Dominikus Sukristiono

Debunking Moral Generalism

New Vindications of Moral Particularism

LIT

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Debunking Moral Generalism

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

1 INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Preliminary I: Thematic Introduction 1
1.2 Preliminary II: Nearby Intellectual Developments to the Debate 6
1.3 Preliminary III: First- and Second-order Study of Morality 18
1.4 Aim and Claims 20
1.5 Summary 22

2 THE MANY MORAL GENERALIZATIONS 23
2.1 Some Forms of Moral Generalizations 23
2.1.1 Moral Principles 23
2.1.2 Moral Laws 26
2.1.3 Moral Norms 31
2.1.4 Moral Codes 34
2.1.5 Moral Formulae 35
2.2 Conditions of Moral Generalizations 38
2.2.1 Contents 39
2.2.2 Informativeness 41
2.2.3 Universal Quantifier 42
2.2.4 Grounding Relation 43
2.2.5 Wide Conceptual Scope 45
2.2.6 Explanatory Power 46
2.2.7 Practical Function 47
2.2.8 Educational Function 47
2.3 Types of Moral Generalizations 48
2.3.1 Based on Contents 48
2.3.2 Based on the Stability of the Relation Between D and M 49
2.4 Summary 51

3 THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSALIZABILITY 53
3.1 The Doctrine and Its Argument 54
3.2 The Doctrine and Moral Generalizations 64
3.3 Refuting the Internal Ground 68
3.4 Refuting the Motive 71
3.4.1 Subsumption 71
3.4.2 The Descriptive Shapes of The Moral 74
3.5 Summary 81

4 THE THESIS OF SUPERVENIENCE IN ETHICS 83
4.1 The Argument from Moral Supervenience 85
4.1.1 The Thesis of Moral Supervenience 85
4.1.1.1 The Definition of Moral Supervenience 86
4.1.1.2 Ontological and Ascriptive Supervenience 88
4.1.1.3 The Supervenience Base and Some Forms of Moral Supervenience 89
4.1.2 Why Believe in Moral Supervenience? 94
4.1.2.1 The Consistency Argument 94
4.1.2.2 The Grounding Argument 96
4.1.2.3 The Conceivability Argument 99
4.1.3 Moral Supervenience and True Moral Generalizations 101
4.1.3.1 Richard M. Hare 103
4.1.3.2 Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith 106
4.2 Against Epistemological Generalism 109
4.2.1 Dancy against Epistemological Generalism 110
4.2.2 Little against Epistemological Generalism 113
4.3 Against Metaphysical Generalism 115
4.4 Are There Robust Base Properties? 125
4.4.1 Test One: Torture 125
4.4.2 Test Two: The Parfitian Triple Principle 127
4.5 Summary and Remarks 130

5 THE MORAL LANDSCAPE CONSIDERATION 135
5.1 Argument for the Flat Moral Landscape 141

5.2 Arguments that the Moral Landscape is not Flat 147
5.2.1 Semantic Rationale: Extensional and Modal Notions of Normality 148
5.2.2 Ontological Rationale: A Recourse to the Nature of the Base Properties 154
5.2.3 Epistemological Rationale: A Recourse to the Privileged Conditions 160
5.2.4 Conceptual–Pragmatic Rationale: A Resort to the Authoritativeness of Morality 165
5.2.4.1 The Line of Thought of the Conceptual–Pragmatic Rationale 167
5.2.4.2 Normativity and the Elusiveness of Authoritative Normativity 168
5.2.4.3 Constitutiveness and Nonarbitrary Selection 172
5.2.4.4 The Link between the Conceptual Account of Authoritative Normativity and the Pragmatic Claim about The Necessity of Holding Truisms 175
5.3 The Moral Landscape is not Flat and Moral Particularism Holds 177
5.3.1 Moral Truth and a Realist Conception of Truth 177
5.3.2 General Moral Statements Cannot be True 180
5.3.3 Resources of the Nonrealist Conceptions of Truth 183
5.3.4 A Nonrealist Conception of True Moral Generalizations 187
5.4 Summary and Remarks 187

6 UNDERSTANDING THE PARTICULARS 193
6.1 General Characteristics of Moral Because-Statements 197
6.2 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Facts 201
6.2.1 The Particularist Ontology of Moral Facts 201
6.2.2 Token-Nonidentity 203
6.2.3 A Sufficient Account of Explanation of Particular Moral Facts 206
6.3 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Beliefs 209
6.3.1 Epistemic Reasons for Moral Beliefs and Particular Moral Facts 209
6.3.2 Moral Particularism Justification of Particular Moral Beliefs 214
6.3.3 A Priori Moral Knowledge 219

6.4 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Actions 224
6.4.1 A Brief Sketch of the Conception of Practical Reasoning 224
6.4.2 Because-Statements, Ought-Making and Favoring 230
6.5 Holism about Reasons 234
6.5.1 Context-Dependency of Reasons 234
6.5.2 From Holism to Moral Generalism 237
6.5.3 From Holism to Moral Particularism 242
6.6 Summary and Remarks. 244

7 A PARTICULARIST ACCOUNT OF MORAL UPBRINGING 247
7.1 Some Misunderstandings 249
7.2 Dancy on Moral Sensibility and *Phronesis* 251
7.3 McDowell on Moral Sensibility and *Phronesis* 254
7.4 Reason and Emotion. 262
7.5 Immersion: The Humanities and the Practical 265
7.6 Summary and Conclusion. 268
8 CONCLUSION: DEBUNKING MORAL GENERALISM 271
8.1 Moral Generalism Debunked 271
8.2 The Non-Resilience of General Moral Beliefs 285

Bibliography 287
Index 301

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary I: Thematic Introduction

These following questions may strike us: Should doctors always keep all the information secret about their patients? Should politicians always tell the truth? Is killing always wrong? Is war never morally justified? Should friends always keep their promises? Let us consider briefly the very last question. If we promise to do something for our friends, it seems natural to think or feel that any time we promise to do something for our friends, we *should always* keep that promise. The reason behind this thought or feeling is, perhaps, that our relationship with one another, when it comes to making promises (and surely with regard to the doctor–patient or other kinds of relationship), should be built on the principle that "promises must be kept" (or "doctors should always keep information secret about patients from those who are not immediately involved" or "people should always tell the truth"). These principles seem to guarantee trustworthiness among us. But we know from our life experiences that there are situations in which it is best not to keep that promise or that, in a particular situation, these principles are irrelevant, or even trustworthiness should be sacrificed. Even if we know that there are situations in which we *should not* adhere to these principles, still, the appeal to principle is ubiquitous. In the context of communication, we hope that people will always tell the truth because we assume that a successful relationship is built on the principle that "one ought to tell the truth," even though we know that there are situations where it is best not to tell the truth. In the context of our relationship to the needy, we feel or believe that "one ought to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves," even though we know there are situations where we are not obliged to help them. These phenomena that we have just outlined are usual but striking. On the one hand, our daily moral experience seems to be shaped by moral principles upon which we build trust, love, and respect for one another. However, on the other hand, our experiences call into question whether we should always adhere to these principles to become moral persons (or, at the very least, to perform moral actions) or even whether these principles are necessary.

Moral principles are not only common to our daily moral practice but are also frequently referred to and even aimed at by moral philosophers. At the very beginning of the first chapter of his renowned book, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Jeremy Bentham wrote that it is the principle of utility that will recognize what we ought to do and determine what we shall do because "nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign

masters, pain and pleasure."[1] J. S. Mill, in his *Utilitarianism,* also clearly wrote that "our moral faculty, [...] supplies us only with the general principles of moral judgments."[2] He claimed that these principles are abstract doctrines that must be found through reason and not perception. For him, the moral status of a particular action, whether it is right or wrong, or good or bad, is determined by applying these principles to an individual case. Even though both Bentham and Mill were consequentialists, Immanuel Kant, who was not a consequentialist but rather a deontologist, would agree that the primary concern of moral philosophy is to investigate the fundamental principle(s) of morality. In the preface for his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals,* he wrote, "the present groundwork is, however, nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*, which already constitutes an enterprise whole in its aim and to be separated from every other moral investigation."[3] Moreover, in many religious traditions, moral principles that are thought rather as moral rules are explicitly present as well; for instance, the Ten Commandments or Golden Rule. These examples show us that moral generalizations or codifications, either in the form of principles, rules, or laws, are omnipresent in moral thought and practice. Joshua and Bernard Gert have recently written that morality is to be understood as the thought and practice that "refer to certain codes of conduct" as expressed either as formulae, principles, norms, laws, or rules.[4]

The belief that moral thought and practice are and must be generalizable or codifiable and that their intelligibility depends on the existence of the forms of "codes of conduct" is currently challenged by so-called "moral particularism." Moral particularism is not a single and simple view. Most of the defenders of particularism claim that it is a family of views that question the existence and/or roles of moral principles.[5] However, as a thematic introduction, we might formulate that particularism is as a view that opposes any moral codification or generalization. Moral principles might be better thought of as one among many forms of moral codification. Formulae, rules, norms, and laws are other forms of

---

1 Jeremy Bentham (1907). *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 1.

2 John Stuart Mill (1861). 'The Complete Text of 'Utilitarianism''. In: *The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism*. Ed. by Henry R. West. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, p. 1.

3 Immanuel Kant (2002). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. German by Allen W. Wood. New York: Yale University Press, Ak 4:392, emphasis original.

4 Bernard Gert and Joshua Gert (2020). 'The Definition of Morality'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2020. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato. stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/morality-definition/.

5 The arch-particularist, Jonathan Dancy, uses the term "moral principle" as his target of criticism. Because his writings are the central exposition of recent developments in moral particularism, many supporters of moral generalism or critics of moral particularism use the same term as him (moral principle). We here adopt a slightly different perspective in terms of the terminology being used, considering the confusion that has resulted from the usage of this quite specific term generally.

moral codification that are ubiquitous either in daily moral practice or in moral philosophical (including religious) literature. It must be noted, however, that with the term "codification" we do not mean that its instances (principles, formulae, norms, etc.) must take the form of an exhaustive generalization, the one that is applicable as the major premise in a "practical syllogism" of a deductive explanation of the moral status of an action.[6] With the term "codification" we are using in this investigation, we would rather intend to express both the *process* and the *result* of the formation of generalization with regard to the relation between the moral status of an action, like rightness/wrongness, goodness/badness, etc., and the description of the action.[7] This process of generalization or codification has been assumed either by laymen in their daily moral practices or by normative ethicists.

With our understanding and use of "codification" or "generalization," we have some advantages. This usage allows us to consider not only the exhaustive or exceptionless generalizations such as Bentham's principle of utility, the principles that "promises must be kept," "one ought to tell the truth," or "one ought to help the needy," but also other types or forms of moral generalization, such as Kantian formulae of Categorical Imperative, Rossian *prima facie* duties, *ceteris paribus* laws, defeasible generalizations, or hedged moral principles as the way and/or the result of any codification. The other advantage is that we have the possibility to include as much literature about moral particularism as possible that does not only explicitly deal with the moral principles, but also with moral

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6 Codification as an exhaustive generalization is John McDowell's view when he uses this term. For him, this term refers to the exhaustive moral principles that serve as the major premises in a deductive form of explanation of a virtuous person's action, while statements about the specific situation serve as the minor premises. Because, for him, the explanatory picture of the action of a virtuous person takes a deductive form, "the one he has targeted to criticize," the moral codes or principles must only be the exhaustive generalizations. This view is disadvantageous because it cannot take the inexhaustive generalizations, like Rossian *prima facie* duties, *ceteris paribus* laws, or defeasible generalizations, into consideration. (See John McDowell (1979). 'Virtue and Reason'. In: *The Monist* 62.3, pp. 331–350; Jonathan Dancy (1983). 'Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties'. In: *Mind* 92.368, pp. 530–547.)

7 With "moral status," we mean the moral properties of an action, whether it is right/wrong, good/bad, ought (not) to be done, permissible or forbidden. With "the description of an action," we would not only include the natural properties of an action, such as telling the truth, making a promise, killing individuals, or helping the needy, but also the so-called thick moral properties of an action, such as being just, nasty, or lewd. Furthermore, we think that "actions" are the clear bearers of moral and nonmoral properties. Nevertheless, we are also open to the possibility that persons and institutions would also be bearers of such properties. We sometimes write that actions, persons and institutions are a triad of the bearers of such properties.

rules,[8] moral laws,[9] and moral codes to avoid confusion that might be caused by the variety of terms used by various authors. The usage of "moral generalization," taken as broad as possible, will allow a more comprehensive discussion about the tenet of the particularist thoughts in the metaethical and normative – ethical discourse.

Particularism is a complex view, not only because it defends the thesis as we have outlined in the previous paragraphs at different levels and strengths, but also because some of its concepts are not precisely formulated and explained, or in some cases, even formulated differently by various authors. Therefore, the first difficulty and task in this work is to make clear the concepts and distinctions that are disguised, blurred, or confused in the particularism/generalism debate. In this case, an overview of the many forms of moral generalizations needs to be done and thereby clarify the target of criticism of moral particularists. Moral particularism, according to the view we are defending, is a claim that these moral codifications or generalizations cannot be true and their existence and roles in moral thought and practice are not necessary.[10]

Many authors on both sides, those promoting particularism or advocating generalism, seem to identify moral generalism (or sometimes also called moral principlism) with mainstream moral theories, such as Utilitarianism, Kantianism, or Rossian ethics, or even claim that these moral theories endorse moral generalism. As the current literature demonstrates, this is the second reason why the dispute between particularism and generalism in ethics is becoming increasingly complex. It is perhaps true that some mainstream moral theories, to a certain extent, endorse moral codification. However, these moral theories have different ways and strengths for how the process of codification is done. A simple identification that these moral theories are the ones that are targeted by moral particularism could be misleading, or at least confusing. This is also our second aim in this

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8 See E. F. Carritt (1928). *The Theory of Morals an Introduction to Ethical Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; Russ Shafer-Landau (1997). 'Moral Rules'. In: *Ethics* 107.4, pp. 584–611; Johan Brännmark (1999). 'Rules and Exceptions'. In: *Theoria* 65.2-3, pp. 127–143.

9 See Luke Robinson (2007). 'Moral Principles are Not Moral Laws'. In: *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 2.3, pp. 1–23; Bruno Niederbacher (2017). 'Was ist ein moralisches Gesetz?' In: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 139.4, pp. 373–386.

10 The formulation of particularism we discuss here is quite strong. We have two methodological reasons for it. First, we want to pursue a theoretical clarity by drawing a clear demarcation between generalism and particularism. Any theory that supports the possibility and necessity of generalization, either taken separately or conjunctively, is generalist in nature. This has something to do with our second reason, namely, that we want to do justice to generalists. We assume that, in the eyes of generalists, people who identify themselves as particularists yet allow for moral generalization do not do credit to the tenet of moral generalism. For instance, particularists who claim that generalists' generalizations are not defeasible draw an inaccurate picture of generalism.

particular work: to define the extent to which these moral theories can be classed as moral generalism or as favoring moral codification.[11]

If we have been successful in defining the thesis of moral generalism and its possible explicit forms in mainstream moral theories, we can then present the reasons why some philosophers endorse moral generalism. The questions of why morality *should* be codified and whether it *can* have rarely been examined by moral theorists. Most normative ethicists implicitly endorse moral codifiability, either directly by saying which codes or principles are ultimate and/or should be applied, or indirectly by suggesting the way one should follow to find the codes or principles applicable to any particular moral practice. However, they do not explicitly provide the reasons for, or justify why, morality should and can be codified. Some former and recent metaethical works on moral generalization will help us to see these reasons.[12]

Understood as a negation of moral generalism or moral codification, it seems that particularism only provides a negative thesis. It is natural therefore to ask about the positive arguments for moral particularism. The answer to this question is two-fold. First, we see how the arguments for moral generalism fail to provide

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[11] P. Stratton-Lake, for instance, argues that the opposition between Aristotelianism and particularism, on the one hand, and principled ethics and Kantianism, on the other, can be transcended by distinguishing the roles of moral principles. According to Stratton-Lake's alternative account of Kantian acting from duty, moral principles do not play a justificatory role for a practical reason. The conditions that justify the particular obligations or the major motivations for moral conduct are not the observance of moral law, but rather the particular concrete factors. For him, "the moral law may be understood as grounding particular obligations not in the sense that it justifies them, but in the sense that it acts as the condition of their possibility." He calls this "the transcendental conception of moral law." (Philip Stratton-Lake (2000). *Kant, Duty and Moral Worth.* London: Routledge, p. 68) Another author who tried to reconcile Kantian and Aristotelian ethics, as far as we are aware, is Nancy Sherman (See Nancy Sherman (1989). *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[12] The former works on this topic that we particularly consider are those by Henry Sidgwick (1962). *The Methods of Ethics*. 7th ed. London: Macmillan, Richard M. Hare (1952). *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, Richard M. Hare (1963). *Freedom and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press and Markus G. Singer (1961). *Generalization in Ethics*. New York: Alfred A. Knop. While the more recent works, among others, that we consider are Mark Lance's and Margaret Little's theory of defeasible generalization (Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2006). 'Particularism and Antitheory'. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Ed. by David Copp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 567–594 and Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2008). 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics'. In: *Challenging Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Vojko Strahovnik, Matjaz Potrc and Mark Norris Lance. New York: Routledge, pp. 53–74), Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge's theory of generalism as regulative ideal (Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge (2006). *Principled Ethics. Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press), Pekka Väryrynen's theory of hedged moral principles (Pekka Väyrynen (2009). 'A Theory of Hedged Moral Principles'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91–132) and Maike Albertzart's theory of indeterminacy of moral principles (Maike Albertzart (2014). *Moral Principles*. Bloomsbury Ethics. London: Bloomsbury Publishing).

nontrivial or substantial true moral generalizations. Second, we see the particularist's arguments that moral codification at any level and form is unnecessary. In short, for particularists, a plausible moral theory and an account of moral practice do not require the generality or universality of moral judgments, but rather its particularity that is more essential. Those who defend particularism will conclude that "morality can get along perfectly well without [moral] principles."[13]

1.2 Preliminary II: Nearby Intellectual Developments to the Debate

Recently, the moral particularism/generalism debate has emerged as a fundamental issue in moral philosophy, and moral particularism is now acknowledged as a distinct metaethical and ethical theory (or at least, a stable position about these matters). This progress is, however, not independent of the moral particularists themselves, but related to other thoughts in ethics and metaethics in the history of analytic philosophy. In our view, the closely connected intellectual developments that might be seen as the conceptual background of this recent debate are the development of intuitionism and antitheory in ethics, a new interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, and the study of reason in moral philosophy. These topics must be discussed, if only briefly, so that we can have some conceptual foundations prior to the investigation and discussions in the later chapters.[14]

ETHICAL INTUITIONISM AND MORAL PARTICULARISM. Moral particularism stems from and finds the strength of its arguments in ethical intuitionism or even, intuitionism in philosophy, generally. Ethical intuitionism is conceptualized in various ways, but its distinctive feature is its epistemology and metaphysics.[15] Every traditional intuitionist maintains that basic moral propositions are self-evident and ethical intuition is the basic source of evidence. Intuition, in its initial sense, such as that proposed by Richard Price, is the ground of how "we owe our beliefs of all self-evident truths, our ideas of the general, abstract affections and relations of things, our moral ideas, and whatsoever else we discover,

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13 Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 2.

14 We regard these four thoughts as background because we have in my mind that "moral particularism" is a distinct strand of (meta-) ethical thought that has particular features. Others might regard that moral particularism does not have a quite distinctive position; rather, it is a branch of virtue ethics (See Rosalind Hursthouse (1995). 'Applying Virtue Ethics'. In: *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory: Essays in Honour of Philippa Foot*. Ed. by Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence and Warren Quinn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 57–75, Margaret Olivia Little (1997). 'Virtue as Knowledge: Objections From the Philosophy of Mind'. In: *Noûs* 31.1, pp. 59–79. DOI: 10.1111/0029-4624.00035) or a cousin of antitheory (See Annette Baier (1985). 'Doing Without Moral Theory?' In: *Anti-Theory in Ethics and Moral Conservatism*. Ed. by S. Clarke and E. Simpson. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, Stanley G. Clarke (1987). 'Anti-Theory in Ethics'. In: *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24.3, pp. 237–244). However, given the recent development of moral particularism, we think it is legitimate to regard it as a distinctive moral thought and the other views as background.

15 Philip Stratton-Lake (2020). 'Intuitionism in Ethics'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2020. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/intuitionism-ethics/.

without making use of any process of reasoning."[16] Propositional beliefs grasped by intuition of this sense are factive, meaning that when an agent *S* believes that *p*, where *p* is a self-evident proposition, it is the case that *p*. The later intuitionists, such as William David Ross, however, had a different notion about beliefs grasped by intuition. They considered them to be nonfactive and therefore fallible because for them, intuition is an intellectual seeming, "as something analogous to the nonfactive notion of perceptual experience."[17]

Ethical intuitionists are epistemic foundationalists, maintaining that all moral reasoning and true moral beliefs must be ultimately grounded on (a) proposition(s) that is/are not inferred from other propositions. The basis or the ultimate ground is the self-evident truths grasped by intuition. When considering self-evident moral truths as the basis of derived moral knowledge, some ethical intuitionists, such as W. D. Ross, are pluralists, whereas others, such as Sidgwick and Moore, are monists, in the sense that there is only one ultimate self-evident true moral proposition. While these ethical intuitionists, either pluralists or monists, are generalists about basic self-evident true moral propositions (meaning that some features of the world or of actions have stable or invariant moral valence, so that there is/are moral judgment(s) that will always be true), moral particularists believe in the particularity of "self-evident" true moral propositions. In terms of moral principle, for generalists, the basic self-evident true moral proposition(s) is/are possible and, perhaps, necessary to be codified (or at least codifiable) into (a) moral principle(s)). In contrast, assured by the belief about the steadfastness of the intuition in every single moral judgment and decision, particularists do not accept the possibility and necessity of codifiability of true moral propositions. While some intuitionists are ethical generalists, arguing for the view that there are universally true statements specifying the relation between nonmoral (or later will also be called "descriptive") and moral facts that can be grasped by intuition, ethical particularists argue against this conviction. As a distinct species of ethical intuitionism, so to speak, particularism also makes the similar epistemological claim that moral knowledge is possible, but basic moral knowledge is gained case by case. To gain this knowledge, sensitivity to particular moral facts is required where the person must be able to recognize the *salient* feature(s) of that particular action and take it into his or her consideration when making moral judgments or decisions. For particularists, to gain moral knowledge, one does not need to appeal to any principles so that one can make an inference from a general principle to a particular judgment or universalize one's judgment to justify it.

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16 Richard Price (1758). *A Review of the Principal Question in Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 169.

17 Stratton-Lake, 'Intuitionism in Ethics'.

Justification and explanation of one's moral judgment and/or decision are particular and do not involve any moral principles.[18]

Ethical intuitionists do not only endorse cognitivism and foundationalism but also metaethical realism and non-naturalism about moral properties. For them, moral judgments grasped by intuition are cognitive states that are truth-apt, or capable of being true or false. Some moral judgments are true when the things being referred to have the moral property attributed to them. This implies realism about moral properties, whose relationship with the nonmoral properties renders moral judgment to be true (or false). The moral properties usually considered here are the thin ones, like goodness/badness or rightness/wrongness. According to intuitionists, these moral properties cannot be defined or analyzed (completely) by nonmoral terms, such as psychological, social, or biological ones. Because our present work here is not a complete exposition about ethical intuitionism, what is relevant in this work is that most particularists also maintain this non-naturalistic realism about moral properties. Particularists, like Dancy, maintain that moral properties exist "out there" as the genuine part of the world and these properties are particular to the specific circumstance. For particularists, rightness or wrongness of action is not a brute fact. What makes an action right or wrong are also not rightness or wrongness as property-universals but the features of the particular action themselves.[19]

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[18] For some authors, this particularist's thought resembles the casuistry model of practical reason as developed by Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin. (See Ulrik Kihlbom (2002). *Ethical Particularism - An Essay on Moral Reasons*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell Stockholm International; Albertzart, *Moral Principles*; and Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin (1988). *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning*. Berkeley: University of California Press.) Our account of particularist moral epistemology is presented later in Section 6.3.

[19] The contrast of intuitionism as a methodological view of moral inquiry is the method of reflective equilibrium (RE). According to RE, we should begin our moral inquiry with our initial moral judgments, i.e., our existing beliefs. Just like the Cartesian methodological doubt, we then must question whether we have a settled opinion about that initial moral judgment. If we have not made up our minds, we must set our moral judgments aside. We do this screening until we find the settled initial moral judgments that may be called the *considered moral judgments*. We might find that some of our considered moral judgments regarding actions are inconsistent with the general moral principles we have (as shown by examples we have elaborated in the first paragraph of this chapter). When there is a conflict between our particular judgment on the one hand and a moral principle on the other hand, we develop a moral theory that accounts for all our moral judgments by integrating them into a comprehensive, consistent system. The difference between RE and intuitionism is the (ir)revisability of considered moral judgments. While intuitionists maintain that the fundamental moral truths of considered moral judgments are self-evident, apprehended by intellectual seeming or direct perception, and irrevisable, proponents of reflective equilibrium argue that such judgments are subject to revision. (See Michael DePaul (2011). 'Methodological Issues: Reflective Equilibrium'. In: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Ethics*. Ed. by Christian Miller. London: Bloomsbury, pp. lxxv–cv; Norman Daniels (1979). 'Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics'. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 76.5, pp. 256–282; John Rawls (2009). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press)

ANTITHEORY AND MORAL PARTICULARISM. The second development in moral philosophy that we may consider as a proximate idea to moral particularism is the skepticism to traditional moral theories, such as Utilitarianism or Kantian ethics. This skeptical view about moral theory, usually known as "antitheory," has been exhibited by philosophers such as Elisabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Bernard Williams. Antitheorists claim that the conceptual framework of modern moral philosophy that seeks to provide a thoroughly and systematic account of correct ethical thought and practice goes into an erroneous direction.[20] Anscombe in her paper "Modern Moral Philosophy" states that modern moral theories employ a *legal* conception of ethics and put the concept of obligation as the center of the theory.[21] This implies that being morally obliged means "being bound or required as by a law."[22] But being bound by a law implies the role and/or the existence of the legislator of that law. This, she claims, is evidence that modern moral philosophy has been heavily influenced by Christian ethics, in which God is the legislator, wrongdoing is a violation of His law, and the concept of obligation is based on belief in and of the authoritative God. However, modern moral theories have abandoned the role and existence of God. Consequently, they lack the authoritative lawgiver and hence, so Anscombe says, the theories are unintelligible.

While Anscombe criticizes the conceptual foundation of the ethics of modern ethical theories, Williams attacks the very project of systematizing ethical life as reductive because it cannot provide a realistic phenomenological and psychological picture of ethical life.[23] Moral theories parsimoniously seek a unified and consistent explanatory picture of ethical life, employing a single principle that may serve to assess the moral status of any action in any circumstance. This simplification project is a fault for Williams, because an ethical life is complex "due both to the messiness of life itself and to the fact that our own ethical outlook is the contingent product of a range of traditions in ways that often pull in conflicting directions."[24] Williams diagnoses that this project of simplification evolves from the theoretical ideal of consistency. Moral theories assume that there must be a consistent explanatory criterion of rightness and wrongness, but according to Williams, this will eliminate genuine moral conflicts of ethical life or unresolvable inconsistencies.

Furthermore, these theories also assume that theoretical consistency will keep rationality intact. Consequently, due to the pursuit of consistency and the preservation of rationality, moral theory must either abandon the actual complexities of

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20 Simon Robertson (2016). 'Anti-Theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams'. In: *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy*. Ed. by S. Golob and J. Timmermann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 678–691.

21 G. E. M. Anscombe (1958). 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. In: *Philosophy* 33.124, pp. 1–19. DOI: 10.1017/ S0031819100037943.

22 Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 6.

23 Bernard Williams (1985). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. London: Fontana.

24 Robertson, 'Anti-Theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams', p. 685. See also Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 16.

ethical life (therefore, making the theory irrelevant) or regard that inconsistency as irrational. The theoretical ideal of consistency would suggest two things to resolve the conflicting or inconsistent ethical claims so that the conflicting claims would make sense. First, reduction of the conflicting claims into one claim. If this is the case, however, moral theories cannot match all the actual experiences. Second, the invocation of the independent or impartial standard or method to adjudicate the conflicting claims. Nevertheless, Williams is doubtful that this impartial standard could resolve the conflicting claims.[25] According to him, such an impartiality and the generality of ethical theories will require one to abandon personal concerns whenever one pursues the goal of becoming an ethical person.

There are some reactions to Williams' criticism, and moral particularism might be thought of as one of them.[26] Some consequentialists and neo-Kantians defend their monistic view by providing a less pervasive account of obligation. However, there is a good chance that they will be challenged by others for their reductive tendencies in their theories about rightness. Others, like W. D. Ross, would provide the pluralist account of duty (i.e., the abovementioned plurality of intuitively accessible moral truths) to resolve this reductive tendency and to overcome the insensitivity of ethical theory in relation to the complexity of ethical life. According to Ross, the wider range of normative accounts about rightness would be context-sensitive, so that they preclude reduction to a codifiable criterion or general test. However, in our opinion, pluralism still cannot escape a reductive tendency because it would provide a fixed "list" of features that will always have a permanent proclivity to become what is right to do. Ross identifies that there are at least seven *prima facie* duties: fidelity, reparations, gratitude, justice, beneficence, self-improvement, and nonmaleficence.[27] These features are not fixed, and he allows that there are other *prima facie* duties. However, the "list" of *prima facie* duties has a reductive tendency because it includes some features or considerations that might be a duty proper, although the *prima facie* duties are not by themselves duties. For instance, to say that fidelity, like keeping promises, is a *prima facie* duty would exclude the facts, e.g., that there is no duty at all to keep promises that involve wrongdoing.[28] Thus, Ross's pluralist concept, although in this regard it is better than a monistic one, cannot escape a reductive tendency.

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25 Robertson, 'Anti-Theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams', p. 685.

26 Robertson, 'Anti-Theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams', p. 688.

27 See William David Ross (1930). *The Right and the Good*. Ed. by Philip Stratton-Lake. New ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 21.

28 Another notorious problem for Ross's account is that it fails to fulfill its own project, i.e., to provide a criterion for right and wrong. First, the account of *prima facie* duties suggests that one must make moral discernment whether the feature in question would be an actual duty. Thus, his theory seems to say that these features might be your duties but might also not, and the theory does not provide you with a suitable guidance to discern whether it is a duty or not. Second, there might be, in specific situations, conflicts between competing *prima facie* duties. There is also no guidance, other than moral discernment in the actual case, to resolve

To escape this tendency, some philosophers then turn to virtue ethics because it abandons the project of providing any criterion of rightness or wrongness. Rather than seeking a general test of rightness, virtue ethicists pursue a more holistic approach capable of viewing the ethical life as an ongoing process of the development of an ethically excellent (i.e., virtuous) character: someone who is inclined to do the right thing in the given circumstances, with the right intention and feelings. Moral particularism, which endorses the ideas that, firstly, moral import might not be codified but irreducibly context-dependent, and secondly, that moral persons are not those who adhere to principles but those who have a sensibility to particular considerations, and, therefore, moral thought and practice can get along well without moral principles or any kind of codification or generalization, is the other alternative that goes along with antitheory.[29]

PARTICULARIST INTERPRETATION OF ARISTOTELIAN ETHICS. The rise of antitheory in modern moral philosophy triggers another development. As previously mentioned, virtue ethics is one of the alternative conceptions of morality as a response to antitheory and one that rejects the reduction of the complexity of ethical life into a single or extremely limited number of concepts, such as obligations, rightness, or wrongness. The root of such a thought is the new reading of Aristotelian ethics. Another new reading of Aristotelian ethics that is closely related to virtue ethics is the particularist interpretation of such concepts. Both virtue ethics and moral particularism find support for their theoretical framework in Aristotle's thoughts, especially in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The early particularism-friendly interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* can be found in John McDowell's 1979 article "Virtue and Reason," which appeared in *The Monist*. He provides the view that emphasizes the concept of virtue in the first rank of moral philosophizing rather than the concept of moral principles. Concerning a virtuous person's action, he argues for the uncodifiability of the knowledge of virtue. Knowledge about virtuous actions that should be done in a particular circumstance is uncodified and "[o]ccasion by occasion," he claims, "one knows what to do, if one does, not by applying universal principles but by

the conflict. (See Russ Shafer-Landau (2010). *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 242–243)

[29] Margaret Olivia Little, however, denies that moral particularism is at its core endorsing an antitheoretical approach. She argues that moral particularism is compatible with a moral–theoretical approach. She does not present moral particularism as an account that denies the role and existence of moral principles entirely. For her, moral principles take the form of defensible generalizations or *ceteris paribus* or "for the most part" generalizations. Moral principles as *ceteris paribus* generalizations are neither statistical nor enthymeme in a deductive explanation. *Ceteris paribus* generalizations are generalizations that "privilege the conditions or cases in which a certain connection holds." According to this view of moral principles, she argues that moral particularism endorses a specific theory about morality that is not in the first place necessary to provide the general knowledge about right and wrong actions but important to provide the understanding about morality. (See Margaret Olivia Little (2013). 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory'. In: *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. by Russ Shaffer-Landau. 2nd. London: Blackwell, pp. 776–784)

being a certain kind of person: one who sees situations in a certain distinctive way."[30] As a result, he appears to argue that Aristotle supports the view that particular-perceptual moral knowledge takes precedence over knowledge of universal principles in making correct moral judgments and decisions. The universal or general moral judgments a person makes are derived from the particular ones, and not *vice versa*.[31] Jonathan Dancy, strongly influenced by McDowell through his various works, has led to the situation where moral particularism has become the established and well-recognized position in moral philosophy. Though he has altered his views regarding strong and weak particularism, he is consistent in arguing for the unnecessariness of moral principles in morality.[32]

The historical and conceptual support for the recent developments in moral particularism can be found in the expanded particularist-friendly interpretations of Aristotle's ethics, which are to a certain extent similar to McDowell's views. Some recent authors can be mentioned here: First, Robert Louden who contends that Aristotle's view of practical knowledge "(1) is knowledge of genuine particulars rather than of universals or types and (2) agents cannot know these particulars by inferential reasoning but only directly through intuition."[33]

Second, Martha C. Nussbaum. In some of her writings, specifically in *The Discernment of Perception*, she argues that Aristotle attacks the view that "rational choice can be captured in general rules or principles that can then simply can be applied to each new case."[34] According to her interpretation, Aristotle regarded

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30 McDowell, 'Virtue and Reason', p. 347.

31 Here we must mention the works of David Wiggins. He, and perhaps McDowell as well, seem to argue that what the virtuous or well-brought-up person needs in deliberations and choices is situational perception (corresponds to Aristotle's *aisthesis*) of the indefinitely varied contingencies, which cannot be expressed in general judgments. What one needs in practical deliberations or decisions is the perception of particulars to recognize which salient or decisive features should play a role. (See David Wiggins (2002). 'Deliberation and Practical Reason'. In: *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. 3rd. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 215–238; Ruth Chang, ed. (1997). *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press)

32 Dancy's early distinctive views about particularism, following the step of McDowell, can be found in these essays: Jonathan Dancy (1981). 'On Moral Properties'. In: *Mind* 90.359, pp. 367–385 and Dancy, 'Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties'.

33 Robert B. Louden (1986). 'Aristotle's Practical Particularism'. In: *Ancient Philosophy* 6, pp. 123–138. URL: https://doi.org/10.5840/ancientphil198668.

34 Martha C. Nussbaum (1992b). 'The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality'. In: *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 55–105. It must be noted that her particularism does not preclude the role and existence of the universal theories and general rules of conduct. She insists, however, that such rules are insufficient for a correct conduct and that judgment about the complex particulars has an important role. Good judgment involves both rules and particular perception, where rules will keep the perception on the right track. See Angela Kallhoff, ed. (2001). *Martha C. Nussbaum: Ethics and Political Philosophy*. Münsteraner Vorlesungen zur Philosophie Vol. 4. Münster: LIT Verlag, specifically these chapters: "Let's Talk about Love" (pp. 43-53) and "Love, Literature and Human Universals" (pp. 129-152).

that for an individual to display practical reasoning, prior perception of the particulars is more important than a knowledge of the universals. Furthermore, he endorsed the view that practical wisdom cannot be considered as systematic knowledge about the universals and general principles.

The third author we might mention is Nancy Sherman, who provides a similar understanding of Aristotle but stresses the role of emotions as an important capacity to get the right evaluative information to have a perception of the particulars.[35] On her view, the virtuous person's ability to use perception and emotions as a source of evaluation must be habituated or trained. However, this should not be understood in the Kantian sense, i.e., as a "mindless process of learning by repetitive skill and reinforcement."[36] According to her interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy, habituation of perception and emotion is instead "a critical process of learning that involves judgment, inquiry, and a growing capacity to make one's actions comprehensible and to transform one's goals and circumstances into rational decisions."[37] This process, she argues, suggests that Aristotle is not an intuitionist in the sense that moral judgments gained by perception of the particulars are mysterious and need no justification or explanation. For her, there is no reason to think that Aristotle's notion of perception must be viewed as an immediate apprehension cut off from a more discursive process. A moral judgment grasped by perception always takes the circumstances into consideration, so that the preceptor or the wise person might see the salient feature shaped by that context. Recognition of one shape is not a pure description of it but involves how one's shape is connected to or resembles another. In this sense, Aristotle is a particularist but not an intuitionist.

Fourth, a recent particularism-friendly interpretation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is presented by Uri D. Leibowitz.[38] He defines particularism as a research program that aims at providing an explanation of the rightness or wrongness without appealing to exceptionless moral principles. He argues that in *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle does not aim to formulate one exceptionless principle, e.g., a virtue-based principle[39], as the criterion of rightness and wrongness that

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35 See Nancy Sherman (1997). *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, specifically, pp. 239-283. In this book, she seems to argue that there is a convergence between Aristotelian particularism and Kantian universalism.

36 Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue*, pp. 242–243.

37 Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue*, p. 243.

38 Uri D. Leibowitz (2013). 'Particularism in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 10.2, pp. 121–147. DOI: 10.1163/174552412x628904.

39 According to this principle, "[a]n act is right, if a fully virtuous agent might perform it in the circumstances." There is, however, no evidence, so Leibowitz argues, that Aristotle pursues this kind of principle. This principle is also explanatorily meaningless because what makes an action right is not the fact that a virtuous person would perform it. Instead, the action done by a virtuous person is right because of the features of that action that make it right. So, this principle presents the wrong order of explanation. (Leibowitz, 'Particularism in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 126.)

will always be explanatory with regard to particular actions. What Aristotle gives is rather an explanatory schema, because, unlike the scientific explanation that is a "pure demonstration," the explanation of the rightness of actions lacks fixity and its account cannot be precise. Leibowitz argues that Aristotle does not want to show which actions are right or what is the criterion of rightness. Instead, he wants to show the explanatory schema of action; that if an action is right, which is something "[that] is (already) known to us," there is a scale on which the action is neither excessive nor deficient.[40] The features of virtuous actions will fill this schema. With this schema, one can clearly explain the extent to which a certain action is right, without appealing to any general principle, but by filling the schema (that the action is neither excessive nor deficient) with the features of that particular action. There are surely many other studies we could include, but we think that the abovementioned are the most illuminating ones. These show that one can find in the writings of Aristotle some precursors of the particularist's ideas about the unnecessariness of general moral principles, the priority of perception in gaining moral knowledge and the priority of the particulars in providing justification and explanation of an action.[41]

THE RECENT STUDY OF MORAL REASON AND MORAL PARTICULARISM. The study of reason is as old as philosophical reflection itself. However, in contrast to the former study that focused on the faculty of Reason, contemporary study of reasons investigates the very nature and the roles of reasons.[42] People may have reasons for action, for believing, for feeling, and so on, but theoretical reasons, reasons for believing, and practical reasons, reasons for action, are two

40 Leibowitz, 'Particularism in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 130.

41 There is certainly another interpretation of Aristotle's ethics that shows that Aristotle is not a particularist. T. H. Irwin, for instance, argues that Aristotle takes some ethical generalizations to be principles that exist prior in the order of explanation, justification, and knowledge to the ethical beliefs that they explain. Irwin contends that Aristotle does not take ethics and ethical generalization less seriously than science and physical generalization. His argument is that "Aristotle normally takes the principles of a discipline to be 'better known by nature' (*gnôrimôteron phusei*) that the initial beliefs that provide the starting points for inquiry [...] what is better known by nature is also more universal, prior, and more explanatory [...] The Ethics makes it clear from the beginning that Aristotle is looking for principles." (See Terence H. Irwin (2000). 'Ethics as an Inexact Science: Aristotle's Ambitions for Moral Theory'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 100–29. See also the discussion about the inexactness of ethics in Georgios Anagnostopoulos (1994). *Aristotle on the Goals and Exactness of Ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press)

42 In German, the terms "reason" or "reasons" should be translated and understood as *Grund* or *Gründe*, which does not denote *"Vernunft"*. Unfortunately, the English word for both terms is the same, "reason," which might cause confusion for some people. In this book the terms "reason" or "reasons" will always refer to *"Grund"* or *"Gründe"*. We use "Reason" (capitalized R) only when we refer to *"Vernunft"*.

fundamental types of reasons.[43] The details are subtle and difficult to simplify, but what is relevant for us, particularly in this preliminary analysis, is that the recent defenses of particularism are mostly based on the study of the role and nature of reasons. The enabling condition for their particularist defenses is the contemporary confidence of moral philosophical reflections that appealing to reasons for acting and believing in certain ways will better enable us to account for various normative and evaluative phenomena than appealing to value, obligation, or other concepts. The basic concept is rather simple. We may presuppose that there are normative and evaluative phenomena. Normative and evaluative phenomena are believed not as brute facts, but they have these normative and evaluative properties in virtue of other properties. For example, the fact that a holiday in Bali is good is not a brute fact. The fact that its stunning views, quiet rooms, and tasty food are pleasurable is what makes a holiday in Bali worthwhile. There is/are reason(s) *why* some normative or evaluative facts are normative or evaluative as they are. The same is true for moral actions. The fact that some actions have normative or evaluative properties is not believed to be a brute fact. There must be some reason(s) *why* these actions are also normative or evaluative as they are.[44]

In the standard debate, people distinguish between two kinds of practical reasons based on the roles of these reasons.[45] There are good reasons for an action or reasons that favor the action. These are usually called *normative reasons*.[46] Such reasons are usually the ones that also justify the action; therefore, these are also

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43 The intensive study of reason in the second half of the 20th century begins, perhaps, with Joseph Raz (1975). *Practical Reason and Norms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Some years before this publication, there were prominent publications about practical reason, such as G. E. M. Anscombe (1963). *Intention*. 2nd. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Donald Davidson (1963). 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes'. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 60.23, pp. 685–700; Thomas Nagel (1970). *The Possibility of Altruism*. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, that already have influentially shaped the discussion around this topic. In the 19th century, David Hume and Immanuel Kant also provided views about how Reason guides and justifies human actions. However, these writers took reason rather as the faculty of Reason of a human being than reason as such.

44 In Chapter 6, such a requirement in moral thought and practice is called "the because-constraint." In that chapter, we argue that the analysis of this constraint shows that there is a plausible particularist account of explanation. We leave the discussion of this topic in that chapter.

45 Maria Alvarez (2017). 'Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/.

46 The standard definition of normative reasons is due to T. M. Scanlon's phrase, "I will take the idea of a reason as primitive. Any attempt to explain what it is to be a reason for something seems to me to lead back to the same idea: a consideration that counts in favour of it. 'Counts in favour how?' one might ask. 'By providing a reason for it' seems to be the only answer." (Thomas M. Scanlon (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, p. 17 and Thomas M. Scanlon (2004). 'Reasons: A Puzzling Duality?' In: *Reason and Value: Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz. Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*. Ed. by R. Jay Wallace et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 231–246)

called the *justificatory reasons*. For example, the fact that calling my mom will fulfill a promise I made to her is a good reason or a justification for me to make that call. There are also reasons for which people do an action. These are reasons that motivate the agent to act, and therefore, are called *motivating reasons*. An agent who is motivated by that reason acts "in the light of that reason." When he or she comes to the practical reasoning, that motivating reason will usually also play the role of the explanation of her action. Motivating reasons are those that usually figure in the explanation of an action; therefore, these are also known as *explanatory reasons*. Nevertheless, whether it is true that motivating reasons are always explanatory is a matter of debate that we cannot extensively discuss at this juncture.[47]

However, there is no consensus regarding how many kinds of reasons there are. Jonathan Dancy, for instance, argues that there is only one kind of reason for action. The reasons that favor actions are of no different sort to the reasons that motivate the agents to act. The distinction between normative and motivating reasons is due to two different questions, but not to the existence of two different sorts of reasons. He writes, "[w]hen I call a reason 'motivating,' all that I am doing is issuing a reminder that the focus of our attention is on matters of motivation, for the moment. When I call it 'normative,' again all that I am doing is stressing that we are currently thinking about whether it is a good reason, one that favours acting in the way proposed."[48] However, there is evidence that the basis on which the agent acts, the motivating reason, is sometimes not the same fact that also justifies that action. The reason that has motivated (and explained) why Europeans during the colonial period subjugated the indigenous people in Africa was to gain political and economic power over the region. However, there is no reason that justifies that subjugation. Thus, at least as a theoretical distinction, it is plausible to talk about normative and motivating/explanatory reasons separately.

There are some complications and disagreements about the nature of reasons for action. So far, I have assumed that when we talk about reasons, we think that reasons are facts, i.e., something that is mind-independent. There is, however, also no consensus as to whether all reasons are facts, or that they are propositions or even beliefs, i.e., something that is mind-dependent. It seems plausible to talk about normative reasons as facts, like what we have done above.[49] However, there is disagreement among philosophers as to how certain facts have or might have normative force, i.e., how a certain action has a particular normative property, because of these factual reasons. Some philosophers even reject the idea that

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47 For further debate, see Alvarez, 'Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation'; Maria Alvarez (2009). 'How Many Kinds of Reasons?' In: *Philosophical Explorations* 12.2, pp. 181–193; Jonathan Dancy (2000a). *Practical Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

48 Dancy, *Practical Reality*, pp. 2–3.

49 Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, pp. 17–18; Dancy, *Practical Reality*; Maria Alvarez (2010). *Kinds of Reasons: An Essay in the Philosophy of Action*. Oxford University Press.

there are normative facts.[50] Indeed, what factive reasons are, is also a matter of disagreement. Some philosophers hold that because true propositions are about facts, factive–normative reasons are nothing but true propositions.[51] However, if normative reasons are propositions, they must be abstract and representational, which seems unsuitable to account for reasons that are in fact concrete and nonrepresentational.[52] Philosophers also have different claims about the normativity of reasons; some argue that reasons are normative or have normative force because they play the role of the good- or right-making basis of actions[53] or because of their relation to rationality[54] or desires[55]. While it seems that there is an agreement that normative reasons are conceived as facts that are mind-independent, philosophers disagree whether or not motivating reasons are mind-dependent, that is, entities that depend on someone's thinking or believing certain things.[56] So, it seems plausible to say that the reason that motivated the Europeans to subjugate the indigenous peoples in the countries they conquered was their belief in gaining political and economic power, even though there was no fact that justified that subjugation.

What is then the relation between normative and motivational/explanatory reasons and moral particularism? Particularists, especially Jonathan Dancy in his *Moral Reason* and later in *Ethics without Principles*, argue that particularism is the natural implication of the "behaviour of reasons." Even for him, particularism

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50 The most notable one is J. L. Mackie (1990). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Pelican Books.

51 Stephen L. Darwall (1983). *Impartial Reason*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Michael Smith (1994). *The Moral Problem*. Oxford: Blackwell; Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*.

52 Jonathan Dancy (2004b). 'Two Ways of Explaining Actions'. In: *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 55, pp. 25–42.

53 Joseph Raz argues for this view of the normativity of normative reason: "Reason is then explained in part by invoking value: valuable aspects of the world constitute reasons. This approach [...] can be characterized as holding that the central type of human action is intentional action; that intentional action is action for a reason; and that the reasons are facts in virtue of which those actions are good in some respect and to some degree." (See Joseph Raz (1999). *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 22–23.)

54 Christine M. Korsgaard (1996). *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Smith, *The Moral Problem*; Joshua Gert (2004). *Brute Rationality: Normativity and Human Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

55 This comes from Hume's account of desired-based practical reason, maintaining that all normative reasons derive their normativity from a relation to some desire of the agent. See Bernard Williams (1981). 'Internal and External Reasons'. In: *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 101–113. See also Mark Schroeder (2008). 'Having Reasons'. In: *Philosophical Studies* 139.1, p. 57; Alan H. Goldman (2009). *Reasons From Within: Desires and Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

56 Those who argue that motivating reasons are mind-dependent are, among others: Robert Audi (2001). *The Architecture of Reason: The Structure and Substance of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Alfred R. Mele (2003). *Motivation and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

is meant to be "a doctrine about how moral reasons work."[57] For Dancy, reasons are holistic, meaning that one feature that is the reason for an action (or for a belief) in one case might be the reason against or an irrelevant reason in other situations. Reasons for action and for believing have no stable valence. For instance, the fact that I have borrowed a book from a friend is the normative reason to give back the book. If I know that my friend has stolen the book from the library, the fact that I got the book from him or her is no longer the reason for me to give the book back to him or her. The holistic nature of normative reasons (and of motivational/explanatory reasons) makes it impossible to capture or codify them into moral principles because moral principles "seem all to be in the business of specifying features as *general* reasons."[58] The particularists would contend that any appropriate provision of moral principle is not necessary for the normative, motivating, or explanatory reasons found in morality. Moral generalists, conversely, might claim that reasons are not entirely holistic but atomistic, maintaining that there could be features that will always be the reason for (or against) any actions whenever they occur. They may also claim that, although reasons are holistic, nonstrict generalizations are still possible and/or necessary.[59]

So far, we have shown the complicated issues that arise in the moral particularism/generalism debate due to the intellectual background of the discussion, specifically in the second half of the 20th century. If we are to understand the recent development of moral particularism, we must first understand these related topics; otherwise, we lose sight of the significance of moral particularism for ethical life. Before moving on, however, one more preliminary is needed to clarify which area of study of morality should the moral particularism/generalism debate be placed in.

1.3 Preliminary III: First- and Second-order Study of Morality

In the study of morality or in moral philosophy, generally, people distinguish at least two domains of study. First, the question can be asked about what one should do in a particular situation or whether one has an obligation to do something (e.g., telling the truth, helping the needy, keeping a promise). These questions belong to the first-order study about morality that is usually considered to be the "province of *normative ethics*."[60] Some theorists provide the decisive answers to these questions. Most answers provide the monistic principle as the criteria for wrongness and rightness and the guidance upon which people may discern what they should do. The theories about the criteria or guidance are usually called *normative theories*, e.g., Kantian ethics, Utilitarianism, Natural law, or Divine Command theory. There are also some normative ethicists who argue that there is no decisive answer to the question of what one should do because the standard

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57 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 15.

58 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 76.

59 We deal with such an issue in Chapter 6 of this investigation.

60 Alexander Miller (2013). *Contemporary Metaethics: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity, p. 1.

and guiding principles are nonmonistic or pluralistic. There is no single standard or guiding principle. Ethical pluralists, the most prominent being W. D. Ross, suggest that there is no absolute principle that may act as the criteria of rightness/wrongness or as the guidance for decisions, but there are *prima facie* duties that play the role of strong reasons when they occur but might be outweighed by competing reasons. These are the examples of answers to first-order questions. The second category of questions in the study of morality deals with the metaethical questions such as the meaning of moral concepts (rightness, wrongness, goodness, badness, or value), the nature of moral judgments (whether they are cognitive or noncognitive entities), the way to justify moral opinions, and the existence and nature of moral facts. This study belongs to the field of metaethics.

The relevant question here is whether the moral particularism/generalism debate is a normative or metaethical one. On the one hand, we believe that particularism and generalism are metaethical theories. They attempt to provide the answers to metaethical questions (the nature of moral judgments, the possibility of moral knowledge, and how one determines the moral status of an action and makes moral decisions) either with or without appealing to any substantial theory about the decisive criteria of rightness/wrongness or goodness/badness. However, on the other hand, particularism and generalism might also be seen as normative theories. Generalism usually endorses substantial theories about the criteria of rightness/wrongness or goodness/badness, while in contrast, particularism might be seen as the extreme pole of ethical pluralism, as it endorses the view that there is a vast, perhaps infinite, number of right-/wrong-making features that are impossible to be captured by generalization or codification. These observations suggest that the particularism/generalism debate may not be properly classified as metaethics or normative ethics. However, we may hope that this should not cause difficulty for us because sometimes the strict demarcation between one domain of study and another may hinder us in our aims to understand the subject more comprehensively.[61] If this occurs, we are in a position to combine both studies

[61] Regarding this matter, Ulrik Kihlbom brings a similar claim. For him, the debate between particularism and generalism (which he calls universalism), in one interpretation, can be categorized in the realm of both metaethics and normative ethics, but from another perspective, both positions belong to neither domain. He argues that both particularism and generalism put forward both metaethical claims (such as claims about moral knowledge and truths) and normative claims (where particularism might be regarded as the strong form of moral pluralism). Therefore, we can say that both theories can be placed in the areas of metaethics and normative ethics. However, in his discussion, he does not maintain that both positions are taken to be substantial theories of values and norms and, therefore, they do not belong to these categories. In this book, however, we maintain that both particularism and generalism claim something morally substantial, although in the particularist accounts it is not codifiable. In our account, the particularist claim about the uncodifiability of moral judgments or moral facts does not make it an empty or nonsubstantial moral theory. (See Kihlbom, *Ethical Particularism - An Essay on Moral Reasons*, pp. 18–20)

and lose the strict terminological demarcation between them without relaxing the systematic clarity.[62]

1.4 Aim and Claims

The primary goal of this investigation is to clarify, assess, and defend moral particularism, thereby debunking our belief that morality is dependent on substantial true moral generalizations. The systematic and most fruitful way to achieve this objective is to strictly take the demarcation line between what moral particularists believe and what their opponents, moral generalists, believe and analyze both of their arguments. However, as we demonstrate, we believe that ethical particularism has a more plausible theoretical argument. Nevertheless, we might concede that there are some truths in some forms of moral generalism. We conduct the investigation on the arguments of both sides as follows.

As we investigate the central points of controversy between moral generalism and particularism, we think that the central argument for moral generalism lies in the doctrine of universalizability of moral judgments and the thesis of moral supervenience, according to which moral properties supervene on nonmoral properties. We intend to dismantle these two generalists' arguments and defend the following five claims. First, the two generalists' arguments fail with the result that there are no substantial true moral generalizations derived from the doctrine of universalizability and the thesis of moral supervenience. Second, what is defensible is only the existence of loose moral generalizations, i.e., general statements that depict the loose relation between certain moral and nonmoral properties. However, they cannot be true in a realist sense of truth. Such generalizations are also not necessary for moral thought and practice. Third, fourth, and fifth, given the claims that there are no substantial true moral generalizations and that moral thought and practice do not require moral generalizations, we argue that moral particularists can provide adequate accounts of how certain nonmoral properties have a certain moral tendency, of how we understand particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions without maintaining the existence of moral generalizations and general moral facts, and of what moral education would be like without relying on the existence and role of moral generalizations.

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[62] For some particularists, specifically McDowell, Dancy, and McNaughton, moral particularism is sometimes discussed in the context of the moral–epistemological and metaphysical discussion. In defending his pure- cognitivist theory of moral motivation, Dancy argues that there is an internal coherence between his notion of the pure theory of moral motivation and McDowell's account of moral particularism. (See Jonathan Dancy (1993). *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 55–58) McNaughton discusses moral particularism also in the context of his defense of non-naturalistic moral realism. He seems to argue that if all the right actions share nothing in common except their being right, then moral generalizations or principles are unnecessary. (See David McNaughton (1988). *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 62). Dancy in his *Ethics without Principles* also puts forward the notion that contributory reasons for actions are best understood in terms of non-naturalistic realism. (See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 53–70)

The structure of this book is as follows: As we have seen, this chapter sets out some preliminaries of the debate between moral generalists and particularists and elaborates on the aim and the claims of this investigation. Chapter 2 presents the target of criticism of moral particularism where we investigate the possible forms and notions of moral generalizations. In chapters 3 and 4, we aim to demonstrate that the core arguments for moral generalism, i.e., the arguments from the doctrine of universalizability and from the thesis of supervenience, are unsound. Chapter 3 particularly tackles the generalists' argument from universalizability. We lay out two particularist strategies to refute this argument: (1) showing the falsity of the doctrine, and (2) demonstrating that the doctrine cannot account for the rationality of moral judgments. Chapter 4 discusses the thesis of supervenience in ethics, or the so-called thesis of moral supervenience. After clarifying what the thesis of moral supervenience is and providing the possible arguments for believing why it is true, we argue that particularists have some good reasons to invalidate the generalists' argument from moral supervenience. In Chapter 5, we discuss another form of moral generalizations, the loose moral generalizations, which are considered under the topic of moral landscape. In this chapter, we consider to what extent loose moral generalizations hold and whether moral particularism implies the existence of such moral generalizations.

The moral particularists' claim that there are no defensible substantive true moral generalizations raises several issues, two of which will be discussed in the following chapters: moral explanations and moral education. In Chapter 6, we show how moral particularists might provide an account of moral explanations without involving the existence and role of moral generalizations. We think that these accounts of explanations provide a way to understand normative phenomena, in particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions. Our approach is to consider that the because-constraint holds, meaning that for every moral fact, belief, and action, there must be some reason(s) that explain(s) why they obtain. The analysis of the because-constraint provides a plausible account of explanation of the particulars where moral generalizations and general moral facts are not necessary. The penultimate chapter (Chapter 7) investigates an account of moral upbringing that is consistent with moral particularism and, thus, a reply to the generalists' criticism that there would be no adequate account of moral education derived from moral particularism. Here, we consider Dancy's and McDowell's notions of moral upbringing that aim at acquiring *phronesis*. Moral *Bildung* or moral upbringing must not be an inculcation of moral principles as moral standards but rather an initiation into the space of reasons. In the conclusion (Chapter 8), we summarize our investigation into the moral particularism versus moral generalism debate. As a result of our investigation, we must be skeptical of the implicit tendency to maintain that some general ethical beliefs are unaffected by changes in circumstances, as such beliefs are unnecessary and may lead us in the wrong direction. As moral particularists would argue, moral thinking works well without such general ethical beliefs.

1.5 Summary

In this introductory chapter, we have given three preliminaries to the investigation about moral particularism. We began not with a sophisticated philosophical dispute but with a consideration of our daily moral thought and practice. As a clue to the philosophical problem, we show that moral particularism is a view that questions the possibility and necessity of moral codification or generalization, as assumed by mainstream moral theories. We have provided an outline of the complexity of the particularism/generalism debate. We also have shown that there are at least four topics around the moral particularism–generalism debate. The conflicting views about moral particularism–generalism are sometimes regarded as the debate about whether, ultimately, moral knowledge should and can rely only on intuition. It seems that moral particularists do rely on the ability of our intuition to grasp the knowledge about rightness/wrongness or oughtness of particular circumstances. Moral particularists, however, take a different view from the early intuitionists, who maintained that there is some finite number of moral truths that might be captured by moral principles.

Furthermore, moral particularism also emanates from the rise of the antitheoretical thought in presenting a rejection of moral theories. Intuitionism and the antitheory approaches that promote virtue-based ethics derive their strength and inspiration from the new interpretation of Aristotelian ethics, which prioritizes perception of particulars over universal judgments, views ethics as an inexact science, and endorses habituation as a means of acquiring moral competence. This reading is regarded as a particularist-friendly interpretation of Aristotelian ethics. The last intellectual development that we think is the most important to understanding the debate is the study of moral reasons. Recent particularist writings in the field base their arguments on the nature and role of reason for action. Finally, in the third preliminary, we have argued that the moral particularism/generalism debate might not be placed into one domain but that it involves both normative ethics and metaethics. The next chapter will begin the investigation by laying out the many forms of moral generalizations.

2 THE MANY MORAL GENERALIZATIONS

Moral particularism is the antithesis of moral generalism, according to which there are substantial true moral generalizations that play a necessary role in moral thought and practice. In the literature on moral particularism, however, some philosophers do not elaborate at length what moral generalizations are. Some only mention their forms, such as moral principles, laws, or norms. They also do not clearly consider the variety of moral generalizations. Typically, in their criticism, moral particularists only give some general characterizations of moral generalizations and a general argument against the moral generalist claims. The task of this chapter is, therefore, to explicate the characteristics of moral generalizations that are possibly targeted by moral particularists. To this end, in Section 2.1, we conduct a pragmatic and conceptual observation about the forms of moral generalizations that are often present in moral philosophical literature. In Section 2.2, we consider some conditions of moral generalizations that are targeted by moral particularism. The claim is therefore conditional: only if moral generalizations satisfy these conditions will they be a target of criticism of moral particularism. Further, in Section 2.3, we categorize the forms of moral generalizations. We might categorize them both based on the contents and the stability of the relation between the descriptive and moral properties of actions (as displayed in the moral generalizations). Hopefully, by doing this, we will clear up the confusion regarding the kind of moral generalizations that are criticized by moral particularists.

2.1 Some Forms of Moral Generalizations

Although we intend to consider as broadly as possible our usage of the term "moral generalization," it is beyond our competence to consider *all* possible terms through which we might express moral generalizations. What is realistically achievable is rather to consider some usual terms and then draw a systematic reflection on them, which is relevant to the moral particularism–generalism debate. We consider five terms that are familiar not only in the context of the debate between particularists and generalists, but also in a wider context of moral thought and practice. They are moral principles, moral laws, moral norms, moral codes, and moral formulae. We may consider them as species or forms of moral generalizations. Let us observe them specifically from conceptual and pragmatic points of view.

2.1.1 Moral Principles

The term "moral principle" is widely used in the recent moral particularism–generalism debate. As we have indicated in the first chapter, this debate is usually

taken as to consider whether there are true moral principles and if they are necessary in moral thought and practice. There is, however, no consensus about what this term is supposed to mean.

The term "principle" (Lat. *principium*) itself is also equivocal. Nevertheless, there are at least four basic features we can observe. First, it has something to do with the connection between the highest level (or the source) and its lower level (or the derivatives): an entity (it could be objects, states, statements, etc.) *P* is a principle in a certain domain, if and only if *P* is the ultimate source or origin from which anything else in that domain is derived. In the moral domain, therefore, *P* is a moral principle, if and only if *P* is the source or origin of any other, i.e., derivative, moral entities (such as reasons, beliefs, truths, or actions). Second, the term "principle" also has something to do with the foundation or basis of other entities: an entity *P* is a principle in a certain domain, if and only if *P* is the foundation or basis upon which other things would rest. While in the first explication, the movement (of thought) is top-down, according to the second one, it is bottom-up. However, it seems that there is no substantive difference between these two notions. Both tell us that *P* is a moral principle, if and only if *P* is the origin, basis, or beginning of any other, i.e., derivative, features of this domain (moral feelings, beliefs, thoughts, or actions). This is what we usually mean, either in philosophical or nonphilosophical discourse, when we use this term. A clear example of this usage is in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, when he says that the subject matter of metaphysics is "seeking the principles and highest causes,"[1] while "every principle [is] the first point from which a thing is, or comes to be, or from which one gets acquainted with it."[2] A similar remark is also given in the *Nicomachean Ethics* when he asks where one should *begin* one's argument, whether from "the first principle" or "from things known to us."[3] Perhaps, this is what philosophers also mean when they discuss justification and explanation of any particular moral judgments (beliefs or knowledge). Moral philosophers usually use the term "appeal to moral principles" when they explain why a certain action is right or wrong or good or bad, in the sense that these moral principles are the source or origin that can explain why that action is right or wrong or good or bad. The same is true for moral justification. Being so conceived, the term *principle* or *moral principle* can be understood metaphysically, as the source, origin, or foundation of any other entities, or epistemologically, as the source, origin, or foundation of explanation or justification of derivative things in that particular domain. Both senses might be related to each other. If one holds realism regarding moral facts and truths, one

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1 Aristotle (1984). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Vol. 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, Met. Γ 1003a26–28.

2 Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Met. Δ 1013a17-18.

3 Aristotle (2000). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. by Roger Crisp. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511802058, 1095a31-1095b4.

might refer the principle(s) in the epistemological sense to the principle in the metaphysical sense.

There is a third and quite different notion of the term "principle"; it can also denote something general that has a wide scope of application. A principle in any domain has a wide coverage so that it can be applied to numerous (or even all) cases. For instance, the principle, "Do not tell a lie," contains the general term of "lying" or "telling a lie" and is applicable to all cases that involve telling a lie. By saying "applicable," one need not necessarily suppose that the holder of the principle should exercise an action as to what the principle says, but it is enough to think that the principle can be considered to decide what one will or should do in a certain situation. The applicability of a principle is due to the generality of the concepts being used that can cover cases that fall under the concepts. Therefore, a principle that contains a general concept can always be specified.

The aforementioned description should not, however, rule out the possibility of principles that are very specific so that they are only applicable once, or there is only one case that falls under the concepts being used in those principles. For instance, one might take an individual suggestion, "Fly to Bali once before you are 25 years old" as a "principle." This is, however, a specific principle that is only applicable once. This principle contains some specified concepts that cannot be more specific. The action ("fly"), the place ("to Bali"), the agent ("you"), and the time ("once before you are 25 years old") are all exhaustively specified. We may call this an "exhaustively specified principle," a principle that is clearly set out. It is perhaps a specification of a principle "Have fun when you are young" where the concept of "Fly to Bali" falls under the concept of "having fun" and "before 25 years old" takes the place of "when you are young."

In the moral domain, a principle such as the one set out in the previous paragraph is also possible, although it may look peculiar. One might hold an individual suggestion, "It is morally good to give a jacket to an unfortunate named Harry on Saturday, 13th December 2025" as a "moral principle." If this is a principle at all, its concepts are already exhaustively specified, and it is only applicable once. Perhaps, this principle is a specification of the general principle, "It is morally good to help the unfortunate."

However, we suggest that such a specified principle would lead to confusion if it were treated or attributed as a principle at all. It would be better to call such a principle a particular order of action; it orders one to act in a certain way in a particular circumstance. Thus, we may maintain that the term "principle" is characterized by the generality of the concepts being used. By maintaining this concept, principles (moral principles included) admit specification, although in their most specific form, they should not be treated as principles.

The last feature of the concept of "principle" is its universality. R. M. Hare in his article, "Principle," warned that universality should not be confused with

generality.[4] While generality denotes the conceptual aspect of principles, universality deals with their metaphysical aspect. As Hare explained, principles are universal, indicating that they involve a universal quantifier, and their terms should not involve the reference to particular entities such as proper names, places, or time. While generality is a matter of degree and contrasted to specificity, the universality of a principle denotes the ontological status of certain things that are expressed in that principle and cannot come in degree. A principle is, therefore, universal if and only if none of the references of the principle are particular. Being thought of as a universal proposition, a principle such as "It is good to help the unfortunate" does not refer to any particular entity, although it somehow specifies the kind of action, that is, "helping the unfortunate." In this sense, this principle displays the ontological status of a certain kind of action as being universal or being of a certain kind. This being said, universality does not include degrees, therefore, there is no such thing as less or more universal. What is possible is either being universal or particular. Particularity is the opposite of universality. Furthermore, because all principles (moral principles included) are universal, there could be no such thing as a particular principle in a logical and metaphysical sense.

2.1.2 Moral Laws

The second term we consider is "moral law." This term is less used than "moral principle" in the moral particularism–generalism debate.[5] The term "law-like generalizations" is more frequently used. The term "law" itself is more usual in other normative domains such as in religion and jurisprudence. In jurisprudence or legal philosophy, the question of "What is a law?" is, however, subject to ambiguity. We might refer to some legal philosophers to gain some insight into this matter and perhaps resolve this ambiguity. St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the proponents of the natural law tradition, argues, for instance, that law "is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated."[6] According to this definition, a law is normative.[7] Aquinas explains that "[l]aw is a certain rule and measure of acts

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4 Richard M. Hare (1972). 'The Presidential Address: Principles'. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 73, pp. 1–2.

5 Those who use this term are, for instance, Luke Robinson (2007). 'Moral Principles are Not Moral Laws'. In: *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 2.3, pp. 1–23, Mark N. Lance and Margaret Little (2007). 'Where the Laws Are'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 2. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau, pp. 149–171 and Bruno Niederbacher (2017). 'Was ist ein moralisches Gesetz?' In: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 139.4, pp. 373–386.

6 St. Thomas Aquinas (2021). *Summa Theologiae*. Ed. and trans. by Alfred J. Freddoso. URL: https://www3.nd. edu/~afreddos/Summahome.html (visited on 06/09/2021), I–II, q. 90, a. 4.

7 Surely, in that paragraph, Aquinas seems to think that being promulgated is one of the requirements of the normativity of laws. This, however, must be understood in the juridical context. By contrast, it is not quite clear whether this requirement has some implication to the status of moral laws because it seems that moral laws are not promulgated by anyone. We might

in accord with which one is either induced to act or restrained from acting. For "law" (*lex*) is derived from "to bind' (*ligare*) because law obligates (*obligare*) one to act."[8] Further, he says that what binds one, a human being, to act is reason, and thus, a law is sovereign not only because it is given by those who have power but also if it is in accordance with reason. Moreover, for Aquinas, a law is not only normative but also teleological: it must be something directed to the common good.[9]

This normative–teleological definition is refuted by the legal positivist tradition whose proponents, among others, are John Austin and H. L. A. Hart. While for Aquinas (and other proponents of natural law tradition), laws are normative, for legal positivists, laws are seen as empirical, in the sense that they are parts of social facts. For Austin, and later also for H. L. A. Hart[10], whether a rule is a law does not depend on the normative question of whether it has a good purpose or it is morally good. Because laws are social facts, to determine whether a rule is a law, what we need is an empirical investigation alone. According to Austin, this empirical investigation is done by testing the rules to see whether they can satisfy the validity conditions to be regarded as laws. For him, the rules must be tested as to whether they are commands issued by the politically sovereign to its subordinates and whether they are supported by sanctions.[11] Hart provides a different account of the validity conditions. For Hart, the validity of any rule lies in its institutional history or origins, whether the rules have been adopted in accordance with the lawmaking procedures of the legal jurisdiction of a certain institution. For legal positivists, therefore, laws are separated from morality, and this gives the possibility that some laws might be immoral (while for natural lawyers, an unjust law is not a law at all). Legal positivists argue that their conception of laws can provide a better explanation about conflicts of obligation. According to them, conflicts of obligations arise when people face immoral laws. In such conflicts, on the one hand, people are required by a law to do a certain action, and on the

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therefore bypass this aspect; what is crucial for our present concern is the binding or obligation effect of laws, which is one of the essential aspects of moral laws.

8 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 90, a. 1.

9 A brief note on Aquinas's teleological notion of the common good: Aquinas thinks that the objective of practical reason is "(bliss and) happiness." (See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 90, a. 2) Alternatively, the end of all our actions, in so far as they are in accord with practical reason, is happiness. Laws, therefore, in so far as they are an ordinance of reason, should lead human beings to the same goal, happiness. In the context of a state, laws therefore must lead all its members, not only the rulers, to happiness. That laws serve all the members of the community for the common good means that they serve the interests of all members. (See Susan Dimock (2016). *Classic Readings and Cases in the Philosophy of Law*. New York: Routledge, pp. 5–6)

10 H. L. A. Hart (1961). *The Concept of Law*. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

11 John Austin (1995). *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*. Ed. by Wilfrid E. Rumble. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

other hand, morality forbids them from doing it. If laws are conceived as those that are argued by natural lawyers, there should be no conflict of obligation.[12]

From this short observation about the definitions of law, we can see some necessary conditions of a law. First, any rule *L* is a law, if and only if *L* binds one to act, i.e., it obligates one to act according to its precepts. Second, both approaches (natural law and legal positivism) agree that *L* is a law, if and only if there is a certain body that plays a role as the law-giver. For example, if a rule is given by God, it is Divine law, and if promulgated by people or any human body, it is a human law. The third aspect, which is closely related to the first one, states that *L* is a law only if any violation of *L* will be sanctioned. Specifically, with regard to the first condition, it is important to take notice of Hart's remarks. He distinguishes two types of rules: primary rules, i.e., those that "impose duty" and "concern action involving physical movement or change," and secondary rules, i.e., those that "are concerned with the primary rules themselves" (they specify the ways in which the primary rules may be conclusively ascertained, introduced, eliminated, varied, and the fact of their violation conclusively determined).[13] Primary rules are binding, and secondary rules give the reasons why that is the case.

The above three conditions seem to fit our intuition when we use the term "law" in the moral domain. A moral law is a rule, and it has a binding or normative force. Moral laws are normative in the sense that they require us in regard to what we should act, feel, or believe. Among many moral laws, we can also distinguish between primary and secondary moral laws (sometimes people call them ultimate and derivative moral laws or generalizations). Primary moral laws are more specific and are determined by the secondary ones. While primary moral laws tell us which actions are right or wrong, obligated, permitted, or forbidden, and good or bad, the secondary moral laws give us the reasons why a particular moral law has that binding force. The statement "Promises ought to be kept," for instance, is an example of a primary moral law, and the statement "It is wrong to act on any maxim that we could not will to be universal law" can be seen as the secondary law because it gives the reason why the primary one holds.

As pointed out earlier, while the first condition of law obviously fits our intuition when we use the same term in the moral domain, the second condition does not. In the legal domain, it is quite clear who the lawgivers are, but it is not the case in the moral domain. Both views, divine command theory (a view that morality is necessarily dependent on God and moral obligations consist of acting in obedience with God's commands) and theological natural law theory in ethics, are perhaps the only exceptions because both impose God or God's providence as the moral law giver either directly or indirectly. Social contract theory can also be thought of as a moral theory that imposes "the hypothetical contract of

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12 A survey on the history of jurisprudence can be accessed, among others, in Dimock, *Classic Readings and Cases in the Philosophy of Law*.

13 Hart, *The Concept of Law*, p. 92.

the society" as the "moral law giver." Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics seem to have difficulty fulfilling this request because, in these theories, there is no clear indication of who or what body can impose moral laws.[14] This reminds us of how Anscombe jettisoned these modern moral theories when she argued that they were implausible because they employed legal conceptions of ethics without imposing the plausible notion of the lawgiver.[15]

Interestingly, the third condition of the legal concept of law—that its violation is subject to punishment—can also be applied to moral laws, although according to some moral theories, there is no body of a lawgiver. If, according to a particular moral theory, there is a body of lawgivers, it seems obvious that a certain punishment will be given to those who violate the law and also to those whose responsibility it is to administer those sanctions. In contrast, for moral theories where the concept of the lawgiver is unclear, it seems that the punishment of wrongdoings would come either from fellow human beings by expression of disapproval, blame, or condemnation, or from our own conscience by feeling guilty and regretting our behavior. John Stuart Mill is prominent for endorsing such a view, as he writes:

> *For the truth is, that the idea of penal sanction, which is the essence of law, enters not only into the conception of injustice, but into that of any kind of wrong. We do not call anything wrong, unless we mean to imply that a person ought to be punished in some way or other for doing it; if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow-creatures; if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience. This seems the real turning point of the distinction between morality and simple expediency [...] There are other things, [...] which we wish that people should do, which we like or admire them for doing, perhaps dislike or despise them for not doing, but yet admit that they are not bound to do; it is not a case of moral obligation; we do not blame them, that is, we do not think that they are proper objects of punishment.*[16]

In recent discussions on moral generalizations, it is surprising that philosophers do not appeal to legal philosophy to approach the question about the nature and

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[14] One might argue that according to these theories, "rationality" is the "body" of a lawgiver. However, what "rationality" is supposed to mean is a matter of controversy. Utilitarians might argue that the principle of utility is also the principle of rational action: Actions are rational, if and only if they produce as high a utility as would any other alternative action that the agent could perform instead. However, that being said, it begs the question of how this utilitarian principle is itself rational. Kantians might also argue that being moral and being rational are not two different things because, for them, the supreme principle of morality is the standard of rationality. Thus, it is our human nature (which is characterized by autonomy and reflective capacity) that obliges us to abide by moral laws.

[15] To consult, see the first chapter of this book. See also G. E. M. Anscombe (1958). 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. In: *Philosophy* 33.124, pp. 1–19. DOI: 10.1017/S0031819100037943

[16] John Stuart Mill (1861). 'The Complete Text of 'Utilitarianism''. In: *The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism*. Ed. by Henry R. West. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, p. 101.

role of moral laws. Rather, almost all of them appeal to the notion of law as outlined in the recent discussion about laws of nature.[17] It is surprising because laws of nature are primarily the concern of natural science, specifically physics, while moral laws are the concern of human sciences. It seems to us that it should be obvious that an appeal to the related human sciences, such as jurisprudence, would shed a better light on an account for moral laws. Perhaps this connection with natural science is due to the hegemony of naturalism in analytic philosophy and the popularity of the metaphysical reflection of physical laws as suggested by philosophers such as David Lewis and David M. Armstrong on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the decline in the philosophical reflection of the study of humanities in recent analytic philosophy.

It seems, however, that there is a fundamental discrepancy between the notion of law in the "laws of nature" and in "moral laws." While laws of nature are to some extent descriptions of what and how nature is (they have nothing to do with beliefs and/or desires or conscious decisions), moral laws are thought of as norms regarding how we *should* act and involve beliefs (and/or desire) and conscious decisions. This incongruity is clearer when we come to the notion of "abiding by the law" (or "being sanctioned because of violating the law"). While moral laws have normative force in the real sense, meaning that any decision or action should be directed by moral laws, laws of nature have this force only in the metaphorical sense. Those who violate moral laws are subject to sanctions, and they will be redeemed only by fulfilling the requirements of the punishment imposed. In contrast, a physical (nonhuman) movement that violates a certain law of nature is, however, not a subject of punishment (and is not redeemable); it is just another kind of (or perhaps, exceptional) phenomenon.[18] Nevertheless, despite this discrepancy, we still can learn some valuable lessons from the notion of natural laws that will then provide clarity to our consideration of moral laws.

In a recent discussion on the laws of nature, there are two theories about what laws of nature are: regularity theory and necessitarianism.[19] Most philosophers adopt the latter view to account for moral laws, arguing that moral laws are neither statistical generalizations nor depictions of "nomic" regularity; rather, they depict a necessary relation governing the operation of the universe. There are numerous specific ideas regarding necessitarianism in moral laws. Some philosophers adopt Armstrong's theory about laws of nature in that they consist

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17 There are some exceptions, for instance Gideon Rosen (2017b). 'What Is a Moral Law?' In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Vol. 12, pp. 135–159; Bruno Niederbacher (2018). 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists'. In: *Topoi* 37.4, pp. 549–559.

18 A disclaimer: by saying this, we do not intend to advocate that there are true moral laws. This consideration is just an argument that there is a fundamental discrepancy between the notion of laws of nature and moral laws.

19 Norman Swartz (2021). *Laws of Nature*. URL: https://iep.utm.edu/lawofnat/ (visited on 09/04/2021).

in relation between two universals.[20] Other philosophers repudiate such a view because it cannot plausibly account for the defeasibility of moral laws; therefore, moral laws are not apt to exceptions.[21] Lance and Little, for instance, argue that the law-likeness of moral to natural laws lies in two features that they both possess: "counterfactual robustness" or "necessity" and "particularly forceful kind of inductive confirmability."[22] Another notion of moral laws drawn from metaphysical consideration about laws of nature is to utilize Jonathan Lowe's ontological square, where both action and moral properties are considered as universals and particulars.[23] According to this account, one can "justify the assumption of action-universals and property-universals on the grounds that they help us understand *moral laws*."[24] Considering that moral laws depict the relations between universals, they "express how an object is disposed to behave," so that this account admits the exceptional occurrences.[25]

It must, however, be noted that although here we make quite a strict distinction between the terms "moral principles" and "moral laws," some philosophers use them interchangeably, or even synonymously, even with other terms, such as "moral norms" or "moral codes." They might use one of these labels as a term of art, as we use the expression "moral generalization" in this particular work. This is surely legitimate in the context of a philosophical reflection. However, a clear declaration about the terms being used and a careful analysis of them might produce a better understanding of the matter being discussed.

2.1.3 Moral Norms

The term "moral norm" is currently not very popular, neither specifically in the moral particularism–generalism debate nor in moral philosophy in general. As we have said, however, some philosophers find that this term is synonymous with moral principles or moral laws. The word "norms" itself seems to be embedded in the moral domain. In the 60's, Georg Henrik von Wright asserted that norms have similar components to laws. He described that there are six components of norms.[26] First, a norm might have a *character* of being an obligation that orders or

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20 Mark C. Murphy is one of the proponents of this view. He argues that moral laws are distinct from and underlie moral facts. Moral laws are said to be the "second order" relation between properties, while moral facts are the "first order" relation between properties that informs us that the action is "morally necessary." The property of *promise-keeping*, for instance, selects the property of *being performed*, so that it makes it morally necessary to keep the promise. (See Mark C. Murphy (2011). *God and Moral Law: On the Theistic Explanation of Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 2)

21 Lance and Little, 'Where the Laws Are'.

22 Lance and Little, 'Where the Laws Are', pp. 155–156.

23 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists'.

24 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', p. 552.

25 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', p. 553.

26 Georg Henrik von Wright (1963). *Norm and Action. A Logical Inquiry*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 70–92?

commands one to do a certain action or a permission or a prohibition from doing a certain action or activity. These might be expressed by an "ought to" or a "may" or a "must be" or "must not be done."[27] Second, the *content* of a norm might be an action (like "Close the door") or an activity (like "Smoking allowed"), or a combination of both, "*that which* ought to or may or must not be or be done."[28] Third, there are certain things that are required if there is to be an opportunity for doing the thing that is the content of a given norm, called *the conditions of application*. Based on these parameters, von Wright distinguished between categorical and hypothetical norms.[29] Norms are categorical if their "condition of application is the condition which must be satisfied if there is going to be an opportunity for doing the thing which is [their] content, and *no further condition*." Other norms are hypothetical if their "condition of application is the condition which must be satisfied if there is going to be an opportunity for doing the thing which is its content, and *some further condition*."[30] According to this distinction, if a norm is categorical, the condition of application is included in the content, whereas if it is hypothetical, its condition of application must be further defined. An order like "Close the door" is already understood as categorical, given the content that the door is to be closed, while a hypothetical norm must mention the condition when or why something must or must not be done by adding an "if-clause" to a given norm.

The fourth and fifth components of norms are the agents of the given norms: one is the *authority* who gives the norms, and the other are the *subjects* to whom the norm is given.[31] With regard to the authority who gives the norms, von Wright made a further distinction between personal and impersonal agents. At this point, he also made an important remark regarding heteronomous and autonomous norms and argued that in its primary sense, all norms are heteronomous, meaning that they are given to some subject by somebody else. Autonomous norms are possible only if the authority and the subject are identical. If autonomous is understood as lacking authority, he argued that such norms are then logically impossible. With regard to the subjects or recipients of norms, von Wright distinguished between particular norms (if the subject is one specified human being) and general norms (if it is all men either restricted or unrestricted to a certain group). He also made remarks similar to Anscombe that some moral principles

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27 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, p. 71.

28 von Wright does not clearly define the difference between action and activity. It seems that for him, activities contain some actions. His example of an activity is smoking. He explains that with regard to the norm "Smoking prohibited," if we are engaged in the activity of smoking, the norm orders the act of ceasing smoking (e.g., by throwing the cigarette away), and if we are not smoking, it prohibits the act of starting to smoke (e.g., by lighting a cigarette). (See von Wright, *Norm and Action*, pp. 71–72.)

29 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, p. 73.

30 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, p. 74.

31 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, pp. 75–79.

addressed to all men, such as "Thou shalt not kill" or "Never tell a lie," lack authority, and therefore, it is problematic to call them norms.

The last or sixth component of norms is the *occasions* where the given norms will be applied. He also made a distinction between norms that are applied in particular (if they are applied for one occasion, such as "Close the window *now*") and in general occasions (if they are applied for an unlimited number of occasions). He suggested that there are norms that can be applied in a conjunctively general way, such as "Close the window whenever it is raining." However, it is unlikely that there are norms that are disjunctively general, that is, a norm that "orders or permits the realization of its norm-content on some (at least one) of [...] unlimited number of occasions."[32] There could also be some "eminently general norms" that is general with regard to subject and occasion. Moral norms, such as "Thou shalt not kill" or "Never tell a lie," might be thought of as these eminently general norms. However, von Wright remarked that such norms are problematic with regard to their autonomous nature. Hypothetical norms can also be eminently general, e.g., a regulation that concerns the citizens of a particular nation can be regarded as a norm that "orders or permits all men unrestrictedly to do a certain thing if (in case) they happen to be" the member of that nation.[33]

A short remark about autonomous norms is worth making here. While von Wright does not seem to state a clear position whether such autonomous norms are necessary in a moral system, Philippa Foot, in her seminal paper, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," argues clearly that these autonomous norms, which are usually also called categorical imperatives, are not necessary for a moral system.[34] She argues that it is illusionary to believe that such norms have a certain "normative power" and that only actions performed for the reasons of norms alone (i.e., without any further reason) are moral actions. She argues that such autonomous or categorical imperative characteristics are also found in the expressions of etiquette, and these are not in the same category as the expressions regarding moral norms. Thus, she concluded that the categorical imperative is not the sufficient nor necessary requirement of moral actions. She rather contended that moral requirements exert a rational influence on the will only hypothetically. A moral action is, therefore, rational only if it is conditionally supported by a certain desire.[35] This topic has been followed up by some philosophers, such as John McDowell in his paper, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?."[36] He argued that while desire may be included to motivate one to perform some moral actions, beliefs in themselves are capable of

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32 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, p. 80.

33 von Wright, *Norm and Action*, p. 81.

34 Philippa Foot (1972). 'Morality as A System of Hypothetical Imperatives'. In: *The Philosophical Review* 81.3, pp. 305–316.

35 Foot, 'Morality as A System of Hypothetical Imperatives', p. 315.

36 John McDowell and I. G. McFetridge (1978). 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?' In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 52, pp. 13–42.

being the reasons for performing moral actions. Beliefs that motivate one to perform a certain moral action are conceived as the proper conception of the given circumstance. McDowell argued that although desires may be involved in the explanation of one's performance, it is, however, supplementary because beliefs themselves are sufficient to provide the required explanation, while for Foot, it seems that desires are necessary for one to perform moral actions. McDowell's conception of moral reasons surely does not solve the problem of law conception of moral norms, such as "Thou shalt not kill" or "Never tell a lie," that has been exposed by von Wright. However, what we can learn from McDowell's understanding about moral reasons is that it motivates us to inquire whether beliefs about some general moral norms are necessary to be the moral reasons for the actions or whether it is ultimately one's proper conception of the given situation that is necessary for the moral reasons of a certain action. We shall explore this question further in Chapter 7.[37]

2.1.4 Moral Codes

The term "moral code" is often used in moral philosophical literature, but there are very few authors who define what this term is supposed to mean. On occasion, philosophers use this term together with another, such as "code of conduct" or "ethical codes." The meaning of the term "code" itself is usually assumed to be obvious; it can be understood as a set of rules or principles. A "code of conduct" is therefore a set of rules that is endorsed as guidance to behave (such as to act, feel, or think) in a certain way.

The term "code of conduct" seems to have a wider scope than "moral code." It is possible that a certain community or society has some codes of conduct, such as etiquette, that do not qualify to be called moral codes. To clarify which codes of conduct may count as moral codes, philosophers then talk about some conditions of moral codes. This then seems to suggest that to determine what the term "moral code" is supposed to mean, we need to look for the definition of morality itself. In this regard, Bernard and Joshua Gert indicate that the term "morality" can be used either in the descriptive or normative sense. In a descriptive sense, morality "refers to certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group (such as a religion) or accepted by an individual for her own

[37] Another noteworthy suggestion about moral norms is given by Joseph Raz. He explains that closely related terms to "norms" are "principles" and "rules." While there are several kinds of rules, "norms" denote a certain kind of rule; these are rules "which are sometimes called categorical rules, i.e., rules which require that a certain action be performed, as well as rules granting permissions." Thus, there are mandatory and nonmandatory norms. He seems to follow von Wright in describing what norms are, asserting that norms are imperative, must contain some actions stated in the norm-formulations, state the norm-subjects or the recipients, and clarify the conditions of application. He remarks that the legal conception of norms, such as provided by H. L. A. Hart in Hart, *The Concept of Law*, is defective for it cannot account for norms that are not always practiced, like moral norms. (Joseph Raz (1975). *Practical Reason and Norms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press)

behavior."[38] Being so understood, then the notion we have introduced (codes of conduct of a certain society) must be conceived in a descriptive sense. In a normative sense, morality "refers to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational people."[39] According to this understanding, any code of conduct would then be a moral code if it is put forward by all rational people. The difference between the former and the latter sense is their relation to the feature that makes an agent a moral agent. In a descriptive sense, the agent of moral codes is limited to those who are members of that group, while in the normative sense, the condition for being a moral agent is being rational. This last statement does not fully deal with several issues, specifically what this rationality should amount to. Some philosophers also argue that rationality should not be the condition for any code being a moral one. It is then still open to discussion which criterion or criteria should be satisfied to count any code of conduct as a moral code.

2.1.5 Moral Formulae

Another term that sometimes creates confusion when it comes to the particularism–generalism debate is "moral formula." In a wider context, the term "formula" is frequently used in philosophy, mathematics, or other sciences. In logic, for instance, when we use the term "formula," we intend to refer to a set of one or more propositional variables, or predicate symbols, and operators. Usually, we formulate and perhaps reformulate speech acts or expressions from natural language into semiformal or formal language to gain a greater degree of clarity. Such a formalization is useful because most of the time, natural language is imprecise and words that we use are ambiguous and/or equivocal. Language that is supposed to help us to know the world better and to communicate with each other is sometimes an obstacle. Gottlob Frege, in his renowned *Begriffschrift*, is convinced that "the task of philosophy is to break the domination of the word over human spirit by laying bare the misconceptions that through the use of language often almost unavoidably arise concerning the relations between concepts and by freeing thought from that with which only the means of expression of ordinary

[38] Bernard Gert and Joshua Gert (2020). 'The Definition of Morality'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2020. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato. stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/morality-definition/ (visited on 02/11/2020).

[39] Gert and Gert, 'The Definition of Morality'.

language, constituted as they are, saddle it."[40] Formalization is therefore necessary to gain clarity, something which is aimed at by sciences.[41]

In moral philosophical discourse, formalization is also a usual practice. Formalization of any thought is not necessarily a transformation from the natural language into the formal language as in logic; what is more important is the clarity of linguistic expressions. In moral philosophical literature, it is typical that Kantian ethics uses formulae to express its thought. We might stipulate that in Kant's works, formulae: a) use natural language (by contrast, they do not utilize the "language" of formal logic), b) provide a quite abstract but explicit criterion about the subjects being discussed, and c) are ordered in a regular way. We may see some examples of them:

- *Formula of Universal Law*: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you at the same time can will that it become a universal law."[42]
- *Formula of the Law of Nature*: "So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."[43]
- *Formula of Humanity as End in Itself:* "So act that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means."[44]
- *Formula of Autonomy*: "the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law"[45] or
  "Not to choose otherwise than so that the maxims of one's choice are at the same time comprehended with it in the same volition as universal law."[46]

Our current concern is not to analyze the content of these formulae or how they relate to each other but rather to identify the role and identity of these formulae in Kant's moral thought. These formulae are perhaps less clear than what we expect when we consider Frege's programmatic claim. Some concepts that are used in

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40 Gottlob Frege (1967). 'Begriffsschrift, eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens'. In: *From Frege to Gödel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic*. Ed. by J. van Heijenoort. Trans. German by S. Bauer-Mengelberg. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 7.

41 In many contexts, formulations of any speech act do necessarily not involve any "formula" or "formalization" in a strict sense like in logic. However, what we learn from logic is that the intention of formulation is to gain some degree of clarity. Thus, in this regard, logic can be regarded as the point of reference in which one will find the answer to the question about what a formula should look like because it seems that our logical system provides the best way to gain clarity.

42 Immanuel Kant (2002). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. German by Allen W. Wood. New York: Yale University Press, Ak. 4:421.

43 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 4:421.

44 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 4:429.

45 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 4:431, cf. Ak. 4:432.

46 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 4:440, cf. Ak. 4:432, 434, 438.

those four formulae are not obvious. For instance, the concepts of "in accordance with," "maxim," "universal," "law," "rational," and so on, need more clarification. Perhaps, by endorsing such formulae, Kant does not mean to make statements that are intuitively obvious so that they do not need any interpretation or clarification, but rather he intends to provide what he calls "the supreme principle of morality."[47] Therefore, as we have considered, these formulae that are the supreme principles of morality are the source or foundation of any other derivative moral judgments.

Some interpreters of Kant might think that these formulae are rational or intellectual procedures to distinguish right from wrong because they think that this is what (supreme) principles are for. John Rawls, for instance, even provides an example of an explicitly described procedure. He assumes that because Kant's categorical imperative is applicable in ordinary moral practice, there must be such a procedure (which he calls categorical imperative procedure or CI-procedure) that "helps to determine the content of the moral law as it applies to us as reasonable and rational persons endowed with conscience and moral sensibility, and affected by, but not determined by, our natural desires and inclination."[48]

We may consider the first abovementioned formula. If it is taken as the supreme principle of decision procedure, Rawls argues that we can consider that CI-procedure has four steps.[49] First, you have to formulate a maxim, which is a way you would act or consider acting. Second, you have to generalize it so that you have a representation of what will happen when everyone adopts the way you would act or consider acting. Third, you have to expand the generalized maxim into a possible world in which the actual world is modified by supposing that everyone follows the generalized maxim (Rawls calls such a world the "perturbed social world"). Fourth, you have to determine whether you *can will* to be a member of such a world; if you can, then the maxim you have is permissible; if not, it is impermissible. Conceived in this way, CI-procedure is thought of as an application of the formulae that provide a procedure of ordinary moral judgment and decision.

Although many philosophers would have a similar interpretation, it is, however, not obvious whether this understanding is the one that Kant aims for. Allen W. Wood alternatively contends that Kant's formulae are not supposed to provide an intellectual procedure to distinguish right from wrong. Instead, they act like a moral compass, a device that helps us to give an orientation regarding where we are and where we are going or tells us the difference between one and other things. Formulae do not give us information about which actions are right or

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47 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 4:392.

48 John Rawls (1989). 'Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy'. In: *Kant's Transcendental Deductions. The Three Critiques and the Opus Postumum*. Ed. by Eckart Förster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 82.

49 Rawls, 'Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy', p. 82.

wrong, but they should save us "from the disorienting effects of your moral weakness and corruption."[50] Wood argues that for Kant, the term "judgment" does not refer to discursive reasoning with the help of formulae in a rigorous decision procedure, but "to a special capacity of the mind that enables it to mediate between a general concept and its particular instances."[51] He argues that for Kant, ordinary moral agents have "common rational moral cognition," so that they possess general moral concepts (about what is good or bad, right or wrong, and about what conforms or is contrary to duty). Their concern is not distinguishing right from wrong, but rather how moral concepts are to be applied to particular cases by means of determining judgments. Judgments are therefore not a series of discursive thinking by means of procedure, but "a matter of how an already recognized moral duty applies to this action, here and now."[52]

To summarize, there are at least three features of a moral formula. First, it aims at clarifying thought that is sometimes hindered by the lack of clarity of natural language; there seems no dispute on this matter. Second, a formula can be a principle of decision procedure. Being so understood, moral formulae have the same role as moral principles. Third, moral formulae are a moral compass, a device to assist in the navigation of the moral state or character of where we are or where we are going. Being conceived as a moral compass, formulae do not intend on guiding us to come to a certain decision about right or wrong actions.

What we have considered are some possible forms of moral generalization. However, the above analysis suggests that there is no single notion of moral generalization. Every concept has its own emphasis and concerns, although they share some aspects. If moral particularism is the antithesis of moral generalism, according to which moral generalizations play a necessary role in moral thought and practice, the form of moral generalization targeted by moral particularists is not quite clear. To simply appoint one or some of these terms as its target of criticism is also not an option because moral particularist claims seem to target various aspects shared by each of the five forms outlined in this section. Therefore, we propose that we need to specify some conditions of moral generalizations so as to know what a moral particularist targeted is. The next section will elaborate this further.

2.2 Conditions of Moral Generalizations

Jonathan Dancy, the major proponent of moral particularism, has indicated that there are at least four conditions of principled ethics (i.e., ethical theories that endorse the necessary role of moral principles or moral generalizations). He

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50 Allen W. Wood (2017). *Formulas of the Moral Law*. Elements in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781108332736, p. 19.

51 Wood, *Formulas of the Moral Law*, p. 18.

52 Wood, *Formulas of the Moral Law*, p. 19.

claims that these conditions are not exhaustive. The four conditions he outlines are:[53]

1. *Coverage*: The moral status of every action must be determined by the principles, in one way or another. (Otherwise, the principles would fail to cover the ground.)
2. *Reasons*: Of each action that has a moral status, the principles must somehow tell us *why* it has that status. (Supervernience-based principled would not do this; they are too indiscriminate.)
3. *Epistemology*: We must be able to learn the principles, either from some form of experience or from each other, i.e., by testimony.
4. *Applicability*: The principles must be capable of functioning as a guide to action in a new case; having learnt them, one must be able to *follow* them, or *apply* them.

These conditions are, however, not quite clear when we want to determine which kind of principle or generalization moral particularists are attacking. For instance, one may not get an answer regarding what the contents of that generalization should be. Do trivial generalizations such as Aquinas's first principle of practical reason, "*bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum*"[54] (*Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 2), belong to those that are targeted by moral particularism? Perhaps, they do not. However, if they do not, it is unclear why. Moreover, one may further ask whether principles containing thick moral concepts, such as "All just actions are morally right," are also the ones that are targeted by moral particularism. Moral particularists' answers may vary. Thus, we need some more explicit explication on the conditions of moral generalizations that are the target of moral particularism. We propose that there are at least eight conditions. Six of them are necessary conditions of moral generalizations criticized by moral particularism. In the following passages, we go through each of them.

2.2.1 Contents

Every considered moral generalization, in our opinion, pictures a stable relation between the descriptive property of an action, person, or institution and its moral property. We consider this to be a metaphysical claim. It can be said that there are things called descriptive properties that are usually known as "natural properties." These properties include telling the truth, making promises, eating meat, being rude, performing a just action, and so on. These are the descriptions of entities, the answers to the question: "What is it?"

In addition, there are things in the world that we can call moral properties; these are qualities of entities seen from the moral point of view. We ascribe things

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[53] The context of these conditions is his response to the account of defeasible generalizations, generalizations that are derived from privileged conditions and are defeasible by other conditions when they are applied to the nonprivileged conditions. He claims that such defeasible generalizations will not be counted as moral principles because they fail the conditions of principled ethics. (See Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 116–117).

[54] "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."

with these properties when we give them a moral evaluation or when we answer the question: "What or how it is from the moral point of view?" Examples of such properties are the property of being good or bad, being right or wrong, or being an obligation.

One might immediately raise the question of why we do not make a distinction between thick and thin moral properties. We, however, consider that thick moral properties are the descriptions of entities, although admittedly, they may have some moral weight. When we ascribe a certain entity with thick moral properties, we usually conflate two things simultaneously. To know what these two features are, we need to disentangle our thick evaluation that will enable us to get the descriptive (or natural) part and the moral or thin part. For instance, if we ascribe an action as just, we seem to describe it with the natural or descriptive property of being just as represented by its being distributed proportionally in a fair environment; and simultaneously, when we ascribe it as being just, we seem to approve that action as being right. Thus, it seems that every thick evaluation has a tendency toward a certain thin evaluation, but the concepts of thick evaluations such as JUST, KIND, or LEWD are not reducible to the concepts of thin evaluations.

Moreover, we would claim that the descriptive part of the thick properties results in their possessing specific moral qualities. For instance, if something is evaluated as being just, it is, as we have explained, to some degree good or right, but the description of that thing, like being distributed proportionally in a fair environment, makes it good or right *in a specific way*.[55] Therefore, another description of what the concept of JUST consists of may result in a different degree of being good or right.

For reasons of convenience, we may call the category of the descriptive (properties, facts, concepts, judgments, etc.), *D*, and the category of the moral, *M*. A qualification of the moral generalizations with which we are concerned is that *D* may not be a specified or particular property that is a feature of an entity at a certain place and time; rather, *D* must be of a certain kind, and the concept of *D* must be general. We elaborate on this point in the subsequent paragraphs.

As we have outlined, there is a stable relation between *D*-properties and *M*-properties, and in the moral philosophical literature, the relation between these two groups is conceived in various ways. While in a later chapter, we further discuss these notions, it suffices now to say that moral generalism, the one that is targeted by moral particularism, is a view that advocates that there is a stable relation between the *D*- and *M*-properties. On occasions, this stable relation is explicitly expressed with the word "always" or "never," but most of the time, it is

[55] See Pekka Väyrynen (2021). 'Thick Ethical Concepts'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2021. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford. edu/archives/spr2021/entries/thick-ethical-concepts/ (visited on 15/10/2021).

only assumed. For instance, when one says that "Telling a lie is wrong," we may suppose this as a display of the stable relation between the *D*-property of telling a lie and an *M*-property of being wrong. There are many other ways of expressing the notion of stability that do not make an assumption about frequency. Some philosophers advocate the notion of "normic relations" between the relata, in the sense that if one says, "Generally, *F* is *G*," what one has in mind is "The natural way for *F* to be is being *G*." Likewise, if one says, "Generally, telling a lie is wrong," one might mean, "The natural way of being an action of telling a lie is its being morally wrong."[56] A similar way of defining the notion of the stable relation between *D* and *M* is by advocating the notion of "disposition" or tendency of certain properties. If one says, "Generally, *F* is *G*," one might mean that "If an entity is *F*, it has a disposition or a tendency of being *G*." Likewise, if one says, "Generally, telling a lie is morally wrong," what one has in mind is, "If an action involves telling a lie, that action has a disposition or a tendency of being morally wrong."

Thus, the first condition of moral generalization we are concerned with is that they have at least three contents. They must contain at least one descriptive property (*D*), one moral property (*M*), and a stable relation between them (R_{stable}). A general schema of moral generalizations is as follows:

$$D—R_{\text{stable}}—M$$

Later, we will, however, distinguish between the kind of relation that admits exceptions and the one that does not. The former we will call "loose moral generalization" and the later "tight moral generalization." Before we discuss them, we provide the second condition of moral generalization targeted by moral particularism.

2.2.2 Informativeness

While the above condition regarding the content of moral generalization is metaphysical, the informativeness condition is considered to be a conceptual or epistemological claim. This condition claims that given the above schema ($D—R_{\text{stable}}—M$), substantive moral generalizations must provide substantive information regarding which kind of action or behavior has a stable relation to rightness/wrongness and goodness/badness, so that they are useful in moral thought and practice. Once we make this restriction, all arbitrary or trivial generalizations, such as in Aquinas's first principle of practical reason, will be excluded, because such a generalization does not tell us much information about actions that are good (thus to be done) or evil (thus are to be avoided). As far as we are concerned, such trivial generalizations will be thought of as uninformative because we

[56] Such a view is, for instance, advocated in Terence H. Irwin (2000). 'Ethics as an Inexact Science: Aristotle's Ambitions for Moral Theory'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 100–29.

assume that if one thinks that an action is morally right, it means that one has a sufficient reason to act, and if one thinks that an action is evil, we assume that one has some sufficient reason(s) not to perform that action. The property of being right contains the same information as having either sufficient or most reason to act, and, in a similar way, being wrong contains the same information as having either merely sufficient or most reason not to act. In our view, moral generalizations must contain some useful information regarding right or wrong, good or bad, permissible, forbidden, or obligated behavior (action, thinking, or feeling).

2.2.3 Universal Quantifier

Above, when we introduced the term "moral principle," we discussed R. M. Hare's distinction between the notion of generality and universality. Moral generalizations, as we see it, must be universal. To repeat Hare, it means that, "if [they are] formalized, [the formalization will] start with a universal quantifier."[57] For example, one may make a moral judgment that is thought of as moral generalization as in the following form:

> (t): "We must treat all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means, but always as ends,"[58]

This can be read as a generalization with a universal quantifier:

> (t*): "For all actions, if it involves treating persons as ends, then that action is morally right."

If we formalize these generalizations, assuming that T denotes the property of action that involves treating persons as ends, $T\,x$ denotes an action which has the property T (i.e., treating another person as an end), B denotes the property of being morally right, and Bx denotes an action which has the moral property B (i.e., being morally right), we get:

$$\text{(U): } \text{“}\forall x\,(\mathrm{T}x \rightarrow \mathrm{B}x)\text{”}$$

We can expand this to obtain the general schema:

$$\text{“}\forall x\,(\mathrm{D}x \rightarrow \mathrm{M}x)\text{”}$$

Such a universal quantifier denotes the ontological status of moral generalizations. There could be various interpretations of what universality is supposed to mean; however, the basic notion of a statement being quantified as universal is that it holds in all possible worlds or in the universe of discourse. Therefore, metaphysically speaking, if all moral generalizations are universally quantified, they must hold in all possible worlds or in the universe of discourse.

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57 Hare, 'The Presidential Address: Principles', p. 4.

58 This is a reformulation of Formula of Humanity as End in Itself, as we considered above. For further discussions, see Derek Parfit (2011a). *On What Matters*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 177.

2.2.4 Grounding Relation

The question regarding the relation between *D*-properties and *M*-properties (and between *D*-facts and *M*-facts) is one of the central problems and controversies in metaethical discourse. One of these relations is the grounding relation, that is, that nonmoral or descriptive facts or properties, *D*, ground the moral facts or properties, *M*. What this grounding relation amounts to is widely discussed, and there is no fixed consensus regarding it. Although the notion of grounding cannot be replaced by other terms, its concept is closely related to other subjects in philosophy, such as alethic modalities, explanation, dependence, truth-making, supervenience, resultance, and others.[59] We might give some classic examples of grounding relations:

1. If p is true, the fact that p grounds the true proposition that p. (For example, the fact that snow is white grounds the true proposition that snow is white.)
2. If p is true, then the fact that p grounds the (disjunctive) facts that $(p \vee q)$.
3. If p and q are true, then the fact that p together with the fact that q ground the conjunctive fact that $(p \wedge q)$.
4. If *B* is red, then the fact that *B* is red grounds the fact that *B* is colored.
5. If Rob is a bachelor, then the fact that Rob is unmarried and male grounds the fact that Rob is a bachelor.

In metaethical discourse, philosophers discuss whether the term "normative grounding" might have a distinct notion, being different with metaphysical, logical, or conceptual grounding. Kit Fine is the one who proposed the idea that this kind of grounding is a different species and has specific characteristics that are not reducible to other kinds of grounding relations. This matter is, however, highly debated.[60] Although such a dispute will not be discussed in this chapter, as we can see in the above examples, we might stipulate a general schema of the normative grounding relation as follows:

> "Whenever one asserts that a certain entity *A* is *M*, where *M* represents the moral (concepts, facts, or properties), there must exist some grounding entity *G* that grounds *A* in a normative way such that *A is M.*"

The grounding relation presupposes that the grounding entity is not identical to the grounded entity, and the relation is asymmetric.[61] Therefore, with regard to

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59 Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (2012a). 'Grounding: An Opinionated Introduction'. In: *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, p. 19.

60 Kit Fine (2012). 'Guide to Ground'. In: *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, pp. 37– 80.

61 In our examples, the facts on the left (be they logical or conceptual) are different to the entities of the right. It is, however, disputed whether nonidenticality implies nonreducibility. Because our concern is not the nature of grounding, it is sufficient for our present purposes to assert the nonidenticality of the relata of the grounding relation. See Correia and Schnieder, 'Grounding: An Opinionated Introduction'.

the normative grounding, the grounding entity *G* is supposed to be an entity that is not identical to the grounded entity, *M*. If the grounded entity *M* is moral, then *G* must be nonmoral or descriptive. Thus, one can say that the moral *M* is grounded in the descriptive *D*; the *M*-facts or -properties are grounded in the *D*-facts or -properties, but not *vice versa*.

Based on the above schema, from the generalist point of view, the grounding entity *G* must be broadly understood because generalists argue that the narrow sense of the grounding entity is insufficient to provide an explanation of why the entity *A* has the moral property *M*. For instance, an action *A* has the grounding property of maximization of happiness (say *H*). Generalists would argue that it is insufficient only to say that the fact that *A* is *H* grounds the fact that *A* is morally good. Generalists insist that there must be moral generalizations so that the explanation is complete. The moral generalization is a general fact regarding *H* (that is, the fact that if an action involves *H*, it is morally good).[62]

The moral generalization just outlined is the view that is targeted by moral particularists. It is a moral generalization that depicts the universal grounding relation between *D*-facts or -properties and *M*-facts or -properties. Particularists would press generalists with questions, such as, internal to the generalizations themselves, is the relation between the *D*-property and the *M*-property also a grounding relation? If it is, how can both categories of properties stand in a such relation? What grounds such generalizations? Moreover, how can these generalizations explain the exceptions?

The last question arises because generalists seem to hold that a grounding relation is a necessary one. Therefore, for instance, instead of saying (b), one would say: (b') "Necessarily, if *p* is true, then the fact that *p* grounds the (disjunctive) facts that ($p \vee q$)"; and so on. With regard to normative grounding, one would say that "Necessarily, *D* grounds *M*." When it comes to moral generalizations such as the one we have discussed, it seems that one has to hold that, "Necessarily, if an action involves *H*, it is morally good." If generalists hold that grounding relations are necessary, it is then an open task for them to answer the particularists' abovementioned question.[63] Nevertheless, regardless the generalists' answers to such

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62 See Rosen, 'What Is a Moral Law?', p. 140, Bruno Niederbacher (2021). *Metaethik*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, pp. 90–91.

63 The necessary relation of grounding is closely connected to the thesis of supervenience, that is, that the *M*-property supervenes on the *D*-property, such that there should be no difference with regard to the *M*-property, if there is no difference with regard to the *D*-property. Some philosophers argue that grounding relation implies supervenience: *If D*-properties ground *M*-properties, *then* there should be no difference with regard to the *M*-properties, if there is no difference with regard to the *D*-properties (see Niederbacher, *Metaethik*, p. 90). Such a claim is, I think, controversial for various reasons. One of them is that the entailment presupposes that the normative grounding is a necessary relation. However, while it is true that supervenience is a necessary relation, whether normative grounding is a necessary relation is a matter for discussion. Thus, if grounding is a contingent relation, it would not be true to say that, if *D* grounds *M*, then *M* supervenes on *D*.

questions, we might maintain that the moral generalizations we are considered depict the grounding relation between the descriptive and the moral. Such generalizations would also play a role as grounds when it comes to the explanations of certain moral facts.

2.2.5 Wide Conceptual Scope

Another necessary condition for moral generalizations is that they use general concepts. In the above example (t*), we use the descriptive property

(T): being an action that involves treating persons as ends and not means.

The terms being used to pick out the property (T) are general terms, that is, "treating persons as ends and not means." This term has a wide scope and can be specified when it is used to pick out the descriptive properties of actions. For instance, there could be three different actions whose descriptive properties can be picked out by specifications of the concepts used to pick out (T). In other words, considering the descriptive properties of these three actions, the term used to pick out (T) can have at least three specifications. Consider these three different judgments of actions whose descriptive properties are picked out by the specification of the term of (T):

(t1): "It is morally right to let children decide their own future,"
(t2): "It is morally wrong to deceive the unconscious patient,"
(t3): "It is morally right to let your friend commit suicide."

Let us consider only the descriptive terms and concepts used in these judgments and compare them with the terms and concepts used in (t) above, which can be modified as follows: "It is morally right to treat all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means, but always as ends." The descriptive term and concept being used in (t), i.e., "treating all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means, but always as ends," call this (C), is more general than those used in (t1). This means that all cases that fall under the descriptive terms and concepts used in (t1) also fall under the descriptive terms and concepts used in (t), but not vice versa. The descriptive terms and concepts used in (t) are also more general than those used in (t2) and (t3). The descriptive concepts used in (t1), "letting children decide their own future," say (C1), and used in (t3), "letting your friend commit suicide," say (C3), can be said to be positive species of (C). If we consider (t2) as a whole, however, the concept of "deceiving the unconscious patient," say (C2), is not the positive species (C). (C2) can be said to be the negative species of (C), and we say that actions that fall under such a concept would be morally wrong. (t3) is, however, controversial. It seems true that "letting persons do what they want to do" (even based on their knowledge), which can also be specified in "letting your friend commit suicide," (C3), is a specification of "treating persons as ends and not means," (C). If, for example, we force him or her not to commit suicide (perhaps by grasping his/her hand), one could reasonably say that this is

a specification of "treating persons not as ends," which would give the surprising result in being morally wrong. Thus, the point of this generality condition is at least twofold: Firstly, the concepts being used to pick out the descriptive properties as stated in moral generalizations must cover a sufficiently wide range, so that they can either be specified in narrower generalizations or individuated when it comes to particular cases. To repeat the point above, exhaustively specified generalizations cannot be treated as moral generalizations. Second, as shown by (t3), we must anticipate a surprising result that a consistent specification of the general concepts used in moral generalizations might give us an odd consequence.

2.2.6 Explanatory Power

Dancy has indicated that the target of criticism of moral particularism is moral generalizations that play a role in displaying the *reason* why a certain moral action has a certain moral status. Such a question prompts the search for an explanation of why an action has the moral property it has. In answer to this question, if one holds the view that moral generalism is valid, one can picture how it works in a deductive model of explanation in which moral generalizations are the major premises and the descriptive statements about particular cases are the minor ones. The following is an example of an explanation of why a certain action is morally right using the generalization (t*) and a premise regarding a particular description of an action (P):

> (t*): For all actions, if an action involves treating persons as ends and not means, then that action is morally right.
> (P): This action involves treating persons as ends and not means.
> ∴ This action is morally right.

Moral generalizations that can play such a role are the target of criticism of moral particularism. However, moral generalizations should not only be able to provide an explanation regarding the moral status of particular cases in a deductive form, but they must also be able to explain the moral status of particular actions that seem incoherent to what moral generalizations say. For example, take (t*) as our generalization. If we come to a particular case that involves treating persons as ends and not means, but we evaluate it as morally wrong, (t*) must be able to explain why that case is morally wrong. Some philosophers think that these strict generalizations would not be able to play a role in giving the explanations for such nonstandard cases. In order to be able to play a role in explaining such cases, these philosophers suggest that we need to modify these generalizations by adding a clause, such as "preemptively," "*pro tanto*," "in a privileged condition," and so on.[64] We will deal with such generalizations in Chapter 5.

[64] See, for instance, Margaret Olivia Little (2013). 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory'. In: *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. by Russ Shaffer-Landau. 2nd. London: Blackwell, pp. 776–784.

2.2.7 Practical Function

Moral generalizations have not only theoretical purposes but also practical functions. This is to repeat Dancy's condition of *Applicability*. People can use them in moral deliberation as guidance. Some actions, therefore, can be said to be guided by moral generalizations, such as by principles, norms, or laws. These actions, however, can be guided both directly and nondirectly. Some generalizations, such as (t1), can perhaps directly guide your decisions regarding your children, while other generalizations, such as "do whatever brings about the maximum utility" cannot directly be used to determine what you will do. One should either contextualize or specify that generalization for it to be practically useful.[65]

2.2.8 Educational Function

This condition is to repeat Dancy's condition of *Epistemology* that moral generalizations must have an educational function. This means that people can learn about the relation between moral and descriptive properties as pictured in generalizations. For some generalists, moral generalizations are necessary for moral education. They believe that learners can be decent moral agents with the help of these generalizations. Nevertheless, in Chapter 7, we will argue that moral education that aims at cultivating one's moral sensibility does not necessarily need moral generalizations.

The above features of moral generalizations are not an exhaustive list, and one can add other characteristics; however, we consider that those we have outlined are sufficient for our purposes. While features (1) to (6) are the necessary conditions of moral generalizations, the remaining two, (7) and (8) (practical and educational functions), are not. As far as we are concerned, we think that any moral generalization must have at least three contents (a descriptive property, a moral property and their stable relation); they must be informative and universal, utilize general terms, and be able to provide an explanation of the moral status of particular cases. Exhaustively specific moral generalizations are possible, but they do not meet the requirements to be called moral generalizations. We also agree that some moral generalizations are not practically useful, although they may have a theoretical use.

Some people might think that the term "generalization" we are using can create confusion with the assumption that it is the "result" of induction. It might be true that some moral generalizations are the result of induction. However, because this is not the main concern of this present chapter, we postpone a discussion of this problem to a later section where we deal with the discussion about the doctrine of universalizability, which is usually thought of as one of the rationales for the existence of moral generalizations.

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[65] About moral generalizations that function as guidance and actions that are guided by moral principles is discussed a little bit further in Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge (2006). *Principled Ethics. Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 8–11.

While we have considered some conditions of moral generalizations that are the target of moral particularism, we may also consider various categories of moral generalizations that can be suggested in this field. This should be useful when it comes to the discussion of whether moral generalizations are necessary in moral thought and practice. This will be delved into in the next section.

2.3 Types of Moral Generalizations

We suggest that there can be at least two ways to categorize moral generalizations. First, we may categorize them based on their contents, and second, based on the stability of the relation between the descriptive properties, *D*, and the moral properties, *M*. These categorizations are useful both for our comprehensive understanding of moral generalization and also to serve the discussion in the later chapters.

2.3.1 Based on Contents

Based on the contents of moral generalizations, we can distinguish between those that serve to clearly provide the features that make actions right or wrong, good or bad, and those that serve to set the conditions on which those features are right or wrong, good or bad. The first kind of moral generalizations are called material generalizations, and the second are formal generalizations. This categorization is approximate to Hart's distinction between the primary and secondary laws.[66]

1. Material Generalizations

In our view, material generalizations "purport to set forth conditions under which an action is right or wrong or something is good or bad" by *clearly* pointing to which descriptive property grounds the moral one.[67] These moral generalizations specify either implicitly or explicitly the descriptive features that will ground the moral property of an entity. Some examples:

> (t): "We must treat all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means, but always as ends."
> (p): "Promises ought to be kept."
> (l): "Telling a lie is morally wrong."
> (h): "An action A is right if and only if (or because) A would produce at least as high an overall balance of pleasure versus pain as would any other alternative action open to an agent."

Generalizations such as (p) and (l) seem to be obvious in that their descriptive and moral properties are clearly stated. We purported that (t) is also a material

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66 See Section 2 Point 2 *"Moral Laws"* of this chapter.

67 Mark Timmons (2012). *Moral Theory: An Introduction*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 4.

generalization because it contains some clear description of actions, which is thought of as the ground for the "mustness" of that action. The descriptive property that is involved here is "action that involves treating persons as a means." (h) is also a material generalization. The descriptive property that is involved in (h) is "produce at least as high an overall balance of pleasure versus pain as would any other alternative action open to an agent." To make this distinction clearer, we move to the next category, which is a formal generalization.

2. Formal Generalizations

Formal generalizations are general statements about what one should or should not do, without specifying the descriptive properties that ground the moral property of the actions. Examples that can be given include:

- *First Principle of Practical Reason:* "Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."
- *Objectivity:* "One ought to do the same action when one faces exactly the same situation."
- *Formula of Universal Law*: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you, at the same time, can will that it become a universal law."

As we indicated when dealing with the necessary conditions for moral generalizations, these principles are not those that are targeted by moral particularism as they do not have descriptive contents and are uninformative. As we have considered, these principles are known by means of "common rational moral cognition." Interestingly, and it is crucial, not all of Kant's formulae are the target of criticism of moral particularism. The *Formula of Universal Law*, understood in its basic sense, does not display any descriptive property, and therefore, it is not the target of moral particularism. However, his *Formula of Humanity as End in Itself* is one of the targets of attack by moral particularists because it fulfills at least the necessary conditions of moral generalizations considered here.

2.3.2 Based on the Stability of the Relation Between D and M

As we have indicated, the relation between the *D*- and *M*-properties/facts is a grounding relation: Moral facts/properties are grounded in descriptive facts/properties. Specifically, moral generalizations depict a stable relation between descriptive and moral properties/concepts. In this regard, we can distinguish two kinds of relations between *D*- and *M*-properties, tight and loose.

1. Tight:

> The stable relation between the moral property, *M*, and the descriptive property, *D*, is *tight*, if and only if there is no possibility for any entity to have *D* and $\neg M$.

Sometimes such a relation is called "absolute" because the generalizations determine absolutely the moral status of particular actions whose descriptive properties fall under the descriptive concepts that are stated in the moral generalizations. For instance, generalization (t): "We must treat all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means, but always as ends" might be thought of as displaying a tight relationship between its *D*- and *M*-properties. We call such a generalization a "tight generalization." If (t) is understood as a tight generalization, there would be no possibility for any entity to have the descriptive property of treating rational beings, or persons, merely as a means, and simultaneously, such an action is permissible (in this case being not-must-not can be thought of as equal to being permissible). Likewise, generalizations, such as (p), (l), and (h), would also have the same character if they are thought of as displaying a tight relation between their *D*- and *M*-properties. In a later chapter, we further discuss this type of generalization and the particularist claim that such a kind of generalization cannot be true.

2. Loose:

> The stable relation between the moral property, *M*, and the descriptive property, *D*, is *loose*, if and only if there is some possibility for any entity to have *D* and ¬*M*.

We call generalizations that display a loose relation between *D*- and *M*-properties "loose generalizations." We might be normative-ethically neutral and presuppose that generalizations such as (t), (p), (l), and (h) are loose generalizations, as they admit the possibility for cases where their descriptive property(-ies) is/are as what is/are stated in the generalizations (or fall under the concepts that are stated in the generalizations), but their moral property(-ies) are not the same as those stated in the generalizations.

Let us consider (t). If (t) displays a loose relation between its *D*-property, that is, between "treating all rational beings, or persons, never merely as a means," and its *M*-property, that is, being "must" (for reasons of convenience, we may call this property as "being an obligation"), it is possible for a particular action that involves treating a rational being, or a person, merely as a means where the action is not forbidden. A simple example of this case is when you ask an airport officer for the flight time as you are in a hurry. At that particular moment, it seems that there is no difficulty in admitting that you treat that person merely as a means and your particular action is permissible. Consider another example: Suppose you are a police officer who is assigned to arrest a crime lord, and at a particular time, you, perhaps together with your team, catch a member of that gang. Assume that your only way to get the information you need is by interrogating that member using some technique of criminal investigation. For our purposes now, it seems that the gang member should be treated merely as a means to obtain more information regarding the crime lord. In that case, it seems that you are

obliged to pursue an act that involves treating a rational being, or a person, merely as a means. Set out this way, (t) displays a loose relation between its *D*- and *M*-properties.

The interesting question is then what explains that loose stability. What is actually displayed by that loose relation between *D*- and *M*-properties of moral generalizations? In the next chapter, we discuss these questions together with the particularist claim that such generalizations are, for various reasons, not genuine. Some generalists would argue that what is actually displayed by such loose exception-laden generalizations is their privileged conditions; that is, under these privileged conditions, such generalizations hold; however, in the nonprivileged ones, they do not.[68] Others would argue for a dispositional character or a normic state of certain *D*-properties, i.e., moral generalizations display the dispositions or the normic states of certain *D*-properties that can be blocked from being actualized in certain circumstances.

2.4 Summary

This chapter is a general survey of the moral generalizations that are ubiquitously present in our moral thought and practice. It aims to make clear the possible notion of moral generalization that is the subject of criticism and targeted by moral particularists. We began with a discussion regarding some usual terms such as moral principles, laws, norms, codes, and formulae. In the recent particularism–generalism debate, it seems that philosophers do not carefully distinguish between these terms, assuming that they have the same notion. As we have shown, this is not entirely true. While, to a certain extent, these terms display some similar characteristics with regard to generality, each one has its own focus. Moral particularism as an antithesis to moral generalism can therefore not be construed as a view that rejects all forms of moral generalizations as listed above. The claim of moral particularism is conditional. Only if moral principles, laws, norms, codes, or formulae satisfy the content, informativeness, universality, generality, and explanatory conditions are they the target of moral particularism. It can certainly be said that there are many forms of generalizations that satisfy these conditions in moral thought and practice.

Further, we have categorized the types of moral generalizations; these are material and formal. The category into which they fall is based on their contents. Moral particularism is obviously an attack on material generalizations, that is, those that contain clear information about which kind of actions are right or wrong, good or bad, permissible, obligatory, or forbidden. Formal generalizations *as such* do not contain that information and fail to satisfy the conditions outlined. They are, therefore, not the target of moral particularism. It is worth noting that based on such a distinction, Kantianism, for instance, proposes not only material

[68] Margaret Olivia Little (2000). 'Moral Generalities Revisited'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 276–304.

generalizations but also formal ones. Thus, it would be misleading to think that moral particularism criticizes all forms of generalizations endorsed by Kantianism. The target of criticism of moral particularism is these material generalizations. The next chapter shall provide the reasons why moral particularists attack this kind of moral generalization.

3 THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSALIZABILITY

Given the introduction to the debate in the first chapter and the observation of the various conceptions of moral generalizations in the second chapter, we will now deal with the core generalists' arguments criticized by moral particularists. To begin with, consider that we usually think that if an action is right (or wrong; good or bad) for one person, then we also think that it must be right (or wrong; good or bad) for others in similar circumstances. This is what we typically call the doctrine of universalizability (hereinafter, the doctrine). This doctrine is closely related to two other topics in metaethics: the theses of supervenience and resultance. These three subjects will be discussed in this and the following chapters; this chapter discusses, specifically, the doctrine of universalizability, and the following chapter deals with supervenience and resultance. Generalists argue that the doctrine must be true, and if it is true, there must be substantive moral principles or generalizations that are derived via the doctrine; therefore, moral particularism is false. Particularists argue against this doctrine.

As we will show, the doctrine itself is, however, full of ambiguity and needs considerable clarification. In section 3.1, we will spell out the generalist's argument from universalizability and the scope of this doctrine. This should clarify which formulation of the doctrine must be accepted or would be rejected by moral particularists. After setting out the stall, in Section 3.2, we will show the generalist's view that the truth of the doctrine suggests that there are absolute moral generalizations. In contrast, particularists reject the truth of such a doctrine (as understood in a certain sense) and thus claim that there cannot be absolute moral generalizations.

We will dive deeper and pose this particularist argument against the doctrine in the next sections. Particularists might undertake two strategies. First, as we will show in Section 3.3, they might undermine the internal ground of the doctrine by showing its falsity. Second, as we will show in Section 3.4, they can also undermine the motive of why generalists advocate the doctrine. In this regard, for generalists, the doctrine seems to warrant the rationality of moral judgments, where being rational is understood as being consistent in using certain terms. The demand for being consistent can be seen when we consider the generalists' way of giving a plausible explanation of particular moral judgments by subsuming them under generalizations. Particularists would refute this subsumptive move. Another way to meet the demand for consistency is by advocating the thesis that the moral terms or concepts have a certain shape or commonality with respect to the descriptive ones. Particularists also refute this thesis, claiming that the moral (terms or concepts) is shapeless with regard to the descriptive. Through such arguments, particularists can arguably defend their view that the doctrine is false, and therefore, there are no true absolute moral generalizations.

3.1 The Doctrine and Its Argument

The structure of the argument from the doctrine of universalizability can be shown as follows:

Argument from Universalizability

> P1. The doctrine of universalizability is true.
> P2. If the doctrine of universalizability is true, there are moral generalizations.
> C. There are moral generalizations. (Hence, moral particularism is false.)

What does P1 amount to? In moral philosophical literature, the doctrine of universalizability is formulated and conceived in different manners. To clarify what the doctrine amounts to, we may begin by clearing up some misunderstandings. First, the doctrine does not have a function as the decision-criterion.[1] It was Henry Sidgwick who dealt with the doctrine extensively, perhaps for the first time, in his book, *The Methods of Ethics*.[2] In discussing the doctrine, it seems that he reflected public opinion that there is no substantive difference between the Golden Rule, Kant's categorical imperative, and the doctrine. Regarding the Golden Rule, he argues that the doctrine is its most precise form. He writes:

> *As we may otherwise put it, "if a kind of conduct that is right (or wrong) for me is not right (or wrong) for someone else, it must be on the ground of some difference between the two cases, other than the fact that I and he are different persons." [...] These principles have been most widely recognized, not in their most abstract and universal form, but in their special application to the situation of two (or more) individuals similarly related to each other: as so applied, they appear in what is popularly known as the Golden Rule, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." This formula is obviously unprecise in statement; for one might wish for another's cooperation in sin and be willing to reciprocate it [...] In short the self-evident principle strictly stated must take some such negative form as this: "it cannot be right for A to treat B in a manner in which it would be wrong for B to treat A, merely on the ground that they are two different individuals, and without there being any difference between the natures or circumstances of the two which can be stated as a reasonable ground for difference of treatment."*[3]

Based on this quotation, it seems true that there is a natural connection between the Golden Rule that has a practical function to determine which action is permissible or forbidden (or which action ought or ought not to be done) and the doctrine. In Sidgwick's own form, however, clearly, the doctrine only tells us what should happen with the moral status of a certain kind of action (where

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1 Jörg Schroth (2001). *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*. Paderborn: mentis, p. 19.
2 Henry Sidgwick (1962). *The Methods of Ethics*. 7th ed. London: Macmillan.
3 Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, pp. 379–380.

A treats *B*) when it occurs in another but similar situation (where *B* treats *A*). He seems to overlook that the Golden Rule has a function that the doctrine does not have.[4]

The same is true with regard to Kant's categorical imperative. Sidgwick also treated the doctrine as equivalent to the categorical imperative.[5] There is, however, a fundamental difference between them. The categorical imperative is an effective tool to determine which actions one should perform in a particular situation. Kant's categorical imperative suggests: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a

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[4] Harry J. Gensler seems to agree with this claim. To a certain extent, however, his claims are inconsistent. On the one hand, he seems to claim that the Golden Rule is just an axiom like the doctrine of universalizability that only prescribes consistency and does not provide information regarding which actions are right or wrong. On the other hand, it seems that he also argues that these axioms can prescribe us to do certain things. We may compare the formulations of both axioms. He writes that the axiom of universalizability is "U: If an act A ought to be done (would be all right), then there is some conjunction F of universal properties such that (1) act A is F and (2) in any actual and hypothetical case every act, that is F, ought to be done (would be all right)." This formulation is similar to mine (see formula (D) in this chapter). To our minds, U does not prescribe anything. It just tells us what would happen to act A and every act similar to A with regard to their moral status. However, when Gensler discusses the Ima Racist example, it seems that he argues that the doctrine also tells us which kind of action has a certain moral status. Here is his example. Ima Racist believes that "We ought to treat blacks poorly – because they're inferior." To refute this conviction, Gensler attacks one of the premises and says that those who are inferior (that is, those who have IQs less than 80) are not only blacks but also some whites. Being consistent with the conviction, Ima Racist must therefore treat the whites who have IQs less than 80 poorly too. Gensler concludes that Ima Racist would face a dilemma: if Ima Racist rejects that consequence, he is inconsistent, but if Ima Racist treats the whites with IQs less than 80 poorly as well, he is not (only) a racist but also an elitist. Thus, the doctrine is not trivial or useless.

However, what we do not agree within this example is the formulation of the first conviction of Ima Racist. Such a conviction is not genuinely racist. Instead, Ima Racist should, we think, have the conviction that "We ought to treat blacks poorly—because they're black." If this is the case, then Ima Racist would not face such a dilemma. Moreover, Ima Racist would not have a problem applying the doctrine of universalizability to his acts. He will be consistent because whatever conviction he has, as long as it is genuine, the doctrine will only tell the moral status of similar actions. Although we agree that this conviction is morally wrong, the reason why it is wrong cannot be found using the doctrine of universalizability.

Now, the formula of the Golden Rule is different in that it prescribes us to do a certain act. Gensler's formula for the Golden Rule is "(GR): Don't combine (1) acting to do A to X with (2) not consenting to the idea of A being done to you in an exactly similar situation." As we can see, it prescribes us to do a certain thing (Do!), not only not to combine (1) and (2), which requires us to be consistent, but also to do certain acts A to X. Surely, which action or kind of action is prescribed by GR is open, and it depends on your consideration. Thus, we can use GR as the decision criterion about which action we ought to do, while U does not have such a function. (See Harry J. Gensler (2002). *Formal Ethics.* London: Routledge. The formula "U" can be found on p. 69; GR on p. 93; the example of Ima Racist on pp. 80-81, 158-165.)

[5] Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, pp. xix, 486.

universal law."[6] According to this, to determine what you should do, you have to ask whether you *can will* that the maxim, which is the description of the intended action you consider you want to pursue, can be the universal law. This is useful to determine what you should do at any time you want to make a decision because it will create a boundary that separates those actions you ought to do from those you ought not to do. Both kinds of actions are separated by the *can–will* criterion (whether the maxim can be a universal law). This, however, is not the case with the doctrine as it does not provide any criterion regarding which actions are right or wrong. The doctrine only tells us that if an action ought to be done in a certain circumstance, it ought to be done in all relevantly similar situations. However, it does not state *which* kinds of actions ought to be done in a given particular circumstance.

Another similar misconception is to treat the doctrine as equivalent to M. G. Singer's generalization argument.[7] Singer writes that "Each of these cases [i.e., some considerations when one asks 'What would happen if everyone did that?'] provides an example of the use or application of a type of argument, which I propose to call *the generalization argument*: 'If everyone were to do that, the consequences would be disastrous (or undesirable); therefore, no one ought to do that.'"[8] Singer's generalization argument clearly provides a guidance regarding how to decide what one ought to do with regard to a certain consideration. He realizes, however, that such an argument requires a further premise to make

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6 Immanuel Kant (2002). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. German by Allen W. Wood. New York: Yale University Press, 4:421.

7 Such a misconception can be seen in Sidgwick's paragraph when he addresses whether, under certain circumstances, telling lies would be justifiable; for instance, whether an advocate is justified in telling lies in front of the court to fulfill his duty to defend his client, who is a criminal. When he answers this question, it seems that he does not distinguish between whether one statement or axiom is the generalization argument and the other is a generalization principle. He writes:

> Finally, it cannot be assumed as certain that it is never right to act upon a maxim of which the universal application would be an undoubted evil. This assumption may seem to be involved in what was previously admitted as an ethical axiom, that what is right for me must be right for "all persons under similar conditions." But reflection will show that there is a special case within the range of the axiom in which its application is necessarily self-limiting, and excludes the practical universality that the axiom appears to suggest: i.e., where the agent's conditions include (1) the knowledge that his maxim is not universally accepted, and (2) a reasoned conviction that his act will not tend to make it so, to any important extent. For in this case the axiom will practically only mean that it will be right for all persons to do as the agent does, if they are sincerely convinced that the act will not be widely imitated; and this conviction must vanish if it is widely imitated. (Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, pp. 318–319.)

If we consider this passage, Sidgwick seems to understand that the universalization axiom "what is right for me must be right for 'all persons under similar conditions"' is sufficient to be the argument or to determine which actions an agent might or might not perform. In this case, Sidgwick associates the principle of generalizations with the argument of generalization that, we think, is a mistake.

8 Markus G. Singer (1955). 'Generalization in Ethics'. In: *Mind* 64.255, p. 361.

it valid. If one considers that "This is an action *X*; if everyone were to do *X*, the consequences would be disastrous (or undesirable); therefore, everyone ought not to do *X*," one can still further ask how this line of thought can be considered cogent. According to Singer, only under the condition of the generalization principle would such an argument be valid. What he calls the generalization principle is "that *what is right (or wrong) for one person must be right (or wrong) for any similar person in similar circumstances*."[9] What we here call the doctrine is, therefore, this generalization principle and not the generalization argument.

The second misconception about the doctrine is to treat it equivalently with the thesis of supervenience, the details of which we will consider in the next chapter. To give a preliminary remark, the difference between the doctrine and the supervenience thesis is in their contents. The supervenience thesis displays a relation between two distinct families (of properties, facts, concepts, or judgments), while the doctrine either does not differentiate what its contents are, or, if it does differentiate them, it does not tell what relation they have.

What is then the formula of the doctrine? To better set out the doctrine, we suggest that we should rely on the works of R. M. Hare. A considerable warning when interpreting Hare, however, has been given by Jonathan Dancy. He suggests that, on occasions, what Hare wrote about universalizability is what we now understand as supervenience.[10] Therefore, it is wise to be cautious when reviewing the work of Hare.

In *Freedom and Reason*, Hare contends that all descriptive judgments are universalizable. He explains that "[a] judgment is descriptive if in it the predicate or predicates are descriptive terms and the mood is indicative."[11] For Hare, descriptive judgments that have an indicative mood are to be distinguished from moral judgments that have an imperative or a prescriptive mood. Both descriptive and moral terms, however, have meanings, and "the kind of meaning [of both terms] is determined by the kind of rules."[12] According to him, the meaning-rule determines the "consistency of practice in the use of an expression which is the condition of its intelligibility."[13] Now, moral judgments share with descriptive judgments both the features of having a meaning-rule and of universalizability, although moral judgments are not descriptive.[14] About the universalizability of the descriptive judgments, he writes as follows:

> *If a person says that a thing is red, he is committed to the view that anything that was like it in the relevant respects would likewise be red. The relevant respects*

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9 Singer, 'Generalization in Ethics', p. 362.

10 See Jonathan Dancy (1993). *Moral Reasons.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Appendix II, pp. 258–260.

11 Richard M. Hare (1963). *Freedom and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 10.

12 Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 7.

13 Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 7.

14 Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, pp. 10–11.

> *are those that, he thought, entitled him to call the first thing red; in this particular case, they amount to one respect only: its red colour. This follows, according to the definitions given above, from the fact that "This is red" is a descriptive judgement. "This is red" entails "Everything like this in the relevant respects is red" simply because to say that something is red while denying that some other thing that resembles it in the relevant respects is red is to misuse the word "red"; and this is because "red" is a descriptive term, and because therefore to say that something is red is to say that it is of a certain kind, and so to imply that anything that is of that same kind is red.*
>
> *The proposition "Everything like this in the relevant respects is red" is not, indeed, formally and in the strictest sense a universal one; for it contains the singular term "this." But, [...] when a singular term is governed by the word "like" or its equivalent, it has the property of being turnable into a universal term by substituting for "like this" a term that describes the respects in which the thing in question is being said to be like this. If no suitable word exists, it is always possible to invent one. And so if a person who says "This is red' is committed also to the proposition "Everything like this in the relevant respects is red," then he is further committed to the proposition that there is a property such that this has it and such that everything that has it is red. And the second part of this proposition contains no singular terms, and can therefore be called properly universal."*[15]

Hare's argument of universalizability can be semiformalized as follows:[16]

(A) Descriptive Judgment

The singular descriptive judgment

> (i) "*a* is red."

entails a judgment that

> (ii) "Anything that was like *a* in the relevant respect(s) would likewise be red."

The term "like *a* in the relevant respect(s)" can be replaced with another term that describes the relevant respect(s) by virtue of having this (or these), the object would be similar to *a*. Therefore, (ii) implies that

> (iii) "There is a property or a set of properties such that *a* has either of them and everything which has either of them is red."

Moral judgments share the features with descriptive judgments of having the meaning-rule and universalizability. Suppose we take the term "morally right"

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15 Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 11.

16 The reconstruction of Hare's argument is by and large based on Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, pp. 51–53.

as a representative for other moral terms. In this regard, we may get an argument as follows:

(B) Moral Judgment

The singular moral judgment

> (iv) "An action *h* is morally right."

entails a judgment that

> (v) "Anything that was like *h* in the relevant respect(s) would likewise be morally right."

The term "like *h* in the relevant respect(s)" can be replaced with another term that describes the relevant respect(s) by virtue of having this (or these), the object would be similar to *h*. Therefore, (v) implies that

> (vi) "There is a property or a set of properties such that *h* has either of them and everything that has either of them is morally right."

We are now ready to formulate the doctrine. However, from the above considerations, there could be two formulations.[17] First, if we link (iv) and (v) we will get

> **(U_{REL})** "If an action *h* is morally right, then all actions that were like *h* in all morally relevant respects would likewise be morally right."

Second, if we link (iv) and (vi) we will get

> **(U)** "If an action *h* is morally right, then there is a property or a set of properties such that *h* has either of them and everything that has either of them is morally right."

If we generalize the last formulation, we will get

> "If an action *h* has a certain property *M*, then there is a property or a set of properties *D* such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* is *M*."

As we have seen, the doctrine can now be understood either as **(U_{REL})** or **(U)**. However, it must be pointed out that these have different senses. **(U_{REL})** is an analytic truth. What is implicitly told by **(U_{REL})** is that there is a relation between the rightness of the action *h* and the morally relevant respects possessed by *h* such that *h* being morally right is related to *h* having all morally relevant respects. (UREL) is, therefore, an analytic truth: all actions like *h* in all their morally relevant respects are morally right, and all actions like *h* which are morally right are like *h* in all morally relevant respects. Further, **(U_{REL})** tells us that two particular actions, *h*1 and *h*2, that are similar in *all* their morally relevant respects must be

[17] The claims and formulation of the doctrine are modified from Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, pp. 51–58 and Jörg Schroth (2003). 'Particularism and Universalizability'. In: *Journal of Value Inquiry* 37.4, pp. 455–461. DOI: 10.1023/b:inqu.0000019032.13457.20

morally similar. If both particular actions are not morally similar, then there must be some difference in their morally relevant respects.[18]

(U) can also be an analytic truth, but it would be trivial. Consider this following thought. Because Hare does not distinguish clearly whether the two properties in **(U)** are of two different families of properties, it could be the case that *M* and *D* are of the same property. **(U)** still holds if we replace both properties *M* and *D* with "being morally right": "If an action *h* is morally right (=*M*), then there is a property of being morally right (=*D*) such that *h* has the property of being morally right (=*D*) and such that everything that has the property of being morally right(=*D*) is morally right (=*M*)."

However, perhaps these interpretations are not what Hare has in mind. The last consideration would suggest that, perhaps, for Hare, both properties should not be from the same family; one must belong to the family of moral properties and the other to the nonmoral or descriptive property.[19] Moreover, he also accepts the thesis of supervenience that the moral (properties, facts, concepts, judgments) supervene on the nonmoral ones. Therefore, we might reformulate (U) as follows:

> **(DOC)** "If an action *h* has a certain moral property *M*, then there is also a descriptive property or a set of descriptive properties *D* such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* is *M*."

Moral particularists, specifically Dancy, argue that "the doctrine of universalizability is clearly false."[20] However, he does not specify which sense of the doctrine he has in mind. It is hard not to accept **(U_{REL})** and the trivial version of **(U)** as true. Most probably, it is **(DOC)** that is rejected by moral particularists.

We would, however, suggest that what is rejected by moral particularists such as Dancy is **(DOC)** in a certain sense. To understand the possible interpretations of **(DOC)**, we have to specify what this doctrine means with the term "having the descriptive property or the set of descriptive properties *D*." We would suggest that the dispute between the particularists and generalists is regarding the scope of the descriptive property or the set of descriptive properties *D*. To have a better understanding regarding this term and Dancy's criticism, we would like to introduce the distinction between the universalization and the application moves. These moves are implicitly pictured by **(DOC)**, and both groups, generalists and particularists, have overlooked such a distinction. When we apply **(DOC)** to a particular case, we make a universalization move, that is, an abstraction of a

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18 It is tempting here to talk about the grounding relation between *h* being morally right and *h*'s having all morally relevant respects such that the latter grounds the former. We, however, will not try to introduce such a concept with regard to (UREL) to maintain the fidelity to Hare's text. Moreover, we think the above elaboration seems to be sufficient.

19 We are aware that for Hare, it would not be appropriate to say that there are moral properties in a realist sense. Perhaps it would be better to call these "moral qualities." However, for reason of convenience, we use this realist terminology while keeping in mind that Hare is a nonrealist.

20 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 80.

particular moral judgment, such that it shifts from a consideration about a concrete action, such as *h*, that has a particular descriptive property or a particular set of descriptive properties *D*, to an abstraction of the action *h*, where the abstract action *h* has the abstract descriptive property or abstract set of descriptive properties *D*. At the abstract or universalized level then, we make an assumption that if there were any action (either real or hypothetical) similar to *h* in its *D* respects, then it must be *M*. This, in its entirety, is what we may call the universalization move, that is, the movement from the particular judgment (about your action) to abstract or imaginary cases. This move will hopefully be clearer if we provide an illustration such as the following:

Suppose while you are on your way to your office, you see an accident, and somebody is injured. You may ask yourself whether you ought to help the injured person. Assume you have these following considerations in your mind: on the one hand, the victim is injured, she needs help, and you have completed a first aid training program; on the other hand, you are busy, have a meeting with your boss, do not want to get involved, and so on. After you think for a while, you decide to help the victim. Another person, perhaps your boss, who knows you well enough, would say that you did the right thing or that your act was morally good. Now, imagine that you have a *Doppelganger* (an exactly similar counterpart of you in all things). Imagine that your *Doppelganger* faces the same event as you, has the same considerations as you, and also does the same thing as you do. Now, your boss, who is also the boss of your *Doppelganger* and holds the doctrine **(DOC)** consistently, should also make the same judgment regarding the action that your *Doppelganger* has taken, that is, that his action was morally good.

The universalization move of **(DOC)** is such a thought; it is an abstraction of a judgment about a particular action or person, such as *h*, and a supposition or a conjecture that if there were any action or person exactly similar in its *D* respects to that particular action or person, that action or person should deserve the same moral judgment. Your *Doppelganger*, his situation, and his action are the abstraction of you, your situation, and your action, respectively, in a very restricted sense. He is identical to you but an abstraction of you, your situation, and action.[21]

In the above example, however, there is an implicit application move that is triggered when we ask, "Which actions are similar to *h*?" Once we ask this question, we move from a universalization to an application move. Another way to understand the application move is to ask whether the doctrine of universalizability is useful and to which cases it is of use. In our opinion, such a question is rarely asked in the particularism–generalism debate. To deal with this issue, we

[21] When raising this point, we try to avoid using heavy ontological terms, such as "universal properties, facts or relations," because we want to keep the analysis ontologically modest. By doing this, we hope that we can accommodate the discussion of the doctrine of universalization that to a certain extent is metaphysical, without committing to the existence of controversial ontological entities such as universals.

suggest that we might distinguish three possible interpretations of the application move, that is, the possible answers to the question as to which kind of cases the doctrine is useful.

1. *Application move*$_1$: The doctrine **(DOC)** is only useful for actions that are exactly similar to *h* in *all D* respects such that there is only one instance of an action having the property *D*. This is what is implicitly shown by the example of the *Doppelganger* who is totally identical to you. If this is the case, particularists should not reject **(DOC)** because it is an analytic truth. If an action *h* is morally right, all actions exactly similar to *h* in all respects, such that there is only *h* itself, are morally right. The doctrine **(DOC)** would be understood:

(DOC$_1$) "If an action *h* has a certain moral property *M*, then there is a descriptive property or a set of descriptive properties *D* such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* is *M*, such that it is *only* the action *h* itself."[22]

2. *Application move*$_2$: The doctrine **(DOC)** is applicable to actions that are similar to *h* in all morally relevant respects such that there are more than one instances of actions having the property *D*. We can modify the above example. Suppose, now, you are the victim of an accident, and that woman is the one who helps you; suppose also that the features are now exactly reversed. You are injured and need help; the woman passes by, sees you are the victim of an accident, and has completed a first aid training program, but she is busy, has a meeting with her boss, does not want to get involved, and so on. Further, suppose that there are some differences between you and the woman, but these are morally irrelevant (such as the color of the shoelaces). Just like you, she nevertheless helps you. Her boss (who was your boss), if he is consistent, will also judge that what she does is the right thing or that her act is morally good. In this case, your action in the first example (say *h*1) and the woman's action (say *h*2) are similar in all morally relevant respects, that is, in the *D* respects. *h*1 and *h*2 are two different actions, but with respect to their morally relevant features, both fall under the same concept of *D*. If it is what the doctrine means with the descriptive property (either an individual or a set) *D*, we think that particularists should not reject **(DOC)** as well, because it is an analytic truth.[23] If actions *h*1 and *h*2 are similar in all morally relevant

[22] This possibility would coincide with the supervenience thesis that is accepted by particularists. While generalists would argue that the supervenience thesis implies the existence of moral generalizations, particularists reject this claim. A more detailed consideration on supervenience will be discussed in the next chapter.

[23] Such an application move is, we think, the most popular one when one discusses the doctrine of universalizability. Harry J. Gensler, for instance, presents this kind of interpretation of the doctrine; he explains that the doctrine prescribes impartiality in a very weak sense in which one should be consistent in judging exactly the same cases. The illustration we present here is modified from his example, where he elaborates the notion of exact similarity by also

respects, they must be morally similar; thus, **(DOC)** might be modified as follows:

(DOC$_2$) "If an action *h* has a certain moral property *M*, then there is a descriptive property or a set of descriptive properties *D* that cover *all* morally relevant respects for *h* being *M*, such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* is *M*."[24]

3. *Application move*$_3$: The doctrine **(DOC)** is applicable to actions that are similar to *h* in *certain* morally relevant respects such that there is more than one action having the property *D*, where *D* is understood as the *ultimate* or basic property that will always make the actions have a certain moral property. To give an illustration, let us modify the first example. Suppose you and your boss are utilitarians who believe that actions are good, if and only if they produce as high a utility as would any other alternative action that the agent could perform in that given situation.[25] Suppose that your boss now judges your action as bad because it violates the utilitarian principle. You and your boss would perhaps argue that the utilitarian principle is the ultimate consideration to determine whether an action is good or bad, so that any other considerations must be weighed based on this principle. If this is the case, the property or the set of properties *D*, as stated in the doctrine **(DOC)** is substituted by "producing as high a utility as would any other alternative action that the agent could perform in that given situation." We consider this the possibility that is rejected by particularists; **(DOC)** is then rejected because it cannot provide the space for various *D*-properties that would be morally relevant in the new cases. A more detailed consideration of this matter will be discussed in the next section when we look at how the doctrine will generate moral generalizations.

Now, at the end of this section, we come to the point where we can state that there is considerable ambiguity in the doctrine that has led to the emergence of three possible interpretations. Particularists who refute the doctrine then must specify which of its senses is being rejected. We suggest that it is **(DOC)** in the

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providing an imaginary case where there is an exact reverse situation between the situation of one person and that of another person. In this section, we develop two further interpretations of similarity. The first is super-exact or identical similarity, such that there is only one extension of the concept of the universal descriptive property. This is what we elaborate in the *Application move1*. In the *Application move3*, we provide a different and looser interpretation of actions being similar. (See Gensler, *Formal Ethics*, pp. 71–84.)

[24] This possibility is equivalent to (UR) and coincides with the resultance thesis that is also accepted by particularists.

[25] The principle or generalization one holds here can be substituted with other absolute principles, even some easy principles such as "Whatever happens keep your promises." The result should be similar because what matters is not the material of the generalizations but the form of the argument built using the absolute moral generalizations.

sense of the third application move. Generalists seem also to overlook the precise formulation of the doctrine with the result that particularists also interpret it imprecisely. Moreover, the particularist rejection of the doctrine is grounded in the claim that there are no absolute moral generalizations. In the next section, we will consider how generalists might argue that the doctrine implies the existence of absolute moral generalizations.

3.2 The Doctrine and Moral Generalizations

That particularists overlook the different interpretations, as outlined in the previous section, is, however, not unreasonable since when generalists claim that the doctrine **(DOC)** implies the existence of moral generalizations (this is the scope of (P2) of the *Argument from Universalizability* as described above), they do not make such a distinction too. Generalists such as Hare just believe that these generalizations are rules that can cover numerous kinds of particular moral judgments. For him, the existence of moral generalizations, or, in his terms, "substantial moral principles," is the implication of the doctrine. Furthermore, this claim is based on the understanding of the doctrine in the sense of the *Application move3*. We can see such a conviction in his *Freedom and Reason* where Hare writes:

> *For in saying that it is proper to call a certain kind of man good (for example a man who feeds his children, does not beat his wife, &c.) we are not just explaining the meaning of a word; it is not mere verbal instruction that we are giving, but something more: moral instruction. In learning that, of all kinds of man, this kind can be called good our hearer will be learning something synthetic, a moral principle.*[26]

In a more compact form, he also writes:

> *because of universalizability, a person who makes a moral judgment commits himself, not merely to a meaning-rule, but to a substantial moral principle.*[27]

In these quotations, Hare claims that the doctrine implies the existence of moral generalizations. We may make his argument more explicit as follows:
The singular judgments that

(vii) "a person *S* has certain descriptive properties *D*"

and

(viii) "*S* is a good man."

imply that

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[26] Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 23.
[27] Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 30.

(ix) "There is a person *S* who is *D*-kind and can be called good."[28]

Given the modified **(DOC)** for a person:

> **(DOC_p)** "If a person *S* is good, then there is also the descriptive property of being *D*-kind such that *S* has the property of being *D*-kind and every person who is *D*-kind is good."

it can be concluded that

(x) "of all kinds of man, every man being *D*-kind can be called good."

For Hare, it seems that (x) is the explicit formulation of moral generalization. Based on (x), the general schema of moral generalization with regard to actions is

> **(G)** "Of all kinds of actions, every action that has a certain property or a set of descriptive properties of being *D*-kind can have a moral property of being *M*-kind."

In our opinion, Hare's argument is, however, full of ambiguity, specifically with regard to statement (ix). First, concerning the notion of "being *D*-kind of man," it is unclear what he means with this term; he seems to assume that "being *D*-kind of man" is being a certain class of man. However, what is assumed by being a certain class of something is also ambiguous. In one interpretation, a class can have more than one member; therefore, Hare might have an assumption that the class of "being *D*-kind of man" has some members (say Mr. X, Mrs. Y, and Lady Z). In another interpretation, a class can also have only one member; therefore, Hare might also have another assumption that the class of "being *D*-kind of man" has only one member, that is, as he gives in the earlier example, the man "who feeds his children, does not beat his wife" (the symbol "&c" used by Hare—as used in the above-mentioned quotation—is also indefinite, which is disadvantageous when trying to gain a clear picture of his argument). Second, concerning the term "can be," it is unclear what this term is supposed to mean. In one interpretation, Hare seems to have the idea that the property of being *D*-kind possessed by a certain man provides a possibility for this man to be called good (or generally, to have *M*-property). If this is the case, then there is also a possibility for a man to be called not good (or not to be called good), while having the property of being *D*-kind. In another interpretation, based on the doctrine of universalizability, Hare seems to assume that every *D*-kind of man or every man who possesses the property of being *D*-kind *is* good because the statement (ix) is an implication of particular judgments (vii) and (viii).

Particularists such as Dancy seem to have the opinion that the expression of "being *D*-kind of man" presupposes that it is a certain class of man that has more than one member (as is stated by the *Application move3*), and the expression

[28] Hereafter, we have to make a loose interpretation of the property of being *D*-kind, such that it might cover either one property or a set of properties.

"can be" is supposed to be understood as "is" and not just as an expression of a possibility.[29] In proposing the above notion, Dancy seems to interpret that (x) is supposed to be understood as:

> (x') "of all kinds of men, every *D*-kind of man is called good."

Therefore, (G) would be equivalent to this following schema:

> **(G*)** "Every action has a moral property of being *M*-kind, if and only if it has a certain property or a set of properties of being *D*-kind."

If we recall **(DOC)**, which is equivalent to **(DOC_p)** from which (x') and also **(G*)** are derived, we can see that **(DOC)** is consistent with **(G*)**. In fact, **(G*)** is what is indicated by the clause "everything that has *D* is *M*" in **(DOC)**; in this way, we can see that the schema **(G*)** is present ubiquitously in the normative ethical theories. The concern of these theories is to determine which kind of *D* (either an individual property or a set of properties) is the ultimate criterion of rightness or wrongness. Appropriate examples for this claim are as follows:

1. Classical utilitarianism: "An action is morally right, if and only if it would maximize happiness."
2. Natural law perfectionism: "An action is morally right, if and only if it contributes to the perfection of a human being."
3. Rule consequentialism: "An action is morally right, if and only if it is not prohibited by ideal code of rules whose acceptance would bring about maximal good for the greatest number of people."
4. (Scanlon's) Contractualism: "An action is morally wrong, if and only if its performance would be disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behaviour that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement."[30]

These examples are moral generalizations that are derived from the doctrine of universalizability. Let us consider (1) classical utilitarianism and suppose that it is *not* thought of as analytical, meaning that being right *is identical to* or *means* maximizing happiness. As Hare suggested, we would begin with particular judgment

> (xi) "An action *j* would maximize happiness."

and

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[29] It seems counterintuitive to interpret "can be" as "is." However, this interpretation comes not only from particularists, especially such as Dancy, but also generalists, such as Hare. In our opinion, when Hare thinks about moral principles, he also assumes that they not only have one case of application but also play a necessary role in determining the moral status of a certain *kind* of action or person.

[30] Thomas M. Scanlon (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, p. 153.

(xii) "*j* is morally right."

By saying this, Hare suggests that we are committed to the judgment that

(xiii) "Anything which is like *j* with respect to maximizing happiness would likewise be morally right."

Moreover, as we have seen, given the doctrine **(DOC)**, it suggests that

(xiv) "If an action *j* is morally right, then there is a descriptive property of maximizing happiness such that *j* has the property of maximizing happiness and everything which has the property of maximizing happiness is morally right."

Like the above consideration that **(DOC)** implies **(G*)**, (xiv) would imply

(xv) "Of all actions, every action that has the moral property of maximizing happiness, has the property of being morally right."

As we have considered, it is equivalent to

(xv') "Every action has a moral property of being right, if and only if it has a descriptive property of maximizing happiness," which is another way of formulating classical utilitarianism (1).

The same process can be repeated with the same end result for the other moral generalizations we outlined above (2–4); this can be done by substituting the property or set of properties of being *D*-kind stated in each generalization. Although some generalizations are more complicated and indirect than others, there is no structural difference between them. By going through this process with the other ethical theories, it seems true that the doctrine **(DOC)** implies the existence of moral generalizations as described in the schema **(G*)**. **(G*)** is, however, supposed to be the generalization that can be applied to numerous moral cases as long as they have the property or the set of properties of being *D*-kind, which is stated in moral generalizations. Particularists therefore do not only refute **(DOC)** in the sense of *Application move*$_3$ (which is the amount of (P1) in the *Argument from Universalizability*), but also **(G*)** in the above sense.[31]

Before we see the reasons why particularists reject **(DOC)** and **(G*)**, we need to consider the kind of moral generalizations that are generated from **(G*)**. These are absolute generalizations, meaning that they do not admit exceptions that we have heretofore called tight moral generalizations.[32] Typically, the proponents of each generalization would argue that the property or set of properties of being *D*-kind stated in each generalization (such as maximizing happiness, contributing

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[31] In this chapter, I do not discuss whether the possibility of *Application move1* and *Application move2* may generate moral generalizations because, as I will show in the next chapter, although they may render moral generalizations, these generalizations are very limited or specified and are applicable only to one case, that is, the case being universalized. Such a principle, although possible, is however useless. (See Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 81.)

[32] See the previous chapter, Subsection 3.3.2.

to the perfection of a human being, being allowed by an ideal code of rules whose acceptance would bring about maximal good for the greatest number of people, or being disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behavior that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement) are the ultimate criteria for an action to have a corresponding moral property. Thus, as stated in **(G*)**, moral generalizations rendered from the doctrine **(DOC)** are absolute generalizations. Moral particularists refute **(DOC)** in the sense of *Application move*$_3$ and its implication as stated in **(G*)**, which is the schema of absolute generalizations. The particularists' argument for this rejection will be considered in the next section.

3.3 Refuting the Internal Ground

In the *Argument from Universalizability*, particularists refute premise (P1), and, therefore, its conclusion (C) is false. Based on our consideration above, particularists therefore refute the schema of the doctrine **(DOC)** and the schema of moral generalization **(G*)**. Remember that the doctrine of universalizability itself might have two formulations, **(U_{REL})** and **(U)**; **(DOC)** and, therefore, **(G*)** are the derivatives of **(U)** in a particular sense where the properties *D* and *M* are of two different families. This being said, if particularists claim that "the doctrine of universalizability is clearly false,"[33] this criticism must be directed at **(DOC)** and **(G*)** only because particularists need to accept the doctrine of universalizability in the sense of **(U)**-analytic.

Now, why do particularists such as Dancy think that **(DOC)** and **(G*)** are false? Let us recall **(DOC)**:

> **(DOC)** "If an action *h* has a certain moral property *M*, then there is also a descriptive property or a set of descriptive properties *D* such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* is *M*."

Dancy states that there are two ways to refute the *Argument from Universalizability* where its first premise (P1) is understood in the above sense: First, by attacking the internal ground, that is, the assumption that once a certain descriptive property is counted as morally relevant in a certain way, it will always have the relevance in the same way; second, by undermining the motivation for holding the doctrine, that is, that rationality presumes a strict consistency in using terms and concepts. Dancy undertakes the first route and John McDowell the second. Let us discuss Dancy's argument first.

According to Dancy, **(DOC)** in the above sense is false because "there may, in a new case, be a strong reason against the judgment that was not present in the

[33] Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 80.

first case: a defeater, as we might call it."[34,35] For Dancy, the fact that in one case, the descriptive property of *D*-kind had by an action *j* in virtue of which one judges that *j* has a certain moral property of being *M*-kind should not oblige one to judge another action, say *k*, that has the descriptive property of *D*-kind as having the moral property of being *M*-kind because *k* might have other descriptive properties that prevent *k* for being *M*-kind. If this is the case, then **(G*)** must also be false, meaning that there is no absolute moral generalization derived from the doctrine **(DOC)**. For instance, the fact that in one situation, a generous and kind action makes it the case that the action is good does not oblige us to judge that on another occasion, a generous and kind action that is done to deceive someone else would be a good action as well. Another example: if some actions that maximize happiness even for the greatest number of people are morally right, they do not oblige us to judge other similar actions that maximize happiness for the greatest number of people as morally right because there could be some other properties in the new cases that prevent them from being morally right (or prevent us from judging that they are morally right). Examples of this kind (which are the counterexamples for absolute moral generalizations) can always be plausibly made.

In reply, generalists might expand the universalizability base so that it covers the possible defeaters. However, for Dancy, this is also not a plausible move. He writes that "There are just too many potential defeaters for the absence of each one to count among our original reasons, and the general absence of a defeater is not to be thought of as one of the reasons why we judge the first action right."[36] Suppose generalists would reformulate **(DOC)** into:

> **($\mathbf{DOC}_N$)** "If an action *h* has a certain moral property *M*, then there is the descriptive properties D_1 - *D*n such that *h* has D_1 - *D*n and everything that has D_1 - *D*n is *M*." (*D*1 - *D*n is supposed to cover the possible defeaters.)

and **(G*)** would be

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34 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 80

35 Surely, this sounds like an epistemological argument, whereas the doctrine **(DOC)** is a metaphysical claim. However, what we can assume is that his epistemological argument has a consistent metaphysical basis, and it must be read from a metaphysical perspective. This means that the term "defeater being present or absent in the first or later actions" is of metaphysical relevance. Moreover, in Dancy's terminology, the term "reasons for actions" has a metaphysical sense because they are facts. For instance, the fact that the action involves treating a human being merely as a means is the reason not to act. (See the introduction of this book, specifically Section 1.2, where the recent reflection on reasons for action is discussed.) Thus, we might charitably interpret his argument that the term "defeater" should not only be understood as a defeater of one's moral judgment or belief but also a defeater of reasons (that are facts) to become the reason for one to act or not. With such an interpretation, although here Dancy seems to provide an epistemological argument to refute the doctrine **(DOC)**, we should not purport it as misleading.

36 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 81.

> **(G*N)** "Every action has a moral property of being *M*-kind, if and only if it has the descriptive properties of being D_1 - *D*n-kind."

Dancy argues that this move is implausible because there could be many counterexamples so that in one case, for instance, the absence of a certain descriptive property makes an action right, but its presence cannot be counted as the property that makes the action wrong. Such a feature is, for instance, an enabler or disabler whose presence or absence makes it possible for the other descriptive properties to function as the reason that makes an action right or wrong. The absence of a certain property that plays a role in determining the moral status of an action cannot be included into the schema of the generalization.[37]

Dancy gives some examples of both nonmoral and moral cases. From the nonmoral case: what makes an ice cream taste good is not that it is not salty, but the ingredients of this ice cream. However, if ice cream were salty, it would not taste good. The presence of saltiness, therefore, plays a certain role in the reason why the ice cream does not taste good. If this is the case, then the absence of saltiness should also play a role in making the ice cream taste good. If the absence of saltiness plays such a role, so also must the absence of other things, such as bitterness, sourness, and so on.[38] Likewise, in the moral case, suppose that you knock a woman down while you are driving. It is morally right, then, if you help her. You would perhaps visit her in the hospital, and your action would be right. If, then, your visit is motivated by your desire to seduce her, your action would be wrong. The presence of your desire to seduce her plays a certain role that makes the action wrong. This leads us to say that the absence of such a desire to seduce her must also play a certain role in making your action of visiting her right. However, then, you should also include any other considerations that must be absent so as to make your action right. It is structurally impossible to include all possible properties, individual or a set of properties, that must be absent in the moral generalizations.

Further, generalists may fully expand the universalizability base so that it includes all *D*-properties *in all morally relevant respects*. However, by doing this, generalists would come to **(U_{REL})** that is an analytic truth. Recalling **(U_{REL})**:

> **(U_{REL})** "If an action *h* is morally right, then all actions that were like *h* in all morally relevant respects would likewise be morally right."

As we have said, particularists would not refute **(U_{REL})**. However, what generalists now get from this interpretation is not a synthetic generalization, the one that is aimed at by Hare, but rather an analytic one. Moral generalizations or principles derived from **(U_{REL})** are an analytic truth, i.e., two actions h_1 and h_2 that are similar in all morally relevant respects are morally similar. Suppose that all

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37 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 81.

38 This example is drawn from Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 44.

morally relevant respects of the action h_1 are countable, and there are 211 properties (211 is just an arbitrary number). h_1 and h_2 are similar in all morally relevant respects, meaning that h_1 and h_2 have each of these 211 properties. If the action h_1 has D_1-D_{211}-properties that are morally relevant and the action h_2 is similar to h_1 in all morally relevant respects, then it is impossible that h_1 is morally right, for instance, and h_2 is morally wrong. Here, there might be a moral generalization, such as:

> **(G*A)** "Every action has a certain *M*-property, if and only if it has the properties of D_1- D_{211}."

(G*A) is a very specific or limited moral generalization. Perhaps, it can have more than one extension, like in h_1 and h_2. In fact, **(G*A)** is the generalization generated from the notion of *Application move*$_2$. However, according to the consideration regarding the conditions of moral generalizations as discussed in the previous chapter, from a moral point of view, such a moral generalization cannot be included in the category of genuine moral generalization. Thus, we might conclude that the doctrine does not imply the existence of moral generalization.

3.4 Refuting the Motive

In addition to the above point, we think that such a generalization cannot serve to fulfill what generalists need. However, what do generalists want when advocating the claims that absolute moral generalizations and the doctrine of universalizability are necessary for moral thought and practice? According to Dancy, the motive for generalists to advocate the doctrine and moral generalization is to fulfill the demand of rationality of moral thought and practice.[39] It is usually thought that rationality presupposes consistency regarding how terms and concepts are used. The doctrine and moral generalizations are considered to be the building blocks to fulfill this demand. This assumption is clear when we discuss the role of moral generalizations in the explanation of particular moral judgments and the relation between the moral (terms or concepts) and the descriptive (terms or concepts).

3.4.1 Subsumption

There is no dispute between particularists and generalists that our moral judgments might make sense or be rational. Generalists, like Hare, however, assume that rationality requires consistency in the practice of moral judgment, that is, being consistent in the use of the terms and in applying the concepts. They argue that moral judgments are rational only if and because there is some rule that warrants the consistency of using the terms and applying the concepts. According to Hare, for instance, moral judgments share the feature of universalizability with the descriptive judgments. If someone judges that "*X* is red," one is committed to the meaning-rule of the word "red," that is, to hold that anything similar to *X* is

[39] Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 82.

red. In this train of thought, one also holds the rule that "Everything that is similar to *X* with respect to its being red (or its redness) is red." In the moral domain, according to Hare, if someone judges that "an action *h* is right," one is committed to the meaning-rule of the word "right," that is, to hold that anything similar to *h* is right, such that one also holds the rule that "Everything relevantly similar to *h* with respects to its being right, is right."

However, as we have explained, the doctrine has two categories of move (the universalization and application). Although the universalization move is not a problem for moral particularists, there is a difficulty when it comes to the application move understood in the third sense. Hare believes that new moral judgments would be rational if they follow the meaning-rule consistently, that is, if one uses certain meanings of words consistently. Furthermore, moral words do not only have evaluative meanings but also descriptive ones; for instance, a judgment that a certain action is good is rational only if one admits that the word "good" has a certain meaning, i.e., reference, which can be found in the descriptive features in virtue of which the action is good. For Hare, it seems that this last consideration is based on the assumption that there is a consistent or stable connection between the word "good," the moral quality of an action, and the descriptive property or properties in respect of which the action is good, and such a connection is pictured in moral generalizations. Therefore, one is consistent with one's moral judgment only if one applies certain moral words consistently with regard to their evaluative and descriptive meanings that are captured in the corresponding moral generalizations (which are derived from the previous actions). If one wants to make a moral judgment regarding new cases and the judgment is rational, one must follow the meaning-rule of the previous moral judgments when evaluating similar cases. Thus, for Hare, if one already has a moral generalization (which pictures how the evaluative and descriptive meanings are supposed to be related), one has to subsume the new cases into that moral generalization. Subsumption is the way one applies moral generalizations to the new cases such that one is consistent in using the terms and concepts, and, therefore, one feels that one's new judgments are rational.

Dancy argues that this subsumptive model of how we account for the rationality of moral judgments is an option that should not be chosen. He gives several reasons.[40] *First*, as we have considered, absolute moral generalizations are too narrow or limited to accommodate the vast variety of moral judgments. Moral generalizations derived from the doctrine of universalizability are tight or absolute, thereby resulting in the fact that they cannot accommodate the presence or absence of features not stated in the moral generalizations but that are relevant to determine the moral status of the new actions. *Second*, absolute moral generalizations can neither provide a plausible account for moral conflicts (that is, conflicts of obligations) nor for moral regrets. It could be the case that when

[40] Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 82.

one holds an absolute generalization, one can still have conflicts of obligations. With regard to such phenomena, the holder of an absolute generalization has two possibilities to account for these phenomena: *either* they wrongly apply the generalizations, perhaps because of failure to see the ultimate feature(s) of a certain action that should be the reason for or against the action, *or* there is something wrong with the generalizations because, if absolute generalizations are true, there should be no such conflict. In the case of an ideal moral agent (where one cannot fail to recognize the ultimate features of an action that should be the reason for or against it), there must therefore be something wrong with absolute moral generalizations. The same is true for the phenomena of moral regrets. If absolute generalizations are true, the one who holds these generalizations should not have the experience of regrets. These experiences of regrets show that while one has come to a certain moral judgment or decision, it seems that there is some relevant consideration that is left behind or has not been counted as relevant. Going back to the third version of the example regarding the accident that was set out earlier, supposing that after you have considered your reasons based on your utilitarian principle, you leave that injured person and that you and your boss subsequently regarded your action as morally good. However, in your conscience, you feel that there are other relevant reasons not to leave that injured person in the predicament. Your absolute utilitarian principle cannot plausibly account for why there are such residual duties.[41]

Third, the rationality of moral judgments should not depend on the generalizations, but on the judgment itself, whether it is grounded in good reasons.[42] Surely, generalists would argue that to be able to make correct moral judgments, one has to acquire the concepts regarding which features should be relevant to determining the moral status of an action. Moral generalizations are then thought of as pointers to some relevant features that, if they appear in a certain action, those judging them must consider them as morally relevant. In response, particularists would argue that the way certain descriptive features are morally relevant is not codifiable. The same feature can be positively morally relevant (or the good or right-making feature) in one action while negatively morally relevant (or the bad or wrong-making feature) in another action. In addition, the same feature can be morally relevant but play a different role (such as being an enabler or disabler for other features that are the good or bad, right or wrong making features of an action) or, morally, may be irrelevant although it is present in the action. When we make a moral judgment, what we should do, particularists would argue, is not apply moral generalizations generated from past judgments through universalization to the new cases, but rather recognize which features the action has and what roles they play in that particular action.[43]

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41 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 109–126, Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 4.

42 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 83.

43 In Chapter 6, we will discuss this topic regarding the different kinds of roles of reasons for actions and the nature of these reasons.

3.4.2 The Descriptive Shapes of The Moral

With regard to the demand of consistency of how we use moral terms and concepts, generalist noncognitivists like Hare argue that the moral (terms, concepts, or properties) have a certain natural or descriptive shape.[44] Adopting McDowell's shapelessness hypothesis, moral particularists, such as Dancy, however, argue that the moral is shapeless with regard to the descriptive, and therefore, the doctrine is false.[45]

The shapelessness hypothesis states that the moral (considering its terms or concepts) is shapeless with regard to the nonmoral or descriptive facts. The term "shape" is regarded by some philosophers to mean the commonality of some objects in question.[46] The hypothesis originally arises in the context of McDowell's criticism of noncognitivism using the disentanglement argument. It is now appropriate to examine this argument. Noncognitivists believe that moral concepts are not genuine concepts. Concepts are genuine, if and only if they pick out certain features of the world that are, in a certain sense, real.[47] According to McDowell's examination of noncognitivism, for noncognitivists, the explanation of why we think that the practice of using moral concepts is rational can be disentangled in two claims.[48] First, if such a practice is rational, it is because our senses are equipped with the competence to classify what we see. We make a classification regarding which actions belong to which "moral concept." (Here, we use apostrophes to designate the noncognitivist view about moral concepts,

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44 Such a noncognitivist claim, whose details will be discussed in this subsection, is argued, among others, by Stevenson and Hare. They claim that moral terms such as "good" have two patterns: the pattern of descriptive meaning, (that the "moral concepts" of certain moral terms do not pick out genuine (moral) features of the world, but rather the descriptive ones) and the attitudinal pattern (our responses (approval or disapproval) to those descriptive features). For them, the conjunction of these two patterns will make our use of moral terms rational. (See Charles L. Stevenson (1944). *Ethics and Language*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, pp. 81–83, 206–207, Richard M. Hare (1952). *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 121–126, and Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, pp. 125–129.)

45 The original form of this hypothesis is put forward by McDowell when he considers the thesis of supervenience that the moral or evaluative supervenes upon the descriptive. He writes:
However long a list we give of items to which a supervening term applies, described in terms of the level supervened upon, there may be no way, expressible at the level supervened upon, of grouping just such items together. Hence there need be no possibility of mastering, in a way that would enable one to go on to new cases, a term that is to function at the level supervened upon, but is to group together exactly the items to which competent users would apply the supervening term. Understanding why just those things belong together may essentially require understanding the supervening term. (John McDowell (1998). *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 144–145)

46 Debbie Roberts (2011). 'Shapelessness and the Thick'. In: *Ethics* 121.3, pp. 489–520; Simon Blackburn (1981). 'Rule-Following and Moral Realism'. In: *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*. Ed. by S. Holtzman and C. Leich. London: Routledge, pp. 313–335.

47 Simon Kirchin (2010). 'The Shapelessness Hypothesis'. In: *Philosophers' Imprint* 10.4, pp. 1–28.

48 McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 216.

such as GOOD, KIND, and JUST, which are not thought of as genuine concepts.) Some actions fall under the concepts of GOOD, KIND, or JUST, while others are regarded as BAD, CRUEL, or UNJUST. If our practice of using these concepts is rational, then there must be something that links them together so that some descriptive features belong to the category of GOOD, KIND, JUST, etc. This "something" should not be whimsical because our use of the concepts is rational. However, for noncognitivists, this "something" must also not be moral features because for them, they do not exist. For them, it must rather be the similar descriptive features of the world that we connect to with the same moral terms. Additionally, it is possible for us to know such connection because we have certain attitudinal propensity, either approval or disapproval, towards these descriptive features. This attitudinal propensity is the second feature of the noncognitivist argument. Thus, for them, the conjunction of these two features (i.e., the commonality of the descriptive features of the world and the attitudinal propensity) is the explanation for our use of moral concepts being rational. However, for cognitivists like McDowell, these two features taken together could not sufficiently explain that our use of moral terms is rational. Cognitivists argue that the "something" that links certain descriptive features of the world must be their moral features that are picked out by genuine moral concepts. The reason for this conviction is explained by the shapelessness hypothesis.

From disentanglement, we move now to shapelessness hypothesis. Suppose you are a noncognitivist. You believe that the concept of JUST, for instance, is not a genuine concept, and you know there are many descriptive features or kinds of actions that would be just or that fall under the category of JUST ACTION. Because you are a noncognitivist, it is then your attitudinal propensity—in this case, it is your approval of certain descriptive features—that would help you pick out which actions are just. For instance, an action with the descriptive features *B*, *C*, and *D* falls under the "concept" of JUST ACTION. Therefore, based on entanglement, some actions are just because they have the features *B*, *C*, and *D* and because you approve them. In this sense, your attitude towards the features *B*, *C*, and *D* helps you to determine the extensions of the "concept" of JUST. Actions with the descriptive features of *B*, *C*, and *D* are then the extensions of the "concept" of JUST, and the descriptive features *B*, *C*, and *D* are the similarities of those actions that fall under the concept of JUST or JUST ACTION. Alternatively, for you, a noncognitivist, the "concept" of JUST has the shape of being *B*, *C*, and *D*. More generally, for noncognitivists, therefore, the moral concepts are "shapely" (or have some commonality) with respect to the descriptive or nonmoral features. As another example, for noncognitivists, one who has acquired the "concept" of RIGHTNESS can apply it correctly to actions that have the descriptive features of having D_1 and D_2. The shape of the "concept" of RIGHTNESS can be found, therefore, in the similarities of all and only things that fall under a certain concept, i.e., actions that can be classified as falling under the concepts of having D_1 and D_2.

This corresponds to the doctrine of universalizability, specifically as stated in **(DOC)**. Because **(DOC)** is a metaphysical thesis, we can convert it into a conceptual one:

> **(DOC_C)** "If an action *h* falls under the moral concept of BEING M, then there is a descriptive property or a set of descriptive properties of being *D* such that *h* has *D* and everything that has *D* falls under the moral concept of BEING M."[49]

(DOC_C) tells us that once a competent user of the moral concept of BEING M applies it to a certain action in virtue of which the action has a property or a set of properties of being *D*, one is bound to apply the same moral concept of BEING M to all actions that have the descriptive property or set of descriptive properties of being *D*. Moreover, actions that have the descriptive property or the set of descriptive properties of being *D* also fall under the descriptive concept of BEING D. Therefore, we can say that the moral concept of BEING M has a certain shape with regard to the descriptive concept of BEING D. In short, **(DOC_C)** implies that the moral has descriptive shapes.

Now, McDowell argues that this noncognitivist claim is wrong. He states it is erroneous to claim that the moral has a certain shape with regard to the descriptive or nonmoral. McDowell argues this with an illustration.[50] Suppose an insider or a competent user of a certain moral concept applies the concept of RIGHTNESS to actions that fall under the descriptive concept of HAVING D_1 AND D_2. Now suppose there is an outsider who does not share the moral view with the insider and has learned the concept of RIGHTNESS as mentioned above. This second individual can surely correctly apply the concept of RIGHTNESS to actions that have features D_1 and D_2. However, this person will be wrong (or only accidentally correct) when it comes to actions that have other descriptive features, say D_3 and D_4, which are morally relevant, and therefore make it the case that the action does not fall under the concept of RIGHTNESS, although it also has the descriptive features D_1 and D_2. Thus, according to McDowell, the descriptive extensions of moral concepts cannot be unifiedly classified under the similarity of descriptive features. Alternatively, objects (such as persons or institutions) or events (such as actions) that warrant description with the same moral predicate will not necessarily exhibit a pattern of similarity perspicuous in descriptive or nonmoral terms.[51]

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[49] I suppose generalists, either noncognitivist or cognitivist, would accept (DOC_C). Their difference is that, while for cognitivists, moral concepts such as BEING M are genuine concepts, for noncognitivists, they are not. Our present concern is, however, the claims of noncognitivist generalists (such as Hare and Stevenson), whose claims are refuted by cognitivist particularists such as Dancy and McDowell. At the moment, I do not propose to discuss other possible positions, such as cognitivist generalism and noncognitivist particularism.

[50] McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp. 214–215.

[51] For a more comprehensive discussion regarding the disentanglement thesis and its relation to shapelessness, see, among others, Christian Miller, ed. (2014). *The Bloomsbury Companion to Ethics*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Ch.10, Kirchin, 'The Shapelessness Hypothesis';

Although it seems that the shapelessness hypothesis is clear, we still need an argument to justify it. In the literature, its proponents refer to Wittgenstein's concepts of family resemblance and rule-following to justify the hypothesis. Let us discuss the latter first.[52] What is refuted by the proponents of the hypothesis is the assumption that rationality requires consistency, which is understood as *doing the same thing*. The result of this assumption is that when we apply a certain moral concept to a certain action by virtue of its descriptive features (so that that action is right or wrong, good or bad), we feel that we should follow a certain rule that is transcendent or assumed to that practice, and in this case, we also assume that the rule is true. By following this rule, we feel that we are doing the same thing. This rule seems to warrant that whenever we apply the same moral concept to a certain action that falls under a similar descriptive concept, our application is rational. Such a practice of application occurs when we make moral judgments. Particularists, however, argue that by practicing this (following the rule), we fail to make a judgment regarding the particular situation that we face. Instead, we make another judgment, i.e., we judge whether we do the same thing. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein gives an example of a person who counts in a series from 2 to 4 to 6 to 8, ... and on reaching 100, feels it is necessary to continue with 102, 104, ...[53] The sense that there is an obligation to continue with 102, 104, ... comes from the assumption that if the same thing is done, the person is then rational. Perhaps an assumption has been made that there is a pattern or a rule regarding what is being done, such as "add 2." This would suggest that when the question is asked about which number must be counted after reaching 100, it is felt that now 102, and then 104, and so on, must be said, because now the rule "add 2" becomes the independent benchmark by which consistency in the operation of a practice is assessed.[54] The practice of judgment has now changed. At first, it is a practice of making a judgment regarding counting the number after 100 "because so far, the series has gone 2, 4, 6, 8, ...and so on"; and later, it is a practice of making a judgment about what would or should be counted by following the rule "add 2." Particularists would argue that making moral judgments (which is one of the practices of using moral terms and concepts) should not be a practice of doing the same thing or following a rule.

Wittgenstein makes the aforementioned point more dramatic by advancing this example that after reaching 1000, the person continues with 1004, 1008, ... and so on.[55] If we cannot simply judge that what the person is doing is merely a mistake, we are confronted with a question whether there is a practical rule such as "add 2" governing that practice of counting. McDowell, echoing Wittgenstein,

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Pekka Väyrynen (2014). 'Shapelessness in Context'. In: *Noûs* 48.3, pp. 573–593; Roberts, 'Shapelessness and the Thick'.

52 See McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp. 58–65 and Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 83–83.

53 Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, §143.

54 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 84.

55 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §185.

argues that if such a practice is realized, it confirms that this is not a practice of the mere psychological mechanism of following the rule. The notorious problem of following a rule when it comes to the question of what it means to consistently use a certain word or apply a certain concept is summarized in the so-called Wittgenstein's Paradox. Wittgenstein writes that "no course of action can be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule."[56] One interpretation of this paradox tells us that being consistent in applying a certain concept does not mean being reliant on the (practical and meaning) rule governing the past courses of action such that one does the same thing again.[57] We will use an example posited by Kripke.[58] For instance, you might have learned the term "table" in such a way that you can use it in the future. Now, suppose you see a table under the Eiffel Tower for the first time, and a stranger who does not share the way you view the object table (and, we can say, has a different table-view to you) comes up to you and is skeptical of your practice of applying the concept of TABLE to the one under the Eiffel Tower. The stranger might suppose that by table in the past, what you mean is that it was TABAIR, that is, any table that was found not under the Eiffel Tower. Then, you should not be troubled by this skeptical challenge because you can correctly apply a certain concept, although you follow a different meaning rule. The other direction would also be true; consider an example from Hilary Putnam and Joseph LaPorte about a jade gemstone.[59] The term "jade" applies to two different minerals, nephrite and jadeite. Both minerals have different microstructures, chemical compounds, and colors. Nevertheless, it is acceptable to apply the same term "jade" consistently to the different combinations that may make up what is called jade. Surely this example exposes how words are ambiguous, and to clarify them, we need some explanation, perhaps an evolutionary or sociological one. Nevertheless, this is a fact of consistently applying the concept to objects that are different at their descriptive level.

What the above examples show is that the assumption that there is a rule, either practical or semantic (meaning-rule), or a pattern that governs the relation between the meaning of the concepts and their (descriptive) extensions, which belong to another family, is wrong. We might suppose that the meaning of the terms "table" and "tabair" or the concepts of TABLE and TABAIR belong to the same family and the extensions of these terms belong to another family. Likewise, the meaning of the term "jade" (or the concept of JADE) belongs to a certain family that is different from its extensions. These examples are supposed to

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56 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §201.

57 Saul A. Kripke (1982). *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 7–54.

58 Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition*, p. 19.

59 See Hilary Putnam (1975a). *Mind, Language and Reality*. Philosophical Papers 2. Cambridge University Press, p. 241, Joseph LaPorte (2003). *Natural Kinds and Conceptual Change*. Cambridge University Press and Ian Hacking (2007). 'The Contingencies of Ambiguity'. In: *Analysis* 67.4, pp. 269–277.

support the shapelessness hypothesis that the moral (its terms or concepts) is shapeless with regard to the descriptive. The upshot of the examples is that despite the fact that there is no rule that governs the practice of applying certain concepts to the objects that fall under their ambit, we can still apply them correctly. Alternatively, the explanation regarding how we can correctly and consistently apply moral concepts must not be sought in the pattern of the relation between the two families of concepts, that is, the moral and descriptive concepts-but somewhere else.

The second justification for the shapelessness hypothesis is much easier. It has to do with Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance. We might arguably claim that moral concepts are family resemblance concepts.[60] In Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, the concept of GAME is the example of the family resemblance concept *par excellence*.[61] Wittgenstein shows vividly that numerous games, such as board games, card games, ball games, or the Olympic Games, metaphysically share no common property, although linguistically, they are called games. The usage of the term "game" for these different games is to say that they stand in family resemblance because all are united under the common overlapping similarities, that is, their being called games. In this sense, the property of being called games is the only property that unites them. Now suppose these games are G1, G2, G3, and G4. As shown by Wittgenstein, G1 and G2 might share the property F1, and, in a similar way, G2 and G3 share the property F2, but G1 does not share the property F1 with G3. G3 and G4 might share the property F3 and so on. G1, G2, G3, and G4 do not share the property that is common to them all except their being called a game. The fact that they are games demonstrates that they fall under the same concept of GAME.

The example outlined above supports the shapelessness hypothesis. If moral concepts are family resemblance concepts, they can correctly be applied to many extensions (that is, to actions with different kinds of *D*-properties) without having the commonality in their *D*-properties. Actions or persons to which moral concepts are correctly applied do not have common identical properties, except for their common moral properties. Moreover, if these actions or persons have nothing whatsoever in common except their being judged as right or wrong, they do not have any commonality (viz., they are shapeless) in their descriptive properties.

This being said, it does not mean that particularists should rule out any pattern of the meaning of moral terms or concepts; these are shapeless with regard to descriptive terms and concepts. However, the above consideration regarding games suggests that moral terms and concepts still have a pattern that is the moral conceptual pattern because all right actions are right, and all wrong actions are wrong. Moral terms and concepts have the moral but not

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60 Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu (2013). 'Shapelessness and Predication Supervenience. A Limited Defense of Shapeless Moral Particularism'. In: *Philosophical Studies* 166.1, pp. 54–55.

61 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §66.

the associated descriptive shapes. However, such a commonality is merely trivial. The remaining question is, then, how we could acquire conceptual competence of moral terms if these terms have no descriptive patterns. Such a question has been raised by F. Jackson, P. Pettit, and M. Smith in their article "Ethical Particularism and Patterns."[62]

Jackson et al. argue that the particularist claim that all right actions are simply united by the fact that they are the proper application of the predicate "is right" is problematic. The reason is that the predicate "is right" is just a bare predicate, and there cannot be such predicates because this kind of predicate applies to how things are or to certain descriptive facts. Being competent to correctly apply the moral predicate "is right," therefore, requires the existence of a commonality between the descriptive facts that are the correct application of the moral predicate "is right." If there is no such commonality between the descriptive facts that are the correct applications of the predicate "is right," "we finite creatures could not have grasped through a finite learning process [...] the predicate 'is right'."[63] In the context of our discussion, by advocating such a claim, the doctrine that also emerges from Hare's conception of meaning-rule of words, would have stronger support. This would surely be harmful for moral particularism.

Moral particularists might give several responses to the above argument. First, particularists might give up their claim based on this argument and say that there are descriptive patterns. However, we think that particularists would strongly resist dropping their theory. The second response is that particularists might say that there are perhaps descriptive patterns of moral concepts, but they are ungraspable by our cognitive ability. If this is the case, then how our use of moral concepts can be correct is epistemologically mysterious. Third, particularists might provide other models of acquirement of conceptual competence that do not assume the necessary role of descriptive patterns. The last part of this book should provide an account of moral education consistent with moral particularism where acquirement of moral concepts is gained through *Bildung*, that is, an immersion into the moral practice.[64]

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62 Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit and Michael Smith (2000). 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79–99.

63 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 87.

64 There are some solutions to the challenge posited by Jackson et al. that are suggested by moral particularists, as discussed in Tsu, 'Shapelessness and Predication Supervenience'. First, Garfield argues that it might be true that there must be descriptive commonalities we can latch onto. However, due to our cognitive constraints, commonality has to be short and clear enough to be learned. In fact, there is no evidence that such a short and clear commonality has been demonstrated today. Unless Jackson et al. can show such a short and clear commonality, particularists can still hold their claim. Second, Eleanor Rosch demonstrated that our conceptual competence does not depend on the indiscriminate descriptive commonality that we latch onto, but rather that we learn to apply concepts correctly by grasping onto prototypical properties

3.5 Summary

We might now summarize our discussion on the doctrine of universalizability and the particularists' objections to the *Argument from Universalizability*. Despite its wide acceptance, the doctrine is full of ambiguity. It should not be understood as guidance to discern which action ought or ought not to be done; rather, the doctrine is supposed to tell us the rationality of a particular moral judgment with respect to other moral judgments. To clarify its ambiguity, there are at least three forms of the doctrine: **(U_{REL})**, **(U)**, and **(DOC)**. Particularists do not refute **(U_{REL})** because it is an analytic truth; there could be moral generalizations derived from **(U_{REL})**, but they cannot be categorized as genuine moral generalizations because they are too specific. **(U)** could also be trivial if both properties are of the same family. If they are from different families, we will get **(DOC)**; this is refuted by particularists. To clearly understand **(DOC)**, two different moves have been introduced, the universalization and application moves, both of which have been overlooked by particularists and generalists. For generalists, absolute moral generalizations of the schema **(G*)** are derived from **(DOC)** and are supposed to be applicable to various cases. Particularists refute **(DOC)** and **(G*)** by undertaking two strategies: first, by showing the falsity of the doctrine and the schema **(G*)**, and second, by demonstrating that **(DOC)** and **(G*)** would not satisfy the generalist demand of providing the account for the rationality of moral judgment. The demand for rationality, so particularists argue, should not be sought in applying the meaning-rule consistently

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that are present in typical cases. Third is John Horty's notion of default, where he explains that our conceptual competence is one with defaults about concepts. That we are competent with the concept "bird" means that we are equipped with the defaults about the concept that, for instance, "birds fly." Our conceptual competence is, therefore, always defeasible. For instance, when we are told that a certain bird is a penguin, we revise our concept of a bird—that there are also birds that do not fly. Jackson et al. do not provide the space for one to revise one's own concepts. Fourth, and the one that I propose to develop, is McDowell's account. We might sum up his ideas into two claims. First, the moral concepts might have shape; however, it would not be discovered out there in what descriptive facts show us, but rather in our response to those facts. Our conceptual competence is not explained by there being descriptive shapes we latch onto, but by a particular way people carve up moral reality and knowing why people carve up moral reality the way they do (so it seems that people categorize *things* into what is right and wrong, virtuous or vicious). That being so, moral conceptual capacity is somehow a specific kind of competence in which people perceive the world in a specific way, that is, from the moral point of view. Second, the competence of grasping moral concepts comprises sharing the same "form of life." In a way similar to the acquirement of linguistic competence, the acquirement of moral competence is built on the habitual, viz., the practical basis, when one is initiated into the moral point of view. (See: Jay L. Garfield (2000). 'Particularity and Principle: The Structure of Moral Knowledge'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Margaret Little Brad Hooker. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Eleanor Rosch (1975). 'Cognitive Representations of Semantic Categories'. In: *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 104.3, pp. 192–233; John F. Horty (2012). *Reasons as defaults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, specifically "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," pp. 198–218.)

but must rather be sought elsewhere. Conceptual competence of using moral terms is not demonstrated by following a rule because moral concepts are shapeless with regard to descriptive concepts; rather, it is demonstrated by an initiation into the moral point of view in an immersion that is pursued by habituation, viz., practice.

4 THE THESIS OF SUPERVENIENCE IN ETHICS

In the previous chapter, we dealt with one of the key generalist arguments, the argument from the doctrine of universalizability. In this chapter, we discuss another thesis that is also believed to support moral generalism, the thesis of supervenience in ethics or, in shorthand, the thesis of moral supervenience.[1] This thesis says that moral properties supervene on nonmoral properties. In saying this, one means that there is an asymmetric covariance relation between moral and nonmoral properties: for any two similar objects (actions, persons, institutions, etc.), there can be no differences in their moral properties without at least one difference in some of their nonmoral properties. This thesis implies that if there is an action *a* that has a moral property M and a nonmoral property D, any actions identical to *a* with respect to D must also have the moral property M. Some generalists, such as Richard M. Hare, Jonathan Bennett, Frank Jackson et al., and W. Sinnott-Armstrong, contend that, via the thesis of moral supervenience, one will render some true moral generalizations because, as they consider, employing the above conviction, one can have a generalization that $\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$, which is seen as a form of true moral generalizations.[2] This is surely an argument for moral generalism. We can call it *the Argument from Supervenience*. If this argument holds, then it will pose a problem for moral particularism.

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[1] Perhaps the term "moral supervenience" is an elliptic or sloppy one, as if the adjective "moral" gives additional information about the (moral) quality of the concept of supervenience (like in "moral/immoral action"); however, this does not sound right. Moreover, this term has already been widely used, for instance, in Nick Zangwill (1995). 'Moral Supervenience'. In: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20, pp. 240–262; Gerald K. Harrison (2013). 'The Moral Supervenience Thesis is Not a Conceptual Truth'. In: *Analysis* 73.1, pp. 62–68. DOI: 10.1093/analys/ans140; Alexander Miller (2017). 'Moral Supervenience: A Defence of Blackburn's Argument'. In: *dialectica* 71.4, pp. 581–601; Anandi Hattiangadi (2018). 'Moral Supervenience'. In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 48.3-4, pp. 592–615. DOI: 10.1080/00455091.2018.1436034. In this context, this term must be understood as "supervenience in the domain of morality" or, in short, "supervenience in ethics." Perhaps this is why some other authors prefer to use the term "supervenience in ethics" rather than "moral supervenience." In this chapter, however, we use these terms interchangeably, and "moral supervenience" will be understood as "supervenience in ethics."

[2] See Richard M. Hare (1952). *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 145; Richard M. Hare (1984). 'Inaugural Address: Supervenience'. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 58, pp. 1–16; Richard M. Hare (1981). *Moral Thinking. Its Levels, Method and Point*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 62–64; Jonathan Bennett (1995). *The Act Itself*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 19; Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (1999). 'Some Varieties of Particularism'. In: *Metaphilosophy* 30.1-2, pp. 5–6; Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit and Michael Smith (2000). 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79–99.

This chapter examines the above argument and discusses some responses of moral particularists to it that will lead to a defense of the moral particularists' claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. We mainly discuss responses suggested by Jonathan Dancy, Margaret Little, and Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu. Dancy and Little seem to agree that the thesis of moral supervenience can render some moral generalizations true. However, they contend that moral generalizations derived through the thesis of supervenience lack epistemological strength. Dancy claims that moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience are not genuine ones, whereas Little maintains that such moral generalizations cannot explain why certain objects have the moral properties that they do.[3] Dancy's and Little's arguments seem to plausibly disarm the generalists' argument from supervenience when viewed from the epistemological perspective. Their arguments, however, leave a metaphysical problem for moral particularists because the generalists' claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations is still unscathed. The view that *there are* defensible true moral generalizations can be called metaphysical generalism; this is the position that is criticized by Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu.[4] In a nutshell, Tsu's key argument against metaphysical generalism is fortified when he precisely delineates the scope of properties that can be included in the supervenience base. According to his argument, we see that we can have three interpretations of moral supervenience based on the scope of the supervenience base: The first is *Supervenience (original)*, the second one *Universalizability*, and the third one *Resultance*. In addition to Tsu's argument, we claim that, only if the thesis of moral supervenience is understood in terms of *Universalizability* —in which the base properties are restricted to all possible morally *relevant* properties and they are sufficiently robust such that changes of the contexts (the absence and presence of any (new) features) will not affect the base in any way, and any action that has this/these feature(s) will always have the same moral property—then it is plausible to categorically state that there are defensible true moral generalizations. After testing some possible robust base properties, however, we conclude that there is no evidence that such bases exist, and therefore, it is plausible to conclude that there are no defensible true moral generalizations.

In defending the claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations, this chapter will be structured as follows. In the first section, we elaborate the generalists' *Argument from Supervenience* and ask why generalists think that, via the thesis of moral supervenience, one can claim that there are true moral

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3 See Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 87; Margaret Olivia Little (2000). 'Moral Generalities Revisited'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 276–304.

4 Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu (2011). 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack'. In: *Acta Analytica* 26.4, pp. 387–402; Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu (2013). 'Shapelessness and Predication Supervenience. A Limited Defense of Shapeless Moral Particularism'. In: *Philosophical Studies* 166.1, pp. 51–67.

generalizations. Additionally, we present, in a concise manner, what the thesis of moral supervenience is and why some philosophers think that the thesis is true. In the second section, we discuss Dancy's and Little's responses to the generalists' argument from the epistemological viewpoint. In the third section, we examine Tsu's contention against metaphysical generalism. In the last section, we examine two examples of robust base properties, the property of torturing an innocent merely for fun and the property of being allowed by the Parfitian triple principle. In looking more closely at the latter example, we modify the thesis of moral supervenience in a way that it allows the supervenience base to include not only the nonmoral (or the natural) properties but also the morally involving properties.

4.1 The Argument from Moral Supervenience

The generalists' *Argument from Moral Supervenience* can be summarized as follows:

> P1. The thesis of moral supervenience is true.
> P2. If the thesis of moral supervenience is true, then there are defensible true moral generalizations.
> C. Hence, there are defensible true moral generalizations. (And therefore, moral particularism is false.)[5]

Considering the above premises and their conclusion, the argument is, logically speaking, valid. Our primary concern is the second premise (P2), where we argue that it is false, and if this is so, this generalists' argument fails. From this, it follows that the thesis of moral supervenience cannot be utilized to argue against moral particularism. We claim therefore, that, via the thesis of moral supervenience, one cannot render defensible true moral generalizations. However, before we further elaborate this claim, let us take a closer look at what the thesis of moral supervenience is (Subsection 4.1.1) and why some philosophers think that it is true (Subsection 4.1.2). For those whose main interest is to see why generalists contend that there are defensible true moral generalizations derived through the thesis of moral supervenience may wish to skip the next two subsections and go directly to Subsection 4.1.3.

4.1.1 The Thesis of Moral Supervenience

What is the thesis of moral supervenience? To answer this question, we lay out three substantial features of the thesis of moral supervenience. First, as we elaborate in Section 4.1.1.1, in its basic understanding, the thesis of moral supervenience is an ontological claim. We see this in the definition of the thesis that has recently been a recurring topic in philosophical literature where it depicts the relations between the moral and nonmoral properties. Second, in Section 4.1.1.2, we consider that although its basic understanding is ontological, the thesis can

[5] This argument has been put forward in Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', pp. 388–389.

be understood nonontologically, that is, as depicting the relations between moral judgments. Such an understanding is usually called ascriptive moral supervenience. Third, in Section 4.1.1.3, we see that the general structure of the thesis of moral supervenience consists of two elements: the first one is the nonmoral properties, and the second one is the moral properties. As a general name, the former type of properties is usually called "the supervenience base," "the base property," or "the subvenient property," and the latter kind is "the supervenience property." It seems clear that the supervenience properties are those that belong to the class of moral properties. However, although in the formulation of the thesis we state that the "supervenience base" refers to nonmoral properties, such a term requires some additional elaboration, specifically with regard to the following disagreements: First, philosophers disagree regarding the class of the base properties, as to whether they belong only to the class of natural properties. Second, when it comes to consideration about particular objects (actions, persons, or institutions), philosophers also disagree about which properties should be included in the supervenience base. In this section, we do not discuss the first area of disagreement because it is not directly relevant to the topic of this chapter. We only deal with the second one, and in this regard, there could be three forms of the thesis of moral supervenience.

4.1.1.1 The Definition of Moral Supervenience

The concept of moral supervenience can be understood as an application of the general philosophical concept of supervenience to the domain of ethics or moral philosophy. In the domain of ethics, the thesis of moral supervenience indicates that moral properties supervene on nonmoral ones. In general, if one says that a class of properties A supervenes on another class of properties B, one can have the intuition that there is an asymmetric or single-sided covariance relation between these classes of properties, meaning that changes in one class are related to changes in the other. In ethics, the definition of moral supervenience would be as follows:

> **(SUP$_{def}$)** moral properties supervene on nonmoral properties, if and only if, for any two possible objects with such properties, there can be no difference with respect to their moral properties without there being some difference with respect to their nonmoral properties.

To understand this definition, let us consider the following modified trolley case.[6]

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[6] The trolley case thought experiment was introduced by Philippa Foot, but J. J. Thomson is credited with coining the term *trolley problem*. The scenario being presented here is adapted from J. J. Thomson's article. (See Judith Jarvis Thomson (1985). 'The Trolley Problem'. In: *The Yale Law Journal* 94.6, p. 1395; Philippa Foot (1972). 'Morality as A System of Hypothetical Imperatives'. In: *The Philosophical Review* 81.3, pp. 305–316)

The Trolley Case:
Suppose Adam is the driver of a trolley. As his trolley rounds a bend, five track workmen who have been repairing the track come into view. The track goes through a bit of a valley at that point, and the sides are steep, so Adam must stop the trolley if he is to avoid running the five men down. He steps on the brakes, but alas, they do not work. Now, he suddenly sees a spur of track leading off to the right. He can turn the trolley onto it and thus save the five men on the straight track ahead. Unfortunately, there is one track workman on that spur of track. It is equally impossible for this workman to get off the track as it is for the five, so Adam will kill him if he turns the trolley into the spur. Given the short amount of time he has, Adam decides to turn the trolley and thus save the five men but kill the one.

Imagine that you consider Adam's action and suppose, from the armchair, you are convinced that what he does is morally right. Now you make a moral judgment that "Adam's action is morally right." Suppose, further, that you are a realist about moral properties and moral facts, which means that you believe that they exist. These are like, for example, the property of being morally right and the fact that Adam's action is morally right. With regard to your judgment on Adam's action, the properties you are considering are the moral property of being morally right (let us call it *M*), and the nonmoral property of Adam's action (let us call it *D*). The nonmoral property of being Adam's action or being *D* can be analyzed further. From the above case, we know that there are at least two consequences of Adam's action: saving the five (D1) and killing one (D2). We might also plausibly assume that Adam is an adult and is a responsible person who has the ability to make a rational moral decision and to carry it out. Thus, there is a property of being capable of making moral decisions and carrying them out; we label this property (D3). Given this assumption, we might also plausibly be confident that Adam believes that the lives of the six persons around him (those who are saved and the one who is killed) and also his own life are valuable and incommensurable. Let us call this belief (D4). Suppose as well that we have considered all relevant nonmoral properties that further describe Adam's action, and in this situation, we do not see that there are other stronger reasons not to do the action. We call the property that there are no stronger reasons not to do the action (D5). Thus, Adam's action that you judge as being morally right is more or less completely described by the nonmoral properties (D1) to (D5).

Now, consider the definition of moral supervenience above. This definition implies two things: First, any two possible objects (actions, situations, persons, etc.) with exactly similar nonmoral properties must have exactly similar moral properties. With regard to Adam's action, it means that, if there were any possible actions that are similar to Adam's with respect to the properties (D1) to (D5), these must also have the same moral property Adam's action has, that is, being morally right. Second, any two considered objects with different moral properties must

have different nonmoral properties. With regard to Adam's action, if we consider other actions, and they have other moral properties, such as being morally wrong, they must be different in some of their nonmoral properties. Thus, we would have to examine whether these other actions are similar to Adam's with respect to the properties (D1) to (D5).

Surely, with respect to Adam's action, we do not arbitrarily consider any other actions if they have nothing to do with Adam's. We consider only those that, in some respects, have similarities to his action. Suppose Ben's action is, in some respects, similar to Adam's. After a careful analysis, we find out that Ben's is similar to Adam's in having the properties (D1) to (D4), but it does not have the property (D5), which is that there are no stronger reasons not to do the action. We figure out that the stronger reason not to do the action is that the individual worker who is going to be killed is a father of a poor family with several children, and their lives depend on him. The death of the father would bring about some very bad consequences for the children. Similar to the first case, this second one might have the same properties of killing one (D1) and saving five (D2), perhaps the properties (D3) and (D4) as well, but it turns out to be morally wrong. Thus, in this case, **(SUP$_{def}$)** implies that: First, if Ben's action were similar to Adam's with respect to the nonmoral properties (D1) to (D5), it would have the same moral property as Adam's, that is, being morally right. Second, because Ben's action does not have the same moral property as Adam's, they must have different nonmoral properties (in this case, they are different with respect to (D5)).

4.1.1.2 Ontological and Ascriptive Supervenience

Whereas the above definition **(SUP$_{def}$)** and its explication assume the existence of moral properties and facts, some philosophers believe that the thesis of moral supervenience can also be understood without making an ontological assumption regarding the existence of moral properties and facts. They think that the thesis of moral supervenience articulates and underpins the correctness of our moral judgments regarding cases with similar nonmoral properties. Thus, if we consider two actions that are similar in their nonmoral properties, but we judge them as having different moral qualities, we should be suspicious not only whether they really have the same nonmoral features but also whether we do not make a mistake in judging them. In contrast to the ontological understanding of moral supervenience laid out above, which is usually called ontological supervenience, James Klagge calls this nonontological understanding of moral supervenience *ascriptive* supervenience.[7] The thesis of ascriptive moral supervenience can be formulated as follows:

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[7] James C. Klagge (1988). 'Supervenience: Ontological and Ascriptive'. In: *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 66.4, pp. 461–470.

Ascriptive
Anyone who judges apparently base-identical circumstances as morally different from each other thereby makes a *mistake*.[8]

According to **Ascriptive**, moral supervenience is not a relation between properties but between moral judgments. Surely, the difference between ascriptive and ontological supervenience has some important implications, specifically when it comes to the question regarding whether or not moral properties and facts exist. However, in our opinion, the generalists' argument from moral supervenience can be neutral on that question. On the one hand, some generalists who defend this argument, such as Richard M. Hare, are noncognitivists and nonrealists who are committed to the claims that moral judgments are not truth-apt—meaning that moral judgments or statements have no substantial truth conditions and therefore, cannot be true or false—and there are no moral facts and properties. Thus, they understand the thesis of moral supervenience as a relation between judgments. On the other hand, those who argue for the generalists' argument from moral supervenience, such as J. Bennett and Frank Jackson, et al., are realists regarding the existence of moral facts and properties and therefore understand the thesis of moral supervenience as a relation between properties (moral and nonmoral) of objects. However, both camps, the realists and nonrealists, argue that there must be some defensible true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, either understood in the ontological or in the ascriptive sense. In what follows, however, for the sake of simplicity, we assume that there are moral properties and facts, and thus, understand the thesis of moral supervenience as a relation between properties and facts.

4.1.1.3 The Supervenience Base and Some Forms of Moral Supervenience

Let us get back to the cases of Adam and Ben to consider what philosophers call "the supervenience base." In the descriptions of Adam's and Ben's actions, we consider only the nonmoral properties that are morally relevant, such as (D1) to (D5). With regard to the thesis of moral supervenience, these properties are usually called "the supervenience base," "the base properties," or "the subvenient properties" (whereas the moral property being considered, such as being morally right, is usually called "the supervenience property"). Some recent philosophers, however, consider that the supervenience base includes not only nonmoral properties that are morally relevant, but also *all* other nonmoral properties the action

[8] Except for McLaughlin's formula, the formulas of supervenience we are using here are adapted from Tristram McPherson (2021). 'Supervenience in Ethics'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2021. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/supervenience-ethics/ (visited on 16/08/2021).

has.[9] According to this understanding, the thesis of moral supervenience, therefore, does not consider actions with similar morally relevant properties but rather actions that are *exactly alike* in *all* their nonmoral properties. In what follows, we consider this recent understanding of the supervenience base as the original sense of moral supervenience. In this regard, the term "their nonmoral properties" in the above definition **(SUP$_{def}$)** must be understood as including all nonmoral properties that an action has. The thesis of moral supervenience therefore says that any two possible actions with exactly similar nonmoral properties are morally similar.

If the supervenience base is understood as outlined above, however, a problem remains. Michael Ridge points out that, if the supervenience base includes all nonmoral properties that the action has and it is widened far enough such that it includes the spatiotemporal properties of the action, the thesis of moral supervenience would be trivial. It is viewed as such because in one and the same world, there can be "no numerically distinct things [that] can be precisely the same in all of the subvening respects."[10] Surely, he is right when he asserts it is obvious that in one and the same world, there can be no two numerically distinct actions that are similar in all their supervenience base, and therefore, if there were such things (perhaps, in a thought experiment), they could not be morally different. However, the thesis of moral supervenience is supposed to be nontrivial. To avoid such triviality, it is then understood as the relation between two possible worlds. The understanding of the thesis of moral supervenience as capturing the relation between possible worlds is called global supervenience. It can be defined as follows:

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[9] Jonathan Dancy explains that the two different descriptions of which properties should be included in the supervenience base can be found in Richard M. Hare's writings. In his two books, *Freedom and Reason* and *The Language of Morals*, Hare seems to think that what is called the supervenience base properties are those that are morally relevant. Based on this description, the thesis of moral supervenience considers actions that are similar in their morally relevant nonmoral properties. In his later book, *Moral Thinking*, however, Hare seems to propose that the thesis of moral supervenience does not merely consider actions that are similar in their morally relevant nonmoral properties, but any actions that are *exactly* similar in their nonmoral properties regardless of their moral relevance. Thus, according to the latter understanding, the supervenience base includes all nonmoral properties that the action has. Such an understanding is also taken by Dancy himself and other authors, such as Nick Zangwill, Jörg Schorth, and Gerald Harrison. (Dancy's interpretation of Hare's two distinct descriptions regarding the supervenience base can be found in the second appendix of Jonathan Dancy (1993). *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 258. Dancy's statement about the supervenience base, that it "consists in *all the nonmoral features of the action*," can be found in Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 87. A similar view can be found in Zangwill, 'Moral Supervenience'; Jörg Schroth (2001). *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*. Paderborn: mentis; Jörg Schroth (2003). 'Particularism and Universalizability'. In: *Journal of Value Inquiry* 37.4, pp. 455–461. DOI: 10.1023/b:inqu.0000019032.13457.20; Harrison, 'The Moral Supervenience Thesis is Not a Conceptual Truth'.)

[10] Michael Ridge (2007). 'Anti-Reductionism and Supervenience'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4.3, p. 332. In this case, "subvening properties" are the same as what we here call "base properties".

Global Supervenience in Ethics (GS)
For any two possible worlds, *w*1 and *w*2, if they have exactly the same worldwide pattern of distribution of supervenience base properties, they also have exactly the same worldwide pattern of distribution of moral properties.[11]

The thesis of global supervenience in ethics is distinguished from the thesis of local supervenience. While **(GS)** considers the relation between possible worlds globally, the thesis of local supervenience considers the relation between individual objects (actions, persons, institutions) in one and the same world. Furthermore, the thesis of local supervenience can be differentiated based on the strength of covariation between the moral and the nonmoral properties (or the supervenience base) of the objects being considered. The covariance relation between them is considered *strong*, if and only if, once the supervenience base being considered occurs, the corresponding moral property must also occur. This *must* locution here is usually understood as a metaphysically necessary relation between certain nonmoral properties (the supervenience base), on one side, and the corresponding moral properties, on the other, such that once the supervenience base occurs, it is a matter of metaphysical necessity that the corresponding moral properties come about. This strong supervenience can be suggested by the following definition:

Strong Supervenience in Ethics (SS)
Necessarily, for any possible world, *w*, if objects *x* and *y* in *w* are similar in their supervenience base, D, they are *necessarily* alike in their moral property, M.[12]

We may formalize this definition as follows:

$$\forall w\ \forall x\ \forall y(\forall \mathrm{D}(\mathrm{D}wx \leftrightarrow \mathrm{D}wy) \rightarrow \forall \mathrm{M}(\mathrm{M}wx \leftrightarrow \mathrm{M}wy))$$[13]

The contrast of **(SS)** is called weak supervenience; the covariance relation between the supervenience base and moral properties is called *weak*, if and only if, the occurrence of the base properties being considered is not necessarily followed by the occurrence of the purported moral properties. This weak covariance relation can be displayed as follows:

Weak Supervenience in Ethics (WS)
Necessarily, for any possible world, *w*, if objects *x* and *y* in *w* are similar in their supervenience base, D, they are alike in their moral property, M.[14]

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11 This definition is adapted from McPherson, 'Supervenience in Ethics'.

12 The definition is adapted from McPherson, 'Supervenience in Ethics' and Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, p. 45.

13 This formal form of the thesis of strong supervenience in ethics is adapted from Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, p. 44.

14 The definition is adapted from McPherson, 'Supervenience in Ethics' and Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, p. 43.

We may formalize this definition as follows:

$$\forall w \forall x \forall y (\forall D(Dwx \leftrightarrow Dwy) \rightarrow \forall M(Mwx \leftrightarrow Mwy))^{15}$$

The difference between **(SS)** and **(WS)** is best illustrated by examples such as the following:[16] Suppose in the actual world, consequentialism holds, such that rightness covaries uniformly with producing the best overall results. According to **(WS)**, it is impossible that in one and the same world, there are two actions with exactly similar nonmoral properties, which are, however, morally different. Consider your judgment on Adam's action above and suppose that your judgment is true. If it is true that Adam's action is morally right, then **(WS)** implies that any actions exactly similar to it, in a world in which consequentialism holds, must also be morally right. It is impossible for the second action not to be morally right. However, as James Dreier elaborates, this impossibility should not be understood as a matter of metaphysical necessity but instead as a matter of (contingent) fact.[17] This indicates that it does not imply that in all possible worlds, such actions must be morally right, because **(WS)** does not imply that in all possible worlds, once the base properties of Adam's action are present, it is necessary that the moral property of being morally right is also present. It could be the case that in another world, consequentialism does not hold, but rather Kantianism does, so that rightness covaries uniformly with satisfying the categorical imperative. In contrast, **(SS)** would tell us that there is a necessary relation between the nonmoral properties of Adam's action and the moral property of being morally right. **(SS)** therefore implies that, if it is true that in the actual world, Adam's action is morally right, then it is a matter of necessity that, if the base properties of Adam's action are there, then the moral property of being morally right is also there.

Given this necessity relation, there is another consequence of **(SS)**, that is, that **(SS)** implies **(GS)**. Consider how we interpreted Adam's action using **(SS)** above. **(SS)** implies that, because Adam's action is morally right, it is a matter of necessity that any actions similar to Adam's are morally right. If the relation between the base properties of Adam's action and its moral property is necessary, such a relation holds in all possible worlds. Alternatively, we may say that, because in the actual world, Adam's action is morally right, then it is true that in all possible worlds, any actions similar to Adam's are morally right. This means that in all possible worlds, rightness covaries uniformly with producing the best overall results. Put another way, **(SS)** implies that, if in this actual world consequentialism holds, in all possible worlds, consequentialism must also hold. In a certain sense, it means that **(SS)** implies (GS), i.e., if **(SS)** holds, then for any possible world, if they have the same worldwide pattern of distribution of

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15 See Schroth, *Die Universalisierbarkeit moralischer Urteile*, p. 44.

16 McPherson, 'Supervenience in Ethics'.

17 James Dreier (1992). 'The Supervenience Argument against Moral Realism'. In: *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30.3, p. 14.

supervenience base properties, they also have exactly the same worldwide pattern of distribution of moral properties.

The above consideration that **(SS)** implies **(GS)** becomes clearer if we read **(SS)** globally, that is, as a relation between properties of individual objects across possible worlds. As noted by Jaegwon Kim when he cites an unpublished manuscript by Brian McLaughlin, a class of properties A strongly supervenes on another class of properties B, if and only if "*crossworld indiscernibility in B entails crossworld indiscernibility in A*."[18] This indicates that, if moral properties strongly supervene on the base properties (in this case, the nonmoral properties), then, if in the actual world Adam's action, given the base properties it has, is necessarily morally right, then in any possible world in which the base properties of Adam's action are there, such that it is indiscernible to his action with respect to its base properties, this second action must also be morally right or indiscernible to Adam's action with respect to its moral property. Thus, it means that **(SS)** implies that, if in the actual world, Adam's action is necessarily morally right, then in all possible worlds, any actions indiscernible to Adam's are morally right. McLauglin's formula of strong supervenience in ethics can be set out as follows:

McLaughlin's Strong Supervenience in Ethics:
For any worlds w_1 and w_2, and for any objects x and y, if x in w_1 and y in w_2 have exactly the same nonmoral properties, D, then x in w_1 has the same moral property, M, that y has in w_2.[19]

This definition can be formalized as follows:

$$\forall w_1 \forall w_2 \forall x \forall y \, (\forall \mathrm{D}(\mathrm{D}_{w1} x \leftrightarrow \mathrm{D}_{w2} y) \rightarrow \forall \mathrm{M}(\mathrm{M}_{w1} x \leftrightarrow \mathrm{M}_{w2} y))$$

So far, we have discussed that there are three (or four, if **Ascriptive** is included) formulas of moral supervenience that indicate the different possible strengths of the covariance relation between the supervenience base (the nonmoral properties) and the moral properties. In this section, we do not discuss which formula is the most defensible one. Apparently, all these formulas are intuitively attractive in their own right. What we want to explore further here are the reasons why some philosophers believe that the thesis of moral supervenience is true, such that it is appropriate to have the intuition that objects with similar nonmoral properties must be similar in their moral properties, and they cannot be morally different without there being any difference in their nonmoral properties. The next section will propose three reasons for this intuition.

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[18] Brian McLaughlin, "Why Try to Bake an Intentional Cake with Physical Yeast and Flour?," unpublished manuscript, as cited in Jaegwon Kim (1987). '"Strong" and "Global" Supervenience Revisited'. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48.2, p. 316, emphasis original.

[19] The formula is adapted from Kim, '"Strong" and "Global" Supervenience Revisited', p. 316.

4.1.2 Why Believe in Moral Supervenience?

According to Debbie Roberts, there are three arguments that might justify the thesis of moral supervenience: the consistency argument, the grounding argument, and the conceivability argument.[20] Let us discuss them concisely.

4.1.2.1 The Consistency Argument

This argument seems to be attractive for those who regard the thesis of moral supervenience as a relation between moral judgments, i.e., ascriptive supervenience. The reconstruction of Roberts' consistency argument is as follows:[21]

> P1. Moral judgments must be consistent. (Premise)
> P2. One judges that an action has a certain moral property based on one's judgment about the base properties the action has. (Premise)
> P3. One is inconsistent in making moral judgments, if and only if one judges actions with exactly similar base properties as having another moral property. (Premise, possible definition of P1)
> C. Therefore, anyone who treats apparently base-identical circumstances as morally different from each other makes a mistake. **(Ascriptive)** (From P2 and P3)

The argument above is logically valid and seems to represent our intuition regarding how we should make moral judgments. However, some questions can be put forward. The first and foremost one is the motivation of the first premise. We might ask: Why should our moral judgments be consistent? According to the third premise (P3), being consistent with one's moral judgments means that one judges the same actions (actions with similar base properties) as being morally the same. However, *why* should we judge actions with similar base properties as being morally the same? There could be some possible motivations underlying the first premise (P1). One of them is, perhaps, that we tend to think that morality is a system to regulate our behaviors in advance. Perhaps we tend to think that our moral behavior must be consistent with our moral judgments, such that if we judge that a certain action is morally wrong, we ought not to do it, and if we judge that it is morally right, then we ought to do it. Moreover, we might also think that one moral judgment must also be consistent with other moral judgments, meaning that, if we once judge that a certain action is morally right, wrong, permissible, or impermissible based on the base properties it has, we tend to think that in the future, when we face the same acts with the same base properties, we must make the same judgment. If we do so, we think that we are consistent in making moral judgments, and consistent moral judgments will regulate our moral behavior.

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[20] Debbie Roberts (2018). 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?' In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 13. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–24.

[21] Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', pp. 10–11.

In this regard, however, it is disputable whether we can utilize any judgments in the past to make judgments in the future, such that making moral judgments is like following a certain mechanism, and morality seems to be "like a set of traffic regulations."[22] Surely, it would be nice and easy for us if morality were like a set of traffic regulations. However, moral decisions are not just a mechanism for applying past judgments in the future, like applying traffic regulations. Morality is far more complex than that, and although we have learned something from our past judgments, present and future judgments must be based on the judgments about the present and future cases themselves. Such a mechanistic way of making moral judgments is disputable.

The above accusation is perhaps psychologically too behavioristic, if not superficial, and some philosophers believe that there is a deeper reason why we tend to think that the above consistency argument holds. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, we seem to believe that this kind of consistency is a necessary condition of rationality. As argued by Richard M. Hare, being rational in making moral judgments (and in our moral practice) means that we have to follow the meaning-rules of certain words consistently.[23] For instance, if in one case, we use the term "chair" to designate a certain object with four legs on which a person can sit and is made of solid material, we seem to believe that we have to follow the rule that whenever we want to designate an object with similar features, we must use the same term "chair" or its synonyms, such as "sella" (Lat.), "Stuhl" (Ger.), or "kursi" (Idn.). Otherwise, it would seem irrational. Likewise, if in one case, we use the term "morally right" to evaluate a certain action, like Adam's action above, then whenever we face other cases similar to Adam's action with respect to its base properties, we think that it is irrational to use another term, like "morally wrong," to evaluate that action morally. Being rational, at least, requires being consistent in using words when making moral judgments.

There are some disagreements about the abovementioned claim that following the meaning-rules is the necessary condition for being rational in making moral judgment. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the disagreement with this claim is mainly posited by particularists. Let me elaborate their argument once again. The particularists' doubt arises when one understands that consistency in using the moral terms means that there is a fixed relation between moral terms and the nonmoral features being picked out by these terms, such that what is picked out by certain moral terms is fixed by a certain configuration of nonmoral features.[24] Based on the view that is criticized by particularists, being consistent while using moral terms is then understood as following the

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22 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 83.

23 See Hare, *The Language of Morals*; Richard M. Hare (1963). *Freedom and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 7–16; Jonathan Dancy (1995). 'In Defense of Thick Concepts'. In: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20, p. 279.

24 See John McDowell (1998). *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 144–145; Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 82.

fixed-relation-rules between the moral terms being used and the nonmoral features that are picked out, such that whenever we face similar nonmoral features, the same moral term must be used to pick them out. However, in the particularists' view, it is doubtful because there is no such fixed relation between a certain moral term and the nonmoral features being picked out. There could be several cases in which very similar nonmoral features occur, but another moral term must be used to pick them out, because in that situation, there are other nonmoral features present that bestow overall the situation, such that it has another moral quality. Thus, it seems that the consistency argument would hold only if consistency in making moral judgments (P3) would not require fixing the relation between the moral terms being used and the nonmoral properties being picked out.

4.1.2.2 The Grounding Argument

The consideration of the consistency argument laid out above leaves the second premise (P2) intact. It seems that (P2) is a phenomenological claim that our moral judgments are based on our judgments regarding the nonmoral properties of the objects being considered. We seem to believe that the moral qualities of objects do not emerge by themselves, but instead they are grounded in the nonmoral properties the object has. The belief that the thesis of moral supervenience is true arises from such a conviction that, if our moral judgments are true, they are not barely true, but instead, they are true in virtue of other true judgments regarding the base properties. Such an argument has been posited by Michael Smith and elaborated further by Debbie Roberts.[25] The reconstruction of Smith's argument is as follows:[26]

> P1. It is a conceptual constraint on moral judgments that they cannot be barely true; their truth must always be grounded by the truth of other (true) claims, that is, by the truth of (true) judgments regarding base properties that make the moral one appropriate. (Premise)[27]

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[25] See Michael Smith (2004). 'Does the Evaluative Supervene on the Natural?' In: *Ethics and the A Priori: Selected Essays on Moral Psychology and Meta-Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 208–233; Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', pp. 12–13.

[26] The argument presented here is slightly modified from Roberts' reconstruction of Smith's argument. (See Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', pp. 12–13.)

[27] In Roberts' original formulation, true moral judgments "must always be made true by other claims." This is surely based on Smith's passage, where he writes, "[...] it is simply incoherent to suppose that evaluative claims could be *barely* true. Evaluative claims must always be *made true* by other claims. Because evaluative claims are always made true by other claims, it follows that, in possible worlds that agree in the truth of all of the same claims that make evaluative claims true, the same evaluative claims will be true. This is all it means to say that the evaluative is supervenient." (Smith, 'Does the Evaluative Supervene on the Natural?', p. 225, emphasis original.) However, it seems that such a formulation is not right, or at least questionable, because the truth-maker of a certain claim or judgment would not be other true claims. With regard to such a grounding argument, we believe, therefore, that it would be more appropriate to talk about the ground for the truth of certain moral judgments. Thus, we

P2. If an action *x* has a certain moral property, *M*, it has it in virtue of the base property or the set of base properties, *D*, that it possesses. (From P1)
P3. In all possible worlds in which the same claims about base properties are true, the same moral claim will be true. (Premise)
P4. In a possible world where another individual has all of the same base properties, *D*, it will have the same moral property, *M*. (From P3)
C. Therefore, it is a matter of conceptual necessity that, if *x* has some moral property *M*, then there is some base property *D* such that *x* has *D* and everything that has *D* necessarily has *M*.

Consider conclusion C. It seems that there are some differences between this conclusion and the formulas of moral supervenience that we have already encountered. However, this apparent difference is not real. Conclusion C presents two important claims. First, it is a claim regarding grounding that the moral properties of any actions, such as *M*, are always grounded in the nonmoral properties or a set of nonmoral properties that the action has, such as *D*. This claim is supported by the premises P1 and P2, that our true moral judgments cannot be barely true but must be grounded in other true judgments about the base properties. Second, conclusion C articulates the thesis of moral supervenience that is the consequence of the first claim about grounding. It says that, if in one case a certain moral property is grounded in some base properties, other actions with similar base properties must also have the same moral property. This claim is supported by premises P3 and P4, given that P1 and P2 hold.

There is, however, some disagreement regarding the above grounding argument, and it hinges on how one understands the notion of base properties. Michael Smith, among others, contends that base properties must be understood as natural properties because how we conceive things morally is based on how we conceive things in their natural properties.[28] Some philosophers, however, disagree with Smith. David Griffin and Debbie Roberts, to mention just two, argue that, although Smith's conviction is evident from our ordinary normative practice, it leaves open the possibility that some base properties are "normatively involving properties."[29] For instance, the property of being just does not belong to the category of a natural property. The property of being just belongs to the category of thick moral properties, that is, properties that combine normative and natural characteristics. It is a normatively involving property. It is conceivably true that the property of being morally good supervenes on the property of being just, such that, if one action is morally good in virtue of being just, another just action must also be morally good; thus, the thesis of moral supervenience holds, although the base property being considered does not belong to the class of

formulate that it is the truth of (true) judgments about base properties that grounds the truth of certain moral claims. We are grateful to Bruno Niederbacher for highlighting this difference.

28 Smith, 'Does the Evaluative Supervene on the Natural?', pp. 225–229.

29 James Griffin (1992). 'Values: Reduction, Supervenience, and Explanation by Ascent'. In: *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford, p. 317.

natural properties.[30] Likewise, Griffin provides another example. He argues that a Socratic sort of life is good in virtue of the fact that it leads to accomplishment, where accomplishment is a value-rich term.[31] In this case, it is then conceivably true that the property of being a good life supervenes the property of leading to accomplishment; and thus, the base properties do not belong to the category of natural properties.

As a response, Michael Smith argues that, while it seems true that the claims that an action is good (in virtue of being just) and that a Socratic sort of life is good (in virtue of leading to accomplishment) are not grounded by true claims regarding natural properties, one should further maintain that, because those claims about base properties are also moral claims, there must be some further claim(s) about lower-base properties that ground(s) those claims true. Citing a further moral or evaluative claim will always elicit a return to the question about what grounds that claim as true. At the end of the day, so Smith concludes, one must then provide a claim regarding the base properties that belong to the class of natural properties.

Some recent authors, however, argue that Smith's claim is false, because one can provide grounding claims that do not involve any base properties that belong to the class of natural properties.[32] Pekka Väyrynen, for instance, argues that facts about certain things that are morally relevant are moral facts. From this, it follows that true claims regarding certain natural properties that ground the moral claim are also moral claims. For example, one might make a moral claim that the action is wrong because it causes pain. The fact that it causes pain is here morally relevant. The fact that causing pain is here morally relevant is, however, a moral fact. Thus, if the moral claim "This action is wrong" is grounded by the claim that "This action causes pain," the latter claim, i.e., the base claim that grounds the moral claim that the action is wrong, is morally relevant here. It reveals that the base claim that the action causes pain cannot be a mere natural claim but must be a moral claim (or at least a morally relevant claim). This seems arguably true.[33]

For our purposes, we need not take part in this debate on whether the base properties should belong (only) to the class of natural properties. The upshot is that both camps seem to agree that the grounding argument holds, and we can take it as a justification regarding why we believe that the thesis of moral supervenience is true. Nevertheless, we can learn two important lessons from the above discussion. First, it seems that there is a tension between the assumption that moral claims must be fully grounded in claims about base properties and the intuition that there will be no full ground for moral claims. The grounding

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30 A similar example is also given by Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', p. 14.

31 Griffin, 'Values: Reduction, Supervenience, and Explanation by Ascent', p. 317.

32 Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?'

33 See Pekka Väyrynen (2013). 'Grounding and Normative Explanation'. In: *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*. Vol. 87. 1, pp. 155–178.

argument is, however, not meant to solve this tension.[34] Second, Griffin's and Roberts' claim leads to the possibility that the supervenience base should not only be made up of properties that belong to the class of natural properties but can also be of those that belong to the class of normatively involving properties. (This will be relevant later when we examine Parfit's triple principle.)

4.1.2.3 The Conceivability Argument

The third possible way to justify the belief that the thesis of moral supervenience is true is related to the first one, the consistency argument, but it emphasizes how we conceive of things. Therefore, it is called the conceivability argument. Such an argument is maintained for instance by Richard M. Hare, Jamie Dreier, and Michael Ridge.[35] Roberts reconstructs this argument as follows:[36]

> P1. If we conceive of another object identical to *X* in terms of all base properties, then we also conceive of an object identical to *X* in terms of its moral properties. We know a priori that there cannot be another object identical to *X* in terms of all base properties but different from it in terms of moral properties, which we can conceive of.
> P2. If we conceive of an object different from *X* in terms of its moral properties, then we conceive of an object different from *X* in terms of its base properties. We know a priori that there cannot be an object different from *X* in terms of its moral properties without there being any difference in their base properties, which we can conceive of.
> C. Therefore, it is a matter of conceptual necessity that, if an object *X* has some moral property, *M*, then it has some base property or a set of base properties, *D*, such that *X* has *D* and everything that has *D* necessarily has *M*.

To illustrate how the conceivability argument works, Hare utilized the example of St. Francis, whereas Ridge used the example of Hitler.[37] Hare writes that it is a matter of logical impossibility that in one occasion we say that "St. Francis was a good man" and "maintain at the same time that there might have been another man placed in precisely the same circumstances as St. Francis, and who behaved in them in exactly the same way, but who differed from St. Francis in this respect only, that he was not a good man."[38] Likewise, Ridge argues that it is inconceivable that in this actual world, Hitler's actions are wrong, but there are other possible worlds exactly like the actual one in all of its non-normative and descriptive features, in which Hitler's actions were not wrong. For these philosophers, we

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34 Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', p. 14.
35 See Hare, *The Language of Morals*, §9.3; Ridge, 'Anti-Reductionism and Supervenience', p. 335.
36 Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?', p. 17.
37 See Hare, *The Language of Morals*, §9.3; Ridge, 'Anti-Reductionism and Supervenience', p. 335.
38 Hare, *The Language of Morals*, §9.3.

seem to know a priori that there could be no two things indiscernible in their non-normative facts but discernible in their normative facts, and vice versa. We seem to know a priori that some normative facts are fixed by non-normative ones.

However, some philosophers doubt the conceivability argument and argue that it is conceivable that whereas in the actual world Hitler's actions were wrong, there are some possible worlds in which Hitler's actions could have been not wrong, or whereas in the actual world one can maintain that St. Francis is a good man, there are some possible worlds in which one can maintain that another person exactly like him was not a good man. One of the arguments for this conviction, as recently entertained by Anandi Hattiangadi, is based on the fact that there is no necessary relation between some non-normative and normative facts or between some descriptive and moral judgments.[39] This shows that the strong version of moral supervenience, the one characterized by the necessary relation between the moral and nonmoral properties, fails. Alternatively, for Hattiangadi, the conceivability argument would still hold, but only if it does not entail strong moral supervenience. It means that the above conclusion C is false. It would be true if it is formulated without picturing the necessary relation between *D* and *M*. Thus, the conceivability argument does hold only in the sense that in one and the same world, if one maintains that St. Francis is a good man, then one must also maintain that other persons with similar characteristics as those of St. Francis are good men, or, in one and the same world, if Hitler's action was wrong, then any actions similar to Hitler's are wrong. In one and the same world, it is inconceivable that persons with similar characteristics to St. Francis are not good or actions similar to Hitler's are not wrong.

Hattiangadi's claim is surely controversial and needs some deeper ramification that we cannot make in this particular section. Nevertheless, in the light of the three arguments presented above, we can maintain that there are some

[39] See Hattiangadi, 'Moral Supervenience'. Another author who argues against such a conviction is Alison Hills. She claims that the apparent difficulty in imagining the possibility that there exist some possible worlds in which Hitler's actions could not have been (or were not necessarily) wrong is caused by the so-called "puzzles of imaginative resistance," a concept put forward by Tamar Gendler in Tamar Szabó Gendler (2000). 'The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance'. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 97.2, pp. 55–81. In Hills' account, it is not difficult for us to imagine that the action done in a trolley case scenario could be right or wrong because we are not resistant to imagining such possibilities; however, it seems difficult for us to imagine that Hitler's action could not have been wrong because we are resistant to making this imagination. Hill suggests that, if we are not resistant enough, it would not be difficult for us to imagine some possible worlds in which Hitler's actions were not necessarily wrong. This seems to prompt the idea that, if genuine moral disagreements are possible, then it should be conceivable for us that there are some possible worlds in which Hitler's actions were not necessarily wrong, or generally speaking, it is conceivable for us that for any two possible worlds, *w*1 and *w*2, two actions, *x* in *w*1 and *y* in *w*2, which are exactly similar in their base properties, are not necessarily similar in their moral properties. (See Alison Hills (2009). 'Supervenience and Moral Realism'. In: *Reduction, Abstraction, Analysis*. Ed. by Hieke Alexander and Leitgeb Hannes. Fankfurt: Ontos Verlag, pp. 11–163).

plausible reasons that support the strong intuition about moral supervenience. These arguments, however, can be disputed, and the discussion about the last argument seems to reveal that the strong version of moral supervenience is especially controversial. Among the formulas of moral supervenience, it seems that the weak form of moral supervenience is the less controversial one because it only says that, if we consider, e.g., that it is true that Hitler's action was morally wrong, then in one and the same world, any actions similar to that one must also be morally wrong. Consequently, it seems that the generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations derived from the thesis of moral supervenience, which is pictured by P2 in the *Argument from Supervenience*, would have an uncontroversial ground if the thesis of moral supervenience is understood in its weak sense. Richard M. Hare, one of the generalists who maintain the *Argument from Supervenience*, states explicitly that the thesis of supervenience that he has in mind "is not what Kim [...] calls 'strong' supervenience. It is nearer to his 'weak' supervenience."[40] This, however, does not rule out the possibility for generalists to maintain the strong thesis and a fortiori, its global version, and to argue that there are true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of strong-global moral supervenience. In contrast to Hare, for instance, Jackson et al., say that the thesis of moral supervenience they have in mind is indeed global supervenience through which true moral generalizations can be derived.[41] This move, however, has a weightier burden because one needs to further justify that the thesis of strong moral supervenience is true. Given these two different forms of the thesis of moral supervenience held by generalists, we might expect that there would be different forms of moral generalizations as well. Thus, let us now consider these two ways regarding how and why generalists think that via the theses of weak and global/strong moral supervenience, one can generate true moral generalizations.

4.1.3 Moral Supervenience and True Moral Generalizations

In this section, we consider the second premise of the *Argument from Supervenience* (P2) and ask why (and how) generalists, such as Richard M. Hare, Frank Jackson et al., J. Bennett, and W. Sinnott-Armstrong, contend that there are true moral generalizations that can be derived through the thesis of moral supervenience. Two preliminary notes, however, must be given before we examine the generalists' thoughts. First, it must be noted that the word "true" in the term "true moral generalizations" must be interpreted in the broadest sense, encompassing cognitivism as well as noncognitivism. The term "true moral generalizations" should not only be interpreted in the cognitivist sense that moral generalizations are truth-apt, but it must also be interpretable in the noncognitivist sense, i.e., that true moral judgments are moral judgments that *hold*. This is important because not all generalists are cognitivists. Hare is a noncognitivist, and when he says that there are true moral generalizations, he seems to mean that these judgments hold

40 Hare, 'Inaugural Address: Supervenience', p. 4.

41 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 84.

and moral reasoning involving them can be legitimate. Other philosophers, such as Jackson et al., Bennett, and Sinnott-Armstrong, are cognitivists, and they seem to claim that moral judgments are truth-apt.

Second, just to remind us of the discussion in Chapter 2 of this book, the moral generalizations we consider here are those that are generally called moral principles, moral laws, moral norms, moral codes, or moral formulae. We can at least ascribe them these characteristics:

1. They must depict the stable relation between two classes of properties, one of which is of the class of moral properties. For instance, the general statement "Telling the truth will make us feel liberated" is not an example of moral generalization because there is no moral property involved, whereas the statement "We ought to tell the truth" is a moral generalization because it depicts the relation between the act of "telling the truth" and the moral property of being an "ought." "Justice is morally good" is also a moral generalization, although it depicts the relation between the moral property of being good and the morally involving property of justice.
2. The moral generalizations we are considering must be informative. The general statement, "Good must be done, and evil must be avoided" is uninformative, although it is a moral one. In this chapter, we do not consider such uninformative moral generalizations. Informative moral generalizations must at least tell us what types of actions are good or bad, right or wrong, permissible, obligatory or impermissible or give us some information regarding the condition(s) when and why a certain kind of action is good or bad, right or wrong, permissible, obligatory, or impermissible.
3. True moral generalizations that we consider must also be universally quantified.[42] It means that, if they are formalized, the formalization will start with a universal quantifier. In the natural language, this universal quantifier is usually expressed with some vague words, such as "For all," "Every," "always," or "never." For instance, if one says that "We ought to tell the truth," it seems that one intends to say that "For all actions, if they would involve telling the truth, they would be obligatory." When formalized, it will be, e.g., "$\forall x(Tx \rightarrow Ox)$", in which x represents any action and Tx an action involving telling the truth, and Ox being obligatory.[43]
4. True moral generalizations must also have a wide conceptual scope. It means that they must utilize general terms that can be used to pick out

[42] Richard M. Hare (1972). 'The Presidential Address: Principles'. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 73, p. 2.

[43] In saying this, we are well aware that there could be many cases of telling the truth, and they are not obligatory, or even, they are wrong. As we consider later on, it reveals that there are some problems regarding the universally quantified principles. For the sake of the generalists' argument, however, let us stipulate that such examples are acceptable.

> more than one instance. Proper names, on the contrary, can only be used to pick out a certain entity to which the name refers. Therefore, moral generalizations involving proper names are not appropriate candidates for genuine moral generalization.

Given the abovementioned two notes, we are now ready to investigate why (and how) generalists think that there are true moral generalizations given that the thesis of supervenience holds. First, we want, specifically, to investigate Hare's argument where he considers the weak form of moral supervenience, and second, we show how Jackson et al. defend the claim that there are true moral generalizations derived from the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience.

4.1.3.1 Richard M. Hare

Hare's claim that there must be some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience is grounded in two important elements. First, he maintains the *ascriptive* sort of moral supervenience, i.e., it describes the relations between moral judgments and not between properties or facts. He holds that it is logically impossible that in one case, one maintains that "St. Francis is a good man," and in another circumstance similar to it, one maintains that "St. Francis is not a good man." This logical impossibility is not a constraint between the things on which one makes the judgment, but rather between the judgments one makes.

Second, Hare maintains that the thesis of moral supervenience that pictures the relation between one's moral judgments can easily be understood as one of the "constituents of ... *universalizability*."[44] Elaborating this idea, James Klagge explains that in terms of the ascriptive moral supervenience, Hare holds that moral terms supervene on the descriptive properties, indicating that one cannot use different moral terms to pick out the same descriptive properties without there being some differences in those descriptive properties. Hare argues that by virtue of the supervenience of moral terms, when one makes a moral judgment on some descriptive properties, one is necessarily committed to the existence of a universal premise and a particular or subsumptive premise from which the moral judgment can be inferred. The universal premises are those that establish the standard or principle of moral judgments on certain kinds of situations. These are what we here call moral generalizations. The subsumptive premises are those that characterize or describe the objects we judge. In moral reasoning, this latter kind of premise is subsumed under a universal one. The thesis of moral supervenience tells us that, as far as the subsumptive premise is concerned, if two things are held to be indiscernible with respect to their descriptive properties, they will fall under the same universal premises, from which they will entail the same moral judgments. Klagge concludes that for Hare, the thesis of moral supervenience is

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[44] Hare, 'Inaugural Address: Supervenience', p. 3, emphasis added.

a matter of "what moral judgments each person is permitted by the logic of moral terms to make."[45]

To clarify Hare's claim, we might ask further: if, by virtue of supervenience, one is committed to certain universal premises when one makes any moral judgments, what do these universal premises look like? As we have noted above, Hare holds that the concept of supervenience he has in mind is *not* what is called strong supervenience, but it is closer to what is usually called weak supervenience. According to the form of weak moral supervenience **(WS)** we already considered, we know that it is called weak because there is no mutual necessary relation between the nonmoral and moral properties. It only tells us that, if a certain configuration of nonmoral properties is obtained, then (not as a matter of necessity) the purported moral property is obtained. Translated in Hare's noncognitivist terms, it means that there is no necessary relation between the descriptive properties about which one judges and the moral terms one uses in that moral judgment. This implies that the universal premises derived using the thesis of moral supervenience do not hold necessarily.

Consider this example. Suppose you describe that a certain action *a* has the configuration of descriptive properties D; call it D*a*. Now, you make a moral judgment that *a* is M; call it M*a*. In this case, for Hare, this moral judgment is legitimate only if you also hold a universal premise that, for all actions, if they are D, then they are M; $(\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx))$. Suppose in one and the same world in which *a* exists, you face another action *b* that is similar to *a* with respect to D; call it D*b*. Given the thesis of weak moral supervenience, then you have to judge *b* as being M; therefore, M*b*. Your moral reasoning would be as follows:

1. Da	Premise: An action a has a set of descriptive properties D.
2. $\forall x\ (Dx \rightarrow Mx)$	Premise about moral generalization or the universal premise: "Any actions that have D are M."
3. $(Da \rightarrow Ma)$	1 and 2, universal instantiation (UI).
4. Ma	1 and 3, MP.
5. Db	Premise: An action b has a set of descriptive properties D.
6. $(Da \leftrightarrow Db)$	Premise: action a is similar to b with respect to D.

[45] Klagge, 'Supervenience: Ontological and Ascriptive', p. 464.

7. $\forall w \forall x \forall y(\forall D(D_w x \leftrightarrow D_w y) \rightarrow \forall M(M_w x \leftrightarrow M_w y))$	Premise of weak supervenience: Necessarily, for any possible world, w, if objects x and y in w are similar in their supervenience base, D, they are alike in their moral property, M.
8. $(\forall D(Da \leftrightarrow Db) \rightarrow \forall M(Ma \leftrightarrow Mb))$	7, UI. We presuppose that actions a and b are in the same world w, and thus simplify the information that $(D_w a \leftrightarrow D_w b)$ and $(M_w a \leftrightarrow M_w b)$.
9. $[(Da \leftrightarrow Db) \rightarrow (Ma \leftrightarrow Mb)]$	8, UI.
10. Mb	9, conclusion that action b is M.

This above argument or reasoning is logically valid. Considering this above reasoning, surely one can directly infer from steps 5 to 10, given step 2, such that the universal premise guarantees that any actions similar to *a* with respect to D are M. However, by saying this, one cannot yet view the role of the thesis of moral supervenience that says that, for any possible world, two actions with similar nonmoral properties, D, are also similar in their moral property. Steps 6 to 10 make the inference more transparent; by virtue of the similarity between D*a* and D*b*, viz., by virtue of the thesis of weak moral supervenience (step 7), it holds that action *b* is also M.

Hare maintains the thesis of weak moral supervenience and for him it entails step 2 that $\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$, which can be read in a certain sense necessary.[46] However, he explains that the necessity involved in such a generalization should not be understood as a metaphysical necessity, but instead as a *nomologicality*.[47] This indicates that the moral generalizations hold only if the antecedent (the world or the descriptive properties) is just like the one stated in D (and hence, it is M). Step 2 does not guarantee that it is a matter of metaphysical necessity that the world or the descriptive properties of any actions are like D. The antecedent could have been different, such that the actions would have a different configuration of the descriptive properties, or the world would have been different. However, if the antecedent had been different, that generalization still holds. Thus, because the necessity involved in the moral generalizations is not a metaphysical one, we might better consider it a contingent premise, and it would be better to write it without the necessity operator.

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[46] As we have noted, Hare treats the thesis of moral supervenience and the doctrine of universalizability as telling the same thing: that moral generalizations or universal premises are the necessary component of moral reasoning. In maintaining this, he, however, does not explain the logical relation between the doctrine of universalizability and the thesis of moral supervenience. It seems, however, that the thesis of moral supervenience, such as premise 7 above, would not logically entail the existence of moral generalization, as stated by premise 2.

[47] Hare, 'Inaugural Address: Supervenience', pp. 10–11.

Hare contends as well that moral generalizations derived from the thesis of weak moral supervenience are not those that are purely universal.[48] Pure universal moral generalizations would make no reference to particular objects. What is implied by the thesis of weak moral supervenience is, however, the existence of moral generalizations that makes a reference to a particular object such as *a*. With regard to the above reasoning, the moral generalization we could have is "Every action *just like a* with regard to the descriptive property D is M" and not "Every action with the descriptive property D is M." The "just like" is important here because it reveals what kind of moral generalizations can be generated via the thesis of weak moral supervenience.

4.1.3.2 Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith

Whereas what Hare has in mind is the thesis of weak moral supervenience, Jackson et al. consider the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience.[49] They argue that the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience tells us that descriptively identical worlds are morally identical. It then follows that there are necessary truths that take us from the descriptive way individual things are to the moral way they are: in those possible worlds, where things are descriptively identical, such as being D, they must be morally identical, such as being morally right (suppose that being D is morally right). This implies that there are true conditionals that:

> if *D*1, then X is morally right.
> if *D*2, then X is morally right.
> from which one can make a disjunctive conditional that
> if *D*1 or *D*2 or ..., then X is morally right.

Jackson et al. admit that the existence of such true conditionals does not necessarily imply that there is a pattern connecting the way things are descriptively and the way they are morally. Alternatively, for them, "although supervenience tells us that there are necessary conditionals that take us from descriptive ways things might be to moral ways things might be, [...] [there need be no] moral principles in the sense of patterned connection between descriptive ways things might be and moral ways things might be."[50] It could be the case that the connection between the descriptive and the moral is necessarily random. If this is true, then it is surely a support for moral particularism.

However, these authors argue that such connections cannot be random. The ground for their objection is a semantic one and can be described as follows:[51]

1. The thesis of global/strong supervenience holds that descriptively identical worlds are morally identical. (Premise)

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48 Hare, 'Inaugural Address: Supervenience', p. 8.

49 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 84.

50 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 86.

51 This reconstruction is based on Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', pp. 81–96.

2. If 1) is true, then there are necessary truths that take us from the descriptive way things are to the moral way they are. (Premise)
3. There are necessary truths that take us from the descriptive way things are to the moral way they are. (1,2, MP)
4. Between these necessary truths, there are no patterns regarding the connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are. (Premise about particularist claim regarding 3)
5. Between these necessary truths, there are patterns about the connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are. (Premise about generalist claim regarding 3)
6. It is possible for us finite creatures to grasp properly the moral predicates, such as "is right." (Premise)
7. If it is possible for us finite creatures to grasp properly the moral predicates, such as "is right," then 5) must be true (that there are patters about the connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are.) (Premise)
8. Hence, 5) must be true; and therefore, 4) is false. (6,7 MP; Negation of 4)

As one can see, 1) to 3) are the thesis of global/strong supervenience and its implication, as we have mentioned above. Jackson et al. admit that these are not disputed both by particularists and generalists. 4) and 5) are options whether there are patterns of connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are. 4) seems to be the particularists' claim and 5) the generalists' one; these premises are exclusive to one another. 6) is an assumption that seems to be acceptable for the particularists and generalists, that is, that we can grasp properly the moral predicates, such as "is right." 7) is the core thesis that supports the generalists' claim that there are patterns of connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way things are.

Jackson et al. argue that the fact that it is possible for us to grasp the moral predicate "is right" presupposes the existence of a certain pattern that unites the class of right actions (step 7). If the grasp of such a moral predicate is possible, the pattern that unites the class of right actions cannot only be the feature of being morally right. There must be some pattern not only about the ways things morally are, but also about the ways things descriptively are, when they are all picked out by the same moral predicate. All right actions, for instance, then have some commonality in the sense of a pattern with respect to the descriptive way they are. Therefore, as these authors claim, because there are necessary truths that take us from the descriptive way things are to the moral way they are and it is possible for us to grasp moral predicates properly, there must exist some pattern of connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way things are. This connection cannot be merely random.

Regarding the above argument, Jackson et al. anticipate the possible particularists' reactions. These authors admit that the claim or conclusion that there are some patterns of connection between the descriptive way things are and the

moral way things are does not directly entail that the moral particularists' claim that there are no true moral generalizations is false. Particularists may accept that conclusion, but they might provide at least three defenses, which according to Jackson et al., are not sufficient. First, Jackson et al. explain that particularists might argue that these patterns are *sui generis* in a way that they cannot be found among the descriptive properties. These authors, however, argue that, if this is the particularists' view, then moral particularism, which is supposed to be an interesting idea, collapses into a nonsignificant theory.[52]

Second, these authors elaborate that particularists might argue that the pattern uniting the right acts is neither descriptive nor *sui generis*, but instead a pattern capturable in terms of thick moral concepts, such as "generous," "just," or even "being something that there is a good reason to act." Jackson et al. argue that, if the thesis of moral supervenience holds, being generous, being just, or being something that there is a good reason to act must supervene on the descriptive properties, exactly like the property of being morally right. This implies that the semantic argument as presented above applies to them as well. Thus, there must be some pattern of connection between the descriptive way things are and the way of things being generous or being something that there is a good reason to act.[53]

Third, particularists might argue that although these patterns exist, they are not codifiable or "escape *propositional* capture."[54] Jackson et al. argue that this suggestion does not work for several reasons. First, particularists who would propose such a suggestion cannot argue that the patterns are uncodifiable in words and propositions because this view would be an invitation to skepticism: if there is a descriptive pattern that settles what is right, but we cannot know it, then we cannot know what is right. Particularists cannot maintain such a view if they are not skeptical regarding moral knowledge. Second, particularists might also further suggest that although there are these patterns and we can know them, they cannot be captured in words; thus, the patterns escape propositional capture. Jackson et al., however, argue that knowledge about patterns implies that we can conceptualize them, and conceptualizing always involves capturing things in language. Thus, although our language cannot perfectly capture our concepts about what we possibly know, there are at least some words and propositions that could capture the patterns that we can know, so that these patterns are capturable in some moral generalizations. Third, particularists might further suggest that although we can have some knowledge regarding these patterns, this knowledge is not the full one but is partial only because we are finite creatures. Thus, we can only succeed in knowing some patterns in a limited sense but not in full. This implies that there is no guarantee that any moral generalizations we might know are true. In response to this argument, Jackson et al. argue that although

52 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 88.

53 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', pp. 88–89.

54 Jackson, Pettit and Smith, 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns', p. 89, emphasis original.

we cannot have a full grasp of the patterns of connection between the descriptive and the moral, a partial knowledge of them is sufficient to support the claim that there are discoverable descriptive patterns unifying cases that fall under the same moral classification that can be captured in the language we have in terms of moral generalizations.

In sum, we might say that for Jackson et al., the connection between the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience and the existence of moral generalizations is indirect. By virtue of supervenience, there are necessary truths about the connection between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are. By virtue of the possibility of our grasp of moral predicates, there must be some patterns of connection between the descriptive and moral ways things are. These patterns are discoverable by us and capturable in our language in terms of moral generalizations. Thus, if the thesis of global-strong moral supervenience holds, then the generalists' claim that the thesis of moral supervenience generates true moral generalizations also holds.

In this section, we saw why and how generalists, such as Hare and Jackson et al., contend that via the thesis of moral supervenience, one can plausibly establish a claim about the existence of true moral generalizations. Surely, there are similarities and differences between these authors. In spite of their dissimilarities, they posit the same claim that, if the thesis of moral supervenience holds, then there must be some true moral generalizations. This means that the second premise (P2) of *the Argument from Moral Supervenience* holds. The difference between Hare and Jackson et al. is quite clear. While Hare argues that these generalizations hold not as a matter of metaphysical necessity, Jackson et al. seem to argue that based on the semantic analysis of how we use our moral predicates, these generalizations hold as a matter of metaphysical necessity. It seems obvious that if Jackson et al. consider the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience—which, in McLaughlin's formula, says that in all possible worlds, any objects indiscernible in their descriptive properties, D, must also be morally indiscernible, M—then the connection between the descriptive and moral ways things are is a matter of metaphysical necessity. This means that moral generalizations derived via the thesis of global/strong moral supervenience can be formalized as: $\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$.

4.2 Against Epistemological Generalism

Some particularists seem to agree that the thesis of moral supervenience holds, such that two descriptively indiscernible objects are morally indiscernible. This means that they agree that the first premise (P1) of *the Argument from Supervenience* holds. They, however, do not agree on the second premise (P2) that the thesis of moral supervenience will render some moral generalizations true. In this section, we examine their arguments regarding why particularists think that this premise (P2) does not hold, and hence, the thesis of moral supervenience cannot be utilized to support the generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations.

With regard to the particularists' responses to the generalists' *Argument from Moral Supervenience*, we have to distinguish between epistemological and metaphysical generalism. Metaphysical generalism is a claim that indicates that *there are* some true moral generalizations (derived through the thesis of moral supervenience), whereas epistemological generalism is a claim that says that there are true moral generalizations that are practically and theoretically useful. They are practically useful because they play a necessary role in moral decision and practice, and they are theoretically useful because they play a necessary role in moral explanation, that is, in giving the answer to the question why certain objects have the moral quality they do. In this respect, we examine three particularists' arguments that tackle these two views: epistemological and metaphysical generalism. Jonathan Dancy and Margaret Little, in some of their papers, argue against epistemological generalism. Dancy contends that although there can be some true moral generalizations derived from the thesis of moral supervenience, moral generalists will face at least three problems with regard to these generalizations: the recurrence problem, the irrelevance problem, and the practical-guidance problem. We present them in Subsection 4.2.1. Little contends that these moral generalizations are theoretically useless because they cannot play a role in moral explanation. Her argument will be laid out in Subsection 4.2.2. Their arguments, however, leave the metaphysical generalism unscathed. Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu recently posited some arguments against metaphysical generalism that will be presented in Section 4.3. We begin with Dancy's and Little's arguments.

4.2.1 Dancy against Epistemological Generalism

In some of his writings, Dancy maintains that the thesis of moral supervenience is true. When discussing the relation between the thesis of moral supervenience and the existence of moral generalizations, he, however, does not mention whether he takes the weak or strong version of moral supervenience. He seems to understand the thesis of moral supervenience in a rather general sense, i.e., moral properties supervene on the nonmoral or descriptive ones, if and only if for two similar objects, there can be no difference with respect to their moral qualities without there being some difference in their descriptive features. With regard to the generalists' claim that there must be some true moral generalizations derived through the thesis of moral supervenience, his focus is, however, on the scope of the supervenience base. For him, it must be held that the supervenience base must include "*all the nonmoral features of action*."[55] If we understand the supervenience base as consisting of all the nonmoral features an action has, then the consideration about moral supervenience is a consideration about two objects that are *exactly similar* in their nonmoral or descriptive properties. Thus, as we have seen, the thesis of moral supervenience implies that, if an action *a* is morally right, then any actions (either intra or interworlds) exactly similar to *a* in their nonmoral or descriptive properties must also be morally right. In a more generic

[55] Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 86, emphasis original. See also Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 77.

language, if an action *a* has the nonmoral property, D, where D encompasses all the nonmoral properties of *a*, and the moral property, M, then, either in the same world or in any possible worlds, any actions similar to *a* with respect to D have the moral property M. As we have seen in Hare's argument above, for generalists, this thesis of moral supervenience will therefore establish the following claim: "for all actions, *x*, if *x* is D, then *x* is M," and thus there are true moral generalization of the form $\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$, where D encompasses all the nonmoral properties of *x* and M denotes its moral property.

In response, Dancy agrees that the thesis of moral supervenience may imply the existence of such generalizations. He, however, concedes that these are not genuine moral generalizations for three reasons. He writes:

> *First, these principles specify complexes of such a size and in such detail that there is effectively no chance that they should be capable of recurring. A principle that has only one instance is worse than useless, for no such principle could ever be a guide for judgment. Second, these things do not really have the form of a principle either. For they contain all sorts of irrelevancies. Principles are in the business of telling us which actions are wrong and why they are wrong. But the vast propositions generated by supervenience fail utterly to do this; they don't select in the right sort of way. They do no doubt contain the relevant information, but they do not reveal it; as far as supervenience is concerned, all features of the present case, including those that count in favour of the actually wrong act, are equally relevant. Supervenience, as a relation, is incapable of picking out the features that make the action wrong; it is too indiscriminate to be able to achieve such an interesting and important task. Finally, it is surely not irrelevant to point out that nobody could ever come to know the sort of supposed "principle" generated by supervenience. So even if such "principles" could have more than one instance, nobody could ever be guided by them.*[56]

Dancy seems to contend that there are three problems for generalists regarding the claim that there are generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. The first one can be called *the recurrence problem*. If the supervenience base includes all nonmoral properties the action has, which perhaps also includes the spatiotemporal properties of an action, then principles or moral generalizations can only have one instance because there can be no two objects exactly similar in all their nonmoral properties. Furthermore, Dancy argues that moral generalizations that can only have one instance should not be called genuine moral generalizations.

A short generalists' response might be given here. Generalists might argue against Dancy's claim above that there can actually be two or more instances exactly similar in all their nonmoral properties that exist not in one and the same

[56] Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 87–88.

world, but they are instantiated in different worlds. If this is the case, then generalists might well argue that there is no recurrence problem regarding moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. However, we might further ask whether these two objects are really similar in *all* their nonmoral properties because we can plausibly argue that they at least are different with respect to the worlds in which they are instantiated.

The second problem pointed out by Dancy is that, if the supervenience base includes all nonmoral properties that the action has, the "left-side" of the moral generalizations would include many irrelevant descriptive properties. We might call this *the irrelevance problem*. It entails that the construed moral generalizations cannot reveal which actions have certain moral qualities and cannot explain why they have these qualities. Consider the above trolley case. The possible generalization derived through the thesis of moral supervenience from such a case would not only include the properties of killing one (D1) and saving five (D2), but also all other properties the action might have, including the morally irrelevant ones, such as the place and time of that action. However, if that action is morally right, its rightness would not be explained by these irrelevant properties. Typically, generalists would maintain that one needs only to include some relevant nonmoral properties, such as the properties of (D1) and (D2), in the moral generalization to explain why actions having (D1) and (D2) are morally right.

The third problem can be called *the practical-guidance problem* because there are morally irrelevant properties also included in the moral generalizations derived through the thesis of supervenience; such generalizations are useless in terms of guiding actions. One of the main purposes of moral generalizations is to provide us with some useful information and guidance regarding what we ought or ought not to do in a certain situation. Typically, a guide should not be very specific or give a very complex condition, so that we can use it on many relevant occasions. According to Dancy, however, moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience are too complex and too detailed, such that they contain too much information and are too specific. Consequently, such generalizations can only be utilized in giving information about what one should do in one case, and thus, generally speaking, they are useless with regard to providing guidance.

4.2.2 Little against Epistemological Generalism

In some of her articles, Margaret Little also provides some reasons regarding why epistemological generalism does not hold.57 When discussing the relation between the thesis of moral supervenience and the existence of moral generalizations, she makes two distinctive claims that are bolder than Dancy's. First, she claims that the thesis of moral supervenience, although it is true, is not explanatory with regard to the moral status of an action. Furthermore, second, moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience would not be explanatory too.[58]

She contends that moral particularists could well accept the truth of the thesis of moral supervenience, i.e., two situations cannot differ in some moral respect without differing in some nonmoral respect (see the definition of moral supervenience **(SUP$_{def}$)** in Section 4.1 of this chapter). However, according to her, such an admission should not be motivated by its explanatory function. She claims that "the supervenience functions relating the moral to the nonmoral, while necessary, are not the sort that would count as explanatory."[59]

To justify this claim, Little utilizes the idea developed by Hilary Putnam where he argues that explanation of a certain behavior does not lie on the level of its ultimate constituents.[60]Putnam gives the following example to make his view clear. Suppose we need to explain why the peg passes through the square hole, but it does not pass through the round hole. For such physical facts, it is plausible to state that the geometric shape of the physical objects, such as pegs, supervenes on the physical arrangement of their atoms, such that the geometric shape of an object cannot change, like from square to circular, without any changes in the arrangement of its atoms. The microstructure of a peg is its ultimate constituent. Along with Putnam, Little argues that from such a conviction, we never find any explanation regarding why square pegs fit into the square holes but do not fit into the round holes. What we can get is a particular explanation of why those square pegs fit to those square holes and not to those round holes. Such an "explanation" is insufficient because "we miss what unites the phenomena."[61] On this view,

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57 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited'; Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2006). 'Particularism and Antitheory'. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Ed. by David Copp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 567–594; Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2008). 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics'. In: *Challenging Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Vojko Strahovnik, Matjaz Potrc and Mark Norris Lance. New York: Routledge, pp. 53–74; Margaret Olivia Little (2013). 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory'. In: *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. by Russ Shaffer-Landau. 2nd. London: Blackwell, pp. 776–784.

58 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', pp. 285–288.

59 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', p. 286.

60 See Hilary Putnam (1975b). 'Philosophy and Our Mental Life'. In: *Mind, Language, and Reality*. Ed. by Hilary Putnam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 291–303.

61 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', p. 286; Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (1988). 'Moral Theory and Explanatory Impotence'. In: *Essays on Moral Realism*. Ed. by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 276.

therefore, it is wrong to look for an explanation of such a physical behavior at the level of the ultimate constituents. "Just so," Little writes, "we do not find any help about why an action is cruel by looking at the level of details about the physically sufficient conditions for cruelty. What explains [...] why [...] it is cruel, will simply not be found at the level of detail the supervenience functions must encompass if they are to be accurate."[62] Thus, for her, although the thesis of moral supervenience is true, it would be misguided to expect that it has some explanatory function. Appealing to the supervenience base, or in Putnam's terms, "the ultimate constituents," would not provide any illuminating answer to the question of why a certain action has the moral property it has, such as being cruel.

The second claim Little makes is that any moral generalizations possibly generated using the thesis of moral supervenience would not be explanatory.[63] To argue for this claim, she appeals to McDowell's thought that the moral is shapeless with respect to the nonmoral on the one hand and Dancy's view about holism about reasons on the other. On McDowell's view, we cannot mark the boundaries of moral concepts in purely nonmoral terms: the items listed under a certain moral category, such as "cruel," do not form a certain kind that is recognizable as such at the descriptive level. Rather, there are infinite ways of being cruel that cannot simply be codified in terms of the finite number of moral generalizations of the form: if an action is *D*, then it is cruel.[64]

On the other hand, according to Dancy's holism about reasons, the contribution of the nonmoral features to the moral status of certain actions is always context dependent:[65] While a certain nonmoral feature of an action might contribute to the rightness or goodness of a certain action in one context, in another, the similar nonmoral feature would contribute differently. The nonmoral feature of giving pleasure to the acting agent, for instance, would make some different contributions in the context of helping someone in need and inflicting pain. While in the former context, pleasure may contribute to the goodness of the action, it makes the action of inflicting pain worse in the latter. According to holism, therefore, there is no way to codify how nonmoral features would contribute to the moral status of actions in the form of moral generalizations.

Based on these two reasons, Little argues that, although the thesis of moral supervenience is true, implying that the two situations that have the same nonmoral features are morally alike, there can be no moral generalizations that we can hold, which will sustain in every possible situation.[66]

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62 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', p. 286.

63 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', p. 286.

64 To consult, see Section 3.4.2 of this book. See also John McDowell (2002). 'Non-Cognitivism and RuleFollowing'. In: *Mind, Value and Reality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 198–218.

65 See Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 60–66; Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 7, 73–93.

66 The implications of this thesis is discussed in Section 4.1.1.1.

Given such a conclusion, she elaborates further that the only way to save the generalists' claim that there are some true and explanatory moral generalizations is by positing "a peculiar type of scenario, in which subjects are stipulated as already possessing the manual of supervenience functions and as having at their disposal *full knowledge* of the universe's nonmoral features."[67] Such a scenario or thought experiment is for her, however, not only strange but also wrong because in a realistic scenario, we do not have such full knowledge so that the prefixed moral generalizations we have would always sustain in every possible situation.

The upshot of the above two arguments developed by Dancy and Little is that although there could be some moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, they lack epistemological strength. Their truth cannot be guaranteed given the variety of possible situations. Nevertheless, these arguments do not exclude the generalist metaphysical claim. Metaphysical generalism that claims that there are true moral generalizations remains unscathed. In this regard, particularists need to provide some further argument.

4.3 Against Metaphysical Generalism

Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu takes a further step and provides arguments that he thinks will disarm metaphysical generalism.[68] Tsu develops two strategies. First, he claims that generalizations derived from moral supervenience are not genuine ones; instead, they are moral *verdicts*. This is because, while moral generalizations must have more than one instantiation, moral generalizations derived via moral supervenience whose supervenience base includes all nonmoral properties the action might have can only be instantiated by one case. The generalization, $(\forall x)(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$, can only have one instance, namely, the action being considered, say *h*, which has the base property *D*. Thus, the only instance of that generalization is $(Dh \rightarrow Mh)$, and thus, it is not a genuine generalization but a verdict on the action *h*.

This is surely a phenomenological claim and seems to be another way of articulating the recurrence problem given by Dancy. Such a claim can be false only if generalists can provide evidence that there are at least two actions, all exactly similar in all their nonmoral properties and also similar in their moral ones. Because so far there is no such evidence, Tsu claims that moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience are not genuine.[69]

The second strategy Tsu postulates is to adopt and elaborate Dancy's distinction between supervenience and resultance. In response to Dancy's and Little's arguments suggested above, generalists may contend that the base properties for moral supervenience should not be all nonmoral properties of actions but only those that are *morally relevant*. Therefore, the thesis of moral supervenience

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67 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited', p. 287, emphasis added.

68 Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack'.

69 Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', pp. 390–391.

could be set out as follows: moral properties supervene on morally relevant properties. If this is the case, there can be moral generalizations derived from moral supervenience that can satisfy the "in-virtue-of" constraint, and, therefore, they are capable of explaining why a certain action has the moral property it has. If an action is wrong, for instance, it is wrong not in virtue of all its nonmoral properties, but only on those that are morally relevant. The components of such moral generalizations are, therefore, the morally relevant properties only and their corresponding moral properties.

This strategy of narrowing the supervenience base seems to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, moral generalizations derived from moral supervenience can satisfy the "in-virtue-of" constraint, and therefore, are explanatory. On the other hand, they can be considered as genuine generalizations and not merely moral verdicts because under this construal of the supervenience base, two actions need not be identical in all their nonmoral properties to be morally identical. They need only be identical in their morally relevant properties and may differ in their nonmorally relevant ones.[70]

An important remark should be made here. By considering the above generalist strategy, Tsu does not view it as a part of the doctrine of universalizability. Surely, as discussed, this doctrine is closely linked with the thesis of moral supervenience. However, being consistent with this distinction, we may regard the above strategy as an application of the doctrine of universalizability. This is because, whereas the supervenience base consists of all the nonmoral properties of an action, the nonmoral properties considered under the doctrine of universalizability are only those that are morally relevant. We may call these properties "the universalizability base."

The above remark regarding the doctrine of universalizability and the universalizability base is important because, in our opinion, we need to make a clear distinction regarding some possible groups of the nonmoral properties an action might have. In this regard, we think of three different groups. First, it is what we have considered as "the supervenience base," that is, *all* nonmoral properties an action has. Second, it is what we have just considered in the above paragraph, "the universalizability base," that is, the nonmoral properties of an action that are morally *relevant*. Third, the nonmoral properties of an action are "responsible" in the determination of which moral qualities an action has.[71]

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[70] Although the strategy of narrowing the supervenience base here seems to be an epistemological approach to defending the generalists' epistemological claim, we consider it metaphysical because this strategy will not be successful, and consequentially, as we proceed, it will not support the generalists' metaphysical claim that there are true moral generalizations.

[71] For the distinction between relevant and responsible properties, we are indebted to Nick Zangwill. (See Nick Zangwill (2008). 'Moral Dependence'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 111)

Given the above generalists' strategy of narrowing the supervenience base, the distinction between the first and second groups of nonmoral properties is clear. To use the language of set theory, in general, we can say that the member of "all nonmoral properties an action might have" is thought of as being different from the member of "relevant moral properties an action might have." In this sense, it is plausible to hold that not all nonmoral properties an action might have are morally relevant. Now, the distinction between the second and third groups of nonmoral properties, however, needs some more elaboration. In the same way that we distinguish the first from the second group of nonmoral properties, some philosophers claim that not all relevant nonmoral properties of an action are responsible for the determination of which moral qualities that action has. For instance, as we further consider later, in the above trolley case example, due to the principle of "ought implies can," the fact that an agent has both the ability and opportunity to do the action is arguably a morally relevant property: that Adam has the ability and opportunity to turn the trolley is morally relevant in that case. However, if that action is right (in a way that Adam ought to do it), it would be implausible to say that it is right *because* Adam can do it.[72] The rightness of that action is rather a "result" of other properties, such as that it saves five (and kills one). Because not every relevant property is responsible in the determination of which moral qualities the actions can have, it will be helpful if we categorize such nonmoral properties as being different to the second categorization. Using Tsu's terminology, this third group of nonmoral properties is called "the resultance base." Thus, in what follows, we need not only to consider all nonmoral properties an action might have (the supervenience base), but also nonmoral properties that are morally relevant (the universalizability base) and nonmoral properties that are responsible in the determination of the moral properties (the resultance base).

Notably, the above three distinguished groups of nonmoral properties can function as the base properties when we consider the thesis of moral supervenience, meaning that one might plausibly argue that it is necessary that two actions that are alike with regard to their base properties (either understood as all nonmoral properties, morally relevant (nonmoral) properties or responsible nonmoral properties) are also morally alike. The difference is the scope of the base properties. Thus, based on the scope of its base properties, there are three different readings of the thesis of moral supervenience whose descriptions can be stated using the possible/actual worlds locution as follows:[73]

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[72] We agree with Väyrynen that ability and opportunity, as the principle "ought implies can" requires, are not part of the reasons why one ought to do the action or why the action is right. (See Pekka Väyrynen (2019). 'Reasons Why in Normative Explanation'. In: *Inquiry* 62.6, pp. 607–623.)

[73] The formulas we are using here are the modification of Tsu's. (Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', p. 392.)

Different readings of the thesis of moral supervenience:
If an action *h* has (nonmoral) base properties, *D*, and the moral property, *M*, in the actual world, then, in all possible worlds where action *h* is *D*, it also has *M*, where according to:

- *Supervenience (original)*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is *all* nonmoral properties that action *h* has. (We call such base properties "the supervenience base.")
- *Universalizability*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is restricted to the morally *relevant* properties action *h* has. (We may call this kind of base properties "the universalizability base.")
- *Resultance*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is restricted to those morally relevant properties *in virtue of which* the action has *M*. (We may call this kind of base properties "the resultance base.")

We have considered that, according to Tsu, generalists cannot establish the claim that there are some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience if they presuppose the *Supervenience (original)* reading of this thesis because what one can have are just moral verdicts. This suggests a further question whether this generalists' claim can be established if one considers the *Universalizability* and *Resultance* readings of the thesis of moral supervenience instead. Tsu seems to claim that although it is theoretically possible for generalists to claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via *Universalizability* (but not *Resultance*), there is no evidence that there exists a certain base property that is "robust enough such that it would be impervious to the changes of the contexts and that any action that has it would have the same moral properties."[74]

Let us consider the *Resultance* reading first and ask how particularists and generalists would regard this reading of the thesis of moral supervenience. The questions would be as follows: First, which nonmoral properties we might include in the resultance base such that it is plausible to say that these properties determine the moral properties of the actions (or, such that it is plausible to say that, if the action is right, it is right *in virtue of* these properties)? Second, does such an account support the generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via *Resultance*? To answer these questions, let us consider the trolley case above, specifically, regarding its properties of killing one and saving five, and let us stipulate that Adam's action is morally right. Now, in virtue of which properties is this action right, Tsu explains that there is a kind of oddity around the possible answers to this question. On the one hand, it seems plausible to state that the action is right just *because* it saves five lives and not because it kills one. The property of killing one is not the reason or part of the reasons why it is right because it would be odd to say that the action is right because it kills one (or partly because it kills one). On the other hand, it also seems plausible to say that the action is right because it saves five *and* kills one, such that the property

[74] Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', p. 397.

of killing one also plays a role in the determination of the degree of rightness of the action. The reason is that it seems plausible to say that if the property of killing one were absent, the action would be even "more right." This seems to suggest that the absence of the weightier wrong-making properties makes an action "more right." However, this consequence seems to be wrong. For, such a consequence would imply that we have also to say that some right actions, like giving charity, are right because they do not have the weightier wrong-making properties, such as killing, robing, or insulting. This seems to be counterintuitive.

With regard to this oddity, Tsu argues that this is the result of the two notions of "in virtue of," which we do not realize.[75] On the one hand, when we say that the action right just because it saves five and not because it kills one, we use the "in-virtue-of" or "because" in the epistemological-cum-practical sense. Therefore, it would seem wrong to say that the action is right in virtue of the property of killing one in an epistemological-cum-practical sense. On the other hand, when we say that the presence or absence of the wrong-making properties, such as killing one, should also play a role in determining the exact degree of rightness of that action, we use the "in-virtue-of" or "because" in the metaphysical sense. Thus, we can acknowledge that, whereas in the epistemological-cum-practical sense of "in virtue of," it is plausible to state that the resultance base of the rightness of Adam's action is only that it saves five, it is also plausible to simultaneously maintain that in the metaphysical sense of "in virtue of," the resultance base of the rightness of Adam's action is that it saves five and kills one.

Given the above two senses of the "in virtue of" constraint, we might further ask the following question: can generalists maintain the claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via *Resultance* reading of the thesis of moral supervenience? Using the argument suggested by Dancy, Tsu argues that if we understand the "in virtue of" constraint in the epistemological-cum-practical sense, where the resultance base for a right action, for instance, is restricted only to the right-making features, there could be no true moral generalizations. As the trolley case example has shown, if we think that the only property in virtue of which the action is right is the property of saving five, then the generalists must be committed to generalizations, such as: for all actions, if the action has the property of saving five, then it is right. However, it is not difficult to see that this moral generalization is not true. Dancy, for instance, would argue that such a moral generalization is false. Not all actions that have such a property are morally right. There can be further properties that *override* the property of saving five, such that it would be wrong to say that the action is morally right (or that the moral property of being right is *undermined* by some nonmoral features that are present).[76] Thus, if we consider the *Resultance* reading and take the epistemological-cum-practical sense of "in virtue of," it is hard to defend the generalists' claim

[75] Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', pp. 393–394.

[76] Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 77.

that the existence of true moral generalizations can be established using such a reading of the thesis of moral supervenience.

In response, generalists might argue that we should not understand the *Resultance* reading in the epistemological-cum-practical sense, but instead in the metaphysical sense, such that we should take any possible nonmoral properties that are presumably "responsible" for the action's moral properties as the resultance base. For example, in the above trolley case, we should consider the properties of saving five and killing one as the resultance base. Suppose that these exhaust all other possible resultance base properties. Generalists might well then argue that bound by *Resultance*, we have to state that Adam's action is morally right in virtue of the properties of saving five and killing one, and therefore, any action that has the properties of saving five and killing one is morally right. Alternatively, generalists might defend the claim that there are true moral generalizations, such as for any action, if the action has the base properties of saving five and killing one, it is morally right, generated via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood in terms of *Resultance*.

This generalists' strategy of expanding the resultance base from the epistemological-cum-practical sense to the metaphysical one seems to be effective in defending their claim that, via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood particularly in terms of the *Resultance* reading, there are true moral generalizations. On behalf of the generalists, we can further argue that, if such a derivative principle connecting the nonmoral properties of saving five and killing one with the moral property of being morally right can be established via the *Resultance* reading, a nonderivative or ultimate principle might be established too. For instance, it is plausible to presuppose that the rationale underlying the above derivative moral generalization is the unrestricted utilitarian principle, which says that for any actions, if the action maximizes utility, then it is morally right. From such an ultimate generalization, one might derive a derivative moral generalization as mentioned in the above paragraph because the action that saves five and kills one maximizes utility, and therefore, such actions appear as morally right. If we take the *Resultance* reading, then in this case, the resultance base being considered would be the property of maximizing utility. This means that Adam's action is morally right in virtue of its property of maximizing utility because it saves five and kills one, and any action that has the property of maximizing utility is morally right. Thus, the generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood in terms of *Resultance*, is true.[77]

[77] Some of the readers might worry that one cannot derive ultimate principles a posteriori from the actual cases, such as from the trolley case. The reason one might give is that such ultimate generalizations must be known a priori, such that there is a necessary entailment from the nonmoral to the moral that is known without any recourse to further empirical investigation. This claim seems to be true. However, it leads to a general question as to whether this understanding about "a priori" is adequate and whether such an understanding would render the claim that there is a necessary entailment relation from the nonmoral to the moral true. We do

Considering the above strategy of expanding the resultance base so that it includes all responsible nonmoral properties, i.e., the metaphysical sense of "in virtue of," Tsu argues that moral particularists might claim that the generalizations derived via *Resultance* would not always be true. The reason is that there could be other relevant properties present such that, although the action has the complete resultance base, it turns out that the action has another moral property. The relevant nonmoral properties that are not included in the resultance base are what is usually called *enablers* (or *disablers*). In its standard definition, an enabling property is a morally relevant (nonmoral) property that is not included in the resultance base (because it would not be appropriate to say that the action has its moral property in virtue of this enabling property), but its presence or absence is relevant because it would enable the resultance base to do the "job" of determining that the actions have the moral properties they should have.[78]

As we have shortly observed, the example of an enabler is the ability and opportunity of an agent to do a certain action at a certain time, which are required by the principle of "ought implies can." The fact that an agent has the ability and the opportunity to do the action is not the reason, or part of it, in virtue of which the agent ought to do the action or in virtue of which the action is right. For instance, the appropriate reason for an agent to help another person is that the person needs help, but not that the agent *can* help. That the agent can help, however, enables the feature that the person needs help to become the reason why the agent ought to help that person. If the agent could not help, then despite the fact that the person needs help, the agent does not have an obligation to help. Likewise, the ability and opportunity of the agent in the trolley case example, Adam, is also not the reason (or part of it) why Adam's action is morally right. The appropriate features that are the reasons why Adam's action is right, as stipulated above, are the features that it saves five and kills one. If, however, Adam does not possess the ability and opportunity to do the action, Adam's possible "action" of not turning the trolley would not be wrong, despite the fact that such "an action" would kill five and save one (or even more, despite the fact that, if Adam could turn the trolley, it would save five and kill one). However, if Adam does have the ability and opportunity to turn the trolley, and it will save five and kill one, Adam's action of not turning the trolley would be wrong (always given the stipulation

not go into detail regarding these questions. However, as argued by Hattiangadi, although it seems that knowledge regarding the ultimate generalizations might be a priori (such that the utilitarian principle is an a priori truth), there can be no necessary entailment relation from the nonmoral to the moral. This implies that we need to define further what this a priori truth means. Given this fact, it seems that the way we discuss the relation between the thesis of moral supervenience and the existence of ultimate moral generalizations is plausible. (See Hattiangadi, 'Moral Supervenience'.)

78 The term "enablers" was introduced by Dancy. He calls the responsible properties for actions being right or wrong or the reasons why the action is right or wrong or the reasons why one ought or ought not to act "favourers." Furthermore, he uses another term, "intensifiers," to refer to properties that intensify the reason. See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 38–45.

that Adam's action in the trolley case example above is right). Consider the following alternative example: Suppose Adam has the ability and opportunity to turn the trolley, but by doing this, no one will be saved (and therefore, no one will be killed) because the trolley goes into the right spur, and there is no one in that spur, so Adam does not need to do that action because there is no reason for it. In this case, it is clear that the enabler is not part of the reason or the resultance base, but it makes it possible for the resultance base to be responsible for "making" the actions have the moral properties they do.

Bearing in mind that the enablers (and disablers) play an inevitable role in every case, particularists can plausibly maintain that the moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience in the sense of *Resultance* are not true because there can be cases that have completely the same resultance base, but as it turns out, they have different moral qualities, just because some cases lack the enablers and some others do not. Thus, regarding the trolley case example, it would be wrong to stipulate a moral generalization that for any action, if the action has the complete base properties of saving five and killing one, it is morally right.

In this regard, one could imagine that generalists might react by applying the same strategy of expanding the scope of the base properties so as to include the enablers (and/or disablers) in it. For instance, the generalists might stipulate that the base properties would include the resultance base, which might consist of the right- and wrong-making properties, say ABC, as well as the enablers and disablers, say X and Y. However, considering this strategy, they leave the *Resultance* reading of the thesis of moral supervenience because according to this account, the scope of its base properties is wider than the resultance base as to include the morally relevant properties. This means that the base property being considered is the one that we call "the universalizability base," and the thesis of moral supervenience is now understood in terms of *Universalizability*. On this reading, given the morally relevant properties of ABCXY as the base properties, via *Universalizability*, generalists can plausibly maintain that for all actions, if an action *a* is morally right with regard to the morally relevant base properties ABCXY, any action similar to *a* with regard to the properties of ABCXY is morally right. From this, it follows, so generalists might maintain, that there is a true moral generalization: for any action, if the action has the nonmoral properties of ABCXY, it is morally right.

The proponents of particularism, such as Dancy, however, maintain that such generalizations would still not be true because there could be some other properties that neither belong to the resultance base nor are enablers; nevertheless, the presence or absence of which is morally relevant. These are the enablers for enablers, i.e., features that make it possible for enablers to enable the base

properties to be responsible for "making" the action have the moral property it does.[79] However, again, considering *Universalizability*, generalists could object that such properties, i.e., enablers or disablers for enablers, can be included into the base properties because they are also morally relevant, and some true moral generalizations can be derived using them. This strategy of expanding the base properties to include all possible morally relevant properties seems to be effective for generalists in defending the claim that there are some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. There is, however, one limitation to this expansionist strategy in that the base properties should not include all nonmoral properties that the action has because then, as seen above, the moral generalizations can be derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, which would be a moral verdict. Hence, generalists might only maintain the claim that there are some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, where this thesis is read in terms of *Universalizability*, which tells us that the scope of the base properties is restricted only to all morally relevant (nonmoral) properties.

Some philosophers argue that the thesis of moral supervenience, read in terms of *Universalizability*, is a conceptual truth: it is necessary that two actions that are exactly similar in their morally relevant (nonmoral) properties are morally similar.[80] Consequently, if there are two similar actions whose morally relevant properties are similar, it is plausible to construe some true moral generalizations given that it is a conceptual truth. Such generalizations are not merely moral verdicts and, therefore, generalists can evade the problem of recurrence because it is possible that there are two actions that are exactly similar only in their morally relevant (nonmoral) properties but not in all their nonmoral properties. Some generalists also argue that such generalizations would be explanatory or could fulfill the requirement of "in virtue of," if the "in virtue of" constraint is understood in the metaphysical sense: although enablers are not the reasons or the explanation for why the actions have the moral properties they do, they play an inevitable role in providing the explanation of why they have the moral properties they do. In the trolley case example, were the enabler absent and would Adam not do the purported action, Adam's action (or, more precisely, his not doing the action) would not be wrong, partly because he does not have the ability and the opportunity to do it.[81] In this regard, Tsu also agrees that the thesis of moral

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79 See Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', pp. 395–396; Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 231.

80 See Schroth, 'Particularism and Universalizability'. Harrison is of the same opinion that, only if the thesis of moral supervenience is understood in terms of *Universalizability*, it is a conceptual truth. Otherwise, it is not. See Harrison, 'The Moral Supervenience Thesis is Not a Conceptual Truth'.

81 Some particularists disagree with this generalists' claim. Dancy, for instance, maintains that what the enablers do is not explain why the actions have the moral properties they do, but instead explain why the resultance base (which is the explanation for why the actions have the moral properties they do) can do the job. The enablers explain why the explanation performing

supervenience, read in terms of *Universalizability*, is a conceptual truth. Consequently, he accepts that it is possible for generalists to regard the claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, read in *Universalizability*, as true.[82]

Dancy also seems to be aware of this possible generalists' move. For him, however, it is just epistemologically impossible for us to know all possible morally relevant properties, such that we have a certainty regarding those base properties that are robust enough. Base properties are "robust enough" if there can be no other features that can override or undermine them and if there can be no other features whose presence (or absence) is required to enable (or disable) the resultance base properties to do their job of "making" the actions have the moral properties they should have. Alternatively, for Dancy, although such a case seems to be possible, this possibility can never be realized because "there are just too many potential defeaters"[83] and (for now) the human condition does not allow us to comprehend all of them.[84] In a similar way, regarding the above result that generalists' claim that there could be some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood in terms of *Universalizability*, Tsu also claims that this is only a theoretical possibility because, given the moral generalizations we might have so far, there is no evidence that such robust base properties exist. Alternatively, Tsu claims that the lack of evidence regarding robust base properties implies that the generalists' metaphysical claim that *there are* true moral generalizations cannot be held upright. To argue for this claim, Tsu makes some tests as to "whether there is a [base property] that is robust enough such that it would be impervious to the changes of the contexts

works. Later in Chapter 6, we deal with this dispute and argue that the explanation for an explanation is actually also an integral part of the whole explanation of why actions have the moral properties they do.

82 Tsu also discusses another particularists' consideration, that is, that particularists, such as Dancy, might claim that, even though it seems that it is a strong claim that two actions being similar in all their morally relevant properties are morally similar, there could be some cases that are so specially circumstanced such that, despite their similarities with respect to the morally relevant properties, they might have different moral properties. Dancy thinks that such a possibility is real. We may use the above example—that the morally relevant properties are ABCXY, and they exhaust other possible relevant properties. Suppose in a case *h*, there exists a property E that, in itself, would make no moral difference. In another case, such as *g*, however, its presence together with another property, F, would make a moral difference. For Dancy, this shows that although two actions are similar in all their relevant properties, they might have different moral properties. In this regard, however, Tsu suggests that such an account is misleading because one can surely take the conjunctive properties, E ∧ F, as an integral part of the morally relevant properties, and thus, generalists might sustain their claim. We do agree with this suggestion. (Jonathan Dancy (1981). 'On Moral Properties'. In: *Mind* 90.359, p. 379; Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', pp. 396–397)

83 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 81.

84 What is here called *defeaters* might include overriders, underminers, reversers, and excuses. (Sinnott-Armstrong, 'Some Varieties of Particularism', p. 5)

and that any action that has it would have the same moral properties."[85] As we see in the next section, Tsu claims that the result of these tests counts against the generalists' metaphysical claim.

4.4 Are There Robust Base Properties?

As we have mentioned, what is here called the robust base property is an exhaustive configuration of all morally relevant properties there can be, such that in any possible circumstance, any actions that have such properties will always have the same moral properties. This means that if, in certain circumstances, some nonmoral properties that are not yet included in the base properties are present, these would not affect the base properties whatsoever, so that actions that have these additional properties will still have the same moral property. Only if there exist such robust base properties, the generalists' metaphysical claim that there are some true moral generalizations that can be derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood in terms of *Universalizability*, would be true. If, however, there is no evidence that such properties exist, such a claim does not hold.

To prove whether such robust base properties exist, in this section, we perform some tests to determine whether such properties exists. Two kinds of base properties will be analyzed. First, we consider a nonmoral property of torturing an innocent person merely for fun, which grounds a derivative moral principle that actions involving such a feature are wrong. Second, we analyze a morally involving property that is grounded in the Parfitian triple principle. The result of both tests suggests that these base properties are not robust enough. It is then plausible to conclude that the generalists' metaphysical claim does not hold.

4.4.1 Test One: Torture

To prove the generalists' metaphysical claim, Tsu considers the following derivative moral principle:

Torture:"Torturing an innocent person merely for fun is wrong."

In *Torture* we consider the moral property of being wrong and its base property—torturing an innocent person merely for fun. In the generalists' view, it might seem fair to say that such a principle is true (one of the reasons that we might not share is that no morally sane person will think that this principle is false). However, if this principle is true, then it must be made true by the existence of a base property that is robust enough; this implies that in any possible circumstance, the principle will always be true regardless of what additional nonmoral properties might be present. Such a base property must be robust enough so that the absence or presence of (additional) nonmoral properties would not affect the (degree of) moral status the action might have. In other words, if generalists believe that such a base property is sufficiently robust, they seem so to be committed to the following principle:

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[85] Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', p. 397.

*Torture**: "For all actions, if the action involves the feature of torturing an innocent person merely for fun, then the action is wrong."

If we carefully consider these two principles, we may notice a slight difference between *Torture* and *Torture**. As previously mentioned, the difference can be traced to the commitment behind *Torture**, namely, that the base property of torturing an innocent person merely for fun is a robust base property. In contrast, when holding *Torture*, one seems to be *only* committed to the claim that torturing an innocent person merely for fun is wrong without being further committed to the fact that torturing an innocent person for fun is a robust base property. If generalists want to establish the claim that there are true moral generalizations that can be derived via the thesis of moral supervenience that is understood in terms of *Universalizability*, they cannot be contended with *Torture* but must hold the principle as stated by *Torture**.

However, in Tsu's analysis, it would not be difficult to prove that *Torture** is not true. He argues that the term "torturing an innocent person merely for fun" is a general term and that there can be many descriptions of the same kind of actions that have the feature of torturing an innocent person merely for fun. He gives three examples:[86]

1. John tortures innocent Mary merely for fun.
2. John tortures innocent Mary merely for fun; Mary is a masochist who enjoys being tortured.
3. John tortures innocent Mary merely for fun; Mary is a masochist who consents to being tortured during her sexual intercourse with John.

These three descriptions have the same feature that the property of torturing an innocent person merely for fun is involved. Do they have the same moral properties? Tsu argues that they do not. If we trust our intuition, John's action of torturing innocent Mary for fun as described by (1) seems to be morally worse than his action described by (2); and John's action described by (2) seems to be morally worse than his action described by (3). Thus, they have different moral properties. Given *Universalizability*, therefore, one must say that, because they have different moral properties, their base properties must also be different. In other words, because the actions have different base properties, then this is not the proper proof for generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations involving robust base properties that can be derived via *Universalizability*. Tsu concludes that although *Torture* seems to be a true principle, a finer analysis suggests that its base property is not robust enough, and therefore, the generalists' claim of having true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, understood in terms of *Universalizability*, cannot be sustained.[87]

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86 Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', p. 398.

87 Tsu, 'Defending Particularism from Supervenience/Resultance Attack', p. 399.

4.4.2 Test Two: The Parfitian Triple Principle

Nevertheless, generalists might object that the moral generalization analyzed by Tsu, *Torture*, is not the ultimate one. They may argue that to find evidence for the presence of strong base properties, one must resort to ethical theories, which are meant to give robust basis properties of the ultimate moral generalizations. Given the diversity of ethical theories and their potential conflicts, particularists may argue that while a certain property is a robust base property according to one theory, when the action possessing this property is evaluated by another theory, the new base property may supersede or undermine the previous base property, thereby rendering the purported base property insufficiently robust. In response, generalists might then seek a convergence between ethical theories, such that they might establish the claim that there is a certain robust base property that will perfectly accommodate all possible morally relevant properties.

While the idea of a convergence of ethical theories might seem fairly ambitious for some philosophers, for others, it is an interesting challenge. In our opinion, Derek Parfit, in his two-volume work, *On What Matters*, is the one who discusses this challenge thoroughly. In his books, Parfit argues that there is a common ground between what he considers the best versions of Kantianism, Consequentialism, and Contractualism, which are outlined in his Triple Theory. He implies that the Triple Theory can disprove the widespread belief that there is an unresolvable conflict between Kantians, Consequentialists, and Contractualists. At the end of the day, Parfit argues that one might find a convergence between these camps that leads to a single moral truth. In his metaphor, these theories are "climbing the same mountain from different sides."[88]

Parfit's theory seems to indicate a way for how generalists could provide evidence for a robust base property without worrying about the conflict between these ethical theories. According to the Triple Theory: "An act is wrong just when such acts are disallowed by some principle that is optimific, uniquely universally willable, and not reasonably rejectable."[89] This theory seems to endorse the existence of a robust base property for the moral property of wrongness, i.e., *being disallowed by some principle that is optimific, uniquely universally willable, and not reasonably rejectable*. Let us call this property *T*. As claimed by Parfit,

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88 Derek Parfit (2011a). *On What Matters*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 419.

89 The above-quoted principle is the short version of the Triple Principle. Some brief elaboration might be given here. According to Parfit's Convergence Argument, Kantian principle and Contractualism can be combined such that "The principles that no one could reasonably reject are the same as the principles that everyone could rationally will to be universal laws." Furthermore, Rule Consequentialism can be included in that Triple Principle, such that: An act is wrong if and only if, or just when, such acts are disallowed by some principle, that is, (1) one of the principles whose being universal laws would make things go best (this is the sense that the principle is optimific), (2) one of the only principles whose being universal laws everyone could rationally will (this is the sense that the principle satisfies the Kantian requirement), and (3) a principle that no one could reasonably reject (this is the sense that the principle satisfies the requirement of Contractualism). (See Parfit, *On What Matters*, pp. 412–413.)

although *T* contains three subproperties, they "are had by all and only the same principles."90 Thus, they are conceived conjunctively. Moreover, the principle would not directly describe the nonmoral properties in virtue of which the action is wrong. It instead describes "a single *higher-level* wrong-making property, under which all other such properties can be subsumed, or gathered."91 Thus, by adopting this theory generalists might argue that the principles as outlined in the Triple Theory are genuine, useful, and explanatory, and the claim that the thesis of moral supervenience, construed in terms of *Universalizability*, implies the existence of moral generalization holds true.

Before we do a further analysis, we need to give a brief clarification. One might argue that the Parfitian Triple Principle that we are considering is not an appropriate example because, as stated in the definition **(SUP$_{def}$)**, the thesis of moral supervenience considers the relation between moral and nonmoral properties, and this principle does not state any nonmoral property. In this regard, there could be at least two possible responses. First, if this is the case that the thesis of moral supervenience can only consider the covariance relation between moral and nonmoral properties, then, as shown by Tsu's example, it would be very difficult for us find any nonmoral property that is robust enough, that in any possible scenario will always result in the same moral property. Thus, the generalists' claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience would be indefensible. However, second, if we want to consider that this generalists' claim holds, where the moral generalizations being considered should *not* always depict the relation between the moral and nonmoral properties, the thesis of moral supervenience should then be modified to state the relationship not between moral and nonmoral properties, but rather between moral and base properties, where base properties include morally involving properties such as being just, cruel, or disallowed by some principles. If we allow ourselves to take this alternative understanding of the thesis of moral supervenience, then it is arguably appropriate to consider the Parfitian Triple Principle as an example of true moral generalization.[92]

Surely, if we take this alternative construal of the thesis of moral supervenience (i.e., that the base properties might include not only nonmoral but also morally involving properties), the base property *T* would seem robust enough, and therefore, generalists could establish the claim that there are true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. In response, we think

90 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 413

91 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 414.

92 The suggestion that the thesis of moral supervenience might be thought of as depicting the relation between the base and moral properties is also given by McPherson and Roberts (see McPherson, 'Supervenience in Ethics'; Roberts, 'Why Believe in Normative Supervenience?'). While McPherson suggests that the base property should not include morally involving properties, Roberts seems to suggest a conjunctive construal of the base properties, that is, those that "either a sui generis normative property or one whose real definition ineliminably mentions such properties" (p. 6). In this regard, we and Roberts are on the same page.

that particularists can reply to this generalists' claim in two ways. Firstly, they might open a normative dispute arguing that the Triple Theory is false by providing some counterexamples to it. The counterexamples can be actions whose properties can be subsumed under the principle that do not intuitively appeal as being wrong. Other kinds of counterexamples could be actions that are wrong according to the triply supported principle, but, as it turns out, they do not have the same extent or intensity of wrongness because some might be worse than others. The first kind of counterexample is perhaps hard to find, but the second can possibly be found. The second kind of counterexample is quite similar to the previous one concerning the principle that torturing an innocent person merely for fun is wrong, in which the cases felt under the same general base property *T* but had a different extent or intensity of wrongness.

Secondly, we think that particularists could argue against such generalists' claims at the metaethical level. From the epistemological-cum-practical point of view, we might argue that such a principle is too demanding, and, therefore, it can hardly be used in moral judgments and decisions. Moreover, it is also disputable whether the presupposition that there must be a convergence between moral theories is methodologically adequate. For instance, Simon Blackburn argues in a review that a healthy moral philosophy should not have the ambition to construe a convergence between moral theories. Moral disagreements that arise from a diversity of perspectives on moral reasons and values should not be considered tragic, because such a conflict does not necessarily imply that "anything goes."[93] In contrast to Blackburn, Parfit's desire for moral theory convergence is motivated by his conviction that moral philosophy can only progress if there is agreement on moral reasons and values. Such an agreement for Parfit seems to be possible because, for him, human beings have the "intuitive abilities to respond to reasons and to recognize some normative truths."[94] Parfit believes that if there is no coherence between our moral intuitions, morality would not be objective because the truth of moral judgments would then be grounded only on subjective moral belief. He also believes that if this is the fundamental view of morality, it would be a tragedy. He writes, "If there is no single supreme principle, that, I agree, would not be a tragedy. But it would be a tragedy if there was no single true morality. And conflicting moralities could not all be true. In trying to combine these different kinds of moral theory, my main aim was not to find a supreme principle, but to find out whether we can resolve some deep disagreements."[95] Given this conviction, it is clear that Parfit is not only a generalist who merely seeks true moral generalizations, but also aims to find a robust base property that everyone can agree.

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93 Simon Blackburn (2021). *Moral Tale*. URL: https://www.ft.com/content/2bf-7cf30-b9e1-11e0-817100144feabdc0 (visited on 06/10/2021)

94 Derek Parfit (2011b). *On What Matters*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 544.

95 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 155.

The dispute between Parfit and Blackburn illustrates the disagreement between monist and pluralist positions with regard to moral generalizations. Which camp has a better argument cannot be elaborated further in this book. However, it seems that Blackburn's claim is plausible. This should then straightforwardly imply that the search for robust base properties that everyone can agree on seems pointless, and generalists should accept the plurality about moral generalizations. However, the acceptance of the plurality of moral views will result in the acceptance of the plurality of base properties. And we think that generalists who accept such a plurality must also agree with particularists that there could be cases where one base can be overridden or undermined by other base(s) that will then result in different moral evaluations. In other words, if this is the case, then these base properties are not robust enough, and therefore, the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations cannot be established.

In this section, we have tested the claim that there are some robust base properties. We have analyzed two candidates for robust base properties, one belonging to nonmoral properties and the other to morally involving properties. The results of both tests suggest that the considered base properties are not robust enough. Given this result, we believe that particularists can perfectly establish their claim that there is no convincing evidence that there are defensible true moral generalizations that incorporate some robust base properties, even if one believes that the thesis of moral supervenience holds. This result implies that generalists should provide more convincing evidence about the existence of robust base properties to support the claim that true moral generalizations can be derived from the thesis of moral supervenience.

4.5 Summary and Remarks

In this chapter, we discuss one of the core generalists' arguments, the *Argument from Supervenience*. Our primary concern is to evaluate the second premise of this argument that claims there are defensible true moral generalizations that can be derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. To introduce the idea of moral supervenience, we proposed, analyzed, and evaluated two different versions of the thesis of moral supervenience (ontological and ascriptive). Initially, we considered this thesis ontologically as a depiction of the covariance relation between moral and nonmoral properties. At the end of the chapter, we broadened the kind of properties considered by the thesis of moral supervenience and regarded this thesis as depicting the relation between the moral and the base properties, where the base properties include both nonmoral and morally involving properties. We also considered three formal explications of supervenience in ethics (global, strong, and weak supervenience) and three arguments to justify the claim that moral properties supervene nonmoral properties (the consistency, grounding, and conceivability arguments). Although there are some difficulties with these formal explications and these three arguments, we regard them as plausible for the sake of the generalists' argument.

The core part of this chapter was the examination of the aforementioned second premise of the *Argument from Supervenience*. Two generalists' views have been considered. First, according to Hare, the thesis of weak moral supervenience and the doctrine of universalizability are supporting one another; and based on these two views, there are defensible true moral generalizations. In his view of the doctrine of universalizability, if one makes a particular moral judgment about an action based on its descriptive features, in order to make this judgment legitimate, one must also hold a universal premise that, for all actions, if they have such descriptive features, then they also have the same moral quality. The thesis of moral supervenience then tells us that if two actions are held to be indiscernible in their descriptive features, they equally fulfill the antecedent of this universal premise, and hence, they will also have the same moral quality. Thus, in Hare's view, if the thesis of moral supervenience is true, there must be some true universal premises that are viewed as moral generalizations. Second, according to Frank Jackson et al., there are necessary truths about the relationship between the descriptive way things are and the moral way they are in virtue of the thesis of moral supervenience. Furthermore, given that it is possible for us to grasp moral predicates, such as "is right," that connection cannot be random, and there must be some pattern(s) of that connection. According to their view, these patterns are discoverable by us and capturable in terms of moral generalizations. Thus, the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations derived (indirectly) via the thesis of moral supervenience can be established.

However, in the light of our consideration, the above generalists' argument does not hold. We delineated two ways to object the generalists' claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. First, we considered the generalists' epistemological claim that such moral generalizations are practically and theoretically useful. Second, we considered the generalists' metaphysical claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations. To argue against generalists' epistemological claim, we analyzed Dancy and Little's arguments. On their view, such moral generalizations would be neither practically nor theoretically useful. Dancy shows that generalists have three problems in regard to the moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience. First, there is the recurrence problem: because the base properties of the thesis of moral supervenience cover all of the nonmoral properties of an action, moral generalizations derived from this thesis can only have one instance and thus are not genuine. Second, the irrelevance problem: because the base property includes all the nonmoral properties an action has, there are many irrelevant nonmoral properties included in the moral generalizations. Third, the practical guidance problem: such moral generalizations cannot provide us with useful information and guidance about what we ought (not) to do in a certain situation because moral generalizations grounded by all the nonmoral properties of an action are only applicable to one specific case. In addition to Dancy's argument, Margaret Little argues that such moral generalizations are not explanatory.

Her argument is based on two grounds: the shapelessness of the moral and holism about moral reasons. According to the former, the moral cannot be codified into finite descriptions, and thus any ostensibly moral generalizations fail to explain why actions with the same moral quality have different descriptions. According to the latter, there is no way to codify how descriptive features would contribute to the moral status of certain actions. In some contexts, a certain descriptive feature may contribute to the goodness of an action; in others, the same feature may contribute to its badness. Any purported moral generalizations are therefore explanatorily impotent.

Dancy and Little's arguments seem to plausibly object the epistemological generalism, but the generalists' metaphysical claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations is still unscathed. To refute this metaphysical generalism, we considered Tsu's argument. Our analysis revealed that depending on the scope of considered base properties, there are three readings of the thesis of moral supervenience: *Supervenience (original)*, *Universalizability*, and *Resultance*. According to Tsu, if we take the *Supervenience (original)* reading, where the base properties include all nonmoral properties that an action has, there are no moral generalizations, because any statements that can be made considering all nonmoral properties an action has are just moral verdicts. If we take the *Resultance* reading, in which the base property includes nonmoral properties in virtue of which an action has its moral property, or, as we call it, moral properties that are "responsible" for determining the moral status of an action (the resultance base), we not have true moral generalizations as well, because any purported base properties can be overridden by other new base properties, so that the actions do not have the purported moral property.

In Tsu's view, generalists might hold their metaphysical claim only if they opt for the *Universalizability* reading of the thesis of moral supervenience. In this reading, the base property includes all morally relevant (nonmoral) properties. These are the nonmoral properties that are responsible in determining the moral status of an action (the resultance base) *plus* any other properties that make it possible for the resultance base to do its job. These other properties include enablers, disablers, as well as enablers or disablers for enablers. On such an account of base property, it appears that the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations can be established because the considered base property includes all morally relevant properties and exhausts all other possible morally relevant properties. However, the question that emerged was whether there is such a base property that is robust enough, in a way that any changes in the context will not affect it, so that any actions that have this base property will always have the same moral property. To prove the existence of such robust base properties, we ran two tests: first, by the example of the property of torturing an innocent person merely for fun; and second, on the Parfitian Triple Principle. The result of these tests suggested that such base properties are not robust enough, and therefore, the generalists' metaphysical claim cannot be established.

For some generalists, the examination carried out in this chapter is perhaps incomplete or even misguided. One possible reason is that the moral generalizations considered here are not those commonly used in moral theory and practice. Those that are usually used are rather moral generalizations that allow exceptions. Such moral generalizations are thought of as depicting merely a tendency in the moral quality of certain base properties; in reality, they might be overridden by other components of the actual base properties. Lance and Little, for instance, propose that moral generalizations such as "lying is wrong" do not tell us that it is without exception that any action of lying is wrong. This moral generalization only tells us that "lying has the tendency to be wrong."[96] Likewise, if we consider the above Adam's action, the proposed moral generalization would be "an action of saving five and killing one has the tendency to be right," or, if we consider its possible ultimate principle, "maximizing utility has the tendency to be right."

In response to the above objection, we contend that the chief target of this chapter was not to attack the existence of such moral generalizations. Its main intention was rather to argue against the existence of *exceptionless* moral generalizations that are derived from the thesis of moral supervenience. However, a short remark might be in place. If generalists believe that moral generalizations are not exceptionless, but rather allow for exceptions because they only express the tendency of certain base properties, it appears that such moral generalizations cannot be derived using the strong moral supervenience thesis **(SS)**. To repeat what we have considered, **(SS)** formulates the necessary relation between certain base properties and moral properties, such that it is a matter of metaphysical necessity that whenever the base properties occur, the purported moral properties must also occur. Because such a necessity relation is not merely factual but a metaphysical one, it seems that there is no possibility for actions to have the purported base properties but other moral properties. This means that the relation between the base and the moral properties that are expressed in moral generalizations must also be necessary; therefore, they must be exceptionless. In contrast, if generalists opt for weak moral supervenience according to which there is no necessary relation between certain base properties and some moral properties, it seems plausible for them to argue that moral generalizations expressing the relation between these properties allow exceptions. Thus, it seems that the thesis of weak moral supervenience is preferable to support the generalists' claim that there are moral generalizations that express merely the tendencies of some base properties.[97]

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96 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics'.

97 In connection to this topic, some philosophers have recently discussed the modal qualities of moral generalizations, whether they are necessary or contingent. If they are contingent, it seems that there is some possibility for them to allow exceptions or to be true in some worlds but false in others. While, if they are necessary, they are true in all possible worlds, such that there is no possibility for actions having the same base properties but different moral properties. There are no exceptional cases. In this chapter, we do not employ such modality language because it would require a discussion on whether it is appropriate to attribute such modal

There are some further questions regarding such moral generalizations. One might ask how we are supposed to understand the notion of "tendency." Does it express regularity, normality, the nature of things, or just how things are in their standard condition? One might also muse about the truth conditions of such generalizations or about whether such moral generalizations could be true at all. As we have said, this chapter is not meant to deal with such moral generalizations and their follow-up questions. What we have provided are rather some reasons why the generalists' claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience does not hold if the moral generalizations in question are exceptionless. The next chapter will deal with moral generalizations that express the tendency of some base properties and thus allow exceptions.

qualities to moral generalities or laws. For further discussions, see Kit Fine (2002). 'The Varieties of Necessity'. In: *Conceivability and Possibility*. Ed. by Tamar Gendler and John P. Hawthorne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 253–281; Gideon Rosen (2017b). 'What Is a Moral Law?' In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Oxford Studies in Metaethics 12, pp. 135–159; Gideon Rosen (2017a). 'Metaphysical Relations in Metaethics'. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Metaethics*. Ed. by Tristram C. McPherson and David Plunkett. New York: Routledge, pp. 151–169; Hattiangadi, 'Moral Supervenience'.

5 THE MORAL LANDSCAPE CONSIDERATION

The analyses conducted in Chapters 3 and 4 suggest that the two generalists' main arguments, the *Argument from Universalizability* and the *Argument from Supervenience*, fail to support the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations. As per our consideration, the proponents of these arguments, such as Richard M. Hare, seem to believe that these generalizations tell us that there are certain base properties that are robust enough, such that any objects (actions, persons, or institutions) that have such a property or properties *will* or *must* always have the same moral properties.1 However, a finer analysis conducted in the previous chapters showed that these arguments do not support such a claim. As we have considered, particularly in Chapter 4, one of the reasons is that there is no convincing evidence that such robust base properties exist. Any considered moral generalizations involving such base properties fail to tell us that if a particular object (action, person, or institution) has them, it must or will have the purported moral properties as those stated in the moral generalizations. There are many cases that have such base properties, but they do not have the purported moral properties.

Some generalists who want to establish the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations would regard the above and previous sense of *will* or *must* as too strong.[2] They might claim that these auxiliary verbs should not be understood in such a strong sense, but instead in a modest one. In the very broad sense, the idea would be that moral generalizations should not specify certain base properties that will *always* determine the moral status of the objects, i.e., the robust base properties, but they only specify certain base properties that count *generally* in favor of or against any action that has them.[3] The latter thought

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1 In what follows, the term "base property" is used as an umbrella term that encompasses both nonmoral properties, such as stealing and killing, *and* morally involving properties, such as being just, being kind, and being lewd.

2 In this chapter, we use the term "will" or "must," which can be understood as denoting a necessary relation between moral and base properties. However, to obviate difficulties emerging from such an ontological language, we use the ordinary parlance of "will" or "must," which can elegantly accommodate the idea of necessity without evolving any sophisticated but often confusing ontological (mis)understanding.

3 In saying this, we assume that it is plausible that deontic concepts, such as obligation, right, and wrong, are analyzable in terms of reasons. One way to articulate such an idea is as follows: for any agent *A*, action *B*, and circumstance *C*, whether *A* ought to *B* in *C*, all things considered, is a matter of whether the reasons in favor of *A*'s doing *B* in *C* outweigh those against, namely, whether there is reason, on balance, to *B* or not in *C*. For further discussions, see Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Thomas

would not imply that any actions that have such base properties *will* or *must* have the same moral properties in the strong sense of *will* or *must*. For instance, when considered in a strong sense, the moral generalization, "Stealing is wrong," would imply that any actions of stealing will or must be wrong overall, *in any possible circumstance*. However, when the term *will* or *must* involved in such a generalization is considered in its modest sense, this generalization only tells us that the feature of stealing that is involved in any type of action counts generally as the reason for not doing the action. Such a generalization does not tell us that such actions will or must be wrong, all things considered.

This latter idea is presumably the most familiar one in our everyday moral discourse, and perhaps it is theoretically the most acceptable one. When we consider the feature of stealing, for instance, it seems that there is a certain hesitation to state that stealing (*per se*) is right. We would most probably say that stealing is wrong. Likewise, it seems that we would not say that actions involving helping someone in need or donating money to charity are wrong. In other words, this feeling (or better, tendency) seems to suggest that there is a stable relation between some base properties (both nonmoral and morally involving properties), such as stealing, helping someone in need, and donating money to charity, and the corresponding moral properties of being right or wrong. This stability is, however, not a tight one, as expressed by the strong sense of *will* or *must*, but it is a loose stability.

Based on the above considerations, we see that there might be two different commitments underlying these generalists' positions: (i) some base properties have a stable relation to certain moral properties; and (ii) these base properties always override other base properties.[4] Whereas, presumably, *all* generalists would hold (i), they might have different opinions regarding (ii). If generalists hold both commitments, they understand the *will* or the *must* illustrated by moral generalizations in its strong sense. As we have considered, such a position is, however, flawed. If, however, generalists want to be committed to holding the *will* and the *must* in their modest sense, they might hold (i) without holding (ii), such that some base properties have a stable relation to certain moral properties, but in some contexts, the considered base properties can be overridden by other additional base properties. Holding the latter position would mean committing to the claim that killing, for instance, has a stable relation to the property of being morally wrong, but in certain cases, such as in cases of self-defense, the act of killing would not be wrong.

Surely, those who endorse the first generalist position [that holds (i) as well as (ii)] might construct a new moral generalization, in which the base property being

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M. Scanlon (2014). *Being Realistic about Reasons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, and for a contrasting view, see Stephen Darwall (2009). *The Second-Person Standpoint. Morality, Respect, and Accountability*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

4 Simon Kirchin (2007). 'Moral Particularism: An Introduction'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4.1, p. 10.

considered now is not "killing" but "killing-in-self-defense" and the moral property being considered now is "morally right." This generalist position holds that the latter type of nonmoral property, the more specified one, is the one that always overrides other properties such that any action involving killing-in-self-defense is morally right. However, the concern against such a move is that such a specified property can always be overridden by some new features because, as we have said, it is not robust enough. Consequently, if generalists want to defend their view in holding (i) and (ii), they must always specify the base properties being considered. In the long run, however, if the possible new overriding features are infinite, then holding (ii) would not be tenable because any purported configurations or specifications of base properties can always be overridden and any moral generalizations grounded by them can always be falsified by counterexamples.[5] Given this worry, some generalists hold (i) without holding (ii), maintaining that this should be sufficient to support the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations.

Particularists (who claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations) have a different view concerning the above two commitments. Just as on the generalist side, there are at least two possible positions, one holding *both* (i) and (ii) and another holding *only* (i); there are also two different positions on the particularist side. Some particularists accept (i) without accepting (ii) in the sense that they believe that some base properties might have a stable relation to certain moral features, but these base properties do not always override other considerations. In contrast to those generalists who also hold (i) without holding (ii), these particularists endorse a further claim that there can be no defensible true moral generalizations reflecting such a stable relation. In contrast to the above two generalists' positions and to the aforementioned particularist view, some other particularists reject both (i) and (ii). They argue that there is in fact no stable relation between certain base properties and moral properties. Holding this latter position seems to provide a good reason for the particularists' claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations. Thus, we can distinguish four different positions: considering the moral properties, *M*, and the base properties, *D*, these four positions can be summarized as follows:

Position	Are there stable relations between *D* and *M*?	Does the purported *D* always override other *D*s?	Are there true moral generalizations reflecting those stable relations?
G_1	Yes	Yes	Yes

[5] Some philosophers, such as McKeever and Ridge, believe that the overriding features are not infinite, and therefore, moral generalists can establish the claim that some nonmoral features always override other nonmoral considerations. (See Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge (2006). *Principled Ethics. Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, specifically Ch. 6)

G_2	Yes	No	Yes
P_1	Yes	No	No
P_2	No	No	No

Table 5.1: Four Possible Positions Regarding the Stable Relation between *D* and *M*

The first generalist position (G_1), which is held, for instance, by Richard M. Hare, is committed to the claims that some base properties *D* have a stable relation to certain moral properties *M*, that these base properties always override other base properties, and that there are defensible true moral generalizations reflecting these stable relations. In other words, (G_1) holds that in moral generalizations, the *will* or the *must* are understood in a strong sense. The second generalist position (G_2) is not committed to the claim that the purported base properties *D* always override other base properties, although it holds that some base properties *D* have some stable relations to the moral ones *M*. Furthermore, it holds that there are some moral generalizations reflecting these stable relations. This position is perhaps the most popular one among the generalists, although they have their own notion regarding what the stable relation (between the base properties and the moral properties) is supposed to mean. Traditionally, W. D. Ross has been associated with this position.[6] More recently, this position has also been held by Margaret Little,[7] Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge,[8] Maike Albertzart,[9] and Bruno Niederbacher.[10] The first particularist position (P_1) holds the same claim as the second generalist position (G_2), in that they agree that there are stable relations between some base properties *D* and some moral properties *M*; however, (P_1) claims that there are no defensible true moral generalizations reflecting such relations. This kind of view is held, for instance, by Jonathan Dancy,[11] and

6 William David Ross (1930). *The Right and the Good*. Ed. by Philip Stratton-Lake. New ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

7 Margaret Olivia Little (2000). 'Moral Generalities Revisited'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 276–304; Margaret Olivia Little (2013). 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory'. In: *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. by Russ Shaffer-Landau. 2nd. London: Blackwell, pp. 776–784, See also Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2006). 'Particularism and Antitheory'. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Ed. by David Copp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 567– 594; Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2008). 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics'. In: *Challenging Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Vojko Strahovnik, Matjaz Potrc and Mark Norris Lance. New York: Routledge, pp. 53–74.

8 McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*; Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge (2007). 'Turning on Default Reasons'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4.1, pp. 55–76.

9 Maike Albertzart (2014). *Moral Principles*. Bloomsbury Ethics. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

10 Bruno Niederbacher (2017). 'Was ist ein moralisches Gesetz?' In: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 139.4, pp. 373–386; Bruno Niederbacher (2018). 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists'. In: *Topoi*. 4, pp. 549–559.

11 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 112–113.

more recently, by Amelia Hicks.[12] The second particularist position (P_2) answers negatively to all three questions. Such a position is held, for instance, by Alan Thomas.[13]

Chapters 3 and 4 dealt with the first generalist position (G_1). To advance the discussion regarding moral particularism and generalism, in this chapter, we focus on the other positions. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, we will show that there are good reasons to hold the belief that there might exist some stable relations between the moral and base properties. However, second, we will provide an argument for the moral particularist's claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations reflecting these stable relations. The claim we defend will be as follows: some base properties might have certain stable relations to some moral properties, but there are no defensible true moral generalizations reflecting these relations.

Two preliminaries might be in place before we defend the above claim: First, in the following sections, we use the term "moral landscape" to illustrate the relation between the moral and base properties or the moral significance of some base properties.[14] This term is chosen because it has been used widely in the particularism–generalism debate.[15] In the following sections, if we use the phrase "the moral landscape is flat," it must be understood that there is no stable relation

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12 Amelia Hicks (2016). 'Particularism Doesn't Flatten'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 13.3, pp. 339–362.

13 Alan Thomas (2007). 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge'. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4.1, pp. 77–84; Alan Thomas (2011). 'Another Particularism: Reasons, Status and Defaults'. In: *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 14.2, pp. 151–167.

14 The term "moral or normative landscape" is quite usual in English literature, and there are presumably some different notions regarding the meaning of this term. Sam Harris, for instance, has a different understanding of what the "moral landscape" is. He uses this metaphor to illustrate the idea of space encompassing all human experiences. Just like any geographical landscape, there are peaks and valleys of human experience. In Harris's mind, the peaks are experiences of well-being or prosperity, and the valleys are experiences of human suffering. This understanding should not be confused with our understanding of this term in this book. (See Sam Harris (2011) *Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. New York: Free Press, p. 7) Furthermore, it must be noticed that this term is used to capture the idea that the numerous base properties or reasons (see below) are not of the same kind. Some base properties have their own moral significance, and some others do not. So understood, the term "moral landscape" is not a metaphor for the existence of moral properties (right/wrong, good/bad, obligatory/permissible/forbidden, etc.), but instead for the ways in which nonmoral and morally relevant properties (descriptive properties) are viewed from the moral perspective. Thus, the preferable term should be "the descriptive landscape." However, following the existing literature, we do not use such a term but instead the term "moral landscape," keeping in mind that it is supposed to describe the qualities that base properties might have seen from the moral point of view.

15 To mention a few of them: McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons'; McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*; Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge'; Hicks, 'Particularism Doesn't Flatten'.

between the base properties (nonmoral and morally involving properties) and the moral properties. (Here, we are not talking about particular or token base properties of certain actions, but rather base properties at their "type" level.) This means that any nonmoral properties (either it is shoelace color, pleasure or pain) or morally involving properties (such as being just or being kind) are of the same kind with respect to morality. They do not bring their own moral import, or, in our terms, pleasure does not have a stable relation to the moral property of being good, neither does pain to the moral property of being bad and shoelace color to any moral property. The phrase "the moral landscape is not flat" must therefore be understood contrarily, as articulating the thought that some nonmoral and morally involving properties, such as pleasure or pain, bring their own moral import, whereas shoelace color probably does not bring any moral import on its own. To summarize the illustration: if the moral landscape is not flat, different base properties (nonmoral and morally involving features) have different moral significance on their own; if, however, the moral landscape is flat, no base properties have moral significance on their own.

Second, whereas we have so far coined moral considerations in terms of facts and properties, in what follows, we will sometimes analyze the issue in terms of "moral reasons." Using this approach, we can characterize some nonmoral facts, such as the fact that an action involves the feature of stealing or killing, as reasons not to act or against the action. Some other nonmoral facts, such as the fact that a person needs help, are reasons that favor one to act. Some other nonmoral facts, such as the fact about shoelace color, are presumably morally irrelevant. Given such a characterization, there are at least three directions or valencies of moral reasons: those that *favor* one to act, those that are *against* the action, and those that are *irrelevant*. In terms of moral reasons, therefore, when we talk about the "moral landscape," the question would be whether some moral reasons, viz., some nonmoral facts, have stable valencies on their own. If the moral landscape is not flat, one can state that some moral reasons directly exhibit the valency of their moral relevance on their own. In such a sense, the fact of pain, for instance, can be regarded as a reason not to act and the fact of pleasure as a reason to act, whereas the fact of shoelace color does not have any moral significance on its own. However, if the moral landscape is flat, one can say that no facts have by themselves a certain or stable valency. If this is the case, then facts of pain, pleasure, and shoelace color are indifferent from the moral viewpoint.

Given these preliminaries, we now return to the claims of this chapter that some base properties might have certain stable relations in connection with some moral properties, but there are no defensible true moral generalizations reflecting these relations. To argue for these claims, this chapter is structured as follows. In Section 5.1, we discuss the abovementioned second particularist position (P_2), which claims that there is no stable relation between the base and moral facts and properties whatsoever. In other words, in terms of moral landscape, according to this position, the moral landscape is flat, meaning that all reasons, i.e., nonmoral

and morally involving facts, do not bring their moral import on their own. In Section 5.2, we discuss the positive answer to the second question, which is given by generalists of the position (G_2) as well as particularists of the position (P_1). They both endorse the claim that some base properties have stable relations to certain moral properties. On this conception, there are different kinds of facts, viz., nonmoral and morally involving ones, which have different moral imports *on their own*. We present four ways to understand this claim and to argue for it: a semantic way that appeals to the notion of normality, a metaphysical way that appeals to the notion of nature, an epistemological way that appeals to the privileged cases, and a pragmatic way that appeals to the authoritative character of moral reasoning. We will argue that the last way is the most defensible one. In Section 5.3, we examine the argument for the generalists' position of (G_2), specifically its premise that there are defensible true moral generalizations. We argue that this generalists' claim is untenable because moral generalizations reflecting the stable relation between the moral and base properties cannot be true. Given this result, moral particularists might well establish their claim that although there are stable relations between some base properties and some moral properties, there can be no defensible true moral generalizations.

5.1 Argument for the Flat Moral Landscape

In the above introduction, we mentioned that we have a certain hesitation to say that some nonmoral features such as stealing, killing, or helping someone in need do not have moral significance *on their own*. We tend to believe that it does not sound right to say that the feature of stealing is morally indifferent, just like the feature of being a red shoelace. However, why do we have such a hesitation? Is there any plausible ground that justifies our tendency to say that certain nonmoral or morally involving features, at their face value, exhibit their moral valency?

In answering such questions, McKeever and Ridge contend that the justification for why we have the tendency to say that some reasons carry their moral significance on their own, while some others do not, is pragmatic. They begin with an analysis regarding which features we should mention when we are engaged in offering an explanation, where "offering an explanation" is understood as giving an answer to a why question about certain facts in a certain context of conversation.[16] They argue that "which features it makes sense to mention when offering an explanation depends on the context."[17] Furthermore, they also argue that in most contexts, "facts which are known to be common knowledge need not be made explicit when giving an explanation."[18] These two quotations seem

[16] Presumably, McKeever and Ridge maintain a pragmatic understanding of explanation, one that is endorsed by van Fraassen. (Bas C. van Fraassen (1977). 'The Pragmatics of Explanation'. In: *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14.2, pp. 143–150)

[17] McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', pp. 73–74.

[18] McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 74.

to contain the most important features of the conception of practical reasoning maintained by McKeever and Ridge. Let us take a closer look at these features.

The first feature is what is usually called *nonmonotonicity*. A precise definition of nonmonotonic logic might be helpful here. According to Karl Schlechta, "A logic is called nonmonotonic, if it is so in the [...] argument. If $\vdash$ is the consequence relation, then $T \vdash \varphi$ need not imply $T' \vdash \varphi$ for $T \subseteq T'$."[19] This means that for any premise, ρ, which is not part of T, $(T \cup \rho)$ need not imply φ. If practical reasoning is nonmonotonic, this means that if in one context, a conclusion regarding what one ought to do is rendered by a set of premises, in another context, given some additional premise(s), the same set of premises need not render the same conclusion. In the new context, one is allowed to retract the first conclusion about what one ought to do. For instance, to use McKeever and Ridge's example, suppose that Harry and Helen went through a bitter divorce, and they have not succeeded yet.[20] Sally, Harry's new partner, wants to have a party, and her friend asks her why she does not invite Helen. One of the appropriate answers Sally might give is that Harry will be upset if Helen were invited. In this context, the fact that Harry will be upset is the reason for not inviting Helen, and this seems appropriate. Suppose there is another context where Helen's presence at that party will make the 3-year-old Sandy, Harry and Helen's son, happy, and Harry does not want to make him unhappy. In this context, it would be appropriate to say that the fact that Harry will be upset is defeated (as being Sally's reason for not inviting Helen) by the fact that Sandy will be happy. Given this additional fact, therefore, there is a reason for Sally to invite Helen.

The second feature of practical reasoning that McKeever and Ridge maintain is that the adequacy or intelligibility of any practical reasoning depends on some *truisms* (or truistic beliefs) that are supposed to be held by the involved persons. On their view, these truistic beliefs are supposed to be known when one is engaged in an intelligible conversation. In contrast to features that should be mentioned in offering an explanation, these truistic beliefs are held as common knowledge and do not need to be made explicit when giving an explanation. To use the first scenario of the above example, suppose Sally's friend asks her why Harry is upset, and Sally simply replies, "He ran into Helen today." This answer is elliptical, but it is adequate in the right context, that is, in the context where the fact that Harry and Helen went through a bitter divorce is supposed to be known

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19 Karl Schlechta (2007). 'Nonmonotonic Logics: A Preferential Approach. The Many Valued and Nonmonotonic Turn in Logic'. In: *Handbook of the History of Logic*. Ed. by Dov M. Gabbay and John Woods. North Holland: Elsevier, p. 451. The opposite of nonmonotonic logic, the monotonic one, might perhaps be helpful as well. In a monotonic inference, if a conclusion φ follows from a set of premises T, then any set of additional premises to T, $\{S\}$, will render the same conclusion, φ. The formal description of such a monotonic logic is that if $T \vdash \varphi$, then $T \cup \{S\} \vdash \varphi$, in which the set of the additional premise(s) $\{S\}$ is not part of T and $\vdash$ is a consequence relation. In a monotonic argument, an argument that is valid stays valid no matter what, or how many premises are added.

20 McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 74.

and to be held as common knowledge by the parties to that conversation. In other words, the adequacy of Sally's (elliptic) answer depends on the common knowledge that is supposed to be known by the parties to the conversation. Without that common knowledge, Sally's answer, which can be interpreted as a piece of practical reasoning, would not be intelligible. Nevertheless, on McKeever and Ridge's conception, such knowledge of a fact need not be made explicit to make Sally's answer intelligible.

So far, we have talked about the features of practical reasoning according to McKeever and Ridge. According to these authors, moral reasoning has the same features as practical reasoning. For them, moral reasoning is also nonmonotonic. This implies that whether a feature should be mentioned to make sense of an explanation of why a certain action ought (or ought not) to be done (or is right/wrong) depends on the context. In the context in which Harry will be upset when Helen is invited, the fact that Harry will be upset is a reason not to invite Helen. If one asks why it is wrong to invite Helen, in such a context, it is appropriate to mention the feature that Harry will be upset. In another context, such as in the context that Helen's presence will make Sandy happy, the fact that Harry will be upset (as being a reason for not inviting Helen) can be defeated by the fact that Sandy will be happy, so that it is not wrong to invite Helen. Moreover, in their view, the adequacy of any moral reasoning also depends on the truistic beliefs held by the parties. Concerning moral reasoning involving the feature of being a pain, they write, "That an action would cause pain is in most contexts a [...] reason against the action. Why? Because the fact that an action would cause pain almost always is a reason against the action and this is common knowledge, and moreover, it is commonly known to be common knowledge."[21] They argue that this last consideration gives a straightforward answer to the question of why we tend to think that some base properties have their moral valency (or moral significance) on their own and some other base properties, such as shoelace color, do not. Without such truisms being held by the parties, our moral reasoning would not be adequate.

In response to McKeever and Ridge's claim, Alan Thomas argues that it just begs the question about what constitutes practical reasonableness on the part of an agent more generally.[22] He contends that whether a person is a reasonable interlocutor in a conversation in the sense that he or she holds some topic-specific truisms regarding the subject matter is merely one aspect of the requirements of a reasonable practical reasoning. For him, it is true that the mastery of such truisms is required to regard an interlocutor as a practically reasonable participant in an enquiry. In the context of moral reasoning, he seems to agree that such a person should hold that some nonmoral facts, such as facts about pain or pleasure, are morally relevant, and some other nonmoral facts, such as the facts about shoelace

21 McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 74.

22 Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 79.

color, are not directly morally relevant. This means that if such various facts are present, one must focus their attention more on facts about pain or pleasure than on the facts about shoelace color to be regarded as a reasonable interlocutor in a conversation. However, in contrast to McKeever and Ridge, Thomas argues that holding such truisms should not imply that one must also hold some further truisms that some nonmoral features or, in general, some base properties have invariant moral valency, e.g., that pain is always a wrong-/bad-maker and pleasure is always a right-/good-maker of actions.[23]

In our opinion, there are at least two reasons why Thomas claims that there should be no such further implication. First, the arbitrariness of nonmonotonic practical (and moral) reasoning. According to him, moral reasoning is not a different kind of practical reasoning in general. Any moral reasoning has the same characteristics as practical reasoning in general, one of which is nonmonotoniticy. On his view, the nonmonotonicity of practical reasoning, in general, allows any arbitrary addition of information to change the degree of support the evidence offered for a conclusion. This claim suggests that given the arbitrariness of nonmonotonic reasoning, one cannot classify any possible information, viz., facts about base properties, into those that are "central" and those that are "peripheral" or into those that are "negative," "positive," or "neutral." Thus, Thomas claims that the moral landscape is flat.

Thomas provides some elaboration for his claim regarding the arbitrariness of nonmonotonic practical (and moral) reasoning. He begins by contending that the conclusion of a proper practical reasoning is not an intention to act or a thought as close to action as it can be, but instead an action itself.[24] According to him, this view regarding the conclusion of practical reasoning should support moral particularism because "the justification of the conclusion [of a nonmonotonic inference of a certain practical reasoning] is not directed to a general description of an action that this particular action token happens to satisfy. Another token action that met the same general description might *not* be a justified conclusion."[25] A particular practical reasoning is directed to justify the particular conclusion regarding what one does. Moreover, the nonmonotonicity of practical reasoning also tells us that it is always possible for one to retract the conclusion, viz., the action, if there is additional information that defeats the reasoning we already have. Referring to Brandom's view, he claims that "we do not know in advance what a defeating condition to our reasoning might turn out to be," and

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23 Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 82.

24 Such a view is supported by other authors, such as G. E. M. Anscombe (1963). *Intention*. 2nd. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 60, Donald Davidson (2001). 'Mental Events Essays on Actions and Events'. In: *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 207–227, Jonathan Dancy (2000a). *Practical Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and Sergio Tenenbaum (2007). 'The Conclusion of Practical Reason'. In: *Moral Psychology*. Ed. by Sergio Tenenbaum. Amsterdam: Brill, pp. 323–343.

25 Thomas, 'Another Particularism: Reasons, Status and Defaults', p. 155, emphasis original.

therefore, premises about that additional information are not just infinite, but they are indefinite.[26] Nonmonotonicity thus allows any kind of information to be added to the body of an inference of practical reasoning.

Thomas admits that the above account of a nonmonotonic practical reasoning seems to lead naturally to the problem that practical reasoning would be overwhelmed by the complexity of information. He, however, speculates that generalists who contend that it is not *any* kind of information that is allowed to be added to the body of premises for a practical inference, but only those that are *relevant*, seem to evade such a problem. The general principles of practical reasoning, such as moral principles, endorsed by them seem to cut down that complexity into a manageable form. On this view, finite and limited cognitive agents like us would then not be overwhelmed by the complexity of information.

Thomas, however, argues that such a generalists' claim is not tenable. The reason is that both on the generalist and particularist sides, there is no fully satisfactory theory of relevance at hand.[27] Moral generalizations that are supposed to provide some insights regarding which information is relevant will always fail to do their job because, once again, it is indefinite which information is relevant. The relevance of certain information depends, after all, on the context into which the information is brought in. Because there is no theory of relevance at hand, Thomas further claims that his particularist position is more attractive both than moral generalism and Dancy's kind-of-moral particularism. On his view, his version of moral particularism allows agents to be cognitively responsible for what information he or she will include in the body of inference.

Thomas seems to be aware that given this arbitrariness of what information could be relevant, another problem emerges, namely, about how practical (and moral) reasoning could ever be reasonable. Whereas McKeever and Ridge hold that the reasonableness of a certain moral reasoning depends on the truisms held by the parties of a conversation, in the sense that some base properties have their moral relevance *on their own*, Thomas claims that how these base properties are morally relevant cannot be determined in advance. He argues that the reasonableness of a certain moral reasoning does not depend on knowing the truisms regarding how some base properties are morally relevant, but rather on whether the reasoning satisfies the rules of practical inference. This is the second reason why he thinks that the moral landscape ought to be flat.

To explain what these rules of practical reasoning are, he appeals to Anscombe's contention that practical reasoning is "a form of abductive reasoning, specifically, a form of inference to the best explanation."[28] According to Thomas, an

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[26] Thomas, 'Another Particularism: Reasons, Status and Defaults', p. 156. See Robert Brandom (1998). 'Action, Norms, and Practical Reasoning'. In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 12, p. 133.

[27] Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 157.

[28] Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 81. See Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 60.

abductive inference is supposed to be rational when it works according to what Anthony Kenny calls "the logic of satisfactoriness."[29]

Plans and projects are examples of practical inferences in that they contain some commands. When one is engaged in a practical reasoning that considers some plans and projects, one will consider some commands toward what one needs to do. In contrast to the premises of a theoretical inference, commands cannot be true or false, and practical inferences involving them cannot be valid or invalid. Instead, following Kenny, Thomas claims that practical inferences might be satisfactory or not. (Note that practical inferences being satisfactory or not are categorically distinguished from their being executed or not.) The rules in the logic of satisfactoriness in a certain practical reasoning, i.e., the rules of practical reasoning, preserve one to move from one satisfactory plan to another, or prevent one to move from one satisfactory plan to an unsatisfactory plan. The overall goal of such practical reasoning is to find the best way of "satisfying one's basic purposes in a way that is consistent with one's other purposes."[30] So construed, on Thomas's view, the reasonableness of any practical reasoning does not depend on the truisms about how some base properties are morally relevant, but rather on whether one observes the rules of practical reasoning when one infers from premises to conclusion.

Given the above conception of practical reasoning, Thomas argues that the moral landscape is flat. He writes, "if practical inference is a form of defeasible nonmonotonic inference, which is basically a form of abductive reasoning, then I cannot see any a priori circumscription of what could count as an ethically relevant consideration. It seems to me that, for this reason, the normative landscape *ought* to be flat."[31] He argues that it is not obvious that we must hold as a truism that some base properties, such as pain and pleasure, clearly exhibit, at face value, the reasons against or for doing the action. Thomas gives an example of the morality of keeping animals in the zoo. He argues that for some people, it is allowed to cage animals, although they know that these animals might experience some pain when they are put in a cage. In such a case, we still need to give some explanation to these persons regarding why inflicting pain by putting these animals in the cage is not allowed. According to Thomas's conception, the fact that these persons need some explanation regarding why inflicting pain would be morally incorrect, simply undercuts McKeever and Ridge's claim that there are topic-specific truisms regarding the moral valency of some nonmoral features, such as inflicting pain, which must be held implicitly by all those who are engaged in a practically reasonable conversation.

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29 Anthony J. Kenny (1966). 'Practical Inference'. In: *Analysis* 26.3, p. 71.

30 Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 81.

31 Thomas, 'Practical Reasoning and Normative Relevance: A Reply to McKeever and Ridge', p. 82, emphasis original.

Thomas claims that the above consideration also shows how nonmonotonic practical reasoning as a form of abductive reasoning works, which in turn supports the moral particularists' claim that there are no defensible true moral generalizations. He argues that because the inference about what we ought or ought not to do is nonmonotonic, we cannot prevent any arbitrary addition of new information to the set of "premises" having a bearing on the "validity" of one's conclusion, or even on one's practical conclusion. Surely, although this arbitrariness exists, one still needs to observe the abovementioned rules of practical inference in one's practical reasoning, to make the inference satisfactory. However, this arbitrariness also implies that one cannot simply classify various base features as obviously bearing a certain moral valency. There is no way to classify some base properties as "central" or "peripheral" or as having a positive, negative, or neutral moral valency. Thomas concludes that, given that practical reasoning is nonmonotonic and is a form of abductive reasoning, the moral landscape is flat. This should straightforwardly support the moral particularists' claim that it is not true that there are some defensible true moral generalizations reflecting the stable relation between some nonmoral features and their moral significance.[32]

5.2 Arguments that the Moral Landscape is not Flat

Objections to Thomas's aforementioned view come not only from generalists but also from some other particularists. Generalists, on the one hand, obviously, do not share his claim that the moral landscape is flat. Nevertheless, they might agree with him on some other points, specifically, regarding the nonmonotonic characteristic of practical reasoning. Some particularists, on the other hand, although they agree with his conclusion that there are no defensible true moral generalizations, might not share his idea that moral landscape is flat. This means that some generalists and particularists might be on the same page regarding the question of whether the moral landscape is flat. (Surely, they still disagree about the existence of defensible true moral generalizations depicting the stable relations between some base properties and their purported moral significance.) In this section, we elaborate on the reason why some philosophers, both on the particularist and generalist sides, claim that the moral landscape is not flat. In our classification (see Table 5.1), this is the position shared by generalists (G_2) and particularists (P_2) regarding the question about whether some base properties *D* have a stable relation to certain moral properties *M* or that some base properties have a certain moral tendency on their own.

In our opinion, there are at least four different rationales as to why philosophers hold such a view. First, a semantic one: some philosophers seem to view statements about the moral tendency of some base properties in terms of our background expectation of *normality*. Second, an ontological rationale: some philosophers argue that certain base properties have a certain moral tendency or

[32] Thomas, 'Another Particularism: Reasons, Status and Defaults'.

a prevailing disposition with regard to moral qualities just because of the *nature* of these base properties. Third, an epistemological approach: for some philosophers, the moral tendency of certain base properties articulates how we regard these base properties when considered in their *privileged conditions*. Fourth, conceptual–pragmatic rationale: we propose that the moral tendency of certain base properties is an integral part of a moral system that is considered to be *authoritatively normative*. This last rationale is to supplement McKeever and Ridge's aforementioned pragmatic view, but it makes explicit that moral considerations have a distinct authoritative normative character.

5.2.1 Semantic Rationale: Extensional and Modal Notions of Normality

The first rationale to be considered to understand the thought that some base properties have certain moral tendencies or that they have moral significance on their own is semantics: statements about the moral tendency of some base properties can be viewed as articulating our background rational expectations of normality. To analyze the thought that some base properties have a certain prevailing disposition to be right or wrong, good or bad, etc., we may paraphrase such a connection in general sentences. For instance, the thought that the feature of stealing has the prevailing disposition of being wrong can be expressed by the general statement that

(1) Stealing is wrong.

As we have noticed, because (1) expresses only a tendency of the feature of stealing, it does not imply that every action involving the feature of stealing is wrong. One way to understand such a statement is to read it as revealing how things *normally* are. On this reading, (1) expresses a proposition of the form:

(1*) *Normally*, stealing is wrong.

However, what does this normality qualification mean? Normality is surely a rich notion. Nevertheless, there are at least two ways to understand the notion of normality: extensional and nonextensional. Garrett Cullity, among others, understands it extensionally, whereas Pekka Väyrynen, against Cullity's extensional notion, argues for a nonextensional reading of normality.[33]

Cullity argues that in the context of the moral particularism–generalism debate, both parties may agree that some reasons, viz., facts bearing certain base properties, have a certain default valency, in the sense that they may exhibit their

[33] See Garrett Cullity (2002). 'Particularism and Presumptive Reasons'. In: *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 76.1, pp. 169–190; Pekka Väyrynen (2004). 'Particularism and Default Reasons'. In: *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 7.1, pp. 53–79. There are some other terms used by different authors to express the target notion, such as regularity and typicality. The term "normality" is chosen here because it seems that this term has a richer notion than the others. Nevertheless, these other terms might be used synonymously.

moral significance on their own.[34] Some other base properties, such as the property of being a red shoelace, do not have a certain moral significance on their own. According to him, how these base properties exhibit their own moral significance can be understood by appealing to what we rationally expect when we are confronted with circumstances in which those base properties occur. On his view, when we are situated in circumstances characterized by those base properties, we have some background expectations regarding the moral status of these circumstances. In Cullity's terminology, some circumstances are "straightforward" or "uncomplicated," if there is no objection to those expectations, so that the moral status of those circumstances is in line with those expectations.[35]

To illustrate, suppose I had some fun in doing a certain action α in circumstances *C,* and there is no further moral objection to α. I can regard the feature of having fun as a reason to do α on its own. In such a case, I might say that it is rational for me to have a background expectation of normality concerning the feature of having fun in such a way that it would be a reason for a certain action (if there is no objection to that expectation). In Cullity's terminology, if there is no objection to my background expectation of normality concerning the feature of having fun, circumstances *C* would be called "straightforward" or "uncomplicated." On this view, therefore, when we think that certain base properties exhibit their moral significance on their own, we seem to mean that in straightforward circumstances, that is, when there is no objection to our background expectation of normality, actions characterized by those base properties would have the expected moral property. On such an account, statement (1) (and proposition (1*)) can therefore be understood as expressing the following proposition:

(1**) In straightforward circumstances, that is, when there is no objection to our background expectations of normality, stealing is wrong.

Cullity, however, makes a further claim about normality: the notion of normality is understood extensionally. According to him, the claim that some base properties have their moral significance on their own, such that some facts about them are reasons to act, "are sufficient for the [claim about the?] existence of a reason for action in *most* circumstances, where the background is uncomplicated."[36] There could be two readings of this claim: Either (i) it states what happens in most, but perhaps not all, straightforward circumstances, or (ii) it states that most circumstances are straightforward.[37] It seems that the second reading is what is intended. The question, then, is whether the claim that some base properties exhibit their moral tendency on their own implies that *most* circumstances involving them are straightforward.

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34 Cullity, 'Particularism and Presumptive Reasons', p. 170.

35 Cullity, 'Particularism and Presumptive Reasons', pp. 179, 180.

36 Cullity, 'Particularism and Presumptive Reasons', p. 180, emphasis added.

37 This differentiation is based on Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 62.

In response to Cullity's claim, Väyrynen argues that there is no such implication.[38] He begins with an observation about the connection between generic statements and the notion of normality, where he contends that "generics imply certain normality claims."[39] His definition of normality is more complex than the one offered by Cullity, and it is modal in nature. According to him, "normality" is a complex relational character of worlds that depends on their general shape, that is, on the regularities that hold in those worlds. These regularities are to be found in the fundamental laws of those worlds, provided that the contingent initial conditions of these worlds are not too bizarre. He writes, "a world *w′* is normal relative to *w* only if *w′* shares the fundamental laws of *w* and exhibits contingent initial conditions that aren't too bizarre from the point of view of *w*."[40] To illustrate this, suppose *p* is "This is a dry piece of wood," and in a normal world, as in the actual world, a dry piece of wood will catch fire when it is heated (*p*-normal). This is due to the generalities holding in those worlds.

However, he further argues that "although whether a given world is normal depends on what regularities hold there, a world may not always be normal in its own terms with respect to its specific conditions."[41] On this contention, therefore, when *w* is a *p*-world (i.e., a world in which *p* obtains), it need not always be *p*-normal, relative to itself, regarding its being a *p*-world. Due to certain specific conditions, it could be the case that in a *p*-world, it is *p*-abnormal. In addition to Cullity's account of normality, Väyrynen contends that generalities that hold in our world are reflected by our background expectations about how things would be. Due to certain specific conditions, however, some background expectations can be undermined. For instance, we still regard the actual world as a normal world with respect to the regularity that a dry piece of wood will catch fire when it is heated, although due to an insufficient amount of oxygen, in certain circumstances, a dry piece of wood would not catch fire.

Moreover, according to Väyrynen, normality is a relational notion in some further respects: "a world may be normal or abnormal, in virtue of some condition or other, in one respect but not others."[42] In the actual world, for instance, a bird, Tweety, is normal with respect to being feathered but not with respect to flying because it is a penguin. Tweety would be regarded as abnormal when

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38 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 63.

39 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 60.

40 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', pp. 58–59. For this definition, he refers to several authors, such as Nicholas Asher and Michael Morreau (1995). 'What Some Generic Sentences Mean'. In: *The Generic Book*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, p. 314; Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Nicholas Asher (1997). 'Generics and Defaults'. In: *Handbook of Logic and Language*. Ed. by Johan van Benthem and Alice Ter Meulen. Amsterdam: Elsevier, p. 1164; Michael Morreau (1997). 'Fainthearted Conditionals'. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 94.4, p. 200; and Graham Priest (1999). 'Validity'. In: *European Review of Philosophy. The Nature of Logic*. Ed. by Achille C. Varzi. Vol. 4. Stanford: CSLI Publications, p. 202.

41 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 59.

42 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 59.

normality is associated with flying. In contrast, with respect to flying, another bird, Tweedy, will be regarded as normal, because it is a pigeon. On Väyrynen's view, given these two facts, general statements about birds that fly and do not fly, such as (2) and (3), can be seen as true.

(2) Birds fly.
(3) Birds that are penguins do not fly.

Statements such as (2) are usually categorized as generic statements in which "they report a general property of individual instances of a kind, which transcends particular facts."[43] (2) articulates our background expectations of normality regarding birds with respect to flying. In other words, when we utter (2) and mean it in regard to generalities that hold in our world, with respect to the "activity" of flying, we seem to mean that "Birds normally fly." On this reading, it is plausible to see (2) as a true statement. Now, given the account of normality as proposed by Väyrynen above, (3) can also be regarded as a true statement, although we hold simultaneously that (2) is true. Usually we say that (2) is true, although it tolerates exceptions, so that (3) is true as well.

Furthermore, on Väyrynen's analysis, statements regarding the moral tendency of certain base properties, such as (1), are of the same category as (2) in that they are generic statements. Just like (2), (1) articulates how things normally are (with respect to the generalities holding in a certain world and to moral evaluation), and it tolerates exceptions. Thus, the question of whether the claim that some base properties exhibit their moral tendency on their own implies that *most* circumstances involving them are straightforward, viz., normal, would have the same answer as the question of whether it is true that (2), considered as a true statement, implies that *most* birds fly.

Considering the latter question, the answer is considerably simple, namely, it does not. The reason is that the truth of generics such as (2) does not depend on the ratio of cases that conforms to (2). In the literature about generic statements, philosophers seem to agree that it is neither necessary nor sufficient for the truth of a generic statement, "*F*s are *G*s," that most *F*s are *G*s.[44] The truth of (2) does not require that on the extensional level, the ratio of birds that fly is greater than those that do not. Even if most birds were penguins, kiwis, ostriches, chickens, etc. (and they would not fly), (2) would still be true.

Given the above analysis, Väyrynen argues that generic statements, including the moral ones such as (1), which articulate normality, therefore, cannot be read extensionally. Even though most cases of stealing were not wrong, (1) would still be true because, just like (2), the truth of (1) does not depend on the ratio of cases

[43] Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 60.
[44] See Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 63; Pelletier and Asher, 'Generics and Defaults', p. 1132.

conforming to it. The following proposition (1^{x}) is therefore *not* the correct way to understand (1).

(1^{x}) *In most cases*, stealing is wrong.

There is, however, a weaker option to understand the notion of normality extensionally. Whereas on the stronger option, we assume that regarding (1), the ratio of cases of wrong stealing is greater than those of not-wrong ones, the weaker option just assumes that the ratio of cases of stealing in which there is no objection to their wrongness is greater than those in which there is an objection to their wrongness. Suppose stealing would not be wrong in an unjust society. On the weaker option, we assume that the cases of wrong stealing that take place in an unjust society are lower than those that take place in a just society. In other words, the weaker option makes an assumption that most cases of stealing are normal or straightforward.

However, on Väyrynen's analysis, this weaker option cannot rescue the extensional reading of normality. He argues that such an assumption is only possible if we also assume that it is part of the general shape of the world that stealing does not occur in a just society. This further assumption is, however, not warranted. There is no reason that, by chance, we live in a nasty world where human interaction is coercive and fraudulent and human psychology is sadistic, deceitful, and perverse, so that most cases of stealing could still happen in just societies. The extension of normal stealing has nothing to do with the truth of (1). Thus, he concludes, the extensional reading of normality must be rejected.

Given that such a reading of normality is rejected, Väyrynen proposes a nonextensional reading of normality according to which generic statements about normality are understood as expressing modal qualities of certain things about what *may* happen to them in certain situations: "any consideration that here is a reason to φ *may* elsewhere be no reason at all (or even a reason to not φ), depending on the surrounding circumstances."[45] According to this nonextensional-modal reading, (1) can, therefore, be understood as expressing the following proposition:

(1^{nx}) Stealing *may* be wrong.

Read in the modal terms as above, (1^{nx}) can be seen as true irrespective of whether the most cases of stealing are wrong or whether most cases of stealing are straightforward. This can have two implications: on the one hand, (1^{nx}) allows that in certain circumstances, it can be undermined that stealing is the feature that makes an action wrong. On the other hand, the feature of stealing that *can* be undermined is *in fact never* undermined. On such an interpretation, therefore, even if the accidental truth about stealing in a certain world is that it is *always*

[45] Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 68, emphasis original.

(extensionally) wrong, stealing is possibly not wrong when the circumstances permit it.[46]

In our opinion, however, Väyrynen's modal reading of normality is too weak and insufficient. Intuitively, when one says that "Stealing is *normally* wrong," one wants to express that there is *something* with the feature of stealing so that this feature has the prevailing tendency to be wrong. With that statement, one presumably does not just want to say that "Stealing *may* be wrong," in the sense that there is some possibility for stealing to be wrong or not, depending on the circumstances. Surely, we agree that the extensional reading of normality is untenable. However, it seems that the modal reading presented by Väyrynen does not meet the expectation of gaining a deeper understanding about the notion of normality or moral tendency. Using Carnap's terminology, it seems that the modal account of normality is not an analysis of the notion of normality but merely an explication of it. On Carnap's view, an explication is, however, not sufficient for analysis. An explication is "the replacement of an obscure expression with a more precise one that plays the original expression's core functions."[47] In this case, it seems that Väyrynen (and Cullity as well) only "replaces" the obscure terms of "normality" or "tendency" with the modal quality "may," but by doing so, we do not yet fully understand what "normality" or "tendency" is.[48]

In fact, however, he gives a hint about the way we might provide a deeper analysis about the notion of "tendency" or "normality." This can be found in his discussion of the statement "Turtles live to a grand old age." In his analysis, he writes that we seem to think that such a statement is true "presumably because of the nature of the species."[49] Unfortunately, this matter, which would be an important aspect of understanding the notion of normality, is not further elaborated. It is, therefore, unclear whether he would regard the statements that "Turtles, *because of their nature*, live to a grand old age" and "Turtles *may* live to a grand old age" as denoting the same thing. However, in our opinion, although there might be an implicative relation in one or another direction between these statements, the former uses a bolder notion than the latter, and thus, they are expressing different things. The former seems to indicate a deeper understanding of the root of "normality," which Väyrynen does not further elaborate. This seems to suggest that his modal notion of normality is insufficient, and therefore, we need to consider a deeper rationale, namely, the ontological one, where the notion of tendency is understood in terms of the nature of things.

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46 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', pp. 68–69.

47 See Rudolf Carnap (1988). *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, §2.

48 To be fair, presumably Väyrynen does not aim at giving an analysis of normality. Nevertheless, if we want to understand our thought that certain base properties have moral tendencies on their own, such an explication about normality would not be sufficient.

49 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 63.

5.2.2 Ontological Rationale: A Recourse to the Nature of the Base Properties

It is common in literature that when one considers the ontological notion of the moral tendency or of the prevailing disposition of certain base properties, one would do so by appealing to the nature of the moral generalizations or laws. In such an analysis, one would treat statements such as (1) as cases of moral generalizations in the first place and ask their nature. However, we propose a proper analysis of the notion that certain base properties have the moral tendency or disposition on their own and should not consider statements, such as (1), as cases of moral generalizations in the first place because, on our schema (see Table 5.1), it would be a consideration of the third question regarding whether such moral generalizations are true. Instead, we will treat such statements only as stating a relation between a certain base property, such as stealing, and a certain moral property, such as being wrong, without assuming that the relation between them can possibly be prefixed in terms of true moral generalizations. The focus of our ontological analysis will then be the nature of the relation between the base and moral properties. It must be noticed, however, that although our main focus is not the question regarding the nature of moral generalizations, we nevertheless use some insights from the discussion about the nature of moral generalizations.

As has been indicated by Väyrynen, some philosophers claim that statements such as (1) are true "because of the nature" of the base properties,[50] such that, e.g., the feature of stealing has a stable relation to the property of being wrong just by virtue of the nature of stealing. Those who make such a claim are Jonathan Dancy, Margaret Little & Marc Lance, and Bruno Niederbacher, to mention a few. Dancy analyzes the notion of a stable relation between the base and moral properties in terms of moral reasons and values. For him, some reasons, i.e., facts bearing certain base properties, have default moral valency, while some others do not. He claims that some reasons "arrive switched on, though they may be switched off if the circumstances so conspire, while others arrive switched off but are switched on by appropriate contexts."[51] In terms of values, he also writes that "some features come switched on already, as it were, though they can be switched off by other features; others do not come switched on, but they can be switched on by a suitable context."[52] In these quotations, Dancy seems to claim that some base properties or reasons may have default normative settings on their own. In its default setting, pain, for instance, is a reason against performing an action that would inflict it. In its nondefault contexts, e.g., when pain is constitutive of delivering curative treatment, however, the default setting of pain can be switched off, such that there is some reason to perform an action that would inflict it.[53]

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50 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 63.

51 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 113.

52 Jonathan Dancy (2003). 'Are There Organic Unities?' In: *Ethics* 113.3, p. 638.

53 This example is adopted from Lance and Little, 'Particularism and Antitheory'.

Furthermore, Dancy claims that the fact that certain base properties have certain default normative settings is an ontological matter. In his view, pain is, in its default setting, a reason against just because of the nature of pain. The default setting of pain as a reason against is not just a contingent matter about the fact that a certain action that would inflict pain is a reason not to perform it. Likewise, in its default setting, the feature of stealing is a wrong-making feature, not just because a certain action that would be stealing is the ground why it is wrong. Stealing is, by default, a wrong-making feature just because of the nature of stealing.

However, it seems that Dancy's claim just begs the question: Why do we think that it is the property of wrongness (and not rightness) that is part of the nature of stealing, or the property of being a reason against (and not a reason for) that is part of the nature of pain in the first place? Lance & Little and Niederbacher seem to think that one can answer such questions by analogies with matters outside moral domains. In giving an answer to such questions, Lance & Little, as an analogy, refer to the relation between the features of being fish eggs and of turning into fish. They argue that the statement "Fish eggs turn into fish" is true in virtue of the nature of fish eggs. For them, this statement reveals something about the nature of fish eggs, i.e., that they turn into fish.[54] In a similar way, Niederbacher considers the statement "benzene is flammable," arguing that such a statement reveals something about the nature of being benzene, that is, that the property of being flammable belongs to the nature of being benzene.[55] These authors then argue that by analogy, statement (1) reveals something about the nature of the feature of stealing, that is, that the property of being wrong belongs to the nature of stealing.

However, we think that the above answer is untenable because there is a disanalogy between cases in nature and moral cases.[56] To see this, let us consider the phrase "the nature of *D*," where *D* represents nonmoral features such as being in pain, stealing, and promising. What does it mean when one says that "a property *F* belongs to the nature of *D*?" Niederbacher claims that the nature of a certain thing is understood in terms of its essential characteristics, i.e., its essential properties. He writes, "I understand characterization of an action [...] by a property in this way: it belongs to the essence of the action [...] to have an essential characteristic. It belongs to the essence of the action [...] of helping the needy to be morally good or morally obligatory. Helping the needy would not be what it is if it were not morally good or obligatory."[57] This contention seems to have an implication on the definition of essential properties, i.e., those that belong to the nature

54 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', pp. 61–62.

55 Niederbacher, 'Was ist ein moralisches Gesetz?'; Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust NonReductive Realists', p. 553.

56 The considerations provided in this section are inspired by and developed from Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu (2010). 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie'. In: *Public Reason* 2.1, pp. 88–93.

57 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', p. 551.

of certain things. Based on Niederbacher's understanding, a general stipulation regarding essential properties might be formulated as follows:

Essential Property: "A property *F* belongs to the essential properties of an object *D*, if and only if, *F* is necessary for the existence of *D*."[58]

However, is it true that being morally good or obligatory is necessary for the existence of the feature of helping the needy? Is it true that the property of being wrong is necessary for the existence of the feature of stealing? In contrast to Niederbacher, as well as to Lance & Little, who give a positive answer, we claim that these moral properties do not belong to the essential properties of those nonmoral features. The reason for this is obvious: there are numerous cases of helping the needy or of stealing that do not have the property of being morally good or obligatory or wrong, but nevertheless, it is correct to describe them as cases of helping the needy or of stealing. The moral properties of being good, obligatory, or wrong are not necessary for those cases to be a case of helping the needy or of stealing.

If this is so, what are then the essential properties of those nonmoral features? For us, the essential properties of such cases can be found on their appropriate minimal descriptions. For instance, we may stipulate that the proper minimal description of stealing would include the actor, action, motive, and consequences of the action. Without these properties, it is plausible to say that there would be no case of stealing. Concerning the concrete example of stealing, we might call such a stipulation

The Thesis of Proper Minimal Description: The essential properties of stealing are those that are mentioned in its proper minimal descriptions, that is, the actor, the action, the motive, and the consequences.[59]

As a consequence of this thesis, the moral property of being wrong would occur in a certain action of stealing only if its essential properties permit it. In other words, the moral property of wrongness exists only if the context, i.e., the configuration of the essential properties of stealing, permits it to be there. In a certain context, e.g., if the motive is to survive from famine and the consequences are not destructive, the property of wrongness would probably not occur, although it is still a case of stealing. An upshot of this thesis is that, on the correct

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[58] This definition is presumably unsatisfactory or cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, we think that this would be sufficient for our discussion in this chapter. For a further discussion, see Teresa Robertson Ishii and Philip Atkins (2020). 'Essential vs. Accidental Properties'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2020. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/ archives/win2020/entries/ essential-accidental/ (visited on 08/05/2021)

[59] Tsu considers a similar thesis that he calls "Embedded Character." (Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 89) In contrast to his proposal, ours makes a clear condition regarding which properties belong to the essential properties. It should not be the complete description of a feature, but, on my account, a proper minimal one would be sufficient.

description about what descriptive features are, moral properties do not belong to the essential property of those descriptive features.

Those who claim that moral properties belong to the nature of certain base properties, viz., descriptive features, might argue that the above consideration is misguided. Rather than considering the base properties or nonmoral features in their contexts, they might claim that one should consider the existence of base properties in abstraction from their contexts. The idea is that, if they are considered in abstraction from the interfering contexts, one can see that moral qualities belong to the nature of certain base properties, viz., descriptive features. Thus, considering the feature of stealing, they might be committed to the following thesis:

The Abstraction Thesis: In abstraction from its embedded contexts, stealing is always wrong-making.[60]

Being interpreted as endorsing **the Abstraction Thesis**, Lance & Little and Niederbacher can well argue that in some contexts, fish eggs would not turn into fish or that benzene may not be flammable. However, their claim that fish eggs turn into fish or that benzene is flammable is still true because they think that in abstraction from the contexts, the property of turning into fish belongs to the nature of fish eggs just as the property of being flammable belongs to the nature of benzene.[61]

However, what does "being in abstraction from the interfering contexts" mean? A familiar way to understand it is that certain objects in question are considered in their idealized conditions. For instance, the idealized conditions for fish eggs would be a good ecosystem where pollutants and predators are prevented from interfering; the idealized conditions for benzene would be an environment with the appropriate temperature and a sufficient amount of oxygen. For the sake of brevity, we may call this way of abstraction "setting a laboratory." So understood, one can, therefore, argue that because in idealized conditions fish eggs turn into fish and benzene is flammable, it is true that turning into fish and being flammable are the essential properties of fish eggs and benzene, respectively.[62]

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60 This thesis is developed from Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 90.

61 We think that based on Niederbacher's terminology, abstracted objects are equivalent to the types of objects and the property of the abstracted objects to the property-universal. Thus, on such a reading, the particular action of stealing is characterized both by its descriptive properties (the actor, the action, the motive, and the consequences) as well as by its moral property-particular, such as being wrong. The abstracted stealing, i.e., stealing-universal, is therefore characterized by the descriptive property-universal of stealing and the moral property-universal of being wrong.

62 We should, surely, note that there are some considerable differences between things in their idealized conditions and in the laboratory. In laboratories, things are deliberately set up under controlled circumstances, and by doing so, people may achieve a certain goal. Idealized conditions of certain things, however, do not necessarily require controlled circumstances, as in laboratories. Outside laboratories, there could be some circumstances that are ideal for

The question is then: can we construct something called a "moral laboratory" where a certain object in question, such as stealing, is considered in abstraction from its interfering factors? In response to such a question, Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu argues that such a laboratory is impossible. Considering the feature of fish eggs and lying, he writes, "Fish eggs are still fish eggs when they are abstracted from their embedded rivers. They will turn into fish in well controlled biological laboratories. By contrast, it is hard to imagine what a feature of lying would be like when it is shredded of its embedded context involving factors such as a liar, her motive for lying, a person being lied to, and the consequences of the lie."[63] Likewise, it is hard to imagine the existence of an object called "abstracted stealing" when it is shredded from its context, such as the actor, motive, action, and consequences. Given the above definition of **Essential Property**: Because these are the essential properties of stealing, it is clear that an abstracted entity of stealing cannot exist when it is shredded from its essential properties. This is the disanalogy between cases in nature, such as biological and chemical cases, and the moral cases, and thus, **the Abstraction Thesis** must be rejected.

Nevertheless, let us for a moment assume that such an abstraction would be successful, such that there exist certain idealized objects, such as idealized-stealing, idealized-lying, and idealized-charity-giving, although we cannot be sure what these objects would be like. Considered in terms of moral reasons, such idealized objects can be parallelized to Dancy's term of default settings or Cullity's term of straightforward conditions. The basic idea is always the same: in its idealized conditions (or default settings or straightforward conditions), by virtue of their nature, certain base properties pose moral properties *on their own*. The feature of stealing, for instance, poses a wrong-making feature on its own. Likewise, the feature of lying is thought of as a reason against and the feature of giving charity a reason for. The question is then: Is such an assumption illuminating? We think that it is not.

We believe that what is important to be considered here is the qualification of "on their own." On Dancy's account of practical reasons, there are at least two kinds of considerations: those that are reasons for or against the action and those that make it possible or impossible for those reasons to be the reasons for or against the action. The former kind is usually called the "reason" and the latter "enablers." Features are enablers if they make it possible for a reason to be the reason. The opposite of enablers is "disablers," that is, features that make it

obtaining certain things. However, we intentionally use the term "laboratory" to provide a picture of circumstances in which base properties or reasons may exist without any impediments or interfering factors. By doing so, we hope that we can clearly mark the boundary between the idealized and nonidealized conditions.

63 See Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 90. As it stands, Tsu's description of the essential properties of lying seems to be circular, in that it mentions "liar" in the explication about what lying is. It would perhaps be better to describe the essential properties of lying in terms of false testimony. Thus, they may include the false testimony, the testifier, the motive of a false testimony, the testifee, and the consequences of the false testimony.

impossible for a reason to be the reason. It is then thought that in their idealized conditions (or default settings or straightforward conditions), by virtue of their nature, certain nonmoral features are, in fact, reasons independent of the existence of any enablers and disablers. Given the assumption that some base properties may exist in their idealized conditions, they are reasons on their own just by virtue of their nature.

We think, however, that such an account is flawed because *all* reasons require enablers, in that it is impossible for any reason to be a reason without the presence of enablers.[64] Consider the uncomplicated case of promising. The reason why I ought to meet you is the fact that I promised to do it; its enabling condition is that I can do it. So construed, although the reason why I ought to meet you is the fact that I promised to do it, such a fact cannot be the reason if the enabling condition is absent, i.e., if I cannot do it. The presence of the enabling condition is required for the fact that my promise is the reason for me to meet you.

In response, the interlocutor might distinguish between local and global enablers.[65] Global enablers are considerations required by the very concept of a reason for acting. That a person can act is an example of a global enabler. Local enablers are then thought of as considerations required specifically by certain kinds of reasons. That the promise is not manipulated, for instance, is a local enabler for the fact that I promised. The interlocutor might then propose to set aside the requirement of the presence of global enablers. What is to be considered is only the existence of local enablers. The idea is that when some base properties are considered in their default setting (viz., idealized or straightforward conditions), they have a certain prevailing moral tendency on their own, independently of the existence of local enablers. For instance, the feature of making a promise (idealized-promise) is thought of as a reason to do it, because in its idealized or default conditions, the feature of manipulation is absent.

We believe, however, that this move is flawed too for a similar reason: in any possible context, even in idealized circumstances, *all* reasons require the existence of enablers for them to function as reasons. For instance, consider that the fact that I made a promise is, under idealized conditions, a reason for me to act, but under nonidealized ones, e.g., when I was manipulated, it is not. However, according to McKeever and Ridge, this consideration can be read in two ways: First, it may be understood that under nonidealized conditions, the existence of manipulation would "defeat" the fact of making a promise for being a reason for me to act. The presence of a defeater prevents the fact of making a promise from functioning as a reason. Second, it can also be understood that the fact that I was manipulated indicates that the enabling conditions were absent; were the enabling conditions of being unmanipulated present, the fact that I promised to

64 See McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 59 and Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 90.

65 See McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', pp. 59–60.

do the act would function as a reason. If this second reading is plausible, then one can say that the absence of disablers is an enabler. Thus, even under idealized conditions, where the disablers are absent, reasons can function as a reason only if enablers exist. McKeever and Ridge write, "If a consideration needs an enabler in order to function as a reason then trivially that consideration can be defeated; the absence of the enabler is a defeater. Similarly, if a consideration's status as a reason can be defeated then the consideration needs an enabler; the conjunction of the negation of all of its possible defeaters is an enabler."[66] If this is true, then it seems that the thought that some base properties have certain moral significance on their own by virtue of their nature, in the sense that when considered in their idealized condition, they will function as reasons on their own, is untenable. Base properties cannot bear their moral significance on their own just by virtue of their nature. Even under idealized circumstances, the existence of an enabler (and/or the absence of disablers) is required.

5.2.3 Epistemological Rationale: A Recourse to the Privileged Conditions

As the above ontological way of understanding the moral tendency of certain base properties turn to be flawed, an epistemological one might seem to be promising. Lance and Little, in some of their articles, provide such an epistemological understanding of the claim that some base properties have a certain moral significance on their own.[67] On their view, some facts are *paradigmatically* reasons. In terms of thin moral properties, some base properties have a paradigmatic tendency to be right- or wrong-making features. However, although they have such a tendency, Lance & Little agree that the status of certain facts about base properties as reasons depends on the contexts in which they occur. According to these authors, the general statements connecting the base and the moral properties are defeasible generalizations. Statement (1) above would then be understood as "*Defeasibly*, stealing is wrong." Our present focus is not on the character of such generalizations. (We consider such moral generalizations in the next section.) Our main question is instead this: given that moral generalizations are defeasible, how should we understand that some base properties are paradigmatically reasons or that some base properties have a paradigmatic tendency to be right- or wrong-making features?

On Lance & Little's view, the most important concept to understand the abovementioned claim is what is called the "privileged condition." They claim that statements such as (1), if read in terms of the abovementioned defeasible generalizations, would express the proposition that "*In its privileged conditions*,

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66 McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 61.

67 Little, 'Moral Generalities Revisited'; Lance and Little, 'Particularism and Antitheory'; Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics'; Little, 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory'.

stealing is wrong." However, what does it mean that something is in its privileged condition? Unfortunately, Lance and Little do not clearly state what it is supposed to mean. In our opinion, however, there are at least three different ways to understand what "privileged condition" is:

1) Logical: conditions in which the considered feature has its specified property.
2) Metaphysical: conditions in which the nature of the considered feature is revealed.
3) Epistemological: conditions that characterize the epistemic center of the considered feature.

Let us consider these three different ways separately. Understood in its logical sense, the statement that "in its privileged conditions, stealing is wrong" must be read as expressing the proposition that "in conditions in which the feature of stealing has the property of being wrong, stealing is wrong." As we can straightforwardly see, the logical notion of the privileged condition is then trivial and uninformative. Lance & Little, however, claim that their notion of privileged condition should not be empty, claiming simply that something can happen, unless it does not.[68] Thus, we can be sure that they would not aim to read the defeasible connection between certain base properties and moral properties in such a logical sense.

Understood in the metaphysical sense, the statement that "in its privileged conditions, stealing is wrong" would be an expression of the proposition that "in conditions in which the nature of stealing is revealed, lying is wrong." So construed, we can presuppose that while there are conditions that are privileged, there are also some *un*privileged conditions. In the unprivileged conditions, therefore, stealing is not wrong. Such a reading seems to be what Lance and Little want to say when they use the term "privileged condition." They write, "[s]ometimes when we issue a generalization to the effect that something has a certain feature, what we really want to say is not that such a connection always, or even usually, holds, but that the conditions in which it does hold are particularly revealing of that item's nature [...]"[69] As we have considered in the previous section, however, we must clarify how the term "nature" is supposed to be understood. If it is cashed out as articulating the thought that moral properties are part of the essential properties of certain nonmoral (and morally involving) features, the objections of the previous section can be rehearsed. Moral properties are not part of the essential properties of certain nonmoral (and morally involving) features.

In our opinion, what Lance & Little primarily want to defend is the epistemological reading. On this reading, the statement that "in its privileged conditions, stealing is wrong" can be interpreted as revealing the character of the

68 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 61.
69 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 62.

epistemic center of stealing.[70] To elaborate such a thought, these authors make several comparisons. The case of football is presumably the most obvious one. According to them, defeasibly, football is played by 11 players on a side. Because it is defeasible, there could be many variations of football; it might be played by 20 or 5 players on a side. However, the rules of the game given by FIFA are taken to be the privileged conditions upon which the game "football" is supposed to be defined. The many variants of football games can be understood as "football" only if one has a sufficient understanding about what football is in its privileged conditions. Likewise, they argue that "[w]e can understand a situation in which lying is wrong-making without resort to any context in which it has the opposite valence; but to understand the moral status of lying in Diplomacy, one must understand the players as having agreed to play a game with these rules in a context in which lying has its typical valence."[71] In other words, Lance & Little seem to endorse the view that there is an epistemological asymmetry between the privileged, unprivileged, and irrelevant cases. This epistemological asymmetry is explained by its conceptual asymmetry: "[...] mastery of moral concepts is mastery of defeasible generalizations [...] one cannot be said to understand moral concepts without appreciating the privileging moves that lie at their heart."[72] The asymmetry is this: in privileged conditions, concepts about certain features, such as games or morally relevant or irrelevant features, are supposed to be understood priorly. They are central concepts of a certain topic. In unprivileged conditions, such concepts are only understandable via an understanding of those concepts in their privileged conditions. Concepts that are irrelevant to a certain topic are supposed to be obviously set aside. They are supposed to be in the periphery when one considers a certain topic. In other words, on this view, one can presumably be competent with moral concepts without appreciating facts regarding shoelace color to be morally relevant, but not without appreciating facts about pain, pleasure, stealing, lying, etc. to have a certain moral quality when they are considered in their privileged conditions. Thus, Lance and Little seem to endorse an epistemological principle of mastery of moral concepts, which can be formulated as follows:

The Thesis of Privileging Move: Mastery of certain concepts in a certain domain requires a good understanding of the conditions in which a feature has the specified property (the privileged conditions), those in which it does not (the unprivileged conditions), and those in which it is irrelevant to that domain.

As we have mentioned, the case of football is its clear example. Some further examples given by these authors are

70 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 63.
71 Lance and Little, 'Particularism and Antitheory', p. 30.
72 Little, 'On Knowing the "Why": Particularism and Moral Theory', p. 39.

- *Theme-riff irony*: to understand the ironic sense behind a certain sentence, one must understand the same sentence intended literally. The ironic sense is a sort of variation or riff of the literal one.
- *Practical understanding*: a good practical understanding of the concept "match" requires a good practical understanding of the conditions in which it will catch fire when struck and those in which it does not.
- *Justificatory dependence*: appearances that *P* are defeasibly trustworthy to justify the belief that *P*. The justificatory relation between the appearances that *P* and the belief that *P* must be taken as privileged to understand that in the presence of some defeaters, the appearances that *P* will push one not to believe that *P*.

We think that each of these examples has its own specific upshot that cannot be generalized. However, for the sake of argument, we may admit that they have the same message that is to confirm the **Thesis of Privileging Move**. Such a thesis is thought to be true in the moral domain as well. The important questions for our present concern are: How can we mark the boundaries between conditions that are privileged and unprivileged? Can then such a boundary be useful to determine which facts are supposed to be morally (ir-)relevant? As we shall see in what follows, we argue that Lance & Little's epistemological account of privileged conditions is untenable. The main reason is that the typical assumption about the moral significance of certain base properties, viz., the assumption about a clear boundary, is unwarranted.

Consider their example of the practical understanding regarding the concept of "match." They write, "[a concept of] the artifact kind, where deployed, is circumscribed by marking some conditions—however frequent or rare they may contingently be—as *privileged*, and to see the behaviour of matches in general as understandable by reference to departures from those conditions."[73] Based on this quotation, they seem to claim that, if one will, one can clearly mark the boundary between the privileged conditions and the unprivileged ones. Regarding the connection between the features of striking the matches and of catching fire, they argue that even for denizens of the watery Atlantis, if they will, they can take conditions in which matches do not catch fire when struck as the privileged ones. "The point, though," they argue, "is that if they were to have *this* concept, they would have the concept of something that defeasibly works in a way that it rarely works "around here."[74] On their conception, therefore, those who have a good grasp of the privileged conditions "generally succeed in their attempts to light matches, don't waste their matches by making attempts when there is no hope of success."[75]

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73 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 62, emphasis original.

74 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 62, emphasis original.

75 Lance and Little, 'From Particularism to Defeasibility in Ethics', p. 63.

However, so construed, it is not clear which condition *should* be regarded as the privileged one and which condition is the unprivileged one. Tsu, for instance, argues that, if the denizens of the watery Atlantis relocated themselves to the Australian outback, a circumstance that we usually take as privileged conditions under which matches will catch fire when struck, they could still regard their present condition as an *un*privileged one.[76] Furthermore, according to Tsu, this also shows that sensible practices regarding a practical understanding about the concept of match do not depend on one's capability to mark as privileged those conditions in which matches catch fire when struck. The denizens of watery Atlantis who relocated themselves to the Australian outback can have a good practical understanding regarding the concept of matches, realizing that *now* they are situated in an unprivileged condition. If they relocated themselves to the watery Atlantis, where matches do not catch fire when struck and this is regarded as the privileged condition, their practical understanding about the concept of matches could still function well. They would not waste their time striking matches because they know that now, in such a privileged condition, "there is no hope of success" in doing so.

The same is true of the feature of pain or other base features that we usually think as having moral significance on their own. On Lance and Little's account, mastery of the moral concepts regarding the feature of pain requires a good grasp of the privileged conditions of the feature of pain, that is, that in its privileged conditions, the feature of pain is a reason against. One can understand that in the unprivileged conditions, such as when pain is constitutive of athletic achievement or of curative treatment, pain is not a reason for avoiding the action inflicting it, only if one understands that in its privileged conditions, pain is a reason against. However, again, such a distinction between the privileged and unprivileged conditions depends on unwarranted contingent facts about human biology and psychology. To use an example given by H. L. A. Hart, imagine that there is a world populated by rational creatures who have crab-like bodies.[77] It is difficult to inflict pain on such creatures from outside. Pain could nevertheless be inflicted from the inside, and this is necessary for them when they exert themselves in athletic competition. In such a condition, they might consider that in its privileged conditions, pain is a reason for doing the action. In a certain condition, inflicting pain might be a reason against it. However, such a fact should not be explained by the hypothesis that they know that in its privileged condition, pain is a reason against, but by the hypothesis that they know that they are now in unprivileged conditions where inflicting pain is a reason against. The same empirical data about pain as a reason against can well be explained by different but incompatible hypotheses.[78] Lance & Little's assumption that in the moral domain, there must

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76 Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 92.

77 See H. L. A. Hart (1961). *The Concept of Law*. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 194. This example is considered in McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', pp. 70–71.

78 Tsu, 'How the Ceteris Paribus Principles of Morality Lie', p. 92.

be a clear boundary between privileged and unprivileged conditions is therefore unwarranted.

There is a further consequence of the above objection. In the beginning of this section, we made a distinction between base properties that obviously have moral significance on their own, such as pain, pleasure, stealing, or promising, and base properties that do not have moral significance on their own. On Lance & Little's view, the reason why we make such a distinction is that it should be obvious that regarding these base properties that have moral significance on their own, there are conditions that are privileged and unprivileged. More generally, they understand the distinction between the privileged and unprivileged conditions in terms of paradigm. They think that pain, for instance, is paradigmatically a reason against, in the sense that in its privileged conditions, pain is a reason against, and in its unprivileged conditions, it is a reason for. What about the feature of shoelace color? It seems that they would argue that such a feature is paradigmatically not a reason at all or is irrelevant. However, the question is: how could we distinguish features that are paradigmatically a reason (for or against) and those that are paradigmatically not a reason at all (irrelevant)? Whereas for Lance and Little, features in the unprivileged conditions are understood via an understanding about them in their privileged conditions; it is not clear how morally irrelevant features should be understood when they are morally relevant. When in a certain case (or world), shoelace color was morally relevant, does the understanding about such a relevance depend on the understanding that, in its privileged condition, shoelace color is irrelevant? Dealing with such a question, McKeever and Ridge argue that Lance and Little's epistemological account does not have a tenable answer.[79]

5.2.4 Conceptual–Pragmatic Rationale: A Resort to the Authoritativeness of Morality

Before making further examinations, let us reiterate our previous discussion and its interim findings. Our chief concern was and is to examine the thought that some base properties, such as being painful, stealing, or donating some money to charity, exhibit their moral significance on their own, whereas some other base properties, such as being a red shoelace, do not. We want to know whether there are some good reason(s) to justify such a thought. In contrast to Alan Thomas, we have been arguing that some possible good reasons for such a thought are available. We began with a semantic analysis about generic statements that depict the relation between the base and moral properties and understood them in terms of normality. On this analysis, we considered whether some base properties, such as being painful, *normally* exhibit their moral significance, such as being a bad-maker, whereas some others do not. The analysis, however, showed that both the extensional and nonextensional readings of normality are insufficient. They cannot give us a satisfying answer to our abovementioned question. We then run an

[79] McKeever and Ridge, 'Turning on Default Reasons', p. 73.

ontological analysis and considered whether the reason why certain base properties exhibit moral significance on their own might be that the moral qualities associated with those base properties are part of their *nature*. As we have seen, such a thought is, however, unwarranted. Based on the definition of essential properties, we realized that moral properties are not part of the essential properties of certain base facts. Being right or wrong, for instance, is neither among the necessary nor sufficient conditions for the existence of the facts of stealing, lying, killing, or keeping a promise. Given this unsatisfactory result, we then turned to an epistemological analysis. We considered that the possible reason for thinking that some base properties exhibit their moral significance on their own could be found in the way things are in their *privileged conditions*. The idea was that when a base property is considered in its privileged conditions, meaning that it is abstracted from its interfering factors, it has certain moral valency; for instance, stealing is, in its privileged conditions, always a wrong-making feature. Philosophers who make such a privileging move presuppose that there is an analogy between natural facts (our examples were biological facts about fish eggs and chemical facts about benzene) and moral facts. Our analysis, however, revealed that such an analogy is misleading; while fish eggs are still fish eggs when they are in abstraction from their interfering factors (e.g., pollutants and predators), stealing or promising, for instance, would not be what they are without the involved actors, the motivation behind these acts, and their consequences. On further analyses, we also saw that, even given the assumption that we were successful in abstracting base properties from their interfering factors, moral qualities associated with them could not occur without the presence of enablers. The absence of disablers in the privileged cases must be counted as a presence of enablers. In other words, this assumption cannot rescue the idea that the reason why some base properties exhibit their moral significance on their own (whereas some others do not) can be found when we consider cases in their privileged conditions.

If the semantic, ontological, and epistemological ways are flawed, is there any other option? We believe that there is a conceptual-pragmatic option left that can shed some light on how we should understand the thought that some base properties exhibit their moral significance on their own and some others do not. As we have previously discussed, McKeever and Ridge propose a pragmatic approach to this question. On their account, a reasonable moral reasoning requires some truisms that must be held by the reasoners. These truisms are common knowledge that is supposed to be known by the reasoners in a certain context. Concerning pain and pleasure, for instance, it must be held as truism that pain is a bad-making feature and that pleasure is a good-making one so that moral reasoning involving these base properties would be reasonable. On Thomas's analysis, however, such a truism seems incompatible with the nonmonotonic character of moral reasoning, a character that is also endorsed by McKeever and Ridge. On Thomas's account, just like any other kinds of practical reasoning, the nonmonotonicity of moral reasoning allows *any* arbitrary information to be relevant. Moreover, this

arbitrariness prevents any reasons or base facts to determine the moral status of any actions involving them in advance. How certain reasons or facts would be morally relevant is "indefinite." Thomas seems to argue that certain facts, such as being in pain or experiencing pleasure, could be morally relevant, but their moral relevance cannot be determined without the context where they occur. Pain or pleasure *as such* are not bad- or good-making features.

5.2.4.1 The Line of Thought of the Conceptual–Pragmatic Rationale

In our opinion, however, Thomas's aforementioned thought seems to be contrary to common belief. It is quite surprising and sounds outlandish to say that features such as being a pain, being a pleasure, killing, stealing, or making promises do not have a certain moral significance on their own, a kind of specific moral import that a red shoelace does not possess. On the face of it, it seems that a more moderate view is required. Such a view should make sense of the thought that some nonmoral and morally involving facts and properties have a moral significance on their own. According to our opinion, a conceptual-pragmatic way of understanding that we present gives an illuminating answer to the question about the justification of the thought that some base properties have moral significance on their own, whereas some others do not.

To begin with, we need to raise a question to Thomas's view regarding the arbitrariness of moral reasoning: Is moral reasoning really *that* arbitrary, in a way that we cannot draw a boundary between base facts or reasons that may exhibit moral significance on their own and those that may not? In agreement with those who are hostile to Thomas's position, we argue that moral reasoning should *not* be that arbitrary. The reason why it cannot be arbitrary can be found in the authoritative character of moral reasoning. The insights of such a character stem from the conceptual analysis on what and why morality is authoritatively normative. The line of our thought, which we label as *a conceptual–pragmatic rationale*, is as follows:

1. There is a plurality of normative systems. Among many sorts of normativity, it is at least plausible to distinguish between formal and authoritative normativity.
2. Morality is authoritatively normative, meaning that, on a conceptual reflection, it is constitutive of our activity of selecting the nonarbitrary actions of what we ought to do.
3. Because morality is constitutive of our activity of selecting the nonarbitrary actions of what we ought to do, it determines how descriptive facts would be morally significant. This "determination" is the notion of "nonarbitrary."
4. Some base–descriptive facts have a moral significance on their own just because they are framed and evaluated within a certain moral system.
5. The fact that a certain moral system determines the moral significance of these base facts does not imply that there are true general statements

depicting the relation between descriptive base facts and their moral significance. All statements about such a relation would not be capable of being true or false.

The following Subsections 5.2.4.2–5.2.4.4 discuss the first four steps, and the next section (Section 5.3) argues for the claim stated in the fifth step.

5.2.4.2 Normativity and the Elusiveness of Authoritative Normativity

Recent metaethical discussions have shifted from an inquiry to understand morality to a wider inquiry into the nature and characteristics of "normativity" in general.[80] The latter is considered to be encompassing a larger scope of inquiry and bearing a more significant aspect of human life. The natural way to undertake inquiry into normativity is to consider that among our actions, beliefs, or feelings, there are not only things that we merely do, believe, or upon which we feel, but there are also things we *ought* (or *ought not*) to do, believe, or upon which we ought to feel. The study of normativity then appeals to what these "oughts" amount to. There are, however, various types of normativity. To mention just a few examples: considering law, normativity is cashed out in terms of legal and illegal; considering etiquette, it can be cashed out in terms of polite and impolite; considering prudence, its normativity can be cashed out in terms of well-being; and, considering morality, one way to cash out its normativity is to consider deontic concepts, such as being obligatory, permissible, or forbidden.

Nevertheless, although there might be various phenomena of normativity, philosophers usually distinguish between two basic sorts of normativity: *formal* and *authoritative* normativity.[81] Baker stipulates that formal normativity is

[80] Some key publications about normativity in metaethics are Christine M. Korsgaard (1996). *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Judith Jarvis Thomson (2008). *Normativity*. Chicago, IL: Open Court; Peter Schaber (2004). *Normativity and Naturalism*. Frankfurt-Lancaster: Ontos Verlag; John Broome (2013). *Rationality through Reasoning*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons; Tristram McPherson (2018). 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 13. Ox ford: University Press Oxford, pp. 253–277; Lisa Schwarz (2021). 'Living without Normativity'. PhD thesis. The University of Arizona. URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10150/658635 (visited on 28/07/2022); David Copp and Justin Morton (2022). 'Normativity in Metaethics'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2022. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford. edu/archives/fall2022/entries/normativity-metaethics/ (visited on 01/08/2022). A recent and in-depth survey of the variety of normativity can be seen in Derek Baker (2017). 'The Varieties of Normativity'. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Metaethics*. Ed. by T. McPherson and D. Plunkett. New York, pp. 567–581.

[81] This distinction is proposed particularly by Tristram McPherson (McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts'). A similar idea is also endorsed by David Copp, John Broome, Evan Tiffany, Nicholas Southwood, and Derek Baker. In more recent literature, some scholars use the term "robust" instead of "authoritative." (David Copp (2004). 'Moral Naturalism and Three Grades of Normativity'. In: *Normativity and Naturalism*. Ed. by Peter Schaber. Frankfurt–Lancaster: Ontos Verlag, pp. 7–45; John Broome (2007). 'Requirements'. In:

"normativity displayed by any standard one can meet or fall short of."[82] According to him, one can willfully ignore or violate such a standard, but this would not imply that the person would be guilty or her behaviour is in any interesting sense called defective. Formal normativity is displayed by numerous rules, such as rules of chess, club rules, the law, or the standards of a certain pageant contest. In contrast, authoritative normativity is displayed by the requirements of morality, prudence, or perhaps, rationality. The normativity in these domains is thought of as inherently significant. Being ignorant or violating the requirements of morality, prudence, or rationality would always be regarded as defective behaviour. Another way to distinguish between these two sorts of normativity is to differentiate how they suggest or request one to act. Whereas normative facts and properties in the domain of formal normativity tell us what to do (or think, or feel), authoritatively normative facts and properties *really* tell us what we are expected to do (or think or feel). In general, we use metaphors to express the special character of authoritative normativity, such as "normative force."[83]

Surely, this distinction is not without problems. It is not quite obvious whether different phenomena of normativity are easily identifiable with these two categories.[84] Nevertheless, for our purposes, we can assume that normativity of morality is identifiable with authoritative normativity. It seems plausible to state that, in contrast to chess rules or traffic laws, morality tells us what we ought to do (or think or feel) in an authoritative way. In contrast to chess rules or traffic laws, it is plausible to say that morality would *settle what to do*. However, although we acknowledge that there is such a predisposition, it is still unclear what "authority" is supposed to mean here. A descriptive definition of authority, according to which morality is regarded as something (or someone) that has a certain power and can coerce people, seems to be inadequate. The authoritativeness that is attributed to morality seems to need further elaboration.

Unfortunately, in the discussion on the topic of authoritative normativity, people sometimes do conflate two different fundamental questions that may cause some confusion. The first question refers to the explication of "authoritativeness": *What* is the term "authoritative normativity" supposed to mean? If we apply this term in the domain of morality, the question would be: What does it (or do we) mean when (we think that) morality is authoritatively normative? The second

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Hommage À Wlodek; 60 Philosophical Papers Dedicated to Wlodek Rabinowicz. Ed. by Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen et al. URL: www.fil.lu.se/hommageawlodek (visited on 18/07/2022); Evan Tiffany (2007). 'Deflationary Normative Pluralism'. In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume* 33, pp. 231–262; Nicholas Southwood (2008). 'Vindicating the Normativity of Rationality'. In: *Ethics* 119.1, pp. 9–30; Baker, 'The Varieties of Normativity'; Schwarz, 'Living without Normativity').

82 Baker, 'The Varieties of Normativity', p. 568.

83 See Derek Parfit (2011a). *On What Matters*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 34–35.

84 A further discussion on the problem with this distinction can be seen in Baker, 'The Varieties of Normativity', pp. 577–580.

question asks for the vindication of authoritative normativity: *Why* is morality authoritatively normative? This second question, specifically concerning morality, seems to be closely related to the old questions: "Why be moral?" or "Why ought we to do what morality requires us to do?" The first and second questions are important for us; therefore, we try to answer them.

Let us try to answer the first question: "What is normative authoritativeness?" or, in the moral domain, "What do we mean by saying that morality is authoritatively normative?" As we have mentioned, a common approach to an understanding of the authoritativeness of morality is through metaphor, such as "normative force." When we consider some facts that are morally relevant, we usually also use terms such as "favoring" or "calling" us to act in a certain way. For instance, the fact that a child is drowning calls us to help him; and the fact that you promised to meet your friend favors you to keep this promise. Other morally relevant facts also call us to refrain or pull us away from doing certain things. The fact that an action would be an instance of telling a lie pulls us away from so doing; the fact that an action would lead to killing pulls us away from doing so.

However, do these metaphors ("normative force," "favor," "call for," "refrain from," and "pull away from") help us understand the authoritativeness of morality? We think that they do not. It seems that these metaphors give us only a general understanding of normativity, but not of what specifically authority is. Surely, if we take certain facts to have a "normative force," morality, for instance, would tell us that considering these facts; we would see that we ought or ought not to do a certain action. However, it seems that such a locution is not only a circular explication of normativity (moral requirements are explicated using normative terms such as "ought") but also, in those cases, we do not see yet that such normativity is *authoritative*.

To make the case clearer, consider the requirements of etiquette that is usually considered as a case of nonauthoritative or formal normativity. In this domain, we can use the abovementioned metaphor in a similar way. For instance, consider the fact that in some places, talking to someone without looking at the interlocutor's eyes would be considered impolite. It is plausible to say then that the fact that such a behavior would be impolite favors us not to do it. Such a fact calls us to refrain from doing the behavior. In a certain sense, then, if we take such an etiquette system seriously, we might say that such a fact forces us not to do it. This thought is parallel to what has been shown by Philippa Foot, where she argues that if the authoritativeness of morality is glossed as *categorical*, in the sense that we cannot escape its requirements simply by changing our desires or intentions because these are "in themselves sufficient reasons for action," then the normativity of etiquette is also categorical.[85]

[85] See Philippa Foot (1972). 'Morality as A System of Hypothetical Imperatives'. In: *The Philosophical Review* 81.3, p. 312.

Instead of using metaphors, there are several alternative proposals to understand the notion of normative authoritativeness of morality. Let us briefly discuss three of these. First, some philosophers, such as Derek Parfit, distinguish between the notion of "rule-implying" and of "reason-implying." According to him, some normative facts are "rule-implying" "when these facts are about what is correct or incorrect, or allowed or disallowed, by some rule or requirement in some practice or institution."[86] Legal facts and facts about etiquette are examples of "rule-implying" facts. Some other normative facts, however, are "reason-implying," that is, when such facts obtain, "that's *what it is* for us to have some reason, or *what it is* for some act to be what we should or ought to do [...]"[87] Based on this view, moral facts are for him, "reason-implying." This proposal is however misleading.[88] The term "reason" can be used in numerous ways, not only in the moral domain or other supposedly authoritative normative domains. It would be plausible to account for the requirements of nonauthoritative normative systems as reason-implying as well. One can plausibly talk not only about moral reasons but also about aesthetic reasons, legal reasons, chess-rule reasons, reasons of etiquette, etc. Such a distinction is therefore unhelpful.

Second, some other philosophers, such as Ralph Wedgwood, propose that the authoritativeness of authoritative normativity can be cashed out using the concept of *all-things-considered*.[89] Following Donald Davidson, he makes a contrast between judgments that *X* is better than *Y simpliciter* with that it is better *prima facie* and that it is better *all-things-considered*.[90] However, again, a similar contrast of being normatively simpliciter/prima-facie/all-things-considered can be displayed by the requirements of etiquette, laws, and even chess rules. Such an attempt therefore does not provide significant information regarding what "authoritative normativity" is supposed to mean. The natural reaction to these two unsuccessful attempts would be, third, to say that authoritative normativity is a *primitive concept*.[91] Perhaps such authoritativeness can be displayed distinctively by different normative systems; nevertheless, one cannot give a further analysis. Stating that the requirements of a certain normative system are authoritative would only mark the normative system being considered as authoritative, but it does not provide further information regarding what authoritativeness means. Philosophers call such a view *deflationary pluralism*.[92] However, stating that the

86 Derek Parfit (2011b). *On What Matters*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 308.

87 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 309.

88 McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts', p. 257; see also Baker, 'The Varieties of Normativity', p. 569.

89 Ralph Wedgwood (2004). 'The Metaethicists' Mistake'. In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 18, pp. 405–426.

90 See Donald Davidson (1969). 'How Is Weakness of the Will Possible?' In: *Moral Concepts*. Ed. by Joel Feinberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

91 Compare Thomas M. Scanlon (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, p. 17.

92 Tiffany, 'Deflationary Normative Pluralism'.

concept of normative authority is unanalyzable would not be satisfying because such a view does not provide us with an adequate understanding of a complex concept that seems to be semantically rich and strongly entrenched both in our thought about various normative domains as well as in our practice. A novel view is therefore needed.

5.2.4.3 Constitutiveness and Nonarbitrary Selection

On the assumption that the abovementioned attempts are unsuccessful, Tristram McPherson proposes a novel understanding of authoritative normativity that can be considered a revision of the traditional constitutivist view.[93] Constitutivism about normativity is a type of constructivism. In a rough outline, according to the traditional view of constitutivism, some normative requirements, such as moral ones, are authoritative unconditionally, in the sense that normative agents cannot escape these requirements.[94] The unconditional binding by authoritative normativities is constitutive to one's being a normative agent. In contrast, the binding of formal normativity is not constitutive. Suppose you modified a chess game in which players should torture a puppy in the most awful way. As you find yourself playing such a game, you can deliberately stop playing it because you may think that there would be no reason to torture a puppy in a chess game. In such a case, the requirements of formal normativity would evaporate once an agent stops being an agent of a formal normativity. In contrast, concerning authoritative normativity, one cannot stop, for instance, being a moral agent.

This traditional constitutive view has been widely criticized. David Enoch, for instance, argues that this traditional view cannot make sense of what deliberation and agency are when being a normative agent is inescapable and doing what one is required to do is, in a certain sense, *already* determined.[95] Moreover, the association between the inescapability of normative agency and the reason why the requirements for doing certain activities are authoritative is also unclear. In light

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93 McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts'.

94 The constitutivist view is endorsed by different authors, such as Christine Korsgaard, Peter Railton, Elijah Millgram, Tamar Schapiro, James D. Velleman, Connie Rosati, and Luca Ferrero. (See Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*; Peter Railton (1997). 'On The Hypothetical and Non-Hypothetical in Reasoning about Belief and Action'. In: *Ethics and Practical Reason*. Ed. by G. Cullity and B. Gaut. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 53–79; Elijah Millgram (1997). *Practical Induction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Tamar Schapiro (1999). 'What Is a Child?' In: *Ethics* 109.4, pp. 715–738; J. D. Velleman (2000). *The Possibility of Practical Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Connie S. Rosati (2003). 'Agency and the Open Question Argument'. In: *Ethics* 113.3, pp. 490–527; Luca Ferrero (2009). 'Constitutivism and the Inescapability of Agency'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 303–333; Luca Ferrero (2018). 'Inescapability Revisited'. In: *Manuscrito* 41, pp. 113–158).

95 David Enoch (2006). 'Agency, Shmagency'. In: *The Philosophical Review* 115.2, pp. 169–198; David Enoch (2011). 'Shmagency Revisited'. In: *New Waves in Metaethics*. Ed. by Michael Brady. London: Palgrave McMillan, pp. 208–233.

of such criticisms, McPherson revises the traditional agent-based constitutivist view by locating normative authority in the nature of the activity itself.

McPherson dubs the concept of authoritative normativity "practical ought." He assumes that there is a plurality of normativities that may conflict with each other. For instance, what one *morally* ought to do may conflict with what one *prudentially* ought to do. Furthermore, he also assumes that when there is a conflict between moral and prudential requirements, one practically ought to do the morally required things. For example, when an action is impolite but obligatory, the authoritative normativity settles what one ought to do. He considers the following case of the sticky situation:

Sticky Situation You find yourself in a sticky situation. You conclude that morality requires you to stay and help, while prudence dictates that you take the money and run. Torn, you ask yourself: *Given all of this, what ought I to do?*[96]

There could be at least two ways to answer the above practical ought question: arbitrarily and nonarbitrarily. As an arbitrary way out, you might flip a coin, heads for morality and tails for prudence. Alternatively, you might also plump for following morality or prudence. Ignoring both requirements, you can also shrug your shoulders and drink a beer instead. Either way, while facing such a conflict, you must select an option. Given that in all these cases, you should select or choose what you ought to do, McPherson seems to be convinced that the natural reading of these cases is that you select what you ought to do nonarbitrarily.

If it is true that in determining what you ought to do, you make nonarbitrary choices, according to McPherson, this just shows that you privilege something or some considerations, and you take these considerations to be authoritative. In other words, for McPherson, a certain requirement is authoritatively normative if it is constitutive of the activity of nonarbitrary selection or choice. For instance, if you take moral requirements to be authoritative and you accordingly know that you ought to do a certain action *A*, this means that the success condition for your activity of selecting *A* is that you take it that morality requires you do *A*. On McPherson's view, it is then a conceptual truth to say that "[w]hen an instance of the activity of nonarbitrary selection concludes in selection of an option *A*, for the agent's judgment *I practically ought to do A* to be true is for the selection to have satisfied the constitutive success [requirements] of that activity."[97] The nature of normative authority lies on the activity of the nonarbitrary selection itself.

McPherson's account of normative authority is, for some scholars, not without problems though. In her recently defended dissertation, Lisa Schwarz, for instance, doubts that the notion of nonarbitrary selection is clear enough.[98] She considers some possible notions of nonarbitrary selection. According to her, if a

96 McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts', p. 254, emphasis original.
97 McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts', p. 266.
98 Schwarz, 'Living without Normativity', p. 32.

nonarbitrary choice means that it is not exclusively determined by one's preferences, then the legal requirements (that are categorized as formal normativities) would also be nonarbitrary. If, however, nonarbitrary is intended to mean that choices are not *capricious* or just based on impulse or whim but rather based on a certain system or method, numerous other choices, such as in chess games or local polite behavior, are also nonarbitrary. Moreover, most probably, nonarbitrariness expresses a first-order normative concept, meaning that if choices are nonarbitrary, they are based on reasons or justified. According to Schwarz, however, this would make the notion of authoritative normativity circular because it defines authoritative normativity using normative terminologies, such as justified or reasons. She concludes that McPherson's notion of authoritative normativity is therefore not of any help.

Nevertheless, we think that making nonarbitrary selections is unavoidable when one presumes that there exist some authoritative requirements. Surely, both arbitrary and nonarbitrary selections belong to the fundamental structure of the world. We make not only nonarbitrary selections but also, perhaps most of the time, arbitrary ones. However, considering cases such as the Sticky Situation or other kinds of important conflicting situations, we think that it is appropriate that we should make nonarbitrary selections. Furthermore, again, in making these nonarbitrary selections, we take certain requirements to be authoritative.[99]

Furthermore, we do not agree that the assumption of nonarbitrariness makes the explication of normative authority circular. We think that Schwarz fails to distinguish between the chosen action *A* being justified or being the most favored by certain reasons and the activity of choosing the action *A* to be the one that ought to be done. Surely, both are nonarbitrary. However, they are two different things. It is true that action *A* is nonarbitrary if it is justified according to a certain first-order normative theory, in the sense that if one accepts a certain first-order theory *T*, *T* would recommend or even require one to *A* (*A* is therefore a nonarbitrary action with respect to *T*). However, this does not seem to be what McPherson has in mind. Instead, we believe that what he is talking about is the *activity of choosing A*. This activity is nonarbitrary if one takes a certain normative system *S* to be authoritative. For instance, two people may take morality to be authoritative over prudence. If they are both situated in the abovementioned Sticky Situation, the moral requirements are then constitutive for their activity of choosing what they ought to do. Their activity of selecting what they ought to do is, in this sense, nonarbitrary. However, at the end of the day, they may choose different actions, for instance, because they hold different first-order theories. In this case, morality is then thought of as authoritative, not because it will recommend or require one to do the same action, but because it is constitutive in recommending what action

[99] McPherson acknowledges that his conception of authoritative normativity is latched on to phenomena of nonarbitrary selection. If there were no such nonarbitrary selections regarding cases such as the Sticky Situation, the concept of normative authority would be empty. (McPherson, 'Authoritatively Normative Concepts', p. 272)

ought to be done. The way how action would be recommended cannot, therefore, be arbitrary.

5.2.4.4 The Link between the Conceptual Account of Authoritative Normativity and the Pragmatic Claim about The Necessity of Holding Truisms

The next task is to extrapolate the bearing of McPherson's conceptual account of authoritative normativity on the claim that some basic facts and properties have moral significance on their own. The connection we have in mind is this: If a certain authoritative normative system, specifically morality, is constitutive of the nonarbitrary selection of what one ought to do, the options of what one ought to do are already determined by that normative system. Therefore, for instance, if one acknowledges that morality is authoritative and prudence is not, then one is in a position to state that one's options about what one ought to do are already limited by the moral system. In such a case, one "already" decides that the prudential options will not play a role in one's deliberation.

The Sticky Situation may make the claim a bit clearer. If you acknowledge that morality is authoritative and prudence is not, your options now are limited, that is, that you stay and help. The possible prudential options (you take the money and run) are now "out of sight." Given that you acknowledge that morality is authoritative, you now make a consideration *from the moral point of view*.

Nevertheless, in the Sticky Situation, it is perhaps too obvious that any morally sane person would easily take morality to be authoritative over prudence. Another toy case might better illustrate the idea. Suppose you find yourself in a

*Sticky Situation** in which morality requires you to tell the truth, but prudence requires you to be polite, in that telling the truth would be considered impolite and not telling the truth polite. Suppose also that these two exhaust the options. You ask yourself: what ought I to do?

Surely you can do many things in response to that question. For the sake of clarity, consider that in responding to the *Sticky Situation**, you have three judges who will evaluate the possible scenarios of answering that question: a moral judge, a judge of practical reasoning and a judge of prudence. The following analysis is probably trivial. However, we believe that it has a significant theoretical role for the understanding of the bearing of the notion of authoritative normativity on the conviction that some base facts and properties have their moral significance on their own, whereas some others do not.

Suppose, on the first scenario, you are convinced that morality is authoritative, and prudence is not. Given this conviction, you can arguably state that "From the moral point of view, I ought to tell the truth." Considering this judgment, a moral judge might say that your choice satisfies moral requirements; a judge of practical reasoning would say that you do the correct thing. However, a judge of prudence will say that because you are impolite, you do not satisfy prudential requirements. In the second scenario, you might think that morality is

authoritative but choose not to tell the truth to be polite. Considering this situation, a judge of practical reasoning may conclude that you are making a mistake or that you are inconsistent in doing so; a moral judge might evaluate the situation from the moral point of view and state that your action is wrong because you violate the moral requirements; however, a judge of prudence will say that you do the right thing. This second scenario makes McPherson's point clearer: because morality is considered authoritative in the sense that it is constitutive of the activity of selecting what one ought to do, the violation of moral requirements (which usually makes the action forbidden or even morally wrong) is *simply* there, even if you do not opt for morality and consider that the prudential reasons have more weight in that situation. Moral requirements are constitutive of your activity of choosing what you ought to do. Although you think that reasons of prudence will win the day in the sense that they outweigh moral reasons, given that the moral system is constitutive of your activity of selecting what you ought to do, it is plausible to state that from the moral point of view, you violate moral requirements.

There could be other scenarios regarding the answer to the *Sticky Situation**. In one scenario, perhaps, you reject the existence of any authoritative normativity, such that the answer you would give only depends on your subjective preferences.[100] However, such a third scenario requires a deeper reflection on how "a moral life" would be if there was no authoritative normativity at all, and because, in our case, we assume that there exists authoritative normativity, let us concentrate on the abovementioned two scenarios. The point we want to make with the above two scenarios is that because morality is considered authoritative, the options regarding what one ought to do are already framed and limited by the moral system. If one acknowledges that morality is authoritative, one's activity of selecting what one ought to do cannot be based on considerations that are "out of the system," such as prudential requirements. Consider the descriptive property of telling the truth and its opposite, not telling the truth, in the above Sticky Situation*. It is already in our moral system that the property of not telling the truth has a negative moral valence. Thus, the reason why the property of telling the truth or other kinds of base properties have their own moral significance is because we take them to be evaluated or framed in a certain moral system that is authoritatively normative. Some other base properties are considered not directly relevant morally just because they are not directly within the frame of a certain moral system. Surely, it seems necessary to show which individual base properties have moral significance when in the framework of a certain moral system. Such an inquiry, however, cannot be undertaken at present.

The resort to the conceptual understanding of authoritative normativity, where moral systems are considered normatively authoritative, gives us some theoretical advantages in making sense of why we think that some base properties, such as telling the truth, stealing, killing, or helping the needy, have their

100 See Chapter 5 of Schwarz, 'Living without Normativity'.

own moral significance, while some other base properties, such as shoelace color, do not (and hence, the moral landscape is not flat). First, it explains why, in reasonable moral reasoning, it is necessary to hold certain truisms about which base facts are obligatory, permissible, forbidden, right or wrong, good or bad. These truisms, however, are part of the moral system. Furthermore, because reasonable moral reasoning follows the same system, to be coherent, the reasoners should also hold things that are acknowledged by the system. Second, because the conceptual account of normative authority is a sort of constitutivism and constitutivism is a sort of constructivism about normativity, it acknowledges that a certain normative system depends on the beliefs of agents and their activities. From this, it follows that a certain normative system might be revised or advanced when the agents make some novel findings regarding how certain base properties could be morally relevant. Third, because the normativity of morality is considered a sort of constructivism, the truisms about how certain base properties might be morally relevant are also open for revision. This means that although it is held as a truism that a certain base property *D* has a certain moral significance *M* on its own, it could be the case that *D* is defeated by another base property, such that the truism being held has to be given up. We believe that this third advantage gives a plausible argument for the claim that there are no true moral generalizations depicting the relation between certain base properties and their moral properties. The next section will elaborate on this claim further.

5.3 The Moral Landscape is not Flat and Moral Particularism Holds

In this section, we want to analyze whether the conviction that the moral landscape is not flat would imply that the moral particularists' claim is false. The claim we want to make is that because the existence of truisms regarding the moral significance of certain base properties depends on the moral system we acknowledge, there can be no true moral generalizations, i.e., true general statements depicting the relations between the base and moral properties or how these base properties would be morally significant. This means that although we think that some base properties do have a certain moral significance on their own and some others do not (and hence, the moral landscape is not flat), moral particularism is still true. Before elaborating on this claim, a brief overview of the metaethical discussion regarding moral truth and its truth conditions will be presented. Based on this understanding of moral truth and its truth realist conditions, we then show that there are no true moral generalizations in a realist sense. Nevertheless, because we think that holding truisms about morality is necessary for any reasonable moral reasoning, we show in what sense these truisms are true.

5.3.1 Moral Truth and a Realist Conception of Truth

According to William P. Alston, some possible bearers of truth are statements or assertions, sentences or utterances, propositions, and beliefs (or judgments and

thoughts).[101] Nevertheless, sentences, statements, or beliefs can be qualified as true or false only by virtue of their propositional contents, that is, those that are asserted or believed.[102] Thus, we concentrate on the truth or falsity of moral statements and propositions.

Moral statements and propositions are those that evaluate certain facts morally or from a moral point of view. Such an evaluation is shown by the moral terms used in those statements and propositions. As we have considered in Chapter 2 of this book, we concentrate only on the moral statements and propositions that are characterized at least by one moral term that supposedly depicts a certain moral property and one nonmoral or morally relevant term that supposedly depicts a certain nonmoral, descriptive or morally relevant property.

Among the numerous moral statements and propositions, we can at least distinguish between particular and general statements and propositions.[103] Particular statements and propositions are those that have particular contents, articulating the moral status of certain particular or individual things. For instance, a proposition whose content is that Sally's action of inviting Helen is morally wrong is a particular proposition regarding Sally's action at a certain time and place. The contrasts to particular statements and propositions are the general ones. General statements and propositions are those that have general contents. Moral generalizations, the subject matter of our present discussion, are clear examples of general statements and propositions. We may state once again that moral generalizations are general statements that depict the relation between base and moral properties.

As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, there are at least two kinds of relations that can be depicted by moral generalizations. Moral generalizations can depict a tight relation between a certain moral and base property, which indicates that the base property that is stated in the moral generalizations will override any other base properties, so that any actions that have such a base property will have the same moral property. We call such moral generalizations tight moral generalizations. The focus of this chapter is, however, not on this sort of moral generalization. Our main concentration is instead on the loose moral generalizations, i.e., general statements merely expressing that a certain base property has a moral significance on its own. In previous sections, we tried to understand the conviction that some base properties have their moral significance on their own, whereas some others do not. We have argued that the conceptual-pragmatic rationale for such a conviction is the most defensible one. The natural question that follows from such a thought is whether there are true moral generalizations that depict the stable, yet loose, relation between the base and the moral

101 William P. Alston (2018). *A Realist Conception of Truth*. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 5–15.

102 Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth*, pp. 15–17.

103 Bruno Niederbacher (2021). *Metaethik*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, pp. 54–55.

properties. In the following paragraphs, we show that there are no such true loose moral generalizations.

As we have previously considered, specifically, in Section 5.2, we may express loose moral generalizations in several ways. We now discuss for each of these ways whether there are true moral generalizations if we presume that they are plausible. We begin by discussing the semantic rationale that utilizes the notion of normality to understand the stable relation between some base properties and some moral ones. We considered that in terms of normality, the relation between the base property of stealing and the moral property of being wrong that is usually stated in (1) "Stealing is wrong" expresses a proposition that

(1*) *Normally*, stealing is wrong.

Normality can be interpreted extensionally and nonextensionally. In an extensional interpretation, such a proposition might be thought of as expressing a proposition that

(1^{x}) *In most cases*, stealing is wrong.

Whereas in a nonextensional interpretation, (1*) could express a proposition that

(1^{nx}) Stealing *may* be wrong.

The question here is: Are such statements true? Alternatively, are they at least capable of being true or false? However, what does it mean when we say that a statement or a proposition is true? To answer the question of whether such abovementioned general statements and propositions are true, we think that it will be useful to make some hypothetical assumptions about a certain conception of truth. We think that we could share a realist conception of truth because it seems that such a conception has some clear characteristics. Some of these characteristics can be identified as follows:

First, let us assume that it is possible to regard certain moral propositions as true or false. This means we set aside the skeptical claim about the possibility that some moral statements and propositions are truth-apt, a claim that was endorsed, e.g., by moral error theorists.[104] *Second*, let us also assume that the concepts of truth and falsity we are using in the moral domain are not essentially different from those used outside moral domains. If we regard a statement "Snow is white" as true and a statement such as (1*) also as true, let us think that both truth qualifications express the same thing. By rejecting an essential difference in the notions of truth and falsity in the moral and other domains, we would, provisionally, not agree, for instance, with Habermas' proposal that the concept of truth in the moral domain is better understood as "correctness."[105] *Third*, let us assume that

[104] The prominent skeptical argument against the possibility of moral truth can be seen in J. L. Mackie (1990). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Pelican Books.

[105] Jürgen Habermas (2003). *Truth and Justification*. Trans. by Barbara Fultner. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 247–248.

if a certain statement or proposition is true or false, its truth or falsity does not depend on, or is not relative to, a certain agent who asserts or evaluates that statement or proposition. If a certain moral proposition, either a general one, such as (1) "Stealing is wrong," or a particular one, such as "Andy's action of stealing last night was wrong," is true, then its truth does not depend on the agent who asserts or evaluates such a proposition. This means that we would reject a relativist conception of moral truth according to which, roughly, the truth or falsity of a certain moral proposition depends on the agent's point of view, preferences, or standards.[106] *Fourth*, in addition to the assumption that moral statements are possibly true or false, we assume that moral knowledge is also possible. This means that we would assume that there are ways to justify whether our moral beliefs are true or false. Although we need not opt for a certain view of moral justification, we might think that both doxastic and nondoxastic grounds can be necessary to justify our moral beliefs.[107] *Fifth*, and this is the most crucial assumption, let us assume that the conception of moral truth must be a realist one. This means that a statement or a proposition "*D* is *M*" can only be true or false, if and only if there is a truth-maker for it, viz., a state of affairs about whether or not *D* is *M*. One's assertion that "Stealing is wrong," for instance, can only be true or false, if and only if there is a state of affairs about stealing, and this state may include the property of being morally wrong. If such an inclusive state of affairs does occur, then this assertion is true; if it does not, then the assertion is false. The existence of such a state of affairs is the condition upon which a moral statement or proposition can be true or false.

5.3.2 General Moral Statements Cannot be True

As we have previously mentioned, we are convinced that, given these five assumptions, moral generalizations depicting the loose relation between certain base properties and their moral properties cannot be true. With this, we mean that either (1) there are no sufficient truth conditions upon which these generalizations are truth-apt or (2) even if there were sufficient truth conditions, they were not true. Consider the extensional interpretation of the general moral statement about normality (1^{x}), "*In most cases*, stealing is wrong." If the extensional interpretation of such a moral generalization is seen as plausible, one should acknowledge that the truth condition for such a statement is that the ratio of cases of stealing that

106 The recent defense of the relativist view on ethics and metaethics was suggested by Sharon Street (2010). 'What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics?' In: *Philosophy Compass* 5.5, pp. 363–384 and Berit Brogaard (2012). 'Moral Relativism and Moral Expressivism'. In: *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 50.4, pp. 538–556.

107 In Chapter 7, we argue that, given the necessity of both doxastic and nondoxastic grounds for moral justification, both intellect or rationality and emotion are therefore also necessary for moral education.

are wrong is greater than those that are not.[108] On the empirical level, such a state of affairs seems to be possible to obtain. Given such a possibility, the proponents of the extensional interpretation may plausibly claim that there are sufficient truth conditions for such a general statement. Gerhard Schurz, for instance, claims that the normality qualification of certain general statements implies statistical normality.[109] However, as Väyrynen has argued, the apparent possibility of such truth conditions is just based on assumptions regarding contingent matters that are seen as the general shape of a world where such states of affairs may obtain. There is, however, no sufficient ground to support such assumptions, specifically considering general statements regarding morality.[110] Furthermore, as we have argued, whereas it could be the case that there are such sufficient conditions in nature, upon which generalizations may be true or false, given the disanalogy between the natural and the moral, it is not warranted to assume that there are also sufficient truth conditions for generalizations with moral contents. On a popular view, moral generalizations are not supposed to be merely general pictures of what there *is*, but they are supposed to tell us how things *should be*. Their truth or falsity, if they are true or false, should not be based on empirical data regarding what there is.

According to Väyrynen, even if the extensional assumption is not warranted, such moral generalizations can nevertheless be true, provided that they are interpreted nonextensionally. For him, if such moral generalizations are interpreted nonextensionally, they express modal claims, and thus, (1*) should be understood as expressing (1^{nx}) "Stealing *may* be wrong." As we have argued, such an interpretation is, however, too weak and seems to be insufficient for such a moral generalization to be called genuine. It neither provides us with useful information regarding what normality is supposed to mean nor with useful information about moral generalizations in general.

Nevertheless, regardless of their nongenuineness, we may ask whether there are sufficient truth conditions for such statements or propositions. Because, for Väyrynen, the "may" in those moral generalizations is not to capture contingent worldly facts about stealing, it seems that it is difficult to see that there are sufficient truth conditions for them in a realist sense. In fact, in his account of "hedged moral principles," Väyrynen himself admits that the relation between certain nonmoral properties or facts and our responses to such properties or facts (no matter whether such facts are reasons for or against doing certain actions)

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108 By saying this, we are aware that the qualification "in most cases" is semantically vague. Some people might think or feel that "most cases" must articulate a sense that the cases being considered are more than just 50% + 1; perhaps they must be more than or approximately 90%. Either way, how many cases would be counted as "most," however, is not directly relevant to our argument regarding the truth conditions for general statements such as (1^{x}) above.

109 Gerhard Schurz (2001). 'What is' Normal'? An Evolution-Theoretic Foundation for Normic Laws and Their Relation to Statistical Normality'. In: *Philosophy of Science* 68.4, p. 478.

110 Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', pp. 62–63.

depends on a certain normative view that underwrites the existence of such a relation. This means that it is not the state of affairs about such relations that is supposed to support any statements depicting these relations, viz., moral generalizations, but instead, it is the theoretical framework in which one acknowledges those relations. He writes:

> *I propose a conception of pro tanto as hedged principles that involve: (A) a relationship of favouring between some nonmoral consideration and the response for which it is a reason, (B) hedging conditions that limit the scope of that relationship, and (C) a normative basis that underwrites the normative relationship in (A) and determines what conditions fall under (B).*[111]

According to this view, a nonmoral consideration, e.g., the classification of an act as stealing, would therefore have a moral significance as being a reason against, insofar as it is considered under a certain normative basis, and such a basis determines when a case of stealing would be a reason against and when it would be a reason for performing the action. This means that a statement "Stealing may be a reason against doing it" is considered to be "true" only if it is viewed or evaluated from a certain normative basis. The "truth conditions," if one may, for such moral generalizations are therefore not the state of affairs about cases of stealing in which the property of being a reason against doing the action is included in it. This is, however, not a realist sense of the truth conditions.

A similar argument can be pointed to the other rationales, i.e., the ontological, the epistemological, and even, the conceptual–pragmatic views. According to the ontological rationale, the reason why certain base properties exhibit their moral significance on their own is that moral qualities associated with those base properties are part of their *nature*. The assumption underlying such a thought is that moral properties are part of the essential properties of certain nonmoral and morally involving facts. We have seen, however, that this assumption is misleading. Thus, it cannot be the case that a statement such as "Wrongness is part of the nature of stealing" is true in virtue of the state of affairs about the nature of stealing because there is no such state of affairs that would also include the moral property of wrongness in it. In general, we can say that from the ontological point of view, it seems implausible that certain moral properties belong to the nature of nonmoral or morally involving facts.

The same is true of the epistemological rationale. According to this view, the (epistemological) explanation for our conviction that certain base properties and facts exhibit their moral significance on their own and some others do not, stems from a consideration regarding such base properties in their privileged conditions. Base facts and properties that are considered in their privileged conditions have moral significance on their own, and this fact is the core epistemological

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[111] Väyrynen, 'Particularism and Default Reasons', p. 74, emphasis original. See also Pekka Väyrynen (2009). 'A Theory of Hedged Moral Principles'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91–132.

explanation regarding why an action, which has such a base fact, has or has not a certain moral property. Basically, however, this view is similar to the ontological rationale, where a general statement such as "In its privileged conditions, the feature of stealing is a reason against doing it" is considered to be true in virtue of the state of affairs about the privileged conditions of the feature of stealing. Because there is no state of affairs regarding the privileged conditions of the feature of stealing, in which being a reason against is included in such a feature, we cannot say whether the abovementioned general statement is true. Such general statements lack truth conditions.[112]

How about our proposed conceptual–pragmatic rationale? If we think that the reason why there are some truisms regarding morality that must be held by the participants in a moral reasoning and that are determined by a certain moral system, does this imply that there are defensible true moral generalizations depicting the relation between certain base facts and properties and their moral significance? At first glance, it seems absurd to state that there are some truisms, but these are not true or cannot be true. However, if we presuppose that a realist conception about truth assumes that there must be certain states of affairs possibly obtaining to make certain general statements truth-apt, then the conceptual–pragmatic rationale would not necessarily imply that there are true moral generalizations in a realist sense. The existence of such states of affairs is not necessary for holding the view that there are some truisms about morality because these are thought of as part of a certain moral system. In a certain sense, our view is in line with Väyrynen's account of hedged moral principles, where the relation between a certain nonmoral consideration and our reaction to this consideration (be it a reason against or for doing the action involving that consideration) is underwritten by a certain normative basis. This view does not imply that there are certain states of affairs regarding the relation between those considerations and the reactions to them.

5.3.3 Resources of the Nonrealist Conceptions of Truth

Nevertheless, to maintain such a view, we need to elaborate which conception of truth we might hold when we say that there are some truisms about morality that are part of a certain moral system. In our view, a nonrealist conception about truth would be congenial to the conceptual–pragmatic rationale, specifically when considering the truth of general statements about morality. As a terminological stipulation, according to a nonrealist conception of truth, a statement is considered

[112] To be fair, presumably those who propose the epistemological rationale would not appeal to any ontological assumption. They might think that the epistemological account is a way to evade the ontological problems, in which one should not assume the existence of any truth-makers for any general statements. However, although it would be fine to acknowledge that the epistemological view would not face any ontological problems, we believe that it is legitimate to make an ontological evaluation as to whether such an epistemological view would render the existence of true moral generalizations in a realist sense.

to be truth-apt, if and only if there are nonrealist truth conditions for such a statement. In contrast to the realist conception of truth, nonrealist truth conditions are not states of affairs involving certain things.

What are these nonrealist truth conditions? In the literature, philosophers usually call the nonrealist conception of truth "an epistemic conception of truth" because they usually consider that true statements of propositions are true in the sense of being coherent, conceivable, acceptable, justified, or grounded. This means that when one says that a certain general moral statement *p* is true, one would actually mean that "*p* is coherent/conceivable/acceptable/justified/grounded." There are several scholars who argue for such a view. Although they agree that the nonrealist truth conditions would be sufficient for accounting for certain general moral statements and propositions as true, they may have different views about what exactly these truth conditions are. Based on their own theories of truth, they may argue that a moral statement or proposition *p* is true if and only if

- *p* is coherent with some specified set of true propositions.
- *p* would be accepted under ideal epistemic conditions.
- *p* would be worthy of being recognized by indefinitely many participants in an ideal discourse.
- *p* would be held as true by any person who is fully informed and who can make a proportional emotional reaction to *p*.[113]

As examples, two scholars will be discussed further: Jürgen Habermas, as we have mentioned, and Derek Parfit. Habermas believes that the appropriate qualification for a valid general moral statement is not "... is true" but "... is right." He writes as follows:

> *My guiding intuition can be characterized as follows. On the one hand, we discover the rightness of moral judgments in the same way as the truth of descriptions: through argumentation [...]. The validity of statements can be established only through discursive engagement using available reasons. On the other hand, moral validity claims do not refer to the world in the way that is characteristic of truth claims. "Truth" is a justification–transcendent concept that cannot be made to coincide even with the concept of ideal warranted assertibility. Rather, it refers to the truth conditions that must, as it were, be met by reality itself. In contrast, the meaning of "rightness" consists entirely in ideal warranted acceptability.*[114]

Further he writes:

> *We do not understand the validity of a normative statement in terms of the obtaining of a state of affairs, but as the worthiness of recognition of a corresponding*

[113] This summary owes much to Bruno Niederbacher (2013). *Erkenntnistheorie moralischer Überzeugungen: ein Entwurf*. Vol. 45. Philosophical Analysis. Frankfurt: Walter de Gruyter, p. 37.

[114] Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, pp. 247–248.

> *norm on which we ought to base our practice [...] Of course a norm whose worthiness of recognition is ideally warranted may not be recognized as a matter of fact – or such recognition may be withheld by a society in which other practices and interpretations of the world are established. Yet with the reference to the objective world, moral validity claims lose a touchstone that extends beyond discourse and transcends the insightful self-determination of the will of the participants.*
>
> *An agreement about norms or actions that is reached discursively under ideal conditions has more than merely an authorizing power; it warrants the rightness of moral judgments.*[115]

Habermas seems convinced that the validity of general moral statements cannot be based on the ontological assumption that there are states of affairs about morality in the descriptive world. From this, it follows that such statements cannot be true in a realist sense. However, it does not imply that general moral statements cannot be valid. They can be valid in the sense that they are worthy to be recognized in idealized conditions, that is, when there is an equal discursive communication among (indefinitely many) participants. Surely, whether such an idealized condition is possible is a notorious problem and would need some more discussion. However, because this is not our present concern, we leave it open. What is important for us is to show that Habermas' conception (and other similar ones) are plausible resources to explicate a nonrealist truth conception.

Another example of a nonrealist conception of truth regarding general moral statements is provided by Derek Parfit. His position on the truth of general normative statements can be summarized as follows:

1. Some normative assertions are claims and can be true.[116]
2. These claims are analytically irreducibly normative (irreducible to nonnormative claims).[117]
3. Some of these claims are true in the strongest sense.[118]
4. Although some of these claims are true, this has no ontological implication that there are necessary truths about morality. These truths are not about metaphysical reality.[119]

Claim (1) indicates that Parfit holds a cognitivist view about morality; claim (2) shows that he is nonreductivist regarding normative claims. Claims (3) and (4) need some more clarification about what he means by the "truth." Parfit seems to understand truth in a nonrealist sense. Of necessary truths, Parfit writes, "[...] necessary truths are not made to be true by there being some part of reality to

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115 Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 258.
116 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 486.
117 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 486.
118 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 486.
119 Parfit, *On What Matters*, pp. 480, 481, 719, 747.

which these truths correspond."[120] In what sense then is a proposition true? In an analysis, Niederbacher argues that it seems that for Parfit, the term "true normative propositions" is just similar to "normative facts."[121] This is because in Parfit's understanding "[...] truth themselves do not have to exist in such a [an ontological] sense. Truths need only be true."[122]

However, a further clarifying question might be raised: What does it mean when something exists in a nonontological sense or that normative truths are not regarding metaphysical reality? Based on Parfit's view, Niederbacher shows that there could be four possible senses of the term 'existence':[123]

1. the *one* wide sense.
2. the narrow actualist sense (i.e., entities that exist as concrete parts of the spatiotemporal world).
3. the possibilist sense.
4. the distinctive nonontological sense.

Parfit believes that the existence of normative truths cannot be understood in the second and third senses. Normative truths do not exist in an actualist sense. The Earth, for instance, exists in an actualist sense, but being right or wrong does not exist just like how the Earth exists. Furthermore, normative truths also do not exist in the possibilist sense. Some events and actions may exist or not. It is possible for them to exist. For Parfit, normative truths do not exist in the possibilist manner, but necessarily. For him, the existence of normative truths is like the existence of numbers or propositions. They do exist. However, they exist not in a distinctive ontological sense. Parfit writes "These properties and truths are not, in relevant senses, either actual or merely possible, or either real or unreal."[124]

Similar to Habermas's conception, Parfit's one might also be objected.[125] Such an objection might result in the conclusion that a nonrealist conception of truth regarding morality is unwarranted. This realist objection surely needs to be addressed to defend the view that it is necessary to hold some truisms about how base properties are morally relevant. However, because this is not our present concern, we cannot elaborate the answer to such an objection. Furthermore, because we believe that such truisms are conceivable when they are thought of as parts of a certain moral system, it is plausible to maintain that holding such truisms does not imply that there must be realist truth conditions in virtue of which

120 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 747.
121 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', p. 556.
122 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 482.
123 Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', p. 556.
124 Parfit, *On What Matters*, p. 478.
125 The objections to and discussion on Parfit's view can be seen, for instance, in Niederbacher, 'An Ontological Sketch for Robust Non-Reductive Realists', specifically Section 3.2 and Jussi Suikkanen (2017). 'Non-realist Cognitivism, Truth and Objectivity'. In: *Acta Analytica* 32.2, pp. 193–212.

general moral statements depicting the base and the moral properties might be true. This means that there are no true moral generalizations in the realist sense.

5.3.4 A Nonrealist Conception of True Moral Generalizations

We might now sum up our view regarding the truth of general moral statements and propositions. As we have seen, the term "truth" is equivocal. It can be understood either in a realist or nonrealist sense. Our position is as follows: When the term "truth" is understood in a nonrealist sense, we think that (1) there are some true general moral statements and propositions, but (2) these truths do not imply that there are realist truth conditions for such statements and propositions; and (3) for such statements and propositions to be true or false, the existence of nonrealist truth conditions would be sufficient.

Given the abovementioned statements, the natural question is whether the moral particularists' claim that there are no true general moral statements and propositions, viz., moral generalizations, is still tenable. We believe that when moral particularists claim that there are no *true* moral generalizations; they presuppose a realist understanding of the truth. Before this background, therefore, the following statements would not be contradictory to the above ones: When the term "truth" is understood in a realist sense, we think that (A) there are no true general moral statements and propositions, viz., moral generalizations; (B) according to this conception of truth, for any propositions to be true, there must be realist truth conditions; and (C) the nonrealist truth conditions would be insufficient. Because it is plausible to maintain statements (A) to (C) as well as (1) to (3) simultaneously, it is also plausible to simultaneously maintain the moral particularists' claim as well as the conceptual-pragmatic rationale.

5.4 Summary and Remarks

This chapter discusses the widespread belief that the moral landscape is not flat, which means that some base properties, such as pain or pleasure, making a promise, stealing, killing, or donating some money to charity, have a certain moral significance on their own, and some other base properties, such as the property of being a red shoelace, do not. Such a conviction seems to show that some base properties have a stable relation with certain moral properties. We showed that generalists who share such a conviction might have different views regarding the strength of that stable relation. Some generalists might think that the stable relation between some base properties and some moral properties is tight, indicating that the base properties being considered will always override other base properties so that actions that have such base properties will always have the corresponding moral properties. The proponents of such a view argue that from this, it follows that there are true tight moral generalizations. In Table 5.1 presented above, this was position (G_1). Other generalists who share the conviction that some base properties have a stable relation to certain moral properties might, however, maintain that the relation between these properties is loose, in the sense

that although some base properties have their moral significance on their own, in the actual cases, they can be overridden by other base properties. Furthermore, because there is a loose relation between certain base properties and moral properties, they may argue that there are true loose moral generalizations depicting how certain base properties would be morally significant. This was position (G_2).

Moral particularists respond differently to the conviction that the moral landscape is not flat. Some particularists, such as Alan Thomas, plainly reject this claim, maintaining that the moral landscape ought to be flat. His argument is based on two main ideas: moral reasoning is nonmonotonic, and in nonmonotonic moral reasoning, it cannot be determined in advance how certain base properties would be morally significant. The moral import of such base properties is, hence, indefinite. Surely, if Thomas's ideas hold, they would naturally imply that there are no true moral generalizations, and hence, moral particularism is true. Thomas's position was represented by (P_2). The analysis, however, showed that Thomas's ideas seem to be outlandish. It seems strange to say that the base facts and properties of pain or pleasure, making a promise, stealing, or donating some money to charity do not have a certain moral significance on their own, a moral import that is not possessed by the base facts and properties of being a red shoelace. In the light of this criticism, other particularists, represented by the position (P_1), do not share Thomas's idea, specifically regarding the view that the moral landscape is flat. This means that these particularists have the same conviction as some generalists who believe that some base properties have a moral significance on their own and some others do not. There are two consequences of this position. On the one hand, the admission of such a conviction seems to be an advantage for moral particularism because it would not be seen as an alien view regarding the moral landscape. On the other hand, such an admission raises a challenge for moral particularists because this would apparently imply that there are true loose moral generalizations. Therefore, there are two tasks that must be undertaken by moral particularists of this position. First, together with moral generalists, they must elaborate how to understand the conviction that the moral landscape is not flat, that is, that some base properties have their moral significance on their own and some others do not. Second, if there is a plausible understanding of such a conviction, they must elaborate further that this does not imply that there are true loose moral generalizations. These two tasks have been undertaken in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 of this chapter.

To understand the conviction that some base properties have moral significance on their own and some others do not, in the sense that there is a stable, yet loose, relation between these base and moral properties, we present four possible rationales for this conviction. *First*, based on a semantic rationale, we analyzed such a conviction in terms of normality. This means that, when we think that the base property of stealing has a stable relation to the moral property of being wrong, we may express this relation in the proposition that "Normally, stealing is wrong." Normality, however, can be interpreted in two ways: extensionally

and nonextensionally. Interpreted extensionally, such a proposition is thought of as referring to the ratio of cases of stealing that are morally wrong. According to such an interpretation, the qualification of normality would be read as expressing statistical facts about stealing, such as "In most cases, stealing is wrong." According to Väyrynen, however, the extensional interpretation is misleading. The normality qualification of a certain moral proposition should not be understood as referring to the statistical data regarding empirical facts. He thinks that such a generic moral proposition would still be true, even if the corresponding facts at the extensional level would not support it. For him, such generic statements must rather be interpreted nonextensionally, that is, as expressing modal claims. The proposition that "Normally, stealing is wrong" should then be interpreted as expressing the proposition that "Stealing may be wrong." He thinks that this interpretation would indicate the reason why some cases of stealing are wrong, and some others are not. Nevertheless, we argued that such a nonextensional interpretation cannot give us an illuminating answer regarding why we think that the feature of stealing is connected with the moral property of being wrong (and not being right) because if such a proposition were true, another proposition, "Stealing may not be wrong," would also be true.

Given this unsatisfying answer, we then, *secondly*, turned to an ontological rationale, analyzing the abovementioned conviction in terms of the nature of some base properties. The idea was that, in an ontological reflection, some base properties have a certain moral significance on their own in virtue of their nature. When we think that stealing is wrong, for instance, the ontological analysis shows that the moral property of wrongness lies in the nature of the feature of stealing. In our opinion, this view seems to be the most familiar one. The thought underlying such an ontological rationale is that moral properties are seen as part of the essential properties of certain base facts. The moral property of wrongness is part of the essential properties of the fact of stealing in a way that stealing would not be what it is without the moral property of wrongness. We argued, however, that such a thought is flawed. For us, it is clear that stealing would still be what it is without any moral property. The essential properties of stealing do not include such moral properties. We are convinced that what should be included in the essential properties of any base facts are those that are necessary and sufficient to be mentioned when they are described in a proper manner. The existence of certain moral properties is not needed when certain base facts, such as stealing, are described in a proper manner. A variant of the ontological rationale is to consider these base properties in abstraction, that is, when they are separated from their embedding context. This thought is, however, misguided because it is based on a heuristic opinion that there is an analogy between cases in nature and moral cases. In nature, fish eggs and benzene are still fish eggs and benzene when they are separated from their embedding contexts. However, base properties, such as stealing, would not be what they are when they are separated

from their embedding contexts, such as the involving actors, motives, and consequences. Thus, such a variant of an ontological rationale must also be rejected.

Thereafter, *thirdly*, we considered an epistemological rationale. Some philosophers believe that the reason why some base properties have their moral significance on their own is that when these base properties are considered in their privileged conditions, they are the core epistemological explanation for why certain cases have certain moral qualities. To a certain degree, the line of thought is quite similar to the ontological rationale, but it focuses on the epistemological role of the privileged cases. For some philosophers, mastery of certain concepts in a certain domain requires a good understanding of the conditions in which a feature has the specified property (i.e., the privileged conditions), those in which it does not (i.e., the unprivileged conditions), and those in which it is irrelevant to that domain. This is what we called the privileging move. However, we believe that such a move is flawed because we cannot clearly mark the boundaries between conditions that are privileged and those that are unprivileged. What we usually consider as a privileged condition can be regarded as an unprivileged one. The assumption that there is a clear boundary between the privileged and unprivileged conditions is unwarranted.

On the assumption that the above three possible rationales are indefensible, we proposed, *fourthly*, a conceptual–pragmatic one. We agree with McKeever and Ridge that it is necessary to hold certain truisms regarding how some base properties would be morally relevant to see a certain moral reasoning as reasonable. In addition to this pragmatic view, we think that the reason why we should hold such truisms is the authoritative character of morality. We argued that morality is authoritatively normative, in the sense that it is constitutive of our activity of selecting the nonarbitrary actions of what we ought to do. Because morality is constitutive of such an activity, we think that the options regarding what we ought to do are, in a certain sense, already framed or limited by a certain moral system. Therefore, some base or descriptive facts have a certain moral significance just because they are framed or evaluated within a certain moral system. In other words, it does make sense to hold some truisms about how certain base properties would be morally significant because morality is authoritatively normative in the sense that it is constitutive of our activity of selecting what we ought to do. This fourth rationale is our proposed solution to the first task.

Given the plausibility of the abovementioned conceptual–pragmatic rationale, the second task is to inquire whether it is still plausible to maintain the moral particularists' claim that there are no true moral generalizations. We argue that our conceptual–pragmatic proposal would not imply that there are true moral generalizations depicting the relation between base facts and properties and how they would be morally significant. The reason is that the abovementioned thought would not have ontological implications regarding the existence of certain states of affairs that include the base and moral properties in a certain relation all together. This means that although there might be some general statements depicting

the relation between the base and moral properties, they cannot be true in a realist sense because they lack realist truth conditions. Nevertheless, we maintain that there could be some true moral generalizations when the term "truth" is understood in a nonrealist way. To support this claim, we provided some plausible resources for a nonrealist conception of truth that we can maintain. This latter conviction, however, would not render moral particularism false because we think that the term "truth," when used in the moral particularists' claim that there are no true moral generalizations (or its contrast in the moral generalists claim that there are true moral generalizations), is probably understood in a realist sense. This was to conclude that, once one discards this realist understanding of truth, the conceptual–pragmatic rationale would still render moral particularism true.

It must be noted, however, that what we discussed in this chapter was the status of *general* statements and propositions that can be regarded as moral generalizations. Our claim that there are no true moral generalizations seems to have the natural ontological implication that there are no general or universal moral facts. Given that we reject a realist conception of truth regarding general moral statements and propositions, it seems plausible to maintain such an ontological view. However, we had not yet discussed *particular* moral statements and propositions, such as particular moral judgments regarding certain actions or persons. We did not consider whether such particular moral statements and propositions can be true or false in a realist sense. Given the conviction that there are no general or universal moral facts, our next immediate task is to consider the ontological status of particular moral facts. The next chapter will discuss how moral particularists would consider particular moral statements and propositions and particular moral facts given that there are no true moral generalizations in a realist sense and that there are no general or universal moral facts.

6 UNDERSTANDING THE PARTICULARS

One natural question that arises from the moral particularists' claim that moral thought and practice neither require any moral generalizations nor general moral facts is regarding the explanation of the particulars. First, it is the explanation of particular moral facts: How could we have a complete or good explanation of why a certain action (or person or institution) has the moral property that it does without involving the existence and role of moral generalizations or general moral facts? Call this "Question A." Such a question seems to be natural because we usually think that a complete explanation of a certain phenomenon should have a deductive form in which the general statements, perhaps law-like generalizations, are involved as one of its *explanans*. This thought is presumably influenced by the deductive-nomological model of explanation in science. Besides particular moral facts, the opponents of moral particularism might also ask for an account of a full explanation of particular moral beliefs and actions. Regarding particular moral beliefs, the opponents might have at least two epistemological questions. Call the first question "Question B": Can a subject's particular moral belief-formation be explained without this subject having some general moral beliefs? This epistemological question might amplify another one. Call this "Question C": Can a subject's particular moral belief be epistemically justified or even an instance of particular moral knowledge without this subject holding some general moral beliefs with positive epistemic status? Regarding particular moral actions, the opponents might ask for an explanation of a particular moral action. Call this "Question D": Can a subject's particular moral action be explained with neither having any moral generalizations nor any general moral facts?

In this chapter, we deal with these four questions. However, we will not directly consider the account of *explanation* for each subject matter. Instead, we will answer these questions in terms of understanding and ask: How could we understand particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations and general moral facts? But why is understanding here more appropriate? First, in our view, the concept of understanding is conceived not as a mere feeling but as a full-bodied epistemic state. We agree with Henk de Regt that the genuine sense of understanding is an acquirement of a certain epistemic state and not merely a possession of "a kind of confidence, abetted by hindsight, of intellectual satisfaction that the question has been adequately answered."[1] On de Regt's view, understanding as an acquirement

[1] Joseph D. Trout (2002). 'Scientific Explanation and The Sense of Understanding'. In: *Philosophy of Science* 69.2, pp. 212–233.

of a certain epistemic state is necessary in science.[2] In the same vein, we take it that understanding, conceived in its genuine sense, is also necessary in the moral domain. Second, we take the traditional view of the connection between explanation and understanding. Understanding is more basic than explanation, and explanations are means for creating understanding.[3] On this view, explanation is a necessary element of understanding. Third, we take a hybrid account of understanding: if a person, *S*, understands a certain subject matter, *X*, then there is a certain *external* (worldly) explanation of why *X* and some *representation* of that explanation that is accepted by *S*. According to the proponents of this hybrid view, such as John Greco, the former aspect is called "the *object* of understanding" and the latter "the *vehicle* of understanding."[4]

How will we then approach the aforementioned questions regarding the understanding of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions? We propose that the vehicle of the understanding of these subject matters is the particular moral because-statements. In philosophy, it is customary to view statements as the vehicles, i.e., the linguistic representations, that lead to an understanding of how the objects in question are in reality. Consider the deductive nomological model of explanation. Those who think that this model is adequate seem to presuppose that by the way of understanding the logico-linguistic connections between certain premises and conclusions (i.e., between statements), we can come to an explanation (*ipso facto* to an understanding) of certain phenomena. A genuine understanding of certain statements is not merely semantically fruitful. But why because-statements? As we have already acknowledged in the previous chapter, moral actions are not arbitrary. If we judge that we ought to do a certain action, it is not just because that action *merely* ought to be done. If we judge that a certain action ought to be done, we seem to believe that we must have some *reason(s)*

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2 See Henk W. de Regt (2004). 'Discussion Note: Making Sense of Understanding'. In: *Philosophy of Science* 71.1, pp. 98–109; Henk W. de Regt (2017). *Understanding Scientific Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3 In the domain of philosophy of science, the proponents of such a view are, for instance, Paul Humphreys (2000). 'Analytic versus Synthetic Understanding'. In: *Science, Explanation, and Rationality: The Philosophy of Carl G. Hempel*. Ed. by James H. Fetzer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 267; Angela Potochnik (2017). *Idealization and the Aims of Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 122 and Regt, *Understanding Scientific Understanding*, Ch. 2.

4 This hybrid view seems to reconcile the dispute between explanation internalism and externalism. According to explanation internalism, if a subject, *S*, understands a certain subject matter, *X*, then the object of S's understanding is merely the logico-linguistic relationships about *X* in S's belief system. According to Kim, the Hempelian framework is the paradigm example of such a view. In contrast, according to the explanation externalism, if a subject, *S*, understands a certain subject matter, *X*, then the object of S's understanding is rather the mind-independent, metaphysical relations about *X* in the world. According to Greco's hybrid account, both aspects are taken as necessary. (See John Greco (2014). 'Episteme: Knowledge and Understanding'. In: *Virtues and Their Vices*. Ed. by Craig A. Boyd Kevin Timpe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 285–302.)

why it ought to be done. In a more realist way of expressing the matter, we might say that when a certain action has a certain moral property or quality, or when there is a certain moral fact, we seem to believe that there must be some *reason(s)* that *make(s) it the case* that the actions have the moral property or quality they have, or that there must be some reasons, i.e., some nonmoral facts, in virtue of which the moral fact in question exists. Nick Zangwill calls such a requirement of moral thought and practice the "because-constraint."[5]

Now, if we apply the hybrid notion of understanding above, the relations between morals and nonmorals (be they properties or facts, correspondingly) are the *objects* that need to be understood. These are the relations between the moral and nonmoral *facts*, the relations between certain moral *beliefs* and the entity that explains these beliefs (in due course, we will argue that they are particular moral facts only), and the relations between certain (moral) *actions* and the reasons for doing them. Furthermore, as we have just introduced, we think that the natural *vehicle* to understand these objects of understanding is the because-statements. Moral because-statements express these relations regarding moral facts, beliefs, or actions. Particular because-statements, i.e., because-statements with particular contents, may have a form as follows:

(B1) In a circumstance, *C*, a subject, *S*, ought to do *p because p* has the property, *D*.

Or, considering the moral properties of rightness or wrongness, we may also have another form of because-statements such as:

(B2) In a circumstance, *C*, an action, *p*, is right (or wrong) *because p* has the property, *D*.

A considerable warning regarding the notion of reasons that is used in this chapter is necessary. By maintaining that the because-constraint holds, i.e., that for all particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions, there must be some reasons that explain their existence or obtaining, we do not intend to argue that, in general, reasons are best analyzed in terms of explanations.[6] Instead, we want to maintain

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5 Nick Zangwill (2006). 'Moral Epistemology and the Because Constraint'. In: *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. Ed. by James Dreier. Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 263–281.

6 Such a view is proposed, for instance, by John Broome (2004). 'Reasons'. In: *Reasons and Value. Themes from the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*. Ed. by Jay Wallace et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 28–55. Another way to analyze the reasons generally is in terms of evidence. Analyzed generally in terms of explanations, if *F* is a reason to *G*, then *F* makes it the case that *G*. *F* is *why G* is the case. Analyzed generally in terms of evidence, if *F* is a reason to *G*, then *F* only indicates (or at least makes it more epistemically probable) that *G* is the case. The contrast between these accounts is that, if *F* is evidence that *G*, then G may not obtain, whereas if *F* truly explains *G*, then *G* must be the case. The evidential accounts of reasons are proposed, for instance, in Stephen Kearns and Daniel Star (2008). 'Reasons: Explanations or Evidence'. In: *Ethics* 119.1, pp. 31–56. For a further discussion of these two accounts, see

that, in their most basic sense, reasons may provide explanations for something. In this case, if there is a certain moral fact, then there must be some sufficient reason(s) that may provide some explanation of why such a fact obtains; if a subject holds a certain moral belief, then there must be some sufficient reason(s) that may provide some explanation of this subject's belief; if a subject ought to do (or does) a certain action, then there must be some sufficient reason(s) that may provide some explanation of this action. We think that it is plausible to maintain that reasons, in their basic sense, give some explanation.

Furthermore, it should be noted that when holding the because-constraint, the kind of reasons we are dealing with is the so-called normative reasons, i.e., reasons that count in favor of (pros) or against (cons) doing a certain action or believing in something. These kinds of reasons are distinguished from other kinds, such as explanatory reasons, i.e., the explanations of why something nonnormative obtains (e.g., the reason why the bridge is going to collapse is that it is built using low-grade materials), and motivating reasons, i.e., the reasons for which an agent acts—these reasons may also figure in the explanation of actions. Therefore, in this chapter, we maintain that if there are certain moral facts, beliefs, and actions, there must be some sufficient normative reasons that may provide explanations of why such facts, beliefs, and actions obtain.

By asserting that reasons can provide explanations and that explanations are a means of creating understanding, we can propose the particularist hypothesis that a plausible understanding of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions can be attained through the understanding of particular moral because-statements. For these two levels of understanding (understanding the because-statements and the facts, beliefs, and actions), we argue that neither the existence and role of moral generalizations nor general or universal moral facts are necessary.

Hypothesis: By understanding particular moral because-statements without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations or general moral facts, it is possible to arrive at a plausible understanding of particular moral facts, particular moral beliefs, and particular moral actions.

This chapter is dedicated to answering the above four questions, and thereby claims that this hypothesis is true. We will structure it as follows: In Section 6.1, we discuss the important characteristics of moral because-statements. In Section 6.2, we will answer Question A by positing the claim that particular because-statements express sufficient explanations of particular moral facts. In this section, we recall the notion of the resultance relation. In Section 6.3, we contend that particular moral because-statements are expressions of epistemological explanations and thereby answer Questions B and C. In Section 6.4, we argue that particular moral because-statements are explanations of (moral) actions. These

John Brunero (2018). 'Reasons, Evidence, and Explanations'. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*. Ed. by Daniel Star. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 321– 341.

explanations of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions are the means of creating an understanding of these particulars. In Section 6.5, we show that this claim is supported by a widely accepted theory about reasons, i.e., holism about reasons, according to which a feature that is a reason for doing a certain action (and per analogy for believing in something) in one circumstance can be an opposite reason or irrelevant in other cases. From the perspective of particularists, holism about reasons supports the claim that the existence and function of moral generalizations and general moral facts are not required to provide plausible explanations for particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions, and hence to understand these subject matters. In doing this, we propose a *consolidated thesis*, i.e., given that the plausible particularist accounts of explanations of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions are available (and *ipso facto* there is a plausible particularist understanding of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions), that holism about reasons holds, there is no need for moral generalizations or general moral facts in moral thought and practice.

6.1 General Characteristics of Moral Because-Statements

Particular moral because-statements such as (B1) and (B2) have the generic form of

(B) *Mp* because *Dp*,[7]

where *p* denotes a concrete particular object such as an action, a person, or an institution, *M* picks out a moral property or moral quality using either thin terms (such as right or wrong, good or bad, etc.) or thick ones (such as just, courageous, lewd, etc.) and *D* picks out a descriptive or nonmoral property which makes *p M*. By choosing such an approach, we do not consider other forms of because-statements or such statements in other domains. Considering such moral because-statements of the form (B) above, we may identify their important characteristics as follows:[8]

1. Noncausality

If we understand "causality" as a relation that involves temporal succession between the causes and the effects, moral because-statements of the abovementioned form (B) do not express a causal relation between the fact that an object has a certain nonmoral property and the fact that it has a certain moral property. If we

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7 In this form, we omit the circumstance, *C*, assuming that the circumstances in (B1) and (B2) are now understood as being comprised in the particularity of *p*. The circumstances, *C*, of any *p* belong to those that make *p* a concrete particular.

8 These characteristics are modifications of those proposed by Jan Gertken and Nick Zangwill. See Jan Gertken (2014). *Prinzipien in der Ethik*. Münster: Mentis Verlag, pp. 138–144; Nick Zangwill (2008). 'Moral Dependence'. In: *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau. Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 109–127; Nick Zangwill (2017). 'Moral Dependence and Natural Properties'. In: *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*. Vol. 91. 1, pp. 221–243.

make a moral judgment that "This action ought to be done, because it will save more persons than otherwise," we do not mean that the latter fact, i.e., that it will save more persons than otherwise, is the *cause* why that action ought to be done. Such a because-statement does not imply that there is a temporal succession, in that the descriptive or nonmoral fact occurs earlier than the moral one. However, this noncausality feature of moral because-statements of the form (B) need not imply that there could not be any true moral because-statements that are causal. Nevertheless, in this chapter, we do not consider such causal because-statements, and we think that it is usual to view moral because-statements as noncausal.

2. Asymmetry

Moral because-statements express the asymmetric relations: If a moral because-statement "*Mp* because *Dp*" makes sense linguistically, then it is not the case that the inverted statement "*Dp* because *Mp*" would also linguistically make sense. One's moral judgment that "This action ought to be done, because it will save more persons than otherwise" is linguistically understandable, but the statement that "Because this action ought to be done, it will save more persons than otherwise" sounds bizarre. It is worth mentioning that this asymmetry also holds if we talk in a more clearly realist language about moral properties and facts. We think that a certain action has a certain moral property because it has a certain nonmoral property or because of a certain reason, but not the other way around.

3. Dependence Relation

Another important feature of moral because-statements is that they express a certain dependence relation between moral properties and their nonmoral or morally-involving properties. Since Chapter 4, we have adopted the term "base properties" for these nonmoral or morally-involving properties. A moral because-statement of the form (B) is thought of as revealing the dependence relation between the moral property of a certain action or person or institution and its base properties. For instance, the "because" connector in the statement "This action ought to be done, because it will save more lives if it were not taken" tells us that the fact that the action ought to be done is dependent on the fact that it will save more lives than if it were not taken. The because-statements tell us that there is a dependence relation between the moral property or quality of an action, a person, or an institution and its moral reasons, i.e., its base properties.

Now, in the same chapter, we have also considered that there are at least three forms or readings of the dependence relation between the moral and the base properties: *Supervenience (original)*, *Universalizability* and *Resultance*. These are three different theories about the dependence mechanism between the moral and the base properties, but a general concept of moral supervenience stands behind these theories. This general concept of moral supervenience says that "Moral properties supervene on base properties, meaning that if an action *p* has the base properties, *D*, and the moral property, *M*, then, in all possible worlds where action

p is *D*, it also has *M*." The three readings make explicit three different scopes of base properties that are considered. According to:

- *Supervenience (original)*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is *all* non-moral properties action *p* has. (We call such base properties "the supervenience base.")
- *Universalizability*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is restricted to the morally *relevant* properties action *p* has. (We may call this kind of base properties "the universalizability base.")
- *Resultance*: The scope of the base properties, *D*, is restricted to those morally relevant properties *in virtue of which* the action has the moral property *M*. (We may call this kind of base properties "the resultance base.")

Given these three readings of the dependence mechanism, we may also have at least three different readings of the scope of properties that are covered by moral reasons in a moral because-statement. If read in terms of *Supervenience (original)*, the moral reason or the property *D* in the abovementioned moral because-statement of the form (B) covers all descriptive properties an action may have. The consequence of such a reading is, however, that the moral reasons for a certain action may include many morally irrelevant features. Thus, if read in terms of *Supervenience (original)*, the question would be whether it is appropriate to say that the reasons why a certain action ought to be done, for instance, includes also morally irrelevant properties, such as the fact of shoelace color. We think that in contexts where such a property is morally irrelevant (either directly or indirectly), it would not be appropriate to say that a certain action ought to be done because it involves, among others, some morally irrelevant facts, such as a fact of shoelace color, in the sense that the fact that the action ought to be done depends on or, at least, partly depends on the fact of the shoelace color. Thus, we may abandon such a reading of dependence.

We think, however, in terms of *Universalizability* and *Resultance*, we may have some more appropriate readings of moral because-statements. Read in terms of *Universalizability*, the properties covered by the moral reason, *D*, would only include all morally *relevant* properties that the action may have. These may include those properties that are "responsible" for the existence of the moral property that the action has (or the base properties that make the action have its moral property) and those other properties that make the "responsible" properties do their job, including enablers, disablers, and enablers for enablers. Read in terms of *Resultance*, the properties covered by moral reasons, *D*, would include only those that are "responsible" in making the action have the moral property that it has. Other morally relevant properties, such as enablers, disablers, or enablers for enablers, would not be regarded as part of the reasons. Given these two readings of the scope of moral reasons, there is a disagreement among philosophers. Some philosophers, such as Dancy, argue that *Resultance* is more appropriate.

According to him, "reasons" are only those features that are responsible for the moral property or moral quality of an action. Enabling properties are not the reasons why an action has its moral property. Their role is just to make it possible for reasons to do their "job." However, it is also plausible to maintain that the role of such enablers is nevertheless necessary if the reasons should play a role as reasons. If the enabling properties were absent, for instance, the reasons would not be reasons. Thus, this seems to imply that it is also necessary to include the enabling properties as an integral part of the reasons in addition to the responsible properties. We have a preference for the second account, where the enabling properties are seen as part of the reasons.

There are other issues concerning the dependence relation between the moral properties and reasons that an action has that we cannot elaborate further in this section. One of these issues questions what kind of properties reasons are and whether they belong only to the class of natural properties. Another issue concerns the kind of dependence relation, whether it is conceptual or metaphysical dependence. We have discussed such an issue in Chapter 4, where Debbie Roberts' arguments for why we believe in moral supervenience were considered. Nevertheless, what is important for us and what we can plausibly maintain is that a particular moral because-statement of the form (B) expresses the existence of a dependence relation between the moral properties and the base properties or moral reasons.

4. Constitutively Informative

In connection to the feature of dependence, moral because-statements are also constitutively informative in that they give us information for why a certain action, person, or institution has a certain moral property. Suppose Alex tells you that you ought to do a certain action. You may ask him: Why? If he just shrugs his shoulders, and in that way, he does not give you information for why you ought to do that action, his demand would be incomprehensible or even mysterious. As we have said at the beginning of this chapter, if we think that a certain action has a certain moral property, it is constitutive that there must be some reason(s) for it or there must be some information for why it has its moral property. The because-statements are therefore constitutively informative of certain moral judgments or requirements.

5. Nonanalyticity

Moral because-statements of the form (B) are not analytical: there is no conceptual bi-implication or analytic equivalence between the concepts used in the main clause and those used in the because-clause. However, other forms of because-statements might be analytical. For instance, a statement like "*S* is a bachelor, because *S* is an unmarried adult male" is an analytic because-statement. However, understandable moral because-statements, such as "This action ought to be done, because it will save more persons than otherwise might be," do not require that

there is a conceptual bi-implication or analytic equivalence between the terms "being an ought" and "saving more persons than otherwise might be."

These five features are the most important features of the moral because-statements. This list should not be exhaustive, and one may, perhaps, add some more characteristics of moral because-statements. Given these five features, we are ready to analyze particular moral because-statements as expressions of explanations that may create an understanding of these particular subject matters.

6.2 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Facts

To answer Question A, in this section, we claim that particular moral because-statements provide a sufficient account of full explanations of particular moral facts. In order to elaborate on and defend this claim, first we will discuss the particularist ontology of moral facts. The particularist ontological view states that the moral properties of certain objects are the resulting property (or the result) of the base properties, i.e., nonmoral properties, possessed by these particular objects only. This is due to what Dancy calls the resultance relation. Second, we will discuss the implication of such an ontological view that the moral property of a particular object is not identical to its base or nonmoral properties. This is to clarify the misunderstanding that might be drawn by some philosophers that the resultance relation implies token identity. Third, we will argue that because the resultance relation is explanatory, a certain particular moral because-statement of the form (B) provides a sufficient account of the full explanation of why a certain action, person, or institution has the moral property it has.

6.2.1 The Particularist Ontology of Moral Facts

Inspired by William D. Ross, Jonathan Dancy proposes a view according to which the relation between the moral and base properties of a certain object (actions, persons, or institutions) is best understood in terms of, or better, using the metaphor of, *resultance*.[9] However, the concept of resultance applies in contexts other than the moral one. We may see that a cliff is dangerous, but where does this

[9] The idea of resultance is presented in many of his writings, but the most important sources are from Jonathan Dancy (1981). 'On Moral Properties'. In: *Mind* 90.359, pp. 367–385, Jonathan Dancy (2000b). 'The Particularist's Progress'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Little. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 130– 156, Jonathan Dancy (1993). *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 73–77 and Jonathan Dancy (2004a). *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79–93. Although the term "resultance" used by Dancy is borrowed from Ross, Dancy's conception is quite different from Ross's. Ross distinguishes *parti-* from *toti-resultance*. (See William David Ross (1930). *The Right and the Good*. Ed. by Philip Stratton-Lake. New ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 28 & 122.) Parti-resultance properties are those that result from some limited set of nonmoral properties, and toti-resultance properties are those that result from all nonmoral properties. For Ross, moral properties like rightness, wrongness, or oughtness are toti-resultance, not parti-resultance. This position seems to be in contradiction to ours, since in because-statements of the form (B),

property come from? The property of being dangerous possessed by a certain cliff is a "result" of other properties possessed by that particular cliff, such as its fragility, steepness, and it being slippery. Likewise, the property of being a table possessed by a certain entity is a "result" of its having four legs, being made of wood, and its function to place things here. These properties are all possessed by that particular entity.

Similarly, for Dancy, the moral properties of a certain action, person, or institution are the "results" of the base properties possessed by that very object. In this regard, the base properties from which a moral property results can be seen as the moral reasons for a certain action. He writes, "So we have that if an action has a moral property, M, its Mness results from some of its nonmoral properties." On the same page, he further claims that "These nonmoral properties may be called the reasons why it is M, and typically they will form a rather small group among the action's nonmoral properties."[10] Thus, if an action is good, then there are nonmoral properties possessed by that very action and they provide the reasons for why it is morally good.

We may briefly remind ourselves of the characteristics of the concept of resultance, a topic that we have discussed in Chapter 4. There are at least two characteristics that we may mention. First, the resultance relation is *transitive*. Dancy writes that "if a moral property, *M*, results from a nonmoral property, *A*, that itself results from another nonmoral property, *B*, it is not only the case that *M* results from *A*, but also that *M* results from *B*."[11] In his book *Moral Reasons*, he also writes, "A resultant property may itself be a property from which (with the help of others) a further property develops [...] So there is such a thing as a resultance tree."[12] Thus, according to Dancy's conception, if, for instance, an action is good, the resulting properties due to which that action is good (e.g., its being generous and its being humble) might not be the end of the analysis. It could be the case that the resultant properties, i.e., the base properties, are themselves the results of other properties, such that the goodness of that action is also a result of the base properties at a lower level. Second, the resultance relation is *particular*. As we have considered in Chapter 4, in contrast to moral supervenience and universalizability that consider the relation of the moral and base properties of certain objects in comparison with other similar objects, resultance considers *only* in the relation between the moral and base or resultance properties of a certain particular object. It is not the main point of the conception of resultance whether it implies that objects with similar base properties will or should be morally similar. The point of the conception of resultance is just that the moral property or quality of a certain action is the result of the particular properties of the object

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we only take some nonmoral properties as the base properties from which the moral property of an action results. Dancy criticizes Ross's position in Dancy, 'On Moral Properties'.

10 Dancy, 'On Moral Properties', p. 367.

11 Dancy, 'On Moral Properties', p. 375.

12 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 74.

itself. If a certain action is good, then according to the conception of resultance, the goodness of this action is the result of the base properties or moral reasons this particular action has.

Dancy's conception of resultance must be understood within his realist ontological assumption that there are moral properties and facts. However, since he is a particularist, we may plausibly presume that he is a realist, not about the general or universal moral properties and facts but instead about the particular ones. Thus, we may presume that, in his view, there are the moral properties of goodness, badness, rightness, or wrongness that are possessed by certain actions at certain times and places, but there are no universal moral properties *as such*, like goodness, badness, rightness, or wrongness as such. Furthermore, he seems to understand the existence of these particular moral facts and properties in a non-deflationary way. For him, any true statements about moral facts and properties are by no means redundant, but they are metaphysically substantive. They provide us with some substantive information.

Given that Dancy is a realist about particular moral facts and properties and on the assumption that any true statements about moral facts are not deflationary, we take it that Dancy claims that particular moral facts are basic facts. This is to say that it is a part of reality that, in a certain context, a certain moral property is the result of the base properties in that particular context. The consequence of such a view is that the basic resultance relations are not further analyzable or not reducible to other analyses. For some authors, in particular for those who argue that such relations are analyzable, or perhaps explainable, through moral generalizations, Dancy's view would be disputable. Nevertheless, one can grant Dancy, as to any philosopher, that his analysis may end somewhere, that is, that he may assume some bedrock of the reality. Basic moral facts are contingent. The particularity of the resultance relation implies that a certain base property that, in one context, results in a certain moral property might give a different result in another context. As we will see later in Section 6.5, this is due to the fundamental characteristic of reasons in that they function holistically. Nevertheless, although such relations are not further analyzable or not reducible to other analyses, it does not mean that they are not describable, in particular, using the particular moral because-statements. Such statements help us to understand some basic features of the world, where the particular moral facts and properties as the resultance properties are part of it. This means that for moral particularists, such as Dancy, moral facts are, in a certain sense, not brute facts. They are the results of, or stand in a resultance relation to, some base properties, but this resultance relation is a brute fact.

6.2.2 Token-Nonidentity

In a discussion of the resultance relation, Jan Gertken argues that such a relation implies token identity between the particular moral properties and base or

nonmoral properties.[13] He contends that Dancy's conception implies that, if a certain property, *F*, is a resulting property of another one, *G*, then the instantiations of *F* and *G* in any certain object are identical. This seems to be true. Concerning the properties of a certain object, *p*, if *p* has a moral property, *M*, and this is the resulting property of the base properties, *A*, *B*, and *C*, then it seems that there is a symmetrical relation: if (*Ap*, and *Bp*, and *Cp*) implies *Mp*, then *Mp* implies (*Ap*, and *Bp*, and *Cp*). For Gertken, this symmetry of the resultance relation is incompatible with the features of because-statements, since such statements should depict the dependence relations between moral and nonmoral properties of an action, and, as we have seen, such dependence is asymmetric.

Gertken's argument seems to be pointing out a general metaethical problem: whether the moral properties of a certain object are identical to the nonmoral or natural ones, and he seems to argue that Dancy's conception of resultance is inconsistent in this context. On the one hand, to Gertken, Dancy's resultance conception wants to defend the view that moral properties are not identical to the nonmoral or natural ones in that moral properties are the resulting properties of the nonmoral or natural ones. On the other hand, the particularity of resultance seems to imply that there is a converse implication from the statements about an action having certain moral properties to the statements about an action having certain nonmoral or natural properties. In other words, it seems that for Gertken, resultance implies that the extension of certain moral terms (that are used to pick out the moral property of a certain action) is just the same as the extension of certain nonmoral terms (that are used to pick out the nonmoral properties of that action). Regarding a particular case, *p*, that has the moral property, *M*, because it has the nonmoral properties (*A*, *B*, and *C*), *Mp* is identical to (*Ap*, *Bp*, and *Cp*), since from a so-construed because relation, if it is true that (*Ap*, *Bp*, and *Cp*) implies *Mp*, then it is also true that *Mp* implies (*Ap*, *Bp*, and *Cp*).

In response to the abovementioned argument, we think that Dancy and others who want to defend the concept of resultance should admit that, regarding a particular object, the moral and nonmoral terms used might have the same reference in the sense that they pick out the same object, such as the same action. However, is it true that any different terms that are coextensive must be identical and, therefore, convey the same information? Some philosophers argue that it is. Frank Jackson, for instance, gives the example that "being an equilateral triangle in Euclidean space" is coextensive with "being an equiangular triangle in Euclidean space."[14] Given these two terms, there seems to be two different properties. These properties, however, pertain to a certain shape, and there are no two shapes. Thus, according to Jackson, it is true that being an equilateral triangle in Euclidean space = shape S, and being an equiangular triangle in Euclidean space = shape

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13 Gertken, *Prinzipien in der Ethik*, pp. 148–150.

14 Frank Jackson (2017). 'In Defense of Reductionism in Ethics'. In: *Does Anything Really Matter? Essays on Parfit on Objectivity*. Ed. by Peter Singer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 202.

S and, by virtue of transitivity, being an equilateral triangle in Euclidean space = being an equiangular triangle in Euclidean space. For Jackson, this means that there is actually only one property, not two. They seem to be different, but this is just an effect of different ways of speaking.

Against such a view, Niederbacher argues that Jackson fails to recognize the difference between two pairs of expressions.[15] The first pair consists of the expressions "being an equilateral triangle" and "being an equiangular triangle." Surely, they refer to the same triangles. It is the same triangles that are equilateral and equiangular. The second pair of expressions consists of "the property of being an equilateral triangle" and "the property of being an equiangular triangle." These two expressions, however, do not speak about a certain triangle (be it the same or not). They instead speak about certain properties of triangles, one being equilateral and another being equiangular. This should show that, although it seems that both expressions may be coextensional in the sense that they are used to pick out the same triangle, they are not identical in the sense that they pick out different things and, therefore, they convey informative contents.

The same lines of argument might be given to answer Gertken's abovementioned criticism. In our view, Gertken seems to fail to recognize the difference between implication and resultance. It is true that if the nonmoral properties that are possessed by a certain action, *p*, i.e., (*A*, *B*, and *C*), result in the moral property, *M*, then it is plausible to say that "*Mp* occurs because (*Ap*, and *Bp*, and *Cp*)." This is a resultance relation in which the moral property is the result of its base properties. Regarding a certain action *p*, it seems true that the extensions of the moral and nonmoral terms that are used to pick out the properties possessed by *p* might be the same, and, therefore, it seems plausible to say that if (*Ap*, *Bp*, and *Cp*) implies *Mp*, then *Mp* implies (*Ap*, *Bp* and *Cp*), and, therefore, for a certain action *p*, the properties described by *M* seem to be identical to the ones described by (*A*, *B*, and *C*). Both statements (*Mp*) and (*Ap*, *Bp* and *Cp*) could be seen as those that imply as well as those that would be implied by another. However, we think that this does not mean the terms used to pick out the moral property *M* and those used to pick out the nonmoral properties (*A*, *B*, and *C*) are identical in that they are utilized to pick out the same property. More explicitly, considering resultance, we might say that the moral property *M* is picked out by the term "being the resulting property," and the other properties, (*A*, *B* and *C*), are picked out by the term "being the resultance (or base) properties." It is then plausible to say that these terms are not identical in that they pick out different things. Now, if the relation between the moral and nonmoral terms used in a particular moral because-statement is seen as implicatory, it might be true that they are coextensional, in the sense that the action bearing these properties picked out by these terms is just the same action. However, such a coextensionality does not imply that these terms are identical, because the moral terms are those that are

15 Bruno Niederbacher (2021). *Metaethik*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, p. 79.

used to pick out the resulting properties and the nonmoral terms, the resultance or base properties. These two kinds of properties are surely possessed by the same action or person or institution, but they are different, and the terms that are used to pick them out convey different information.

6.2.3 A Sufficient Account of Explanation of Particular Moral Facts

According to Dancy, the resultance relation between moral and nonmoral properties of a certain action is explanatory.[16] In such a relation, the base properties play a role as the explanans of why a certain object, such as an action, has the moral properties it has. However, a certain action might have a lot of nonmoral properties as their base properties. Which nonmoral properties should then be considered as the explanans? In Dancy's account, the explanans covers only those base properties that are "responsible" for making the action have the moral properties it has. These are the normative reasons for a certain action, i.e., reasons that favor one to do the action or are against doing it.

Consider the example of the trolley case we had in Chapter 4. Suppose that it is true that the action is morally right. According to the resultance relation, this property of rightness is the result of the base property(-ies) that make(s) it morally right, namely the property of saving more lives than otherwise. We called this property (D1). If one asks for an explanation of why such an action is morally right, then the answer is because it saves more lives than otherwise. A natural reaction to such an answer would be to ask for the roles of other relevant nonmoral properties, like the property of killing one person (D2), the property of being capable of doing the action (D3), and the property of believing that lives are valuable and incommensurable (D4). They seem to play a role in the explanation of why such an action is morally right. Dancy agrees that other nonmoral properties are morally relevant. However, they do not explain why the action is morally right. They instead play different roles, namely they enable, intensify, or attenuate the explanans to play its role. He writes, "[t]o explain, or to contribute to an explanation, is to play a certain role. There should, therefore, be a distinction between the features that play that role and the features whose presence enables the explainers to play that role, but which do not play it themselves."[17]

If this is true, then particular moral because-statements of the form (B) are the natural way to express such an explanatory relation between the resulting property and base properties. In other words, while the resultance relation between the moral and nonmoral or base properties of a certain moral fact is explanatory at the ontological level and *ipso facto* conveys some understanding of that particular moral fact, the particular moral because-statement depicting such a relation, such as "That action is morally right, because it saves more lives than otherwise," would also be understandable from a linguistic standpoint. Particular

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16 See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 45–49.

17 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 45.

moral because-statements provide some explanation and are therefore the sufficient vehicles for understanding particular moral facts. These two levels of understanding are particularist in nature, in that they neither require the existence nor specify the role of any moral generalizations.

Nevertheless, some philosophers think that such a form of explanation is worrying. According to Lance and Little, such an explanation fails to provide a general picture of how the world is because it is merely a depiction of a metaphysical basic relation about how a certain base or nonmoral property would have a certain moral property as a result. In their criticism, they argue that "This is certainly a view that will leave some uneasy. For many, explanation is neither something to be stipulated as a brute metaphysical fact nor something that *could* be, as Dancy puts it at one point, 'stubbornly particular' [...] It has *something* to do with generalization, even if not a deductive one."[18]

However, we think that good explanations of particular facts must not always have something to do with generalizations. In the discussion on scientific explanations, some philosophers even argue that we can provide good explanations in the domain of special sciences, like biology, economics, and psychology, even though generalizations, either strict or *ceteris paribus* ones, are not available.[19] Moreover, if it is true that good explanations do not require the existence and role of any generalizations, then this is good news for moral particularists who believe that the because-statements are forms of good explanation.

From the generalists' point of view, however, one may point out that, even if an explanation of the form "*Mp* because *Dp*," where there are no generalizations involved, seems to be plausible, we still need to elaborate why such a form of explanation is good or justified. One may further argue that at the end of the day, one still needs some forms of moral generalizations to justify a particular explanation. Michael Scriven, for instance, suggests that it is the *normic statements* that would justify such an explanation.[20] Another suggestion comes from William Dray: such an explanation would be justified by "*telling the story of what actually happened*, and telling it in such a way that the various transitions [...] raise no eyebrows."[21] However, we should be aware that the questions of how an explanation about a particular moral fact would be justified or complete and why that particular moral fact has the moral property it has are two different questions. Whereas the latter asks, "Why is *p M*?" (to which the answer is "because

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18 Mark Lance and Margaret Little (2006). 'Particularism and Antitheory'. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Ed. by David Copp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 586.

19 Uri D. Leibowitz (2011). 'Scientific Explanation and Moral Explanation'. In: *Noûs* 45.3, pp. 72–503.

20 Michael Scriven (1959). 'Truisms as the Grounds for Historical Explanations'. In: *Theories of History. Readings From Classical and Contemporary Sources*. Ed. by Patrick Gardiner. Free Press New York, p. 467.

21 William Dray (1954). 'Explanatory Narrative in History'. In: *The Philosophical Quarterly* 4.14, pp. 15–27, p. 27, emphasis original.

p is *D*"), the former asks, "Why is '*Mp* because *Dp*' justified?" The particular moral because-statements concern the first kind of question, and in answering such questions, the particular moral because-statement is sufficient.[22]

A further criticism is laid out by Roger Crisp.[23] He argues that the explanation of the form "*Mp* because *Dp*," where *Dp* consists only in those base properties that are the responsible reasons why *p* is *M*, is inadequate. He thinks that *Dp* must be expanded, incorporating not only facts that are the reasons why *p* is *M* but also other nonmoral or base facts that are relevant in making *p M*. These other facts include facts concerning enabling properties and perhaps facts concerning enablers for these enabling properties as well. Crisp considers Dancy's example of buying ice cream as follows. Dancy writes:

> *I might buy an ice cream because I expect to enjoy it. But if I were to accept that ice-creams damage one's teeth, I would not buy one. This should not be taken to show that among my reasons for buying the ice cream was the fact that I did not believe that it would damage my teeth.*[24]

According to Crisp, if I were to explain why I buy ice cream, I may mention the fact that, as far as I can see, doing so would contribute to future enjoyment. However, on Crisp's conception, if someone who knows that I am usually careful of my teeth asks me for a full explanation, such an answer would not be sufficient. I need to mention that, in that case, I did not believe that it would damage my teeth. The fact that I did not believe that it would damage my teeth is also part of the reasons why I buy ice cream.

Crisp's criticism seems to raise a general question about the adequacy of explanation. Crisp seems to believe that in an adequate explanation, the explanans must guarantee the occurrence of the explanandum. An adequate explanation must therefore be complete or full, in the sense that the explanans should also include all the possible relevant factors that make the explanandum occur when the explanans occurs.

However, according to Dancy, Crisp's account of full explanation is meant to answer a different question.[25] Dancy's argument against Crisp is essentially the same as to Lance & Little. Regarding the above ice cream example, Dancy argues that if one wants to know the explanation of why I was motivated to buy ice cream, the sufficient answer is because I expected to enjoy it. If one, however, wants to know (the explanation for) how my prospective enjoyment could have

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22 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 47.

23 Roger Crisp (2000). 'Particularizing Particularism'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 23–47.

24 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 24.

25 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 48.

motivated me, a different answer could be given, namely that I did not believe that it would damage my teeth.[26]

6.3 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Beliefs

Based on the ontological understanding of moral facts laid out above, in this section we will answer the two aforementioned epistemological questions. The first question, Question B, concerns the explanation of a subject's particular moral belief-formation without this subject having some general moral beliefs, i.e., moral beliefs with general contents. To answer this question, we claim that particular moral beliefs would be explained by the corresponding particular moral facts only. This is surely an application of the abovementioned ontological view that the explanans of moral facts are the corresponding (particular) moral facts. Furthermore, we claim that the explanans for such beliefs should not be other beliefs, like the beliefs about objects having some moral properties. However, we claim that the experience of the fact that such objects possess these moral features is sufficient to explain the subject's moral belief-formation. Regarding the second epistemological question, we claim that a subject's particular moral belief can be epistemically justified or even an instance of particular moral knowledge without this subject holding some general moral beliefs with positive epistemic status by way of providing a narrative justification. In the last part of this section, we elaborate that, although moral knowledge is contingent, because it is the knowledge of contingent moral facts, it is a priori, due to the a priori knowledge of the relation between the nonmoral and moral properties.

6.3.1 Epistemic Reasons for Moral Beliefs and Particular Moral Facts

The introduction of this chapter begins with a statement that making moral judgments is a usual practice. For example, regarding the trolley case, we might judge that "This action is morally right." On the same page, we argue that the because-constraint holds, which means that for every moral judgment, there must be some reason(s) that sufficiently explains why the objects in question possess the moral property they do. What we have not yet considered is the status of such judgments, whether they are instances of belief or not. In this regard, we think that moral particularism would be congenial to cognitivism rather than noncognitivism. This means that we believe that the statements used in these judgments

[26] There is a further implication of Dancy's response that is not related to the topic of explanation, i.e., resultance would not imply the existence of moral generalizations. From an explanation like "*Mp* because *Dp*," it is therefore invalid to infer that for all *x*, if *Dx*, then *Mx*, that would be a form of moral generalizations. What is possible to be inferred from such a because-statement is an unquantified conditional: "if *Dp*, then *Mp*." This means that the moral explanation would be "stubbornly particular." One cannot apply an explanation for one moral case to another. This, however, does not mean that there are no moral explanations at all. There are some good moral explanations, and they are particular. (See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 48. A similar argument is also offered in Zangwill, 'Moral Dependence and Natural Properties', p. 233.)

may accurately depict or refer to specifically moral aspects of the world, and therefore they are capable of being true or false. Furthermore, we also believe that such judgments are not just expressions of approval or disapproval of a certain kind of action, person's behavior, or institution, or expressions of prescription to do or not to do certain actions. However, we think that particular moral judgments give "voices" to our beliefs.

Nonetheless, one might also consider the possibility that moral particularism is congenial to noncognitivism. A noncognitivist who adopts a particularist view, however, would have to face two fundamental issues.[27] First, since the majority of noncognitivists are committed to a certain sort of naturalism, according to which moral words are definable or analyzable in terms of natural kinds, this would contradict the particularists' assertion that moral terms cannot be defined or analyzed in terms of natural ones. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the reason is that moral terms are shapeless with respect to the natural kinds. The second issue is that for some noncognitivists, such as Allan Gibbard, certain moral reasons function atomistically, meaning that for them, their approval or disapproval is not determined by the context where they are instantiated, but merely by the system of norms that is accepted by the subject.[28] Given these two issues, the cognitivist option is preferable for moral particularists.

Considering moral beliefs, the because-constraint tells us that for any particular moral belief, there must be some reasons for this belief. These are the epistemic reasons for moral belief. The linguistic expression of the relation between moral beliefs and their reasons is moral because-statements. Since the object of our consideration is moral beliefs, it would be better to reformulate the generic form of the because-statement as follows. Call this epistemological because-statement.

(B_{ep}) Subject, *S*, believes that *Mp*, *because Dp*.

Before embarking on the discussion on Question B, we need to provide some elaboration of the epistemic reasons. This is to add to our prior claims, in which we assumed that reasons, not only epistemic ones, may, in their basic sense, provide explanations. Furthermore, as we also said that we are dealing with normative reasons, i.e., reasons that favor one to give a certain reaction (like acting in a certain way or believing in something). In regard especially to epistemic reasons, therefore, we take it that, *first*, epistemic reasons are those that favor one to believe in something (or as reasons against believing in something). We may contrast epistemic reasons with reasons for actions. Consider the trolley case once again. If you ask Adam (the person who turns the trolley and therefore saves five persons, but kills one), "Why do you turn the trolley?" and his answer is, "Because it will save five persons than otherwise," the reason he gives is a reason

27 See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 140–141.

28 For a discussion on whether Gibbard's moral expressivism is compatible with moral particularism, see Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 57–60.

for action. However, if you ask him, "Why do you believe that you ought to turn the trolley?" and he gives the same answer, such an answer is a reason for a moral belief. From these examples, it seems that the same reason plays a role both as a reason for action and as an epistemic reason.[29]

Second, as we already introduced in Chapter 1, we think that reasons, including epistemic ones, are facts, understood as obtaining states of affairs and not merely as true propositions.[30] Facts, as obtaining states of affairs, are made up of objects, properties, and their relations. Thus, in the above example, the fact that the action will save five persons than otherwise is the epistemic reason for Adam to believe that he ought to do the action. Why are epistemic reasons facts? We believe that only such obtaining states of affairs can sufficiently favor Adam that he ought to perform the action.[31] What favors Adam to believe that he ought to turn the trolley is not the mental state that he believes that it will save five lives than otherwise.[32] It is instead the content of such mental states, i.e., the fact that the action will save five lives than otherwise, that (can) favor(s) Adam to believe in what he believes. Were there no such fact, there would be nothing to favor Adam's belief. For instance, if it were not true that the action will save five lives than otherwise, there would be no normative (epistemic) reason for such a belief.

Furthermore, we think that what is capable of favoring is also not propositions, even if they are true. There are diverse understandings of propositions. On one interpretation, propositions are abstract representations of (putative) facts, and thus, they are abstract representations of how the objects, properties, and relations are. However, once again, those that are capable of favoring one's believing are not abstract representations of the facts. The thing that favors Adam to believe that he ought to do the action is not the abstract representation of the fact that it will save five persons than otherwise, but instead it is the fact itself. Another example: suppose that Sarah believes that the letter she reads is fascinating.[33] Suppose, too, that for such a belief, there are two candidates for a propositional normative reason: First, the proposition that "It was written by Samuel Clemens,"

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29 There might be another relating example, that is, if you ask Adam, "Why do you turn the trolley?" and he answers, "Because I believe that I ought to do an action that can save more lives than otherwise." With this answer, Adam surely says something about his moral beliefs. However, this seems to be a reason for action rather than an epistemic reason.

30 This view is usually called factualism about reasons. The proponents of such a view are Joseph Raz (1975). *Practical Reason and Norms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Thomas M. Scanlon (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press; Jonathan Dancy (2000a). *Practical Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Maria Alvarez (2010). *Kinds of Reasons: An Essay in the Philosophy of Action*. Oxford University Press.

31 See Dancy, *Practical Reality*, pp. 112–115.

32 Proponents of the view that epistemic reasons are mental states are, for instance, John Turri (2009). 'The Ontology of Epistemic Reasons'. In: *Noûs* 43.3, pp. 490–512; Bruno Niederbacher (2013). *Erkenntnistheorie moralischer Überzeugungen: ein Entwurf*. Vol. 45. Philosophical Analysis. Frankfurt: Walter de Gruyter.

33 This example is put forward in Susanne Mantel (2019). 'Gründe und Evidenz'. In: *Handbuch Erkenntnistheorie*. Ed. by Martin Granjner and Guido Melchior. Springer, p. 216.

and second, the proposition that "It was written by Mark Twain." These are two different propositions, and therefore they are supposed to represent two different facts. Consequentially, if Sarah wants to find out the reason for her belief that the letter is fascinating, she should appeal to one of these propositions, especially if she does not believe (or know) that Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain are the names of the same person. If she appeals to the first one, she would, for instance, inquire into the family of Clemens; however, if she appeals to the second proposition, then she would inquire into the literature of this famous writer. However, as we may plausibly presuppose, the correct reason why Sarah believes that the letter is fascinating is the fact that it was written by a concrete person named Samuel Clemens, alias Mark Twain. The fact that this concrete person wrote that letter is the correct reason why Sarah believes that the letter is fascinating.

Given the ontological view of epistemic reasons as laid out above, we may turn to Question B, asking what kind of things explain the subject's belief-formation if the existence of moral generalizations and general moral facts is not necessary. In his book *The Nature of Morality*, Gilbert Harman argues that, in contrast to science, where the assumption about a certain scientific fact, such as the fact about a proton, is necessary, the assumption about the existence of moral facts is not necessary to explain how one could come to certain moral beliefs.[34] He writes:

> *Indeed, an assumption about moral facts would seem to be totally irrelevant to the explanation of your making the judgment you make. It would seem that all we need assume is that you have certain more or less well articulated moral principles which are reflected in the judgments you make, based on your moral sensibility. It seems to be completely irrelevant to our explanation whether your intuitive immediate judgment is true or false.*[35]

Harman's argument is surely a criticism of moral realism (especially the realism about moral facts). He seems convinced that we are justified in believing in the existence of a certain entity, but only if this entity plays an indispensable role in the explanation of the belief-formation that is gained through a certain observation. For some philosophers, this condition of belief justification is, however, too narrow. There are many other ways for beliefs to be justified. Since our present concern is not to defend moral realism, the ways we may justify our belief that there are moral facts will not be discussed further. What is relevant right now is rather Harman's suggestion that the explanation of our moral beliefs should include moral principles, on the one hand, and a certain kind of moral sensibility, on the other. The question is: If for moral particularists moral principles or moral generalizations are not necessary, how could we explain our moral belief-formation?

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[34] Gilbert Harman (1977). *The Nature of Morality. An Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[35] Harman, *The Nature of Morality*, 7, emphasis added.

To make this matter sound worse, the opponents of moral particularists might appeal to Davidson's well-known claim that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief."[36] Based on this claim, moral generalists might argue that the belief in moral generalizations plays a necessary role in the explanation of particular moral beliefs. Thus, for them, it seems that there is no way for particularists to explain moral belief-formation.

However, it is not entirely true. Moral particularists might also agree with Davidson, although they must assume that the epistemic reasons are the forms of mental states, but with particular contents. As we have seen, however, such a nonfactual view about epistemic reasons is problematic. Nevertheless, our position that epistemic reasons are moral facts would raise a pressing question of how things from one category of fact could explain the beliefs that are of another category. Such a skepticism is also the reason why Davidson posits the abovementioned claim. For him, any testimony of senses regarding facts, such as perceptions, sensations, passing show, and so on, cannot be considered as explanations of epistemic reasons.

To answer such a question, we appeal to McDowell's idea that experiences can count as the explanation of belief-formation, but they must be endowed by conceptual content.[37] In an analysis, McDowell thinks that Davidson fails to see the possibility that experiences of facts may become the sufficient reason for holding certain beliefs because he fails to recognize that experiences are possible to be endowed by conceptual contents. McDowell reformulates Davidson's abovementioned claim as follows: "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except something else that is also in the space of concepts."[38] Here, he seems to accommodate some parts of Davidson's claim, in that it does not only allow beliefs to be counted as epistemic reasons but also includes experiences as the possible way of forming the reasons for belief. For McDowell, the inclusion of experiences among the epistemic reasons is necessary because, otherwise, we cannot account for the empirical contents of our beliefs (here he speaks about the empirical contents of our "thoughts"). In his view, to understand that our thoughts have empirical contents, we must take beliefs with empirical contents to be in relation to the empirical world. Nonetheless, this relationship must be rationally constrained by experience. According to McDowell, the problem with Davidson's contention is that we lack the justification of beliefs with empirical contents if experience is not included as the way we have epistemic reasons.

Based on McDowell's view, we might plausibly claim that our moral belief-formation would be explained by our experience of perceiving particular moral facts. As we have considered in the earlier section, there are at least two aspects

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36 Donald Davidson (1986). 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge'. In: *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Ed. by Ernest LePore. Blackwell, p. 310.

37 John McDowell (1996). *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

38 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 140.

of moral facts. First, it concerns the resultance relation between the base properties and the moral property of a certain object; and second, it concerns the presence or absence of other considerations such as enablers, disablers, and enablers for enablers. Thus, perceiving the particular base properties, which operate as normative reasons for a certain belief and its possible resultance relation to the moral property, would not be sufficient. It must be accompanied by a perception of the enablers, the disablers, or the enablers for enablers, and their relations and how they play their roles in that circumstance.

As McDowell claims, perceptions of facts should be endowed with conceptual contents. In the moral case, such perceptions should, therefore, be endowed with moral concepts. We agree on this. However, one might raise the question of how moral conceptions could exist in the absence of moral generalizations. In Chapter 7, we will argue that moral education is the natural way to develop moral competence, where an agent, to a certain degree, acquires not only sufficient moral concepts but also emotional maturity. To pursue such an aim, moral generalizations are not necessary in moral education. In this regard, we partly agree with Harman that what we need for belief-formation is a certain kind of moral sensibility. We leave the discussion of moral concept acquirement in that chapter.

Given that experience of particular reasons explains the formation of moral beliefs, one might pose a further question, namely, Question C: Can a subject's particular moral belief be epistemically justified or even an instance of particular moral knowledge without this subject holding some general moral beliefs with positive epistemic status? If such a particular moral belief can be epistemically justified, what kind of justification would be appropriate? To answer this question, in the next section, we will consider the traditional ways of justification, foundationalism, and coherentism and contend that they are not quite congenial to moral particularism. Instead, we believe that there is a particularist-specific way of justification, namely narrativism.

6.3.2 Moral Particularism Justification of Particular Moral Beliefs

The conception of moral belief-formation laid out above seems to have the natural implication that moral particularism would presuppose foundationalism as a way of justification. However, as Dancy argues, moral particularism would not be prone to foundationalism. It is true that particular moral facts are basic. However, it does not imply that knowledge about these facts is basic knowledge in the foundationalist sense. Dancy provides four reasons for this conviction:[39] 1) On the particularists' view, basic moral beliefs (beliefs about basic moral facts) that are held in a certain context as true might be appealed to in confirmation of another basic belief. For instance, the belief that a certain feature makes an action right in one context cannot be held as infallible because, in another context, one would believe that the similar feature functions differently. 2) It is possible for a basic moral

[39] Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 148–150.

belief "to be confirmed or weakened by a non-basic belief."[40] 3) Foundationalism seems to require that the recognition of the particular resultance relation between the nonmoral and moral features must be prior to the recognition of whether such a relation is successful (such that the action is right/wrong or good/bad overall). However, this is not true for moral particularism. Moral particularism allows that one may first recognize that the object in question is right or wrong, good or bad, overall, and later recognize what makes that object right or wrong, good or bad, in detail. 4) Similar to our abovementioned conception, according to moral particularism, perception of moral facts requires acquirement of sufficient moral concepts. This means that for moral particularists, there is no such thing as "the given basic knowledge" that would presuppose other knowledge, but does not presuppose other knowledge, as foundationalists might presume.

Is moral particularism compatible with coherentism? To answer this question, there are two aspects of coherentism we need to discuss. First, coherentists maintain that only one belief can justify another belief. This is to recall Davidson's claim above. Moral particularism would surely not be congenial to such a view, especially when it maintains that the experience of particular moral facts is the explanation of belief-formation. Second, coherentists maintain that all beliefs are of the same sort; there are no beliefs that are basic and not basic. There are, however, different views of what makes these beliefs be of the same sort. In one interpretation, coherentists might think that all beliefs are of the same sort in that they circulate around inferential relations. Again, though, what this "inferential" amounts to is contentious. Presumably, with inferential coherentists assume that beliefs with identical contents must have the same implications in all contexts. If this is what inference amounts to, particularists would not share the same conviction. On another interpretation, coherentists might think that all beliefs are of the same sort in that they revolve around increases and decreases in explanatory coherence.[41] According to this interpretation, beliefs with the same contents do not have the same implication in the sense that they do not contribute equally whenever they are involved.

Beliefs with the same contents might have different strengths regarding how they would support other beliefs. Their level of contribution would be determined by the contexts in which they are involved. Nevertheless, the further cases where certain beliefs are involved would explain, in the sense of confirmation, what to believe when beliefs with similar content are involved.

It means that the subsequent cases serve only to confirm the previous cases. According to Dancy, if coherentism is so understood, it would be compatible with moral particularism in that beliefs with similar content involved in certain cases might act as confirmation (but not as determinants) for the beliefs in question.

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40 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 149.

41 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 153.

Nevertheless, if this is not what coherentists understand under coherentism, moral particularism should not adopt this way of justification.[42]

Given that the above two traditional ways of justification are not perfectly congenial to moral particularism, we might ask whether there is a particularist-specific way of justification. In *Moral Reasons*, Dancy seems to appeal to what we might call "narrativism." He writes:

> *To justify one's choice is to give the reasons one sees for making it, and to give those reasons is just to lay out how one sees the situation, starting in the right place and going on to display the various salient features in the right way; to do this is to fill in the moral horizon. In giving reasons one is not arguing for one's way of seeing the situation. One is rather appealing to others to see it the way one sees it oneself and the appeal consists in laying out that way as persuasively as one can. The persuasiveness here is the persuasiveness of narrative: an internal coherence in the account that compels assent. We succeed in our aim when our story sounds right. Moral justification is, therefore, not subsumptive in nature, but narrative.*[43]

According to Dancy's narrativism, it seems that there is no difference between justification and description, in that a narrative justification is a depiction of the features of a certain situation itself. This narrative, however, does not depict all the features of the situation but only those that are relevant. We might presume that these relevant features are structured in a certain way so that it is not just a list of relevant features. However, as stated in this quotation, these features are not structured in an argumentative way. By depicting the relevant features of the situation in a narrative way, to justify is, therefore, not to argue for one's belief. Dancy further explains that among these relevant features, there are some features that are "more relevant" than others. These are what he calls "the salient features." Salient features are those that "stick out or obtrude, and should catch our attention if we are alert."[44] Moreover, he claims that a full view of the circumstances will be characterized not only by recognition of the functions of each feature but also how these features are related to each other. By having such a full view, one will grasp the "shape" of the circumstances.[45] A full narrative description of the relevant features is therefore a depiction of such a shape as a whole.

How, then, could such a narrative description justify one's beliefs? As quoted above, for Dancy, the cardinal virtue of a narrative justification is its persuasiveness. Two aspects are mentioned to elaborate the notion of persuasiveness: internal coherence and compelling assent. Unfortunately, Dancy leaves these three important concepts unexplained. At first glance, the term "persuasiveness" seems to appeal to feeling or emotion. Moreover, if a narrative is persuasive, it might

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42 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 155.
43 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, 113, emphasis original.
44 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 112.
45 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 112.

mean that a narrative justification is seductive. This, however, might give the impression that Dancy's narrativism implies that moral philosophical discourse would be a kind of propaganda and provide justification as mere rhetoric. Although this interpretation might sound plausible, we think that it is not what Dancy wants to argue. Nevertheless, another term he used, "internal coherence", which is supposed to make persuasiveness clear, might also lead to confusion. With this term, one might interpret that Dancy appeals to a sort of coherentism. However, as we have seen, moral particularism would be congenial to coherentism only if it is understood in a very restricted way. Moreover, it seems that a narrative justification does not need to appeal to any form of coherentism. An illuminating interpretation of Dancy's concepts regarding the narrative justification is provided by Daniel Nica. According to him, with the term "internal coherence," Dancy would mean that a narrative should "identify the way in which the interplay between the elements of a situation determines the occurrence of a morally relevant feature."[46] If this is correct, then a narrative should display the roles of every relevant feature and how they are related to each other in such a way that a situation has a certain moral property.

Presumably, not only their roles and relations but also the sequence of each element would also matter. However, it is not quite clear what kind of sequence is required for a good narrative justification. In this quotation, Dancy states that one needs only to start "in the right place and going on to display the various salient features in the right way."[47] He does not, however, specify where one should begin or in which direction one should proceed. An appeal to literary critics is perhaps here needed to know the ideal sequence of the elements of a good narrative justification.

Another term that is used by Dancy is that a persuasive narrative justification should "compel assent." Again, this term might be understood in the sense that a narrative justification should influence others at any cost, and to this aim, it must be featured with the eloquence of speech like propaganda. But this notion seems to be misleading. According to Nica's interpretation, with this term, Dancy wants to say that a persuasive narrative justification should "provide public transparency for the moral verdict."[48] With this, Nica maintains that a narrative justification should not be esoteric and privately compel a certain individual or groups of individuals. Instead, Nica says, "narrative has to sound right [...] to everyone who is in good faith and understand the situation."[49]

Based on the interpretation above, a persuasive narrative justification would then be characterized by the following features: a) It is a *description* of a certain circumstance; b) It displays *the salient and other relevant features* of this

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46 Daniel Nica (2013). 'Narrative and Justification in Moral Particularism'. In: *The Romanian Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 8.2, p. 32.

47 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 113.

48 Nica, 'Narrative and Justification in Moral Particularism', p. 32.

49 Nica, 'Narrative and Justification in Moral Particularism', p. 33.

circumstance; c) These features are arranged in a certain *sequential* (but not argumentative) way; d) This description depicts the situation *transparently*, so that it is compelling for everyone who is in good faith and understands the situation.

There is, however, another crucial feature that is not yet included. It seems that with the terms "persuasive" and "compelling," Dancy wants to include the rhetorical value of a narrative justification as one of its important features. As stated in the quotation above, he rejects the subsumptive nature of justification assumed by generalists. In the generalists' view, justification is subsumptive, meaning that particular moral beliefs would be justified only if they are confirmed by moral generalizations in a certain way. The usual practice of such a confirmation is using certain forms of formal or semiformal argumentation, where the moral generalizations are among one of its premises. Read this way, it seems that Dancy's rejection of the subsumptive nature of justification is not only a criticism of generalism (because true moral generalizations are not available), but it is also a criticism of formalism in justification.

His emphasis on the persuasiveness of narrative justification appears to imply that formal justification cannot have the virtue of being rhetorically persuasive that narrative justification does. This means that a good narrative justification must have a good rhetoric quality. The emphasis on the rhetorical quality of justification is important, and such a topic is neglected in the philosophical discussion.

What is "rhetoric quality"? According to Winfried Löffler, the rhetoric quality of an argument can be understood as "the degree of confidence that is held by [a] certain recipient, derived from his or her knowledge of the premises, provided by an argument regarding its logical validity and soundness."[50] Applied to our context, the rhetoric quality of a narrative justification would be the degree of confidence that is held by the recipients of this justification; this degree of confidence is provided by the recipients' knowledge of the given description. In the case of narrative justification, a good narrative justification should therefore increase the degree of confidence in holding the beliefs in question by providing sufficient information about the circumstances. Thus, we might state that as the fifth feature of a narrative justification that: e) it increases the recipients' degree of confidence in holding certain moral beliefs in question.

Narrativism about justification appears plausible given the five characteristics listed above. This is not only congenial and applicable to moral particularism, but, regarding the value of persuasiveness, understood as increasing the degree of confidence in holding the beliefs in question, it also provides a novel aspect of justification that is neglected by traditional ways of justification. We also think

[50] Winfried Löffler (2006). 'Spielt die rhetorische Qualität von Argumenten eine Rolle bei deren logischer Analyse? Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Argumentationstheorie und formaler Logik'. In: *Argumentation in Theorie und Praxis. Philosophy und Didaktik des Argumentierens*. Ed. by Günther Keruzbauer and Georg Dorn. Münster: LIT Verlag, p. 116, my translation (DS).

that such an account would be useful for providing a comprehensive understanding of particular moral beliefs. Nevertheless, if we accept such an account, particular moral because-statements of the form (B) would not be sufficient to represent the reason why one holds a certain moral belief. We need to expand the "because-clause" in those statements so that it includes the relevant elements that would justify the beliefs in question. The form of because-statements should then be understood as representations of stories. We can call this new form of because-constraint "because-narrative." Particular because-narratives represent the justification of particular moral beliefs.

6.3.3 A Priori Moral Knowledge

Given the elaboration of the particularists' accounts of the belief-formation and of the narrative justification, moral particularists believe that moral knowledge is possible. As we already mentioned, moral knowledge is, however, neither basic knowledge in a foundationalist sense nor a kind of knowledge that presupposes knowledge about moral generalizations. Moral knowledge is the knowledge of particular moral facts. On the assumption that the traditional view of knowledge as justified true belief holds, for moral particularists, moral knowledge is a justified true belief in particular moral facts. Because particular moral facts are contingent, the suspicion that arises would be to suppose that for moral particularists knowledge of contingent moral facts is a posteriori. Moral particularists, however, argue that knowledge of particular moral facts is contingent but a priori. This section elaborates this particularists' epistemological view that moral knowledge is contingent but a priori. To this end, we refer to the epistemological analysis provided by Zangwill, who thinks that the because-constraint reveals that moral knowledge is contingent but a priori because there is no independent empirical access to the knowledge of the relation between moral and nonmoral properties.[51] We argue that Zangwill's conception supports the moral particularists' claim that there is moral knowledge without knowledge of general moral facts.

Zangwill's main question is how we can have access to moral knowledge, i.e., to justified true particular moral beliefs. In answering such a question, he makes these following two claims:

> *(1) The Because Constraint holds. The Because Constraint means that knowledge of moral properties depends on knowledge of natural properties plus knowledge of moral–natural connections. So, given knowledge of natural properties, we cannot arrive at knowledge of moral properties without knowledge of moral–natural connections. (2) The No Independent Access Thesis holds. The No Independent Access Thesis means that knowledge of moral–natural connections cannot be derived from knowledge of moral properties plus knowledge of natural properties. (And obviously, it cannot be derived solely from either of these.) It follows that knowledge of moral–natural connections is sui generis. It*

[51] Zangwill, 'Moral Epistemology and the Because Constraint'.

> *must have an independent source. (Schematically: (1) knowledge of A depends on knowledge of B and knowledge of C; (2) knowledge of B does not depend on knowledge of A and knowledge of C (and obviously not from knowledge of A or C alone). It follows that knowledge of B must be sui generis.)*[52]

Zangwill considers at least three kinds of knowledge: A) Knowledge of moral properties that we may call *moral knowledge*. For some readers, the term "knowledge of moral properties" might not be clear. We presume, however, that what he means by it is knowledge of moral facts, such as Adam's knowledge that it is right to turn the trolley. B) Knowledge of natural properties, i.e., properties in virtue of which the object has the moral property it has. Such properties are, therefore, the reasons why the object has the moral property it has. We may call such knowledge *knowledge about moral reasons*. C) Knowledge about the relation between the natural and the moral properties, viz., the knowledge about the relations between moral reasons and moral properties. According to the first claim above, i.e., the claim of the because-constraint, Zangwill contends that we have no direct access to moral properties. The because-constraint, if applied to particular moral because-statements, reveals that when we think that a certain action is bad, for instance, it is not merely bad, but it is bad because of something, e.g., because it is a case of stealing. The statement that can be construed from such a case is like "I think it is bad, because it is stealing." Knowledge about the badness of that action is gained through the knowledge of the natural property of stealing that is involved in that very action.

The problem with such an interpretation of the because-constraint is that moral knowledge seems to be gained a posteriori: once one knows that a certain set of natural properties satisfies to make a certain action a case of stealing, one also knows that this action is bad. This seems to imply that moral knowledge depends on empirical knowledge about natural properties or reasons. Zangwill, however, argues that this is not true due to the second condition, that "we cannot arrive at the knowledge of moral properties without the knowledge of moral-natural connections" (i.e., the No Independent Access Thesis). He thinks that such connections are known a priori and that the because-constraint, represented by because-statements, is instructive on that. To make the claim clear, he compares the three cases: proper-name identity (Cicero and Tully), natural-kind-term composite (H_2O and water), and natural-moral connection.

In these three cases, we operate with a framework principle to the effect that if a certain claim holds, it holds necessarily: in the proper-name identity case, if an object identity holds, it holds necessarily (e.g., if it holds that Cicero is wise and Cicero is identical to Tully, then it holds necessarily that Tully is wise); in the natural kind case, if something is a natural kind, then it has a certain molecular composition, and it does so necessarily (e.g., water is a natural kind; water is composed of H_2O; it then holds necessarily that water is composed of H_2O); in

[52] Zangwill, 'Moral Epistemology and the Because Constraint', p. 276.

the moral case, if a certain action has a certain moral property in virtue of a set of natural properties (and this set exhausts all other possibly morally relevant properties—think of the *Universalizability* reading of the moral supervenience laid out in the previous section), then it holds necessarily, that the actions that have the same set of natural properties have the same moral property. Zangwill, however, argues that although, in these cases, we operate with a similar framework principle that involves necessary relations, there are some important differences between these cases to the effect that it is false to claim that moral knowledge is a posteriori.

According to Zangwill, there is a fundamental difference between the cases of proper names and moral cases on one side and the cases of natural kinds on the other. In the proper-name identity and natural-moral cases, the necessary connection is known a priori-ly, but in the case of natural kinds, it is not known a priori. For example, a few hundred years ago, Thales did not know that water is composed of H_2O, but nevertheless, he knew that something was water. The connection between H_2O and water is known empirically. However, we may assume that if he knew that a certain action was good, then he must have known that something must make that action good. The connection between the action being good and the things that make it good must be known a priori. Consider how we gain knowledge of the natural facts, their composites, and the relation between these two things. Regarding the natural kind cases, the knowledge of the upper-level physical properties (e.g., being water, being a rock, a snail, or a clock) is not gained by a cognition of the connection between the upper- and the lower-level (composite) properties. Instead, one starts with *independent* knowledge that something is water, a rock, a snail, or a clock and then investigates their composites. And from such an investigation, one infers the connection between the properties of the lower and upper levels. Moral cases are, however, different from this. There is no direct access to the upper-level properties of actions, such as goodness or badness. One needs to first investigate the lower-level properties in order to know the upper-level properties. Such an investigation would not, nevertheless, be sufficient to access the upper-level properties. One needs to have further knowledge, i.e., knowledge about the relations between such lower-level properties and their upper-level ones. Knowledge of such relations is known a priori. This is what Zangwill meant with the second claim that there is no independent access to knowledge about the relation between the lower-level properties, the moral reasons, and the upper-level properties, the moral properties.

One may concede such a disanalogy between the moral and natural kind cases but assert that, because knowledge of embedded object identity and composition relations is empirical in the two cases of proper names and natural kind terms, knowledge of moral-natural connections would also be empirical. This seems to suggest that the knowledge that a certain pain is bad, for instance, is gained empirically, and given the necessary relation of moral supervenience, it holds necessarily that pain is bad. Zangwill, however, argues that this is false. According to

him, while the identity connections that hold between objects and the compositional relations of certain natural kinds are known a posteriori in both cases of proper names and natural kind terms, there is no way for us to have empirical access to knowledge about moral-natural connections. Just like knowledge about the compositional relation holding between water and H_2O is gained a posteriori, knowledge about the identity relation holding between Cicero and Tully has to be gained a posteriori. In contrast, there is no empirical access to knowledge of the moral–natural relationship between evil and pain. Although one might think that the term "bad" is embedded in the term "pain," such an embedding relation is known a priori.[53]

The moral because-statements make such a claim more transparent, in particular, in virtue of the feature of constitutive informativeness. In the cases of proper-name identity and natural-kind compositional relation, there is no a priori because-constraint. This means that whenever one asserts that something is water, for instance, one does not need to know that it is composed of H_2O. Any true claim about the natural kinds does not require knowledge about the compositions of those natural kinds. Likewise, when one asserts that someone, say Cicero, is wise, one is not required to claim that there is another person, say Tully, who is identical to Cicero, to the effect that he has the identical property of being wise. This implies that it is possible for us to know the natural kinds or names of persons and make judgments about them without knowing their microphysical compositions or identity relations. Such ignorance, however, would not imply a license to make irresponsible claims.[54] To the contrary, when one makes moral judgments about a certain action, person, or institution, it would be irresponsible to not be able to give the reasons why the action, person, or institution has the moral property it has. It is constitutive for any justified moral judgment that there are reasons why such moral judgments hold, and, in this case, one needs to know the relation between the reasons and moral properties of the things that are evaluated.

We think that the consideration laid out above is illuminating, in particular, regarding our intuition about the because-constraint. However, on behalf of the generalists, one may argue that this consideration would still imply that moral generalism holds for at least two reasons. First, one could claim that the above-mentioned consideration would imply that, by virtue of moral supervenience, there are true general moral because-statements, i.e., moral generalizations. Second, one could also claim that Zangwill's No Independent Access Thesis would imply that a priori knowledge about moral-natural relations is the one that is depicted by true moral generalizations.

In response to the first claim, we may rehearse the argument laid out in Chapter 4, where we discussed the extent to which the thesis of moral supervenience

53 Zangwill, 'Moral Epistemology and the Because Constraint', p. 274.

54 Zangwill, 'Moral Epistemology and the Because Constraint', p. 274.

implies the existence of true moral generalizations. As we have considered there, there are three different readings of the thesis of moral supervenience depending on the chosen scope of the base properties, i.e., the scope of moral reasons. Only if the base properties include *all* possible morally relevant properties (that we call the universalizability base, that is, the base properties being considered according to the *Universalizability* reading of moral supervenience), then we may get some true moral generalizations. Such a universalizability base should not only be complete and exhaustive, but robust enough that there is no possibility for such a base to be overridden by other features. We argued that it is not only difficult to find such an exhaustive base, but such a base seems also to go beyond our cognitive capacity. What is possible to find and comprehensible is instead the base properties of particular objects, i.e., the particular reasons why a certain object has the moral property it has. Thus, given the abovementioned epistemological consideration, we think that the moral particularists' claim that the particular moral because-statements are understandable without any appeal to the existence and role of any general moral because-statements is immune to this first objection.

A moral particularist response to the second claim is not quite easy. The considerations set out in the previous section, however, may give a hint. We argued that, based on the conception of resultance relations, the explanation of why a certain action, person, or institution has the moral property it has is "stubbornly particular." We cannot apply the same explanans to explain another explanandum. Read epistemologically, then, the particular moral knowledge is the knowledge about particular moral facts. To gain such knowledge, recourse to a justification of beliefs involving any moral generalizations is not needed. Particular moral beliefs are justified by the story regarding the features of that particular circumstance and how they relate to each other. Given that particular moral beliefs are justified, and they can be true, we might contend that there is a possibility of particular moral knowledge. Nevertheless, this contingent truth is a priori since knowledge about how particular reasons would be related to certain moral property is gained without any appeal to experience. Using Zangwill's abovementioned terms, knowledge of such a particular relation is *sui generis*.

Jonathan Dancy elaborates such a conception in a slightly different way. He claims that knowing such a relation is considered "knowing what is a reason for what."[55] And in knowing what is a reason for what, we are not knowing the relation between facts that are involved as reasons in a particular action, but rather "a relation in which a fact stands to acting in one way rather than another."[56] Dancy's claim gets more transparent if we consider the example previously used. Suppose that the fact that Andy has a great difficulty and needs assistance (say, the fact that *r*) is the reason why I ought to assist him. By "knowing what is the

[55] Jonathan Dancy (2008). 'Are Basic Moral Facts Both Contingent and a Priori?' In: *Challenging Moral Particularism*. Ed. by M. Lance, M. Potrc and V. Strahovnik. New York: Routledge, p. 119.

[56] Dancy, 'Are Basic Moral Facts Both Contingent and a Priori?', p. 119.

reason for what," Dancy seems to mean knowing the fact that *r* stands to act as a normative reason for me to help him, and therefore, I know that I ought to help him. In knowing that I ought to help Andy, I need to have empirical knowledge about the fact that *r*, and I also need to know that such a fact stands for acting in a specific way as a normative reason. The latter kind of knowledge is not gained a posteriori but instead a priori. Now, what explains the meta-fact that the fact that *r* is a normative reason for me to assist Andy? For Dancy, such meta-facts do not have any explanans. This seems to conform to Zangwill's idea that a priori knowledge about such meta-facts is *sui generis* and, hence, does not express any moral generalizations.[57]

6.4 Moral Because-Statements Express Explanations of Particular Moral Actions

The because-constraint that is expressed by moral because-statements of the form (B) is also applicable in providing an account of the explanation of our moral actions. We may postulate that moral reasons are a sort of practical reason, i.e., the reasons for doing certain actions, in the first place. Moral reasoning is a deliberation that explicitly involves moral reasons, and, as we shall see, like other kinds of practical reasoning, it ends in actions. One of the fundamental issues about moral reasoning is this: How do we come to a certain moral action? By an inferential deliberation? Or by a moral deliberation that is noninferential? In this section, we will claim that based on Dancy's conception of practical reasoning proper and on a practical consideration of moral because-statements, moral reasoning proper is noninferential.[58]

6.4.1 A Brief Sketch of the Conception of Practical Reasoning

As a background to our claim, a brief sketch of the conception of practical reasoning might be appropriate. In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant makes a distinction between practical and speculative reasoning.[59] The

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[57] Given the argument of normative constitutivism laid out in the previous chapter, one might argue that we may have a further explanation as to why such meta-facts hold by recurring to the normative system that we acknowledge. We do not, however, think that such a recourse is necessary to plausibly explain our particular moral beliefs. This means that our view of normative constitutivism would still be compatible with the acceptance that knowledge of such meta-facts is *sui generis*. If one, however, needs a further explanation of why such *sui generis* a priori knowledge exists, our account of normative constitutivism may provide an answer.

[58] Our considerations in this section are based on Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 101–108 and Jonathan Dancy (2018). *Practical Shape. A Theory of Practical Reasoning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[59] Kant writes: "I require for a critique of a pure *practical* reason that if it is to be completed, its unity with the *speculative* in a common principle must at the same time be exhibited, because it can, in the end, be only one and the same reason that is distinguished merely in its application." (Immanuel Kant (2002). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. German by Allen W. Wood. New York: Yale University Press, Ak. 4:392, emphasis added.)

usual way to distinguish them is that practical reasoning concerns deliberation involving actions, whereas speculative reasoning concerns deliberation involving beliefs. Speculative reasoning is usually called theoretical reasoning. Due to their label of "reasoning," people conventionally believe, explicitly or implicitly, that both the practical and theoretical reasonings must be inferential in the sense that they contain premises and conclusions, and these contents are held according to certain principles of the inference. If the premises are accepted as true, then the conclusion is guaranteed to be true. However, we need to step back a little from such a conventional view, asking what "reasoning" actually is. In general, reasoning is "a passage of thoughts," but "thoughts" need not always be propositional or construable into premises and conclusions. If this is the case, a passage of thoughts then should not always be inferential in the sense that one draws a conclusion from (a) certain premise(s) based on certain rules of inference. Let us illustrate this with an example of practical reasoning as follows:

(A) I help Andy because he has a great difficulty and needs help.

We may separate the main clause (c) of (A) from its because-clause (1) as follows:

(1) Andy has a great difficulty and needs help.
(c) I help him.

Given that the movement from (1) to (c) is a passage of thought, however, (1) may also end with

(c*) I ought to help him

such that (A) would sound like

(A*) I ought to help Andy because he has a great difficulty and needs help.

It seems that there would be no objection to categorizing the movement from (1) to (c) or (c*) as a reasoning. What do the sentences following (1) and (c) or (c*) represent? The conventional view would say that the sentence next to (1) represents a proposition. However, it is not clear what is represented by the sentence next to (c) or (c*). One may say that they represent propositions as well, and therefore, there is no category mistake in such a reasoning since one merely moves from one proposition to another. To this point, no problems have appeared yet. However, the difficulty arises when one sees such a reasoning as a practical one. This would mean that the "conclusion" of a practical reasoning is also a proposition. However, the pressing question is: What makes such a reasoning practical when it is concluded merely by a proposition? There would be no difference between practical and nonpractical reasoning, such as theoretical reasoning. How does the action or ought-character of the conclusion emerge?

Some philosophers admit that reasoning that ends in a proposition is not directly practical, but it guides actions indirectly. According to the conventional view, the practicality of practical reasoning would then be shown by the actions that are guided indirectly by that reasoning. On such an understanding, practical reasoning is, to a certain degree, subordinate to theoretical reasoning. Some philosophers are unwilling to treat practical reasoning as subordinate to theoretical reasoning. And this instigates new attempts to account for practical reasoning that abandons this conventional view. Among others, Anthony Kenny was popularly known as the one who abandoned the conventional view. Recently, such a view was provided by Jonathan Dancy.

Anthony Kenny argues that practical reasoning has its own standing in contrast to the theoretical one.[60] For him, the premises of practical reasoning are not propositions. Instead, practical reasoning must include premises of "fiat," i.e., sentences with volitional contents, as opposed to sentences expressing beliefs. For Kenny, (1) should therefore be a premise like "Andy shall be helped with his great difficulty," and the conclusion of such a reasoning would be a plan that satisfies this volitional premise, like "So I shall help Andy with his great difficulty." Practical reasoning, according to Kenny, is structurally similar to theoretical reasoning in that it is inferential and involves premises from which a conclusion, i.e., a plan, can be made. However, unlike theoretical inference, the rules of practical inference are not truth-preserving but instead satisfactoriness-preserving. The rules of practical inference preserve us from passing from a plan that provides a satisfactory means of achieving a goal to a plan that does not.[61]

Kenny's conception of practical reasoning is not conventional in the sense that there are no propositions involved, and it seems appropriate to call such a reasoning practical, although he thinks that "a conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a description of an action to be done: a fiat concerning the reasoner's action."[62] But note that a description of an action is never the action itself. Furthermore, Kenny keeps the inferential spirit in his account of practical reasoning.

Following some of Kenny's ideas, Jonathan Dancy proposes a new account of practical reasoning. Like Kenny, Dancy recommends a nonconventional view of practical reasoning. However, unlike him, Dancy thinks that practical reasoning is not inferential. Surely, the exact distinction between the inferential and noninferential reasoning is a controversial issue. However, for Dancy, one of the features of inferential reasoning is the involvement of premises and "conclusion" in that reasoning. He claims that in practical reasoning proper, i.e., a nondefective case of practical reasoning, "there is nothing [...] that is standing as a premise. The idea of there being a premise for a decision is a nonsense, a category mistake

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60 Anthony J. Kenny (1966). 'Practical Inference'. In: *Analysis* 26.3, pp. 65–75; Anthony Kenny (1976). *Will, Freedom and Power*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

61 Kenny, 'Practical Inference', pp. 71–72.

62 Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power*, p. 96.

involving a cross-classification."[63] In order to understand his account of practical reasoning, we need to abandon the conventional view all together; that is, we should not operate with terms such as premises, conclusion, and inference. Practical reasoning is, for Dancy, rather "a process in which we try to work out how to respond to the situation which confronts us."[64] Such a process is not a passage from premises to conclusions. Rather, it is a passage from "considerations" to actions they "favor" or appear to favor. Interestingly, for Dancy, the account of theoretical reasoning would be drawn from, and therefore is analogous to, the account of practical reasoning (not the other way around!). In Dancy's view, reasoning in general "consists in an attempt to determine what sort of response is most favored by the considerations at issue, and responding that way if one can."[65] The fundamental difference between theoretical and practical reasoning then lies in the kinds of responses to the considerations. While in theoretical reasoning, we respond to the considerations by forming beliefs, in practical reasoning, we respond to them by acting in a certain way.

There are at least six components in Dancy's conception of reasoning in general: the considerations of a certain situation (Cp), the state of affairs (Sp), a response-type (R), a response-token (r), a because- or a dependence relation (D), and a favoring relation (F).[66] His account of *reasoning in general* can be defined as follows: In a *reasoning proper*,

(i) certain states of affairs (Sp) represented by one's considerations (Cp) favor (ii) (F) a response-type (R), and

(ii) one responds (r) in the way favored because [(D)] of (i).[67]

As we have said, the distinction between the practical and theoretical reasoning lies in the responses to considerations. Whereas in practical reasoning, one responds to the considerations by acting, in theoretical reasoning, one responds by believing. Thus, in *practical reasoning proper*,

(i_a) certain states of affairs represented by one's considerations favor *acting* in a certain way, and

(ii_a) one comes to *acting* in that way because of (i*a*).

And, in *theoretical reasoning proper*,

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63 See Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 104. It seems to us, however, that the term "cross-classification" here is incorrect, since it would mean that practical reasoning is both classified as inferential and noninferential. We suppose that Dancy would mean that practical reasoning cannot be categorized as inferential or that it is a mistake to see it as inferential. Thus, the term "miscategorization" would be more appropriate here.

64 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 97.

65 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 6.

66 Devlin Russell (2020). 'Review of the book *Practical Shape: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* by Jonathan Dancy'. In: *Utilitas* 32.2, p. 253.

67 Russell, 'Review of the book *Practical Shape: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* by Jonathan Dancy', p. 253.

(i_b) certain states of affairs represented by one's considerations favor *believing* in a certain way, and

(ii_b) one comes to *believing* in that way because of (i*b*).

As one can see, reasoning in general is a process of aligning with the favoring relation between considerations and the responses to them. Whereas it seems clear that, according to Dancy, there could be two different kinds of responses, acting and believing, we need to further clarify what a favoring relation and consideration are.

Unfortunately, Dancy refuses to give a definition of the favoring relation. He thinks, however, that the "favoring relation is famous and infamous."[68] By saying this, he seems to assume that the concept of favoring or favoring relation between certain considerations and the response to them is already known or familiarly used by philosophers who work with such a conception. About the favoring relation, he writes that "The considerations that are adduced in deliberation, and to which the relevant action is a response, are the considerations that together favor that response, or favor responding that way [...] So when an agent deliberates well and then acts accordingly, the action done is of the sort most favored by the considerations rehearsed, taken as a whole."[69] Furthermore, he contends that the favoring relation is how certain considerations "call for" certain responses. He writes, "Features of situation favor or call for certain responses [...] When we respond to the considerations as reasons, we are tracking the favoring relation in which those considerations stand to a way of responding, or, as I tend to put it, acting in the light of those considerations."[70]

He also thinks that the favoring relation is normative. By saying this, he seems to mean that, in reasoning proper, whenever certain considerations favor certain responses, it is normative that such responses must be given to those considerations. According to Dancy, such a normative relation is objective, and it is contained by the shape of the situation. Thus, whenever there is a favoring relation between the considerations and responses to those considerations, such a situation has a certain shape, and such a shape is therefore normative, as it is "produced" by the favoring relation between the considerations and responses. About this practical shape, he writes, "In talking about practical shape, I mean to be talking about the shape of the situation that confronts us, not about the shape of our thinking about that situation. Or rather, to the extent that our thinking has shape, it is an attempt to capture in the mind a shape that the situation has independently of whether we recognize it or not."[71] This is, however, an objective depiction of the favoring relation, in the sense that how considerations favor particular responses is mind-independent. One may raise a question here: What is the role of

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68 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 29.

69 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 29.

70 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 29.

71 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 2–3.

the subject who makes such a deliberation? Dancy argues that "Deliberation is our way of shaping up the situation that confronts us so as to reveal the course of action most favored by the relevant considerations, taken together."[72] Dancy admits that a deliberation has a psychological aspect. Nevertheless, he claims that the relation involved in such a deliberation is objective. The role of the subjects or reasoners is merely "to reveal" such an objective relation.

Although there are undoubtedly a number of issues with Dancy's conception of the favoring relation, his account appears plausible, so let us grant that it holds. We may now consider the thing that does the favoring, and that is here called "the consideration." The background to Dancy's conception of the consideration is Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. As stated in clause (i) of the proper reasoning schema, considerations, for Dancy, are states of affairs. Some states of affairs obtain, and some others do not. However, for Wittgenstein, a state of affair is a possible combination of objects, while for Dancy, it consists in "things being this way rather than that way," or in the event that occurred. Similar to what we considered in the previous section, for him, only obtaining states of affairs can favor acting in the way of *F* or believing in the way of *G*. What are then propositions? And why don't (and can't) they play a role in reasoning? For Dancy, propositions are naked representations of states of affairs. Unlike Wittgenstein, who writes that propositions are sentence-like (he uses the term "Satz," which has at least the syntactic properties of a sentence), Dancy thinks that propositions are naked in the sense that they do not have any syntactic properties like sentences. Nevertheless, propositions can be true or false. True propositions represent obtaining states of affairs. However, although Dancy thinks that only obtaining states of affairs can do the favoring, true propositions cannot do the favoring by virtue of being propositions. He writes, "It is not the proposition that favors, but its truth, or that it is true–and that a proposition is true is itself a state of affairs."[73]

The favoring relation is, however, a tripartite relation, and so far, we have only discussed the two of its relata: the things that are favored (i.e., acting or believing) and the things that favor (i.e., the considerations). In Dancy's conception, there is one more relatum: the agent. He writes, "I understand an action as an agent causing a change, and the agent is one thing and the causing is another. What is favored is the causing of a change of a certain sort by a specific agent, or by any agent of a certain sort. So, it is plausible that we should have a [...] *place* in the favoring relation, for an agent."[74]

Given that any form of favoring relation has a tripartite structure, having places for the particular considerations that favor, for the responses to those considerations, and for the agent who is to respond that way, one more question arises: What explains the ability of certain considerations to favor acting or believing in

[72] Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 30.
[73] Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 39–40.
[74] Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 35–36.

a certain way? Dancy elaborates on what explains the ability of certain considerations, taken as a whole, to favor having this *belief* rather than the alternatives in terms of probability, plausibility, and coherence.[75] Whereas, what explains the ability of certain considerations, taken as a whole, to favor *acting* in this way rather than that way is that such considerations would reveal the value of acting in a certain way. He writes, "The best I can offer is that a reason to act is such a reason because it reveals (or at least points us toward) some value that there would be in so acting."[76] For instance, the explanation of why the fact that my exhaustion plays a role as my reason to take a break is because given my exhaustion, taking a break (a response to the consideration that I am exhausted) will reveal some value for me, for instance, that it will improve my situation. "Reasons to act in a certain way," Dancy claims, "are considerations that cast so acting in a favorable light, and the explanation of this is that they reveal a value in so acting."[77]

We might now sum up the sketch of practical reasoning, in particular, according to Dancy's account. In his view, practical reasoning is a process where an agent works out how to respond to the situation when they are confronted. Such a process is noninferential in the sense that it does not involve any premises from which a conclusion might be drawn according to certain rules of inference. Such a situation has a certain shape, which is a favoring relation between the considerations involved and the appropriate responses to these considerations. In a practical reasoning proper, the appropriate response would be acting in light of those considerations, and in a theoretical reasoning proper, it would be believing in light of those considerations. The considerations taken by an agent represent states of affairs that make up that situation. It is the considerations (i.e., the obtaining states of affairs) and not the propositions or the belief in those propositions that do the favoring. A deliberation is therefore a process taken by an agent to reveal the favoring relation or the practical or theoretical shape of that situation.

6.4.2 Because-Statements, Ought-Making and Favoring

Based on the view that a practical reasoning is noninferential and aims at revealing the shape of a certain situation, i.e., the favoring relation between the considerations and appropriate responses, Dancy argues that moral reasoning is "an

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75 See Dancy, *Practical Shape*, in particular Chapters 3 and 4.

76 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 85.

77 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 86. In our opinion, there seems to be a certain amount of circularity involved in such an explanation. For one thing, the relation between certain considerations and the responses is a favoring relation. And as we have seen, such a relation is normative. However, in Dancy's view, the explanation of why such considerations can do the favoring, i.e., why they can have a certain normative relation to the corresponding responses, is itself cashed out in a normative term, namely "revealing some value." For some readers, such an explanation would surely be worrying. Nevertheless, perhaps there is no better way to explain a normative relation without involving a certain amount of circularity. Such an attempt is, however, not only specific to Dancy's case.

attempt to capture in thought the shape of the moral situation."[78] Let us consider the abovementioned moral because-statement (A*) "I ought to help Andy because he has a great difficulty and needs help." In this statement, the obligatoriness is something that is "made" by the consideration that Andy has great difficulty and needs help.[79] Dancy, however, claims that the relation between such a consideration and the obligatoriness made is not a favoring relation, but instead it is an "ought-making relation" (the similar relations that he considers are right- and wrong-making relations). He thinks that the obligatoriness, rightness, or wrongness made are not what is favored by the consideration involved. What is favored by such a consideration is instead responses, such as (the action of) helping Andy or believing that helping Andy is obligatory, but not the obligatoriness of such an action. However, the moral properties of an action is the "result" of the resultance base properties that are also taken into consideration by an agent. (Recall the notion of resultance discussed in Section 6.2.) The difference between a favoring and an ought-making relation would perhaps best be illustrated by these two examples of because-statements. If one thinks that

(A*) "I ought to help Andy because he has a great difficulty and needs help",

in a certain sense, one admits that the oughtness made is the resulting property of the base properties of Andy's having a great difficulty and his needing some help. What is involved here is the ought-making relation.

If one, however, thinks that

(O_a) "This action of helping Andy would be obligatory"; so I do it,

in that the clause "I do it" represents an action, what is involved here is a favoring relation. In this case, the obligatoriness of the action of helping Andy is one of the considerations.[80] Further, also note that (O*a*) can have a form of a because-statement like

(O_a*) "I do it because this action of helping Andy would be obligatory".

By making a distinction between the favoring relation and the ought-making (or right-making, or wrong-making) relation, we have two forms of particular moral because-statements. What we have considered so far is those that have the form of (B) "*Mp* because *Dp*" where *Mp* represents the fact about the moral quality of a certain action and *Dp*, the descriptive or nonmoral facts due to which such a moral quality results. This is the form of the because-statement (A*) "I ought to help Andy because he has a great difficulty and needs help." The oughtness or obligatoriness of such an action is explained by the properties of Andy's

78 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 103.

79 For the sake of simplicity, we consider that being an ought and being obligatory are synonymous. There are those who do not agree that it can replace the term being obligatory here with being an ought. This, however, would not affect the structure of the argument.

80 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 87–88.

having a great difficulty and needing help. When it comes to a certain action like helping Andy, we have a different form of because-statements. In one's moral reasoning, the obligatoriness of such an action (in configuration with other considerations, e.g., that Andy has a great difficulty and needs help, and I can help) is one of the considerations why I do the action. If formulated in a because-statement, this has a form like

(B_{pr}) "*Rp* because *Mp* ∧ other considerations *Dp*"

where *Rp* represents a particular response of acting, and *Mp*, the moral quality of doing that response. In this form, the connector "because" can be understood as "being favored by", such that a certain action is favored by its having a certain moral quality and other considerations *Dp*.[81]

According to Dancy, people usually forget to distinguish between these two kinds of relation since the same considerations, such as *Dp*, can play two roles: one being the reasons why a certain action has a certain moral quality (this role is shown by (B)), and another being the considerations for certain responses (this role is shown by (B_{pr})). He writes, "The crucial point here is that, though what favors is also what makes [obligatory], and what is made [obligatory] is also what is favored, the making [relation] in making [obligatory] is a quite different sort of relation from that of favoring; favoring is a normative relation, and making is not."[82] Remember that for Dancy, the explanatory relation between the resultance base and the resulting property (that we have seen as a metaphysical explanation of why a certain action, or person, or institution has the moral quality it has) is not normative. And, according to him, favoring, which is normative, cannot be an explanatory relation. At this point, he criticizes John Broome, who argues that what it is to favor (those reasons that call for a certain response) is just to be a part of an explanation of the obligatoriness of that response. If favoring is explanatory, for Dancy, it will "obliterate the normativity of 'calling for,' which is one way of capturing the normativity of reason."[83]

We broadly agree with Dancy's ideas of practical reasoning, in particular, regarding its noninferential character and the favoring relation involved. However, we think that this last point involves a certain problem. It seems true that the explanation of an ought-making relation would not be normative, although the obligatoriness made is normative. In our form of (B), seen as an explanatory relation, it would be no problem to say that both *Dp* and the connector "because" connecting *Dp* and *Mp* are not normative, but, nevertheless, to admit that *Mp* is a normative fact. However, it is not quite clear why we cannot use the same pattern to account for (B_{pr}), where the favoring relation is also seen as explanatory. Is it true that, if a favoring relation is explanatory, it is then not normative just because

81 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 94–95.
82 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, pp. 95–96.
83 Dancy, *Practical Shape*, p. 96.

an explanatory relation is not normative? Would such an explanatory "because" in (B_{pr}) obliterate the normativity of the favoring relation?[84]

We think that Dancy's claim is unconvincing. The normativity of a favoring relation would not be obliterated if we employ normative facts such as rightness, wrongness, or obligatoriness as part of the explanation of why such a favoring relation is instantiated. In a review, Jonathan Hyman gives an example of the north-of relation by giving a definition that X is north of Y, if and only if the distance between X and the North Pole is less than the distance between Y and the North Pole.[85] The spatiality of the north-of relation is defined and, therefore, explained by the distance quantification of X and Y to the North Pole. This means that a certain spatiality contributes to the explanation of the (spatial) north-of relation. Nevertheless, the concept of spatiality involved in the north-of relation is not "obliterated." Likewise, the normativity of a favoring relation would not be "obliterated" by the normative facts that contribute to the explanation. This means that the because connector in (B_{pr}) that is supposed to capture the favoring relation can be read as explanatory, and in such a reading, the normativity of this favoring relation can still be maintained.

In the above sections, we considered that the because-constraint illuminates how we account for the explanations of particular moral facts, moral beliefs, and moral actions. Particular moral because-statements are used to explicate how such a requirement works regarding the moral facts, beliefs, and actions. Our aim was to show that plausible explanations of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions are available, without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations or general moral facts. This claim, however, does not imply that there is no general moral because statements that can be generated from such particular statements. A general rationale for such a claim has not been presented. In the next section, we will consider the leading thought behind moral particularism, namely, holism about reasons. We will argue that given the truth of holism about reasons, there can be no substantive true moral generalizations derived from particular moral because-statements. The argument from holism about the reasons supports our hypothesis that we can have sufficient explanations (*ipso facto*, sufficient understanding) of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations and general moral facts.

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84 On another occasion, Dancy writes: "We get an explanation when we have a 'because', and the notion of a 'because' is not normative. 'Because's simply explain, and what explains a normative fact need not itself be normative, nor need the relation of explanation be normative." (Jonathan Dancy (2015). 'Reasons for Broome'. In: Iwao Hirose and Andrew Reisner. *Weighing and Reasons. Themes from the Philosophy of John Broome*. Ed. by Iwao Hirose and Andrew Reisner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 178.)

85 J. Hyman (2019). 'Review of the book Practical Shape: A Theory of Practical Reasoning by Jonathan Dancy'. Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews. URL: https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/practical-shape-a-theoryof-practical-reasoning/ (visited on 28/08/2022).

6.5 Holism about Reasons

Holism about reasons is a general theory or even a doctrine about how reasons function, including reasons for acting and believing as well as moral reasons. The proponents of moral particularism claim that the truth of holism supports the truth of the moral particularists' claim. Margaret Little maintains that with the doctrine of holism about reasons, particularists may argue for their claim, not only by producing counterexamples to any moral generalizations but by providing a positive argument. She writes, "if reason-giving considerations function holistically in the moral realm, [then] we simply shouldn't expect to find rules that mark out in nonmoral terms, the sufficiency conditions for applying moral concepts."[86] Nonetheless, while moral particularists see holism about reasons as a philosophical weapon, their opponents, moral generalists, develop a counter-argumentative strategy: they not only believe that there is no plausible argument that leads naturally and without difficulty from the doctrine of holism about reasons to the moral particularists' claim, but they even claim that holism about reasons supports the moral generalists' claim. At this juncture, we need to be clear about what the doctrine of holism about reasons is. To clarify this doctrine, we may begin with the canonical statements proposed by Jonathan Dancy. However, his statements can be understood in two ways: weak and strong. After clarifying the doctrine, we may ask whether this would imply that moral generalism or particularism is true.

6.5.1 Context-Dependency of Reasons

Holism about reasons is a doctrine that seeks to articulate our basic intuition that reasons are context-dependent: whether certain considerations, perhaps the majority of them, function as reasons, depends on the context in which they are instantiated. In a certain context, a certain consideration or feature, like pleasure, may be a reason for doing the action, for instance, seeing a film. In a different context, such a feature would be a reason not to or against performing the action, as in the case of torturing humans for pleasure. The opposing view to holism is atomism, according to which a feature that functions as a reason in one instance continues to function as a reason in other cases where the feature is present. It may just be overridden by other weightier reasons. Jonathan Dancy provides the canonical statements of holism and atomism about reasons:

Holism in the theory of reasons: a feature that is a reason in one case may be no reason at all, or an opposite reason, in another.
Atomism in the theory of reasons: a feature that is a reason in one case must remain a reason, and retain the same polarity, in any other.[87]

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86 Margaret Olivia Little (2000). 'Moral Generalities Revisited'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 284.

87 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 73–74. See also Dancy, 'The Particularist's Progress', p. 130 and Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 60.

However, those who are not persuaded by our above example of pleasure might think that the second description that has been given is mistaken. One may argue that, in that case, the proper description of the feature or consideration involved is not pleasure, but sadistic pleasure. Given such a description, one may think that pleasure retains its status as a reason for doing a certain action, such as seeing a film, reading a book, traveling, etc., and sadistic pleasure retains its status as a reason for not doing or against doing the action. Such a thought might then inspire one to subscribe to atomism. In contrast, the holists would insist that such a description is incorrect. They would say that, in cases such as seeing a film, reading a book, or traveling, the consideration involved is nonsadistic pleasure, whereas in cases of torturing a human being, it is sadistic pleasure. Holism about reasons aims at providing a general picture of reasons. In lieu of always providing a specification for a particular consideration, such as nonsadistic or sadistic, holism about reasons suggests that the feature of pleasure functions as a reason when instantiated in viewing a film, reading a book, or traveling, but in other contexts, the same consideration may not be a reason at all.

In the light of holism about reasons, we may then ask: How does a certain feature or consideration function as a reason? To answer this question, we may consider the possible roles of features that are involved in a certain situation. First, we must remember that we believe that reasons are facts, i.e., obtaining states of affairs. However, this does not mean that moral particularism would not be compatible with the view that reasons are true propositions. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the previous section (6.4), we think that presupposing that reasons are facts would be less problematic than otherwise. Second, given the truth of holism, we must distinguish between two types of considerations that may make a candidate reason fail to function as a reason. The first kind is the overriders. McKeever and Ridge explain that "A candidate reason is overridden, when countervailing reasons are weightier and should carry the day."[88] For instance, suppose you think that it is a fact that watching a film would be pleasant, but at the same time, you need to finish your paper. The latter fact would override the former, since the fact that you need to finish your paper is "weightier" than the fact that watching a film would be pleasant. Overriders are, however, not specific to holism about reasons. They are usually not discussed in the moral particularism–generalism debate. What is more specific to holism about reasons is that a second kind of consideration may play a role in the same context, such that certain candidate reasons fail to function as reasons. These are what are called "defeaters." The idea would be as follows: A certain consideration would function as a reason only if there are no defeaters involved. For example, pleasure may function as a reason for doing the action in a specific context, but the presence of the feature of being sadistic renders pleasure ineffective as a reason. Were the feature of being sadistic absent, pleasure would function as a reason for doing the action. The

[88] Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge (2006). *Principled Ethics. Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 28.

opposite of defeaters is enablers. Holism about reasons suggests that a certain consideration can function as a reason not only if the defeaters were absent, but also if there are enablers, facts that make the considerations may function as reasons. For instance, the fact that I made a promise to *p* might be a reason for me to *p*. However, if my promise was made under duress, the fact that I made a promise to *p* would not function as a reason. The fact that my promise was not made under duress is therefore an enabler. Furthermore, Dancy and other philosophers suggest that there are two further kinds of considerations: intensifiers and attenuators (or diminishers). These are the facts that serve to increase or decrease the normative force of a certain consideration as reason. Thus, according to holism about reasons, in a certain situation there can be at least five determinants: the reason, enablers, defeaters, intensifiers, and attenuators.

A concrete example of how these roles are played might be more illuminating. The classical example was given by Dancy as follows:[89]

1. I promised to do it.
2. My promise was not given under duress.
3. I am able to do it.
4. There is no greater reason not to do it.
5. So: I do it.

5 is supposed to represent an action. Based on holism about reasons, 1 is the reason. It is the consideration for which I do it. Sometimes, 1 is called a favorer. This is due to the favoring relation it has with the action, 5. Such an issue has been discussed in the previous section. 2 and 3 are both enablers. Whereas 2 is a specific or local enabler, 3 is a global enabler. The difference between local and global enablers is important and has been discussed in the previous section (see Section 5.2.2). An enabler is global if it is necessarily required by the concept of a reason for acting. Local enablers are facts that are specifically required for certain kinds of reasons. 4 is quite difficult to categorize. 4 is not the reason or favorer, since the action would not be done for the reason, 4. 4 seems to be an enabler, but it does not enable 1 to favor 5. Instead, it enables the moving of passages from 1 to 5.[90] Thus, in this example, there is one reason (favorer) and three enablers, each of which has a different role.

The example of an intensifier and attenuator would be as follows.[91] Consider the above example of Andy's having a great difficulty and his need for help. Suppose I come to the response that I will help Andy. The reason I help him is the fact that he has a great difficulty and needs help. Suppose, now, that I am the only person around him who could help. Such a fact intensifies the reason why I help him. This is an intensifier. Suppose, however, that it was Andy's fault, and he got himself into this situation by insulting someone else. There would still be

89 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 38.
90 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 40.
91 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 41–42.

some reason to help him, and I would probably still help him, but now, such a fact would make the weight of that reason decrease. This is an attenuator.

According to moral particularists, holism about reasons would imply the particularists' claim that there can be no true and nontrivial moral generalizations. Since reasons are always context-dependent, in that their function as reasons depends on the presence or absence of other features, there would be no reason that can function as a reason independently in such a way that whenever such reasons are instantiated, they will play the same role or retain their moral polarity, either as reasons for or against. This means that for all successful considerations (where their enablers are sufficiently present and/or their defeaters are absent), there will always be counterexamples to the effect that the same considerations would fail to function as reasons or fail to maintain their contribution. As the example of pleasure has shown, in some cases of watching a film, the fact that watching a film would be pleasant would be successful enough to function as a reason for doing the action; in other cases, it will fail to function as a reason for doing the action (perhaps when its enabler is absent) or it will not be a reason at all, for instance in the case of sadism, where a defeater is present. Moral particularists believe that, given the truth of holism, the moral generalists' claim that there are true and nontrivial moral generalizations is false.

6.5.2 From Holism to Moral Generalism

Responding to the moral particularists' claim that holism about reasons supports moral particularism, some generalists maintain that "Holism is compatible with the generalist view that morality can and should be codified."[92] There are two distinct claims here: first, holism about reasons holds such that reasons are context-dependent, and second, the context-dependent role of reasons is codifiable in moral generalizations. Since these moral generalists and particularists seem to share the truth of holism about reasons, we only need to discuss the second claim and ask whether this holism concedes that there are nontrivial or substantive true moral generalizations.

McKeever and Ridge, the generalists who proposed such a view, consider a utilitarian style of moral reasoning as follows:[93]

(U) The fact that an action would promote pleasure is a reason to perform the action, if and only if, the pleasure is nonsadistic. The fact that an action would promote pain is a reason not to perform the action. An action is morally right, just in case, it promotes, at least, as great a balance of reason-giving pleasures over pain, as any of the available alternatives; otherwise, it is wrong.[94]

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92 McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, p. 28.

93 They call (U) a "theory." However, we think that it is more appropriate to call it a piece of moral reasoning with a utilitarian style.

94 McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, p. 29.

According to them, (U) is a kind of codification. It comprehensively tells us when an action that would promote pleasure is right and when it is wrong. It, however, presupposes holism about reasons, i.e., whether the fact that an action would promote pleasure is a reason for doing the action depends on the context of whether the pleasure is sadistic.

However, what is implicitly maintained in (U) is that the status of the fact of promoting pleasure as such is not context-sensitive. The additional clause of the first sentence "if and only if, the pleasure is nonsadistic" specifies that in such a context, the fact of promoting pleasure would lose its status. The same is true for the fact of pain. The second sentence does not specify that the fact about pain would be context-sensitive. This seems to nourish worries about whether such a codification really presupposes holism about reasons.

McKeever and Ridge are aware of such a criticism. However, they maintain that holism about reasons does not suggest the stronger claim that the status of a certain consideration as a reason *must* be context-dependent. It only suggests that such a status *can* be context-dependent. Moreover, they also argue that even moral particularists would admit that some considerations have a default or invariant contribution, e.g., pain has an invariable contribution as a reason against performing the action. However, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, although the moral particularists may admit that some reasons may have a default character of how they would contribute as reasons, there could not be true and nontrivial moral generalizations about them (see our discussion in the previous chapter, Section 5.3). Therefore, the recourse to the notion of the default character of certain reasons would not imply the existence of true and nontrivial moral generalizations.

In response to the possibility of a stronger sense of holism about reasons, McKeever and Ridge argue that we can modify (U) so that the status of every consideration as a reason is context-dependent. The modification of (U) is as follows:

(U*) The fact that an action would promote pleasure is a reason to perform the action, if and only if, the pleasure is nonsadistic. The fact that an action would promote pain is a reason not to perform the action, if and only if, the person who will experience the pain has not autonomously consented to experiencing it. An action is morally right if it promotes at least as great a balance of reason-giving pleasure over reason-giving pain as any of the available alternatives; otherwise, it is wrong.[95]

As one can see, there are, again, two features being considered: the facts of promoting pleasure and promoting pain. (U*) is also a codification, and the authors claim that the status of every feature as reasons is always context-sensitive.

[95] McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, p. 31.

These two codifications are not yet explicit forms of moral generalizations, since they are not universally quantified. Nevertheless, according to McKeever and Ridge, they point in the right direction. The authors further argue that the possibility of moral knowledge implies that there are discoverable true moral generalizations.[96] They argue that moral philosophy would be an endeavor to articulate such principles. McKeever and Ridge propose a kind of moral principle or generalization that presupposes holism about reasons. Such generalizations are called "hedged principles" and have the following form:

(K) For all actions x: if (a) x is an instance of Φ-ing, and (b) no other feature of the situation explains why this fact is not a moral reason not to perform x and (c) any reasons to do x are collectively outweighed by the fact that x is an instance of Φ-ing, then x is wrong in virtue of being an instance of Φ-ing.[97]

The idea of (K) can be elaborated as follows. Suppose I know that an action, *p*, is wrong because it is cruel. If I know that *p* is wrong because it is cruel, then I must be committed to the principle that cruelty is a reason for not doing the action. Nevertheless, given the clauses (b) and (c), such a principle is thought of as being compatible with holism about reasons. Clause (b) states that there must be no other features that make the fact of cruelty ineffective as a reason to refrain from performing the action (This means that if such a fact fails to function as a reason not to perform the action, then there must be some other feature(s) that explain(s) this failing). Clause (c) requires that there must be no weightier reasons that defeat the fact about cruelty itself. If the fact about cruelty would favor doing the action, there must be some explanation for it as well. McKeever and Ridge then conclude that (K) is a true moral generalization, but it is compatible with holism about reasons.

This argument is, however, not convincing for two reasons. First, it seems that (K) is an analytic principle, and therefore, trivial. In a review, Dancy thinks that the following claim is analogous to (K):

(F) Any moral claim to the effect that a particular action is wrong *because* of its unfairness would commit the claimant to further claims such as that:

i. the act is unfair,

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96 This view has been discussed in Section 4.1.3.2 ff. of this book, wherein the ideas of Jackson et al. were considered. (See also Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit and Michael Smith (2000). 'Ethical Particularism and Patterns'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79–99.)

97 This form is extracted from their principle concerning an action x as an instance of killing a rational agent. See McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, p. 118. Such an extraction is also considered in Jonathan Dancy (2007). 'Review of the book *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal* by Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge'. In: *Mind* 116.462, p. 463.

ii. its unfairness is a reason not to do it,[98]
iii. its unfairness defeats any reasons that favor doing it.[99]

(F) contains a because-statement, and we can see it as an analytic truth concerning the feature of unfairness: the combination of i to iii would be analytically equivalent to any claims about the unfair wrong actions. Claims i to iii (where ii is read as "its unfairness is a reason not to do it, any potential disablers being themselves disabled") are, however, analogous to (K)'s clauses. Nevertheless, (F) is not a form of principle or generalization, i.e., codification. This is surely the difference between (K) and (F). This difference set aside, the upshot of introducing the example (F) is that one can satisfy the requirements of (K) without committing oneself to any moral generalizations.

We may nevertheless formulate a principle from (F), that is, by quantifying it with a universal quantifier. A principle of the wrongness of actions in virtue of unfairness would have the following form:

(F*) For all actions x: if (a) x is unfair, and (b) that unfairness is a reason not to do x (since nothing explains why it is not, i.e., all potential disablers being disabled) (c) any reasons to do x are collectively outweighed by the fact that it is unfair, then x is wrong because it is unfair.[100]

Surely (F*) has a form of a principle. However, since (F) is an analytic truth, every unfair action that is wrong satisfies (F*). Moreover, (F*) would also be true of any similar considerations. If one replaces the predicate "unfair" with other predicates, (F*) would still hold. In Dancy's analysis, this holds simply because (F*) is an explication of a conceptual truth about reasons, given the truth of holism about reasons: "if something is a reason and stronger than other reasons it will win the day."[101] According to him, (F*) tells nothing more than that.

The second reason why McKeever and Ridge's argument is not convincing is regarding the principle of reasons. (K) is not a principle of reasons, but instead, a principle of wrongness, since it does not specify when a certain consideration functions as a reason and when it does not. McKeever and Ridge give this example: the fact that an action would be pleasant might be a reason to perform the action, all else being equal. They then propose the following principle:

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98 This clause should be read in a more complex way, like 'its unfairness is a reason not to do it, any potential disablers being themselves disabled'.

99 Dancy, 'Review of the book *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal* by Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge', pp. 464–465.

100 Dancy, 'Review of the book *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal* by Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge', pp. 465–466.

101 Dancy, 'Review of the book *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal* by Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge', p. 466.

(P) For all actions (x) and all facts (F): If F is a fact to the effect that x would be pleasant and no other feature of the situation explains why F is not a reason to x, then F is a reason to x.[102]

McKeever and Ridge argue that (P) is compatible with the holism about reasons, given the "hedging" clause that "no other feature of the situation explains why F is not a reason to x." If, for example, such a situation also instantiates the sadistic feature, this would explain why F is not a reason to x. If, in such a situation, there is no other feature that explains why F is not a reason to x, then F is a reason to x. Whether the fact about pleasure would be a reason depends on the context in which such a fact is instantiated.

According to Dancy's analysis, however, if holism about reasons (either in its weak or strong sense) entails (P), it would also entail another principle of reason regarding the same consideration:

(P*) For all actions (x) and all facts (F): If F is a fact to the effect that x would be pleasant and no other feature of the situation explains why F is not a reason to x, then F is a reason *not* to x.[103]

The doctrine of holism about reasons tells us that a feature, such as the fact about pleasure, that is a reason for doing the action may be no reason at all, or an opposite reason, in another. If the holism about reasons holds, then both (P) and (P*) would also hold. (P*) is not to be used often and perhaps might cause a certain confusion. To understand the plausibility of (P*), we need to give up any presumption that a certain fact, for instance, a fact about pleasure, has a certain standard polarity, either as being a reason for or against. This thought is possible, given the plausible assumption that the truth of the doctrine of holism about reasons might entail both (P) and (P*). The possibility of this doubling-contradictory principle of reasons is surely worrying.

To summarize: the moral generalists' claim that holism about reasons is compatible with their claim that there are (true and) nontrivial moral generalizations is false. There are at least two reasons for that: first, any moral generalizations that are holistic would be trivial, and second, their principle about reasons would entail the doubling principles that are contradictory. An alternative for moral generalists would be to reject the doctrine of holism about reasons, maintaining that reasons behave atomistically. This means that they believe that a feature, such as the fact about pleasure, that is a reason in one case must remain a reason, with the same polarity, in any other. However, atomism about pleasure would be at odds with the cases of sadistic and nonsadistic pleasure. How atomists would respond to such an oddity, however, cannot be discussed in this book. What we can plausibly maintain is that the moral generalists' claim about the existence of

[102] McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, p. 120.

[103] Dancy, 'Review of the book *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal* by Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge', p. 465.

true and nontrivial moral generalizations is, as far as our argument goes, incompatible with the doctrine of holism about reasons.

6.5.3 From Holism to Moral Particularism

Our aim in this chapter is to defend the hypothesis that there are sufficient explanations (*ipso facto*, sufficient understanding) of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations and general moral facts. We want to support this claim with an argument from holism about reasons. We think that, given the truth of holism about reasons, a sufficient understanding of the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions does not need any moral generalizations or general moral facts. In short, we will claim that holism about reasons implies moral particularism.

Such a claim, however, would be difficult to defend, if one reads it as a direct inference from holism about reasons to moral particularism. We may mention two reasons for this difficulty. As we have seen in the previous section, the first difficulty stems from the possibility for moral generalists to accept the truth of holism about reasons. Although we have argued that the strong moral generalists' claim that there are true and non-trivial moral generalizations cannot be true, a weaker claim that there are moral generalizations which are holistic in nature might still be true. Generalists might maintain that such holistic moral generalizations are specified, hedged, and analytical (see Section 6.4 above). Moral particularists must grant such a generalists' claim.

The second difficulty stems from the different kinds of the relations that are revealed by the holism about reasons and moral particularism.[104] Holism about reasons is a thesis concerning the relation between reasons or favorers and responses to the considerations, either believing or acting in the light of those considerations, taken as a whole. Moral particularism, on the other hand, concerns the relation between the considerations and the moral quality of certain actions, i.e., the relations of wrong-making, right-making, ought-making, etc. As we have seen in Section 6.4, these are two different relations. The favoring relations are normative and the ought-, right-, or wrong-making relations are metaphysical (due to the resultance relation).

Nevertheless, it seems plausible to think that there could be some continuity from the favoring relations to the ought-, right-, or wrong-making relations. We might suggest that, presumably, if the reasons for action or belief are holistic, then the reasons why an action is right, wrong, or obligatory are also holistic. If holism about reasons for action would mean that a feature that is a reason for doing the action in one context might be a reason for not doing it or no reason at all in other contexts, then presumably, holism about right-, wrong-, or obligatory-making would mean that a feature that in one context makes an action right, wrong, or obligatory would not be a reason that makes an action right, wrong,

104 Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 78–81.

or obligatory in other contexts. Such a thought might seem promising. Nevertheless, it would beg the question: How can we show that holism about "making relations" is derived from holism about reasons? Perhaps the best approach to demonstrate this relationship is by providing examples, in which case, considerations that favor a person performing a particular action would also be the considerations that make this action right or obligatory. However, the worry connected with such a move is that not all favoring reasons would be right- or ought-making features. In general, it seems that by showing such examples, we would not find a theoretically interesting relation between the holism about reasons and holism about right-, wrong-, or ought-making relations.

Given the abovementioned difficulties, Dancy argues that "the argument (if there is one at all) from holism to particularism is at best indirect," that is, "given the holism of reasons, it would be a sort of cosmic accident if it were to turn out that morality could be captured in a set of holistic contributory principles [...] because, given the holism of reasons, there is no discernible need for complete reasons to be like this. If our (or any other) morality turned out to be that way [i.e., being principled], there could be no possible explanation of that fact. It would be pure serendipity."[105] As we have mentioned, according to Dancy, moral particularism is not a radical elimination thesis that, given the truth of the holism about reasons, there are no true moral generalizations at all. His version of moral particularism is that our morality is unprincipled, in the sense that moral generalizations are not needed in moral thought and judgments. Thus, he seems to think that, given the truth of the holism about reasons, there is no need for moral principles. If, in contrast, the holism about reasons is false and atomism is true, then moral principles are required. However, given the truth of the holism about reasons on the one hand and the possibility of the existence of moral generalizations on the other, Dancy thinks that the existence of such generalizations is just philosophically serendipitous. Call this claim the *cosmic accident thesis*.

In our opinion, however, the cosmic accident thesis is problematic. It makes at least two assumptions: First, atomism entails the need for moral principles. In other words, the moral generalizations hitherto proposed by moral philosophers such as Kant or Bentham assume atomism, implying that for these philosophers, there was a need to discover moral principles. Such an assumption seems to be true. The second assumption of the cosmic accident thesis would be that the need for moral principles stems only from atomism about reasons. Given the possibility of the existence of moral generalizations as set out in the previous section, such an assumption, however, seems to be false. The cosmic accident thesis, therefore, should be rejected.

What, then, can we say about the doctrine of holism about reasons to support our hypothesis that particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions are explicable (and so understandable) without maintaining the existence and role of moral

[105] Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 82.

generalizations and general moral facts? We have argued that based on the three proposed accounts of explanations of the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions, where particular because-statements play a role as the representations of such explanations, our main claim can be upheld as plausible independently of the truth of the holism about reasons. Nevertheless, as Dancy has argued, the truth of the holism about reasons implies that there is no need for moral generalizations. We think that there is a close connection between our claim and Dancy's. We might say that given the truth of the holism about reasons and truth of our claim, there is indeed no need for moral generalizations. Call this the *consolidated thesis*. Based on this thesis, moral thinking, both practical and theoretical, works pretty well without any provision of moral generalizations or maintaining the existence of general moral facts. We think, however, that this thesis does not imply that there are no true moral generalizations or that the existence of moral generalizations is just serendipitous. We may concede that moral generalizations are possible, but we believe they are unnecessary for moral thinking.

6.6 Summary and Remarks

The purpose of this chapter is to defend the hypothesis that we can provide a sufficient account of the understanding of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions without moral generalizations or the existence of general moral facts, and to answer four questions regarding the explanations of these subject matters. To this end, we begin with a consideration of our intuition that when we judge that a certain object has a certain moral property, we believe that there must be some reason(s) why such an object has its moral property. Such a requirement of moral thought (and practice) is called the because-constraint. We maintain that this requirement can best be formulated using the because-statements. The debate between moral particularism and generalism is whether there is a need for moral generalizations in order to explain and, therefore, understand the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions. We claim that there is no such need. To answer the questions regarding the explanations of the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions posed by the opponent of moral particularism, we provide three accounts of explanations regarding these subject matters. Furthermore, based on our account of understanding, we contend that these explanations lead us to the understanding of these matters. To do this, we utilize particular moral because-statements as the vehicle of understanding. After describing the important characteristics of moral because-statements in the first section, we argue in the second section that they express the metaphysical explanatory relation between the moral property of a particular action and the nonmoral properties that make this action have the moral property it does. These two properties stand in a resultance relation. In virtue of the explanatory character of the resultance relation, we maintained that the particular moral facts are sufficiently understandable without there being any moral generalizations or general moral facts. In the third section, we argue that the particular moral belief-formations can be explained

by the existence of particular moral facts by the way of experiencing these facts. However, such an experience should be endowed by conceptual contents. Keeping in mind that moral beliefs that are generated through such an experience are particular beliefs, we suggest that these beliefs can be justified in a particularist manner. The traditional ways of justification, foundationalism, and coherentism seem to be uncongenial to moral particularism. On our view, it is instead narrativism that is plausibly congenial to moral particularism. Dancy's account of the narrative justification, however, leaves its important concepts unexplained. We provide some suggestions to elaborate these concepts so that the account of the narrative justification is clearer. Furthermore, we provide some elaboration on the particularist account of moral knowledge. Such knowledge is contingent, since it is the knowledge of particular moral facts, but it is a priori due to the a priori knowledge about the relation between the moral and nonmoral properties.

In the fourth section, we present an account of the explanation of moral actions where neither moral generalizations nor general moral facts play a role. Based on Dancy's account of practical reasoning, we argue that the two components of practical reasoning, i.e., the considerations and appropriate responses (appropriate actions), stand in a favoring relation. Practical reasoning is noninferential in the sense that an agent responds to certain considerations by acting in a way favored by these considerations. The term "consideration" is here understood as the obtaining states of affairs. Deliberation, on this view, is an attempt to reveal the relationship between the considerations involved in a given situation and the appropriate responses to those considerations. It should be noted that the favoring relation involved in practical reasoning must be distinguished from the ought-making relation. In contrast to favoring, which is normative in the sense that the considerations that are the reasons stand in a normative relation to the response(s) made, ought-making is metaphysical due to the resultance relation (although the result of such a relation is a normative fact).

The last section of this chapter is intended to strengthen our claim that the hypothesis holds. We proposed the *consolidated thesis*, i.e., given the truth of the holism about reasons and the truth of our claim, there is no need for moral generalizations in order to understand the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions. Holism about reasons says that a feature that makes a certain contribution as a reason, in a certain context, might make different contributions, or would not play a role as a reason in other contexts. We think that holism about reasons supports moral particularism. Furthermore, on the consolidated thesis, moral thinking, both practical and theoretical, can work pretty well without any provision of the moral generalizations.

7 A PARTICULARIST ACCOUNT OF MORAL UPBRINGING

In the previous chapters, we have laid out the arguments for moral particularism. Regardless of the plausibility of its claims, opponents of moral particularism are of the view that it fails to provide an adequate account of moral education.[1] These opponents seem to think that moral education necessarily presupposes the existence of moral generalizations. For them, it seems that moral education is nothing but the inculcation of moral generalizations, principles, or standards. They might argue that since moral particularists think that some features of certain situations may change their moral valences, and therefore there are no true moral generalizations, there is no way to inform moral novices in advance which features are wrong-, right-, good-, or bad-making. In contrast, given the available moral generalizations, these opponents might argue that it is possible to inform moral novices what features would be wrong-, right-, good-, or bad-making when they are instantiated. We will argue, however, that such a criticism is based on a misunderstanding about the tenets of moral particularism and how moral education should be. The moral particularists' claim that moral generalizations are not necessary for moral thinking does not imply that there would be no plausible account of moral education. We think that moral education does not aim to develop the agents' consistency in obeying certain moral principles, standards, or generalizations, but instead it aims at cultivating one's moral sensitivity so that those agents may recognize features that morally matter and respond to them appropriately case by case. From the moral particularists' perspective, this goal is consistent with moral particularism.[2]

One of the reasons why people accuse moral particularists of failing to provide an adequate account of moral education, in our opinion, is that literature on moral particularism is dominated by metaethical reflection, and literature on the account of moral education that is consistent with moral particularism is simply scarce. This chapter will try to contribute to the reflection on moral education from the standpoint of, and therefore consistent with, moral particularism.

We believe that, as a philosophical concern, the term "moral education" should be understood broadly. In this regard, the term "moral upbringing" would

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1 See, for instance, Brad Hooker (2000). 'Moral Particularism: Wrong and Bad'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 15.

2 In this chapter, we consider the terms "sensitivity" and "sensibility" as synonymous and will use them interchangeably.

be better to express the idea. For us, moral upbringing should be understood as encompassing all the efforts toward developing moral competence that are far broader than any formal schooling. Our concern about moral upbringing regards the process of the acquisition of all aspects of moral competence. Nevertheless, as we will see, our general account of moral upbringing would be applicable to the context of formal schooling as well.

Before we set forth the discussion, we may articulate some common grounds between moral particularists and generalists based on the discussion in previous chapters. First, most of the particularists and generalists are realists about moral facts, although their realism may come in different forms. A commitment to realism about moral facts, properties, or requirements would open the possibility of saying that moral knowledge, if such a kind of knowledge exists, would be knowledge about moral facts. Second, most of them are optimistic about the possibility of moral knowledge. This surely provides a good foundation for an account of moral upbringing that involves the cognitive aspect. Third, we might presuppose that both moral particularists and generalists agree that moral upbringing is necessary and possible. This means that moral knowledge can not only be "transferred," but such a transfer is also necessary.

Given these common grounds, the chapter will be structured as follows: In Section 7.1, we will clarify the abovementioned misunderstanding. On reflection, such a misunderstanding does not only come from the generalists but also from the particularists, in that they accuse moral generalism of endorsing a kind of "rule-fetishism."[3] The clarification of these misunderstandings, however, would be an advantage for moral particularism, since, as we will argue, moral generalizations are not a necessary prerequisite for the acquirement of moral competence; it is instead the moral sensitivity to recognize and respond appropriately to the moral reasons from case to case. Given this result, the traditional Aristotelian view of *phronesis*, i.e., practical wisdom, will be helpful to understand the notion of moral competence. In Section 7.2, we will lay out the particularist's claim that their view is congenial with Aristotle's account of *phronesis*. A practically wise person has a certain moral sensitivity toward moral reasons and the ability to respond to them appropriately from case to case. Unfortunately, Jonathan Dancy, who endorses such a view, does not expose his thoughts on what *phronesis* is or how to achieve such a state. Thus, in Section 7.3, we will discuss McDowell's comprehensive account of *phronesis* and moral sensitivity. In his view, McDowell explicitly mentions the importance of moral upbringing, utilizing the German word *Bildung*, in initiating human beings into the moral realm, a realm of rational evaluation. In our opinion, however, Dancy's and McDowell's accounts of *phronesis*, where the acquirement of moral sensitivity is its prerequisite, are too intellectualistic. We think that the role of the nonintellectual facets,

[3] See Andrew Gleeson (2007). 'Moral Particularism Reconfigured'. In: *Philosophical Investigations* 30.4, pp. 363– 380.

in particular emotion, in forming moral competence is indubitable. In Section 7.4, therefore, we will argue for the interdependent roles of reason and emotion. Such an account is corroborated by the recent findings in neuroscience and psychology. Finally, in Section 7.5, we will propose that the process of acquirement of moral competence would best work when it is imaginative and permeates the deliveries of the humanities and human practices. The practice of "immersion," which is popular in the domain of second-language education, would be appropriate to adopt in the domain of moral education.

7.1 Some Misunderstandings

As we have introduced, some opponents of moral particularism, such as Brad Hooker, assert that there will be no plausible account of moral education consistent with moral particularism. In his article, he draws such a conclusion from the assumption that morality is a kind of legislation with a certain system of rules. Being considered a kind of law, for Hooker, there must be a certain shared commitment to morality, which "provide[s] people with some assurance that others won't attack them, rob from them, break promises to them, or lie to them."[4] Given such an assumption, he thinks that one cannot trust moral particularists because "[i]n so far as they reject general moral principles, particularists leave us unable to form confident expectations about what they will do."[5] He gives the following example:[6] Suppose you are considering making an agreement with a committed particularist. Your only knowledge about her is that she is a committed particularist, and for you, this means that she thinks that the fact that she makes a deal would be a reason in one context and not a reason in another. Hooker asks: "If that is all what you know about her and there is no other binding between you and her (such as legal or cultural bindings) to the effect that she would be punished if she breaks that deal, would you trust her enough to make a deal with her?" Hooker says that given such a particularist presupposition, most probably you will not. More generally, he thinks that, given such a presupposition, the society would not be safe enough. He contends that you would be better off making a deal with a generalist who subscribes to general principles. From such a person, you may expect that she will accord her actions on those principles. Thus, a society of people who presuppose moral generalizations is far better off. Hooker concludes that one of morality's functions is to support stable expectations about how people would behave, and therefore, moral particularism is bad. Based on such a portrayal, Hooker thinks that the generalists' way of moral education will therefore "increase the probability that people will conform with certain mutually beneficial practices."[7]

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4 Hooker, 'Moral Particularism: Wrong and Bad', p. 16.
5 Hooker, 'Moral Particularism: Wrong and Bad', p. 22.
6 Hooker, 'Moral Particularism: Wrong and Bad', pp. 17–19.
7 Hooker, 'Moral Particularism: Wrong and Bad', p. 22.

However, we think that Hooker's claim is based on his misguided account of moral particularism and a committed moral particularist. He is right in saying that a moral particularist would think that a certain feature, such as the fact of making a promise, would be a reason to act in one context and not a reason in another. However, this does not imply that a person who holds such a view is morally unreliable. Moral particularists believe that morally adept persons are instead those who get things right, case by case, in the sense that they can recognize morally relevant features of the situations and respond to them appropriately. When you make a deal with such a person, you can be sure that when the moral situation favors keeping the promise, such persons would be trustworthy to keep it. To be sure, we hope that the situation will favor one to keep the promise made. What is more important is that you can trust people who are committed to moral particularism because they will get things right on the right occasions.[8]

Furthermore, moral particularists need not share Hooker's apparent assumption that morality is a social institution to support our stable expectation about how people would behave. As we have argued, moral particularists believe that moral qualities and moral requirements are not merely the products of social construction. Moral judgments are not just deliberations about people's expectations about how we would act or think or feel. Given that most particularists are moral realists, we might say that for them, moral judgment is a matter of "attunement to what is right and good."[9] The existence of people's expectations about what one would do is not the precondition for the idea of moral requirements.

A comparable misunderstanding also comes from the particularists' side. Some particularists accuse moral generalism as implying a kind of "rule-fetishism," that is, following the rules blindly to the effect of lacking attention to the particularity of cases. It could certainly be the case that the rules being obeyed are adequate, and by following them, one may come to correct responses, either in doing the right actions or in believing what one ought to believe. Nevertheless, as Andrew Gleeson points out, such a practice of rule following "is a form of bad faith [...] and of (moral) illiteracy."[10] On his criticism, generalism seems to imply that, through adherence to moral rules, "[e]ven if the rule accurately tracks moral properties so that we do the right thing, we will not understand what we are doing: No more than a man trained to enunciate an English sentence, but who speaks no English, understands what he says."[11] This seems also to be the reason why Dancy says that "generalism is the cause of many bad moral decisions [...] [because it] encourages a tendency not to look hard enough at the details of the case before one."[12]

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8 David Bakhurst (2005). 'Particularism and Moral Education'. In: *Philosophical Explorations* 8.3, p. 267.

9 Bakhurst, 'Particularism and Moral Education', p. 267.

10 Gleeson, 'Moral Particularism Reconfigured', p. 365.

11 Gleeson, 'Moral Particularism Reconfigured', p. 370.

12 Jonathan Dancy (1993). *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 64.

However, the abovementioned criticism would not do justice to moral generalism in general. A sensible moral generalist, we might presuppose, would not lack sensibility to the particularity of contexts by rigidly adhering to moral generalizations. Maike Albertzart, for instance, argues that moral principles play a role even to "shape an agent's moral sensibilities."[13] For her, the sensibility to the features of certain contexts is not only essential for good moral judgments, but to develop such a sensibility it is demanded for one to adhere to moral generalizations. She writes, "By adopting a set of moral principles an agent commits herself to live her life in a certain way. She will try to structure her life and world in a way that allows her to jointly satisfy her moral principles [...] By structuring her life and world in a way that allows her to jointly satisfy her moral principles, an agent will improve her moral sensibilities."[14] Thus, according to her, moral principles are not redundant in making good moral judgments, given the fact that such judgments require sensibility to the features of each context. Moral principles, standards, or generalizations support us in making good moral judgments.

The reflection on the misunderstandings between moral generalists and particularists regarding good moral judgments and moral competence reveals one more common ground. Both parties agree that sensibility to the particularity of each context is necessary for good moral judgments. We may presuppose that the generalists would maintain that *merely* adhering to moral generalizations would not be sufficient for good moral judgments. However, as argued by Albertzart, commitment to moral generalizations will help an agent sharpen his or her sensibility. In contrast, particularists argue that such a commitment is not necessary not only because good moral judgments presuppose sensitivity to the particularity of each case but also because, for them, it is by no means possible to construe true and substantial moral generalizations. The claims that the competent moral evaluators should give priority to the particulars as the bases of his or her judgments and that moral competence presupposes the acquirement of relevant sensitivity toward particular facts are the grounds for a particularist account of moral upbringing. We will focus on these ideas in the next sections, where we will often utilize the umbrella term of *phronesis*.

7.2 Dancy on Moral Sensibility and *Phronesis*

Most moral particularists, such as Jonathan Dancy, claim that their ideas have a natural affinity to Aristotle's ethics. In an interview, Dancy claims that in the Aristotelian picture of morality, one will not find that a person of moral excellence (or a *phronimos*) has at his command anything like a list of rules. According to Dancy, a person of *phronesis* is rather one who exercises fine perception and

[13] Maike Albertzart (2014). *Moral Principles*. Bloomsbury Ethics. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 192.

[14] Albertzart, *Moral Principles*, pp. 192–193.

judgment in which moral generalizations do not play a role. Dancy is convinced that Aristotle would be open to the general thrust of particularism.[15]

In his book *Moral Reasons*, he makes a similar remark and claims that a person who has the ability of moral perception and judgment does not have a generalist picture of morality in her mind. Furthermore, he also contends that for the development of such abilities, moral education plays a significant role. He writes:

> *a [virtuous] person is conceived of as someone who has been perfectly trained, and thereby equipped with a full range of sensitivities to the sorts of considerations that can matter morally. These sensitivities have no content of their own. They are not independent desires which training implants in us, but simply the ability to recognize whatever morally relevant features we come across for what they are, case by case. This virtuous person is not conceived of as someone equipped with a full list of moral principles and an ability correctly to subsume each new case under the right one. There is nothing that one brings to the new situation other than a contentless ability to discern what matters where it matters, an ability whose presence in us is explained by our having undergone a successful moral education.*[16]

Furthermore, he claims that

> *Anyone who has read Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics will discern the Aristotelian style of this account of virtue, both in its refusal to see moral judgement as the subsumption of a new case under a previously formulated moral principle and in its stress on the role of moral education.*[17]

In these quotations, Dancy puts forward several keywords to his ideas such as "full range of sensitivities," "contentless ability," "being virtuous," and "successful moral education." According to moral particularism, these keywords circumscribe what it is to be a morally virtuous person. For such a person, moral principles are unnecessary, both during the training, and when the person is "already" virtuous. What is necessary for a virtuous person is, "the sensitivities to the sorts of considerations that can matter morally." The sensitivity to the particular considerations which can morally matter operates when a virtuous person can recognize or perceive morally relevant features he or she comes across and when she or he knows the appropriate response to them.

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15 Andreas Lind and Johan Brännmark (2008). 'Particularism in Question: an Interview with Jonathan Dancy'. In: *Theoria* 74.1, p. 5. However, Terence H. Irwin makes an opposite interpretation and argues that Aristotle would not stand at the side of moral particularists since generalizations are fundamental in his moral view. (Terence H. Irwin (2000). 'Ethics as an Inexact Science: Aristotle's Ambitions for Moral Theory'. In: *Moral Particularism*. Ed. by Brad Hooker and Margaret Olivia Little. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 100–29)

16 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 50.

17 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 50.

The term "contentless ability" is important for Dancy's conception of a virtuous person. By saying that a virtuous person has a contentless ability to make a moral discernment, he seems to mean that such a person has a general sensitivity to discern when a virtue is called for or when a virtuous action would appropriately be performed and when it would not be. A virtuous person is not a person who is always kind, for instance, but knows when he or she should be kind and when kindness would not be appropriate. A closer look at such a conception will be discussed in the next section, in particular, when dealing with McDowell's view of the unity of virtue.

Furthermore, Dancy also argues that the coherence of one's moral view or outlook does not depend on one's acceptance of moral generalizations. Instead, it is the possession of moral sensitivity that guarantees the coherence of one's moral outlook. He writes, "Whatever account we give of the coherence of a moral outlook, our account of the person on whom we can rely on to make sound moral judgments is not very long. Such a person is someone who gets it right case by case [...] As Aristotle held, moral education is the key; for those who are past educating, there is no real remedy."[18]

Based on the above citations, there are two points we can maintain already now. First, Dancy seems to think that a person of practical wisdom is equipped to a certain degree with a certain range of sensitivities. Such a person can recognize which features of a certain situation morally matter (i.e., which features play a role as moral reasons), how they would morally matter, and how they can respond appropriately to those reasons. Second, in order to cultivate such a sensibility, he surely emphasizes the significant role of moral education. However, we think that his concepts of a person of practical wisdom and moral education are still austere or tenuous. It is unclear whether such a moral sensibility is only a cognitive ability or whether it involves the noncognitive aspects as well. Furthermore, given moral particularism, we do not yet know what moral education would look like. Thus, we might say that Dancy's claim seems to be a *tenuous claim of phronesis*, which can be stated as follows:

> **(E_1)** a moral agent *S* possesses practical wisdom to the degree to which *S* has acquired a full range of sensitivities toward moral reasons and responds appropriately to these reasons.

Given that Dancy only argues for such a tenuous claim, we need a more concrete picture of a person of practical wisdom and a clearer account of moral education. For these purposes, we need to turn to McDowell's metaethics, since, although he does not consider himself a particularist, his claims are particularist in nature, and he gives a clearer account of *phronesis* and of the central role of moral upbringing.

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[18] Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, p. 64.

7.3 McDowell on Moral Sensibility and *Phronesis*

As considered, the central component of practical wisdom is the sensibility to recognize moral reasons and to respond to them accordingly. McDowell also believes that moral sensibility is the ability to perceive features of the world from a moral standpoint and thereby generate moral reasons for acting or believing accordingly. In this section, we want to inquire into McDowell's notion of moral sensibility and his thought about the role of moral upbringing. To do this, we will first consider McDowell's metaethical view. The complexity of his view notwithstanding, we can sum up his position in the following three claims:

1. There exists a moral realm in which moral requirements make sense. Moral requirements are genuine constituents of the world, and they can be discovered. The moral realm belongs to the second nature of human beings, and it is not law-governed.
2. Moral properties are anthropocentric in character in the sense that moral requirements can only be perceived "from within" by those who acquire the requisite concepts and sensibilities. Those who acquire such concepts and sensibilities are initiated to the second nature.
3. Moral upbringing (*Bildung*) is the natural way to initiate human beings to the space of reasons. Such an initiation makes it possible for human beings to be transformed from the first to the second nature.

The philosophical background of these claims is his general project of reconciliating the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism, an opposition which has appeared in the Philosophy of Mind, Ethics, and Metaphysics. In a nutshell, his ideas can be explained as follows. In *Mind and World*, McDowell declares that his philosophy would not solve the traditional philosophical problems. He would not construe new claims, but rather follow Wittgenstein's therapeutic program. He writes, "My aim is to propose an account, in a diagnostic spirit, of characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy."[19] Nevertheless, he criticizes several philosophical views and arrives at his own positions. In that book (as well as in other publications), he considers the traditional problem of the connection between thoughts and the world. He argues that there should be a space to plausibly account for the relation between thought or mind and the world. He defends a view called "minimal empiricism."[20] Minimal empiricism is a middle position between traditional empiricism, which is committed to the claim that the external world is the only justification for our thoughts, and subjectivism, which maintains that reality in itself is inaccessible. According to his minimal empiricism, mind and world are not separated from each other. For him, our thoughts may have empirical content, and this means we should take our thoughts to be "answerable

[19] John McDowell (1996). *Mind and World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. xi.

[20] Such a term is used several times in McDowell, *Mind and World*, e.g., pp. xii, xi and 31.

to something outside."[21] This leads to the idea that experience is an independent tribunal between mind and world.

Furthermore, McDowell criticizes Kant's and Descartes's dualistic views about mind and world, which he calls "rampant platonism." This position maintains that "the structure of the space of reasons is *sui generis*."[22] However, such a rampant Platonism "makes our capacity to respond to reasons look like an occult power," and this is unacceptable.[23] As a reaction to such views, McDowell proposes what he calls relaxed naturalism, a position that can account for the possibility of perceptual experience.[24]

Given the presupposition that McDowell seeks a reconciliation between the intuitions about subjectivism and objectivism, we might now elaborate the claims 1 to 3 above. In his conception, there are at least two realities: the space of reasons, and the realm of law. The realm of law is the subject matter of the natural sciences. Its structure is law-governed in a way that the things in that realm are intelligible. Moral requirements are real, genuine parts of reality, but they do not take place in the realm of law. They take place rather in the space of reasons. This space is not law-governed. By saying this, McDowell surely argues for nonnaturalism concerning moral requirements.[25]

If the moral requirements are real but belong to the space of reasons and not to the realm of law, how can we then have access to them? McDowell would surely not say that they are inaccessible as being supernatural properties, since this would be a position he criticizes. However, if they are accessible, and they are not the subject matter of the natural sciences, does it not follow that such access requires a mysterious "intuitional" apparatus?[26] McDowell argues that those who

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21 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 82.

22 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 83.

23 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 83.

24 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 89.

25 His argument for the moral realist non-naturalism is based on his interpretation of Aristotle's ethical conception. McDowell writes, "In Aristotle's conception, the thought that the demands of ethics are real is not a projection from, or construction out of, facts that could be in view independently of the viewer's participation in ethical life and thought, so that they would be available to a sideways-on investigation of how ethical life and thought are related to the natural context in which they take place. The fact that demands bear on us is just, irreducible, itself." (McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 83)

26 McDowell is skeptical of intuitionism. In his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, he states that the intuitionist claim about strong moral realism is "clearly disreputable," (p. 154), "unhelpful," (p. 155), and "unsatisfactory" (p. 159). The intuitionist claim about strong moral realism says that moral values and requirements are "brutely and absolutely there," independently of human recognition and responses. (p. 132-133) According to his analysis, this strong realism would imply that moral knowledge would be a cognition of mind-independent features. He claims that this implication would be at odds with the motivational power of moral judgments. (p. 132) According to McDowell, there are at least two other odd implications of such an intuitionist view: First, it requires us to assume that there are further "mysterious extra features" in our ontology (p. 157); second, it requires us to assume that we have a certain mysterious

see only these possibilities fail to recognize the existence of the second nature. He contends that if we "expand nature beyond what is countenanced in a naturalism of the realm of law,"[27] moral requirements would neither be supernatural (and therefore inaccessible) nor reducible to natural properties. The expanded concept of the natural is called "naturalism of second nature." He writes, "Since ethical character includes dispositions of the practical intellect, part of what happens when a character is formed is that the practical intellect acquires a determinate shape. So practical wisdom is second nature to its possessors."[28]

McDowell develops his own version of moral realism. His argument for this view is based on the analogy between moral properties and secondary qualities. In his polemic against moral error theorists such as J. L. Mackie, McDowell argues that Mackie's argument is misguided, in particular, when he compares moral properties to primary qualities.[29] Instead, McDowell suggests that moral properties are analogous to secondary qualities. Against Mackie's argument, he writes:

> *It will be obvious how these considerations undermine the damaging effect of the primary–secondary model. Shifting to a secondary–quality analogy renders irrelevant any worry about how something that is brutely there could nevertheless stand in an internal relation to some exercise of human sensibility. Values are not brute there – not there independently of our sensibility – any more than colours are.*[30]

The distinction between primary and secondary qualities was made popular by the works of John Locke.[31] McDowell utilizes such an idea to argue that it is wrong to identify secondary qualities as merely illusionary. Color, a property he uses as an example, belongs to the category of secondary qualities. On the one hand, a certain color, such as red, would not be able to reveal itself without there being people who have the ability to experience red through perception.

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faculty of moral intuition to detect these mind-independent moral properties. This surely offers us a bogus moral epistemology (p. 162).

27 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 109.

28 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 84.

29 Mackie is conventionally known as the defender of the error theory, according to which there is no ethical objectivity and our phenomenological experience of values is burdened with an epistemological error, since values do not exist objectively in the sense of primary qualities, and thus, all evaluative sentences are false. (See J. L. Mackie (1990). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Pelican Books, p. 13)

30 John McDowell (1998). *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 146.

31 Locke's distinction is extensively explained in John Locke (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. by Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, Book II. However, according to some interpreters, Locke's distinction between the primary and secondary qualities was taken from Robert Boyle's *The Origin of Forms and Qualities*, which was first published in 1666, 23 years before Locke completed the first volume of his book. For a further investigation, see Martha Brandt Bolton (1976). 'The Origins of Locke's Doctrine of Primary and Secondary Qualities'. In: *The Philosophical Quarterly* 26.105, pp. 305–316.

To a certain degree, therefore, the color red depends on the perceptive ability of beings. On the other hand, the things being red (and not green or blue) do not depend on the arbitrary decisions of the perceivers. Colors are, in this sense, independent of beings who perceive them. According to McDowell, however, experiences of color are not peculiar or erroneous.

By analogy, he argues that experiences of moral properties or values are therefore not peculiar or erroneous. This means that for him, on the one hand, moral properties, virtues, or moral requirements exist independently of the agent who perceives such entities. This is what we mean by claim (1), that the moral realm is real. On the other hand, the above analogy also reveals that moral properties, virtues, or moral requirements stand in a certain dependency on the agent's abilities. This leads us to the second claim that moral properties are anthropocentric.

Given the anthropocentricity claim about moral properties, the question would be: What kind of ability is necessary for an agent to be able to perceive moral requirements? In McDowell's view, the ability to perceive moral requirements consists in one's moral sensitivity. Furthermore, following Aristotle, he thinks of such a sensitivity in terms of virtue. In this regard, he talks both about the particular virtues, such as kindness, temperance, or courage, and about being virtuous in general, i.e., the general ability to discern which behavior is virtuous in particular cases. Nevertheless, he seems to be inclined to say that a virtuous agent possesses not merely particular virtues, such as being kind, temperate, or courageous, but such an agent rather has a general ability to recognize the particular moral reasons and to respond to them appropriately. (Perhaps this is what Dancy calls "contentless ability") He writes that "we use the concepts of the particular virtues to mark similarities and dissimilarities among the manifestations of a single sensitivity, which is what virtue, in general, is: an ability to recognize requirements that situations impose on one's behaviour."[32] Thus, without such a general ability, an agent cannot discern which virtue should be exercised in a certain situation. This view about virtue can be called the unity of virtue thesis: A virtuous agent, viz., a *phronimos*, possesses a single kind of moral sensitivity, that is, the ability to discern when a certain virtue should be exercised.[33]

What is further worth noting is that McDowell's use of the term "sensitivity" or "sensibility" differs from the common use, where sensitivity has something to do with feeling or emotion. He rather appeals to a Socratic notion of virtue, referring to the claim that "knowledge is virtue."[34] In his account of a person being reliably kind, for instance, there seems to be no place for emotion or other noncognitive parts of human nature to play a role. He writes:

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32 McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 53.

33 Mario De Caro, Maria Silvia Vaccarezza and Ariele Niccoli (2018). 'Phronesis as Ethical Expertise: Naturalism of Second Nature and the Unity of Virtue'. In: *Journal of Value Inquiry* 52.3, p. 294.

34 McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 51.

> *A kind person can be relied on to behave kindly when that is what the situation requires. Moreover, his reliably kind behavior is not the outcome of a blind, non-rational habit or instinct [...] A kind person has a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement that situations impose on behavior. The deliverances of a reliable sensitivity are cases of knowledge; and there are idioms according to which the sensitivity itself can appropriately be described as knowledge: a kind person knows what it is like to be confronted with a requirement of kindness.*[35]

Thus, it seems that for McDowell, ethical or moral sensitivity is cognitive in nature. But why does he reject the idea that moral sensitivity has something to do with the noncognitive aspects, such as emotions? Unfortunately, there seems to be no source in his writings to answer this question directly. Nevertheless, an indirect answer might be given by considering his view that the noncognitive aspects of human nature, such as desire, also do not play a role in motivating an agent to perform moral actions.[36] In his argument against Philippa Foot, who argues that moral actions are ancillary to the agent's desires or interests,[37] he claims that the noncognitive parts, such as desires, are not required to motivate one to do a certain action. If a virtuous person (who is morally sensible) does a certain action, then such an action is motivated and therefore explained, not by his or her desires but by his or her reasons, which are cognitive in nature. He writes:

> *A full specification of a reason must make clear how the reason was capable of motivating; it must contain enough to reveal the favourable light in which the agent shows his projected action. We tend to assume that this is effected, quite generally, by the inclusion of a desire [...] However, it seems to be false that the motivating power of all reasons derives from their including desires.*[38]

As one can see, the above quote seems to shed some light on the question of what moral sensitivity is. We think that Dancy would agree with McDowell that such sensitivity is robustly cognitive. In *Moral Reasons*, Dancy also thinks that the noncognitive parts of human nature, such as desires, do not play a role in motivating or explaining one's moral actions. Beliefs themselves are capable of motivating.[39] For Dancy and McDowell, therefore, moral sensitivity seems to involve

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35 McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 51, emphasis added.

36 We are aware that these topics, moral cognition and motivation, are two different things. Nevertheless, we think that McDowell's account of moral motivation is close enough to answer the question of why he thinks that the noncognitive aspects are neglected in his account of moral sensitivity.

37 Philippa Foot (1972). 'Morality as A System of Hypothetical Imperatives'. In: *The Philosophical Review* 81.3, p. 308.

38 McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 79.

39 Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, Ch. 1–3.

only the cognitive aspects. We might call Dancy and McDowell's view of moral sensitivity "pure cognitivism."[40]

The above claims about moral realism (claim 1) and the anthropocentric nature of moral properties (claim 2) shape McDowell's view on the acquirement of moral sensitivity as their basic prerequisite. Furthermore, McDowell argues that the initiation from the state of the first nature to second one would be accomplished by moral upbringing (claim 3). On this claim, he writes:

> *Human beings are intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing, which instills the appropriate shape into their lives. The resulting habits of thought and action are second nature. [...] Second nature could not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism. [...] Moulding ethical character, which includes a specific shape on the practical intellect, is a particular case of a general phenomenon: initiation into conceptual capacities, which include responsiveness to other rational demands besides those of ethics. Such an initiation is a normal part of what it is for a human being to come to maturity, and that is why, although the structure of the space of reasons is alien to the layout of nature conceived as the realm of law, it does not take on the remoteness from the human that rampant platonism envisages. If we generalize the way Aristotle conceives the moulding of ethical character, we arrive at the notion of having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature. I cannot think of a good short English expression for this, but it is what figures in German philosophy as Bildung.*[41]

Two things are worth considering. First, for McDowell, initiation into the space of reasons means an initiation into conceptual capacities. This seems to be coherent with his notion of moral sensitivity, which is cognitive in nature. Second, such an initiation is not an alien process, but it is "a normal part of what it is for a human being to come to maturity." Moral *Bildung* or moral upbringing is then a normal endeavor to develop one's conceptual capacity to be sensible to moral requirements and to respond to such requirements appropriately. *Bildung* is here described as the process of "having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature."[42]

A short note on the term *Bildung* might be appropriate here. For competent German speakers, putting the terms *Bildung* and *moral upbringing* side by side as if they were synonymous would presumably not sound natural and intuitive.[43] In an analysis of the term and concept of *Bildung*, Paola Giacomoni shows that the noun *Bildung*, which etymologically stems from the verb *bilden*, may have two different meanings: First, based on the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of Jacob and

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40 We adopt this term from Dancy's account of moral motivation. See Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 12–14.

41 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 84.

42 McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 84.

43 McDowell does this, for instance, on page 87 of his *Mind and World*.

Wilhelm Grimm, *bilden* refers to "a plastic activity on the sensory level and means giving shape, producing a certain object abiding to the rules which preside over the Art."[44] So understood, *bilden* would be a synonym for *gestalten* and *formieren* or *formen*. Second, the word *bilden* might also mean "the relationship of likeness or imitation between the original image (*Bild* or *Urbild*) and its resembling reproduction (*Abbild*)."[45] So understood, *bilden* is akin to the Latin words *imitatio* and *imago*. Based on this second meaning, so Giacomoni, *bilden* should be understood "well beyond the pure and simple formation of an object and [such an understanding] gives rise to the complex relationship between model and copy, original and reproduction."[46]

Nevertheless, it seems that McDowell's understanding of *Bildung* is quite different from these lexical interpretations. According to some interpreters, McDowell's understanding of *Bildung* is rather influenced by Hegel's usage of such a word, which is usually translated into English plainly as *education*. For instance, in the *Philosophical Propaedeutic* Hegel claims that "Man [...] has two aspects: his *individuality* and his *universal* essence. His **Duty to Himself** consists [...] partly in his duty to educate himself, to elevate his being as an individual into conformity with his universal nature."[47] On this claim, he explains that "Man is, on the one hand, a natural being. As such he behaves according to caprice and accident as an inconstant, subjective being [...] Secondly, he is a spiritual, rational being and as such he is *not by nature what he ought to be*. [Whereas] the animal stands in no need of education, for it is by nature what it ought to be [...] man has the task of bringing into harmony his two sides, of making his individuality conform to his rational side or of making the latter become his guiding principle."[48] For Hegel, *Bildung* seems to be understood as a way or a process that may help "elevate" us from the state of being determined by nature, i.e., when one behaves according to caprice and accident, to the state of being rational, where one determines oneself, i.e., when one behaves based on one's reasons (*seiner vernünftigen Seite gemäß*). McDowell's notion of *Bildung*, where such a process is seen as a natural way to initiate moral novices to the space of (moral) reasons, seems to have a degree of affinity to the one provided by Hegel.

Given the above note on the notion of the term *Bildung*, we might now go back to the main topic of our discussion. McDowell's notion of the practical wisdom and the role of *Bildung* seem to be appropriately adopted by moral particularists. Nevertheless, one might ask: How are McDowell's ideas of practical

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44 Paola Giacomoni (1998). 'Paideia as Bildung in Germany in the Age of Enlightenment'. In: *The Paideia Archive. Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*. Vol. 11. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5840/wcp20paideia199811241, p. 54.

45 Giacomoni, 'Paideia as Bildung in Germany in the Age of Enlightenment', p. 53.

46 Giacomoni, 'Paideia as Bildung in Germany in the Age of Enlightenment', p. 54.

47 Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1986). *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*. Ed. by Michael George and Andrew Vincent. Trans. German by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 41, emphases original.

48 Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, p. 41, emphases original.

wisdom and of the role of *Bildung* related to moral particularism? Surely, we have discussed some of McDowell's ideas that are closely related to the moral particularists' claims, e.g., in Section 3.4.2 regarding the shapelessness hypothesis. Nevertheless, a brief summary of this connection might be in place. Similar to McDowell, most particularists would take moral realism and cognitivism about moral judgments as the bases for their theories. Furthermore, McDowell's claim that practical wisdom is akin to the perceptual capacity to discern what reasons call for what responses harmonizes well with the moral particularists' claim that apprehending the particular situation is the only way to moral knowledge. For McDowell, as well as for moral particularists, such an apprehensive capacity (McDowell even talks about perceptual capacity) is noncodifiable in character. The moral is shapeless in terms of, and therefore irreducible to, the natural.[49] These features are some of the points where moral particularism owes McDowell a lot for its claims. Consequently, McDowell's understanding of practical wisdom, which essentially involves the possession of a certain degree of cognitive sensitivity, and his suggestion that *Bildung* is the natural way to initiate an agent into the space of reasons would both be coherent with moral particularism. We might summarize McDowell's view and, by doing so, further determine and enrich Dancy's tenuous claim above. Call this *a pure cognitivist claim of practical wisdom*:

> **(E$_2$)** a moral agent *S* possesses practical wisdom to the degree to which *S* has acquired unified conceptual sensitivities toward moral reasons and can appropriately respond to these reasons.

McDowell's notion of practical wisdom is, of course, richer than Dancy's. However, in our opinion, this pure cognitivist claim seems to undermine the role of the noncognitive parts of human nature, such as feelings or emotions, in the development of a *phronimos*. Moreover, this understanding of the term "sensitivity" does not seem natural in that it has nothing to do with the noncognitive aspects of human beings. We realize that, in the domain of moral motivation, it is notoriously difficult to reconcile the roles of both aspects to account for virtuous action.[50] However, independent of this difficulty, in the domain of

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[49] See 'Non-Cognitivism and Rule Following' in McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp. 202–204.

[50] When considering such an issue, one would usually seek a plausible position between two poles: internalism and externalism about moral motivation. One of the main questions regarding moral motivation is whether moral judgments or beliefs are capable of motivating on their own or (only) by means of some preexisting conative states. Motivational internalists hold that one cannot make a sincere moral judgment, e.g., that "I ought to *p*," without being *motivated* at least to some degree to abide by this judgment. On this view, motivation is internal to moral judgments. This internalism can assume weaker or stronger forms. The stronger form claims that moral judgment *itself* motivates without presupposing the existence of the noncognitive states such as desires or emotions, whereas the weaker form claims that there is a necessary connection between making sincere judgments and being motivated. In contrast to

the development of moral sensitivity, we think that Dancy's and McDowell's accounts seem to be too intellectualist. The ordinary view of moral sensitivity, in which the noncognitive parts of human nature play a significant role, seems to be neglected. In contrast, we think that it is not difficult to imagine how the cognitive and noncognitive parts of human nature would play an interdependent role in the development of moral sensitivity. Furthermore, not only is their view too far from the ordinary one, as we will see, such an intellectualist view is not corroborated by recent findings on neuroscience and psychology. Thus, we need to supplement such pure cognitivism with an account of the role of emotion in cultivating moral sensitivity.

7.4 Reason and Emotion

As we have seen, McDowell and Dancy claim that moral sensitivity is a mature conceptual ability to recognize and respond to moral requirements *qua* perception. This claim, however, only captures the *active* response of the "mind" in recognizing the features of the world from the moral point of view. There is a second dimension of response, the *passive* one, toward the features of the world. And the manifestations of this sort of reaction are in one's feelings or emotions. Being sensitive to the features of the world can also involve being *affected* by them in one's feelings or emotions.[51] This passive aspect of response is neglected by McDowell and Dancy.

The roles of both aspects, the active and the passive ones, have already been recognized by Aristotle. In some of his writings, he says that there are certain things that are to be feared and other things that cause righteous anger. (e.g., *Rhetoric* II. 9-11) In our opinion, the involvement of emotion in the picture of moral sensitivity would even help us to explain the ability of conceptual perception without thereby totally discarding cognitivism about moral judgment and cognition. Thus, we would claim that the *phronimos* possesses not only conceptual perception but also emotional maturity. This might be called *an interdependence thesis*, which can be stated as follows:

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motivational internalism, motivational externalism claims that there is no necessary connection between moral judgments and motivations. If there is a certain connection between these two aspects, such a connection is just contingent. Usually, the externalists would argue that moral judgments are capable of motivating only if they are accompanied by the noncognitive aspects of human nature, such as desires. According to Dancy, the classification of theories of moral motivation into internalism and externalism was made by W. D. Falk for the first time. (See W. David Falk (1947). '"Ought" and Motivation'. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. Vol. 48, pp. 111–138) Recent investigation on the debate between internalism and externalism about moral motivation can be seen, for instance, in Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, Chapter 1. and Connie S. Rosati (2016). 'Moral Motivation'. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-motivation/ (visited on 24/10/2022).

[51] See Weronika Wojtanowska (2016). 'John McDowell's Theory of Moral Sensibility'. In: *Logos i Ethos* 41.1 (41), p. 75.

> **(E_3)** a moral agent, *S*, possesses practical wisdom to the degree to which *S* has acquired a unified conceptual and emotional sensitivities toward moral reasons, and can appropriately respond to these reasons.

One may argue against this thesis, maintaining that the conative dimensions, such as emotions, should be subordinate to reasons. Presumably, such a claim is influenced by (or even by a misleading interpretation of) Aristotle's distinction between the rational and nonrational parts of the human soul.[52] One might think that in Books I and II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle would explain that the desiderative part of the nonrational soul (*to orektikon*)—such as appetite, emotion, and feeling—is not directly involved in reasoning, but it can listen to reason and therefore participate in reasoning. The similar view has also been given by Descartes, when he talks about the pyramidal conception of the mind according to which "the mind consists in a gradual ascent from 'lower' psychological levels (instinctive drives, tensions, animal automatism, and 'reptilian' anatomical structures) through increasingly 'higher' psychological levels, up to a vertex that is able to impart order to this hierarchy of functions, and above all that is able to coherently direct the 'noblest' functions that define rational self-consciousness."[53]

However, such a pyramidal or hierarchical picture of the mind-brain is not corroborated by recent findings on neuroscience and psychology. We might mention some of these findings.[54] In 1992, Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne showed that the assumption made by the Cartesian pyramidal model of the mind-brain, that there is a place in the brain where "it all comes together," is misleading.[55] In a similar vein, the recent proponents of the Global Neuronal Workspace Theory of Consciousness also think that the neurocognitive architecture underlying the unity of consciousness is a distributed computational system without any central controller.[56] These findings on neuroscience show that there is no evidence

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52 See Aristotle (2000). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. by Roger Crisp. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511802058, Book I and II.

53 Mario De Caro and Massimo Marraffa (2015). 'Bacon against Descartes. Emotions, Rationality, Defences'. In: *Moral Realism and Political Decisions. Practical Rationality in Contemporary Public Contexts*. Ed. by Gabriele De Anna and Riccardo Martinelli. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, p. 63.

54 These findings are extensively discussed in Caro and Marraffa, 'Bacon against Descartes. Emotions, Rationality, Defences'.

55 Daniel C. Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne (1992). 'Time and the Observer. The Where and When of Consciousness in the Brain'. In: *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 15.2, pp. 183–201. DOI: 10.1017/S0140525X00068229.

56 According to Bernard J. Baars, the basic idea of this theory is that consciousness has an integrative function for accessing, disseminating, and exchanging information, and for exercising global coordination and control. This theory suggests that such an integrative function works in "large-scale computer architectures," which do not need a central cognitive controller. See, for instance, Stanislas Dehaene and Jean-Pierre Changeux (2004). 'Neural Mechanisms for Access to Consciousness'. In: *The Cognitive Neurosciences*. Ed. by Michael S. Gazzaniga. 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 1145–1157; Bernard J. Baars (2007). 'The Global

that a central cognitive controller (vertex) in the mind-brain exists. Furthermore, as shown by Paul E. Griffiths, it is misguided to treat emotions as the "lower" or "primitive" part of human nature, which should be controlled by the cognitive part. According to him, the view that there is a hierarchical order between "the thinking thing" and emotion is not natural but rather conventional.[57] Based on the findings outlined above, we propose that both emotion and reason play important, but interdependent roles in the development of *phronesis*. As shown, reason and emotion do not dominate each other. In turn, they have to play an equal role in explaining virtuous actions.

One may argue that the last point appeals to empirical findings, while Dancy's and McDowell's pure cognitivism is a normative claim, and therefore, our suggestion is misleading. However, we argue that our suggestion **(E_3)** that reason and emotion should play an equal role in the development of *phronesis* is a normative claim. Given the corresponding empirical evidence, we may argue that such a claim is more reliable than those that are not empirically grounded. Furthermore, apart from the findings on neuroscience and psychology laid out above, the equal treatment between the roles of emotion and reason corroborates Aristotle's claim that the *orectic* state should provide the goal, which is the good, while the doxatic state should provide the means. In her analysis of Aristotle's notion of *habitus*, Nancy Sherman, for instance, argues that

> *it would be a mistake to untangle these [emotive and cognitive] elements. For emotions, are themselves a sensitivity, a mode of discriminating and registering particulars. As such, [...] the evaluative content of emotions may not be purely cognitive or intellectual. To respond compassionately to a loved one who is suffering may not simply be a matter of (intellectually) seeing, and feeling compassion as a result, nor conversely of seeing because one feels compassion, but seeing with an intensity and resolution that is itself characterized by compassion. One would not have seen that way unless one had certain feelings. [...] Thus emotions shape and colour how and what we see just as what we see refines and shapes how and what we feel. The capacities and functions are deeply intertwined.*[58]

Workspace Theory of Consciousness'. In: *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 236–246. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470751466.ch19.

57 See Paul E. Griffiths (2004). 'Emotions as Natural and Normative Kinds'. In: *Philosophy of Science* 71.5, pp. 901– 911. DOI: 10.1086/425944; Paul E. Griffiths (2008). *What Emotions Really Are. The Problem of Psychological Categories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. URL: https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226308760; Paul E. Griffiths (2013). 'Current Emotion Research in Philosophy'. In: *Emotion Review* 5.2, pp. 215–222. DOI: 10.1177/1754073912468299; Ricardo de Oliveira-Souza, Jorge Moll and Jordan Grafman (2011). 'Emotion and Social Cognition: Lessons from Contemporary Human Neuroanatomy'. In: *Emotion Review* 3.3, pp. 310– 312. DOI: 10.1177/1754073911402399.

58 See Nancy Sherman (1989). *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 170–171.

In sum, based on this interpretation of Aristotle's view of *habitus* and the recent findings on neuroscience and psychology, we can be sure that our suggestion, which is described by **(E_3)**, is plausible. Reasons and emotions should play an interdependent role in the development of *phronesis*.

7.5 Immersion: The Humanities and the Practical

Keeping in mind that the account of practical wisdom **(E_3)** stems from the moral particularist's claim envisaged by Dancy and McDowell, plus the insights from recent findings, we may now ask which means are appropriate to develop such a sensitivity. In answering such a question, we are sympathetic to Martha Nussbaum in that developing children's moral sensitivities can be pursued through discussing literature, history, politics, and society, as well as through creative, imaginative, and artistic works.[59] This is, however, only one of the possibilities. We think that there is another possibility, which is by directly experiencing the concrete moral cases. We contend that these two ways are appropriately assigned under the term "immersion."

"Immersion" is a term usually used in language teaching, in particular, in the specific domain of bilingual education. According to Jim Cummins, such a term is used in two ways. First, immersion programs are usually "organized and planned forms of bilingual education in which students are 'immersed' in a second-language instructional environment with the goal of developing proficiency in two languages."[60] Second, such a term "refers to the immersion of immigrant or minority language children in a classroom environment where instruction is conducted exclusively through their second (or third) language (frequently the dominant language of the society or a global language of wider communication)."[61] Both senses, however, are similar in that the students are left to "sink or swim" in a new linguistic environment. This metaphor is surely applicable to moral upbringing as well. We might presuppose that McDowell's notion of initiation into the conceptual capacities assumes that there is continuity between the acquirement of language and of moral competence.

As we have said, there are two ways of immersion into moral life. First, as suggested by Martha Nussbaum, an acquirement of moral concepts is best gained through the humanities, that is, by immersion into the stories and figures that are presented in novels. She argues that literary works play a role on two levels.[62] First, they present us with "sufficiently rich and inclusive conceptions

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59 Martha C. Nussbaum (1992a). *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

60 Jim Cummins (2009). 'Bilingual and Immersion Programs'. In: *The Handbook of Language Teaching*. Ed. by Michael H. Long and Catherine J. Doughty. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 161.

61 Cummins, 'Bilingual and Immersion Programs', p. 161.

62 Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 26.

of the opening question and of the dialectical procedure that pursues it."[63] By immersing into the complexity of stories, a moral novice would not only learn cognitively how certain considerations would matter, given the "concrete" situation, but could also be emotionally engaged in it to the effect that new experience can be gained. Second, Nussbaum argues that there is a "link between a distinctive conception of life (or a family of conceptions) and the structures of these novels."[64] In her view, novels not only have a narrative structure, but also within such a narrative structure, there are certain concepts related to morality, and by understanding such concepts, one may also acquire the moral concepts proposed by moral philosophers. Literary works may therefore offer the depth and breadth of moral conceptions in a way that cannot be provided by academic books and articles.

Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in such a proposal. One needs to be aware that not all novels are good, useful, or enticing for moral upbringing. Not all literary works have a good structure and provide clear moral conceptions. Furthermore, for uncritical readers, "bad" literary works might also have destructive effects. There are many popular literary works which can cause depression or other mental illnesses. Thus, engaging with or immersing oneself in literary works should be accompanied by critical reflection. We think that in the context of moral upbringing, such a critical reflection is necessary to gain moral competence.

Another criticism of Nussbaum's proposal is that such a way would be appropriate only in places where people are literate and have a certain degree of reading culture, that is, where reading (not necessarily literary works) is already a part of life. However, it would be difficult to apply to societies where people are still illiterate or, at least, when the reading literacy rate is low. Hence, we propose another way of immersion into moral life. That is through a kind of practice of internship.

Internships are a usual practice in education. In general, it is a process of learning directly through experiences in which students are confronted with meaningful work related to their field of study or interest. Just like a young doctor who should accomplish his or her period of training directly in a hospital, moral novices can be involved in certain moral situations, such that they can directly engage in recognizing which considerations matter and what responses are appropriate. Such an immersion can be practiced in personal life, in families, or in communities. Surely, in such an immersion into practical cases, one must take into consideration the level of maturity of each involved person.

We advocate this way of immersion for two reasons. First, it should supplement Kohlberg's proposal that moral competence can be developed through

63 Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 26.

64 Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, pp. 26–27.

reflecting critically on problem cases.[65] This proposal has three shortcomings that are solved by ours.[66] First, it is notoriously artificial: The cases are always self-contained and do not include their wider context. Concrete cases in which moral novices may immerse, however, are real. They involve real considerations, real persons, and real consequences. It could be the case that there are also real dilemmas. Second, in solving problem cases, the subjects are directed by questions that should be answered. In other words, their answer would also, to a certain extent, be artificial and not reveal what one would answer in real situations. That would not be the case in an immersion into real-life cases. The problems and answers are real. Third, Kohlberg's proposal assumes that the learning outcomes of reflecting problem cases are moral generalizations. This is surely at odds with the moral particularists' claim. Moreover, such generalizations would always be contestable. By immersion into real-life cases, the desired learning outcomes are not the principles or generalizations but rather insights, experiences, and clear pictures of moral deliberation.

The second reason is that such a proposal has an interesting connection with the "new pragmatism," which, to a certain degree, is congenial to moral particularism.[67] David Bakhurst explains that the pragmatists believe that moral concepts should be elucidated by a detailed exploration of their role in our lives. He writes, "The task will be to examine what is actually going on when people engage in moral evaluation, deliberate about what to do, justify their decisions, praise and blame others, and so on. The pragmatist will seek to place morality in the context of our other practices, as part of a compelling conception of humanity's place in nature, and in order to illuminate and guide practice with a view to 'getting things right'."[68] Thus, by immersing themselves in concrete cases appropriated to one's level, moral novices would have a chance to confront their current moral conceptions with real cases in the hope of getting some light that will illuminate one's further decisions.

Although we do not intend to provide an account of moral upbringing in the formal schooling context, it is, however, not difficult to imagine applying these two ways to school curricula. Nevertheless, we agree with Bakhurst that these two ways of moral upbringing should not be seen as developing a certain discipline.[69] We think that moral upbringing should permeate the humanities and daily classroom interaction. Students may come to moral reflection about the events, figures, concepts, and ways of reasoning by paying attention to the detail of the narratives provided by the literary materials of the humanities. Furthermore, a

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65 Lawrence Kohlberg (1981). *The Philosophy of Moral Development. Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

66 Bakhurst, 'Particularism and Moral Education', p. 274.

67 David Bakhurst (2007). 'Pragmatism and Ethical Particularism'. In: Cheryl Misak. *New Pragmatists*. Ed. by Cheryl Misak. Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford, pp. 122–141.

68 Bakhurst, 'Pragmatism and Ethical Particularism', pp. 129–130.

69 Bakhurst, 'Particularism and Moral Education', pp. 274–275.

classroom is not only a group of people learning school materials, but it is also a community of moral agents. In such a community, there are many opportunities for interactions, conflicts, and events that can potentially be reflected morally. The attentiveness to each other and each other's value, as well as the capability of moral reasoning, would be sharpened when there are opportunities to develop moral reflections to consider cases or events that actually happen, either in the classroom or in the school generally.

7.6 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed and argued for an account of moral education that is consistent with moral particularism. We have clarified some misunderstandings that come not only from the generalist's side but also from the particularist as well. The generalists' charge that there is no plausible account of moral education that is consistent with moral particularism is based on a wrong conception about the tenets of moral particularism and about what a person holding moral particularism would look like. On the other hand, the particularists' charge that moral generalism would imply rule-fetishism is also false. For moral generalism also demands that a morally adept person should be sensible to particular contexts. Both views, however, seem to agree that moral sensibility is central in acquiring moral competence.

We adopted Aristotle's term *phronesis* to account for moral competence. Moral particularists, such as Dancy, claim that moral particularism has a natural affinity to Aristotelian ethics. Dancy contends that a person of practical wisdom does not have a list of moral generalizations, but instead "gets things right case by case." His claim about moral sensitivity is, however, tenuous. He believes that a morally sensible person has a contentless ability to discern which considerations morally matter but does not elaborate on what kind of ability this is. To put flesh on Dancy's tenuous claim, we turned to McDowell's account of *phronesis*. We summed up his metaethical views into three claims: a claim about moral realism, about the anthropocentric character of moral requirements, and about the initiation into the space of reasons. Based on these three claims, we showed that McDowell's view of moral sensitivity is cognitive in nature. He thinks that moral sensitivity is the cognitive ability to recognize reasons in particular cases and to act accordingly. According to Dancy and McDowell, the noncognitive parts of human nature do not play a role in the development of *phronesis*. We, however, did not agree with such a pure cognitivist view. We believe that such a view is not only alien to our ordinary understanding of sensitivity but also not corroborated by recent findings in neuroscience and psychology. Thus, we proposed a more comprehensive view involving the integral role of emotion in acquiring moral sensitivity.

Given such a comprehensive view, we proposed two ways of developing moral competence that are considered under the umbrella term "immersion." The idea is that moral competence is gained through "sinking and swimming"

into moral cases. The two ways we have considered were Nussbaum's proposal of utilizing literary works and our own new pragmatism-based proposal. Since there are some shortcomings in Nussbaum's proposal, we tend to suggest that the second proposal is more realistic. Both proposals are nevertheless tenable and applicable to school curricula. Given that this account of moral sensitivity is derived from, and therefore consistent with, moral particularism, and that there are plausible ways to develop such a sensitivity without moral generalizations, we therefore claim that moral particularism can provide not only a plausible but also a natural account of moral education.

8 CONCLUSION: DEBUNKING MORAL GENERALISM

We will now summarize our investigation and show its outcomes that are useful not only theoretically but also practically. First, Section 8.1 will recall the departure point of our investigation, the aims we want to achieve, and the way we pursue those aims. We will ask: To what extent did we debunk the idea that morality depends on the provision of moral generalizations, and are there substantial true moral generalizations? Second, in Section 8.2, we will show that our investigation of the particularism–generalism debate reveals that we should have a critical attitude toward our ethical beliefs. It appears that we have a tendency to be generalists, i.e., to presuppose that some of our general (not particular!) ethical beliefs are resilient to any changes in the circumstances. However, we will suggest that such a presupposition is problematic. We shall instead assert that, given our realist view of particular moral truths, one only needs to maintain that particular moral beliefs are true and therefore resilient. If one holds general ethical beliefs, they should always be revisable so that they cannot be true in the realist sense of truth. If, however, the truth of such beliefs is the condition for beliefs to be resilient, then one should maintain that the truth of such beliefs is understood in a nonrealist sense.

8.1 Moral Generalism Debunked

The investigation in this book began with the observation of a widely held opinion that moral generalizations are essential for morality. According to this opinion, moral thought and practice seem to depend on the provision of some moral generalizations. Such an opinion is held both by professional philosophers and ordinary people. Mainstream modern moral philosophers, such as Bentham, Mill, Kant, Moore, Ross, Rawls, and others, seem to agree that the chief aim of moral theory is to discover, formulate, and purport the fundamental principle(s) of morality. Therefore, they seem to believe that there are substantial true moral generalizations. Such a view is called moral generalism. Recently, this view has been challenged by moral particularism, i.e., a family of views that are critical of moral generalism. The debate between particularism and generalism in ethics is the main topic of this book. The first chapter provided some important preliminaries to this debate. We proposed that such a debate is situated at the crossroads of at least four philosophical discourses: ethical intuitionism, the development of antitheoretical approaches in ethics, new interpretations of Aristotle's ethics, and the recent study of the roles of reasons in moral philosophy. These four intellectual developments are the backdrop of the particularism–generalism debate.

The second chapter clarified the target of moral particularists' criticism by investigating the many forms of moral generalizations. The term "moral generalizations" is used as an umbrella term for different forms of moral generalizations in moral philosophy: moral principles, moral laws, moral norms, moral codes, and moral formulae. The terms "moral principles" and "moral laws" are commonly used in the moral particularism–generalism debate, whereas "moral norms" and "moral codes" are less used. Nevertheless, when moral philosophers investigate the criteria for rightness or wrongness, they often use these last two terms as well. The term "moral formula" is rarely used in the moral particularism–generalism debate. However, we considered that moral formulae must also be investigated, since moral generalists often refer to Kant's formulae as forms of moral generalizations. Furthermore, based on our analysis, moral generalizations have at least eight features; six of those are necessary. The necessary characteristics of moral generalizations are: First, their *contents* should depict a stable relation between the descriptive property of an action, a person, or an institution and its moral property. Second, they should be *informative* in that they tell us which actions are right or wrong, good or bad, obligatory, permissible or forbidden, etc. Third, following R. M. Hare's suggestion, they should be *universal* in the sense that if they are formalized, the formalization will start with a universal quantifier. Fourth, they must picture the *grounding* relation between the nonmoral or descriptive facts or properties and the moral facts or properties, in that the former grounds the latter. Fifth, as far as we are concerned, moral generalizations should employ *concepts* that have a *wide scope*. Therefore, they cannot utilize terms referring to specific entities, such as proper names. Sixth, they must play a role in *explaining* why certain objects (actions, persons, or institutions) have the moral properties or qualities they have.

Typically, generalists argue for a deductive form of explanation in which moral generalizations serve as major premises, specific descriptions serve as minor ones, and statements about the moral quality of specific objects serve as conclusions. Moreover, in addition to these necessary conditions, we think that moral generalizations would also have a *practical* function, in that they may guide us to decide what we ought (not) to do, and an *educational* function where moral education can be seen as inculcating moral generalizations.

Furthermore, we also distinguished the types of moral generalizations both based on their contents and the strength of the stability of the relation between the nonmoral or descriptive properties and moral properties. Based on their contents, we distinguished material from formal moral generalizations. Whereas material generalizations purport to lay out the conditions under which an action is right or wrong, or something is good or bad, by specifying *clearly* which descriptive property grounds the moral one, formal generalizations do so without specifying which descriptive property grounds the moral one. Kant's formula of the universal law, according to which "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you, at the same time, can will that it becomes a universal law," is an

example of formal moral generalizations. Furthermore, based on the stability of the relation between the nonmoral properties and moral ones, we classified tight and loose moral generalizations. Tight moral generalizations depict the tight relation between nonmoral properties and moral ones. For such generalizations, there will be no possibility for any objects (actions, persons, or institutions) to have the nonmoral properties that are stated in the moral generalizations but have moral properties different from those stated in those generalizations. In other words, if such generalizations are true, then the purported nonmoral properties of certain cases will always override the other nonmoral properties of those cases. In contrast, loose moral generalizations depict the loose relations between certain nonmoral and moral properties. For such generalizations, there are possibilities for objects to have the specified nonmoral but other moral properties. In other words, if the relation between nonmoral and moral properties, which is depicted in moral generalizations, is loose, then these nonmoral properties would not always override other nonmoral properties. They can even be overridden by other nonmoral properties. The distinction between tight and loose moral generalizations is important to understand our rejections of the two key generalist arguments: the argument from the doctrine of universalizability and the argument from the thesis of moral supervenience. We demonstrated these rejections in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 tackled the first key generalist argument, the *Argument from Universalizability*. The first premise of this argument speaks to the truth of the doctrine of universalizability. This doctrine is, however, formulated differently by different authors. Based on R. M. Hare's conception, we proposed a precise formulation of the doctrine of universalizability as follows: If an action, *h*, has a certain moral property, *M*, then there is a nonmoral or descriptive property or a set of such properties, *D*, such that *h* has *D*, and everything which has *D* is *M*. To make it clear, suppose we make a moral judgment that an action *h* is wrong; the doctrine says that, if we make such a moral judgment, then there is a nonmoral property or a set of nonmoral properties, e.g., the property of telling falsehoods, that is possessed by *h*, and any action that has such a nonmoral property has also the same moral property, namely of being wrong. The proponents of moral generalism think that if such a doctrine holds, then there are substantive true moral generalizations (this is the content of the second premise of the *Argument from Universalizability*).

However, according to our analysis, moral generalizations, possibly derived via such a doctrine, may have three different forms depending on the exact interpretation of *D*: *First*, considering a particular action such as *h*, one may think of a generalization of the form: "Any *exactly similar* action to *h* is morally wrong." This means that *D* is understood as covering all nonmoral properties the action, *h*, has. To understand such an interpretation, we proposed to think of the *Doppelganger* of *h*. *Second*, to use the abovementioned example and supposing that the nonmoral property of telling falsehoods is the only morally relevant property (such that *D* is interpreted as including only nonmoral properties that are morally

relevant), one might think of a moral generalization of the form: "Any action similar to *h*, in that its nonmoral property of telling falsehoods is the only morally relevant property, is morally wrong." These kinds of generalizations are presumably what people assume when holding a moral principle such as "Telling falsehoods is wrong."

Third, one may also consider that the particular nonmoral property of giving false information, possessed by that action, fulfills the ultimate criterion for making actions wrong, which is endorsed by a certain moral theory. On this interpretation, when one makes a certain moral judgment that *h* is *M* in virtue of *D*, one assumes that there is a certain moral theory that provides the criterion to determine in virtue of which kind of nonmoral property a certain action would be *M*. For instance, according to classical utilitarianism, an action is wrong, if and only if it would not produce as high a utility as any alternative action that the agent could perform instead. The property of telling falsehoods that is involved in that particular action is then thought of as fulfilling the criterion of wrongness endorsed by this theory. Given the doctrine of universalizability, it follows that there would be two possible generalizations: A) "Any action similar to *h*, in that the property of telling falsehoods fulfills the criterion of wrongness, endorsed by classical utilitarianism, is wrong." To a certain extent, such a generalization is similar to the above second form in that they both assume that the considered nonmoral properties include only (or all) morally relevant properties. However, the principle such as A) is more complex, since it provides the reason why such morally relevant properties may make the action wrong. This is shown by the clause, "in that the property of telling falsehoods fulfills the criterion of wrongness endorsed by classical utilitarianism." This interpretation also shows that when people hold a certain principle such as "Telling falsehoods is wrong," they presumably do not only assume that the feature of telling falsehoods is the only considered morally relevant property, but they also hold a certain moral theory that specifies the actions with such nonmoral properties as right or wrong, good or bad, etc. Furthermore, from such a consideration, we might have another form of moral generalization that considers this criterion itself: B) "Any action that would not produce as high a utility as any alternative action that the agent could perform instead is wrong." This form of moral generalization presupposes that the nonmoral property, *D*, in the formula of the doctrine of universalizability includes only the nonmoral properties of higher order or the criterion for making actions right or wrong, good or bad, etc., depending on which moral theory is supposed to be accepted. Such properties might be: producing as high a utility as any alternative action, contributing to the perfection of a human being, etc.

Moral particularists think that whatever the interpretation of the doctrine of universalizability might be, this doctrine is false. We showed that there are at least two reasons that moral particularists may give. Firstly, we argued that those who believe the doctrine to be true implicitly assume that once a particular descriptive property is counted as morally relevant in a particular way, it

will always be morally relevant in the same way. Following Dancy's suggestion, we think that this assumption is false. It could be the case that, in one action or circumstance, the property of telling falsehoods, for instance, makes the action wrong. However, from this, it does not follow that the property of telling falsehoods would always have the same relevance, namely, making an action wrong. In other cases, such a property might not make the action wrong. Secondly, we argued that the endorsement of the doctrine of universalizability is based on the wrong assumption that rationality presumes strict consistency in using terms and concepts. By endorsing the doctrine of universalizability, generalists like Hare seem to think that moral judgments share the character of being universalizable with descriptive judgments. This means that, for instance, whenever one makes a moral judgment that a certain action, *h*, is wrong with respect to a certain feature, like telling falsehoods, these generalists assume that one must be committed to a certain form of generalization, such as "Any action similar to *h* with respect to this feature is wrong." For them, there are two reasons why this must be so. The first reason for this conviction is that for them, being rational in using certain terms and concepts like "wrong" requires consistency in aligning with the meaning rules. Note that for the proponents of this view, such as Hare, moral terms and concepts do not only have evaluative but also descriptive meanings (see Section 3.1 for a more detailed explanation of Hare's notion of meaning rule). As a result, if the term "wrong" is used to evaluate a specific action that has a certain descriptive feature, such as lying, then, in order to be rational in using words and concepts, one must follow the meaning rule, i.e., one must use the same moral term, namely "wrong," to evaluate all actions that have this descriptive feature. In other words, new similar cases are simply subsumed under the previous evaluation of similar cases.

In response to this subsumptive understanding of the rationality of moral judgments, moral particularists like Dancy argue that such a thought is misleading for three reasons: *First*, obeying such a consistency requirement by using the same moral terms to evaluate similar actions is wrong, given the fact that there could be similar actions, i.e., actions with similar descriptive features, that should not be evaluated using the same moral terms. It is incorrect to subsume all actions with similar descriptive features under the same meaning rules. *Second*, were such a subsumptive understanding correct, there would be no phenomena of moral regrets and moral conflicts. We understood moral conflicts as disagreements between two evaluators about a particular action with a certain descriptive property: for two evaluators of a particular action *h* with the descriptive property *D*, one evaluator believes that *h* is *M* (e.g., an obligation) in virtue of *D*, while the other believes that *h* is not *M* in virtue of *D*. Assuming that both the evaluators are correct in describing the action, *h*, so that there is no disagreement about what should be included in *D*, we argued that the existence of such phenomena of moral conflicts shows that there is something wrong with the moral generalizations of the form "All actions with *D* are *M* (or not *M*)." If one of these moral

generalizations is true, and if it is correctly applied to that case, then there should be no moral conflicts. The same is true for the phenomena of moral regrets. If one adheres to a certain, supposedly true, moral generalization and correctly applies it to one's case, then one should never experience moral regrets. In other words, given the existence of such phenomena, the subsumptive understanding cannot give a plausible account of moral conflicts and moral regrets. *Third*, it is misleading to assume that the moral evaluation of a certain action should also be based on an evaluation of other actions. Although some other actions are similar in their descriptive properties, our evaluation of this particular action should be based only on the particular features that are involved in these very actions.

The second reason why generalists believe that the rationality of our use of moral terms and concepts necessarily presupposes the truth of the doctrine of universalizability is that such terms and concepts have specific descriptive shapes. This claim is particularly proposed by noncognitivists who are also nonrealists about moral facts, such as R. M. Hare and Simon Blackburn. They argue that moral concepts are not genuine since they do not pick out certain facts. Nevertheless, if our use of moral terms and concepts is reasonable, it must be because our senses are equipped with the competence to classify what we see in a way that allows us to determine which actions belong under which moral concepts. On one hand, this classification has a basis in the descriptive similarities of the things that we categorize under a certain moral concept. For instance, among all actions that we categorize as wrong, we must see certain descriptive similarities, such as in the case of telling falsehoods. On the other hand, from a noncognitivist point of view, a second basis for this categorization is our attitudinal propensity toward these descriptive features, i.e., our inclination to approve or disapprove of them. For noncognitivists, these two bases explain the rationality of our practice of using moral terms and concepts.

Based on McDowell's analyses of Wittgenstein's conceptions of rule-following and family resemblance, particularists argue that this generalist view is wrong. McDowell argues that the moral is shapeless with respect to the natural or descriptive. He believes that it is incorrect to suppose that, if our use of moral concepts is rational, then at the descriptive level there must be some commonality between all things that are identified by certain moral terms. For instance, the term "morally wrong" is used only to evaluate only those actions of telling falsehoods that are wrong, but not all actions of telling falsehoods. Thus, there would be no nonmoral pattern for actions that are picked out by certain moral terms. Since this criticism is directed at the noncognitivists, as mentioned above, McDowell's claim seems to imply that they should give up their claim that the condition of rationality for our usage of moral concepts is the existence of a certain pattern at the descriptive or nonmoral level.

McDowell justifies his claim using Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following and family resemblance. The points made by Wittgenstein are the following. First, the assumption that there is a rule, either practical or semantic (meaning

rule), or a pattern that governs the relation between the meaning of terms and concepts and their descriptive extensions is incorrect. Nevertheless, despite the fact that there are no such rules, we can still use terms and concepts correctly. This shows that the explanation of how we can correctly and consistently use the terms and concepts, including moral ones, must not be sought in the patterns of the relation between the terms or concepts and their extensions. Second, we might think that moral concepts are family resemblance concepts, like the concept of "game." For some games, it could be the case that they have a certain common property. However, we would not find any common property that characterizes all games, except their being games. The term "game" is, however, appropriate to be used in calling all of them games. The concept of "game" can therefore be correctly applied to different things, although they do not have any common property. Likewise, one and the same moral concept can also correctly be used to evaluate different actions that have no common property at the descriptive level. Therefore, moral concepts need not have a corresponding pattern at the descriptive level.

Chapter 4 dealt with the generalist *Argument from Moral Supervenience*. The first premise of the argument says that the thesis of moral supervenience is true; the second premise posits the claim that if the thesis of moral supervenience is true, then there are substantial true moral generalizations. Generalists argue that both premises hold, and therefore they may conclude that there are substantial true moral generalizations. To argue against this argument, we criticized the second premise and contended that, whereas the thesis of moral supervenience is true, there are no substantial true moral generalizations. The thesis of moral supervenience tells us that moral properties supervene on nonmoral ones. Based on our definition (see Section 4.1.1.1), this means that for any two possible objects with such properties, there can be no difference with respect to their moral properties without there being some difference with respect to their nonmoral properties. In this regard, we discussed two sorts of generalist rationales that support the claim that the *Argument from Moral Supervenience* holds: one is proposed by Hare, and another by Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith. While Hare deals with the weak form of moral supervenience, Jackson et al. refer to its strong form. These two views provide different versions of premise one, but they both claim that the second premise of the *Argument from Moral Supervenience* holds, and therefore its conclusion.

Our strategy to argue against these views was to make a distinction between a metaphysical and an epistemological understanding of generalism. While the former is a claim that *there are* some true moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, the latter is a claim that there are true moral generalizations that are practically and theoretically useful. These moral generalizations are practically useful in that they play a necessary role in moral decision and practice, and they are theoretically useful in that they play a necessary role in moral explanation, that is, in answering the question of why particular objects possess the

moral qualities they possess. Surely, the epistemological understanding assumes that the metaphysical one holds. We put forward Dancy's and Little's arguments to invalidate epistemological generalism, and Peter Shiu-Hwa Tsu's to challenge the metaphysical one. According to Dancy, moral generalizations derived via the thesis of moral supervenience are worrying with regard to three problems: a) the recurrence problem: given Dancy's assumption that the supervenience base includes *all* nonmoral properties an action has (that would also include its spatio–temporal properties), it follows that the moral generalizations can only have one instance, since there can be no two objects exactly similar in all their nonmoral properties; b) the irrelevance problem: given the same assumption about the supervenience base, the "left-side" of the moral generalizations, derived via the thesis of moral supervenience, would include many irrelevant descriptive properties; and, c) the practical-guidance problem: given the fact that morally irrelevant properties are also included in the moral generalizations derived via the thesis of supervenience, these generalizations are useless in terms of guiding actions.

In addition, following Hilary Putnam's contention that the explanation for a particular behavior cannot be found at the level of its ultimate constituents, Little argues that the notion of moral supervenience would not help us in determining why a particular action possesses its moral property. Nevertheless, it could be the case that, via the thesis of moral supervenience, one would discover some moral generalizations. However, Little contends that these generalizations would not have any explanatory power. Her argument for this claim is based on McDowell's abovementioned contention that the moral is shapeless with regards to the descriptive and on Dancy's conception of holism about reasons. Since the moral is shapeless with regards to the descriptive, there can be no true moral generalizations that can serve as premises in explaining why a certain action has a certain moral property and given that holism about reasons holds, which means that the contribution of certain descriptive facts as reasons depends on context, there can be no moral generalizations that are explanatory in every case. Based on Dancy's and Little's arguments, we argued that epistemological generalism is false.

In order to challenge metaphysical generalism, we distinguished different readings of moral supervenience based on the scope of the considered base properties. This is to avoid generalist criticism of Dancy's previously indicated assumption that the supervenience base encompasses all nonmoral properties of an action. The first reading was called *Supervenience (original)*, and according to this reading, the scope of the considered base properties includes all nonmoral properties the action may have. We called this set of base properties the "supervenience base." The second reading was called *Universalizability*, and according to this reading, the scope of the base properties being considered includes all nonmoral properties that are morally relevant. We called such a set of base properties the "universalizability base." The third reading was called *Resultance*, and according to this reading, the considered base properties are only those that are responsible for making the action have the moral property it has. For instance, for

a certain morally right action, the properties being considered, according to this reading, are only those that make it morally right, e.g., the property of saving five lives. Other kinds of morally relevant properties, for instance, those that enable this base property to make the action right (enablers) or those that would modify the degree of that rightness (e.g., the property of killing one), are not included. We called this set of base properties the "resultance base." Based on Tsu's analysis, we argued that only if the thesis of moral supervenience is read in terms of *Universalizability* can there be true moral generalizations. However, in our view, such a claim requires the existence of the universalizability base, i.e., an exhaustive set of base properties that is robust enough such that it will be impervious to the changes of the contexts, and that any object that has such a set of descriptive properties would also have the same moral properties. After running two tests on examples of robust base properties (the property of torturing an innocent person merely for fun and the property of being disallowed by some principle that is optimific, uniquely universally willable, and not reasonably rejectable), we concluded that such a set of robust base properties is not available, and for this reason, metaphysical generalism cannot be sustained. Given the abovementioned arguments against epistemological and metaphysical generalism, we maintained that the second premise of the *Argument from Supervenience* cannot be upheld in any of its understanding, and therefore this argument is unsound.

The considerations in Chapters 3 and 4 assumed that the moral generalizations being considered are those that depict the tight relation between the moral and nonmoral properties, and they are therefore exceptionless. In Chapter 5, however, we traced how some generalists think that the claim that there are defensible true moral generalizations can still be maintained if the relation between the moral and nonmoral properties is loose. This means that moral generalizations should not specify a certain kind of base properties that will *always* determine the moral status of objects, i.e., a set of robust base properties, but they should only specify certain base properties that count *generally* in favor of or against any action that has them. These generalists think that the existence of such generalizations is necessary to capture the idea that there are different ways of how nonmoral properties would function as reasons. In this sense, they think that the moral landscape (the way nonmoral properties would be morally relevant) is, metaphorically speaking, not flat. Conversely, they argue that the moral particularists' claim, that there are no defensible true moral generalizations, would imply that the moral landscape is flat, and this seems to be counterintuitive. To reply to this criticism, we distinguished (in table 5.1) four possible positions along the three following questions: 1) whether some nonmoral properties have a stable relation to the moral ones (which in turn has an implication on whether the moral landscape is flat); 2) whether the existence of such a stable relation implies that the considered nonmoral properties will override other nonmoral properties; and 3) whether those stable relations are depicted by true moral generalizations. In that table, we demonstrated that generalists of the first position (G1) answer yes to

all these questions; generalists of the second position (G2) argue that some nonmoral properties have a stable relationship to the moral ones (and thus the moral landscape is not flat), that true moral generalizations exist, but that the nonmoral properties under consideration do not always override other nonmoral properties. The first particularist position (P_1) agrees with (G_2) in that the moral landscape is not flat but disagrees in regard to the existence of true moral generalizations. For them, although some nonmoral properties may have a stable relation to the moral ones, there can be no substantial true moral generalizations capturing such a relation. The second particularist position (P_2) gives negative answers to all those questions and therefore holds that the moral landscape is flat and there are no substantial true moral generalizations.

We began with the analysis of (P_2). Those who think that the moral landscape is flat base their argument on the nonmonotonic character of practical reasoning, including the moral one, and on the conviction that it is false to assume that the adequacy or intelligibility of any practical reasoning depends on some *truisms* (or truistic beliefs) that are supposed to be held by the involved persons. Alan Thomas, our exemplar of the proponents of (P_2), argues that the nonmonotonic character of practical reasoning allows that any arbitrary addition of information can change the degree of support that the evidence provides for a conclusion. This means that we cannot classify in advance of any possible ranges of information into those that are "central" and those that are "peripheral" or into those that are "negative", "positive," or "neutral." Nevertheless, Thomas admits that some features of a certain situation might be morally relevant and some others not. However, the way in which they would be relevant or the kind of relevance they would give cannot be determined in advance. Thus, for him, the moral landscape is flat. In our opinion, there are some truths in Thomas's claims, in particular, regarding the nonmonotonic character of practical reasoning, including the moral one. Nevertheless, we argued that some nonmoral properties, such as telling falsehoods, might have a stable relation with certain moral properties, such as being wrong; therefore, for us, the moral landscape is not flat.

In order to comprehend the notion of a stable relationship between moral and nonmoral or base properties in the sense that certain nonmoral or base properties have a specific propensity to contribute as a reason, we offered four distinct rationales. First, a semantic rationale, according to which statements about the moral tendency of some base properties are understood in terms of our background expectations of *normality*. Second, an ontological rationale: certain base properties have a certain moral tendency or a prevailing disposition in regard to moral qualities, just because of the *nature* of these base properties. Third, an epistemological rationale: the moral tendency of certain base properties articulates how we regard these base properties when considered in their *privileged conditions*. Fourth, a conceptual–pragmatic rationale: the moral tendency of certain base properties reflects their function in morality that is considered to be *authoritatively normative*. In our opinion, the first three rationales are problematic for their own

reasons, and the fourth one is the most defensible one. Our argument for this claim rests on the assumption that morality is authoritatively normative. We showed that, based on the conceptual analysis of being authoritatively normative, morality (i.e., moral requirements) is *constitutive* of our activity of selecting the nonarbitrary actions that we *ought* to do. In this sense, morality would always determine how descriptive facts would be morally significant, and thus, how they would be significant cannot be arbitrary. Furthermore, we also think that these descriptive facts may have a moral significance on their own, just because they are framed and evaluated within a certain moral system. In other words, we think that rational moral beliefs rest on the tacit assumption of a certain moral system into which these beliefs can be integrated. This claim, however, does not imply that there are true moral generalizations in a realist sense of truth. We contended that moral generalizations that depict the loose relations between moral and nonmoral properties cannot be true because there are no sufficient truth conditions for such generalizations. Nevertheless, we conceded that such generalizations might be true in a nonrealist sense of truth, although, as we entertained in Chapter 6, such true generalizations are not necessary for moral thinking.

Given the particularists' claim that there are no substantial true moral generalizations, several problems might occur. In this investigation, we dealt with two questions regarding how we should understand particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions and what moral upbringing would then be like, both without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations. Chapter 6 dealt with the first question. Such a question seems to be natural, since we usually assume that particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions can only be explained if they are subsumed under certain moral generalizations. Our strategy to answer this question is to analyze the because-constraint that depicts the explanatory relation between the particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions and the reasons for their obtaining. The because-constraint of these subject matters is best expressed by a particular moral because-statement. In this chapter, we claimed that by way of analyzing the because-constraint that is explanatory, we come to a plausible understanding of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions. We elaborated that, according to Dancy's conception of the resultance relation, the moral properties of certain objects are the "result" of, and thus explained by, the nonmoral properties of the corresponding objects. Particular moral facts are partly explained by the facts about base properties. Such a resultance relation is ontologically basic and, therefore neither needs nor admits further explanation, and it is always particular in the sense that the moral property of a certain action is the "result" of its nonmoral properties only. Such an understanding of particular moral facts does not require the existence of moral generalizations or general moral facts. To answer the epistemological question of the explanation of belief-formation, we refer to McDowell's view that the experience of perceiving particular moral facts, endowed with conceptual contents, is a viable account of the explanation of belief-formation. In particularists' view, to justify such a belief, one needs to appeal to the

account of narrative justification. To justify a particular moral belief, one does not appeal to other beliefs (whether fundamental beliefs or beliefs that presuppose other beliefs), but rather provides a persuasive description of the situation in a narrative way so that it increases one's confidence in the beliefs in question. Furthermore, we presented the particularists' epistemological view that moral knowledge, i.e., knowledge of basic facts, is contingent but a priori, due to the a priori knowledge of the relationships between the moral and nonmoral properties of a given context. In order to provide an account of the explanation of a moral action, we appeal to Dancy's nonconventional view of practical reasoning. On such a view, we made an important distinction between "the favouring relation" and "the making relation." According to Dancy's nonconventional view, we argued that practical reasoning is noninferential in the sense that it does not involve any kind of premises and conclusions, and it terminates in actions (i.e., not in thoughts closely linked to actions, such as intentions). What is involved in such reasoning are considerations, responses to these considerations, and the favoring relation between considerations and responses. Considerations represent the states of affairs regarding certain situations, while the responses a reasoner might give are either believing or acting in the way favored by those considerations. Thus, it could be the case that the considerations of why a certain agent does a certain action, like helping someone in need, are not only that the person needs help (i.e., a kind of nonmoral feature of the situation), but also that the action would be right or good, i.e., the moral features of the situation. Such a structure is different from the structure of "the making relation," such as in the right-, wrong-, or ought-making relations. Since the property of rightness, for instance, is the "result" of the nonmoral properties of that situation, such a moral property is not part of the reasons why the action is right. The arguments laid out above showed that there are plausible explanations of particular moral facts, beliefs, and actions in which moral generalizations or general moral facts do not play a role. To support this assertion, we argued that the doctrine of holism about reasons implies that moral generalizations are unnecessary.

Chapter 7 dealt with the second question mentioned in the previous paragraph: What would the moral upbringing be like without maintaining the existence and role of moral generalizations? In order to answer this question, we began with a clarification of some mutual misunderstandings between generalists and particularists. On one hand, some generalists accuse moral particularism of not being able to give a plausible account of moral education. We argued, however, that such a criticism is based on apparently wrong assumptions. First, it misconstrues a committed moral particularist as a morally unreliable person. Second, this construal is presumably grounded on the view that morality is a shared commitment to a certain system of rules that are obeyed by the members of a certain society, such that every member might have the right expectation of how people would behave. According to this view, moral education, understood as the inculcation of moral rules or generalizations, is then seen as the way to increase

the probability that people will conform to certain mutually beneficial practices. Given the moral particularists' claim that there are no substantial true moral generalizations, the proponents of the abovementioned view might argue that moral particularism is bad and wrong.

We argued that this criticism is misleading. It is not true that according to moral particularism, a committed particularist will always be morally unreliable. We contended that a committed particularist, who is morally competent, would get things right, not by adhering to certain moral principles or generalizations, but by correctly recognizing the features of particular situations and appropriately responding to them, case by case. Those who acquire such an ability to recognize the moral features of every situation and to respond to them appropriately can be called morally competent or sensible persons. In fact, the view that morally competent persons are those who acquire such a moral sensibility is also held by some generalists. By mentioning this, we showed that some particularists also make a misleading charge against moral generalism, saying that the adherence to moral generalizations would imply committing themselves to "rule-fetishism." Nevertheless, given that both moral particularists and generalists agree that morally adept persons are those who cultivate moral sensibility, this opens the possibility of developing an account of moral education that is committed to moral particularism.

In order to develop an account of moral education that is committed to moral particularism, we inquired further into the notion of moral competence by appealing to the traditional Aristotelian view of *phronesis*. Moral particularists, such as Dancy, argue that in the Aristotelian picture of morality, one will not find that an excellent moral agent (a *phronimos*) has anything like a list of rules at his or her command. Such a person, however, can exercise fine perceptions and judgments where moral generalizations do not play a role. For Dancy, such a person cultivates his or her moral sensibility so that he or she can correctly recognize the features of the situation that are morally relevant and respond appropriately to them. Dancy also mentions that in order to reach the state of *phronesis*, moral education plays a significant role. However, his thoughts that morally competent persons have cultivated their moral sensibility and that moral education plays a significant role in such a cultivation process are rather tenuous or sketchy. Therefore, to put flesh on these adumbrated thoughts, we inquired into McDowell's notion of moral sensibility and his idea of moral education. McDowell is a realist with regard to the existence of moral facts. Knowledge about such facts, however, can only be acquired by those who possess the requisite moral concepts. For him, moral sensibility is then not understood in the usual sense, where feelings, emotions, or desires are involved, but it is understood as a conceptual ability. Furthermore, he stresses that such a conceptual ability is a general (or unified) ability to discern when an agent should exercise certain virtues, such as being kind, and when he or she should not. This means that for a morally competent person, rules or generalizations, such as that one ought to be kind, honest, or brave, do not play

any role. He further contends that moral education, which is understood in terms of moral upbringing (he uses the German term *Bildung*), is the natural way to initiate moral novices into the space of (moral) reasons, i.e., to lead them toward the state of conceptual sensitivity to moral reasons and the state of being able to respond to them appropriately.

McDowell's conception is rich. However, we contended that such a view cannot do justice to the indubitable roles of the non-cognitive aspects of human nature. McDowell's intellectualist view about moral sensitivity captures only the *active* response of the mind toward the features of the situation, but it fails to properly account for the *passive* response to them. In our view, the appropriate place for such a passive response is the emotional side of human nature. Thus, we proposed an interdependent thesis of moral competence, where a competent moral agent cultivates not only his or her conceptual ability, but also emotional sensitivity toward moral reasons. We contended that this view is corroborated by recent findings in neuroscience and psychology, which suggest that emotion and reason are interdependent and do not dominate each other.

After arguing for our view on moral competence, we suggested two practical means to develop such a competence. We adopted the term "immersion," which is popular in language teaching, to describe these means. Our idea was that moral upbringing would best be carried out through a practice of "sinking and swimming," i.e., immersion, into moral cases. The two ways of immersion that we recommended are through the humanities and practical immersion. We agreed with Martha Nussbaum that moral sensitivities would best be developed through discussing literature, history, politics, and society, as well as through contemplating imaginative and artistic works. However, Nussbaum's suggestion has several shortcomings. In regard to the utilization of literary works, we argued that this way is only possible with a suitable infrastructure, such as the availability of good literature and reading culture. In many places, however, such an infrastructure is unavailable. Thus, we proposed an alternative way of immersion, which is through direct participation in solving concrete moral cases. This practice can be pursued in different contexts. Surely, what is required here is the availability of moral educators who can help moral novices recognize the morally relevant features of situations and respond to them appropriately. The desired outcome of such a practice would not be certain moral generalizations or principles, but instead some moral insights and experiences. We also argued that these two ways of cultivating moral sensibility, through humanities and practical immersion, could also be implemented in the context of school curricula, being aware that schools are not only institutions to teach and learn theoretical materials, but they are also supposed to educate moral agents. We think that if moral reflection permeates the study of the humanities and classroom activities or events, this will naturally help children develop their moral sensibility.

To summarize the result of our argument, we claim that we did not only debunk moral generalism but also provided a constructive view about morality

in general. However, it is important to be clear that this investigation provides only general arguments against the existence and role of moral generalizations. We did not consider every possible form of moral generalization, or every possible nonmoral property, or every possible set of such properties. Nevertheless, we are confident that the examples of moral generalizations and the set of nonmoral properties that we considered were not just arbitrary choices. They were chosen because they seem to well illustrate the conceptions we wanted to explain. Surely, a fine-grained description of each example might be much more complex. Furthermore, this investigation did not intend to provide a complete account or defense of moral particularism, and we dealt only with the key arguments of moral generalism and moral particularism. Likewise, we did not intend to cover further implications. For instance, we did not deal with the possible impact of moral generalizations or their absence on politics or on maintaining the stability of a society. We also did not deal deeply with the question of how moral particularists would come to correct moral judgments, given the unavailability of substantial true moral generalizations.

Regarding this last issue, however, the conception of particularist moral epistemology we proposed (see Section 6.3) might be instructive. We constrain ourselves to a sketch. Since we think that there are particular moral truths, particular moral judgments might be true in a realist sense of truth. If there is a moral disagreement to the effect that both judgments are contradictory (e.g., if judgments *p* and *q* are in dispute and *p* and *q* are contradictory), then one of them must be true. Note, however, that not all moral disagreements are strict logical contradictions. But, as an example of how we would deal with the issue of moral disagreement, we might restrict ourselves to the consideration of these kinds of moral disagreements. Since moral particularists think that moral generalizations do not play a role in resolving such disagreements, we might entertain the idea that it is epistemological principles that instead should suffice to adjudicate these disputing moral judgments. The adjudicator of this disagreement might ask, for instance, which judgment is more reasonable or which judgment is supported by weightier reasons. Which epistemological principles are appropriate is, however, beyond the scope of this book.

Furthermore, despite the fact that there are some issues that we did not deal with, there is one important insight from the investigation that we will consider: at the individual level, we need to be critical regarding our tendency to be moral generalists, given that some general ethical beliefs appear to be resilient. A closer look at this issue will be given in the next section.

8.2 The Non-Resilience of General Moral Beliefs

At the phenomenological level, we have a tendency to hold that some of our beliefs, whether true or false, are immune to changes in circumstances. For instance, some people firmly believe that the earth is flat, although it is not, and there are plenty of counterarguments against it. Surely, not all beliefs we firmly

hold are false. There are some true resilient beliefs that are appropriate and/or useful, e.g., the belief that human brains cannot survive for a long period of time in an environment with insufficient amounts of oxygen. In the moral domain, some people might assume that there are resilient ethical beliefs. Presumably, they are usually general ethical beliefs, i.e., beliefs in regard to general moral facts. If this is the case, then we seem to have a tendency to be moral generalists. Given the points presented in this inquiry, we should be cautious of such general ethical ideas, or at least of our predisposition to hold such beliefs firmly, believing that they are impervious to changes in circumstances. Some holders of firm ethical beliefs might be generalists of the position (G_1) in table 5.1, presupposing, or perhaps even maintaining, that these general ethical beliefs depict the tight relation between the moral and nonmoral properties or that certain nonmoral properties retain their moral relevance in every circumstance. Others might hold the position (G_2), thinking that such general beliefs only point out the moral tendency of certain nonmoral properties, but how these nonmoral properties would be relevant is fully determined by the context. Recall that we have argued that (G_1) is hardly defensible. (G_2) can also not be held if we think that these general beliefs are true in a realist sense of truth.

Given the abovementioned considerations, we suggest that the best position to hold is (P_1), asserting that some nonmoral properties might have a certain moral tendency but, at the same time, holding the moral particularists' claim that there are no substantial true moral generalizations. This means that we propose to abandon the idea that some general moral beliefs are resilient to the changes of circumstances. This, however, does not imply that there are no true moral beliefs at all. As argued in Chapter 6, moral particularists of the position (P_1) maintain that there are some particular true moral beliefs (where truth here is understood in the realist sense).

Nevertheless, for some people, our arguments might still be unpersuasive, and they might consider general moral beliefs as necessary both at the individual and social levels. For those who tend to hold such a position, we suggest that (G_2) is the most plausible generalist option. This means that, for them, some general moral beliefs hold but are revisable, i.e., nonresilient. In some contexts, these moral beliefs can therefore be altered. However, this stance comes with a price: one must therefore give up the idea that these general moral beliefs are true in a realist sense of truth. Nevertheless, the proponents of this position might regard these general moral beliefs as true in a nonrealist sense of truth. This means that, if truth is the condition for beliefs to be resilient, those who hold such resilient general ethical beliefs must concede that the truth of such beliefs is understood in a nonrealist sense.

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Index

Albertzart, Maike, 138, 251
Alston, William P., 177
Alvarez, Maria, 16
Anscombe, Elisabeth, 9, 29, 32, 145
    antitheory, *see* antitheory
antitheory, 9–11
    and particularism, 11
Aquinas, St. Thomas, 26-27, 39, 41
Aristotelian ethics, 11-14
    and particularism, 11
Austin, John, 27

Baars, Bernard J., 263
Baker, Derek, 168
Bakhurst, David, 250, 267
Bennett, Jonathan, 83, 89, 101-102
Bentham, Jeremy, 1
Blackburn, Simon, 129-130, 276
Broome, John, 168, 232

Carnap, Rudolf, 153
Copp, David, 168
Crisp, Roger, 208
Cullity, Garrett, 146
Cummins, Jim, 265

Dancy, Jonathan, 2, 6, 12, 16, 38, 46, 57, 68, 71, 84, 90, 110, 119, 124, 138, 201, 208, 216, 226, 234, 243, 251
Davidson, Donald, 171
de Regt, Henk, 193
Dennett, Daniel, 263
Dray, William, 207
Dreier, Jamie, 92, 99

Enoch, David, 172

Foot, Philippa, 9, 33, 170, 258
Frege, Gottlob, 35, 36

Gensler, Harry J., 55
Gert, Bernard, 2, 34
Gert, Joshua, 2, 34
Gertken, Jan, 203-205
Giacomoni, Paola, 259
Gibbard, Allan, 210
Gleeson, Andrew, 250
Greco, John, 194
Griffin, David, 97-99
Griffiths, Paul E., 264
grounding
    normative, 43-44

Habermas, Jürgen, 179, 184-186
Hare, Richard M., 25, 42, 57, 64, 71, 95, 99, 101, 103, 138, 276
Harman, Gilbert, 212
Harrison, Gerald, 90
Hart, H. L. A., 27, 34, 48, 164
Hattiangadi, Anandi, 100
Hegel, G. W. H., 260
Hicks, Amelia, 139
Hills, Alison, 100
Hooker, Brad, 249-250
Hume, David, 15, 17
Hyman, Jonathan, 233

immersion and moral education, 265, 284
intuitionism in ethics, 6
    and particularism, 6-8
Irwin, Terence, 14, 43, 252

Jackson, Frank, 80, 89, 101, 106, 131, 204, 277
Jonsen, Albert R., 8
justification
    coherentism, 215
    foundationalism, 214
    narrative, 216

Kant, Immanuel, 2, 13
Kenny, Anthony, 146, 226
Kihlbom, Ulrik, 19
Kinsbourne, Marcel, 263
Kirchin, Simon, 74, 136
Klagge, James, 88, 103
Kohlberg, Lawrence, 266
Kripke, Saul, 78

Lance, Marc, 31, 133, 154, 160, 207
Leibowitz, Uri D., 13
Little, Margaret, 31, 84, 110, 113, 131, 138, 154, 160, 207, 234
Locke, John, 256
Louden, Robert, 12
Lowe, Jonathan, 31
Löffler, Winfried, 218

Mackie, J. L., 17, 179, 256
McDowell, John, 12, 33, 68, 75, 213, 254, 258
McKeever, Sean, 138, 141, 142, 146, 159, 235, 237
McLaughlin, Brian, 93
McNaughton, David, 20
McPherson, Tristram, 89, 172, 175
Mill, John Stuart, 2, 29
  moral generalization, 4, 23
  code of conduct, 34
  codification, 3, 238
  defeasible, 146, 160
  formal, 49
  hedged principles, 181, 239
  loose, 41, 50
  material, 48
  moral codes, 34, 272
  moral formulae, 35, 272
  moral laws, 26-31, 272
  moral norms, 31-34, 272
  moral principles, 23, 42, 64, 125, 272
  tight, 49, 273
moral reasons
  and particularism, 15
  atomism, 234
  holism, 114, 234-244
  kinds of, 196
Murphy, Mark C., 31

Nica, Daniel, 217
Niederbacher, Bruno, 44, 138, 154, 186, 205, 211
nonmonotonicity, 144
  of moral reasoning, 144, 166
Nussbaum, Martha C., 12, 265

Parfit, Derek, 171, 184
Pettit, Philip, 106, 277
phronesis, 248, 251, 254,
  and phronimos, 251, 257, 261, 262, 283
Putnam, Hilary, 78, 113

Rawls, John, 37
Raz, Joseph, 15, 17, 18, 34
reflective equilibrium, 8
resilient ethical beliefs, 286
resultance, 84, 118
rhetoric quality, 218
Ridge, Michael, 90, 99, 138, 141, 144, 159
Roberts, Debbie, 94, 96, 99
Ross, William D., 7, 10, 138, 201
  on prima facie duties, 10, 171

Scanlon, T. M., 15, 66, 136
Schlechta, Karl, 142
Schorth, Jörg, 90
Schurz, Gerhard, 181
Schwarz, Lisa, 168, 173
Scriven, Michael, 207
shapelessness hypothesis, 74, 261
Sherman, Nancy, 13, 264
Sidgwick, Henry, 7, 54
Singer, M. G., 56
Sinnott-Armstrong, W., 101
Smith, Michael, 106, 277
Southwood, Nicholas, 168
Street, Sharon, 180
supervenience in ethics, 198, 222, 278
  argument from, 85
  ascriptive and ontological, 88
  formula, 86

Thomas, Alan, 139, 143, 188
Thomson, J. J., 86, 168
Tiffany, Evan, 168
Toulmin, Stephen, 8
Tsu, Peter Shiu-Hwa, 84, 115-126, 132, 158-165

universalizability analytic truth, 59-60
  argument from, 54
  formula, 59, 60

von Wright, Georg Henrik, 31-34
Väyrynen, Pekka, 98, 148, 150, 181

Wiggins, David, 12
Williams, Bernard, 9
  antitheory, *see* antitheory
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 77, 229, 276
Wojtanowska, Weronika, 262
Wood, Allen W., 37

Zangwill, Nick, 195, 219-222

Ethik in der Praxis/Practical Ethics
Studien/Studies
begründet von Hans-Martin Sass (†)
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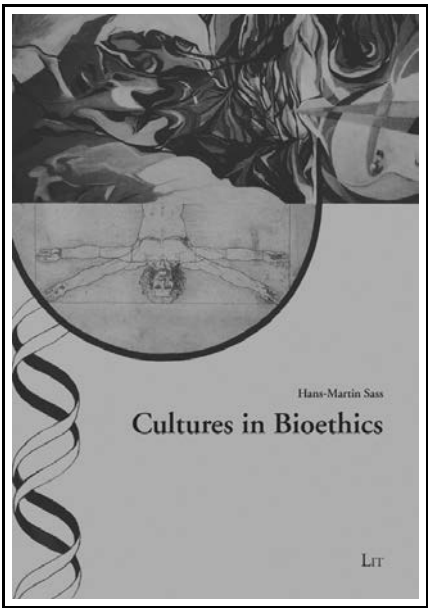

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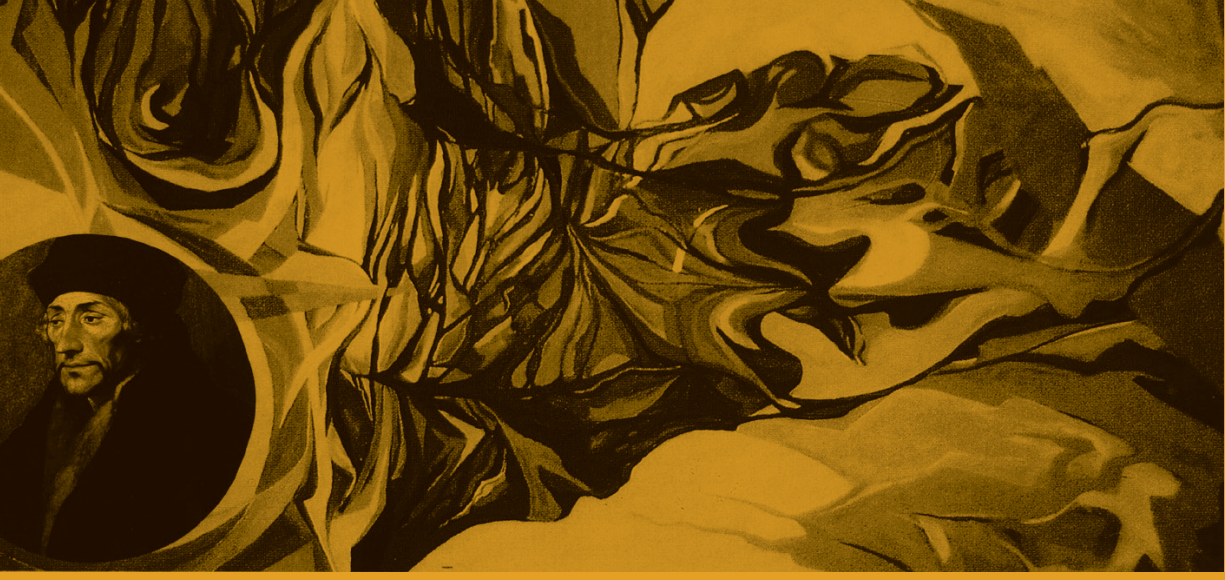
Harmonizing Bioethics
Global Way in Integrating People and Values
Harmonizing Bioethics is about relationships of peoples and cultures, our civilizations and living environments. Following the original concept of bioethics by Fritz Jahr, we search for harmonizing discourses in the process of industrialization and globalization. Confucius 'compassion' and Jesus 'love your neighbor' are the global backbones of our actual and future deliberations. 'Do not hurt, be compassionate, be respectful, be responsible'. Issues such as caring for the poor, euthanasia, organ transplantation and physician-lay collaboration and teamwork are discussed in transcultural evaluation. A special aspect of urban bioethics and culture discusses also the influence of artificial intelligence. Building upon these pluriperspective grounds will direct us and the world in future collaboration as a bridge in global ways in integrating peoples and values advancing to a new age for all.
vol. 49, 2020, 264 pp., 39,90 €, pb., ISBN-CH 978-3-643-91360-9

Martin Woesler; Hans-Martin Sass (Eds.)
Medicine and Ethics in Times of Corona
The Corona pandemic kills people, endangers families, friends, communities, companies, institutions, societies, economies and global networks. It brings about triage, unemployment, social distancing, and home schooling. Countries respond differently, often set aside civil and basic human rights. Families and friends cannot get together, visiting the sick, nor attending funerals. This pestilence is clearly a cultural, economic and political disease. 40 leaders in medical and sociological research, in politics, religion, and consulting from 24 countries offer diverse, sometimes controversial answers, collected by Martin Woesler and Hans-Martin Sass .
vol. 47, 2020, 448 pp., 49,90 €, pb., ISBN-CH 978-3-643-91320-3

Hermes A. Kick
Border Situations – Crises – Postcritical Creativity
Karl Jaspers and Processdynamic Perspectives
For none of the central survival problems of mankind, which include the increase of the world population, limited resources, transcultural communication problems and information overload, convincing solution concepts exist so far. The areas of tension mentioned are taken up in this volume and placed in the context of overstrain and rebellion of the individual and society. They are the impetus for philosophical thinking and for the conceptualization of the process-dynamic approach as a survival strategy that leads to practical philosophy. Overcoming the borderline situation shows "what man actually is and can become" (Karl Jaspers). Using numerous examples from the fields of psychotherapy, artistic and political action, this book shows that historical and phenomenological analysis needs to be complemented by a process-dynamic approach.
vol. 46, 2020, 218 pp., 39,90 €, pb., ISBN-CH 978-3-643-91287-9



How should we decide what to do? How should we justify our actions? How can we know which action is the right thing to do? To answer these questions, philosophers usually look for one or more principles of morality. The idea that morality should be grounded in one or more principles or generalizations is called moral generalism. In this book, this idea and its arguments are debunked, and a strong moral particularism is advocated. The author argues that there are no substantive true moral generalizations, and that the existence and provision of such generalizations are not necessary conditions for plausible moral thought and action. Three arguments in favor of moral particularism are presented. Firstly, even though some types of actions, such as torturing people or helping the needy, might have moral properties of their own, the propositions about them cannot be true. Secondly, moral generalizations are not necessarily needed to understand and explain moral facts ontologically. Thirdly, moral education should be carried out through immersion in moral practice instead of the inculcation of moral principles.

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