A Kantian Reconciliation of Moral Realism and Moral Supervenience

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
at Trinity College Dublin

by

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Abstract

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The 'Moral Supervenience' thesis is a deeply intuitive and popular one within philosophy, and can be defined as follows: "There can be no changes in any moral properties without at least some kind of change in non-moral properties." What this thesis basically states is that there is a necessary connection (knowable on an *a priori* basis) between the moral and non-moral properties of any given situation. In other words, when you have two actions that at least appear identical, they can only have different moral properties if the non-moral properties are different in a morally relevant way (for instance, cutting someone may, on the face of it, be wrong, unless a surgeon is doing the cutting with informed consent, for example).

When this thesis is combined with moral realism (i.e., the view that there are moral facts that are objectively true or false on an attitude-independent basis), Simon Blackburn claims that a mystery is created: how is it that there can be this necessary connection between moral and non-moral properties, when there is no logical entailment from one to the other? Blackburn advocates an alternative account of morality: rather than there being objective attitude-independent moral facts, he claims that moral judgements necessarily have attitudinal content. He also thinks that his account better explains supervenience than moral realism, and thus claims that we ought to accept his account.

In this dissertation, my aim is to identify how a moral realist could respond to Blackburn's argument. After setting out the view of moral realism, the notion of moral supervenience, and Blackburn's argument in greater detail in the first chapter, as well as its historical inspiration dating back to J. L. Mackie, I aim to categorise the responses that have been, or otherwise could be, made into at least four different strategies. I will then identify which of the viable strategies is the most plausible, devoting a chapter to each.

I will then argue that Kant would have been able to defend Moral Supervenience as a conceptual thesis, by justifying the thesis analytically as a conceptual requirement of the systematic behaviour of moral facts, but equally claim that the proposition that moral facts do supervene can only be justified synthetically, and therefore could have responded to the challenge on a realist basis.

However, even if a realist interpretation of Kantian Ethics could provide a viable answer to the challenge, Blackburn's argument might still be taken to be sound if his expressivism is taken to be preferable to the Kantian synthetic practical justification of moral facts. Yet Blackburn's very own Quasi-Realist project depends upon a kind of synthetic practical justification of its own, which seems fundamentally akin to that of Kant—that is, the practical legitimacy of our moral discourse with its "realistic seeming nature". Unlike Kant though, Blackburn is committed to the claim that all moral discourse must have some attitudinal content behind it, and it is not clear how this can be explained. A realist interpretation of Kant can be preferable to Blackburn's after all, on the basis that it gets right to the heart of the mystery behind his modal challenge, but does not have to explain how all moral discourse necessarily has attitudinal content behind it.

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

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<u>Résumé</u>

<u>Chapter 1 – Realism, Supervenience, and Blackburn's Modal Challenge</u>

This chapter's central aim is to establish the parameters for achieving its goal: to provide a Kantian defence of realist moral supervenience as a solution to Simon Blackburn's modal challenge against moral realism.

The first part of the chapter aims to define moral realism. I begin by explaining the complications in defining the view, making use of Michael Smith's (1994) *The Moral Problem* to demonstrate how conflicting views on the nature of moral judgements in themselves heavily impact upon how the debate is viewed. I then proceed to utilise Stephen Finlay's (2007) 'Four Faces of Moral Realism' to demonstrate how there are a number of definitions of moral realism that vary in strength. I finish this part of the chapter by defending a definition of moral realism that seems to best fit as a target of Blackburn's modal challenges—namely that moral claims can successfully describe moral facts involving moral properties that have attitude-independent truth values.

In the second part of the chapter, I explain what moral supervenience is, i.e., the view that moral facts and natural facts necessary co-vary. After exploring the origin of the term and its usage, I point out certain intricacies that have to be addressed when cashing out a kind of supervenience thesis, using predominantly Jaegwon Kim's work on supervenience and focussing in particular on the distinction between global and local supervenience. I then explain how the moral supervenience thesis, in one version or another, is very widely accepted and taken to be a conceptual prerequisite for competent moral discourse.

In the final part of the chapter, I explain how Blackburn thinks that moral supervenience is actually problematic for the moral realist. First of all, I explain how Blackburn actually cashes out moral supervenience himself. I then explain how a ban on what he calls 'mixed worlds' (possible worlds within which moral properties supervene on some occasions but not on others) is required, but so too is the view that there can be possible worlds where moral properties do not supervene at all, at least on the analytic level. I proceed with Blackburn's explanation for why drawing analogies with other kinds of supervenience will

not help, and how specifically his quasi-realism can maintain a discourse about moral properties on a minimalist basis, as well as summarising the challenge in the form of an argument in order to point out possible responses.

Chapter 2 – The Distinction Between Moral Naturalism and Nonnaturalism, And Its Bearing on Blackburn's Modal Challenge (Or Lack Thereof)

Before assessing how realists have so far responded to Blackburn's modal challenge, the precise scope of the mystery has to be established. As already set out in Chapter 1, there are those who claim that moral naturalists are able to avoid Blackburn's mystery, to the point where the mystery itself should not be treated as applying to moral naturalism in the first place. In order to evaluate the validity of this claim, the actual distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism has to be considered. The aim of this chapter is to do precisely this. After elaborating upon the distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism, as well as the distinction's potential significance to the discussion at hand, I hope to show that this distinction provides no immediate basis for dismissing Blackburn's modal challenge, not even as a basis on which to deny premise 2 of Blackburn's argument.

I demonstrate this by exploring the possible bases on which the distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism might reduce the scope of Blackburn's modal challenge, based on the different approaches highlighted by Finlay (2007), repudiating each in turn. I will then explore the distinction between reductive and non-reductive forms of moral naturalism, and highlight how a commitment to a reductive form of naturalism might present a basis on which to reject the second premise of Blackburn's argument. I will then show why such a commitment might be an unappealing one to make. By presenting Caj Strandberg's (2004) more restricted version of G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument (1903) to apply to what he refers to as 'analytic reductionism', I will adjust the argument in order to put into question any view that would constitute a denial of the second premise of Blackburn's argument. In doing so, I hope to undermine appeals to naturalism as a means of avoiding or responding to Blackburn's modal challenge.

Chapter 3 – Why Realists Need to Defend Supervenience, Why Realists Still Need to Overcome Blackburn's Modal Challenge, And The Proposed Kantian Reconciliation of Moral Realism and Supervenience

In the third chapter, I will identify the remaining available strategies for responding to Blackburn, and discuss why they may not be adequate. These strategies are as follows:

1. To deny the supervenience thesis as a conceptual claim, as Alison Hills (2009) and Gerald Harrison (2013) have done. Although alternatives have been offered to capture how situational factors can change our moral judgements, without supervenience it is only contingent that they do so, or, in other words, a 'brute fact'.

2. To reject the need to answer Blackburn's modal challenge entirely, by explaining away the analytic possibility of a mixed world as merely an incidental fact (as philosophers like James Dreier and Russ Shafer-Landau (2003) have done).

3. To provide a direct response to Blackburn's modal challenge, which provides an explanation for the mystery being the analytic possibility of mixed worlds, which renders Blackburn's argument invalid.

I will first respond to calls for rejecting moral supervenience as an *a priori* truth, with the aim of showing that such a rejection would greatly undermine the conceptual rigidity that any moral theory needs, whether realist or not. I then review the attempts to dismiss or otherwise repudiate Blackburn's modal challenge to moral realism.

After defending the claim that the mystery does call for an independent explanation beyond the supervenience thesis in itself (as those like Shafer-Landau (2003) suggest as an approach), I will also present Nick Zangwill's (1995) response to Blackburn's modal challenge, who claims that his modal challenge can be answered on the basis that moral supervenience is only justified on a Kantian *synthetic a priori* basis, and determines that whilst this is the best strategy to take, more explanation is required than simply taking supervenience to be a brute fact, and that Kant's own moral theory could provide this.

Chapter 4 – Interpreting a Kantian Account of Moral Realism, and Why It Can and Should be Reconciled with Kantian Accounts of Constructivism

In the fourth chapter, I will be discussing the debate surrounding the possibility of interpreting Kant as either a moral realist or moral anti-realist, to establish the basis on which to propose a Kantian solution to Blackburn's modal challenge (even if not necessarily one that Kant would have subscribed to). I will start by addressing Frederik Rauscher's (2002/2015) arguments that the methodology in the *Groundwork* (1785) and Kant's project of Transcendental Idealism in general are both inconsistent with a realist interpretation of Kant, which could be used to undermine the aim of deriving a realist theory from Kantian Ethics. I will then proceed to explain how there is a spectrum of metaethical interpretations of Kant with different levels of metaphysical commitments (which have been advocated by Hills (2008), Robert Stern (2009), Terrence Irwin (2004/2009), Karl Ameriks (2003), and others). I will also argue that Kant's grounding of morality in autonomy has no bearing on the question of whether any moral theory derived from his work can count as realist.

I will then argue that irrespective of which level of metaphysical commitment you choose, even the metaphysically weakest metaethical account of Kantianism (constructivist) is both compatible and best interpreted with realist commitments. Whilst constructivists may correctly cite the formal methodology for determining the rightness of actions, I argue that nevertheless a realist commitment is required. First, I defend an understanding of moral realism that can accommodate Kantian constructivism in the first place; one that can still reject error theories and non-cognitivist views of morality, without having to commit specifically to any heavy-duty moral ontology.

I then build on an attack made by Russ Shafer-Landau (2003) against constructivism, which amounts to the claim that the constructions must have realist foundations, or else they are morally arbitrary. I put forward an alternative kind of dilemma to the one that Shafer-Landau (2003) suggests, to prevent constructivists from responding with a *basic* (i.e., stance-dependent) realism that David Copp (2005) defends. Adapting a parallel argument

based on one of Mary Midgley's (1981) own arguments against moral relativism, in which she claims cultural relativism collapses into moral *isolationism*, I argue by analogy that Kantian constructivism either collapses into a problematic kind of moral subjectivism, or else requires there to be one objectively correct construction process based on a conception of the ideal rational agent, and hence at least a minimal kind of moral realism. Through this process only one correct set of moral principles could be constructed, and as such moral claims would be true in virtue of these moral principles. Even without any metaphysical commitment to a mind-independent moral reality *per se*, this commitment would, according to my defended definition, count as a moral realist one.

Chapter 5 – In Defence of the Kantian A Priori Synthetic Account of Supervenience as a Solution to Blackburn's Modal Challenge

In this final chapter, I will explain how a commitment to moral supervenience can be found in Kant's moral theory, and subsequently how supervenience can cohere with different versions of Kantian moral realism. In providing my own account of moral supervenience, I will be looking into the various interpretations of Kant's works (in particular, the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*) made in particular by scholars in the past century, who, with the growth of independent interest in metaethics, have debated what metaethical views Kant defended in his work (or at least what views are compatible with his moral theory).

I will also address potential objections to my interpretation of supervenience in Kant, for instance Scott Forschler's (2012) claim that Kant actually abandons his moral supervenience claim in the second section of the *Groundwork* (1785) as a result of endorsing the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative (the Formulation of Universal Law), and the Formulation's incompatibility with Supervenience (at least according to Forschler).

I will then specifically try to explain how exactly the *practical* nature of the justification might fit with the possible different kinds of realism that could be attributed to Kant, as established in the preceding chapter, and these are dependent on the strength of the metaphysical commitments of each interpretation. So, at the extreme end, in the

constructivist reading of Kant's moral realism, the *practical* justification for the existence of moral facts (which can be explained, for instance, in terms of Henry Allison's (2004) interpretation that regarding ourselves as bound by the moral law is necessary for the possibility of the practical standpoint) may be analogous to the very justification that Blackburn provides for his *quasi*-realism. At the other extreme, where Kant's realism is read (as by Ameriks (2003), for instance), the *practical* justification underpins a 'dogmatic' rationalism that Kant uniquely defends in his moral theory (where the validity of our moral experiences is taken for granted as a necessary fundamental), which may be analogous to indispensability arguments being used to defend robust moral realism in contemporary debates by the likes of David Enoch (2011). I will address concerns relating to the use of Kant's synthetic a priori as a means to explain the supervenience thesis by defending the claim that with a substantive reading of noumena, Kant's synthetic a priori is in fact compatible with a level of skepticism that could even be taken to the lengths of external world skepticism. I aim to show that skepticism can be fully accommodated within Kant's epistemology, in a way that makes skepticism much less problematic for moral metaphysics.

I will then conclude by comparing my proposed forms of Kantian moral realism to Blackburn's projectivism as a means to respond to the modal challenge. I will argue that the latter cannot be taken as preferable to the former, in being either ontologically more efficient or explanatorily proficient. As a result, I conclude that my proposed solution to Blackburn's modal challenge successfully repudiates Blackburn's resultant argument against moral realism.

__Introduction__

With a specific focus that has developed in the analytic tradition for a little over a century, metaethics has been systematised as a subject of inquiry in an attempt to gain a more specific understanding of what exactly morality is, where it comes from, and how agents relate to it.

One of the most fundamental questions in this subject of inquiry concerns morality's metaphysical status: is morality somehow dependent on agents as the subject of moral discourse, or is morality in some sense an independent feature of the world? This question has in recent times been framed in terms of two opposing sets of views within metaethics: moral realism and moral anti-realism. Moral realists and anti-realists specifically tend to have opposing answers to the following question: are there any mind-independent moral **facts or truths**? Those who give an account of morality that would require a 'yes' response to that question would normally be classified as moral realists, and those who do not, moral anti-realists.

Not only is there disagreement on how the lines between the two sets of views need to be drawn, since there is no consensus on how moral realism *in itself* ought to be understood as a view, but there are also doubts about whether or not this question is one that can be taken seriously as an independent question from first-order ethical ones. Philosophers like Ronald Dworkin (2010) for instance have argued that to think there are answers to moral questions in the first place requires that any moral anti-realist views are unintelligible, and that therefore these metaethical questions cannot be investigated on a detached basis from the rest of ethics. Nevertheless, despite there being no consensus on how to define their positions, it is generally accepted that there is a substantive debate to be had (and being had) between moral realists and anti-realists.

Simon Blackburn (1993) is one among many who upset the distinction between moral realism and anti-realism, blurring the lines between the two, due to a defence of what he calls *quasi*-realism. Although one might wish to call his metaethical position realist in the sense that he defends the claim that there *are* mind-independent moral facts, his position is

a significant departure from traditional accounts of moral realism, because he argues that moral claims are conceptually attitudinal, and the moral facts that make them true or false are simply posited in order to generate moral principles to guide our actions. Therefore to make a moral judgment according to Blackburn is to be expressing an *attitude* about an action, event, or situation (rather than expressing a belief or proposition that can be true or false, in virtue of some agent-independent state of affairs).

Blackburn (1985) set one of the most significant challenges to moral realism, which is to give an account for how moral facts by conceptual necessity co-vary with certain relevant non-moral facts, or in other words, an account of Moral Supervenience. 'Moral Supervenience' may sound like a highly technical term, but it in itself is a commonsensical, intuitive claim about the nature of moral facts (at least for moral realists). I take the following to be a brief definition of moral supervenience:

Moral Supervenience: "There can be no changes in any moral properties without at least some kind of change in non-moral properties."

Take the commonly used example of 'cutting someone' – this action is ordinarily taken *prima facie* as morally wrong. However, there are cases where it might be the morally right thing to do (for instance if you're a surgeon in an operating theatre, and someone needs their appendix taking out). Nevertheless, non-moral properties here are different in these scenarios (you're a surgeon, you're operating on a patient, there is a prior agreement with this patient, etc.). So when you have two actions that at least appear identical, they can only have different moral properties if the non-moral properties are different in a morally relevant way.

So what supervenience entails is that an action couldn't be taken to be morally right in one instance but not another, unless there were some differences in the natural facts about the matter. We couldn't for instance take anyone replicating actions and all the relevant circumstances from a certain situation as acting morally, when in said situation the actions were taken to be *immoral*. This seems to be a necessary conceptual claim for a realist, and one that has independent intuitive appeal.

There has been much debate in the recent decades about whether this notion of moral supervenience creates problems for moral realists, sufficient perhaps to undermine the position entirely. As previously mentioned, Blackburn (1985a) poses perhaps the most famous attack of this kind on moral realism. He uses a modal argument of the following form to demonstrate moral anti-realism's favourableness over moral realism:

1) It is analytically necessary that, if in one situation certain moral as well as non-moral properties obtain, then there must be the same moral properties in all situations with the same set of non-moral properties.
{Necessarily [($\exists$x) (G*x & Fx) → ($\forall$y)(G*y → Fy)]}

2) There being a set of such non-moral properties without any moral properties does not entail a logical contradiction. In other words, it is analytically possible for these non-moral properties to obtain without any moral properties doing so.
{Possibly ($\exists$x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

3) Given premises 1 and 2, any viable metaethical view must explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

4) Moral realism cannot explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

Conclusion) Moral realism is not a viable metaethical view.

For the sake of expedience, it may be best to simply understand 'F' as the set of moral properties, and 'G*' as 'morally relevant' non-moral properties. G* properties are in other words the properties that moral properties supervene on (so the circumstantial factors that would impact on the moral evaluation of an action).

Premise 1 is just Blackburn's stating of the supervenience thesis, but premise 2 states that it is possible that some G* (morally relevant natural/non-moral) properties are present without their supervening F (moral) properties. In other words, there is at least one possible world, where there are morally relevant non-moral properties without at least some supervening moral properties.

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This entails the possibility of what Blackburn calls 'mixed worlds'. The ways in which the instantiation of moral properties can fluctuate can be for instance on geographical or temporal factors. So a mixed world could be one where moral properties may only be instantiated at certain times of the day, or perhaps only in one certain part of the world. Blackburn claims that even if one took it to be metaphysically impossible (in virtue of violating at least one kind of metaphysical principle or law) for there to be G* properties without corresponding F properties, there is nevertheless still an *analytic* possibility (which might still hold despite the weaker constraint of metaphysical possibility). Blackburn takes it to be acceptable to claim that mixed worlds are metaphysically impossible, on the basis that this is not only internally consistent, but also consistent with premise 1.

Having accepted this analytic possibility, the moral realist is then left with a mystery of how to explain it. According to Blackburn on the other hand, moral anti-realists are not necessarily left with this mystery. If for instance, as Blackburn claims, moral properties are grounded in human psychology rather than in entirely independent matters of fact, the so-called 'ban of mixed worlds' is required for the function of morality in order to maintain consistency. For Blackburn, there cannot be opposing moral facts about actions simply because they take place at different times of day, or in different sides of the world, unless of course these factors had some kind of moral relevance. On the moral realist account however, no analogous inconsistency can be pointed to, which is why the mystery is left for moral realists to solve.

Whilst many agree with Blackburn in response to his paper, believing that his argument does create problems for moral realists, many claim that this is only the case for ethical non-naturalists (e.g. Hills (2009) and McPherson (2012)). The claim seems to be plausible, since the necessary connection between non-moral and moral properties doesn't seem so mysterious if moral properties simply *are* natural properties in some sense. However, I will be arguing that all anti-reductionists (naturalists included) have difficulties in explaining moral supervenience, much like Michael Ridge (2007).

Given not only the popularity of moral realism amongst philosophers, but also the strong intuitions in favour of moral realism that are commonly found amongst the general populus

as a whole, it seems important to provide a clear account of how to interpret the connection between moral and relevant non-moral properties, in light of Blackburn's modal argument.

The treatment of the debate concerning moral supervenience has been frequently treated as analogous to other kinds of supervenience theses (such as that of mental properties on physical properties in the Philosophy of Mind). Using such analogies has had significant sway in the debate about moral supervenience, and has been particularly visible in discussions surrounding Russ Shafer-Landau's (2003) approach to the moral supervenience debate. However, it seems as if reasons ought to be given to investigating moral supervenience in this way; Nick Zangwill (2008) for instance, claims that moral supervenience is quite *un*like other kinds of supervenience. In any case, it does seem as if it would be worth considering the moral supervenience debate independently of debates about other kinds of supervenience, unless good reasons not to arise.

In this dissertation, my aim is to identify how a moral realist could respond to Blackburn's argument. After setting out the view of moral realism, the notion of moral supervenience, and Blackburn's argument in greater detail in the first chapter, as well as its historical inspiration dating back to Mackie, I aim to categorise the responses that have or otherwise could be made into at least four different strategies. I will then identify which of the viable strategies is the most plausible, devoting a chapter to each. These four strategies are as follows:

The first strategy would be to reject premise 2, and deny the possibility of a mixed world even on an analytic level. Blackburn's justification for premise 2 is the principle that there is no necessary connection (at least in an analytic sense) between moral and non-moral properties. This principle is grounded in similar intuitions as the ones underlying G. E. Moore's (1903) "Open-Question" argument, though it does appear on a *prima facie* level that these intuitions could arguably be disputed. Blackburn's intuitions here amount to the claim that there is always a question that could be asked without making a logical contradiction, that being whether there are particular moral properties supervening on natural properties. In other words - "We are in circumstances with G* properties, but do F moral properties obtain?". However, one may try to defend the claim that there is such an entailment. Establishing whether or not this sort of response could work may require a verdict on whether there is any viable account of the open question argument.

The second strategy would be to reject the first premise, and simply deny the supervenience thesis. This strategy may be motivated independently of Blackburn's argument. Alison Hills (2009) advocates this approach whilst managing to still explain the connection between F and G* properties as a 'constant conjunction'. She defines the constant conjunction thesis as: "In the actual world, there are no differences in moral properties without differences in (some interesting subset of the) natural properties." (Hills (2009), p. 168.)

Although this thesis captures how situational factors can change our moral judgments, it is merely contingent that they do: "It is simply a brute fact, admittedly one that makes a certain kind of moral reasoning and moral argument possible" (Ibid., p. 176). To say, for instance, that it is merely a brute fact that anyone who happens to find themselves in the same relevant circumstances as Hitler is just as bad a person as Hitler seems a very troublesome thing to say. It would mean accepting the possibility that someone could be in the same circumstances as Hitler in another possible world and not be acting immorally. In short, moral judgments would only be correct contingently (in so far as it only happens to be true in the actual world), and one could never say that they are *necessarily* correct. So whilst I intend to consider this strategy in greater detail, I do not think an adequate response to arguments made by those such as Zangwill (1995) that moral supervenience is a conceptual truth.

The two remaining strategies would involve the rejection of premise 3 or 4, which would involve rejecting or accounting for the "mystery" that the possibility of a mixed world produces. In order to achieve this, one of two approaches has to be made: One could either dismiss the combination of premise 1 and 2 merely as an incidental or axiomatic fact (which is how, as Zangwill notes, some who accept the metaphysical impossibility of mixed worlds choose to respond to Blackburn), or to account for the a priori impossibility of a mixed world without it being on an analytic level. This latter approach is the one adopted by Zangwill (1995b), and I find it to be highly intriguing. He claims that in fact the moral supervenience thesis is a "brute *synthetic a priori* conceptual" (Ibid., p. 256) necessity, rather than an analytic one.

The explaining away of the analytic possibility of a mixed world as merely an incidental fact (which is what James Dreier (1992) argues for instance) could be attacked as a response that begs the question. Since Blackburn's anti-realism can cash out the 'mixed-world' in terms of quasi-realist moral facts, rather than the more 'problematic' realist moral facts, Blackburn might argue that by comparison this response is unsatisfactory. As for Zangwill's (1995) approach, I will argue that although the account of moral supervenience he defends is highly contentious, it can nevertheless provide a valuable response to Blackburn's challenge, upon which a solution to the mystery can be built. I will develop this view in my last chapter.

It seems easy for a moral realist to mistakenly not think much of Blackburn's argument, on the basis that it says nothing against defending the metaphysical impossibility of a mixed world. However, having read more around the literature, I am unsure as to whether that response is satisfactory. The problem in my mind seems to be accounting for the necessary connection between G* and F properties; I think what Blackburn's argument indicates more than anything is that a better (or at least fuller) explanation needs to be given for it.

Prima facie, it does seem as if G* properties need to always have supervening F properties, making the rejection of premise 2 the most plausible option to take, but without claiming that F properties are in some way reducible to or logically entailed from G* properties (i.e. accepting some form of reductionist naturalism), the moral realist needs to give some kind of direct account. Although I endorse the supervenience thesis, I do not think that the second premise of Blackburn's argument can be denied. This is because I do not believe one can derive normative claims from purely descriptive ones.

So it seems to me that the answer to the problem is to give an alternative explanation of how one can get from 'X is committing an assassination' to 'X is doing something morally wrong' (taking the fourth strategy), in order to explain away Blackburn's "mystery". I think the correct explanation can be drawn out from Immanuel Kant's (1785/1998) moral theory, and my final chapter will be an attempt to do so. In drawing from Kant, Zangwill (1995) provides part of the available "Kantian diagnosis", but what I hope I can do is draw out a full account of it using a combination of Kantian normative ethics and metaethics (though without intending to present a direct interpretation of Kant *per se*), a combination I think which is necessitated by the need to set out an account by example at the normative ethical

level, so it is clearer to see how it can be fully incorporated into a moral theory at the first order and applied level, rather than simply providing the account at the metaethical level. I will very briefly below illustrate what this account would look like:

Kant makes it very clear in the preface of the *Groundwork* that the moral law has to be determined *a priori* (or else morality would merely be grounded in 'anthropology') and synthetically (or else questions of morality could be answered entirely by analysing moral concepts in themselves). He draws his moral theory out "analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle, and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to the common cognition in which we find it used." (IV: 392) As such, F properties, and their connection to G* properties, would be connected on an *a priori* synthetic level, meaning that the analytic possibility of a mixed world is no longer a problem for the moral realist. This is because for Kant, no concatenation of non-moral facts in any way logically entails any moral facts. In fact, there is no theoretical argument to be made for claiming that there are "moral facts" at all. Instead, moral facts are posited on the basis of *practical* justification, as such facts must be presupposed when deliberating over what courses of action to take.

To further explain the necessary connection between G* and F properties in its own right, the G* properties determine what maxims according to which human (rational) beings are acting. As for the F properties, they can under the Kantian theory be reduced to relations between such maxims and the duties that all human beings share. This is because all that determines the rightness or wrongness of an action is its accordance with the moral law, and thus whether or not the agent is adhering to his/her duties (which is determined by G* properties). The connection itself is conceptual, however its analytic nature is simply on the basis that F properties are posited on the basis of synthetic a priori justification, as are moral claims in general.

So for instance, to utilise one of Kant's (1998) own examples, some G* properties could be that of acting on the following maxim: "When I believe myself to be in need of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know I shall never do so." (IV: 422). In virtue of this maxim violating the formulations of the Categorical Imperative (because the maxim for instance is not universalisable, and would mean treating at least one individual as a mere means to an end), the supervening F property of moral wrongness

would obtain. It is very clear to see on this account of F properties that there has to be a necessary connection with G* properties, since the F properties are explicitly determined by G* properties. The supervenience thesis for Kant therefore is absolutely necessary to his moral theory.

So my counter-argument to Blackburn's attack on moral realism could be summarised as follows:

In agreement with Blackburn, I accept that any viable metaethical view must explain how both premises 1 and 2 of Blackburn's argument are true. However, I think with a Kantian account of moral realism can give us the following account of premises 1 and 2: on the one hand, premise 1 (supervenience) can be defended with Kant's conceptual analysis of morality in the GMS; on the other hand, the second premise can also be accepted, on the basis that the instantiation of moral properties themselves can only be *synthetically* justified *a priori* (i.e. justified on a *practical* rather than *theoretical* basis). So the fact that mixed-worlds are analytically possible is no concern, since moral properties are not logical entailed from moral ones. As a result, premise 4 of Blackburn's argument is false, and hence its conclusion is not supported.

With this account, although there will be a number of objections that would have to be addressed, the largest two of which being that it can be argued (and many do argue) that actually Kant was committed to a kind of moral anti-realism, moral constructivism, and that such an account of the synthetic a priori would still rely on Kant's own metaphysical world-view, transcendental idealism. So as well as explaining how Kant can provide a previously unexplored account of moral supervenience, and how it might provide the solution to Blackburn's challenge to moral realism, I will be repudiating arguments that there is no viable interpretation of Kant as a moral realist, and be arguing that all Kantian constructivists can and ought to at least reconcile their views with moral realism. I will also suggest a metaphysical approach to morality that might be derivative of Kant, without being as metaphysically heavy-handed as Kant's projects can be read to be (indeed, I hope that this account will be compatible with varying levels of metaphysical commitments, to suit varying kinds of moral realists accordingly). In the end I intend to show that Kantian metaethics (though not necessarily Kant's) can be used to reject Blackburn's

conclusion that moral anti-realism gives a better explanation of moral supervenience, and that therefore Kant's metaethics may be of significant appeal to moral realists.

Chapter 1: Moral Realism, Moral Supervenience and the Modal Challenge that Blackburn Raises for Defenders of the Combination

The central aim of this is first to set up the parameters for achieving the goal: to provide a Kantian defence of realist moral supervenience as a solution to Simon Blackburn's modal challenge against moral realism. The first two parts of this chapter aim to establish how the view of moral realism and moral supervenience should be understood; the third part of the chapter provides an overview of Blackburn's modal challenge (1985); and the chapter finishes with the set of possible responses that are examined later in the dissertation.

The first part of the chapter aims to define moral realism. First, I explain the moral realist outlook in vague terms, and then use Michael Smith's (1994) *The Moral Problem* to provide a partial explanation for why it is so difficult to draw lines between moral realism and moral anti-realism, as it aptly demonstrates that conflicting views on the nature of moral judgments affect how the debate is viewed. I use Stephen Finlay's four faces of moral realism to demonstrate that there are a number of definitions of moral realism of varying strength. I then defend a definition of moral realism that seems to best fit as a target of Blackburn's modal challenges – the claim that moral claims can successfully describe moral facts involving moral properties that have attitude independent truth values.

In the second part of the chapter, I explain moral supervenience, i.e. the view that moral facts and natural facts necessarily co-vary. The concept of supervenience was mostly introduced by R. M. Hare (1984), although touched on previously by G. E. Moore (1903), and I describe its applications in different areas of philosophy, such as the philosophy of mind. Predominantly using Jaegwon Kim's (1984/1990/1993) work on supervenience, I point out intricacies that must be addressed when cashing out a supervenience thesis, focusing on the distinction between global and local supervenience. I explain how the moral supervenience thesis is widely accepted, and is a conceptual prerequisite for competent moral discourse.

In the final part of the chapter, I explain how Blackburn considers that moral supervenience is problematic for the moral realist. First, I explain how Blackburn cashes out moral

supervenience himself. I then explain how a ban on what he refers to as 'mixed worlds' (possible worlds within which moral properties supervene on some occasions but not on others) is required, but so is the view that there can be possible worlds where moral properties do not supervene, at least on the analytic level. According to Blackburn, the moral realist cannot explain how both requirements can hold, whereas a moral anti-realist can, making the moral anti-realist's view preferable to the moral realist's. I proceed with Blackburn's explanation for why drawing analogies with other kinds of supervenience does not help, how his quasi-realism can maintain a discourse about moral properties on a minimalist basis, and point out possible responses by summarising the challenge in the form of an argument.

I. Moral Realism

What exactly is this view 'moral realism' that I am attempting to defend? Part of the reason why it is so difficult to answer this question is because there is as much disagreement and various accounts on the nature of morality, and hence its metaphysical status, as there is about what morality actually dictates. It might be argued that the problem is even worse than with normative ethical questions, as questions about metaethics, especially metaphysical questions, do not tend to feature in everyday moral discourse. So it is harder to reach a common understanding of even where to start with the debate, as it will involve debates on the semantic as well as the metaphysical level, and often the two distinct sets of questions are conflated.

A good point at which to start may be a moral debate. Imagine that person P is having an argument with person Q about whether torturing cats is morally wrong. P claims that torturing cats *is* morally wrong, whereas Q claims that it is not. The following questions can then be asked. What is the nature of the debate? Is there a genuine or substantive disagreement, or some verbal/semantic confusion? If there is a genuine debate involving a substantive conflict of views, is either P or Q objectively correct? If so, in virtue of what is either set of views correct?

A moral realist would answer yes to the second and third of these questions. The short answer to the question of what is moral realism is that these disputes concern beliefs that

can be true or false in a similar fashion to scientific beliefs. Moreover, in such disputes, where opposing and exhaustive moral views are being defended, at least one party must be objectively correct. In the above case, either P is correct in claiming that torturing cats is morally wrong, or Q is correct in claiming that it is *not* wrong. As Geoffrey Sayre-McCord states: "Realism involves embracing just two theses: (1) the claims in question, when literally construed, are literally true or false ... and (2) some are literally true. Nothing more. (Of course, a great deal is built into these two theses.)" (Sayre-McCord (1986), p. 3). Sayre-McCord points out that the moral realist essentially will come to the defence of the claim that there are moral truths to establish, defend and argue for – but also that much more needs to be explained about what the existence of such moral truths means.

Although Sayre-McCord has defined moral realism in the way that I will be defending in this dissertation, to begin to answer these metaethical questions, one needs first to establish the nature of moral claims. Smith (1994) aptly demonstrates in his book *The Moral Problem* that there seems to be a tension between several intuitions about the nature of moral claims (judgments), which has significant sway on the realism/anti-realism debate, especially with Blackburn's contribution. I shall now explain why this is so.

I.I. Smith's The Moral Problem

To explain where moral judgments arise, and how they motivate actions, Smith formulated the following three propositions in chapter one of *The Moral Problem*:

1) "Moral judgments of the form "It is right that I ϕ" express a subject's belief about an objective matter of fact, a fact about what it is right for her to do." (Smith (1994), p. 12).

Smith describes this view as "the objectivity of moral judgment" (Ibid.). In essence, the first proposition summarises the cognitivist view, that being the view that when one makes a moral judgment, that judgment simply has the form of a belief that can be correct or incorrect.

Cognitivism does not necessarily entail a realist view on morality (the view that moral judgments can be correct on the basis of moral facts). On the contrary, a cognitivist may hold the view that moral judgments presuppose an objective morality, that this

presupposition is a systematic error and, as such, moral discussion either should be eliminated entirely (this view is known as moral eliminativism), or moral judgments can be kept on the basis that they play an important function in society (moral fictionalism). In the context of this dissertation, cognitivism will be taken as a necessary condition for moral realism, otherwise it could be argued that moral realism would be compatible with non-cognitivism.

As non-cognitivists tend to be projectivists or expressivists like Blackburn, and claim that moral judgments express moral attitudes (such as admiration or disgust) rather than independent beliefs, and the purpose of this dissertation is to defend the set of metaethical views under threat from Blackburn's challenge, it would not make sense to include non-cognitivism in this set of views, as Blackburn takes his account of non-cognitivism to be shown to be preferable by his challenge. The only basis for taking non-cognitivism as compatible with moral realism as the view that Blackburn challenges would be to claim that there could be a definition of moral realism, which could either include an account of moral judgments that is both non-cognitivist as well as non-expressivist or non-projectivist and not expressivist/ projectivist accounts, or else include other expressivist/projectivist accounts that are not Blackburn's. Although I will later provide further justification for taking this stance, I cannot see any basis for justifying any definition of moral realism that would do either, so I take this to be sufficient justification for precluding non-cognitivists accounts in the definition of moral realism that I adopt in this dissertation.

The second proposition is Smith's formulation of motivational internalism:

2) "If someone judges that it is right that she ϕs then, ceteris paribus, she is motivated to ϕ." (1994, p. 12)

To elaborate, this proposition holds that moral judgments reflect opinions about why we should behave in certain ways, and that these reasons provide intrinsic motivation to conduct moral actions. This motivation need not necessarily be overriding (i.e. having these moral motivations does not ensure that one acts in correspondence with them), but it stands nonetheless with every held moral belief.

This proposition is described by Smith as 'the practicality of moral judgment', in that it explains how having moral beliefs can make you act on them. This is a requirement for the internalist view, as it holds that motivations to act morally come simply from moral beliefs and, as such, there are no necessary conditions other than moral beliefs for moral motivation.

Smith's version of internalism could be stated as follows:

"If someone judges that it is right that she ϕs then, in so far as she is rational, she is motivated to ϕ." (1994, p. 61) (This is what Smith refers to as 'the practicality requirement'.)

It is important to keep in mind that the exact line between internalism and its negation externalism is not precisely agreed, in the same way as the line between moral realism and moral anti-realism is not precisely agreed, for similar reasons. There are different accounts of how to define both motivational internalism and motivational externalism. Russ Shafer-Landau provides another good example of how to draw the line. Although he describes Smith's position as an internalist one, "externalists claim that the connection between a moral judgment and being motivated is a contingent one. Specifically, it is contingent on a person's psychological make-up and on the perceived content of moral demands." (Shafer-Landau (2000), p. 275)

Smith's original definition of internalism appears to be consistent with such claims, and so is his practicality requirement. Arguably, the extent to which one is rational is a facet of one's psychological make-up, and can determine how the content of moral demands is perceived. In this sense, one can take the connection between one's moral judgments and one's moral motivations to be contingent. However, there is a conceptual connection; although this is between moral judgments and the subsequent motivations that are believed to be present in a fully rational being.

So Shafer-Landau has a stronger definition of internalism, in that he sees it requiring a necessary connection between moral judgments and motivation. Although the practicality requirement can be read that way, in so far as no person making moral judgments might be taken to be wholly irrational, and therefore all moral judgments necessarily motivate to at

least some extent, it appears that Smith does not make a straightforward commitment to the connection being necessary. As Shafer-Landau accepts the possibility of intrinsically motivating beliefs, this is how he draws the line between internalism and externalism, and why he defends externalism.

Unlike Shafer-Landau's approach, the importance of the entire debate seems to come not only from trying to establish what if anything distinguishes normative judgments from any other kind but also, more importantly, whether one's culpability for not acting morally can be grounded purely in some form of failure to understand or appreciate one's moral obligations. If moral judgments can intrinsically motivate, the claim that such judgments ought to be treated as unlike other kinds of judgments is more defensible than not. This is particularly important when it comes to Blackburn.

The third and final proposition of *The Moral Problem* is:

3) "An agent is motivated to act in a certain way just in case she has an appropriate desire and a means-end belief, where belief and desire are, in Hume's terms, distinct existences." (1994, p. 12)

This originates from David Hume's Psychological Theory, which is that beliefs are fundamentally distinct from desires. Desires express valence towards a potential state of affairs (whether realisable, unrealisable, or already realised), whereas beliefs express views on what is the actual state of affairs. Hume had been thought to assert that the two as distinct entities are necessary and sufficient for an agent to be motivated, provided the two are relevant to one another. In short, the two need to stand independent of one another, but together they constitute motivation.

'The Moral Problem' is that all three propositions cannot be correct simultaneously, because if moral judgments express an agent's belief, there is an inconsistency between proposing that these judgments entail motivation in their own right, and the proposition that beliefs alone cannot motivate. Therefore, for a metaethical theory to stand without inconsistency, it would have to reject at least one of the three propositions, or else demonstrate how they can all be reconciled (which Smith ambitiously attempts to do).

It is reasonably clear how Blackburn ought to be categorised, at least with respect to *The Moral Problem*. Blackburn defends a view known as projectivism (or expressivism), according to which moral judgments are fundamentally evaluative rather than merely descriptive, meaning that they express attitudes (for instance, of approval or disapproval) that feature as necessary content of moral judgments. So his account of moral judgments is non-cognitivist, because to make a moral judgment is not to express an independent belief in the same way that, for example, making a scientific judgment can. As he rejects cognitivism, Blackburn defends both internalism and the Humean theory of psychology. However, as one can see from what Smith (and Finlay) says, Blackburn rejects realism with cognitivism, since he loses with cognitivism what Smith calls the 'objectivity of moral judgments'. Incidentally, the plausibility of internalism has been used as a basis on which to argue against moral realism. Naturally, for such an argument to succeed, attempts to reconcile the three propositions of *The Moral Problem* like Smith's, as well as rejections of the Humean theory of psychology, must be ruled out. Under his project of 'Quasi-Realism' though, Blackburn (1984/1993/2004) nevertheless defends the existence of moral truths, albeit simply on a deflationary account of truth.

Although perhaps enough has been said to demonstrate that non-cognitivists such as Blackburn can be treated as anti-realists, at least for the purposes of this dissertation, it is still unclear what other kinds of metaethical views should be treated as realist or anti-realist. I shall look at an overview by Finlay, in which he provides the different definitions of moral realism, and explain which definition will be assumed here.

I.II. The Four Faces of Moral Realism and Those Covered Here

Finlay's paper (2007) 'The Four Faces of Moral Realism' is intended to contextualise the more recent developments in the moral realism/anti-realism debate, with a specific goal of categorising the spectrum of different versions of moral realism that have been given contemporary defences. One of the obvious benefits to such an undertaking is that it successfully identifies the most likely places of substantive (rather than merely verbal) disagreement in the debate. It also provides a clear basis for distinguishing between sets of views where the distinctions are reasonably contested; a good example is the distinction between moral naturalism and non-naturalism. Another obvious benefit is that it provides further support for the claim that Blackburn is a moral anti-realist.

Finlay claims that the set of moral realist views can be categorised into four different 'faces', with different levels of metaphysical commitment, each giving significantly different accounts of what constitutes a moral realist view. As will become apparent, a necessary condition for accepting any face of moral realism is to accept any weaker faces. The four faces of moral realism are as follows.

1) <u>Semantic</u>: This is the weakest of the four faces, in that it is only a commitment to a realist account of what moral judgments or claims express. To accept semantic moral realism is in a sense simply to accept moral cognitivism. All that a semantic moral realist is committed to is the claim that moral claims express beliefs about attitude-independent truth values of moral propositions, and subsequently that these beliefs have truth values. Finlay (2007, p. 821) points out that this is precisely what Sayre-McCord (1986) thinks is all there is to the moral realist view, apart from the obvious additional condition that there <u>are</u> some true moral beliefs and true moral propositions. Blackburn's own views represent the typical set of views rejecting even this face of moral realism, as he rejects moral cognitivism. Those views are expressivist/projectivist, according to which moral claims do not simply state propositions that can be true or false as such; rather, these claims express the attitudes of the agent making the claims. Other examples of projectivism besides Blackburn's include Alan Gibbard's (1992), Mark Schroeder's (2007/12), and more famously A. J. Ayer's (1936).

2) <u>Ontological</u>: This face is only slightly stronger than the semantic, in that it is an additional commitment to the claim that moral claims or beliefs describe moral facts that have independent moral truth-makers. Examples include moral properties, such as goodness or simply practical reasons, and moral relations such as justification or entities such as obligations. This view tends to be called moral descriptivism. There are two bases on which the semantic face might be accepted but the ontological rejected. One can either defend the claim that moral judgments or claims are true or false in virtue not of moral facts but on some other basis (such as their practical efficacy), or else that there are no moral truths to be successfully described. Christine Korsgaard's (1996) procedural realism is the example of the former that Finlay (Ibid., pp. 822-823) points to, which is a kind of moral constructivism (the view that moral principles are mind-dependent in that they are constructed by moral agents). Defences of the error theory (the view that all moral claims

do state propositions, although they are all systematically false) of Richard Joyce (2001) and J. L. Mackie (1977) are cited as examples of the view that there are no moral truths to be described (Ibid., p. 825).

3) <u>Metaphysical</u>: This face is of the strength that tends to be associated with the moral realist view, at least by those who are more critical of the truth behind moral claims requiring a 'moral reality' or any metaphysical commitment. More specifically, this face entails a commitment to the claim that there are non-attitudinal moral properties or entities, which act as the truth-makers of moral claims. As an example of a view (which Finlay calls subjectivism) that rejects this face while accepting the previous two faces, Finlay (Ibid., p. 829) points to Smith's moral rationalism (1994). It is important to note that subjectivism in this sense does not necessarily imply the absence of universal moral facts, or facts applying to every moral agent. For instance, Smith's own metaethical views are subjectivist according to Finlay's use of the term, as he grounds moral reality within moral agents themselves. Although what one is moral obliged to do is what one's fully rational self would advise, Smith argues reasonably that there are certain obligations that we all share, for there is advice on which all fully rational selves would agree.

4) <u>Normative</u>: The fourth face of moral realism causes a division that Finlay takes to divide metaethical views at this juncture in exactly the same way as another. On the one hand, to be committed to normative moral realism is to be committed to the claim that moral properties have attitude-independent authority; they give us reason to act morally independently of any relevant attitudes one might have, and independently of any motivation one might have to act morally. On the other hand, Finlay thinks that to be committed to normative moral realism is also to be committed to the claim that moral entities or properties are not reducible to nonmoral (natural) entities or properties, or in other words, to be committed to moral non-naturalism (Ibid., p. 821). Although one might contest the claim that the line between moral naturalism and non-naturalism sits in the same position as the line between metaphysical normative realism and normative moral realism, Finlay (2007) makes a reasonable case for taking this view of the naturalism/non-naturalism distinction, on the basis that there is no consensus on how the distinction should be understood, and his distinction fits well with the 'four faces' account of moral realism. I will argue later that distinguishing between moral naturalism and non-naturalism provides no way out for the moral realist in the face of Blackburn's modal challenge.

The diagram below is a helpful depiction of how the four faces interact and are connected (Finlay (2007), p. 821):

	REALISM	ANTIREALISM
1. SEMANTIC: Do moral claims have attitude-independent truth values?	YES	NO
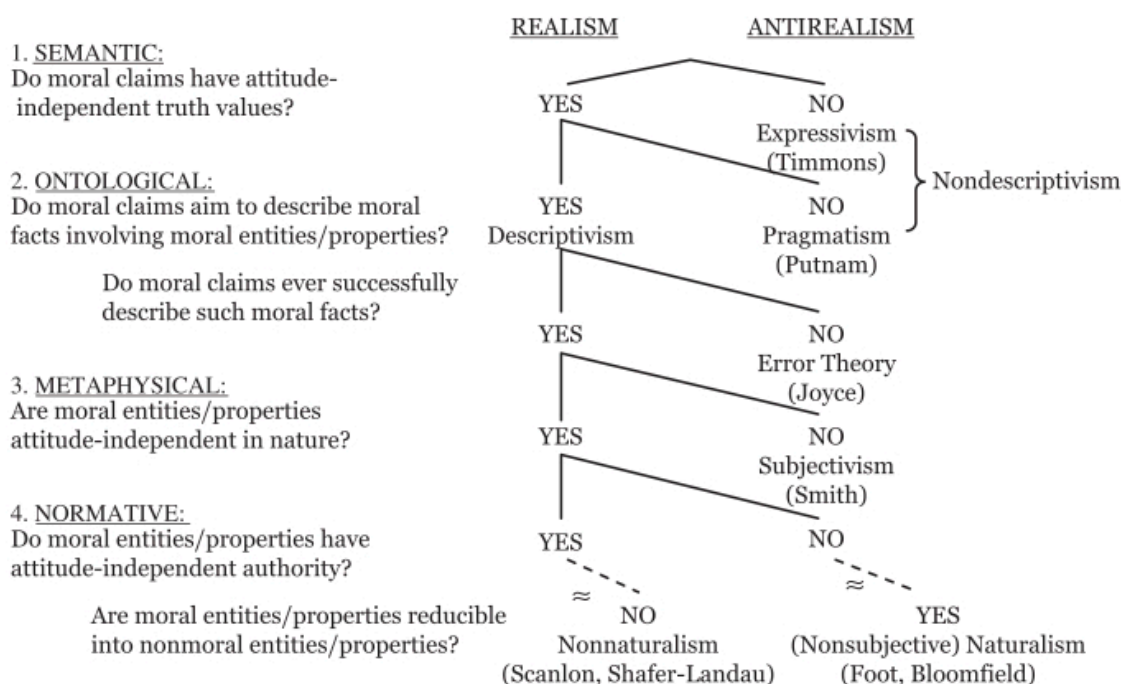
The most appropriate way to decide where to draw the line between moral realism and moral anti-realism appears to be to accept all the possible metaethical views that can be a target of Blackburn's modal challenge as realist. Although some such as Alison Hills (2009) argue that Blackburn's modal challenge is a challenge only to moral non-naturalists (robust realists as Finlay describes them, who accept all four faces), I intend to show that this view may be mistaken. The challenge is to explain peculiar modal implications when moral realism is combined with the moral supervenience thesis. Blackburn argues that moral anti-realism can explain these implications, whereas moral realists cannot.

Given that cognitivism is a necessary condition for moral realism, the semantic face of moral realism clearly needs to be accepted for a view to count as realist (which is of no great surprise, given that it is the weakest form). Moreover, as the supervenience thesis concerns how properties and states relate, I think the moral realist view can be taken to

require a commitment to such properties or states existing, meaning that the ontological face also needs to be accepted. However, Blackburn gives no consideration for the distinction between naturalism and non-naturalism in his presentations of the argument, so it seems reasonable to think that the challenge was not intended to apply only to non-naturalist accounts of moral realism. As the semantic and ontological faces of moral realism are sufficient to be targeted by Blackburn's modal challenge, I think it is reasonable to stipulate that neither the metaphysical or normative faces of moral realism have to be accepted for a metaethical view to count as realist for the purposes of this dissertation. Therefore, the semantic and ontological faces will be taken to be the necessary and sufficient conditions for a view to count as moral realist (this will be defended in greater detail in the fourth chapter). Throughout this dissertation I will endeavour to appreciate all four faces of realism, and see how many can be defended against Blackburn's modal challenge. Before explaining the exact nature of this challenge, I shall explain the concept of moral supervenience.

II. Moral Supervenience

Although it is intended to point to a reasonable conceptual restriction on how moral claims need to work, "supervenience is a philosophical concept" (Jaegwon Kim (1990) p. 1), and as such may have a more technical status than it should. Part of the reason for this is that the concept is metaphysical, in that it seeks to account for how different metaphysical states connect to others, or even simply physical states. A basic blueprint for a supervenience thesis might be as follows: if x states supervene on y states, then there cannot be a change in x states without a change in y states. Perhaps the most renowned example of the use of supervenience as a concept is in philosophy of mind, by philosophers such as Donald Davidson (1980) and Kim (1984, 1990, 1993), to account for the necessary connection (albeit not causal, although it may be as a result of a causal connection) between relevant physical states and mental states. Kim and Davidson have attempted to argue that any change in mental states requires a change in physical states. The concept of supervenience is also used in other areas of philosophy, but there are a number of different applications, from accounting for natural kinds to aesthetics. I will look at these different applications later, when I consider Blackburn's addressing the potential implications of analogies with these other applications for his modal challenge.

Kim (1990, pp. 5-6) pointed out that the use of the term 'supervene' in the philosophically relevant sense can be dated back as far as Leibniz, although moral supervenience itself (but not by name) was defended by both Henry Sidgwick (1981) and Moore (1922). Hare (1952) was the first to introduce the term supervenience into moral philosophy, although he acknowledged (1984, p. 1) that he was not the first to use the term. Kim (1990, p. 7) notes that the kind of supervenience that these British moral philosophers defended concerned the necessary covariance of moral properties with nonmoral properties. Moral properties will be said to supervene 'natural', 'physical' or simply sometimes 'nonmoral' properties, but it should be noted that although the use of different terms may indicate disagreements about what the nature is of the properties that underlie moral properties, these disagreements are not relevant to the question of moral supervenience; for this reason I will not investigate which properties are said to be moral. A basic version of a moral supervenience thesis might be described as follows: 'There can be no change in moral properties without a change in natural properties.'

I describe this version of the thesis as 'basic' mostly because there are significant differences in what the claim amounts to (even from just considering the scope of the term 'natural'). On one level, as will be explored later in this chapter, the modal strength behind the supervenience claim is not made explicit in the basic version, and therefore different accounts of it can be given on this basis alone. Perhaps the most important distinction to point out at this stage concerns what the supervenience thesis should be taken to demonstrate. On the one hand, the supervenience thesis can be treated a simply stating how moral properties co-vary with other non-moral properties. On the other hand, it might be treated as *explaining how* moral properties co-vary with other non-moral properties (as Shafer-Landau (2003) does). For the purposes of this dissertation, I will be treating supervenience under the former treatment, and object to the latter treatment of supervenience (at least within the context of moral philosophy) in the third chapter. The first reason for this is that so such treatment of supervenience is required to understand and consider Blackburn's modal challenge, and the second is that explanations of the pertinent kind seem far better encapsulated by discussions of 'grounding' (see for instance Rosen (2010)) and 'superdupervenience' (see for instance Horgan (1993)).

A good example is whether a supervenience thesis ought to be read at the *global* or *local* level. If the claim is read at the global level, any connection between supervening x properties and underlying y properties is necessary only when x and y properties are properties of an entire possible world. For instance, John Haugeland (1984, p. 1) defends the supervenience of all non-physical properties on physical properties as follows: "[t]he world could not have been different in any respect, without having been different in some strictly physical respect". This is a *global* supervenience thesis because it only requires that two possible worlds must have different physical properties if they have different non-physical properties. A *global* moral supervenience thesis would be as follows: 'the world could not have been morally different, without having been different in some natural respect'. If the supervenience thesis is read at the *local* level, however, it concerns not just possible worlds, but any individual concatenations of properties within the actual world. So the *local* version of Haugeland's example might be taken to be: 'Nothing in the world could have been different in any respect, without having been different in some strictly physical respect.' A *local* moral supervenience thesis would be: 'No action could have been morally different, without having been different in some natural respect.' Local supervenience is therefore a stronger thesis to defend, although in the moral case it seems not only intuitive to defend it, but also conceptually required. If the moral properties of actions did not uniformly co-vary with the relevant natural facts about the circumstances in which they take place, it looks as if moral properties could not behave with the consistency that seems to be required for morality to work.

Another pertinent example of how much further the supervenience question can be complicated is by asking whether the supervenience thesis is what Kim (1984) describes as *strong*, or else *weak*. To defend a strong supervenience thesis is not only to be committed to the claim that there cannot be a difference between the co-varying properties, but also that the supervening properties must necessarily be instantiated when the underlying properties are instantiated. In ethics, the following *strong* supervenience thesis might be defended: 'Where any moral property (or set of moral properties) x is instantiated, natural property (or set of natural properties) y must also be instantiated, such that y obtains, and necessarily if y obtains, x obtains.' Again, this *strong* supervenience thesis in the moral case looks intuitive as, conceptually speaking, this thesis rules out the possibility of morally relevant natural properties y obtaining without any moral properties x obtaining. This

seems warranted because there would be no moral explanation for why two actions could be identical on the natural level but only one has any moral properties.

A *strong local* moral supervenience thesis therefore seems to be appealing to defend (and also appears as I show to be what Blackburn has in mind as well). Although its status as a conceptual claim has been recently criticised, moral supervenience unsurprisingly has common-sense appeal, to which Smith claims that "everyone agrees" (1994, p. 21), as it provides a simply conceptual constraint on how moral properties need to behave, for coherent moral discourse to be possible. Blackburn even argues that to think otherwise would be "misidentifying a caprice as a moral opinion" (1993, p. 122). So in the same fashion as Smith's *The Moral Problem*, both moral realism and moral supervenience seem intuitive to accept independently of one another; however, Blackburn argues that when they are combined a tension is generated of a modal nature, which the moral realist cannot explain. I shall now explain how Blackburn argues this.

III. Blackburn's Modal Challenge

Blackburn's original challenge appears in his paper 'Moral Realism' (2013/1971), but I will focus on features in his more famous paper 'Supervenience Revisited' (1985). Although there are differences between the two versions of the challenge, I do not consider that the original makes a significantly different contribution to the debate. The challenge starts with an explanation of the moral supervenience thesis. Blackburn then denies that there are any analytical entailment relations between moral and non-moral kinds, or even to natural kinds. (There may well be a distinction between the two; I shall argue later that the question of whether the two are coextensive does not significantly affect the force of the challenge.) In any case, the claim is that moral facts are not solely deducible from natural facts (Zangwill (1995b), p. 243). Based on this logical disconnection between moral facts and natural facts, Blackburn claims that moral realists cannot provide an adequate justification for apparently problematic entailments of supervenience, and since he thinks he can do so with his quasi-realist approach, moral realism should be rejected in favour of moral quasi-realism. I will now go into more detail about this argument.

III.I. Blackburn's Explanation of Moral Supervenience

Blackburn (1985) stipulates a distinction between F judgments, which are "moral commitments, or attributions of mental states" (p. 60), and claims that the facts pertaining to them (F facts) supervene on non-moral (natural, or G) facts. In fact, they supervene on certain particular G facts (or G* facts). For instance, the actions and intentions of a person in a situation that results in another person dying may be morally relevant and are therefore G* facts, whereas the weather at the time may not be. In any case, the supervenience claim for Blackburn is only to mean that in some sense it is necessary that if F facts change, then G facts also change, or that two situations with the same F facts must have the same G facts.

To clarify the metaphysics behind this claim, Blackburn uses notions of possible worlds, although he states that he does so only for heuristic purposes, rather than any commitment to possible worlds being a prerequisite for the validity of his argument.

Without explaining the nature of the modalities involved, Blackburn states the supervenience claim as follows:

(S) "As a matter of necessity, if something x is F, and G* underlies this, then anything else in the physical or natural or whatever state G* is F as well." (Blackburn, 1985, p. 60)

{Necessarily [($\exists$ x) (G*x & Fx & G*x U Fx) $\rightarrow$ (y)(G*y $\rightarrow$ Fy)]}

So if 'Action a is wrong' obtains in morally relevant circumstances c, then by necessity any instantiation of the same action at any point under the same morally relevant circumstances will also be wrong.

Blackburn points out that there are stronger ways in which to make the supervenience claim. One could claim that the version of supervenience Blackburn seems to be defending here is an even weaker one than he acknowledges in his challenge, and this has been picked up by several assessors of Blackburn's challenge. Zangwill (1995b) points out that P can have two different interpretations:

"(WS) If something is F and G*, then anything else in *that* world which is G* is also F."

"(SS) If something is F and G*, then in *all possible* worlds anything which is G* is also F." (Zangwill (1995b), p. 248)

From how Blackburn treats S in the challenge, it appears as if he is merely committed to the weaker WS rather than the stronger SS. As Zangwill (1995b) notes, however, the main argument behind the challenge can remain intact if SS were used instead. In any case, as Blackburn points out, this satisfies the definition of supervenience, even if only to a very weak degree. This is a crucial point for his argument, as he contrasts it with this supervenience claim:

(N) "As a matter of necessity, if something x is in a G* state, then x is an F state as well."

{Necessarily(x)(G*x → Fx)}

The weaker claim (P) merely states that necessarily, if an action has moral properties, and certain non-moral properties underlie this, then any other action with the same non-moral properties must have the same moral properties. However, the stronger claim (N) states that necessarily, if an action has these non-moral properties, then they must also have the moral properties. In Blackburn's words, the first expresses a 'conditional', whereas the second asserts a potential 'consequent' (1985, p. 61). As (N) is not directly implied by (S), (S) is consistent with the following claim:

(P) "It is possible that there exists something x that is in a G* state but not in an F state."

{Possibly (∃x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

(P) states that it is possible for there to be an action that has the same non-moral properties as before, but not the corresponding (supervening) moral properties. He originally argued (2013, 1970) that the combination of (S) and (P) would be a problem for a moral realist, because he would have to account for the possibility of supervening F properties not

obtaining with the underlying G* properties. In 'Supervenience Revisited', however, he argues further that there is motivation for combining the two.

III.II. Blackburn's Mystery Generated By the 'Ban on Mixed Worlds'

To explain how and why rejecting the combination of (S) and (P) might be motivated, Blackburn (1985, pp. 61-63) asks us to consider the following proposition:

"Necessarily, if something x is in both an F and G* state, and its G* state *underlies* its F state, then by necessity any other thing y that is in the same G* state must also be in the same F state" (?).

(?) {Necessarily (($\exists$ x) Fx & G*x &(G*x U Fx)) $\rightarrow$ Necessarily (y)(G*y $\rightarrow$ Fy)]}

By the term 'underlie', I will simply take Blackburn to mean the inversion of 'supervene', so if X supervenes on Y, it could conversely be said that Y underlies X. So since (P) allows for F properties not to supervene, (?) makes it clear that it is not simply the underlying G* properties that are the necessary and sufficient conditions for establishing that the F properties obtain. If it is possible for an action to have the underlying non-moral properties without the supervening moral ones, it seems that something other than the non-moral properties must be responsible for the moral properties. Blackburn calls it a *releasing* property (R) (1985, pp. 61-62). R would therefore set out the possible non-arbitrary conditions under which moral properties might fail to supervene on G* properties.

Blackburn then addresses some immediate technical problems for the notion of supervenience. First, he notes that (S) is vacuously true if nothing could be in both a G* and F state, and (N) is vacuously true if nothing could be in both a G* and F state. In noting that this entails that being virtuous supervenes on being homogeneously made of granite (his example), he narrows supervenience claims to ones that are not vacuously true. One ought to acknowledge, however, that this problem is just a particular instantiation for supervenience theses of the so-called "paradoxes of material implication" (see for a detailed explanation Bennett (2003), pp. 138-140), where conditional propositions of the kind that Blackburn that has pointed to here are true according to classical logic, despite

appearing intuitively illogical. Here is a more basic example: 'if pigs can fly, then horses can play chess' is true given that the antecedent is false (as pigs cannot fly), despite the consequent appearing to have no connection whatsoever.

As this problem is not of any substantial concern for the argument itself, in as much as supervenience is a conceptual claim that still seems plausible to defend, I will not attempt to answer this general problem regarding the paradoxes of material implication, and simply accept Blackburn's restriction of supervenience claims to non-vacuous truths. This seems to be a reasonable restriction, as the moral supervenience thesis is intended to be a non-vacuous conceptual claim about how moral judgments should behave.

Blackburn then moves on to the issue of how to define G* properties. If G* properties included all the physical/natural properties belonging to a thing, then arguably the supervenience thesis would again be vacuously true, as no two things could share all natural/physical properties. So Blackburn assumes a *limitation* thesis, which states that G* properties refer only to the non-moral properties that are relevant to the supervening moral properties (i.e. the *morally* relevant non-moral properties).

A final issue he raises is how the term G* precisely corresponds with the properties it is meant to denote: is it just that G* refers to whatever properties that underlie F, or is there something built into the sense of G* that any set of properties it refers to is complete? Blackburn notes that this is not a central point, although he accepts the possibility of the latter.

The moment that (?) is combined with the positing of a thing that has G* properties underlying its F properties (E − {($\exists$x) Fx & G*x &(G*x U Fx)}), then (N) can be derived. Blackburn acknowledges that accepting (?) entails that accepting supervenience in essence means accepting (N), and that this is an attractive alternative to (S) and (P) (or merely simply an account of reductionism). Blackburn leaves it open as to whether (?) is true.

Putting (?) aside, Blackburn argues the combination of (S) and (P) means that there may be possible worlds where there are G* properties without the supervening F properties, as well as possible worlds with the supervening F properties. However, what Blackburn calls

'mixed worlds' are ruled out. By a mixed world, he means a world in which there may be a set of G* properties with supervening F properties, and also a set without the supervening F properties. In other words, supervenience rules out the possibility of a world where moral properties sometimes supervene on the morally-relevant non-moral properties, and sometimes do not. This *impossibility* is the heart of the mystery for the moral realist.

Blackburn gives both spatial and temporal examples. According to him, the realist has to explain why there cannot be a world that has only one set of F properties supervening on one set of G* properties, or a world that starts with F properties supervening on G* properties, but, later, the same F properties do not supervene.. Blackburn concludes ultimately that projectivists (who accept the same kind of moral anti-realism as Blackburn) can provide a better explanation for the ban on mixed worlds than realists. By 'explanation' here, I am simply referring to an account that can demonstrate the ban on mixed worlds to be unproblematic. Any discussion of an 'explanation' of Blackburn's challenge henceforth will be utilising this understanding of the term.

III.III. Blackburn's Explanation of the Challenge for Moral Realists

Blackburn (1985, p. 65) explains that the level of modality with which the supervenience claims are read (analytic, metaphysical, and physical) has huge implications for their status:

> For the puzzle to begin to arise, we need to bring the modalities into line. I mention this because it affects the moral case quite closely. Suppose we allow ourselves a notion of "analytically necessary" applying to propositions that, in the traditional phrase, can be seen to be true by conceptual means alone. Denying one of these would be exhibiting a conceptual confusion: a failure to grasp the nature of the relevant vocabulary, or to follow out immediate implications of that grasp. In a slightly more modern idiom, denying one of these would be "constitutive" of lack of competence with the vocabulary. (1985, p. 65)

The kinds of necessity that Blackburn have in mind seem to be those that are the case by definition. Take for instance the proposition 'All bachelors are unmarried.' What makes this proposition true is simply the definition of the terms used. For something to be an

analytically impossibility would be for it in some way to entail a logical contradiction (for instance, the existence of round squares). Blackburn makes clear that this kind of necessity can be differentiated from the necessity that seems to be behind the moral supervenience claim.

> We may contrast this with metaphysical necessity: a proposition will be this if it is true in all the possible worlds which, as a matter of metaphysics, could exist. Of course, we may be skeptical about this division, but I want to respect it at least for the sake of argument. For the (S)/(P) combination in moral philosophy provides a nice example of a *prima facie* case of the difference, and one which profoundly affects my original argument. This arises because someone who holds that a particular natural state of affairs, G*, underlies a moral judgment, it is very likely to hold that this is true as a matter of metaphysical necessity. For example, if I hold that the fact that someone enjoys the misery of others underlies the judgment that he is evil, I should also hold that in any possible world, the fact that someone is like this is enough to make him evil. (1985, p. 65)

A potential example of how metaphysical necessity might be distinguished from analytic necessity can be found in debates on the philosophy of mind. It may be accepted that it is not analytically necessary that mental states supervene on underlying physical brain states, but it may be argued that it is metaphysically necessary. For instance, it might be argued that 'philosophical zombies' may be analytically possible, but defenders of stronger kinds of mental physicalism such as identity theorists will argue that such beings are metaphysically impossible.

Blackburn accepts that if his argument was read purely in terms of metaphysical necessity alone, then (S) and (N) would follow, meaning that mystery would be avoided. He acknowledges that asserting (S) and (N) on a metaphysical level in this way is exactly what is "exactly involved in having a genuine standard" (1985, p. 66). However, he then suggests assessing the argument in terms of *analytic* necessity. It seems uncontroversial to claim that supervenience ((S) at least) is a conceptual claim about morality, and therefore reading (S) in terms of analytic necessity makes sense.

However, Blackburn argues that reading (N) with analytic necessity does not appear to make sense. For this would mean that an action having certain non-moral properties would alone logically entail it having supervening moral properties. Having a concept of morality alone does not seem sufficient to claim that particular actions have particular moral properties. For this would mean that moral judgments would be correct in so far as the judgments were being made with competent moralising. Blackburn accepts that one could insist that (N) is correct on an analytic reading, but does not do so for the purposes of his argument. This is because he takes it to be a commonly accepted view that people can make moral judgments under the same conceptual constraints that govern all moral judgments, but nevertheless have different moral judgments about the same set of natural facts. The intuitions being applied here are akin to those behind the Open Question argument. Blackburn's intuitions amount to the claim that there is always a question that could be asked without making a logical contradiction, that being whether there are particular moral properties supervening on natural properties; in other words, 'We are in circumstances with G* properties, but do these F moral properties obtain?'

In rejecting (N) on an analytic level, Blackburn accepts (P) on an analytic level, which means that the (S)/(P) combination holds on the analytic level, and the mystery remains on the analytic level. The question of why it is analytically possible for mixed worlds to exist needs to be answered. Not even (?) can be claimed in defence, as here (?) would entail (N), and (N) has already been rejected. The precise challenge that Blackburn raises is to provide a moral realist explanation of the (S)/(P) combination on the analytic level.

III.IV. The Unhelpfulness of Analogising

To an extent, Blackburn anticipates some of the responses that moral realists make to this challenge, the response from Shafer-Landau (2003) being one example. Shafer-Landau (2003) actually tries to use the analogising approach to support moral supervenience, but Blackburn (1985) actively rejects this here.

By analogising with different kinds of supervenience (the mental on the physical, natural kinds on molecular structure, and secondary on primary qualities), Blackburn (1985, pp. 67-74) tries to demonstrate that analogising will not explain away the mystery, or provide a solution to it. Although, Nick Zangwill (1996) does suggest that the S/P combination

could be worth exploring on a realist basis across the multiple cases that Blackburn raises. Still, for each of these examples, Blackburn grants that the (S)/(P) combination appears on the *prima facie* level to be implausible; however, he goes through each to explain why it is that the combination can be accepted with these cases, so long as no analogous realist doctrine is being defended. He concludes that all that is achieved from looking at different kinds of supervenience is that, in each case, the (S)/(P) combination is best explained with an anti-realist account. The three examples he looks at specifically are as follows.

First Example: Mental on the physical

> In W_1 physical G* properties (such as neurons firing) underlie mental F properties (such as pain), and there is no instantiation of these same physical properties without the supervening mental properties. In W_2 there are such physical properties without supervening mental properties. In W_3, however, the circumstances start out in the same vein as W_1, but then change to be like W_2. Whilst W_1 and W_2 are acceptable, W_3 cannot exist.

With the first example, Blackburn claims that the supervenience of the mental on the physical can only be accepted as a metaphysical doctrine. If Henry (Blackburn (1985), p. 69) were to have a headache one day and not the next, accepting a change in his mental state while denying the occurrence of any physical change does not seem like a failure based purely on the meaning of mental ascriptions. Whereas if Henry performed a certain number of moral wrongdoings one day, but a different number on the next, to accept this while also claiming that Henry performed exactly the same actions in relevantly similar circumstances on both days would seem to be a conceptual error of this kind. The mental supervenience thesis does not appear plausible to accept at the analytic level, so neither would the (S)/(P) combination.

It appears that, by accepting (S) on the metaphysical level, the appropriate thing is to accept (?) and subsequently (N) on this level as well, so that (P) can be rejected, resulting in a ban on mixed worlds. However, Blackburn claims that accepting an (S)/(P) combination is compatible with Davidson's (1980) account of mental states, where a kind of supervenience relation is accepted without a commitment to any "lawlike propositions connecting the two vocabularies" (Blackburn (1985), p. 69). Given this lack of commitment, an (S)/(P)

combination could still be accepted on the physical level alone (or else with (S) on the metaphysical and (P) on the physical). Needless to say, for Blackburn this is problematic.

If worlds with the underlying G* but without any supervening mental properties are physically possible, then it does not seem clear why it is that similar worlds with occasionally supervening mental properties are physically *impossible*. To use Blackburn's example, if we accept that there are physically possible worlds where individuals have underlying physical properties but no headaches, it seems unreasonable to claim that it is *impossible* for there to be other worlds where some individuals with these same physical properties *do* have headaches and others do not. Moreover, Blackburn (1985, p. 70) claims that accepting (P) on the physical level undermines any rationale for accepting (S) on even the physical level in the first place. He claims that any attempt to defend (P) on the physical level as well as (S) would come out as either an anti-realist or idealist (i.e. at the very least not *realist*) account of the mental, because it appears as if the behaviour of mental facts is dictated by our constraints on how they can be described, rather than any on mental events in themselves (given (P)). As far as Blackburn is concerned, this example provides no solution to the challenge, as it appears that the (S)/(P) combination is acceptable only when it comes to mental supervenience if an anti-realist account of the mental is defended.

Second Example: Natural kinds on the physical/chemical

> In W_1 having physical/chemical G* properties (such as being composed of molecules of H_2O) underlies membership of a natural kind F properties (such as being water), and there is no instantiation of these same chemical properties without the supervening property of being water. In W_2 there are such chemical properties without supervening natural kind membership. In W_3, however, the circumstances start out in the same vein as W_1, but then change to be like W_2. Whilst W_1 and W_2 are acceptable, W_3 cannot exist.

Blackburn (1985, p. 71) acknowledges that it may not seem so evidently clear that the molecular composition of H_2O completely underlies the property of being water; however, for the sake of his argument he takes this as a granted assumption. On the same basis as with the first example, he argues that supervenience can reasonably be accepted only on

the metaphysical level, and not on the analytic. He then argues that, if accepted on the metaphysical level, (S) should be accepted with both (?) and (N), and not (P).

Blackburn thinks that the only possible rationale for accepting an (S)/(P) combination here would be to claim that the property of being water *must* supervene on chemical/physical composition, but that particular composition need not be H_2O molecules (and the possibility of an alternative underlying composition must be of equal modal strength to the necessity of the supervenience relation). Again, as the ability to apply the term 'water' competently does not require any consideration of physical/chemical composition (as it was applied competently before the discovery of H_2O molecules), then, just as with the first example, there is no helpful comparison to make with moral supervenience, as to use moral terms competently, certain morally relevant facts *do* have to be considered.

Blackburn then considers a Quinean response (actually credited to Smith; see footnote on p. 72.), which is to reject the distinction between conceptual ignorance about water from scientific ignorance about its molecular composition. He thus introduces a different kind of modality based only on competency, so for instance a competently possible world is "as a competent person might describe the world as being" (1985, p. 72). On this level of modality, Blackburn considers whether the (S)/(P) combination could be viable. He claims this would amount to a ban on mixed worlds because a competent user will deny that there are possible worlds where there are some things of the same physical/chemical composition that are water, and some things of the same composition that are not water. This would be the case even if a competent user could accept that there are possible worlds with things of the same composition but without any of these things being water. The claim amounts to what Blackburn calls '*framework* knowledge' (1985, p. 72), and every competent user would be expected to have it. He notes that if this stance were to be viable, it would work as a counterexample against his argument that (S)/(P) combinations can be explained only with an anti-realist account.

There are two levels to the response that Blackburn gives to the claim that this example provides a counterexample to his argument. The first is that this Quinean approach takes a similar line to the anti-realist line Blackburn takes to be supported in the moral supervenience case. This is because in the moral case, as far as Blackburn is concerned, it is not the role of moral judgments to describe any kind of moral reality, or even any "moral

aspects of reality" (1985, p. 72; my italics). It is simply the case that the moral supervenience thesis forces our moral vocabulary to be constrained by the *natural* world. Analogously, Blackburn suggests that the supervenience of natural kinds plays this same role of constraining our vocabulary, rather than giving some further scientific or metaphysical description of reality, as 'wateriness' does not provide a description that is additional to that provided by H_2O molecular composition.

Accepting that this first level may be too weak to defend as a genuinely anti-realist account of natural kinds, Blackburn argues that the level modality being considered here generates an analogy to the anti-realist approach in the moral case. He points out that for something to be competently possible or necessary will be conditional on the *beliefs* that we hold, with which all competent individuals would agree. So the ban on mixed worlds would be motivated on the basis that we believe that all competent individuals would agree with it, but equally the competent possibility of (P) would be granted on the basis that not all competent people would agree that if a thing was composed of H_2O molecules, then it must be water. The (S)/(P) combination on this level of modality would have no dependency or connection to the scientific or metaphysical nature of the property 'wateriness' *itself*, and as moral judgments behave in the same way, Blackburn argues that this (S)/(P) combination is not a genuine counterexample, but another case of deviation from any realist approach to supervenience.

Third example: Secondary Qualities on Primary Qualities

> In W_1 having a surface with certain refractive G* properties underlies the property of having the colour F, and there is no instantiation of these same refractive properties of surfaces without the supervening property of having the colour F. In W_2 there are surfaces with the same refractive properties without having the supervening colour F. In W_3, however, the circumstances start out in the same vein as W_1, but then change to be like W_2. Whilst W_1 and W_2 are acceptable, W_3 cannot exist.

Again, for reasons similar to those in the previous examples, Blackburn (1985, pp. 70-71) rejects the claim that either (S) or (N) can be accepted on the analytic level. This is because the only conceptual requirement for ascribing colour terms is the correct reaction to the

perception of a colour. It may well be that someone can claim that an object's colour has changed, but does not engage with the question of whether the refractive properties of the object's surface have also changed, without making any kind of a conceptual error (even if one argued that an element of ignorance was being demonstrated if a change was not acknowledged). As Blackburn eloquently puts it: "His eyesight may be defective, but his grasp of the vocabulary need not be so" (1985, p. 71). Equally, colour supervenience seems intuitive to defend, simply because otherwise there would be 'scientific havoc' (1985, p. 74).

In this example, however, Blackburn argues that accepting an (S)/(P) combination in this colour case would be implausible. For if one sensibly defended a supervenience relation between the underlying account of primary properties (regardless of whether it includes the refractive properties of the surfaces) at the physical level, then arguably (N) ought to be accepted on the physical as well, meaning that (P) would be rejected. Even if one defended (S) on the metaphysical level, there seems to be no good reason to defend (N) as well. One might try to generate the (S)/(P) at the level of 'competently possible worlds', but Blackburn claims that the result would be the same as in the previous example – one would just have an account of colour supervenience that would depend on beliefs that are taken to be prerequisites for competence.

It is not the case that Blackburn entirely rules out (S)/(P) combinations for colour supervenience. For it is reasonably easy to see that a non-realist (so idealist or anti-realist) account of colour may be able to make sense of the account, without having to take the Quinean approach to supervenience, but this is of no concern to Blackburn here. He has tried to demonstrate, by looking at these analogous examples, that when the (S)/(P) combination holds, even with these different kinds of supervenience, not just the moral case, realists cannot seem to provide an explanation, and so realists have to defend (N) in order to defend the relevant kind of supervenience. In the moral case, however, Blackburn argues that (N) cannot be defended on the analytic level, and therefore the (S)/(P) combination holds at the analytic level, which only moral anti-realists can explain.

III.V. Blackburn's Explanation for the Mystery

It is clear why projectivists might have an explanation. If moral properties are simply grounded in the psychology of moral agents, rather than independent moral facts, then one can explain the impossibility of mixed worlds based on the consistency of human psychology. To use Blackburn's examples, there are no possible worlds where (at least generally) there will be approbation towards all actions by virtue of a certain set of relevant facts except those that occur in a different hemisphere. Equally, there will not be possible worlds where there is general approbation towards all actions by virtue of a certain set of relevant facts unless they take place after t1.

A moral realist can only point to a metaphysical consistency, which Blackburn thinks cannot have a better explanatory fit than the one claimed by projectivists. That said, the realist may be somewhat perplexed by the claim that projectivists, or any moral anti-realists, can provide an explanation for the (S)/(P) combination on the analytic level at all, and hence may deny the need for an explanation on this basis. This is because the realists might argue that this modal challenge is generated by realist discourse, in the sense that holding the supervenience relation requires the claim that there *are* moral properties to be supervening on non-moral properties, which does not seem to be defensible for moral anti-realists, at least *objectively*. One may wish to argue simply that all that Blackburn demonstrates with this challenge is that (S) is not an adequate account of moral supervenience, because there may be more *a priori* constraints on moral properties than other kinds of supervening properties, as there is no genuine account of (S)/(P) combination, and instead (?) should be accepted in the moral case.

However, this kind of response is not likely to be successful, not just because it seems plausible for there to be anti-realist accounts of *objective* moral properties within something like an error theory about morality, where any moral propositions are simply systematically false. More pertinently, even if other accounts of projectivism or moral anti-realism in general could not account for moral properties, Blackburn defends claims that there *are* moral properties, and even *objective* moral truths. This is because he defends *quasi-realism*. Rather than being a specific account of anti-realism, quasi-realism itself is best thought of as:

> The enterprise of explaining why our discourse has the shape it does, in particular by way of treating evaluative predicates like others, if projectivism is true. It thus seeks to explain and justify the realistic-seeming nature of our talk of evaluations - the way we think we can be wrong about them, that there is a truth to be found, and so on. (Blackburn (1984), p. 180).

The goal of the quasi-realist project is to be able to maintain the discourse involving moral properties, facts and truths, that comes with the moral realist outlook without being committed to any kind of moral realism. As far as Blackburn is concerned, by being able to maintain this discourse, without any ontological commitments behind it, quasi-realism provides the best of both worlds. He does this by accepting a minimalist conception of truth; he does not distinguish between the statements 'Murder is wrong' and 'It is true that murder is wrong'.

Although Blackburn thinks that discussions of moral truths can be maintained, they are simply questions about whether moral claims of the kind 'Murder is wrong' should be accepted, when taken on the projectivist line to simply to mean at the claim's underlying structure 'Murder: Boo!' To include discussions of facts yields similar results, in that to say 'It is a fact that murder is wrong' will be taken to mean 'It is a fact that "Murder: Boo!"', which expresses nothing more than simply saying 'Murder is wrong'. Although it may seem as if Blackburn may struggle to defend the kind of objectivity in the moral discourse he requires for his quasi-realist project, Blackburn (2010) argues that this project provides a better account of moral objectivity than many other contemporary metaethical theories. There is potential room for objecting to Blackburn's required commitment to a minimalist account of truth, and therefore some may find his claim that there can be moral truths difficult to swallow. However, I will take it for granted that Blackburn's project is not sufficiently problematic for the purposes of his modal challenge. So, it is taken for granted at least at this point that, with this quasi-realist framework, it appears that discussions of moral properties, facts and truths can be maintained without a commitment to realism.

III.VI. A Diagnosis of Blackburn's Argument

Blackburn's argument can be summarised as follows.

1) It is analytically necessary that, if in one situation certain moral as well as non-moral properties obtain, there must be the same moral properties in all situations with the same set of non-moral properties.

{Necessarily [($\exists$x) (G*x & Fx) → ($\forall$y)(G*y → Fy)]}

2) There being a set of such non-moral properties without any moral properties does not entail a logical contradiction. In other words, it is analytically possible for these non-moral properties to obtain without any moral properties doing so.

{Possibly ($\exists$x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

3) Given premises 1 and 2, any viable metaethical view must explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true, any viable metaethical view must explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

4) Moral realism cannot explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

Conclusion: Moral realism is not a viable metaethical view.

I note that the version this isn't exactly how it appears in 'Supervenience Revisited'. My account of Blackburn's argument is mostly inspired by the account of Zangwill (1995, pp. 240-242.). In any event, as the instantiation of moral properties is not analytically entailed by the instantiation of their underlying moral properties, a moral realist has to explain why moral properties supervene uniformly (and possibly, necessarily so).

As the argument is valid, it appears that the options available to the moral realist are to contest at least one of the premises of the argument. A moral realist could thus take one of the following four actions.

1) Reject the first premise, and in doing so reject the version of the moral supervenience thesis that Blackburn defends, in favour of some kind of substitute. Gerald Harrison (2013) and Hills (2009), for instance, choose this approach and reject supervenience as a conceptual claim.

2) Reject the second premise, and defend the (N) claim on the analytic level, which would require defending a reductionist account of analytic moral naturalism, where it could be said that G* properties on their own logically entail F properties.

3) Reject the third premise, that is, the claim that a moral realist has to explain why premises (1) and (2) are true. James Dreier (1992), for instance, argues that the argument is simply begging the question against the realist.

4) Reject the fourth premise, and provide a realist explanation for the truth of premises 1 and 2, while defending the adequacy of the explanation.

I will address each of these potential responses, and aim to show that the moral realist should adopt the fourth of these possible strategies.

Chapter 2: The Distinction Between Moral Naturalism and Nonnaturalism, And Its Bearing on Blackburn's Modal Challenge (Or Lack Thereof)

Blackburn's modal challenge has prompted a number of responses from realists. However, before these responses can be analysed, the precise scope of the mystery must first be clarified. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, there are those who claim that moral naturalists can avoid Blackburn's mystery to the extent that the mystery itself should not be treated as applicable to moral naturalism (Shafer-Landau (1994), Blackburn (2004), Strandberg (2004b), Farrelly (2005), Hills (2009)). To evaluate the validity of this claim, the actual distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism must first be considered. The aim of this chapter is to determine the nature of such a distinction, in order to undermine appeals to this distinction as a response to Blackburn's mystery. After elaborating upon the distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism – and the potential significance of such a distinction, if any, to the discussion at hand – I hope to show that this distinction provides no immediate basis for dismissing Blackburn's modal challenge, and, furthermore, that it does not even afford a basis upon which premise 2 of Blackburn's argument can be denied. A reminder of this premise is given below:

2) There being a set of such non-moral properties without any moral properties does not entail a logical contradiction. In other words, it is analytically possible for these non-moral properties to obtain without any moral properties doing so.

{Possibly ($\exists$x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

I. Moral Naturalism and How to Distinguish It from Nonnaturalism

The central tenant of moral naturalism invokes a general naturalistic metaphysical view of naturalism itself, namely, that the moral properties are *natural*. Nevertheless, there is no further consensus regarding the definition of the moral naturalist position. Simply put, moral naturalism might be encapsulated in the claim that "moral facts are a species of scientific facts" (Shafer-Landau, 2003, p. 55). This would reflect how the term 'naturalism'

itself is intended to invoke the metaphysical worldview of *naturalism* which, though no less difficult to define, encapsulates the general view that ontological commitments should be strictly limited to that which falls within the domain of the scientifically observable. Committing to moral naturalism on this basis could still amount to claiming any of the following: moral facts or properties are *identical* to, *reducible* to, or *constituted* by, natural facts or properties. Defenders of moral naturalism include Peter Railton (2003), Frank Jackson (2000), Hiliary Putnam (2016), and Nicholas Sturgeon (1985/1986/1991/2006).

It is conceivable that Blackburn's mystery might be undermined by such a distinction; for instance, if the moral and natural properties are not sufficiently distinct in the first place, premise 2) of Blackburn's argument might seem implausible. If committing to moral naturalism amounts to the claim that natural properties and moral properties are not distinct, especially in a strictly ontological sense, there would be no problem in the supervenience relationship, for it would be one that simply applies to two properties of the same kind.

Conversely, a simpler definition of moral nonnaturalism is encapsulated by Shafer-Landau (2003). Shafer-Landau stipulates that "moral properties are not identical to scientific properties" because they are comprised of two essential claims: "A metaphysical claim, to the effect that moral properties are *sui generis*, and not identical to any natural properties", and "a semantic claim, to the effect that moral terms cannot be given a naturalistic analysis" (Shafer-Landau (2003), p. 73). A possible point of confusion with Shafer-Landau's account is that its approach is deliberately intended to be wholly compatible with a naturalistic worldview; indeed, as Shafer-Landau states, it is "not ontologically extravagant" (Ibid.). The progenitor of this assertion treats this characteristic as a merit, meaning that – at the very least – Shafer-Landau might be seen as obfuscating the distinction between moral naturalism and nonnaturalism. Consequently, one may argue that his version of moral realism counts as naturalist after all. Shafer-Landau does, however, consider moral facts to be eternal truths, thus his account may be considered as being closer to the position of moral Platonism than might be implied by his sympathy toward a naturalistic worldview (in terms of Finlay's 'Four Faces of Moral Realism', Shafer-Landau is on the furthest end of realist commitments, in virtue of accepting all four faces).

The general difference between moral naturalism and competing accounts of moral nonnaturalism – such as those articulated by Moore (1903) and Shafer-Landau (2003) –

rests on claims regarding the nature of moral properties. While moral nonnaturalists believe moral properties to be knowable *a priori*, moral naturalists believe moral properties can be known purely through empirical investigation. The *a priori* claim by nonnaturalists is, in turn, based on the claim that moral properties do not appeal to empirical investigation; furthermore, nonnaturalist positions often incorporate a standard consideration that supernatural entities have a scope that goes beyond empirical investigation (Mabrito (2005), p. 2; Zangwill (2012), p. 13; Audi (2013), p. 21). Aside from Shafer-Landau, defenders of moral nonnaturalism include: Caj Strandberg (2004b), Derek Parfit (2011), David Enoch (2007/2011), Zangwill (1993/1994/1995a/2005/2008), William Fitzpatrick (2008/2009), and Ralf Wedgewood (2007).

Beyond this preliminary means of differentiating archetypal positions of moral naturalism and nonnaturalism, there remain several competing views as to how the line can be drawn more explicitly. Further information and clarity regarding this distinction can be gleaned from Finlay's *Four Faces of Moral Realism* (2007). Despite ample room on the realism spectrum for differentiated positions to resist clear categorisation, this is not unique to the 'Four Faces'; Finlay provides a clear initial account by which different definitions of 'natural' can be categorised.

Finlay explains that there are two ways by which to define 'natural', providing two different approaches to defining naturalism further:

a. The scientific: herein "the 'natural' is that which is an object of scientific enquiry" (Finlay, 2007, p. 828). Anything that falls within the domain of scientific investigation (that which has a spatiotemporal element, is subject to causal influence and has causal power) would count as 'natural' according to this approach.

b. The epistemological: naturalists generally believe that moral knowledge is justified *a posteriori* in the same manner by which knowledge of natural facts (or 'natural knowledge') is justified; conversely, nonnaturalists tend to think that at least some moral knowledge is justifiable *a priori*.

Finlay himself points to Shafer-Landau's definition of nonnaturalism as a means of identifying two additional approaches, thereby permitting the establishment of a distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism:

c. The analytic: While moral naturalists may be content to contest it, nonnaturalists may wish to argue that "moral terms or concepts cannot be analysed into 'natural' terms or concepts" (Finlay, 2007, p. 829).
d. The reductive: Some naturalists consider their position in terms of an ontological reduction, while all nonnaturalists are committed to the view that "moral properties or entities cannot be reduced into 'natural' properties or entities" (Ibid.).

Finlay ends up favouring d) as a basis upon which to differentiate between naturalism and nonnaturalism, though he acknowledges that certain naturalists nevertheless deny the reducibility of moral properties to natural ones. Still, Finlay claims that these naturalists are committed to the view that "properties predicated by moral terms are identical with certain natural properties" (Finlay, 2007, p. 830), with this argument subsequently used to justify the differentiation of the two positions. While I would not deny that this distinction can indeed be made, albeit on somewhat tenuous grounds – since it incorporates a minimal understanding of what the naturalist position entails and purports to – I do think, however, that there are further reasons for skepticism towards not only the reductive approach to the distinction, but also the other three approaches, at least as a means of delineating the scope of Blackburn's modal challenge.

I.I. Why the Distinction Between Naturalism and Nonnaturalism Must be Established on a Reductive Basis, At Least in Relation to Blackburn's Modal Challenge

In agreement with Finlay, in this section I shall discuss the reasons why, of the various means by which naturalism and nonnaturalism can be differentiated, the reductive approach is to be preferred. Furthermore, I believe that it is the only approach that affords an adequately substantive basis for the arguments purporting to the naturalism–nonnaturalism discussion and the precise differentiation between the two positions. The reasons as to why the reductive basis alone can and should be used to distinguish the two positions are

manifold, and each shall be identified and explained in this section, at least within the context of Blackburn's modal challenge. I grant that there may be alternative rationales for alternative approaches to the naturalism-nonnaturalism distinction, though they have no relevance to my purposes here.

The relationship between moral vocabulary and the ontology to which it purportedly refers is complex. Indeed, I would argue that even the moral terms employed by both naturalists and nonnaturalists cannot be analysed without a constant reminder of and reversion to the corresponding vocabulary of the natural sciences. Hence moral vocabulary is, in some sense, autonomous from the language of the natural sciences, since it is answerable to different constitutive norms. Despite this, the underlying ontology need not be *sui generis*, and the ontological underpinnings of both moral vocabulary and the vocabulary of the natural sciences – regardless of their respective utilisation – may be common to both. This is not an unprecedented position, nor is it an entirely original one. Indeed, Davidson (1980) has already proposed a similar position in his work on the different constitutive norms governing physical and mental predicates, by which he took the concept of supervenience – whose meaning became clearer through the work of Gilbert Ryle (1949) and Hare (1952) with regard to lower and higher correlated properties – and adapted it when referring to correspondence between physical and mental events. Herein Davidson (1980) propounded the view that, if two events are identical – or, rather, entirely alike – in physical terms, then they cannot therefore differ in mental terms; differentiation of mental aspects is therefore impossible if the physical events leading to these mental aspects are entirely alike. The ontological commonality of the vocabulary used by naturalists and nonnaturalists, despite autonomy from natural science vocabulary, can be carried over to the relationship between the natural and the moral according to the following argument. Ultimately, Davidson took supervenience to be a relation holding between predicates, not the properties they refer to. This is very different from standard supervenience theses. Therefore, it is possible for moral predicates to supervene on natural predicates without entailing a necessary ontological reduction of the moral to the natural, thus a separation is made between linguistic and ontological predication.

As a result of accepting this argument, moral nonnaturalists can be granted a degree of autonomy and freedom when discussing moral terms and arguments. This is in keeping with the general opinion among nonnaturalist philosophers that moral discussions should

be awarded a degree of autonomy, compared to more stringent and chastising logical philosophical discourse.

It is still possible for a moral naturalist to accept that some moral knowledge is *a priori*, with the totality of moral understanding not being forced into *a posteriori* discovery and empirical proof. One could maintain, for instance, upheld that it is analytically true that certain moral acts – such as adultery, murder, and theft from memory – remain morally wrong, and that this can be established without evoking empirical knowledge or experience and is maintainable *a priori*. Such a position means that one can occupy a comparable 'nonnaturalist' position insofar as both accept *a priori* analytical moral truths outside the realm of empirical knowledge.

However, some conflation of meaning follows regarding the logico-semantic definition of analytic truths and the strictly epistemological notion of an *a priori* truth; disparity between analytic and *a priori* knowledge can be seen in the linguistic and relational analytic and the epistemological *a priori*, a subtle confusion that, in some philosophical arguments and puzzles, may serve as an analogous illustration to the discussion at hand. Moral naturalists can uphold that one may have empirical access to moral facts, that they are knowable empirically and experientially; that we can "see" moral truths. Some would uphold that "see" here is not a purely empirical process and that such perceptions regarding moral truths and facts are actually quasi-perceptual. However, I maintain that they are able to avoid the problematic position and arguments propounded per nonnaturalist intuitionism. Indeed, herein the need to reject certain cognitive, rational but necessarily *amoral* truths is highlighted as a justification for the argument that moral truths are not synonymous, epistemologically speaking, with their corresponding truths in the natural sciences and their empirical foundations. Moreover, this position introduces a contextualisation and relational element that is not evident in purely logical suppositions or argument; herein properties such as 'kindness' are evoked to introduce a context and relational property but without the need to express an attitude. This presents itself as relevant and related to the aforementioned differentiation between an ontological and a linguistic supervenience and, consequently, the nonnaturalist and naturalist differentia or differentiation accordingly.

The naturalist can uphold that an appeal to moral properties can play an ineliminable role in the causation – as well as the explanation – of moral behaviour; the following example

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might clarify why: John helped the stranger out of an intention to treat fellow human beings with kindness, and in doing so, acted kindly. However, it might be argued we are unable to provide an explanation as to why John acted kindly without reference to natural properties that caused his cognitive state (for instance, his upbringing). In other words, John's actions in this instance resulted from a cognitive state that, in turn, could be claimed to be caused by knowable natural properties (e.g. those pertaining to how he was raised). Hence, Shafer-Landau's claim (2003, p. 8) – namely, that moral properties can be causally inert but nevertheless natural – is no longer a necessity. It indeed could be argued that causal efficacy is an essential feature of the natural, in the same way that to be 'knowable' – either potentially or actually – is a necessary feature of knowledge. Consequently, one could claim that if a biological property like healthiness is causally inert, then there can be said to be no such natural property as healthiness.

Moral properties (which may be relational properties) may have a spatiotemporal extension, in virtue of their being identical with some or other natural property. However, it does not follow that moral properties admit themselves to a reduction to natural properties, while token identities can exist between the moral and the natural, without admitting type identities – which point to a reductionism. If this is correct, then moral properties are free to enjoy a degree of ontological autonomy; this position is agreeable to the nonnaturalist argument of the same nature.

A naturalist can hold that "moral science"– constituted a branch of the natural sciences, albeit one that admits less precision than other more systematised natural sciences such as physics and biology. It is natural insofar as it studies properties that have an extension or presence regarding an ontological spatiotemporal existence and a causal efficacy; it is less precise insofar as the constitutive norms that govern the use of moral language mean that moral language does not categorise the world, and that it is unable to cut up the totality of the knowable world cleanly into such entities as are studied by the "harder" natural sciences.

My argument in this section has been an ontological one and has rested on the disparity between ontological similarity and linguistic similarity – that is, terminology utilised through either a logical or linguistic system of predication and/or contextual relation and significance – in a manner representative of the naturalist–nonnaturalist discussion. There

might be scope for my attempts to undermine the naturalist-nonnaturalist distinction without a reductive/non-reductive basis to be repudiated, however I hope to have made clear why these approaches might seem questionable. As far as Blackburn's modal challenge is concerned, appeals to naturalism would therefore only help the realist if it provided a basis on which to reject the second premise of his argument.

I.II. Why the Distinction Between Naturalism and Nonnaturalism May Not Be All That Significant

The fundamental reason why I do not think the distinction between naturalism and nonnaturalism has any bearing upon Blackburn's modal challenge is because, when taken in isolation, the distinction provides no basis upon which to undo the distinction between moral properties and non-moral properties; this distinction does nothing to undermine the standing of the modal challenge for all moral realists, naturalists and nonnaturalists alike. Blackburn's presentation of the challenge in 'Supervenience Revisited' (1985) contains no reference to any distinction, and, more significantly, it does not depend upon such a distinction between the moral and the natural.

Such appears to be the case largely because the argument, and its various stages, is made explicitly at an analytic modal level, rather than at a metaphysical or nomological one. Indeed, the metaphysical relationship between moral and natural properties is simply not discussed within the argument, something that Blackburn specifically alludes to in his work (Ibid., pp. 65-66). Clearly this point has significant repercussions for the aforementioned approaches when establishing any distinction between moral naturalism and nonnaturalism:

Regarding the a) approach, if the distinction is established on scientific grounds, then– unless there are morally relevant scientific laws that are analytically necessary – the distinction between moral naturalism and nonnaturalism will, at best, function as a distinction that is relevant only at the metaphysical modal level. Indeed, such a distinction could be equally weak at the nomological level; for example, if such a distinction were purely a reflection of the nature of moral properties within the realm of possible worlds as governed by natural (i.e. physical) laws that both function within the actual world, but not

in all possible worlds – that is, regarding natural laws that are nomologically but not metaphysically necessary.

In this case, Blackburn's modal challenge would stand even at a metaphysical level, because – according to this reading – taking naturalism for granted would not merely be analytically possible but also *metaphysically* possible for 'mixed worlds' to be potentially entailed in the S/P combination (where, for example, moral properties only supervene during daylight hours). Even if we accept that this is far too weak an interpretation of the supervenience thesis for it to appeal to naturalists and nonnaturalists alike, of those who may wish to commit to any kind of supervenience thesis, naturalists will more likely insist on the relevant scientific laws simply being metaphysically necessary. However, this distinction alone remains insignificant in this regard; it still has no bearing upon the need for an explanation of the S/P combination at the analytic level. Even if one accepts that it would be metaphysically impossible for moral properties to supervene in daylight hours on this account of naturalism, it remains *analytically* possible.

The b) approach is still more incapable of providing an immediate basis for limiting the scope of the modal challenge. This is because, on epistemological grounds, if naturalism amounts to claiming that all moral knowledge is justified *a posteriori*, then, arguably, the S/P combination has become still more mysterious and troublesome at the analytic level. This is because the naturalist position is ill-suited to presenting arguments that disagree with the analytic possibility of mixed worlds, and, what is more, it lacks a basis upon which to provide an account of these mixed worlds that is as simple and feasible as Blackburn's modal challenge. Moral naturalists might see this as an unfair characterisation, instead interpreting the argument as an opportunity, a basis upon which a perfect antithesis can be constructed to disprove the validity of the modal challenge. In order to argue that the modal challenge is, in fact, *irrelevant,* or simply unproblematic to naturalists, these individuals are required to construct and make arguments specifically highlighting the irrelevance – or else the mere unproblematic nature – of the challenge to their position.

Moral naturalists might disagree here, on the basis of defending the existence of moral truths that are both analytic *and* justifiable *a posteriori*. If this were the case, then one may evoke Kripke's (1980) argument on the epistemological truth equivalence of Hesperus and Phosphorus here (which were previously thought to be different stars, but later turned out

to be identical). Kripke argued that knowing they were one and the same was a case of analytic a posteriori knowledge; analytic because it for him is equivalent to saying Hesperus is Hesperus, or Phosphorus is Phosphous, and a posteriori because it was discovered empirically. By analogy, it could possibly be argued that there are moral truths that behave the same way. An example of this could be 'it is morally wrong to deliberately try to do the morally wrong thing'. This might be only justified empirically if for instance the statement was assessed by looking at the consequences of trying to do the wrong thing. However, such a self-defining truth per the empirical accumulation of *a posteriori* knowledge – truths that, indeed, are incapable of being defended on anything but a self-evident basis – is nevertheless tantamount to an active denial of premise 2). Otherwise, Blackburn's modal challenge can still apply. As part of this interpretation, the closed and meaning-making nature of empirical and epistemological inquiry is inextricable; while linguistically the disparity between two synonymous terms may be evident, if not self-evident, in logical terms the difference may be invisible. This serves to illustrate the relatively microscopic difference between logical and linguistic terminology, something that is crucial to the discussion concerning reductionist interpretations of premise 2) of the Blackburn's modal argument.

The c) approach appears to be equally unsuccessful a means to immediately dismiss Blackburn's modal challenge as a moral naturalist. This is because, if to be a naturalist is to commit to the analysability of moral terms in natural terms, to the extent that the very meaning of moral terms can be captured entirely in natural terms, then one would only be set to deny the premise 2) of Blackburn's argument, rather than demonstrating the inapplicability of the argument. If moral terms are not as analysable on this basis, then the mystery behind the analytic possibility of mixed worlds appears to be generated in any case. This leaves only approach d).

II. Non-Reductive vs. Reductive Moral Naturalism and the Bearing of this Distinction on Blackburn's Modal Challenge

It's important to clarify that despite using a reductive approach to distinguish between moral naturalism and nonnaturalism, it is nevertheless possible to make a further distinction between reductive and non-reductive moral naturalism, as a means by which some of the

criticisms of the moral naturalist position can be circumvented. Of these, the arguments generated by Moore's Open Question Argument (hereafter OQA) (1903) are exemplars, and these may serve as grounds for denying premise 2 of Blackburn's argument. I will now clarify how this subsequent distinction can and is often made:

Non-reductive moral naturalism is the view that, although moral properties are on an ontological par with natural properties – and thus maintain compatibility with a naturalistic worldview – they are identical with but not *reducible* to other natural properties such as descriptive natural properties. Consequently, the full normative meaning behind the proposition "it is wrong to steal money from others" cannot be reduced to – and hence cannot be encapsulated by – a descriptive statement such as "taking money that belongs to others causes unhappiness" or "taking money that belongs to others undermines their wellbeing". The distinction between reductive and non-reductive naturalism is therefore brought into question and several taxonomical issues as a result.

First of all, one might ask: in what sense are moral properties to be considered identical to natural properties? On considering the difficulty of identifying or formulating a universally accepted definition of 'natural', Robinson (2002) indicates a popular use of the term: something is natural if it is open to an empirical investigation. Others, such as Billy Dunaway (2015), have made an alternate proposal for the definition, stating that if something can be classified as 'natural', then it has causal power. Conversely, Strandberg (2004) contends that such a definition insufficiently distinguishes naturalism from the position of nonnaturalism or even supernaturalism. Nonnaturalists, such as Moore, claim that causal power can still be attached to nonnatural properties, and that supernatural beings such as angels, God, and demons, if they existed, would also possess causal power. Therefore, Putnam and De (2016) conclude that the definition of naturalism regarding causal power means that moral naturalism would overlap with other metaethical theories.

Philosophers who argue against the existence of Moorean nonnaturalist properties (and hence reject at least Finlay's fourth face of Moral Realism) can nevertheless claim that although Mooreans and others might think that causal power is attributed to such properties, they are causally impotent, inexistent, and hence have no causal power (Shafer-Landau, 2005; Ridge, 2007; Zangwill, 2012; Dunaway, 2015). Therefore, a distinction between supernaturalism and nonnaturalism can still be made. Others might maintain that

supernatural entities and the possession of causal power by Moorean nonnaturalist properties remain open to debate. Supernaturalism and nonnaturalism would be deemed false if they were considered as having no causal power beyond this definition as opposed to any other metaphysical doctrine, an admittedly odd contention (Shafer-Landau, 1994; Farrelly, 2005; Hills, 2009; Zangwill, 2012; Dunaway, 2015).

The presumption that moral properties are not identical to non-normative or descriptive properties might be brought into question regarding this non-reductive moraal naturalist position. This question requires an understanding of the meaning of descriptive properties (Dreier, 1992). Ridge (2007) argues that descriptive properties cannot simply be defined as properties that are not normative. Such an assumption would make the irreducible nature of the non-identical with that of descriptive properties trivially true. According to Robert Mabrito (2005), descriptive properties can be defined as those properties that can be investigated through descriptive disciplines such as sociology, biology, physics, and psychology. Consequently, non-reductive moral naturalism can be defined according to two views: first, that moral properties are also natural properties; and second, that moral properties are not identical with any other properties capable of investigations under descriptive disciplines.

Some philosophers, such as Paul Bloomfield (2001) and Ridge (2007), have adopted definitions that differ somewhat from the contemporary definition of descriptive properties. Such definitions posit that moral properties *are* reducible to descriptive properties, though only when the former are based on the latter. *Prima facie,* differentiation between the two definitions seems non-existent; indeed, this definition converges with the contemporary definition on most occasions, although the two convergent definitions differ in certain cases and scenarios. Holistic moral functionalism is an example of this divergence. For example, appealing to the Ramification method in the definition of holistic moral properties, which characterise the functional network, means that moral properties can be presented on the basis of the Ramsey expression, which has no moral terms (Bloomfield, 2001, p. 11; Audi, 2013, p. 16). In this regard, moral properties would be reducible to descriptive properties according to the second definition of non-reductive moral naturalism (Bloomfield, 2001).

Arguably, the knowledge of a moral property relies on the relations of that property and other moral properties that fall within the remit and boundaries of a functional network as

characterised by moral theory. In other words, it is those relations of such properties within the moral-theory framework that are knowable, not the properties *qua* properties. Smith (2004) expounds on this explanation, indicating that moral properties are understood in a parasitic manner, one that requires an understanding of other normative or moral properties. Therefore, the contemporary definition indicates that the properties that are observed by the Ramsey expression may not be liable to investigations under descriptive disciplines (Bloomfield, 2001, p. 7; Audi, 2013, p. 10).

In terms of Blackburn's modal argument against realism, the distinction between reductive and non-reductive moral naturalism only indicates a means to respond to the argument if a reductive account of naturalism was sufficiently reductive to immediately entail a rejection of the argument's second premise. In the following section, I aim to put into the question the plausibility of such views.

III. Strandberg's Version of the Open Question Argument as a Refutation of Analytic Reductionism

Strandberg's (2004a) version of the OQA is one of the clearest and strongest available. He specifically states that the argument's target is 'analytic reductionism', which, according to him, amounts to the claim that there is a correct analytic statement of the form 'whatever is X is good', in the sense that 'being X' captures the meaning of the term 'good'. This interpretation has significant initial appeal, especially when considered among the contemporaneous philosophical climate in which the OQA was formulated and proposed – and indeed, per the wider naturalistic fallacy propounded by Moore against the naturalist perspective.

I argue here that because Strandberg does not convincingly escape the Paradox of Analysis objection, it is not, in fact, a successful refutation of analytic reductionism. However, he nevertheless provides adequate – and adequately in-depth – arguments and argumentation to undermine a narrower interpretation of Moore's argument, one that would be necessary to reject the second premise of Blackburn's argument:

2) There being a set of such non-moral properties without any moral properties does not entail a logical contradiction. In other words, it is analytically possible for these non-moral properties to obtain without any moral properties doing so.

{Possibly ($\exists$x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

Based on the assumption that we are concerned chiefly with the plausibility of denying this premise as a realist response to the argument, a realist view and approach shall be assumed and employed, in method and in argument, throughout the remainder of this discussion.

III.I. Introduction to Strandberg's OQA

The OQA originated with Moore's *Principia Ethica* and is generally interpreted as an attack on moral naturalism. Within the OQA, Moore proposes – in Section 26; Chapter 2 – the view that "No intrinsic value is to be found except in the possession of some one natural property…and which declare this because it is supposed that to be good means to possess the property in question." I take the following rendering to be representative of a vague conception of the OQA:

> Premise 1) If, upon sufficient reflection, the question 'is whatever is X good?' can be asked intelligibly by a competent user of the term 'good' (when X is some non-moral property/set of properties), then the statement 'whatever is X is good' is not a correct conceptual analysis of the term 'good'.

> Premise 2) Upon sufficient reflection, the question 'is whatever is X good?' can be asked intelligibly by a competent user of the term 'good'. It is, in other words, an open question.

> Conclusion) The statement 'whatever is X is good' is not a correct conceptual analysis of the term 'good'.

Due to the numerous renderings of the OQA within *Principia Ethica* – and the lack of clarification from Moore as to the precise mechanics of the argument – many different

interpretations of different ideas as to whom the argument was levelled at have arisen. Moore's target remains uncertain, though there are several clues and suggestions within *Principia Ethica*. One interpretation of Moore's intent comes from Fred Feldman (2005) who argues that, rather than trying to undermine naturalism directly, Moore was simply responding to those arguments that attempt to convince us of a moral theory purely on the basis of a provided reductive analysis of moral properties. Feldman also observes and clearly demonstrates how Moore's account of the OQA can be interpreted in different ways. I do not think I could provide and defend a clear interpretation of the nature and purpose of OQA – at least, not as it was originally outlined and presented by Moore himself – nor is such a strict interpretation necessary for the argument presented herein. Hence, I think that a preliminary evaluation of the OQA can be provided by utilising a more clearly stated version, and by considering who Moore was addressing per its formulation and use.

As noted above, Strandberg's version of the OQA argument is one of the clearest and strongest available. He specifically states that the argument's target is 'analytic reductionism', which he defines as "the notion that a term applying to something in virtue of its moral property has the same meaning as a term applying to something in virtue of its non-moral property or properties" (Strandberg, 2004a, p. 8). Hence, for Strandberg's analytic reductionism, there is a correct analytic statement of the form 'whatever is X is good' in the sense that 'being X' captures the meaning of the term 'good'. Despite the initial appeal of this interpretation I wish to argue that, even if his argument is not in fact a successful refutation of analytic reductionism *in itself*, if the argument becomes sufficiently diluted it may render a defence of a direct-entailment relation from non-moral properties to moral properties problematic.

An outline of Strandberg's argument and its merits shall be provided, after which I shall try and prove how the argument fails to repudiate an objection, one that the progenitor himself had anticipated. This objection is that which arises from his desired response to the Paradox of Analysis. Although Strandberg attempts to demonstrate the compatibility of this response with his interpretation of the OQA, I will argue that he fails to adequately address the concern of incompatibility, and thereby fails to rule out analytic reductionism entirely.

III.II. Strandberg's Version of OQA and its Merits

Strandberg states that his interpretation of the OQA differs from Moore's version in several ways. For example, the initial premises of Strandberg's version of OQA are generalised to include all analytic statements that aim to capture the meaning of one of its composite terms, rather than merely those specifically of the form 'whatever is X is good'. So, for instance, the statement 'an unmarried man is a bachelor' is true purely in virtue of the meaning of the terms 'unmarried man' and 'bachelor'; what it means to be a bachelor is the same as what it means to be an unmarried man, thus they are tautologically indistinct. Consequently, this statement qualifies as those of the sort Strandberg refers to in his interpretation.

When Strandberg is discussing analytic statements, he clearly states that he does not want to commit to the analytic/synthetic distinction for the purposes of his argument. What he is really talking about when I say 'analytic statements' are merely 'fixed points in language': they guarantee that we talk about the same things and the same properties of things in different circumstances, and that we do this from a common epistemological basis ensuring mutual understanding" (Ibid., p.184). This point, however, does not change the nature of his argument fundamentally, for his definition of analytic reductionism does not require the notion of analyticity anyway. So, for the sake of a simpler explanation, I refer to these statements as 'analytic' in this chapter.

Moreover, like many modern versions of the argument, Strandberg's highlights the importance and relevance of doubting the significance of this to such 'open questions'. It seems that Strandberg understands the capacity of doubting a particular statement to be a necessary and sufficient foundation upon which one can render the same statement into an intelligible question. Strandberg does not make it clear that this ability should also be taken to be what he *means* by "the ability to put a statement intelligibly into question"; nevertheless, the argument remains valid despite this. Regardless, Strandberg's version of OQA can be summarised into these two arguments:

First Argument:

Premise 1) An analytic statement that captures the meanings of one of its composite terms is correct only if it cannot be (upon sufficient reflection) intelligibly formulated into a question.

Premise 2) Such an analytic statement [premise 1] can be reasonably put into doubt with full understanding of the meaning of the statement's composite terms – and thus of the statement as a whole – if it can be intelligibly formulated into a question.

Premise 3) The statement 'whatever is X is good' can be reasonably put into doubt, with a
full understanding of the meaning of the terms 'X' and 'good', thereby casting the whole statement into doubt.

Premise 4) The statement 'whatever is X is good' can, upon sufficient reflection, be intelligibly formulated into a question. As such, 'is whatever is X good?' is an open question.

Conclusion) The statement 'whatever is X is good' is not a correct analytic statement that captures the meaning of the term 'good'.

Second Argument:

Premise 1) All analytic statements of the form 'whatever is X is good' that hitherto proposed capturing the meaning of the term 'good' can, upon sufficient reflection, be formulated into a question.

Premise 2) Taking the first argument for granted, there are two explanations for premise 1: either there is a correct analytic statement of the form "X is good", one that captures the meaning of the term good and which is simply yet to be discovered; or there is not.

Premise 3) There is no evidence for there being a correct analytic statement of the form 'whatever is X is good'.

Premise 4) The best explanation for this is that all analytic statements of the form 'whatever is X is good' – and indeed, of any other analytic statement that tries to capture the meaning of moral terms – are subject to the first argument.

Conclusion) There is no correct analytic statement of the form 'X is good'; furthermore, this is true of all other analytic statements that try to capture the meaning of moral terms.

By 'doubt', Strandberg states that he is referring to a broad conception of the notion, including "the proper sense (where one is not sure whether to answer affirmatively or negatively)" and "the propensity to respond with an outright 'no'" (Ibid., p. 182). This is how the term is employed within this chapter.

In any case, Strandberg applies the second argument to refute analytic reductionism because he does not concede that premise 3 of the first argument can be taken as applicable to all possible instances of the analytic statement "whatever is X is good". Instead, Strandberg takes the first argument as merely "a test of whether an analysis expresses sameness of meaning". (Ibid., p. 194) This seems reasonable, given that demonstrating that a particular statement of the form 'X is good' can be reasonably doubted is far more likely to be possible by looking at the particular statement itself, rather than by looking at all statements of said form in general.

At any rate, by setting out the initial premises of his version of OQA in terms of definitional analytic statements, his argument is, at least *prima facie*, clearly more convincing than the original OQA. The first two premises of Strandberg's argument are much harder to dismiss than the first premise of the particular interpretation of the OQA I attribute to Moore. Strandberg goes to great lengths to demonstrate how statements such as 'Water=H_2O' and 'x is a brother if and only if x stands in the family relation to a person that is the main theme of the story of Cain and Abel' do not count as counterexamples to the first premise of his argument; this is because they do not constitute analytic statements as he defines them. According to Strandberg, 'to be H_2O' does not capture the meaning of the term 'water'. This seems to indicate that Strandberg takes two properties to have the same meaning, and thus takes statements like 'whatever is X is good' to capture the meaning of the term 'good' if and only if they both pick out all and only the same notions we ascribe to each of them

independently of empirical assessment, as well as picking out all and only the same objects and properties (rather than the latter being a necessary and sufficient condition). Whilst one could object to these criteria for sameness of meaning, for my purposes here I will give Strandberg the benefit of the doubt. Though one can appeal to these statements for utilisation as analogies, Strandberg's version remains immune to them if it is to undermine Moore's OQA.

Nevertheless, Strandberg is faced with a significant objection, one to which he gives a great deal of attention as he tries to demonstrate how it may be avoided. This objection stems from the means by which he hopes to respond to the Paradox of Analysis.

III.III. The Objection from the Paradox of Analysis

As perhaps the most effective responses to OQA do, the objection I will be addressing seeks to undermine premise 1) of the first argument – the objection from the paradox of analysis. Although this is not the only strategy for repudiating this argument, and such strategies may well be worthy of attention for objecting to Strandberg's version of OQA, however I shall not be addressing them here, as my aims are simply to adapt the argument in light of this particular issue.

The paradox of analysis can be explained in terms of the following argument:

> Premise 1) If a statement cannot, upon sufficient reflection, be reasonably put into doubt, then the statement cannot be informative, since the statement must obviously be trivial in nature.

> Premise 2) An analytic statement is correct if it cannot, upon sufficient reflection, be reasonably put into doubt.

Conclusion) Therefore, if an analytic statement is correct, it cannot be informative.

In other words, the conclusion of this argument holds that a definitional analytic statement is only informative when it can be intelligibly put into question, that is, only when it is incorrect. Needless to say, the paradox seems to be built into the foundations of the OQA.

Evidently, this is the case regarding Strandberg's version of the argument, since the first conclusion of the argument is practically equivalent to the first premise of his first argument; both state that being reasonably indubitable is a necessary condition for a correct analytic statement.

Consequently, unless the argument is taken to be unsound, it seems to present a significant issue for advocates of conceptual analysis. If all correct analytic statements are uninformative, then there is nothing informative that can be learned about any concept, regardless of the analysis to which the concept is subjected. Whilst this was not necessary problematic for Moore's OQA, since his original argument might be read as simply intending to demonstrate that conceptual analysis of the term 'good' is impossible anyway, Strandberg's version of the argument might be undermined by the view that the OQA cannot be used to undermine a particular conceptual analysis of the term 'good' (in favour of another nonnaturalist analysis for instance), since it only undermines the possibility of conceptual analysis in general, and hence anyone utilising the OQA to take metaethical opposition to naturalism would have to give up on conceptual analysis as well in the process, which might prove to restrictive for the metaethical arguments that might be intended.

In order to deny this conclusion then, an advocate of conceptual analysis must repudiate at least one premise of the Paradox if they are to maintain that analytic statements can indeed be correct and informative. However, denying premise 2) appears *prima facie* to be incompatible with Strandberg's interpretation of the OQA, since denying premise 2) is equivalent to denying premise 1) of Strandberg's first argument.

To summarise, the objection is that, as the conclusions of the Paradox of Analysis must be denied, and as premise 1) of Strandberg's first argument is equivalent to premise 2) of the paradox of analysis, premise 1 of the Paradox of Analysis must therefore be denied; otherwise Strandberg's version of OQA must be taken to be unsound.

III.IV. Strandberg's Response to the Objection

Strandberg focuses heavily on this objection because he hopes to advocate conceptual analysis, while simultaneously maintaining the soundness of his interpretation of the

OQA. Consequently, he argues for the possibility of an analysis to be correct and informative, even though his interpretation of the OQA does not allow for it.

Strandberg responds by asking how one may deny the conclusion of the Paradox without also denying premise 1) of the first argument. Indeed, he argues that, in fact, one can accept premise 2 and deny premise 1) of the Paradox by utilising a distinction from Smith's *The Moral Problem* (1994, pp. 37–38). Herein, Smith argues that there is a difference between having 'knowledge-that' and 'knowledge-how', and that both are needed for a conceptual understanding. In defending informative and correct analytic statements with the use of the journey from 'knowledge-how' to 'knowledge-that', Strandberg is presupposing that a real distinction can be made between them. This distinction was originally defended by Ryle (1949, Chapter 2), although whether or not there is a real distinction to be made remains a contentious issue (Snowdon (2003)). For my purposes, however, I will again give Strandberg the benefit of the doubt, and assume that such a valid distinction can be made.

Along similar lines, Strandberg argues one can have an understanding of how to apply moral terms correctly, without being able to provide an analysis that captures the meaning of the term 'good', at least not in the form of an analytic statement. Consequently, analytic statements of the form 'whatever is X is good' can be both correct and informative in those cases wherein an agent applies the term 'good' correctly, though without being able to provide an analysis that is able to capture its meaning. So, if this agent were to encounter a correct analytic statement of the form 'whatever is X is good', the statement would be informative for the agent, even when the agent in question is unable, upon sufficient reflection, to reasonably put it into doubt; this is because the statement captures the meaning of the term 'good'.

Strandberg therefore believes that he has formulated a counterexample to premise 1), in that the proposed agent finds something that cannot, upon sufficient reflection, be formulated into an informative question. However, several difficulties regarding the counterexample seem to remain.

III.V. Problems with Strandberg's Response

Several issues remain regarding Strandberg's response as a strategy for denying premise 1). Indeed, without undermining premise 2) the argument seems to rely on the possibility of an agent being able to apply the term 'good' correctly in all possible contexts, though without them being able to give an analysis that captures the meaning of the term itself. If it is only the case that this agent can apply the term to uncontroversial contexts, then, since the agent in this case does not know what definitional analytic statement involving the term 'good' is true, it cannot be said that the agent knows how the term good should be applied.

Moreover, if the agent is only able to apply the term 'good' correctly in certain contexts, there is no basis upon which one could claim that the agent would not be able to reasonably put into doubt a definitional analytic statement of the form 'whatever is X is good'. Even if it is possible for an agent to discover the truth of such a definitional analytic statement – while having no reason to doubt it – there remains no necessary reason to think that this agent would think that it *could not*, in theory, be doubted.

Strandberg's only explanation as to how such a statement 'whatever is X is good' could be reasonably indubitable is by reflecting on how one applies the term 'good', which subsequently determines if the statement in question accords with the term. Hence, if one were unable to apply the term 'good' to every context, there would appear to be no reason to think the statement 'whatever is X is good' would ever appear as reasonably indubitable to you. This seems like a reasonable claim. Why would it be impossible for such an agent to reasonably put into doubt the analytic statement 'whatever is X is good' while also reasonably putting into doubt the term 'good' when it is correctly applied to a moral issue – such as, for instance, abortion – unless they already have some conceptual understanding of the term 'good'?

Strandberg needs to provide an answer to this question for this case to stand as a genuine counterexample. Indeed, otherwise Strandberg might just say that one could recognise the statement 'X is good' as reasonably indubitable merely by having partial knowledge of how to apply the term 'good'. For analogously, he might argue, one may apply the term 'prime' to the numbers 2, 3, 5, 7, and 11 while simultaneously upholding that there are an infinite number of prime numbers. Once one is acquainted with the statement 'whatever is

a prime number has only two factors', one can, on sufficient reflection regarding the means by which the term is used, see that such a statement accords with how the term 'prime number' is correctly applied; consequently, one may conclude that the statement is reasonably indubitable.

Nevertheless, the analogy may be disputed. Indeed, given the knowledge that one has, upon reflection one has as much reason to conclude that the statement 'whatever is a prime number has two or fewer factors' is reasonably indubitable, while also making the claim that 1 is also a prime number. Still, Strandberg might argue in response that had one additionally known that the term 'prime number' does not apply to the number 1, there would be no way in which one could not conclude upon reflection anything other than the statement 'whatever number is prime has only two factors'. Hence it is really a question of having the necessary partial knowledge of how a term like 'good' can be applied and used, prior to one being able to reflect upon it and subsequently conclude that statements such as 'whatever is X is good' are reasonably indubitable.

In response, one could make the argument that the agent cannot always apply the term correctly based on the premise that they happen to have adequate partial knowledge, but he then must also understand that he is applying the term correctly. Otherwise, the correct use may be merely circumstantial, assuming the agent just happens to always make correct estimates. In other words, to be able to say that an agent really knows how to apply a term correctly, the agent must know *that* he knows how to apply the term correctly; for example, unless the agent *knows* that they possess the necessary and sufficient partial knowledge of how the term 'prime number' applies (i.e. they know that they must know that numbers like 2, 3, 5, and 7 are prime numbers, and also know that 1 is not a prime number), they cannot conclude, upon reflection alone, that statements like '23 is a prime number' are reasonably indubitable. If this is the case, then Strandberg needs to provide further explanation as to how such statements can become reasonably indubitable – without it simply constituting a conceptual understanding.

Strandberg may choose to contest this point through an externalist account of epistemic justification. He might argue that – despite the defensibility of knowledge – merely by undertaking derivations simply per correct application of the term itself, this still counts as knowledge. Moreover, he may claim that the need for the agent to know that they know

how to correctly apply the term is both unnecessary and incorrect, although this has been heavily argued against (Williamson (2000)). However, the problem for Strandberg is that not only does the agent need to know how a term is correctly applied, but they must also know that all analytic statements that use that term are indubitable. Under the circumstances that Strandberg sets out, there is no reason to believe that the agent could reflect to such an extent that they would be able to determine that a correct analytic statement of the form 'X is good' cannot reasonably be put into doubt. Indeed, in encountering such a statement, it seems possible that the agent might reject it based on the possibility that they might use the term 'good' for erroneous reasons – for instance, following a particular set of incorrect rules that happened to cause the agent to apply the term 'good' correctly.

According to this analysis, it seems reasonable to claim that, in order to be able to explain why – or, perhaps more pertinently, to 'know that' – the term 'good' applies to a particular scenario, there is a prerequisite that one must ultimately provide an analysis capturing the meaning of the term itself. However, if this were the case, then the correct analytic statement could not be informative, and hence its counterexample is, in fact, not a counterexample. To demonstrate that this does not constitute a necessary condition for explaining why the term 'good' is applicable in any context, Strandberg may have to argue that it is impossible for an agent to correctly be able to apply the term 'good' to all possible contexts on a purely circumstantial basis. Now it seems that the burden of proof has been returned to Strandberg; indeed, it is seemingly impossible for him to prove their interpretation to be valid, since it appears to be perfectly plausible to maintain completely coextensive terms with entirely different meanings. Until someone manages to provide a successful proof of this impossibility, I think that proving the validity of Strandberg's counterexample is impossible; furthermore, the counterexample is, in fact, no counterexample at all. Strandberg does not successfully show how one can accept premise 2) and reject premise 1); indeed, one could still argue that it is more reasonable to reject premise 2) in order to avoid the paradox and therefore allow for correct analytic statements that can intelligibly be put into question.

III.VI. A Viable Adjustment to Strandberg's Argument

Since premise 2) of the second argument relies on premise 1), it seems reasonable to conclude that the validity of Strandberg's version of the argument requires further defence. Due to its failure to show how his arguments are compatible with the claim that there can be correct and informative analytic statements, denying the plausibility of premise 1) of the first argument seems entirely reasonable.

At best, Strandberg might show, with his supposed counterexample, that a commonsensical intuition regarding morality could be sympathetic to his version of the OQA. When the 'Litmus test' of Strandberg's first argument is applied to a reductive analysis of moral properties, they may seem, on first appearance, to intuitively fail. However, this issue is explainable by alluding to the lack of explanation for the term 'good' according to common-sense intuition. It is for this reason that this question remains an outstanding one in the field of metaethics. Consequently, it seems as if Strandberg fails to refute analytic reductionism according to his version of the OQA. In order to avoid this charge, Strandberg would need to provide a better defence of how his response to the Paradox of Analysis is compatible with premise 1) of his first argument, in order for his arguments to survive the aforementioned objection.

Nevertheless, it appears as if the argument could still be useful in defending premise 2) of Blackburn's argument, that is, when defending the analytic possibility of non-moral properties obtaining without supervening moral properties obtaining. By employing Blackburn's stipulated account of analytic statements, Strandberg's arguments could be adjusted as follows:

First Argument:

> Premise 1*) An analytic statement – one that a competent language user of its composite terms can see to be true by purely conceptual means – is correct only if it cannot, upon sufficient reflection, be intelligibly formulated into a question.

Premise 2*) Such an analytic statement can be reasonably put into doubt by a competent language user of the statement's composite terms – and thus of the statement as a whole – iff it can be intelligibly formulated into a question.

Premise 3*) The statement 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' can be reasonably put into doubt, with a full understanding of the meaning of the terms, thus the statement as a whole can be doubted.

Premise 4*) The statement 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' can, upon sufficient reflection, intelligibly be put into question; consequently, 'do Non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M?' becomes an open question.

Conclusion*) The statement 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' is not correct.

Second Argument:

Premise 1*) All analytic statements of the form 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' that have been hitherto proposed can, upon sufficient reflection, be intelligibly formulated into a question.

Premise 2*) Taking the first argument for granted, there are two explanations for premise 1*): either there is a correct analytic statement of the form 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M', which simply has not been discovered yet; or there is not.

Premise 3*) There is no evidence for there being a correct analytic statement of the form 'Non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M'.

Premise 4*) The best explanation for this is that all analytic statements of the form 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' – and indeed, of any other analytic statement that tries to capture the meaning of moral terms – are subject to the first argument.

Conclusion*) There is no correct analytic statement of the form 'non-moral facts N logically imply moral facts M' nor indeed regarding any other analytic statement that tries to capture the meaning of moral terms.

The objections raised against Strandberg's argument do not apply to these emended versions of the same. First, the arguments only concern moral facts being logically entailed from non-moral facts. Second, and perhaps more significantly, the argument does not require the analytic statements in question to express the *meaning* of their constituent terms; this was required in Strandberg's original argument to increase its plausibility and also to act as an objection to analytic reductionism. Analytic reductionists might be able to accept premise 2) of Blackburn's argument, however. One might be concerned that premise 1*) of Strandberg's first argument does not have the same kind of plausibility as the original premise 1). However, I would argue that this better encapsulates the usual intuitive interpretation of OQA. This is because the premise amounts merely to claiming that to reasonably doubt a question rules out the ability to establish its truth on a purely conceptual basis – per utilisation of Blackburn's weaker account of analyticity. While this may not present itself as a straightforward tautology, it nevertheless appears as a trivial truth.

Therefore, despite these adjustments, this argument appears to cohere with Blackburn's own stipulations in his argument, as well as keeping the strengths of Strandberg's original argument without incurring its setback. This provides a means to defend the logical disconnection of moral and non-moral facts, and thus premise 2) of Blackburn's argument.

III.VII Objections

Hence the argument provided herein is not an original formulation or objection; it is merely an extant objection applied at a higher level and, therefore, it shall hold repercussions for the wider discussion. The idea that there might be a set of non-moral properties that are able to obtain without their corresponding moral properties obtaining is an analytical possibility. Hence for these properties to manifest themselves in an exemplar, or as an instance or relation, remains an extant question regarding relational ontology and/or linguistic interpretation of the terms used. Essentially, Blackburn's second premise states

that there can exist – per a defence or corroboration of a nonnaturalist approach and against that of a naturalist approach to metaethics – non-moral properties that are untied to a moral equivalent set of properties. There is no set of non-moral properties that obtain without this argument being contradictory. For instance, the truth of the statement 'bachelors are unmarried' is, in an analytic sense, defendable in a pure and uncomplicated manner – indeed, the statement is often cited as the exemplar of analytic statements that are true. However, an *ad reductio* discussion follows when a questioner questions the truth of the statement according to one or both facts being unknown by the agent or questioner; that is, it is impossible to not know one without the other having presented itself as an obtained reality, whether potential or actual. It seems as if the argument would run the same way as asking whether or not it is true that bachelors are unmarried – to do this entails, at best, a problematic interpretation and, at worst, a confusion between closed- and open-ended meaningful questioning.

This difference between the linguistic and the logical is important because reductionism demands a closed and non-semantic system; within a linguistic framework, statements and propositions are used contextually and demand an understanding by each interlocutor to have any claim to truth or validity. Without this context a statement may be made, such as 'bachelors are unmarried men'; however, these statements can be claimed to be meaningless, as they entail their own tautological 'meaning'. In a real-world scenario when such statements are made in a pseudo-linguistic manner, a conflation of worlds occurs, and the validity or truth of the statement relies on one facet of the statement in an open-ended interpretation per that of 'queerness' as propounded by Mackie (1977).

Therefore, a situation like Kripke's conflation of Hesperus and Phosphorus is only applicable iff the meaning of these two terms is reducible to a non-linguistic meaning, and furthermore, regarding the discussion above, this non-linguistic meaning needs to obtain in a manner that relates to moral properties. Per the objections levelled against Blackburn's premise 2), the premise holds an either/or interpretation; no possibility remains for the interpretations of moral and non-moral properties being entailed with neither of them being knowable to a certain degree. That is, like Moore in his original OQA, premise 2) makes an assumption that either one and therefore – per Moore's original question, both must be false. Indeed, according to the OQA, the meaning of the initial phrase is supposed to have meaning, a non *a posteriori* meaning, self-defined and empirically constructed as well as

empirically discoverable. Indeed, in these circumstances the discovery of said truth and the formulation, and obtaining, or epistemological and hence ontological manifestation are one and the same – they are subject to a Cartesian circular argument but do not, unlike the eponymous character of the phrase, pretend to be outside of the aforementioned circular argument. Indeed the 'queerness' of moral law and of moral properties as proposed by philosophers such as Mackie can be evoked in criticism of premise 2). According to Mackie, "if there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe" (Mackie, 1977, p. 38). To interpret certain moral phrases in the same manner as a tautology and to expect them to hold the same relations might arguably be fallacious.

The point here is that making it less obvious should not have a bearing – since as Strandberg himself acknowledges, analytic truths are not necessarily obvious anyway. Simple mathematics is awash with examples and instances of this; indeed, philosophically speaking, one may imagine a logically closed system that presents an established set of rules or relations that are simultaneously unknowable and also not-unknowable given sufficient time and reflection. In other words, when presented with the relations of this system, the observer or investigator would struggle to determine perhaps even a single relation between two nodes, points, or propositions. Yet every one of these within the closed system is inextricably tied to all others, and no one may be false without all others becoming false as well. With the argument herein, one could maintain that – with an Aristotelian account of ontological potentiality and actuality and a Scholastic, epistemological interpretation of this *qua* metaethical obtaining – the potential knowledge of both sides of this tautology is, and has always been, with or without exemplars or minds, true, and hence the properties obtain thusly. Linguistically speaking, and hence morally speaking, if one assumes an uncertain position among or between the two positions of naturalism and nonnaturalism (supernaturalism per metaethics being exempt from this discussion), this introduces several issues due to the vagaries of language and the relation between the ontology of natural kinds and the ontology of moral truths or statements.

Despite the various interpretations of the OQA, many of which were formulated or devised according to the philosophical climate of the time and the progeny of that movement in the form of analytics-driven metaethics, the statement *qua* OQA is, arguably, one that invites reductionist thinking. If one takes the argument thus – as opposed to supposing that its

intent was to level criticism and tie up naturalist ethicists and invite them into the naturalistic fallacy, also originated by Moore – then reducing the OQA is more than appropriate.

The argument evoked by Moore is one that rests upon the synthetic nature of all value propositions, whether moral or otherwise, and the impossibility of tautologically or directly identifying a non-moral property or proposition with that of a non-moral property or proposition. Indeed, the argument itself echoes the dialogue in the *Euthyphro*, and can even be conflated with the Aristotelian or Platonic argument concerning the Third Man – itself an argument not unrelated to the moral, indeed metaethical, landscape regarding its significance to the ontological nature of epistemic truth. As a result, the OQA and the naturalistic fallacy invite reductionism because, in some capacity, they are based upon them – Moore begs the question of what is being referred to when one says that 'x is good' by presuming that one can or wants to know what 'x' is being that of the argument 'x' is 'x' *qua* 'x'.

However, the argument presented herein is not the same as the argument cited above concerning the marital status of bachelors; one remains closed and begs the question concerning the truth of both non-moral and moral properties, while the other assumes the existence of both, be it potentially or actually, in an epistemological or ontological manner without claiming to have any certainty regarding anything other than their mutual connection. This is where Moore and Mackie diverge, and it is where the crux of the debate over the OQA is most poignant. In the same way, the obviousness of this truth does not necessarily have the power attributed to it by the original OQA, and, furthermore, the analogy has insufficient strength as an argument for the OQA.

Competency in utilising such terms in relation to the term 'analytic' must imply a higher level of understanding than just 'good'. Thus, to some extent the criticisms of Moore and the naturalistic fallacy, as well as the OQA in the tradition of Mackie's queerness, are not as relevant as they may initially seem. It is believed that this argument applies not merely to linguistic or semantic minds, but also to philosophical ones. The hierarchy, per supervenience, of properties is one that does not necessarily entail the complete and total understanding of a phrase and its use in any given situation. Hence the analogy of closed and open systems is useful here because it forces a dichotomy between linguistic

terminology and logical terminology. For the agent to use a term in any given context, even if they use it with consistent and considerable accuracy, does not mean that this agent understands the term's meaning in every case. Indeed, as previously stipulated, the agent may be able to claim that they know the meaning of this terminology but in not in each and every instance. Even if they utilise the term without conflation or contradiction per the meaning or object concerned, then this can be, arguably, a circumstantial and not a meaningful connection. Hence its significance to the discussion is untenable. Only in the closed system approach, where tautology has no meaning, can the alternative conclusion be reached, namely that moral and non-moral properties are related per a naturalist perspective and approach, and thus the appeal is therefore not just to a competent language speaker, but to a philosopher.

III.VIII Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the argument from reductionism when levelled against Blackburn's argument is neither complete nor conclusive. Reductionism in this sense poses a number of problems if one is to accept and propound the second premise of the moral challenge and its criticisms; reductionism entails either an assumption regarding an original position, namely that it posits that moral properties do necessarily exist purely on the basis of natural properties obtaining, or else assumes that the connection between them must be both analytic and knowable. As a result, reductionism cannot be said to have been proved untenable or irrelevant in this instance; its relevance is still maintainable as there is no alternative, nonnaturalist position that is capable of affording any certainty like the (unproven) claims of the naturalist who levels such criticisms against Moore and his OQA, and who remarks on inconsistencies and inaccuracies regarding Blackburn's premise 2) of his modal challenge. In short, this discussion is not intended to prove that reductionism does not work at all; rather, it merely demonstrates the reasons why you might put these into question and present them as potentially conclusive. Consequently, though not definitively, it has been shown how Blackburn's argument is potentially immune to such criticisms, and why it may be able to withstand appeals to analytic reductionism. At the very least however, it might be said that unless there is a sufficiently convincing account of analytic reductionism that can be defended as a means of undermining premise 2 of Blackburn's argument, then the modal challenge remains a problem for moral realists, whether naturalist or nonnaturalist. Appeals to naturalism as a response could only make

sense if naturalism was understood with a reductive approach, but my arguments presented here I think put such an approach sufficiently into question that alternative responses ought to be explored.

Chapter 3: Why Realists Need to Defend Supervenience, Why Realists Still Need to Overcome Blackburn's Modal Challenge, And the Proposed Kantian Reconciliation of Moral Realism and Supervenience

In this chapter, I will identify the remaining available strategies available for responding to Blackburn's modal challenge to moral realism, and discuss the potential reasons why they may not be adequate. These strategies are as follows:

1. To deny the supervenience thesis as a conceptual claim, as those such as Hills (2009) and Harrison (2013) have opted to do. Although alternatives have been offered to capture how situational factors that can change our moral judgments, without supervenience it is only contingent that they so, or in other words, a 'brute fact'.

2. To reject the need to answer Blackburn's modal challenge entirely, by explaining away the analytic possibility of a mixed world as merely an incidental fact (as philosophers like Dreier and Shafer-Landau (2003) have opted to do).

3. To provide a direct response to Blackburn's modal challenge, which provides an explanation for the mystery being the analytic possibility of mixed worlds, which render Blackburn's argument invalid.

At the outset of the chapter, I will initially respond to existing calls for the rejection of moral supervenience as an a priori truth. The aim of this is to demonstrate that such a rejection would go a considerable way to undermining the conceptual rigidity that all moral theories are necessarily in need of (irrespective of whether they are realist or not). I will in turn review the various attempts to dismiss or otherwise repudiate Blackburn's modal challenge to moral realism and explain moral supervenience on a realist basis.

After defending the claim that the mystery does call for an independent explanation, and in particular, one that goes beyond the supervenience thesis in itself (as those like Shafer-

Landau (2003) suggest as an approach), I will also present Nick Zangwill's (1995) response to Blackburn's modal challenge, who claims that his modal challenge can be answered on the basis that moral supervenience can be simply justified on a Kantian synthetic a priori basis. Zangwill suggests that although this is the optimal strategy currently available to adopt in response to Blackburn's modal challenge, a more thorough explanation is required than simply taking supervenience to be a brute fact. Thus, as will be noted in due course, it is particularly important to recognise that the strategy indicates how Immanuel Kant's own moral theory could provide the foundation for this.

I. Why Supervenience Needs to be Defended as An A Priori Truth

Perhaps the most straightforward way for a realist to respond to Blackburn's modal challenge is simply to reject the first premise, and in doing so, reject supervenience as a conceptual truth. The central point behind Blackburn's argument is the difficulty associated with reconciling supervenience with moral realism, which means that if moral realists can demonstrate a viable basis on which to reject supervenience, then Blackburn's argument cannot undermine moral realism. The purpose of the present section is to give a review of three suggested ways in which the rejection of moral supervenience on a realist basis could take place.

I.I On the Possibility of Simply Dismissing the Supervenience Thesis as a Conceptual Claim

Harrison (2013) argues that not only is the supervenience thesis simply not tenable as a conceptual claim, but also that moral realists would be independently better off dismissing it. Before determining whether there is any validity to this argument, the first thing that needs to be taken under consideration is that he gives a rather vague definition of supervenience:

"(S) any two acts that share the same natural properties have the same moral properties." (2003, p. 62)

It is worth pointing out here that the vagueness behind this definition may in fact serve as a crucial consideration. This is because, as I hope to show, the success of his argument

somewhat depends on Harrison's own definition, which although visibly is not identical to Blackburn's may also amount to a very different definition entirely.

Needless to say, (S) makes for something of a contrast with the first premise of Blackburn's argument:

1) It is analytically necessary that, if in one situation certain moral as well as non-moral properties obtain, then there must be the same moral properties in all situations with the same set of non-moral properties.

{Necessarily [($\exists$x) (G*x & Fx) $\rightarrow$ ($\forall$y)(G*y $\rightarrow$ Fy)]}

The first important point to note relates to the fact that the definition given in Blackburn's paper is characterised by a far greater level of detail when comparatively examined against that provided by Harrison (2013). However, the issue of whether or not the two definitions are in fact coextensive definitions (or, indeed, incompatible definitions) remains unclear. Much of the reason for this is the use of the term 'natural' rather than 'non-moral' in Harrison's (2013) definition. The term 'natural' is one that seems better to avoid if possible, for the simple reason that it implies (wrongly I think) that the supervenience thesis (at least the one that Blackburn uses as the first premise of his argument against realism) is one that has no significance to non-reductive naturalists, or indeed those who might consider themselves to be 'reductive non-naturalists', as I covered in the previous chapter.

 It is also critical to recognise that what Harrison (2013) appears to be arguing here is that it is possible for two actions, both of which are in different sets of circumstances, to share all the same natural properties, but nevertheless have different properties in terms of the degree to which they are morally relevant. In this way, Harrison (2013) claims that (S) is often confused for what he refers to as the 'principle of universalisability':

> The principle of universalizability (U) states that if an action is right, then
> every action that is similar in morally relevant respects is right too. U is an
> analytic truth. If two acts are alike in all morally relevant respects then by
> definition they are morally alike. If they were not, this would have to be due

to a morally relevant difference between them. Does denying S [supervenience] commit one to denying U? No. (Ibid., p. 63)

Of the two principles that Harrison has set out, (S) and (U), one might ask which is closer to Blackburn's version of the supervenience thesis. If we are to take Harrison's argument as a means to directly address Blackburn's argument, then it would need to be (S). However, it appears that (U) is in fact much closer to how exactly Blackburn formulated his account of moral supervenience. One way in which to demonstrate this further is to further modify the (U) that Harrison (2013) discusses to produce "U2", which proceeds in the following way: "if act x is right, then any act having the same properties in virtue of which act x is right, is also right." (Ibid., p. 64)

U2 appears to be somewhat closer to the first premise of Blackburn's argument. but Harrison argues that U2 is "completely false", on the grounds that two actions might share the same properties, but one might have "additional morally relevant properties". (Ibid.) However, it is also important to recognise that this is covered in the first premise of the argument given by Blackburn, and so U2 ends up only failing to be consistent with S (more specifically, in those instances where two situations do not share the same _set_ of non-moral properties). Here, if we return to a consideration of Blackburn's formulation of the supervenience thesis, what becomes immediately notably in view of the above consideration is that it was deliberately set out in such a way as to avoid the possibility of including extraneous or confounding non-moral properties in the supervenience claim.

The following example should clarify the point: according to U2, if it's morally right for person *a* to perform surgery on person *b* in a situation with properties P (*a* is a qualified surgeon, *b* has provided consent to the surgery, etc.), then it would also be morally right for person *a* to perform surgery in any other situation with properties P. However, the kind of possible counterexample that Harrison is alluding to is one where the situation is *almost* entirely the same, in sharing all of the same properties, but also has additional properties that have such moral significance that it renders the surgery wrong (for example, the instruments *a* is using are rusted, unbeknownst to *b*). One might put into question whether it is in fact possible for two situations like these to share the same properties, barring the all important additional properties that delivers the differences in moral properties. However, even if you take this possibility for granted, this does nothing to undermine

Blackburn's account of supervenience, since the counterexample does not apply to any definitions of supervenience (such as Blackburn's) that pertain to sets of properties rather than merely a number.

Furthermore, as Harrison himself points out:

> The S thesis says that two acts with exactly the same natural properties have the same moral properties. But it does not say which natural properties are the ones in virtue of which the act is right/wrong. Furthermore, no two actions in the actual world share exactly the same natural properties. So, the most extreme form of moral particularism according to which there are no defensible moral principles (Dancy 2004) is compatible with S as well as not-S. (Ibid.)

The fact that Harrison specifically chooses to defend the impossibility of two actions sharing the same natural properties in the actual world perhaps indicates his lack of appreciation for the significance of supervenience in itself, at least as a modal claim. Moreover, it is possible that Harrison only has weak rather than strong supervenience in mind (i.e. supervenience within the domain of a single possible world, the actual world, as opposed to the domain of all possible worlds). Nevertheless, even if Harrison managed to undermine weak supervenience as a conceptual claim, Blackburn's argument is still viable if the first premise is read as a defence of strong rather than weak supervenience (as was discussed back in Chapter 1).

This is a crucial way in which Blackburn's premise, and hence his account of supervenience, differs from the account Harrison gives here which clearly articulates the issue that Harrison raises, i.e. the lack of clarity generated by accumulating non-moral properties that is possible on Harrison's account. Rather than giving us a genuine basis to deny supervenience, all that Harrison seems to have achieved is to show why an imprecise understanding of supervenience can undermine both the credibility and the significance of supervenience in itself. Nevertheless, under the understanding that Blackburn has provided, moral supervenience might still be crucial, independently of whether any kind of particularism is defended.

It's worth raising that Harrison (2013) capitalises on Jonathan Dancy's (2004) arguments for moral particularism as part of his claim. To be more specific, Harrison utilises the arguments relating to moral particularism as a means to draw attention to the various issues that underlie U2. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that, as Strandberg (2008) demonstrates, moral particularism actually need have no overarching bearing upon the supervenience claim, since supervenience can be compatible with particularism, so long as the supervenience claim is defined with enough specificity (which is what Strandberg (2008) demonstrates).

I.II. Hills' 'Constant Conjunction' Thesis

In treating it as an argument against moral nonnaturalism, Hills (2009) suggests and discusses the following possible response to Blackburn's argument:

"The non-naturalist might simply bite the bullet and refuse to give any explanation at all. It is simply a brute fact, she might say, that there is this necessary connection between moral and natural properties. This rejection of the demand for explanation is not very appealing" (2009, p.166) Hills here seems to articulate why an explanation is required in the first place, and she offers it in relation to the need to respond to Blackburn. She then offers what comes across as a somewhat *ad hoc* 'constant conjunction thesis:

"Constant conjunction (revised): in the actual world, there are no differences in moral properties without differences in (some interesting subset of the) natural properties." (2009. P. 168)

Arguably though, all Hills has done here is moved the requirement for an explanation a further step along. The constant conjunction claim in itself appears to be a reasonably weak claim that we are required to assume in the actual world in order to maintain consistency in moral reasoning. One can however ask in response: why? Why in this *particular* world (the actual world) do moral properties happen to behave in this way? Hills has already denied the realist a conceptual explanation with this by denying supervenience, so the question seems as difficult to answer as it is pertinent. Perhaps more importantly, it seems crucial to have some explanation as to why the constant conjunction thesis would hold in

the actual world and not in any other possible world in order to be able to justify the claim as holding in the actual world in the first place.

In order to undermine the supposed inconceivability of denying moral supervenience, Hills (Ibid.) suggests that it can be envisaged by considering the possibility of different moral theories being true, or the same moral theory justifying opposing mutually exclusive moral claims. So for instance, acknowledging that a particular utilitarian moral theory might be true in one possible world, whilst virtue ethical theory might be true in another. Since we can conceive of these possibilities, denying supervenience would simply amount to allowing different moral theories to have different truth values in different possible worlds.

There are issues to be raised here though, that seem to undermine realism in the first place. For if one can conceive of a possible world in which a particular moral theory does not hold and is impossible (i.e. it's possible that there are no possible worlds in which moral theory holds true), we seem to be able to infer from S5 modal logic that such a moral theory must be impossible. This is because, under S5 modal logic, a possible necessity implies a necessary necessity. If moral theories are therefore taken to be constituted by necessary truths (i.e. moral theories are taken to hold in all possible worlds), then there is an argument to be made that allowing possible worlds in which the supposedly correct moral theory for the actual world is instead <u>in</u>correct, generates an outright refutation of the moral theory. This response would I think be an overstep though; in denying supervenience by defending the contingency of the right moral theory on a realist basis, this response only seems to demonstrate that one would be ruling out the possibility of the correct moral theory being constituted by any necessary truths, which might perfectly well suit Hills' argument anyway.

This approach would end up being analogous to Johannes Schmitt & Schroeder (2011), who have argued that under weaker assumptions than is found under the commonly accepted S5 modal logic, Blackburn's argument can be addressed, however it would require a world-relative rather than absolute (which is not to be confused with weak or local vs. strong or global) account of supervenience. Like with Hills, this response in my mind should be construed as a denial of the supervenience thesis, and thus as a denial of the first premise of Blackburn's argument. Also like Hills, it results in quite problematic modal implications for moral truths.

Even without taking this approach, if moral truths don't have this kind of metaphysical necessity, then why think that there are moral truths at all? What makes a particular moral theory true in the actual world, when it could be a different in another world? Even if there were an answer that could be given to this question, is there any reason why we should care at all?

Even if morality is not subject to the kind of conceptual analysis that permits the embodiment of a moral theory in terms of rigid principles, this is itself constitutes a conceptual truth of sorts. It isn't simply a matter of inconceivability, as Hills herself suggests that she wants to be able to say that:

> First, one could deny supervenience without accepting that any natural property could be associated with any moral property. So one might deny supervenience without accepting that there is a possible world in which what Hitler did was morally right. But then one would have to explain why this natural property could not be associated with moral rightness, and we have taken on a different but not obviously easier explanatory burden. So I will not question that premise of the argument. (Hills (2009), p. 170)

This is a very important set back to her constant conjunction account that she does not explore in any substantial detail, and seems in fact intent on avoiding:

> The basic constant conjunction claim…is likely to be a trivial truth, for any two actions will have different natural properties (at least in terms of the time they take place, where they occur and the identity of the agent and those affected by the action). Clearly a trivial truth like that requires no explanation. (Ibid, p. 175)

This is where her argument is at her weakest. She cannot give any reason why there is no possible world in which Hitler's actions were morally right. Even if she could, the explanatory burden here seems to be just as bad (if not worse) then trying to solve the mystery behind Blackburn's modal challenge in the first place. Instead. Hills simply attempts to undermine the intuition that this counterfactual is problematic, by simply

acknowledging that the possibility of a wrong action being right in another possible world is no more than a consequent of its conceivability (this is a similar line taken by Anandi Hattiangandi (2018)).

I.III. Why We Need Supervenience

According to those such as Zangwill (1997) (despite him arguing explicitly against moral rationalism (2012)) and Colin Farrelly (2015), supervenience relations not only require no explanation, but are also a prerequisite for systematic moral reasoning, as they are ultimately explanatorily brute. Matthew Kramer (2009) even argues that it's in fact a *moral* mistake to reject supervenience, not simply a conceptual one. What results in even providing a weaker alternative to supervenience appears to result in the kind of difficulties faced by Hills (2009).

Zangwill (1995) challenges the explanations of supervenience offered by those such as Mark Timmons and Terrence Horgan claiming that these explanations are only demanding semantic explanations. Zangwill further criticizes the Twin Earth argument against moral naturalism claiming that the argument is an epistemology argument, where the real problem lies or moral realism. Therefore, Zangwill is of the notion that moral realism still faces real problems in that the attempts offered to explain the supervenience aspect in naturalism are futile and fall short of philosophical standards since some moral facts cannot be explained.

II. How Some Realists Have Tried to Undermine Blackburn's Modal Challenge

II.I Dreier (1992), Shoemaker (1986), and McFetridge (1985)

Those like Dreier (1992), Sydney Shoemaker (1986), and I. G. McFetridge (1985) do not aim to provide an explanation for Blackburn's mystery, generated by S/P combination. They do not mean to deny either realism or supervenience, but instead deny the need to provide any explanation (and as such deny the third premise of Blackburn which claims otherwise). In effect, they question the relevance of the analytic possibility of mixed worlds? As Blackburn (1985) acknowledges, metaphysically they're impossible, and so they question why moral realists have to be in any way concerned their analytic possibility.

The reason why I think they ought to be concerned is not because of the analytic possibility in itself, but the extent to which realists are equipped to provide an explanation for it. On the face of it, mixed worlds appear to constitute a violation of the very systematic nature of morality that supervenience is meant to provide conceptual constrains for in the first place. It's simply not enough as a result to accept it as analytically possible. An explanation is required to understand why the possibility holds analytically, and then why this explanation is not inferior to Blackburn's projectivist solution.

II.II Shafer-Landau (2003/2005), Mabrito (2005), and Ridge (2007)

Shafer-Landau (2003) originally used moral supervenience as a means to provide a constitutional account of nonnaturalism. He therefore saw it as a support for nonnaturalism rather than a problem for it. In response to criticisms from Mabrito (2005) and Ridge (2007), Shafer-Landau (2005) insisted upon this defence of moral supervenience:

> Assume for now that it is a conceptual truth that moral facts/properties/ relations are supervenient ones. The problem, then, should be that competent speakers of a language can conceive of a world in which the base properties that actually underlie particular moral ones fail to do so. But there is no mystery here, since people can conceive of many things that are not metaphysically possible. If certain base properties metaphysically necessitate the presence of specified moral properties, then the conceptual possibility that they fail to do so reveals only a limitation on our appreciation of the relevant metaphysical relations. There is no deep explanatory puzzle resisting resolution here. (Shafer-Landau (2003), p. 86)

Much like Dreier (1992), Shafer-Landau does not see the problem behind the mystery. In defending supervenience with the use of analogising with other forms of supervenience though (2003), he demonstrates the extent to which he has missed the thrust of Blackburn's argument (1985) in much the same way. As I covered in the first chapter, Blackburn explicitly rules out the plausibility of analogising in this way to solve the mystery, as the mystery can simply be regenerated in different contexts beyond the moral.

III. Non-Naturalist Explanations and Justifications of Moral Supervenience

In response to various concerns raised about moral supervenience, by others as well as by Blackburn, realists have tried to provide a variety of different explanations in order to defend the combination of realism and supervenience.

A variety of criticisms have been raised with respect to the matter of moral supervenience, one notable concern having been raised by Blackburn, and others from different members of the philosophical community. This is an important point to register because in response to these concerns, it has been the project of a number of realists to provide a variety of different explanations in order to defend the combination of realism and moral supervenience.

In the recent research conducted by Stephanie Leary (2015), she sought to observe the various differences that exist between naturalist and nonnaturalist approaches to explaining moral supervenience. In view of the conclusions she arrived at after completing her initial analysis, Leary then proceeded to state her own response to Blackburn's argument. Noteworthily, after first considering the various arguments upon which naturalists rest their case that moral properties can be perceived as the same as natural properties, Leary expressed puzzlement. In addition to this, Leary highlighted some weak points in the notion, widely held among non-naturalists, that a distinction should be made between moral properties and scientific properties. As noted by the philosopher (Ibid., p. 1):

> One of the most common complaints raised against non-naturalist views about the normative is that, unlike their naturalist rivals, non-naturalists cannot provide a metaphysical explanation for why normative properties supervene on natural properties. That is, while most naturalists and non-naturalists agree that there cannot be a normative difference between the two entities … without there being a natural difference between them, naturalists have a ready explanation for this, whereas non-naturalists do not.

Contrastingly, Leary adopted the position that these normative properties are of their own kind without any dependence on natural properties, and she subsequently took the view

that making such a claim is vague. This essentialist response by Leary (2015) to the objections presented against the supervenience argument is that essentially grounded non-naturalism has the resources that are absent in fundamentalist non-naturalism in the explanation of the metaphysical connections that exist between normative and natural properties. Therefore, Leary concludes that naturalism cannot be preferred over non-naturalism due to the mere fact that it already has an explanation for the necessary connections, since both principles are at par in the provision of explanations. These connections rely upon the existence of what Leary (2015, p. 1) refers to as "hybrid normative properties":

> Specifically, I argue that non-naturalists may claim that there are certain hybrid normative properties whose essences determine both naturalistic sufficient conditions for their instantiation and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of other normative properties, and that this explains why the normative is determined by, and supervenes on, the natural.

Unfortunately, the concept of Hybrid-Properties has been the subject of heavy criticism in the recent work of those such as Antonella Corradini (2017) and Toppinen (2017). In both cases, they conclude that properties of this kind in all likelihood do not exist.

On the other hand, Barry Maguire (2016) concluded that the focus on logical autonomy between the moral and the non-moral properties by many philosophers is a mistaken approach. This stemmed from the consideration that the role of metaethics is to focus instead on the matter of a metaphysical autonomy. In addition to this, he indicates that a metaphysical autonomy of moral from non-moral properties is achievable, in this way rendering support to the different forms of opposition to revisionary metaethical theses.

Based on the work of Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo (2014), who suggested that the existence of moral fixed points is something that must be acknowledged. These moral fixed points are seen by them as representative of substantive moral propositions, and it is also the case that they can be viewed as being non-naturalistic conceptual truths. Noteworthily, the they concluded that these moral fixed points must exist in any world with systems of moral norms similar to our system and a world that is similar to our world. Therefore, at

the centre of their argument is the notion that a commitment to true propositions enables non-naturalists to resist any prominent objects, including the supervenience argument.

Of the two arguments proposed by Tristram McPherson (2012), the first is characterised by the way in which it indicates that moral properties are supervenience. In contrast to this, the second argument rests on the opinion that non-naturalists are committed to supervenience of the moral and the necessary connection between properties that are distinct. When combined with one another, the two arguments of McPherson (2012) demonstrate the way in which it is not possible to nonnaturalists to avoid commitment to the significant theoretical liability.

After considering the arguments formulated and proposed by Ridge (2007), one who holds their conclusions to be true would regard supervenience as something that is realised in all domains of empirical relations. In view of this consideration, the empirical state of supervenience makes moral and natural properties susceptible to scientific techniques. Furthermore, it is important to recognise here that scientific properties give an explanation for the existence of events, and owing to this, the question then arises as to whether moral properties have the capacity to explain the occurrence of events (Farrelly, 2005). As such, Dunaway (2015) attributes both causal efficacy and explanatory force to moral properties based on the concepts of moral realism. It is also possible for one to assert that moral realism explanatory standards cannot be converted to naturalistic explanatory standards without losing some important explanatory features. One could even claim that the moral level explanatory autonomy is advantageous to moral realism. This assertion is supported by philosophers such as Robert Audi (2013), who aim to demonstrate that under the scientific framework, when moral properties are constituted with natural properties that exhibit causal efficacy, moral properties can then adequately carry out an explanatory role. As a consequence of any dispute relating to the causal efficacy of natural properties that constitutes the moral properties, it is subsequently not a viable path to have moral properties which perform an adequate explanatory role.

Based on the writings published in the paper by Shafer-Landau (2005), it is asserted that supervenience in isolation is not sufficient for granting causal autonomy at the moral level. This assertion is explained in the concepts of the causal efficacy of the natural properties, and it was recently and noteworthily supported by Putnam (2016). In the latter's

publication, the philosopher argued that supervenience gives rise to a bottom-up causality, and this is the reason why it is inadequate when attempting to explain the top-down causality. One of the fundamental consequences this gives rise to is moral epiphenomenalism. A critical implication of this is that causal efficacy can be granted in a direct way to moral properties, which takes place when the non-naturalism prejudice (caused by the existence of unrelated collections of properties [namely, the natural and the moral properties]) is set aside.

In addition to the previous points, Putnam (2016) formulated an argument to demonstrate that diversity in the moral philosophies plays a significant role in moulding the concepts of naturalism. In turn, the philosopher stated that these concepts seek to abide by the natural course pursued by nature. Under naturalism, the prevailing notion is that it is possible to derive values from facts (Zangwill, 2012). On the other hand, moral realism is characterised by the way in which it insists on the argument that moral judgments and beliefs can either be true or false. A pertinent to consideration note here is that a key implication of this is the notion that moral values are discovered in the course of passing resolutions. This represents a noteworthy contrast to the notion propounded by moral naturalists, who claim that values can only be derived from facts and actions.

According to Farrelly (2005), analysis indicates that moral, philosophical assertion represents an entity. It should further be noted that this entity acts as the connecting linkage when a pair of concepts are involved in understanding the moral standing and value of an action or a fact (Finlay & Cuneo, 2008). In addition to this, according to several scholars, including Ridge (2007, p. 10) and Teemu Toppinen (2017, p. 19), it is possible to conclude that universal moral philosophies represent defined concepts. These concepts are characterised by the way in which they attempt to explain the connection between any given action as well as the manner in which the moral value of the action in question is understood by an individual and the wider social sphere.

In the recent paper published by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), they adopted a series of strategies in order to provide an explanation as to the question of how non-naturalism can respond to epistemological and metaphysical objections. At the centre of the paper was the claim by the two philosophers that there are moral fixed points, which represent substantive moral propositions. They call these fixed points 'non-naturalistic conceptual

truths', and they argue that they can be adopted by both moral nonnaturalists and moral naturalists. One of the defining features of this approach is the sui generis nature of the moral properties and facts conceptualised under this proposal, along with their preference for a metaphysical conceptualisation, along with a preservation of compatibility with respect to every construal of the natural/non-natural dichotomy. The relevant proposal is as follows (Ibid., pp. 411-412):

> There are non-natural moral truths. These truths include the moral fixed points, which are a species of conceptual truth, as they are propositions that are true in virtue of the essences of their constituent concepts.

Their challenge to supervenience stems from their suggestion that there exist certain non-natural moral truths that are not exclusively made true by or identical with some natural facts. In other words, they suggest that there are certain non-natural moral truths that are conceptual truths. It is important to recognise that this claim is committed to the existence of non-natural truths (or conceptual truths) that are objects (for example, practical reason and God), properties such as being unreasonable and being morally wrong, and concepts such as being sublime and being intrinsically valuable.

In addition to this, Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's (2014) paper is notable because of the way in which it postulate the existence of two forms of non-naturalism: firstly, they highlight the form of non-naturalism known as minimal non-naturalism; and secondly, they highlight the form of naturalism known as robust non-naturalism. They claim that in minimal non-naturalism, there are non-natural truth both non-natural moral facts and properties are nonexistence. At its core, this claim indicates that all moral facts and properties are natural.

On the other hand, robust non-naturalism claims that non-natural moral facts and properties, as well as non-natural truths, are available. Their primary thesis on the comprehensive reasonability and consistency of moral propositions defined minimally eccentric moral systems. The challenge to the supervenience standpoint by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau is based on the claim that anyone should not reject the moral fixed points lest they engage in incompetent moral thinking. They further maintain that this is a viable way in which to give a counterexample to the supervenience argument for moral non-naturalism. However, in the earlier paper published by Stephen Ingram (2008) who later

(in 2015) published a critique to Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's (2014) work, the philosopher gave reasons why it would be reasonable to deny the claim that certain moral propositions should be taken as conceptual truths. In his 2008 paper, Ingram suggested that the rejection of conceptual truths by error theorists does not indicate that error theorists are conceptually deficient. In fact, Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) agree that the arguments presented by error theorists should be taken seriously, thereby making the argument of conceptual deficiency uncharitable. Therefore, the new direction to moral nonnaturalism seems deficient in the rejection of supervenience.

An important consideration that should not be overlooked is that despite the conceptual utility of Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's (2014) work, Ingram's (2008) criticisms were not incorporated into consideration of their later work. Therefore, in Ingram's 2015 paper, he reiterated one of the key points of his initial critique: namely, that the acceptance of Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's proposal would be to imply that those who decline to accept the moral fixed points are conceptually deficient. Ingram (2015, p. 2) continued:

> However, it is not obvious that those who actually reject the moral fixed points are conceptually deficient. Error theorists, for example, reject the moral fixed points. Are they conceptually deficient? … Cuneo and Shafer-Landau do not, as far as I can see, address this more fundamental problem.

In the concluding remarks to his paper, Ingram (2015, p. 5) argued that while there is much to commend about the analysis completed by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau, they fail to address the above fundamental problem; they direct unsubstantiated claims against error theorists, including the charge of ineffective methodologies; and finally, they overlook the fact that if it holds false that error theorists are conceptually deficient in rejecting the moral fixed points, then the notion that the moral fixed points are conceptual truths similarly holds false.

Moving onto the earlier paper published by J. H. Sobel (2001), one of his crucial propositions was that moral properties lack the capacity to challenge the contention brought about by Blackburn's supervenience argument. The underlying reason for this is because they supervene on non-moral properties, thereby creating a situation in which they are conceptually autonomous. Sobel proceeds to suggest that it is possible for the

supervenience argument to be used for the purpose of highlighting a different argument, namely, one that examines why moral properties and their autonomy conceptually entail on the basis of non-moral properties from intuitionists. It is also noted that intuitionists are philosophers who perceive the existence of synthetic necessary moral principles. However, the fact should not be overlooked that Sobel notes that moral realists still face the challenge of explaining these necessary moral principles, such that the supervenience challenge to moral realism still holds.

One of the philosophers who has managed to challenge the objections of supervenience is Leary (2015). According to Leary, essentially grounded non-naturalism defers from fundamental non-naturalism in that it has the necessary resources. These include an adequate explanation of the connections between normative and natural properties from the metaphysical viewpoint. In addition to this, the principles of essentialist non-naturalism can be applied for both moral naturalists and non-naturalists in the provision of metaphysical explanations, which are ultimately necessary when one is attempting to substantiate the connection between natural and normative properties.

Based on the work of Ralf Bader (2016), it is possible to reject the arguments which attempt to address the supervenience argument against non-reductive moral realism in another way. This approach involves making the claim that there is only a supervenience of normative properties with normative necessity, and this does not map onto metaphysical necessity. Bader (2016) also claims that there is no sufficient defence for non-reductive views or normative morality offered by the standard response to supervenience, which consists of the rejection of the co-extension of the criteria from property identity. In other words, the standard response to the supervenience argument against non-reductive moral realism "consists in rejecting necessary co-extension as the criterion for property identity" (Ibid., p. 1), and this is insufficient to defend non-reductionist perspectives of the normative. Noteworthily, this relates to the way in which identity needs, at the very least, "necessary co-extensiveness across all metaphysically possible worlds" (Ibid., p. 3).

According to Maguire (2016), it is reasonable to conclude that the focus of a broad collection of philosophers on logical autonomy is a mistaken approach. This conclusion comes about when one considers the fact that a metaphysical thesis is of more importance to metaethicists. Here, the thesis is such that it indicates the way in which there is no full

grounding of moral facts on the basis of non-moral facts. When considered in relation to the arguments proposed by moral realists, namely, those which focus specifically on the autonomy of moral properties with respect to natural properties, then it is clear that Maguire's (2015) claims constitute a strong challenge. Most noteworthily, Maguire's observations mean that the arguments of the moral realists are insufficient ways to pull down the supervenience argument given by Blackburn. It should also be acknowledged that the philosopher McPherson (2012) supports the supervenience argument against moral nonnaturalism. This claims that moral properties are fundamentally different when considered in relation to natural properties. According to McPherson (2012), it is important for the conceptual defence of non-naturalism to be committed to the supervenience of the moral on the natural properties.

The overwhelming majority of philosophers hold to the notion that moral properties (or facts) are not required to perform any function when attempting to provide explanations for non-normative natural events. (Black, 2000, p. 17). Nevertheless, a variety of problems and concerns arise in view of the moral explanation, since considerable semantic, epistemic, and metaphysical challenges are levelled against moral realism. Here, it should be noted that one prominent way in which to vindicate the degree to which explanations of the moral properties function in an effective way is to advocate for a non-reductionist approach to moral naturalism. In this context, there exists a correlation between moral properties and natural properties. In view of this, it ought to be the case that the moral properties are open to empirical investigations, all the while remaining irreducible to natural properties that are non-normative in nature (including biological, sociological, and psychological properties). A range of philosophers, including Rufus Black (2000) and Ridge (2014), have developed forms of moral functionalism, and these serve in such a way as to vindicate the moral explanations. The underlying intention of the functionalism is to gain comprehensive insight into the moral properties as functional properties in the second order. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognise that the nature of these moral properties receives assignment to the characteristic of the functional roles. According to the conclusions drawn by Bader (2016), addressing what he referred to as the grounding argument against non-reductive moral realism (as noted in the previous section), it is a viable possibility to salvage non-reductionism through the differentiation of the different grounding relations involved in the grounding of normative properties, as well as the corresponding non-normative properties.

Two features, which include moral functionalism, in the form of a posteriori, and a holistic version of the functionalism of the moral functionalism are developed to vindicate explanations of moral naturalism. The posteriori form capitalises on the features of moral theory to give functional roles their c of moral properties and is only discoverable by appealing to empirical investigations (Shafer-Landau, 2006). In view of this, it is possible to view the characteristic posteriori version of functionalism as a form of moral naturalism. The holistic version is based on the premise that the functional roles attached to moral properties cannot be restricted to the identification of non-normative properties alone. Instead, it is necessary for the properties to involve a connection network to both normative and non-normative properties. Therefore, the holistic version can also be identified as a form of moral anti-reductionism (Toppinen, 2017).

There have been some attempts to shed light on the explanatory part of moral properties. Included among this group are philosophers such as Zangwill (2012) and Bloomfield (2001), who most notably conducted investigations into the nature of explanations. For example, one of the investigations targeted was the notion that the explanation of the moral part is based on the premise that the explanations are characterised by some degree of plausibility. It is a viable possibility to mount a plausible defence based on explanation theories, and these include the unificationist model and the causalist model. The causalist model with respect to explanation proposes the argument that an explanation of a state or an event is equal to the provision of information on the causal effect of that event (Blackburn, 1993). On the other hand, the unificationist model argues that what an explanation does is to prove and disseminate a unified account of a wide range of events. On the basis of these theoretical conceptualisations of the issue, philosophers claim that moral properties can be understood with a consideration of functional properties. Furthermore, these can perform the work of causal explanations, and they can also play a critical role in the process of unification (Bloomfield, 2001).

One of the most notable arguments published in the previously-discussed paper by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) is that moral nonnaturalism should entail the acceptance of conceptual truths for certain substantive moral propositions. As a case in point for the moral fixed point, they suggested the case that it is wrong to commit murder, or to kill another person by way of slaughtering. Another claim they made is that offering to give help or

charity to other human beings who are suffering from distress is something that constitutes a moral requisite, especially in those situations where the act of providing aid would be extended easily, and if the provider only incurred a very little cost. As stated by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), when a person engages in just behaviour, and when such just behaviour has no prospect of benefitting the person themselves, this constitutes the archetypal example of a moral fixed point. Noteworthily, their paper is replete with cases of moral fixed points, each of which is accompanied by extensive explanation, but the later studies conducted by Ingram (2014, 2015) show considerable scepticism about the direction with respect to the matter of moral non-naturalism. As indicated by Ingram (2014), a variety of valid reasons exist for denying the position taken by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), specifically regarding the issue that those who oppose the moral fixed points are conceptually deficient. As summarised by Ingram (2015),

> However, it is not obvious that those who actually reject the moral fixed points are conceptually deficient. Error theorists, for example, reject the moral fixed points. Are they conceptually deficient? … Cuneo and Shafer-Landau do not, as far as I can see, address this more fundamental problem.

IV. The Opposition of Moral Knowledge Based on the No-Explanation Argument

The debate surrounding moral explanation is well-known in contemporary metaethics. Indeed, there is a huge disagreement between the moral explanationists and the moral anti-explanationists (Mabrito (2005), p. 10; Blackburn (2004), p. 114; Putnam (2016), p. 28; Toppinen, 2017 (p. 13)). On the one hand, moral explanationists are the philosophers advocating to the efficacy of explanations of moral properties or facts. On the other hand, moral anti-explanationists deny any efficacy on explanations of the moral properties or facts (Dreier, 1992). With respect to the community of moral philosophers, these individuals are attracted towards the present debate owing to the fact that the problems given rise to by moral explanations represent a considerable and serious challenge to the issue of moral realism. As for the nature of these challenges, they are moral, epistemic, or semantic. Furthermore, moral challenges question the various ways in which moral

properties can claim legitimacy of metaphysical status in the event that they have no role to play in the explanatory criteria of morality (Farrelly, 2005).

Regarding the semantic challenges, these are chiefly concerned with questioning the reference of moral terms to properties if these properties are void of explanations on the usage of moral language. As for the matter of epistemic challenges to moral realism, these are preoccupied with questioning the justification of moral convictions and moral knowledge if moral facts are considered irrelevant in the explanation of descriptive phenomena (Black (2000), p. 21; Strandberg (2004b), p. 16; Hills (2009), p. 20).

The no-explanation arguments towards moral knowledge can be conceptualised as a form of epistemological challenge. The challenge attacks moral knowledge on three fronts (Shafer-Landau, 1994). With respect to the first challenge, it is concerned with explaining how moral beliefs can be given the property of knowledge only if moral properties and facts have an irreplaceable role to play in the explanation of descriptive or non-normative phenomena. It should be noted that this challenge is termed the explanation condition to moral knowledge. The second argument indicates that there is no irreplaceable role to play for putative moral properties and facts in the explanation of descriptive phenomena (Putnam (2016)). This argument is termed the explanatory efficacy of moral properties. Finally, with respect to the third argument, it is the conclusion that there is no adequate basis upon which to make the claim that moral beliefs can be considered as moral knowledge (Strandberg, 2004b).

For the purpose of illuminating the explanatory condition on moral knowledge in a more comprehensive way, it is important for the reader to be exposed to the following two premises. The first premise is as follows: namely, that a belief in a property can be considered posteriori knowledge only if the property can have an irreplaceable role to play on the explanation of descriptive phenomena. As for the second premise, it proceeds as follows: namely, that moral knowledge can only be given the title of a posteriori knowledge. The conclusion based on these two premises supports the notion of the explanatory efficacy of moral knowledge. One might concede the premise that moral knowledge can only be accorded the posteriori title is reasonable. The agreement with the premise is based on the fact that the moral field is regarded as a natural field, which is empirically accessible.

For scholars such as Moore (1903) and more recent philosophers including Audi (2013), both of whom are classified as moral intuitionists, the expectation is that they would indeed deny this premise. This expectation stems from the observation that intuitionists are of the view that moral knowledge is a priori, which concurs with the notion that moral knowledge is still valid even without moral facts having the explanatory role to play in the description of phenomena. The explanation is likened to mathematical knowledge, which stands regardless of whether or not mathematical facts and entities play a role in the explanation of natural phenomena (Zangwill (2012), p. 29; Black, (2000), p. 18; Bloomfield (2001), p. 18). In discussing the degree to which the epistemological perspectives of non-naturalists are dubious, Toppinen (2017) argued that this is the case, relying on the argument that it would be very challenging to give an explanation of the manager in which we come to the conclusion of the knowledge of moral facts of moral knowledge were a priori.

According to Zangwill (2012), the premise that a moral fact is a posteriori knowledge only if it has an irreplaceable role in the explanation of descriptive phenomena is reasonable. Critically thinking about other forms of a posteriori knowledge indicates that the human sense of justification in the belief of protons, atoms, and electrons existence is reasonable, which itself is the natural outgrowth of the following initial assumption: namely, that assumptions perform an indispensable function when attempting to explain, log, and gain insight into some natural phenomena. Another example of empirical knowledge supported by that premise is the existence of a table in the room, and the existence of sensory experiences. As will be clear to the reader, it is not possible to perceive the existence of a table without drawing on and relying on sensory experiences. In this case, the existence of the table as an explanation for the sensory experience triumphs over other hypotheses. One example is the hypothesis that the individual only hallucinates the table, thinking their perception to be real but, for example, they are dreaming (Black, 2000). Therefore, the promise that claiming that a belief is a posteriori knowledge based on its ability to play an irreversible roe in the explanation of descriptive phenomena is a convincing argument.

V. The Outlook of Non-Reductive Moral Naturalism

Irrespective of the matter of whether the explanatory weakness of moral facts involves the general falsity of moral realism, the concept itself raises a severe challenge to the

naturalistic moral realism (Toppinen, 2017). The first general assertion of moral naturalism is that moral knowledge is a posteriori, while the second assertion denotes the nature of a posterior knowledge as having a unique role (Shafer-Landau, 2006). The third assertion is that putative moral properties and facts have no unique role to play. To provide a final summary of these three statements, one may conclude that moral naturalism is false. In fact, it simply reflects the reduction that moral naturalists use as a solution of a popular response to the issue surrounding the moral explanation within the moral naturalism framework (Bloomfield, 2001, p. 11).

A reductive solution of this kind contends with the naturalist argument that there is an explanatory power in moral properties. This stems from the way in which they are reducible are identical with descriptive properties, where properties such as sociological, biological, and psychological properties are included here. In view of these considerations, it is reasonable to conclude that moral properties have an explanatory power in the same capacity of descriptive properties, provided that the moral properties are reducible (Smith, (2004), p. 18). The question that arises as a result of this, according to Farrelly (2005), is about the authenticity of properties deemed morally right turning out to be biological, sociological or psychological properties. Finlay and Cuneo (2008) observe that there is no convincing evidence in research indicating that moral properties or facts are descriptive. Therefore, there are reasons to choose to be skeptical about these reductions, meaning that a vicious circularity clouds the reductive moral solutions to some of these moral explanations.

According to Ridge (2007), the moral naturalism that is non-reductive in nature is in a position to vindicate the efficacy of explanations of moral facts. Farrelly (2005) expounds that therefore, there is the possibility of moral properties and facts as having the explanatory power even when having irreducible properties to descriptive properties. The proposed version of moral functionalism gives an extraordinary account of non-reductive moral naturalism, according to Dunaway (2015). This version insists on the second orders as opposed to first order moral functionalism.

Moral Functionalism of the second order are based on the condition that moral properties are identical to the second order properties that play certain roles in functionalism, but are into identical to the first-order realizers of occupants that play these roles (Dreier, 1992).

The second claim used to support the proposed version of moral functionalism is that it is a synthetic form of functionalism. In this context, then, an appeal to the empirical investigation is the only specification that can be made with respect to the roles of moral properties in contrast to analytics moral functionalism (Blackburn, (2004), p. 14; Putnam (2016), p. 25; Mabrito (2005), p. 9). The third component supporting the proposed moral functionalism is that it is holistic in nature whereby there cannot be capturing of the functional roles of moral properties without referring to other normative or moral properties. These conditions make the proposed version of moral functionalism have the attribute of a non-reductive moral naturalism (Bloomfield (2001), p. 3; Black (2000), p. 25; Strandberg (2004), p. 18; Hills (2009), p. 18). Arguably, the morality of moral naturalism can be preserved without having to sacrifice its autonomy by meeting the no-explanation challenge in the non-reduction moral naturalism framework.

A factor that is worth noting is the lack of the need for the discussion of explanation theories for the approach of reductive moral naturalism (Strandberg, (2004b), p. 31; Hills (2009), p. 21; Shafer-Landau (2007), p. 21; Dunaway (2015), p. 15). According to Smith (2004), showing the same nature of moral properties and descriptive properties by the reductive moral naturalist requires the preservation of explanations regardless of the nature of explanations. However, Black (2000) contrasts this requirement to that of the non-reductive moral naturalist, which requires a discussion of the explanatory theories. One might argue though that non-reductive moral naturalism will then need to show that the high order property has an explanatory power that exceeds their base realisers.

Vindication the moral explanations require the philosopher to demonstrate a presumption that there is a plausible account of the explanations (Bloomfield, 2001). Hence, the unificationist and causal models that exist in the realm of explanation theories are viewed as some of the most potent theories that can vindicate the moral explanation (Mabrito, 2005). According to Ridge (2007), the causal and the unificationist models of explanation show cases the possession of the explanatory power of moral properties. The possession of this power is only possible if these properties have a unifying power or the causal power as described by the two models of explanation. A general contrast emerges between internalism and explanatory externalism based on the difference between the unificationist model and the causal model (Ibid).

According to Ridge (2007), the explanatory externalism is based on the premise that the constitution of the explanatory externalism must be based on external and objective relations in the world. On the other hand, the internalists argument indicates that explanation is an intrinsic activity to an epistemic corpus, which means that the attribute of something as an explanation is dependent on internal factors to the body of knowledge. Ridge (2007) concludes that the explanatory relevance of explanations requires the constitution of both epistemic and ontic factors.

VI. Zangwill's A Priori Synthetic Solution to Blackburn's Modal Challenge

As the previous sections have demonstrated, there are a significant variety of ways in which moral realists have attempted to explain moral supervenience in greater detail, in response to concerns akin to the ones behind Blackburn's modal challenge. These however are not adequate to address the challenge in themselves. For at best, these explanations can be read as justifying (N) on the metaphysical level. As a reminder, (N) is the following:

(N) "As a matter of necessity, if something x is in a G* state, then x is an F state as well." $\{Necessarily(x)(G^*x \rightarrow Fx)\}$

This however is a claim that Blackburn is happy to say is not in dispute, and does nothing to prevent the analytic possibility of mixed worlds which is evidently entailed by the first two premises of his argument. So a realist explanation as to why mixed worlds are analytically possible (or possibly why they are in fact not) still needs to be provided.

In his paper written to address a variety of aspects relating to the topic of moral supervenience, Zangwill (1995) adopted an approach that was diametrically opposed to that applied in the context of Blackburn's modal challenge. To be more specific, Zangwill's approach centred around the argument that it is necessary to understand moral supervenience, in fact, in the form of an a priori synthetic claim.

At the outset of Zangwill's paper, the philosopher defended the seriousness, as well as the philosophical significance, of Blackburn's model challenge. defending the seriousness of

Blackburn's modal challenge, and argues that the 'Ban on mixed worlds' argument is problematic:

> (P) tells us that there are possible worlds in which things are F and G* and that there are also possible worlds in which things are G* but not F. But given that there are worlds in which things are G* and F, and others in which things are G* and ~F, then it seems that there should be mixed worlds – worlds in which some G* things are F, but other G* things are ~F. But this is disallowed by (S). I shall argue in part 2 that this reformulation is misguided and that Blackburn's original version of the argument in "Moral Realism" was superior…To deny the doctrine of moral supervenience is to change the subject away from morality. If someone appeared to deny moral supervenience, we would think that they had not grasped the concept of moral value, or perhaps that we were mistranslating their utterances as moral utterances. It is pretty incontrovertible that supervenience is an essential feature of moral thought, even if it is hard to support this with a non-question- begging argument. The nearest we can get to an argument is to consider the situation of those who flout supervenience in their system of moral judgments. (p. 242)

Providing a summary of the argument formulated and published by Zangwill (1995, p. 243) will be useful. This is because in his paper, he neglected to fully flesh the argument out, and so the provision of more detail regarding its claims will serve as valuable for present purposes. With respect to the form that the argument takes, the following should be taken into consideration: first, Zangwill suggested that we consider a person who has flouted supervenience in the context of their moral judgments, and then follow this by examining an example of a personal act in which we exempt ourselves from moral wrongdoing, or "when we make exceptions in our own case". In the event that one evaluates the act of bribery as something morally impermissible when considered generally, but then evaluate one's personal act of bribery as something morally acceptable, then it is invariable that this constitutes an embarrassment on the basis of inconsistent moral reasoning.

As such, holding G* and not F generates discomfort, embarrassment, or a combination of the two, and as we have noted, this stems from the fact that the individual in question

(yourself in the above example) is guilty of inconsistent reasoning. This is an indication of an awareness that various "normative constraints" on an individual's judgments are in place, which give rise to disapproval of the general act of bribery, but this is contrasted with the failure to conform to these constraints when the act is specifically instantiated in the case of the individual. According to Zangwill (1995, p. 243), the act of seeking to attain consistency constitutes an integral component and irreducible element of what it means to engage in moralisation. However, the philosopher continues, suggesting that the desire to be consistent in the manner in which one moralises and acts in the world as a rational human being is founded on the "commitment to moral supervenience". When the above statements are taken as given, the conclusion follows logically from them that "moral supervenience is a conceptual truth" (Ibid.).

It is also important to recognise that part of Zangwill's argument emphasises the way in which S is characterised by a considerable level of weakness. This stems from the fact that it seems to be WS, according to Zangwill and many others, which forms the basis of the rejection of the mystery. However, it would appear that (S) is adequate at the analytic level, which Blackburn seeks to use centrally in his argument (1985).

One of the attributes of Zangwill that becomes immediately apparent when surveying his output is the inherent sympathy he has for nonnaturalism. In view of this, it is easy to see why Zangwill (1995) has an abiding preference for strong (SSS): either all worlds are G*/F (worlds where there are F properties supervening on G* properties) or all worlds are G*/~F (worlds where there are no F properties supervening on G* properties). According to Blackburn, this stronger form of realism results in a situation where the philosopher who holds to projectivism is no more ideally situated than the philosopher who holds to the tenets of realism. This stems from the fact that a contradiction is given rise to, which contrasts starkly with the expectation of a mystery. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge here that the difficulty lies in the way it appears perfectly reasonable to conclude from the arising of this contradiction that the weaker reading of (S) was actually more sensible in the first place.

According to Zangwill (Ibid., p. 249), close analysis of the situation reveals the inherently unintuitive nature of the weak reading. As he stated (Ibid.): "How could S be true, G* and

F be true, and therefore all F's obtain, but then it easily be the case that something is G* but not F?"

The most straightforward response to this question appears to relate to (S)'s capacity to reconcile very effectively with respect to our intuitions in support of P (namely, the second premise of Blackburn's argument). Nonetheless, Zangwill claims that "this does not defeat Blackburn's argument. Rephrased in terms of what knowledge leaves open, his problem" is the following (Ibid.):

> How can it be that $(\exists w)(G^*/Fw)$ is left open by the knowledge built into the concept of morality; and the same goes for $(\exists w)(G^*/\sim Fw)$; but the conjunction $[(\exists w)(G^*/Fw)$ and $(\exists w)(G^*/\sim Fw)]$ is **not** left open by the knowledge built into the concept of morality? How can it be that it is possible as far as the concept of morality is concerned that $(\exists w)(G^*/Fw)$ is true, and it is possible as far as the concept of morality is concerned that $(\exists w)(G^*/\sim Fw)$ is true, and yet it is not possible as far as the concept of morality is concerned that both $(\exists w)(G^*/Fw)$ and $(\exists w)(G^*/\sim Fw)$ are true? What is the source of this constraint? What justifies us in accepting it? … It may be metaphysically necessary that there are only G*/F worlds, but so long as we admit that a G*/F world and G*/~F world are each conceptually or epistemically possible, Blackburn's argument goes ahead. (1995, p. 252)

According to Zangwill, the source of this constraint has to be a priori synthetic. As he has argued elsewhere (1997), Zangwill (1995) claimed the citation of the fact that supervenience is brute is adequate to contribute to its sturdy justification. Nevertheless, to contribute even more heavily and securely to its justification, Zangwill, in a comparable way to Shafer-Landau, published his attempt to strike an analogy with another form of (in this case, he opted for colour). However, when we consider statements such as "something cannot be both yellow all over and blue all over", we should recognise that we are dealing with a form of analytic strength that does not seem to fit within the moral context. Hence, we must consider the possibility (a likely one) that the analogy is a false one. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the degree to which the moral case is unique

owes much to the way in which it is by nature practical. This, however, does not represent a way to aid the mystery at all, and – in fact – it seems to make it all the more serious.

According to Zangwill (1995), it is possible to make a coherent argument to the effect that moral supervenience represents a framework principle. In this way, moral supervenience can be conceptualised as something akin to a certain principle of causation, or – to cite an immediately obvious example – the statement that "all bodies are divisible". Despite the fact that practical experimentation and empirical investigation would certainly result in a situation where these principles could be subjected to justification, there does not seems to be enough of a theoretical justification for doing so. A more important consideration is the fact that weak supervenience appears to be sufficient with respect to the matter of dealing with the pertinent issues (in the case of Blackburn, at the very least). Of critical import is the fact that this could allow a philosopher to argue that the account given by individuals who hold to projectivism suffers from an additional problem: namely, one that relates to the matter of providing an explanation to the combination that Blackburn did not appreciate. However, philosophers such as Jorn Sonderholm (2009) have argued against this very claim.

Worse still, Sobel (2001) published a paper in which he stated that Blackburn's supervenience argument presents a huge mystery with respect to the issue of moral properties. To be more specific, the philosopher contended that moral properties, if it was the case they that were to be regarded as conceptually autonomous, would have to be categorizes as unreal. In addition to this, Sobel suggested that the supervenience argument also faces a challenge among intuitionists and moral realists, in particular in view of a situation in which the existence of synthetic necessary moral principles is taken as a given. Hence, Sobel (2001) concluded that it is unavoidable for moral realists to come across the challenge of having to explain the factors that would make these necessities possible. Furthermore, in the earlier paper written by James Klagge (1984), another notable problem was raised: namely, that which arises when the possibility of synthetic necessity is acknowledged in the first place, not simply within the context of moral philosophy.

In order to address these concerns, the following is the most appropriate strategy that can be adopted: namely, to reconsider the concerns in relation to the notion of where the synthetic a priori originated (i.e. with Kant himself). By first using Kant's theory to flesh

out both an account of both moral realism and moral supervenience, and then establishing the precise mechanism by which realists can be accommodated within this framework, I aim to demonstrate that Blackburn's modal challenge can indeed be addressed. Even for Blackburn, supervenience is a conceptual a priori claim. The only difference, aside from the rationalism which opposes the projectivism, is the lack of a transcendental argument. In the event that this was diluted, however, Kant and Blackburn move much closer together, and subsequently the sole remaining issue is the question of realism.

In its own right, the argument is entirely dependent on the possibility that Blackburn's response is visibly more effective. Given that my argument centres around the assumption that Blackburn's response is not visibly more effective, then the argument taken independently – in its own right – lacks an appropriate level of plausibility. With respect to the question of whether Blackburn's account is more effective than that provided by a realist is, at this stage, simply reducible to a matter of how inherently the views compare. As a result of this, the instantaneous redundancy of such an argument is unavoidable. A final consideration is that the abovementioned claims are sufficient to show that by looking at Kant's approach in the GMS, we can absolutely look at the mystery behind banning the mixed worlds head on in realist terms, and also supply it with an adequate response.

VII. A Kantian Account of Synthetic A Priori Supervenience

To explain the necessary connection between G* and F properties in its own right, it should first be noted that the G* properties determine what maxims according to which human (rational) beings are acting. As for the F properties, it is possible for them – under Kantian theory – to be reduced to relations between such maxims and the duties that all human beings share. This stems from the fact that all of the considerations which contribute to the determination of the rightness or wrongness of an action are accordance with the moral law, and thus they have an impact on the question of whether or not the agent is adhering to his/her duties (which is determined by G* properties). The connection itself is conceptual, but it is important to take into account the fact that the analytic nature is simply on the basis that F properties are posited on the basis of synthetic a priori justification, as are moral claims in general. This is crucial in understanding how to reconcile the analytic possibility of mixed worlds. Although there is no logical contradiction in the possibility of

mixed worlds (possible worlds in which only some moral properties supervene based upon morally-irrelevant conditions) on this account, since moral properties are only justified on a synthetic basis in the first place, it would still be nevertheless *metaphysically* impossible (insofar as it would be metaphysically impossible for there to be any constraints (or 'realising properties' to use Blackburn's terms) to bring about mixed worlds. The analytic possibility of mixed worlds is therefore a possibility that can be entertained prior to the direct justification for defending moral properties outright.

It should be noted that duties themselves for Kant would not supervene on G* properties. This stems from the fact that duties themselves, according to the Kantian system of thought, are entirely unconditional. In other words, this simply means that they are shared by all rational beings at all times, irrespective of any situational circumstances. The matter of what for Kant precisely determines the nature of moral duties is exactly the question he means to answer in the second section of the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). To state the project briefly, it is possible for them to be fully derived from the supreme principle of morality (at least in Kant's eyes). In view of this, it is evident that the supervening moral facts for Kant would be facts about whether a duty has, is, or would be fulfilled or violated when certain actions are performed by a rational human being.

As a case in point, it will be useful to draw on one of the examples given by Kant (1998) himself. This example proceeds as follows: consider that some G* properties could be those of acting on the basis of the following maxim: "When I believe myself to be in need of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know I shall never do so." (IV: 422). In virtue of this maxim violating the formulations of the Categorical Imperative (because the maxim for instance is not universalisable, and would mean treating at least one individual as a mere means to an end), the supervening F property of moral wrongness would obtain. As is entirely clear upon considering this account of F properties, the existence of a necessary condition with the G* properties becomes immediately apparent. This stems from consideration of the fact that the F properties are explicitly determined on the basis of the G* properties.

I expect that it will not be overly difficult for the reader to see exactly why the supervenience thesis for Kant, therefore, is absolutely necessary with respect to his moral theory. At the same time, the fact should not be overlooked that the supervenience thesis is

likely to have the characteristic that it is a necessary and fundamental aspect of the vast majority of most moral theories.

Nevertheless, it will be useful for the reader to bear in mind the most critical objection that is likely to be raised to this proposed solution to Blackburn's modal challenge. To be specific, it is worth pointing out that Kant has not traditionally been regarded as a realist. In actual fact, much of the writing of Kant, and many of the fundamental precepts upon which his moral theory is based, appears to be intentionally framed in opposition to the realist philosophers who were writing at the end of the eighteenth-century. Therefore, for the purpose of overcoming this potential objection, the task of the next chapter will be to demonstrate why it is that a Kantian account of moral realism is viable, and moreover, why such an account has a considerable level of appeal.

Chapter 4: Interpreting a Kantian Account of Moral Realism, and Why It Can and Should be Reconciled with Kantian Accounts of Constructivism

To contribute to the ongoing debate on the metaethical status of moral constructivism, and in doing so, provide a basis on which to identify an appropriate response to Blackburn's modal challenge within a Kantian framework, I argue that Kantian constructivism can and should be reconciled with a concept of moral realism. Whilst constructivists may correctly cite the formal methodology for determining the rightness of actions, I argue that nevertheless a realist commitment is required. I will firstly defend an understanding of moral realism that can accommodate Kantian constructivism, and which is capable of rejecting error theories and non-cognitivist views of morality, without having to commit specifically to any heavy-duty moral ontology. Secondly, I will add to the criticisms of constructivism made by Russ Shafer-Landau (2003), that essentially assert that constructions without realist bases are morally indiscriminate. I will also propose an alternative to the dilemma suggested by Shafer-Landau (2003), to prevent a *basic* (stance-dependent) realism response from constructivists such as is defended by David Copp (2005).

Adapting a parallel argument based on one of Mary Midgley's (1981) own arguments against moral relativism, in which she claims cultural relativism collapses into moral *isolationism*, I argue by analogy that Kantian constructivism either collapses into a problematic kind of moral subjectivism, or else requires there to be one objectively correct construction process based on a concept of the ideal rational agent, and hence at least a minimal kind of moral realism. Through this process, only one correct set of moral principles could be constructed, and moral claims would therefore be true in virtue of these moral principles. Regardless of a theoretical steadfastness to a mind-independent moral reality, this stance would be supported by my definition, and thus would be considered a moral realist commitment.

I. The Scope for a Realist Approach to Kantianism

I.I. Preliminaries

"A good will is not good because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended ends, but good just by its' willing, i.e. in itself." Kant GMS IV: 394.

These opening words from Kant's (1785) *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMS) present a potentially significant ambiguity, which can be encapsulated in the following question: is the good will good through its willing alone, or is it simply good in itself? Under the former interpretation, goodness itself is conferred by the good will (which Kant proceeds to deconstruct into the Categorical Imperative). Under the latter interpretation, the good will is merely the one thing that happens to be inherently and unconditionally good. The former interpretation would constitute a commitment to a constructivist reading of Kant's moral theory, where the rules that determine whether an action is right or wrong are determined by what the consensus either could possibly be in the first place, or else would be if formed by a collective of purely rational agents (they are in other words an idealised 'construction'). The latter interpretation would on the other hand lead to a commitment to the view that such moral rules are true objectively and independently of what a collective of rational agents would assent to (in other words, it would constitute a commitment to moral realism).

Although moral realism and constructivism are not strictly speaking incompatible, the constructivist approach in metaethics is often seen as a more approachable (at least for being less metaphysically burdensome) alternative to moral realism, as it does not require a commitment to the existence of any independent moral values that constitute an independent moral reality. Given the very nature of the Categorical Imperative (with the will legislating moral rules based on their universalisability), it is quite easy to see how you might interpret Kant's moral theory as constructivist. The question however remains as to whether or not Kant ought to be taken as a moral realist.

From an interpretative perspective, it seems as if Kant could well be either a moral realist or anti-realist, given the availability of these two substantially different interpretations of

his moral theory. That being said, it is uncontroversial to claim that his moral theory does not easily fall into either set of views. A lot of the complexity regarding how to categorise Kant's metaethical views in response to the ambiguity within the GMS seems to derive from the objective and unconditional rigidity of the moral law on the one hand (potentially supporting a realist interpretation), and the requirement of self-legislation in order to act in accordance with it (which seems to be supporting the constructivist interpretation) on the other hand; both equally important facets seem to support different interpretations of Kant. To further complicate the exegetical issue, it is also impossible to divorce his moral theory from the rest of his philosophical work, all of which hangs upon his commitment to Transcendental Idealism that he sets out in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/87).

Rather than trying to briefly summarise a definition of Transcendental Idealism, I will simply present Kant's own:

> I understand by the transcendental idealism of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves. (Ibid, A369.)

There are a whole spectrum of different interpretations of how to understand the metaphysical implications of Kant's Transcendental Idealism, all of which would have significant bearing on the metaethical questions behind his moral theory. Worse still, this complexity is exacerbated by the question of what commitments are entailed from a constructivist and/or realist interpretation in the first place.

Rather than attempting to contribute to any of the debates surrounding the aforementioned issues (so avoiding the question of whether Kant himself would consider himself a realist, or whether Kant's moral theory is best interpreted as realist), my aim here is less ambitious. Much like Wood (2008) intends to discuss Kantian ethics rather than specifically Kant's ethics (ethics derivative of Kant's work, rather than necessarily Kant's work on ethics and views in themselves), my focus is on Kantian moral theory ('Kantianism' as I'm using the term here) rather than necessarily Kant's moral theory specifically. In any case, I will instead be trying to demonstrate the following:

Firstly, that it is possible to reconcile moral realism with a constructivist version of Kantianism (though not necessarily Kant's moral theory as he intended it specifically), and with other forms of Kantian constructivism. Essentially, this means that the two different interpretations discussed earlier would actually be congruent. To do this, I will argue for what constitutes a commitment to Kantian constructivism, as well as a commitment to moral realism, and advocate for the compatibility of these commitments.

Secondly, and more relevantly, that constructivism is more plausible when interpreted as a form of moral realism (and as a result, in order to defend moral constructivism, one must commit to at least some form of moral realism). In order to achieve this, I will augment Shafer-Landau's (2003) application of the Euthyphro dilemma, with the aim of invalidating Copp's (2005) rebuttal to it. By combining it with an adjusted version of Midgley's (1981) stance against moral relativism, I intend to show that, in the absence of any realist commitments, constructivism collapses into subjectivism, hence undermining constructivism's credibility as a moral and political theory.

To clarify, the purpose of this undertaking is not to identify the metaethical commitments Kant himself found it necessary to make. There are already plenty of defences of realism in Kant, including: A. M. Baxley (2012) Jochen Bojanowski (2012), Terrence Irwin (2004/2009), Hills (2003/2008), Patrick Kain (1999/2004/2006a/2006b/), Allen Wood (1999) and Adrian Piper (2012). I am not even trying to undermine the Kantian Constructivism project in itself, as it may well have significance and value beyond simply providing a possible basis to oppose moral realism. More accurately, all I am attempting to illustrate is that if one finds oneself sympathetic to Kantian moral theory (even if not entirely to Kant's own moral theory), and on that basis, commits to a constructivist version of it (or some relevant derivation thereof), one not only can, but should, also commit to moral realism. The position that I'm aiming to defend has already been posited by Christina Lafont (2004) exegetically.

However, before I can demonstrate either aspect, there are two fundamental issues that are could be raised by those who wish to flatly deny the plausibility of deriving moral realism from Kant's moral theory (irrespective of whether Kant was or should have been committed to a kind of moral realism). These issues must be addressed in order to even begin motivating any kind of realism inspired by Kantian moral theory. The first is the supposed

incompatibility between any commitment to moral realism and Kant's Transcendental Idealism, and the second is the presumed irreconcilability between any commitment to moral realism and a moral theory committed to moral autonomy as its' central component. I will elaborate further on the latter after ruling out the former. The first issue is only fundamental inasmuch as it could be used a basis to undermine a realist understanding of moral supervenience relying on the a priori synthetic within the context of Kantian moral theory. The second is more of an issue with deriving any kind of realism from Kant irrespective of the supervenience question.

I.II. Why Kant's Transcendental Idealism Does Not Rule Out a Realist Interpretation of Kantian Moral Theory

As far as the exegetical question is concerned, all that this dissertation requires is that a realist interpretation of Kantianism is viable and coherent (not necessarily Kant's own moral theory, as it should be understood exegetically). One might consider it to be sufficient to consider Kantianism in isolation from Kant's own metaphysical project of Transcendental Idealism. However, that is not the appropriate course of action for this dissertation for several reasons. Firstly, the solution to Blackburn's modal challenge that I will be defending in this dissertation will rest on the assertion that the supervenience thesis should be defended as an *a priori synthetic* claim. Secondly, because I will be exploring Kant's original conception of the a priori synthetic within the context of ethics in the final chapter, my dissertation will require that this central component of Kant's Transcendental Idealism that I will utilise in the final chapter is compatible with a realist interpretation of Kant. Thirdly, if the second item is not established, it is essential that at a minimum, the derivative elements of Kant's Transcendental Idealism utilised to defend a synthetic a priori account of moral supervenience be compatible with a Kantian account of moral realism.

To ascertain why there might be an incompatibility of this kind, one only need refer to the work of Frederik Rauscher (2002/2015), starting with a paper called 'Kant's Moral Anti-Realism'. In this paper, Rauscher provides a very helpful contribution to the debate, by presenting a straightforward argument of the anti-realist reading. This piece of research is particularly valuable, as it avoids any debate of the various types of moral constructivism (and specifically which kind is best attributed to Kant).

In his subsequent book (titled *Naturalism and Realism in Kant's Ethics*), Rauscher (2015) then proceeds to offer a metaphysically naturalist account of Kant's Transcendental Idealism project. During the introduction (Ibid., p. 5), Rauscher himself acknowledges that his interpretations are based on concepts that are inconsistent with several aspects of Kant's work. However, he justifies this on the premise that "the same is true of all interpretations of Kant, given his inconsistent use of terminology and the diverse contexts in which he applies the same terms." (Ibid.). It would, I believe, be uncontroversial to claim that there are at least some potentially anti-realist elements to Kant's moral theory (one need only look at Kant's understanding of moral autonomy as a significant example), but in my opinion, briefly contemplating Rauscher's arguments, independent of the discussions around constructivism, provides a helpful method for determining whether there is scope to derive moral realism from Kant's work. The topic in itself can be debated directly, without any reliance on discussions of constructivism. So, before proceeding any further, it seems reasonable to consider whether the arguments that Rauscher presents against any realist interpretations of Kant are sufficiently valid to entirely rule out realist versions of Kantianism defending the a priori synthetic.

Raushcher argues that "Kant is a moral anti-realist because he ultimately holds that the basis of morality is an experience limited to the minds of human-like beings" (2002, p. 480). In order to justify his stance as to why it is not possible to view Kant's moral theory as realist, he initially defines moral realism, followed by a synopsis of his interpretation of Kant's moral theory ("Moral Idealism"):

"Moral realism: The belief that some of the moral characteristics of the world are independent of the human mind.
Moral idealism: The belief that all of the moral characteristics of the world are dependent upon the human mind." (2002, p. 482).

Rauscher's reasoning behind choosing this particular definition of moral realism is evident, since it provides an immediate basis on which to show how his interpretation of Kant precludes it. For one thing, Kant never discusses moral truth, let alone commits to any concept of it (certainly not on a mind-independent basis). Secondly, all discussion of duties are in terms of 'imperatives', which might undermine any appeal to mind-independent moral characteristics. Whilst Rauscher himself discusses the difficulties and varying

approaches to defining moral realism (2002, pp. 480-482; 2015, pp. 10-15), he wishes to invoke moral idealism as "a traditional antonym of 'realism', instead of 'anti-realism'", though nevertheless a form of anti-realism, in order to draw the line between the two sets of views on a metaphysical basis. This for him is to ensure that any constructivist or otherwise strictly formalistic interpretations of Kant's moral theory are categorised as anti-realist rather than moral realist. Although Rauscher's method does have a degree of support, in my estimation, it excludes realist interpretations of Kantianism that I consider to be both relevant and important, therefore I will take a different approach to defining realism. This is in order to ensure that a true and full picture is provided.

A noteworthy observation are the correlations between Rauscher's interpretation of Kant's metaethics, and Blackburn's projectivism theory. Notwithstanding the obvious extent to which the two theories are completely opposed to one another (just looking for instance at the fact that Kant grounds morality in attitude-independent reason, whereas for Blackburn morality is entirely attitude dependent), both strongly pursue a means to encapsulate a metaethical grounding of moral discourse. Kant on the one hand talks about drawing out the categorical imperative from "common… rational moral cognition" (AK 4: 493), whereas conversely, Blackburn wishes to simply accommodate it within a *quasi*-realist framework. That being said, Kant does consider practical reason part of the faculty of desire (in as much as for Kant, an agent's practical reason determines what is good or bad for that agent, in determining whether what are objects of the faculty of desire/aversion). With the moral law being determine by *pure* practical reason, there is room for further parallels being drawn with Blackburn, in deriving or possibly even interpreting a quasi-realist Kantian theory, where the moral law is governed by what are the objects of desire/aversion for the ideally practically rational agent.

In any case, Rauscher identifies three bases on which to undermine a realist interpretation of Kant (which I will be assessing for the possibility of undermining realist accounts of Kantianism generally):

> i) the methodology in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (i.e. the conception of moral autonomy, necessitating the 'idealism of obligation');
> ii) the significance of conferring value in Kant's theory (necessitating the 'idealism of value');

and

iii) the incompatibility of realism with Kant's transcendental idealism (necessitating the 'idealism of agency')

The first reflects claims about the incompatibility of moral realism and a moral theory with autonomy at its core, which I will be addressing in the next section. The second I will not aim to contest, since a conception of value is not necessarily required for realism, although Hills (2008) for instance has defended a conception of value (that of rational nature itself) within Kant's theory directly. So I will now address the third (although I will revisit it to an extent within the final chapter).

My aim is predominantly to demonstrate that realism can cohere with the motivations for constructivism as contended by Rauscher, and secondly, to challenge the anti-realist motivations.

One might think that the existence of the moral law in itself would fit quite well to moral realism, but Rauscher argues that since all one has is the categorical imperative, i.e. the phenomenal conception of pure practical reason, the only reasonable way in which to conceive of morality on Kant's terms is 'moral idealism'. However, Rauscher is presupposing his own interpretation of what the noumenal realm amounts to (i.e. nothing), which is not the only way in which to interpret the Transcendental Idealism project in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787). In the next chapter, I will be offering an interpretation that is both metaphysically restrained whilst also maintaining the metaphysical 'weight' of the noumenal realm that you find in interpretations of Kant like Karl Amerik's (2003). Under this sort of interpretation, the Categorical Imperative is merely a phenomenal representation of the moral law. Since as those like Oliver Sensen (2009) tend to argue that there is no moral value underlying the Categorical Imperative itself, there are bases on which to read it as simply providing the formal parameters to determine how to fulfil our obligations.

What I think the issue is Rauscher's contentions here is that how he interprets Kant's entanglement of epistemology and metaphysics – it is of necessity for Kant that in recognising being inescapably free (as he tries to determine in the final section of the GMS (1785)), one is compelled to act as if under the dictation of the moral law, in order to

achieve real autonomy. Whilst that may be sufficient in order to act in a way that Kant argues is genuinely moral, there is no argument that one can ever know that this can be achieved (which is something that Kant himself seems to acknowledge (AK 4:463), for the Moral Law ultimately lies within the noumenal realm, the realm of 'things-in-themselves' of which we have no knowledge. That seems to indicate that there are no moral claims that are made true purely in virtue of the Categorical Imperative, it is that the moral law is in the noumenal, and one simply has to recognise its' presence to reconcile with one's concept of freedom. Whether one accepts or rejects the notion of free will, decisions are made as if this freedom is established (Ameriks (2003)).

Kant's transcendental idealism appears to indicate that he is disregarding grand metaphysical claims, instead categorising all platonic forms as noumena. This consequently halts the commitment to several aspects of Kant's (possible) metaphysical commitments, including free will, the concept of self, and the existence of God. Again however, this might be read as simply jumping to conclusions, as all that Kant is committed to is not being able to make theoretical knowledge claims about noumena. However, this stance does not mean that he defends atheist, hard determinism, and elimitivism about the self. Since he seems to also deny knowledge claims with respect to morality in an analogous fashion, it denotes that he would place morality in the noumenal realm.

However, if this is the case, one might ask why consider realism as a possible form of Kantianism, when Kantian moral theory could be considered simply quietist instead? Whether successfully or not, this is a question that I think Kant seems to be trying to answer in section 3 of the *Groundwork* (1785), in emphasising the inescapability of our acting under the idea of freedom. Yet not even Kant seemed to think that this alone could provide us a basis on which to theoretically support the existence of free will, and with it for Kant, all the moral facts. The claim however that such facts exist can still nevertheless be made independently of such theoretical knowledge (I will try to show why in the final chapter). At any rate, the fact that Transcendental Idealism is inseparable from Kant's complete metaethical thinking does not alone preclude a realist account of Kantianism.

I.III. The (Lack of) Metaethical Implications of Moral Autonomy

Rauscher (2002/2015) also raises another traditional objection to interpreting Kant as a realist. The objection in brief is tantamount to the following: because the Categorical Imperative is a matter of self-legislation, and is the only way in which moral law can be binding, it is the moral agent's legislative will that is the source of obligation, as Kant himself (AK IV: 441) argues. Therefore, since any independent moral reality cannot actually legislate moral obligations, morality cannot have any connection to such an independent reality. However, I would argue that this is not a valid conclusion. The claim that moral facts in themselves do not motivate a sense of obligation, or even if they did not have any independent authority, do not negate the existence of moral facts. There is an extent to which realism is painted in a negative light by associating it with moral heteronomy, when the commitment to realism can simply amount to the commitment to mind independent facts. What motivates in a special kind of sense is our moral judgment about what said facts might be.

Prior to Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, for a moral theory to claim that moral agents are legislated by a moral authority that is entirely independent of them was not especially controversial. Since Kant's famous attack in the *Groundwork* that targets any such moral theory, characterising them as 'heteronomous', and defence of his pioneering account of autonomy, and its centrality to his moral theory, a burden has been placed on moral theorists who claim that agents must conform to a moral authority independent of them to address Kant and those who have defended a similar line of attack.

This line of attack in particular has been assumed by moral constructivists (see for instance Bagnoli (2014, 2015)) in order to attack realist outlooks on moral claims in favour of an anti-realist one. Confusion about Kant's metaethical commitments seem to have also generated further uncertainty as to what implications there might be for a defence of either moral autonomy or moral heteronomy on the overarching metaethics. On the one hand, constructivists like Carla Bagnoli argue that Kant's main argument for autonomy (and attack on moral heteronomy) claims that an independent moral reality (that are posited on realist accounts) fails to explain the normative power of moral obligations. In this context, moral heteronomy and moral realism are considered to coincide, and so subsequently are moral autonomy and moral anti-realism. On the other hand, by virtue of rejecting an

account of moral autonomy where moral agents are taken to all share the required rational faculties to come to understand how to justify and govern their actions objectively, theorists defending moral heteronomy might be persuaded to coincide with moral antirealism, on the basis that no other objective ground might be available for explaining moral obligations that all agents would need to share on a realist account.

In this section, I hope for the following conclusion: Both realism and anti-realism are unaffected by an acceptance or disregard of the concept of moral heteronomy or moral autonomy. Therefore, neither can be taken to be either support for, or as an unacceptable albeit unavoidable consequence of, heteronomous accounts of moral agency. After providing a more concrete account of the divisions between accounts of moral autonomy and heteronomy, and of moral realism and anti-realism, I will attempt to demonstrate that both are consistent with the accounts of moral autonomy and moral heteronomy. On the one hand, Robert Stern (2012a, 2012b, 2013) rather aptly argues for a Kantian account of moral autonomy that remains consistent with moral realism, and equally there are potential accounts of moral heteronomy available for the moral realist, even those sympathetic to a form of Kantianism. Equally, communitarian accounts of moral heteronomy can have stronger anti-realist commitments than constructivists (by virtue of being committed to moral non-cognitivism). Based on this, a valid argument can be made that no specific form of moral ontology is fundamental to an account of moral heteronomy.

I.III.I Identifying the Assumed Connection Between Moral Realism and Heteronomy

To begin with, here are the kind of claims that I am concerned with here:
 "Kant's objection against foundationalist theories is that they are heteronomous, and therefore dogmatic." (Bagnoli, 2014, p. 315)

"The charge of heteronomy is directed against those ethical theories, such as intuitionist rationalism, which derive moral obligations from an external order of value…" (Ibid.)
In other words: "Realism ought to be rejected because it's heteronomous, and therefore dogmatic."

I find the following claims, standing alone without further support, to be equally problematic:

'Heteronomy is acceptable because you have to accept it to defend realism.'

'Accepting autonomy is good because it avoids realist commitments.'

'Autonomy is acceptable because you have to accept it to defend anti-realism.'

The primary aim of this section is to establish sound reasoning for the lack of truth behind these claims. In other words, that there are no entailment relations between realist/antirealist views and autonomy/heteronomy.

I plan to achieve this by:

i) Suggesting some (hopefully clear) definitions of autonomy and heteronomy, and realism and anti-realism.

ii) Pointing out how there can be accounts of autonomous and heteronomous realism, and autonomous and heteronomous accounts of anti-realism, none of which are incoherent, inherently inconsistent, or have significant internal tensions.

I aim not to be able to adequately defend any of the combinations of views that are being assessed in this section, but merely to present clear potential counterexamples to demonstrate that such counterexamples are not hard to find. However, I am taking it to be sufficient for my purposes to demonstrate that no inherent issues arise by virtue of any of the pairings of views themselves. Essentially this means that my conclusions should not be impacted by any issues that arise with a particular perspective prior to being linked with another, as it will not weaken any of the arguments. Therefore, a genuine objection must only point to internal problems that result from the combination. External issues may still apply, but again they would not destabilise my stance.

I.III.II. Kant's Attack on Heteronomy and Account of Autonomy

Heteronomous moral theories (previous versions of moral realism, particularly rationalism and sentimentalism) hold that moral ends exist and are identifiable prior to reasoning about them. Reason can only recognize them as already in place, and can bind agents only with the help of inclination or interest. According to Kant, this is a form of moral skepticism. More specifically, Kant's concern was that a moral theory needs to consist of **categorical imperatives**, and on a heteronomous account there can only be **hypothetical imperatives**.

According to Kant, morality and free will are strongly connected through his conception of **autonomy**: Kant reached his concept of autonomy by linking moral agency and his own definition of human rationality, and identifying it as the freedom to act as a moral agent. More specifically, this conception commits him to a view of a self that relies on unpopular and perceivably radical metaphysical claims.

This paragraph provides an extremely brief overview of those claims. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1781/87) claims that all our actions are law governed. In the realm of appearances (or the phenomenal realm), all events are caused, meaning that the universe in this realm is deterministic. Therefore, any actions we take are on the basis of what Kant refers to as inclination (Kant includes all human desires, habits, and all individual motivations in this).

Hence, in order for our actions to be genuinely free, they must come from the realm of things-in-themselves (or the noumenal realm), as they will then be undetermined actions initiating causal chains in the phenomenal realm. These actions, rather than being driven by inclination, are governed by pure practical reason (i.e. formal, necessary, and unconditional regulative principles of action). In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1785) explains that such principles are in fact moral principles, as they determine our duties, and acting from duty is the only way in which to act with a good will, which, in Kant's estimation, is the only type of action that can be construed as morally good. This does not mean that we cannot act morally with non-duty-based motives, rather it is that we must always keep in mind what our duties are, and be committed to fulfilling them. Kant refers to the capacity to act from moral principles, and thus conduct undetermined actions, as autonomy, and ascribes it to all human/rational beings. So, for Kant, our free will and morality are heavily linked, and autonomy bridges the connection between the two.

One noteworthy point here is that we are not only achieving autonomy, or acting autonomously, when we are acting in the context of the moral law, rather than inclination. For then one could say that we are determined to act from the moral law standpoint as much as we are determined to act from natural laws (the laws of physics). All that is required in order to have the status of an autonomous agent is the capacity to ascertain which set of laws we are governed by, and our current trajectory in relation to those. Moreover, we can

only choose to act in accordance with the moral laws, so any sense of being controlled by them is far weaker than any form of determination going on in the phenomenal realm.

Another minor point of interest is that one can read the notion of the noumenal realm in different ways, and that will have significant sway on the nature of Kant's commitments here. This will be discussed in further detail later in the dissertation.

To sum up the above points, Kant is committed to the claim that there is a non-empirical (noumenal) aspect to every human being where the capacity for pure practical reason resides, and that we achieve autonomy by tapping into that capacity and making decisions accordingly. This capacity is also the source of our dignity (hence for Kant, autonomy, dignity, and practical rationality are all closely intertwined), that all human beings share, and hence is the basis of equal treatment and respect. With our autonomy therefore being inextricably tied to a noumenal aspect of the self, perhaps the most significant problem with this account of autonomy becomes apparent: how can we accurately assess whether to ascribe autonomy to agents, when such assessment would require empirical observation, and ascribing autonomy to agents would require positing a non-empirical rational self in every one?

It cannot simply be that Kant would have had us never ascribe autonomy to agents, since according to Kant, an agent's autonomy is the basis of their dignity, and thus we are committed to the autonomy of all agents that we respect. Yet, Kant inspired a search for an account of autonomy that might also demand the equal treatment of all agents simply by virtue of their capacity to self-determine (which seems prima facie to be a fundamental human condition), albeit requiring his metaphysical commitments.

In slightly more modern terms, autonomy/heteronomy can be understood as follows:
Autonomy: Practical reason is the ultimate source of moral obligations, which requires rational agents to act under the idea of freedom, and subsequently from principles/maxims they regard themselves as having chosen. In other words, moral obligations are self-legislated.
Heteronomy: In contrast to autonomy, moral obligations are not self-legislated. Practical reason is not the ultimate source of moral obligations – they are derived from an external authority.

With these definitions in mind, I believe the possible combination with views on the realism question are as follows:

I.III.III (In my estimation) How the Lines Should Be Drawn in Relation to (Anti-)Realism and Moral Autonomy/Heteronomy

a) The possibility of Defending Autonomy and Anti-Realism (the traditional reading of Kant and forms of Kantian Constructivism like Bagnoli (2014))

Autonomy: Practical reason is the ultimate source of moral obligations, which requires rational agents to act in keeping with the concept of freedom and subsequently from principles/maxims they regard themselves as having chosen. In other words, moral obligations are self-legislated.
Anti-Realism: Moral agents are the ultimate authors of moral obligations, and therefore the truth of any moral claims depends upon the existence of moral agents.

b) The possibility of Defending Autonomy and Realism

At the most basic level, as I hope to show later in this chapter, even constructivists can be considered realists, under the condition that they are committed to objective moral truths, in so far as they are committed to an objective, 'correct standard of construction'.

Stern (20113) suggests a hybrid account, where the *obligatoriness* of actions are dependent on the agents, but not the *rightness* of the actions. In other words, Stern distinguishes between authority and legislation, so that the moral law and its' authority is independent of agents, but agents nevertheless have to legislate themselves.

Ameriks (2003) suggests an even stronger interpretation of Kant, where the pure practical reason of rational beings makes them moral agents because it provides them the tools to access 'moral reality'. Practical reason is simply the *phenomenal* content of morality's *noumenal* existence.

c) The possibility of Defending Heteronomy and Realism (which is generally assumed)

A paradigmatic example of this combination is the Divine Command Theory (DCT), where actions are right or wrong insofar as they either conform or deviate from God's wishes/will.

d) The possibility of Defending Heteronomy and Anti-Realism

Here are two ways in which DCT can be rendered anti-realist: DCT can be expressed as an error theory (an Erroneous Divine Command Theory, or EDCT). Assuming atheism is true, DCT may nevertheless be drawn to the correct moral theory, in which case, moral fictionalism might be adopted to maintain moral discourse. Otherwise, DCT can be combined with moral non-cognitivism, and all moral claims by necessity have attitudinal content. This attitudinal content can either be derived from moral agents or from God.

One might query how the authority of morality can be external to agents, if moral truths concern the correct execution of a procedure constructed or created by moral agents. You could argue under a constructivist interpretation of Kant that moral truths not external to moral agents *per se*, since they concern actual and possible moral agents. If a comparison between DCT and EDCT is conducted, the actual practice of considering and acting from moral principles should, in theory, function in exactly the same way; according to EDCT, while moral agents are conforming to an external authority, it is simply a fictitious one.

One might also object that combining realism with autonomy would be adding to one's ontology gratuitously, since autonomy can be just as easily combined with anti-realism. However, Kantian realists might require a conception of transcendental free will, Pure Practical Reason, or simply an objective standard for practical reasoning, which does not seem to count as an internal problem. Typically, realists think that more is needed than what the anti-realist can justifiably offer, so perhaps the argument, like many Occam's Razor claims, might just be begging the question.

At this stage, I hope to have demonstrated that there are good reasons to believe that moral realism is compatible with Kant's moral theory, or at least that one need not accept an interpretation of it that makes it so.

II. Can Kantian Constructivism Avoid Realist Commitments?

II.I.I How Moral Realism and Kantian Constructivism Ought to be Defined

I have already covered moral realism reasonably extensively in the first chapter, setting it out as the view that moral disputes concern beliefs that can be true or false in a similar fashion to other beliefs such as scientific ones. Moreover, in such disputes, where opposing and exhaustive moral views are being defended, at least one party has to be objectively correct. I noted the following definition from Sayre-McCord: "realism involves embracing just two theses: (1) the claims in question, when literally construed, are literally true or false... and (2) some are literally true. Nothing more. (Of course, a great deal is built into these two theses)". (Sayre-McCord (1986), p. 3) According to Sayre-McCord, in circumstances such as these, the moral realist will advocate that moral truths must be determined, protected and supported. However, as he further points out, there are many more elements that require clarification in terms of what precisely the existence of such moral truths would entail.

Assuming there is nothing further that it would amount to, it could be concluded that Sayre-McCord's definition of moral realism simply amounts to the acceptance of the following: I) moral cognitivism (that moral judgments amount to beliefs about moral propositions that can be either true or false), and II) a rejection of the systematic falsity of these beliefs (and thus accepting the possibility of moral judgments). However, for moral constructivists (particularly those of a Kantian persuasion), this definition of moral realism might be considered overly inclusive, as it would also encompass those of their own metaethical persuasions. Based on this marginal definition, Paul Formosa (2011) is adamant that there is no strong justification for challenging that Kant's moral theory is realist.

The sort of definition of moral realism that constructivists are more likely to consider themselves opposed to would be something more compelling, such as the following: "Realists believe that there are moral truths that obtain independently of any preferred perspective, in the sense that the moral standards that fix the moral facts are not made true by virtue of their ratification from within any given actual or hypothetical perspective". (Shafer-Landau (2003), p. 3) This account of moral realism can easily be read as

immediately ruling out any sort of constructivist account of metaethics (as Shafer-Landau intended, since he deliberately targets constructivism in his book *Moral Realism*), on the basis that constructivism is considered to be a commitment to the view that moral standards are indeed made true by virtue of their endorsement from within a hypothetical perspective (in the case of Kantian constructivists and Kant under a constructivist reading, this perspective would be one of an agent whose actions are entirely governed by what Kant would call Pure Practical Reason, or more simply, the Categorical Imperative).

II.I.II A Reminder of The Four Faces of Moral Realism

In order to give a more precise account of how I will be defining moral realism for this discussion, it is worth returning to Finlay's 'The Four Faces of Moral Realism' (2007).

As I noted before, Finlay claims that the set of moral realist views can be categorised into four different 'faces', each varying in increasing level of metaphysical commitment, and each providing a significantly different account of what is deemed to be a moral realist perspective:

1) <u>Semantic</u>: To accept semantic moral realism is, in a sense, to simply accept moral cognitivism. Finlay ((2007, p. 821) highlights that this is exactly in accordance with Sayre-McCord's (1986) definition of the moral realist view, apart from the obvious, albeit easy to forget, additional condition that there <u>are</u> at least some true moral beliefs and true moral propositions.

2) <u>Ontological</u>: This face is minimally stronger than the semantic face due to an added commitment to the assertion that moral claims or stances describe moral facts that have independent moral truth-makers. This view is often referred to as moral descriptivism. One can accept the semantic without the ontological, by claiming either that moral judgments or claims are true or false in virtue of not moral facts, but on some other basis (such as their practical efficacy), or else that there are no moral truths to ever be successfully described. Korsgaard's (1996) "Procedural Realism" is the example of the former that Finlay ((2007), pp. 822-823) points to, which is naturally one of the leading defences of moral constructivism.

3) <u>Metaphysical</u>: This third face is generally associated with the moral realist view, at least by constructivists and those who are more critical of the truth behind moral claims, requiring a 'moral reality' or any kind of metaphysical commitment. More specifically though, this face entails a commitment to the claim that there are non-attitudinal moral properties or entities, which act as the truth-makers of moral claims. Finlay (Ibid., p. 829) cites Smith's (1994) moral rationalism as an example of a perspective that only accepts the semantic and ontological faces, but does not recognise this third face. Smith's moral rationalism is based on the stance that one is morally obligated to act in a way that they deem completely rational (although Smith argues reasonably that there are certain obligations that we all share, as there is advice that all of our fully rational selves would agree upon).

4) <u>Normative</u>: On the one hand, to be committed to normative moral realism is to be committed to the claim that moral properties have attitude-independent authority. On the other, Finlay thinks that it is also to be committed to the claim that moral entities or properties are not reducible to nonmoral (natural) entities or properties, or in other words, to be committed to moral nonnaturalism (Ibid., p. 821).

It is relatively clear to see how and why constructivists might wish to dissociate from the 'realist' label, given the possibility of being interpreted as defending (or perhaps even associating with) the metaphysical, or worse still, the ontological, faces. However, the question remains as to what definition of realism I have in mind as the minimum that constructivists ought to be defending.

II.I.III Where to Draw the Line with Moral Realism

For the purposes of this dissertation, the following definition of realism is accepted here as accurate: "<u>There are moral truths, which are neither dependent on, nor true or false in virtue of, any opinions or attitudes about them, or any entailment therefrom.</u>"

The principal motivation for my selection of this definition of moral realism is that it is one that I think is (if not at least should be) common ground between constructivists and more traditional realists - that our moral discourse, in so far as it implies that moral claims express beliefs that can be true or false, does not need to be given any kind of framing to qualify

this feature of it (so for instance, by framing with an error theory, it can explain how the discourse is systematically false, even if there is an internal truth and falsehood). In other words, this underlying feature of our moral discourse can simply be taken for granted because it's 'true to life' (or in terms less palatable to constructivists, because it could be read as a metaphysical claim, morality has a 'real' existence).

In my opinion, this definition strikes a balance between the definitions put forward by Sayre-McCord and Shafer-Landau, as it acknowledges the independent complexion of moral truths, but is not limited by their conditions to exclude moral constructivism in any manner. This just as clearly fits with the arguments that I am attempting to make; that constructivists can and should defend a stronger kind of realism than is included in Sayre-McCord's definition. It also provides something of a unified position for realists in opposition to Blackburn in the face of his modal challenge, irrespective of where they stand on the spectrum of metaphysical commitments. Apart from moral cognitivism (and hence at least the 'semantic face' of moral realism), it could be argued that it is nevertheless unclear from the definition that I have given as to the exact commitment that defending it would entail. If the definition amounted to nothing more than a commitment to moral cognitivism, then at best, in all probability, it would only count as uninteresting and trivial to Kantians. This is because, at least under the most straightforward interpretations of Kantianism, Kantians (especially Kantian constructivists) are committed to the view that rational agents motivate their actions based on reason alone (as opposed to also requiring desire).

Yet, I would be of the opinion that a commitment to moral realism in terms of the ontological face is also required with my definition. This may seem unusual, as one might think for instance, that it might be compatible with an error theory (since one may claim that there are 'moral truths' that are all systematically false, though true under a fictionalist premise). However, given that even under a fictionalist premise, the 'fiction' must be constituted by the attitudes and opinions of moral agents, I do not believe that an error theory could count as realist under the definition of moral realism that I have provided. Constructivism, on the other hand, could be considered either realist or anti-realist, depending on the commitments involved in the view. If we take Finlay's (2007) reading of Korsgaard into account for instance, Korsgaard's constructivism would count as anti-realist, since there are only correct answers to moral questions (in virtue of exercising the

procedure of moral reasoning correctly) rather than any independent moral truths. Nevertheless, Finlay himself (2007, p. 845) acknowledges that there is an uncertainty about whether Korsgaard is in fact committed to moral truths, and points to Nadeem Hussein & Nishi Shah's (2006) argument that this reading of Korsgaard ultimately does not actually produce a coherent metaethical position.

II.I.IV How to Define (Kantian) Constructivism

The alternative interpretation of Korsgaard's procedural realism does, in fact, provide a clear demonstration as to why constructivism is compatible with my definition of moral realism. The reason for this is as Finlay (Ibid.) points out, the perspective indicates that Korsgaard is committed to the claim that "moral claims report facts about the results of processes of enquiry". Interestingly, this is precisely how Finlay himself defines constructivism (i.e., as a form of ontological moral realism). Although it may be questionable for me to include this definition of constructivism, my purpose in doing so is to utilise it to argue that this should be the foundation of constructivists' commitments. In light of this, I am stipulating the following definition of moral constructivism: "What determines the correctness of moral claims are the results of correct processes of practical reasoning".

Having provided a lengthy account of what should count as realist for the discussion at hand, I will, by comparison, neglect the basis on which a theory ought to count as constructivist, let alone one of the Kantian persuasion. This is primarily because the aim is to persuade constructivists of constructivism's compatibility of realism (and additionally the appeal of realism), rather than to persuade realists of this. My reason for not undertaking the latter is because of the aforementioned spectrum of views; it is simply implausible to expect those such as Shafer-Landau, who think stronger metaphysical views are required of realism to take constructivism in its' project, to essentially change their minds to be compatible. To achieve the former on the other hand, I intend my arguments here to be as inclusive of all theories that identify as constructivist as is reasonable, and to achieve this all that is required in a definition is that it is weak enough to encapsulate constructivism to the smallest possible extent. To a certain extent, it is also due to the widespread perspectives of constructivism, in addition to the fact that it can be founded on deeply disparate viewpoints (Humean or Aristotelian versions of constructivism as opposed to Kantian

constructivism are the most notable examples). Constructivism's need for realism is much more complex to defend for all versions of realism, however my focus is simply on Kantian versions in this dissertation.

In fact, Finlay (Ibid.) goes so far as to describe T. M. Scanlon as a 'constructivist', whilst also explaining how he defends all four faces of moral realism. To a certain degree, my intention by referencing the utilisation of the 'constructivist' label in this manner, is to spark a debate in this discussion. Although this is a sufficiently unusual use of the term to run the risk of confusion, it reflects how I believe constructivism would be better understood (i.e. as a version of moral realism).

One final preliminary question remains: what would make a version of constructivism Kantian? For the same reasons as with constructivism generally, I will simply briefly stipulate the following commitments as conditions:
i) The grounding of moral principles in practical reason as an autonomous process of self-legislation.
ii) The requirement for moral principles to be universalisable.
iii) The requirement to never treat rational agents as merely a means to an end.

It may well be that there are kinds of constructivism that might otherwise be called Kantian. For example, types that would otherwise determine that humanity (rational agency) has unconditional value. However, such versions of constructivism will not be the subject of my discussion here.

II.II The Dilemmas that Constructivists Face by Rejecting Realism

Frequently, constructivism is perceived as an opposition to realism, therefore it is highly plausible that the most valid objections to constructivism have been put forward by realists who challenge its capacity to be effective in this position. As I have already alluded to, the kinds of realists who are keener to object to constructivism are those who are more sympathetic to the more metaphysical accounts of realism (i.e. those who defend the metaphysical or even the normative faces of realism, treating them as necessary criterion for a 'genuinely' realist account). One of the most notable examples of this is Shafer-Landau's evoking of the Euthyphro dilemma.

II.II.I. Shafer-Landau's Euthyphro Objection to Constructivism and Copp's Rebuttal

The version of the *Euthyphro dilemma* which Shafer-Landau invokes as a means to object to constructivism could be encapsulated in the following question: "Are moral principles objective because of the application of the construction procedure, or because of some further objective moral premise upon which the procedure is selected?" If it is the former, then the question is open as to where the moral content of the procedure originates, beyond simply being stipulated. In Shafer Landau's own words, "there is no reason to expect that the principles that emerge ... will capture our deepest ethical convictions, or respect the various platitudes that fix our understanding of ethical concepts". (Shafer-Landau (2003), p. 42) If, however, the latter is accurate, then the moral premise must exist independently of the procedure itself, and hence a commitment to moral realism is required anyway.

Copp (2005, p. 274) acknowledges Shafer-Landau's suggestion that constructivists can provide a response to this dilemma by answering the question as to where the moral content originates. Kantian versions of constructivism are a perfect example of this, grounding it in purely practical reason, and making the exercise of morality part of the essence of being a practically rational agent. Shafer-Landau however, expresses doubt regarding the viability of such projects, on the basis that it remains unclear as to how exactly the manifestation of moral content is really explained. (Shafer-Landau (2003, p. 43) Copp has been reported as considering this as Shafer-Landau acknowledging (albeit implicitly) that in this way, constructivists can avoid the dilemma. (Copp (2005), pp. 273-274) The following demonstrates how Copp outlines a constructivist theory that commits to what he describes as 'basic realism':

> Basic realism accepts the following doctrines:
>
> 1) there are moral properties, such as rightness.
>
> 2) these properties are sometimes instantiated.
>
> 3) moral predicates express these properties.
>
> 4) moral assertions express beliefs regarding the instantiation of these properties.

5) in that there are properties, rightness and other moral properties have the same metaphysical status as familiar non-moral properties, whatever that status is.

Basic realism accepts all five doctrines. Stance independent realism adds the sixth thesis that facts about the instantiation of moral properties are 'stance-independent'. (Copp (2005), p. 271)

According to Copp, there are particular forms of constructivism that recognise the first five doctrines, but not the sixth. This makes them 'basic realists', but they fall short of being a realist as delineated by Shafer-Landau. Nevertheless, their acceptance of the five doctrines ensures that they cannot be accused of unpredictability. The term 'basic realism' perhaps says enough, however; while the version of constructivism that Copp is discussing here may not count as a realist per Shafer-Landau's definition, there are numerous reasons for otherwise regarding it as realist.

II.II.II How 'Realist' is 'Basic Realism' (and How Realism Can Still Be Avoided)

Claims 1-4 all seem to indicate a commitment to moral cognitivism, and hence to semantic moral realism. Furthermore, claim 5 appears to signify a commitment to ontological moral realism. If this were the case, Copp's basic realism is in fact, compatible with my definition of moral realism. Pointing this out is not a criticism of Copp's objection to Shafer-Landau, since he was only intending to challenge Shafer-Landau's presentation of the dilemma as part of the means of defending his metaphysically much stronger version of moral realism. However, this also means that Copp does not actually provide a solution to the dilemma itself, since basic realism only acts as a counter-example with at least a more metaphysical definition of moral realism.

Essentially, the crux of the matter will hinge on exactly how 'stance-dependent' Copp's suggested basic realism is, as this will determine the optimum means of interpreting claim 5. Either it can be read under the straightforward interpretation (i.e. as a kind of ontological realism), or it could be read with a degree of qualification sufficient to undermine the independent status of moral properties, and failing to quite meet the conditions of ontological moral realism. The moral theory that Copp sets out as a means to explain how basic realism ("society-centred theory") could be instantiated should provide clarification:

Society-centred theory provides a theory about the status that a *moral* norm must have in order that corresponding moral propositions be true. It links the truth conditions of *moral* propositions to the status that corresponding norms have when the society would be *rational to choose* them to serve in the society as the societal moral code. I understand the rationality of a society's choice to depend on whether the choice would best serve the society's needs. Hence, the society-centred theory links the truth conditions of moral propositions to the status that corresponding norms have when their serving in a society as the societal moral code would enable the society better to serve its needs than would the currency of alternative sets of rules. (Copp (2005), p. 276)

Basically, the essence of this theory is that the moral claims are true, because they out-perform other claims in effectively meeting society's needs in the context of which these claims are presented. This theory seems quite clearly compatible with Kantian Constructivism; indeed, it could be re-formulated to be a direct version of Kantian Constructivism. This will be discussed in further detail later in the dissertation, including an explanation as to why this is accurate, however, for now, it is a noteworthy point.

At any rate, the outline of society-centred theory remains inadequate to inform about what status moral properties should have, in that there are still potential alternatives. On the one hand, the status of moral properties could be both objective and independent of any society, though always applying to societies (ontological moral realism). On the other hand, the moral properties have objective and independent status, but only within the context of a particular society (this seems to only amount to semantic moral realism). On this latter interpretation, one could claim that the status of moral properties has the same status as familiar non-moral properties (but only within a certain societal context), in order to satisfy claim 5. Whilst this might seem slightly misleading, it may be a desirable position to take for those who want this stronger understanding of 'stance-dependence' but are unwilling to relinquish the straightforward treatment of moral claims as implicit within the general moral discourse.

Copp provides a more in-depth explanation of how he believes the comprehension of moral properties should function, which is as follows:

> On my approach, moral "properties" are best viewed as relational. Strictly speaking, wrongness, for example, is a relation between actions and a relevant society. To be sure, since I believe that societies have basically the same needs, I think the moral codes that are justified relative to different societies will tend to be similar in content. Yet societies can be in different circumstances, which means that the moral codes justified in relation to them are unlikely to be exactly the same. (Copp (2005), p. 276)

The relational nature of moral properties here would undoubtedly suggest the straightforward interpretation of claim 5. In which case, Copp's response to Shafer-Landau does not, in itself, overcome his objection to constructivism as an alternative to moral realism, rather just Shafer-Landau's metaphysical account of it. Copp himself argues that constructivism is compatible with basic realism elsewhere (2013), and Shafer-Landau subsequently describes this view as *"non-derivative constructivism"* (2005, p. 315).

However, the available stronger account of 'stance-dependence' which qualifies claim 5, actually demonstrates a method of understanding basic realism which fails to meet what I consider to be the necessary conditions for a realist position, and thus avoids Shafer-Landau's dilemma entirely. In other words, Copp has presented a position that can be interpreted as anti-realist available to constructivists, which both circumvents Shafer-Landau's Euthyphro dilemma, and perhaps even accommodates the realist-looking nature of everyday moral discourse.

II.II.III. Another Dilemma Presented on Kantian Terms

Nonetheless, there is still an argument for realism that can be salvaged from Shafer-Landau's use of the Euthyphro dilemma. It is a far less ambitious argument, in that it only targets Kantian versions of constructivism, and demands moral realism as I have defined it in this dissertation, rather than Shafer-Landau's metaphysical and normative moral realism. Instead of simply suggesting that any kind of moral constructivism requires some form of realist foundations (and for Shafer-Landau these would be metaphysically substantial), this

argument claims that a Kantian version of constructivism can only be plausible if it is founded on realism. However, this still presents Kantian constructivists with an unavoidable choice between moral realism and collapsing into arbitrariness, although there are several considerations that must be raised for Kantian constructivists to fall into this dichotomy.

I am not the first to suggest that constructivism could be read as kind of subjectivism; Ridge (2012) for instance argued that Sharon Street's constructivism (2008/2010) amounted to a kind of subjectivism, albeit of an intricate kind. This argument shares some characteristics with the 'Schagency Objection' made famous by Enoch (2006). However, rather than casting doubt on the plausibility of locating normativity within agency without raising concerns of scepticism, the doubt is cast upon the plausibility of formulating moral or political principles that could apply to a collective on a constructivist basis.

Initially, I put forward the following claim, which should allay some of the criticisms of Kantian constructivists: "It is wrong for any rational being to treat another rational being purely as a means to an end, rather than as an end-in-herself" (I will continue to refer to refer to this claim as the 'Mere Means Claim', or MMC). Returning to the original conditions that I stipulated as the requirements for a constructivist theory to count as 'Kantian', I am taking for granted that this is a claim that all Kantian constructivists are committed to, as rejecting it would violate condition iii) - the requirement to never treat rational agents merely as means to an end. Therefore, if Kantian constructivists were to be asked whether or not this claim was true, it would appear that they would be compelled to say that it was. Even the most formalistic versions of constructivism for those who do not wish to ascribe an inherent value to humanity, and hence avoid realism on this basis, would still need to treat this claim as true.

Having established the need to defend MMC as being true, there are questions that can be raised about the basis on which this defence is made. For instance: Under what conditions is MMC true? What *makes* the statement true? These might be taken as a rather glib appeal to substantive moral truth-makers, and moral realism as a result. The most straightforward response available to Kantian constructivists wishing to avoid such commitments seems to be an appeal to practical reason; by taking an explicitly constitutivist position (in claiming that to be morally constrained is simply part of what it means to be an agent in the first

place), one can simply say that it is fundamental to moral agency (at least conceived on Kantian terms).

In taking this position though, Kantian constructivists could be faced with the following question: Does the truth of MMC depend on moral agents? If the answer to this is negative, this would infer that Kantian constructivists are committed at a minimum to something equivalent to Copp's basic realism, and therefore, moral realism as it has been defined in this dissertation. Even with the explanation for moral truths resting on the valid exercising of practical reason, the formal rules that determine the validity of such exercises would have to hold independently of whether such exercises ever actually take place. In other words, these rules would need to count as independent truth-makers.

To clarify how this could be possible, a chess analogy may help. In this scenario, it would be a claim that chess players have no bearing on whether one is playing the game of chess correctly. The rules of chess, irrespective of the contingencies explaining how the game came to be played in the first place, are objective. They hold irrespective of whether the game is ever invented, ever played, or even whether there any entities in existence who do or even can play. A different game might have been invented and named 'chess', with almost identical rules apart from just an essential difference, but this in no way undermines the claim that the game we refer to as chess is governed by the rules as we understand them.

It may be that this sort of explanation of moral truths will be unappealing to Kantian constructivists, and so would instead claim that moral truths do depend on agents. If they do claim this though, then the constructivists are faced with a problem about the scope of their 'constructions' that is raised by the potential for disagreement about them. If the truth of whether or not an agent has exercised practical reason correctly is dependent upon agents, then what is determining this fittingness must be how the individual agent (or a collection of agents) conceive (or 'construct') the rules governing practical reason. It is possible that constructivists may choose to reject this step, and instead maintain that the rules governing practical reason are based upon an idealised conception of it, so whilst the rules are independent of how particular agents conceive of practical reason, and the rules that should govern it, the rules nevertheless remain dependent upon agents in general.

The issue with this reaction is that it cannot be definitively established why there would be any reliance on agents, as the idealised concept, by nature is hypothetical (as it is an idealisation). The rules of practical reason instead seem open to the chess analogy, in which case the rules stand irrespective of whether they are or could ever be 'played out'. A constructivist would need to be able to provide a substantial explanation as to why such a dependency relationship would hold, or else demonstrate on some other basis why my presentation of the constructivist account cannot be considered realist. The reason why I am doubtful of either being possible in the case of Kantian constructivism in particular, is because of the specificity of Pure Practical Reason as understood in Kantian terms, even if hypothetically stipulated seems to require its' status of moral significance independent of whether Kant ever explored it.

If the significance of practical reason did not have such independence, then it is simply a question of how agents conceive of it. However, if the opposite is true, this would seem to denote that morality is a choice, rather than being collectively mandatory. Any agent seems completely at liberty to disagree with the conception of practical reason that others might be assenting to. Without an independent truth-maker to act as an independent adjudicator on this sort of this dispute, there is no reason to think that the Kantian conception of practical reason is any better than for instance a Humean conception of it, or indeed an entirely nihilistic conception. If this is correct, constructivism seems to collapse into a kind of subjectivism, problematic to Kantian versions in particular, because it would be as Philippa Foot (1972) stated – "a system of *hypothetical* imperatives". Not only does this seem to undermine Kant's *categorical imperative*, but it would appear to imply a kind of relativism.

At this stage, constructivists may be willing to face and accept a commitment to relativism that renders the constructed moral norms to be relative to the collectives of rational agents that adopt them. Whilst this may not be considered a significant problem because it enables a form of cultural relativism that some constructivists may recognise as a benefit, this would in reality be disregarding the crux of the issue. This kind of relativism would entail that, since there's no independent truth on the matter to give any one account any authority, one individual conception as to what practical reason actually commands has no reason for being undermined by a collective understanding of practical reason, no matter how many agents comprise the collective.

Even if one were to try to claim that the authority could simply be determined by popularity (so in other words, the normative authority was with whichever collective was largest in relation to any particular issue), doing so would be ascribing independent authority to collectives in and of themselves, which would be once again introducing a realist foundation to the constructivist theory. Ultimately, without some sort of realist foundation of this kind, Kantian constructivism will potentially always collapse into what Midgley (1981) referred to as 'moral isolationism' (Ibid., p. 80), where one agents' conception of what ought to be done is no more effective than any others, leaving no basis on which to make moral claims upon one another. This appears to be irreconcilable with the employment of Kantian constructivism (in the appropriate form) as a moral or political theory.

Therefore fundamentally, in order for Kantian constructivism to have the kind of weight that its' proponents would wish, a commitment to moral realism seems to be required (at least as I define it). Kantians who interpret the formulation of humanity as giving humanity objective value in itself will have a straightforward realist interpretation of the Kantian project, but this is not the sole means of realist interpretation (for instance, one should at least take practical reasons demand to respect rational projects as a <u>foundational</u> moral truth). It appears that regardless of the approach that is taken to explain moral realism, Kantian constructivists must admit a commitment to it.

II.II.IV. Conclusion

As I have pointed out, not all constructivists have been targeted by the argument I have presented here - Humean and Aristotelian versions of constructivism could reject the semantic face by maintaining a non-cognitive account of moral realism (this may even be open to some versions of 'Kantian' constructivism that deviate sufficiently from the conditions that I stipulated for counting as Kantian, although again they were not intended to fall under the argument's scope). Ultimately however, I hope to have argued the following: Kantian constructivisms that accept all moral truths to be dependent on agents fall into relativism, which will be problematic for the project as a moral or political theory to bind together rational agents. Conversely, in the context of the definition of moral realism that I have provided in this dissertation, Kantian constructivism is compatible based

on an acceptance of the core mortal truths. Kantian constructivists should therefore recognise a commitment to this kind of moral realism.

In terms of the unanswered metaphysical questions, there is a range of options for constructivists, such as ontological realism (as demonstrated by Korsgaard's procedural realism) and normative realism (as shown through Scanlon's contractualism). Within this spectrum there is a divide analogous to the ones that traditional constructivists use to separate themselves from the realist camps, which Richard Galvin (2011) aptly delineates. This divide is between what Galvin refers to as "agnostic" constructivism and "atheistic" constructivism (Ibid, p. 16). The terms themselves are somewhat self-explanatory; agnostic constructivists simply avoid the question of moral metaphysics altogether, whilst atheistic constructivists reject moral metaphysics entirely. As to which of the two positions is superior, or indeed whether a more theistic constructivism would be more appropriate, remains open for discussion. My aim here was not to defend any of the three.

It may be that the kind of realism that constructivists need to commit to could be as weak as Sayre-McCord's account, as strong as Safe-Landau's, or even more potent still. It may also be that it simply does not matter either way: In this vein, Copp (2005) uses the term "shallow" to describe the discrepancies between realist and anti-realist accounts of constructivism. He justifies this by pointing out that they are almost "extensionally equivalent" (Copp (2005), p. 279) However, the validity of this opinion is outside the scope of this dissertation. Whatever the case may be though, constructivists should not avoid the realist label, nor even necessarily bear any metaphysical apprehension towards it (at least for the moment). This should not however, be too significant a concern for constructivists who wish to evade the entire practice of metaphysics, for they can simply adopt an 'agnostic' or 'atheistic' stance. They maintain the freedom clearly assert their opposition to metaphysically burdensome metaethics, but should nevertheless recognise the need to accept moral truths with enough independence to merit the realist label.

Chapter 5: In Defence of the Kantian A Priori Synthetic Account of Supervenience as a Solution to Blackburn's Modal Challenge

The purpose of the present chapter is to defend the Kantian solution to the modal challenge against moral realism presented in Blackburn's (1985) 'Supervenience Revisited' raised at the end of the third chapter. A common way of conceptualising Blackburn's argument against moral realism is that his modal challenge can be better handled by his quasi-realist expressivism than any explanation or response a realist can provide. In view of this, I will argue that Kant would have been able to defend moral supervenience as a conceptual thesis, in particular by justifying it analytically. To be more specific, the analytical justification given by Kant would see moral supervenience as a conceptual requirement of the systematic behaviour of moral facts. However, I anticipate that Kant would have claimed that the proposition that moral facts do supervene at all can only be justified synthetically, and therefore would have been able to respond to the challenge on a realist basis.

It is nonetheless noteworthy that even if the realist interpretation of Kant could provide a viable answer to the challenge, Blackburn's (Ibid) argument might still be considered sound if his expressivism is taken to be preferable to the Kantian synthetic practical justification of moral facts. Unlike Kant though (I will argue), Blackburn is committed to the claim that all moral discourse must have some attitudinal content behind it, which makes it difficult to explain both how objective moral justification can be possible, as well as the possibility of moral progress.

In view of the above considerations, a realist interpretation of Kant can resist claims that Blackburn's (Ibid) projectivism is preferable after all. Such a view is founded on the basis that it fully appreciates the significance of Blackburn's mystery, without having to be damagingly burdened by it on a metaphysical basis. Nevertheless, as a defining strongpoint at least, it does not have to explain how all moral discourse is necessarily supported by and founded on attitudinal content.

So my counter-argument to Blackburn's attack on moral realism could be summarised as follows: In agreement with Blackburn, I accept that any viable metaethical view must

explain how both premises 1 and 2 of Blackburn's argument are true. However, I think with a Kantian account of moral realism can give us the following account of premises 1 and 2: on the one hand, premise 1 (supervenience) can be defended with Kant's conceptual analysis of morality in the GMS; on the other hand, the second premise can also be accepted, on the basis that the instantiation of moral properties themselves can only be *synthetically* justified *a priori* (i.e. justified on a *practical* rather than *theoretical* basis). So the fact that mixed-worlds are analytically possible is no concern, since moral properties are not logical entailed from moral ones. As a result, premise 4 of Blackburn's argument is false, and hence its conclusion is not supported.

Before proceeding any further however, I shall first address potential concerns that Kant's Categorical Imperative might actually conflict with moral supervenience.

I. Is Moral Supervenience *Really* Compatible with Kant's Moral Theory?

In his paper 'From Supervenience to "Universal Law": How Kantian Ethics Become Heteronomous', Scott Forschler (2012, p. 49) interprets the following metaethical claim from the first section of the Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785):

> The subjective conditions under which some action is thought of as justified
> via some maxim be sufficient for judging the same action as justified by any
> agent in those conditions.

Although Forschler (Ibid.) takes this as a description of supervenience, it is important to recognise that the Formula of Universal Law (FUL) replaces this kind of universalisation in the manner given below (at least according to Forschler):

> The judgment that some agent could rationally (i.e., without willing the
> frustration of his own valued ends) will his adoption of some maxim under
> the condition that this would cause all agents in his world to adopt it as well.

According to Forschler (Ibid.), this difference is significant. Critically, Forschler arrives at this conclusion after considering the way in which maxims that are indisputably wrong pass the FUL test, but they fail the aforementioned supervenience test. Hence, he claims it is possible to conclude that the supervenience thesis ought to be accepted instead of the FUL.

Given the considerations mentioned above, I will attempt to demonstrate in due course is that within Kant's system of thought, rather than conflicting with the supervenience claim, it is possible for the FUL to function as a strengthened form of the supervenience thesis. Given Kant's clear aspirations for the Categorical Imperative to legislate the complete coherence of all possible maxims, it will be argued that this stems from the way it has a formal universality and necessity between all rational agents, as well as between moral and non-moral facts. At the same time, I will argue that it does not suffer from the deficiencies highlighted by Forschler (2012), which is a critical point to acknowledge because this means the FUL can be seen to accompany the supervenience thesis (or at least have the supervenience thesis contained within it). Based on the conclusions given rise to by this line of argumentation, I suggest that the FUL's not worthy of rejection. There may be other ways to dispute the possibility of Kant agreeing with the moral supervenience claim. For instance, one could point to the "practical rules of exceptions" in the categories of freedom, found in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788/1997, V:67) as a basis for undermining the completely and categorically systematic behaviour of moral duties that Kant defends in the *Groundwork* (1785/1998) and hence supervenience with it. However, I will not be considering such suggestions because it is unclear how the *Critique of Practical Reason* is meant to cohere with the *Groundwork* in the first place, the *Groundwork* can be looked at in isolation from it, and hence the realist account I'm wishing to defend need only be derivative of the *Groundwork*, and not necessarily committed to any claims in the second *Critique*.

I.I. Moral Supervenience and Kantian Ethics

In view of the consideration that the permissibility of maxims supervenes specifically under the "subjective conditions" that an agent falls under, it is necessary to ask what we mean by this term. As a first step forward, we might first suggest that such conditions can be defined as an agent's understanding or interpretation of moral facts. Nevertheless, upon close analysis of the matter, we observe a range of indications to suggest that this cannot

be the case. In particular, the key point to note here is that seeing "subjective conditions" as an agent's understanding or interpretation of moral facts would presuppose an internalist account of moral justification. Hence, it would be necessary to see any action as justified as long as it was genuinely believed to be right. According to this view, war criminals and murderers, along with any other individuals justifiably and commonly viewed by the reasonable to be immoral (take, for example, the odious Heinrich Himmler), could be defended, which is not only implausible, but is clearly misaligned with the precepts and fundamental tenets of Kantian theory.

Since the above way of defining what we mean by "subjective conditions" is clearly inadequate, we might consider that the phrase refers to the morally relevant facts that a moral agent has access to. Here, then, it is noteworthy that subjective motivations only play a role in that they are a prerequisite for maxims, but it is critical to recognise that this is where the matter stops. Subjective motivations for actions are not objectionable, as long as they motivate actions that pass the categorical imperative (CI) test. Furthermore, while this is true, "moral praiseworthiness" is a factor that Forschler (Ibid) neglects to consider, which might be construed as the moral virtue or worthiness of an action.

I.II. Universal Law vs. Supervenient Universality

According to Forschler (2012, p. 55), in accepting the FUL, Kant actually "abandons" the supervenience thesis in favour of the FUL on the following grounds:

> The test given by the FUL asks if a contradiction in will arises just in the
> case where *everyone follows the same maxim*. But this is, rather obviously,
> a contingent condition which does not always hold; it is one of many
> possible conditions an agent might find himself in, and one of the more
> likely ones at that. Knowing that a maxim generates no contradiction in will
> in that condition by no means guarantees that it will not generate a
> contradiction in will in any other, and to suppose otherwise commits a subtle
> logical mistake.

In view of the above, Forschler (Ibid.) claims that Kant made a category error by substituting universalisation "within a world" for supervenience.

I think it can be reasonably argued that Forschler (Ibid) demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the FUL in this instance. The reason for this becomes immediately clear when we consider a case in which everyone follows the same maxim. Noteworthily, a contradiction arises [between rationally willing that everyone follows the maxim in question, and not merely looking at some possible world and seeing what would happen. As the reader will note, there is a difference.] However, if we grant Forschler's (2012) point for the time being, it will be useful to see where it goes. According to Forschler (Ibid), the difference that exists in this scenario is that supervenient universalisability ranges not over the agents, but over the moral facts of any acts of any possible agent. Or, to be more precise, "over the judgments a practically rational agent makes about any possible agents acting in response to the antecedent conditions of some maxim" (Ibid, pp. 55-56).

In addition to this, Forschler (Ibid) makes the following side comment: namely, that Kant qualifies as a moral anti-realist along the lines of Hare and Blackburn. He formulates this position based on the way in which the philosopher uses moral facts in order to derive facts about willings, prescriptions, or judgments, rather than the "perceptual detection of substantive moral facts or qualities". However, what Forschler actually highlights here is a strong virtue of drawing out an understanding of supervenience from Kantian theory. Although I would agree to a certain extent with the stated similarity, I would argue that Forschler incorrectly treats the two accounts of moral facts as mutually exclusive. This will hopefully have been made clearer in the previous chapter (specifically, after a defence has been given of the interpretation of Kant as both a moral constructivist and a moral realist).

Ultimately, it is this similarity between the meta-ethical views of Kant and those of Blackburn which perhaps makes my intended approach all the more efficacious. This is because the similarity in question shows how Blackburn's approach need not be anti-realist at all. Assuming this is the case, and Blackburn's Quasi-Realism could be understood on a cognitivist basis (for instance by reconciling it with Smith's (1994) moral rationalism, when for instance an action could be considered right or wrong if one's fully rational self would have had positive attitudes about it), one might go so far as to claim that his modal argument does not demonstrate that his anti-realism is better than realism at all. This is because the setbacks to his own commitments to projectivism (which I will discuss later) could be avoided, and perhaps even make his moral theory much closer to Kant's.

Blackburn could still respond with the claim that his account of anti-realism is better than the one I am trying to make of realism with Kant, but I hope to demonstrate that my account given here allows realism to maintain the *prima facie* plausibility that it deserves.

According to Forschler, supervenient universality ranges over all possible instances of a maxim. Consequently, if a person judges one maxim to be permissible in certain circumstances, it must be permissible in all of them. Hence, it is important to recognise that independently, it might not only be the case that Kant would argue this fails to hold, but it might also be the case that he suggests it seems implausible. Before taking the discussion further, it may perhaps be useful to look at the examples themselves.

As one example, take the Maxim of Left-Hand Driving (MLHD) given in Forschler (2012). This proceeds in the following way: "When I want to drive somewhere, I will drive on the left side of the road, to arrive safely". While it passes the Categorical Imperative test, in being consistent with the FUL, it should not be a maxim that we follow in all circumstances (consider the calamities that would result if we were to do so outside of countries like the UK or Japan). However, it is important to ask the following question: "What exactly is morally problematic about the Maxim of Left-Hand Driving?" All the FUL is intended to show is whether or not the tested maxim is morally permissible; as such, it is not necessarily morally wrong to follow the maxim, as sometimes it works out perfectly well.

Of course, prudentially speaking, it is a terrible maxim to follow, but that is beside the point entirely. If you were entirely ignorant of the existence of other drivers, and had a genuine and rational basis for believing you were the only driver, so that in believing this you were not demonstrating any negligence, then there would be nothing inappropriate about the maxim. Whilst it might be hard to imagine an example of this, it is nevertheless theoretically possible; particularly for instance, if you thought you were the last surviving human in a post-apocalyptic scenario, and roads were generally in a better condition on the left hand side.

What is particularly worth noting is that this response is equally applicable to the other two examples that Forschler provides. What is critical to note here is that Forschler potentially is demonstrating a problematic interpretation about how the Categorical Imperative test ought to be interpreted (i.e. as a means to determine the practical efficacy of all maxims).

In particular, it is important to recognise that it is not the case that every action that can be described by a maxim that passes the CI test is morally permissibe, only the negation of those that fail.

I.III. Possible Responses from Forschler

First of all, it is critical to recognise that the practical purposes of Forschler's (2012) Maxim of Left-Hand Driving (MLHD) would not be directly undermined, which is why the maxim evades rather than passes universalisation.

However, there still seems to be no contradiction here: namely, the MLHD could easily be adopted when legislated as universal law. However, if the one exception to the general moral principle can never be adopted if it were universally legislated, then it seems like the exception would have no purpose in the Kingdom of Ends.

For Korsgaard, where the FUL is understood as a means to test the practical efficacy of a maxim, which in turn determines its permissibility, Barbara Herman's (1993) tennis maxim may present a difficulty of the kind that Forschler wishes to raise. The maxim proceeds as follows (Ibid, pp. 138-140): When I feel like playing tennis, I should go to the courts early on a Sunday morning, in order to avoid crowds.

If universally legislated, it looks as if this maxim would undermine the practical purpose of the maxim in the first place, generating the practical contradiction that Korsgaard thinks (1985) is the best way to understand the contradiction in conception. Ultimately, even if a practical contradiction were necessary for a contradiction in conception, it certainly does not appear to be sufficient. Had Forschler taking this approach to criticise the FUL, then his objection might have been more understandable.

Another issue in the background that must be considered is the matter of whether maxims are always necessarily in mind behind every action. Furthermore, it is important to ask whether they need to be. Here, it is noteworthy that in order for the CI test to be applicable to all actions, one would need to adopt Onora O'Neill's view (1977) that they are indeed behind every action, although there is a distinction between 'specific' and 'underlying' intentions; a distinction that Forschler does not find "clear or compelling" (2012, p. 61).

However, then we are required to explain why Kant argued that a person needs to "learn to act from maxims".

Is there only one maxim behind every action? If not, how many, and do they all need to pass the CI test? If there is more than one, it may not be clear how it can be determined whether or not an action is actually moral or immoral.

I.IV. Conclusions on Kantian Supervenience

Although I do not consider that the impermissibility of certain maxims that pass the FUL outright has been demonstrated by Forschler, it has been shown that potentially issues can arise with Korsgaard's practical interpretation of the FUL. There are as a result complications that arise on how exactly to understand the role of maxims in the CI test. However, given that this thesis does not require a fully worked out interpretation of this role of maxims, it seems reasonable to conclude that Forschler has provided no serious concerns about the incompatibility of moral supervenience and the Categorical Imperative. In view of this, we have no viable grounds on which to reject the equivalence of the formulations of the categorical imperative.

II. Applying Kant's A Priori Synthetic to Metaethics

The entire project of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787/1998) might be said to be Kant's attempt to explain how the *synthetic a priori* is possible. Perhaps most fundamentally to his Transcendental Idealism, the *synthetic a priori* was the method of explaining non-empirical knowledge that although was not analytic was nevertheless necessary for the possibility of experience. Examples of this knowledge included the connection between causes and effects and mathematical knowledge. With the *synthetic a priori*, Kant intended to explain the possibility of experience in the first place. However, this in itself does not make clear how the synthetic a priori applies to his moral theory. What would it mean for moral knowledge to be necessary for the possibility of moral experience? This necessity appears at the very least to be practical in nature.

Kant makes it very clear in the preface of the *Groundwork* that the moral law has to be determined *a priori* (or else morality would merely be grounded in 'anthropology') and synthetically (or else questions of morality could be answered entirely by analysing moral concepts in themselves). He draws his moral theory out "analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle, and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to the common cognition in which we find it used." (IV: 392) As such, F properties, and their connection to G* properties, would be connected on an *a priori* synthetic level, meaning that the analytic possibility of a mixed world is no longer a problem for the moral realist. This is because for Kant, no concatenation of non-moral facts in any way logically entails any moral facts. In fact, there is no theoretical argument to be made for claiming that there are "moral facts" at all. Instead, moral facts are posited on the basis of *practical* justification, as such facts must be presupposed when deliberating over what courses of action to take.

Nelson Potter (1997, p. 438) offers the following two explanations as to why the categorical imperative (CI) is synthetic a priori:

(i)   The "rational intuitionism" position: This position indicates that the CI is a tool that gives our rational faculties direct access to moral truths, which aligns with Ameriks (2003) and, in this way, places Kant into the category of Platonistic rationalism.

(ii)   The "motivational" position: This position explains the possibility of acting on the basis of moral reasons alone (i.e., it expresses a strong – albeit potential hybrid – form of motivational internalism).

It is important to recognise that for those individuals who are more sympathetic to a strong metaphysical reading of realism (i.e. those who are already predisposed to an intuitionistic form of non-naturalist), then the former will naturally appeal to a greater degree. Nevertheless, as Potter (1997) explained, it does not align very closely with Kant's own position, who sought to oppose rationalism of this kind. The former is particularly helpful as a means of providing a way to explicate a practical justification in a way that puts it on par with Blackburn on non-metaphysical (constructivist) readings, but it also leaves room for a practical justification if a more metaphysical reading is sought.

According to Potter (ibid, p. 455), the foundational ethical synthetic a priori proposition that Kant is discussing throughout his works amounts to the following: namely, that "a rational being has the [extra-phenomenal] power to act from purely moral motives". In view of this, it is necessary to presuppose this practically for the ethical system to function effectively.

Notably, Potter (ibid, p. 458) understands that this proposition generates a number of questions, and he finishes his paper with a consideration of these: "Is this proposition defensible? How would it be best understood in terms familiar to philosophers of the late 20th century?" It is my present aim to try to provide some answers to these questions. This perhaps might be seen as a means of solving Smith's *Moral Problem*: by defending motivational internalism and moral cognitivism, even when the Humean theory of psychology might appear to be true. Kant could either be read as trying to make the Humean theory of psychology compatible with cognitivism and motivational internalism, or simply as rejecting it altogether. Which reading you take may depend on how you understand his account of the synthetic a priori applies to morality.

How the proposition can be understood will of course depend on the reading of Kant in play. Ameriks (2003) would give a substantive account of the noumenal self and the moral law, while constructivists might by contrast see it as more of a theoretical schematic based on which moral considerations can be practically justified. It is this latter reading, given that it is the weakest, that I will focus on here (in the same way that Blackburn chose to focus on the weakest form of supervenience).

So, for constructivists, we can simply understand this foundational proposition as a commitment to the possibility of moral reasons providing a motivational force of their own. This is compatible with both the metaphysically 'agnostic' and 'atheistic' understandings of constructivism, allowing for different understandings of the third section of the groundwork.

How is this status connected to moral supervenience? Well, it is an acknowledgment of and a providing of the rationale which underlies the need to have a conception of normativity that can provide a genuine distinction between the moral and non-moral (i.e., F properties and G* properties). If the response to F properties in their own right can provide motivation

for agents, and not simply reasons, then it has to do so consistently on the basis of moral compulsion (namely, an intrinsic motivation to act morally). In turn, in order for this to be possible, then the manifestation of F properties has to systematically co-vary with G* properties (namely, the morally relevant circumstances).

As already mentioned in the third chapter, Sobel (2001) casts doubt upon not just realist solutions to Blackburn's modal challenge, but specifically ones that utilise synthetic necessity. He (Ibid., pp. 380-381) explicitly target Smith's (1996) suggested synthetic necessity of moral principles on the grounds of his moral rationalism, because it leaves open the possibility of a moral error theory, as it leaves open the possibility that there are no moral truths after all. This however can be reconciled with realism, and I disagree with Sobel that it demonstrates a disadvantage of moral realism. I in fact would say that Smith's moral rationalism provides a modern understanding as to how synthetic necessity might cohere with moral realism (Robert Hanna (2004) also provides a very thorough defence of the synthetic a priori in general). It fits particularly well with my purpose in this thesis, in opting to defend at least an ontological account of moral realism, where Finlay (2007) situated Smith's rationalism precisely.

Rather than taking the possibility of there being no moral truths a being a disadvantage to my realist account, I would argue that it in fact sheds light upon the very issue at the heart of the mystery behind Blackburn's modal challenge. This is fundamentally generated by the second premise, from which the possibility of no moral truths can be to a degree extrapolated. I would argue that it is this very possibility that fundamentally explains why no plausible solution to Blackburn's modal challenge has yet been established. I now aim to show how Kant's Transcendental Idealism project can be framed as compatible with even a deeply entrenched level of skepticism, which when applied to ethics, makes sense of both his insistence on the lack of moral certainty (GMS IV: 419), as well as the need for a synthetic justification for the categorical imperative.

II.I. Can Kant's Synthetic A Priori be Compatible with Any Kind of Skepticism?

II.I.I Kant's First Critique

Kant's Copernican Revolution in the first critique (which I will continue to refer to as CPR) was ground-breaking, particularly in its attempt to replace the theocentric account of cognition to an egocentric (or more precisely, anthropomorphic) one. Kant introduced the notion that there is a relation between subject and object existing in experience, and the possibility of which – for him – entailed the necessity of experience's subjective constituents, making the subject in part responsible for the object. As Kant noted:

> Up to now it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects…hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition. (Kant (1781/87), B *xvi*.)

The distinction between the phenomenal (i.e., the realm of things as they appear to us) and noumenal realms rests on the basis that substantial metaphysical knowledge is subject to the conditions of experience. However, once we acknowledge these conditions, such knowledge has a grounding that it never had before (this is what Kant referred to as synthetic a priori knowledge). Kant's account of such knowledge, however, has come under heavy criticism, partly on the basis that Kant treats these conditions as necessary (and therefore obtaining) for all experience. It has been pointed out, though, that it is not clear how such necessity can be claimed. For instance, Kant strongly defends of the necessity of space's Euclidean and three-dimensional nature as synthetic a priori knowledge. However, in light of progress in physics into the paradigm of relativity theory, most philosophers now reject the Euclidean nature of space. Even if the Euclidean nature of space could still be defended, it seems reasonably clear that there are possible alternative non-Euclidean conditions for experiencing space to the ones that Kant put forward, so Kant's claims of necessity here seem highly doubtable.

Despite such heavy criticisms, some semblance of Kant's synthetic a priori can be found within the pragmatic tradition, arguably for instance with C. I. Lewis (1929). I would argue, however, that these criticisms of Kant that inspired similar accounts of knowledge mostly

depend on a deflationary reading of Kant (i.e., reading the noumenal realm as an empty concept, and subsequently rejecting the existence of noumena). It is reasonably clear that Lewis read Kant in this way:

> Perhaps the whole of Reality is, as Kant thought, an inevitable idea but also a necessarily empty one, to remind us forever of the more which is to be learned and connected with our previous knowledge. (Lewis (1929), p. 9).

If one were to reject such a reading in favour of a substantive interpretation of noumena, one could argue that Kant's synthetic a priori at least seems to be compatible with a kind of skepticism; in particular, one that denies knowledge of a mind-independent reality, or in Kant's terms, the noumenal realm. This form of skepticism is detailed in Stephen Engstrom's (1994) description of 'Cartesian skepticism'. As Kant himself argued:

> That what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, but whose true correlate, i.e., the thing in itself, is not and cannot be cognised through them, but is also never asked after in experience. (Kant (1981/87), A 30/B 45).

Such a skeptical interpretation would actually mean that Kant's synthetic a priori would not be so different to Lewis' *pragmatic* a priori, and that the possibility of alternative conditions for experience need not be so damaging for Kant's project.

In this section, my wish is to defend the claim that with a substantive reading of noumena, Kant's synthetic a priori is in fact compatible with a kind of external world skepticism. Although I will not be defending such a substantive reading within this section, it is nevertheless hope that some possible advantages for adopting such a reading will be demonstrated. I will begin by examining what Kant has to say about skepticism, how Kant's epistemology differs when considered in relation to the ordinary skeptical position. It will then be concluded that skepticism can be fully accommodated within Kant's epistemology, in a way that makes skepticism much less problematic.

II.II.II Kant on Skepticism

In the translator's introduction to 'The Idea of Phenomenology' by Edmund Husserl, Lee Hardy writes:

> First, the problem of knowledge entails the problem of 'transcendence': how can consciousness reach out beyond itself and 'make contact' with an object wholly external to it? Second, the problem of knowledge involves the problem of "correspondence": how can we be assured of an agreement between the act of knowing and the object known? (Husserl (1999), p. 3)

Kant identifies the problem of reality or transcendence articulated in the first of the above two questions as the most important problem in metaphysics, and the CRP can in large part be seen as an attempt to solve this problem. In other words, "the real problem of pure reason is contained in the question: how are synthetic a priori judgements possible?" (Kant (1781/87), B 19) The second question is intimately related to the first, in that the very fact that experience is inherently representational creates a skeptical problem. Kant's own attitude towards skepticism is expressed in the following passage:

> The first of these two famous men opened the gates wide to enthusiasm, since reason, once it has authority on its side, will not be kept within limits by indeterminate recommendations of moderation; the second gave way entirely to skepticism, since he believed himself to have discovered in what is generally held to be reason a deception of our faculty of cognition – We are now about to make an attempt to see whether we cannot successfully steer human reason between these two cliffs, assign its determinate boundaries, and still keep open the entire field of its purposive activity. (Ibid., B 128)

What does it mean to steer a middle-course between dogmatism and skepticism? What exactly are dogmatism and skepticism in the way in which Kant understood them? If dogmatism is the claim that we cannot explain the relation between subject and object and must simply assume it, as Sebastian Gardner points out, and skepticism is to deny that we can verify that our subjective experience corresponds with reality, Kant's position is that

we cannot correlate our experience with reality as a condition of that experience, but we *can* therefore explain the relation between subject and object. Experience does not happen automatically or inconsequentially for Kant; there are conditions for it (Gardner (1999), pp. 35–56). However, these conditions make it impossible to relate our representations to real objects (i.e., noumena), since the representations belong only to us as conditions merely for *our* experience, and not to objects in themselves. In view of these considerations, it would appear that Kant's solution to the problem of transcendence renders any solution to the problem of correspondence impossible Ibid., pp. 33-35; Kant (1781/87), B *xxxv*). Indeed, we have only to consider the following remark to see the degree to which this is true:

> The transcendental enquiry tells us how we must constitute objects in order that experience be possible, but it does so only on the condition that the objects in question are identified with appearances rather than things-in-themselves. (Gardner (1999), p. 50)

II.II.III How Kant Differs from the Skeptic

So, what are the differences between the skeptic and the Kantian? Are there any? Although the effect is roughly the same, the *reason* why sense-experience interposes itself between cognition and reality in the skeptical sense is different from the reason it does so in the Kantian sense. In the Kantian sense, the dichotomy between subject and object is a condition of their relation, since we *bring with us* subjective conditions for the possibility of experience in the form of pure intuitions and pure concepts. It is critical to note that these *do not* belong to the object (there is an object or thing-in-itself with Kant, but we are unable to know what it is or, for that matter, anything about it).

For the skeptic, the reason is simply that we cannot go outside of our experience to verify that it corresponds with reality. In view of these considerations, the difference lies in the fact that with the skeptic we cannot know whether our experience coincides with reality, whereas with Kant, we can be sure that it does not. Indeed, as stated by Kant himself:

> If we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution of the sense in general, then all constitution, all relations of objects in space and

time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear. (Kant (1781/87),
A 42/B 59)

Moreover, "if we abstract from our way of internally intuiting ourselves and by means of this intuition … and thus take objects as they may be in themselves, then time is nothing" (Ibid., A34/B51). This highlights the non-spatial and non-temporal nature of the thing-in-itself, yet it is important to recognise that space and time are the necessary forms of our supposed experience of it, of our relation to it. Hence, as a consequence of this, the very attempt to cognise the object entails its own failure (in humans at least).

So, it does indeed seem that the critique is not a response to skepticism but a reiteration of it. In fact, it is notable that Kant goes further than the skeptic; he does not merely claim that we *cannot know* whether our experiences coincides with any reality, he claims that they certainly do not as this is a condition of the very possibility of having an experience. Paul Guyer states the following:

> Transcendental idealism is not a skeptical reminder that we cannot be sure
> that things as they are in themselves are also as we represent them to be; it
> is a harshly dogmatic insistence that we can be quite sure that things are
> they are in themselves cannot be as we represent them to be. (Guyer (1987),
> p. 333)

However, as we have seen, the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms highlights the effect of having two different standards for our truth claims, one being absolute reality, and the other appearance. If we make the standard for our truth claims absolute reality, then they can never be correct. If, by contrast, we make the standard for our truth-claims appearance, then they can be correct, and it is this latter sense that underlies the positive element to Kant's circumscription of our knowledge. In this way, they "succeed in opening the field of appearances open for mathematical assertions." (Kant (1781/87), A10/B 57.)

The skeptic does not say anything about the certainty of space and time as we experience both; there is no certainty in the skeptic, not even of this kind. This stems from the way in which there is only one standard of truth that the skeptic will accept, and this is the standard

of truth we can never reach. For Kant, there are two standards: reality *and* appearance. Contrastingly, for the skeptic, space and time are merely two more concepts derived from experience, which may or may not be *real*. Ultimately, however, Kant argues that space and time are conditions for the possibility of experience, and so, at least with respect to experience, they are most certainly real (Ibid., A27-28/B 43-44).

Still, as indicated earlier, that which is within experience is not strictly *known* if the standard for knowledge is reality. Therefore, it is consequential to note that this is the traditional way in which the standard of knowledge has been conceptualised. If we try to correlate the objects of our experience with any *real* objects, we fail, but if we ask whether space and time exist within experience, then it is not doubtable that they do. Our knowledge claims, then, cannot be made into unconditional knowledge claims; we must recognise that the *truth* of our prescriptions, such as those of geometry, is relative to the objects of experience because real objects do not occupy space (and are not in time)(Ibid., A 27-30).

In view of the above considerations, it seems that by drawing the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms, Kant is asking us to pull the wool over our own eyes. It might be claimed that "Kant's account contradicts the clear meaning of 'knowledge'. Since to know something according to Prichard, is to know it as it really is, in contrast to how it 'may seem to us'" (Allison (2004), p. 6). It could be argued that appearance is by definition not the standard of truth but the standard of untruth. It is surely the case that we want to say that the standard of truth is the only one that matters, and to make one of the standards for knowledge appearance is, in a sense, to beg the question, where the question is "How do we know that our experience of reality is veridical?" Kant's answer seems to be, "we can't, but if we make appearance the standard for truth then we are correct in our knowledge claims!"

However, Kant would say that although appearance is not reality, appearance is the standard for what is possible knowledge for humans. Hence, we are required to content ourselves with this, since we cannot go beyond our limits. Since the structure of our experience of reality is a *necessary* precondition of that experience, we should not take the standard by which to judge cognition to be absolute reality; this is to misunderstand the functioning of our cognitive faculty. The standard by which to judge cognition should be *its* objects and not objects as they are in themselves. To make absolute reality the standard

for knowledge is to ask too much of finite human cognition. We must replace theocentric conceptions of cognition with an anthropomorphic one.

II.II.IV How Kant Resolves the Issue of Skepticism

Based on the discussion given in the previous section, it can be argued that perhaps Kant was not interested in defeating skepticism. Indeed, his project – as described in his own words – is to steer a *middle-course* between skepticism and dogmatism.

One immediate objection to the interpretation of Kant as accommodating skepticism is the fact that external world skepticism appears to be the target of the refutation of idealism. However, all that Kant can aim to demonstrate with the refutation (aside from the question of whether he is successful) is that there are objects that are external to me. The only sense of 'external' that Kant can mean is outside of one's experience; Kant can also say nothing about the nature of these 'external objects'. As such, they may well be illusory. Given this, I have no reason to belief that the refutation of idealism can establish any incompatibility between Kant's epistemology and the skepticism of the kind being addressed in this essay.

The notion of the noumenal realm is not therefore Kant's solution to skepticism, but a reminder of the positive aspect of Kant's critique; we can know nothing of the thing-in-itself (this is a condition of the very possibility of experience), but we can be certain of the necessity of the prescriptions of the sciences *within* the world of experience, the world in which space and time exist. Moreover, metaphysics is established as a science, as a tribunal and not a battleground, in which we can once and for all distinguish between valid knowledge claims and arbitrary speculative metaphysics (which, as a result of the misapplication of concepts which are only valid within experience, has hitherto been responsible for the failures in this field). Yet in highlighting this, Kant is underlining the fact that although the conditions for experience preclude knowledge of reality, they are also conducive to knowledge (albeit knowledge of appearance).

Kant's philosophy and, in particular, his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms suggests that we may be wise not to make reality the standard for our knowledge claims. Having undertaken a complex appraisal of our cognitive faculties, Kant has discovered that our alienation from reality is a condition of the very possibility of

experiencing that reality. We could question whether Kant's analysis of the faculty of knowledge and the conditions for its operation are correct, but that would be the answer to a different question. If we assume that Kant's appraisal of our cognitive faculties is correct, then perhaps we should be sympathetic to his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal (in other words, to the relocation of the standard of knowledge from reality to *appearance*). The skeptic has not taken into consideration the complex functioning of our cognitive faculty that Kant has undertaken (in particular, the necessary role of the a priori intuitions of space and time in our cognition), which means that in understanding the process by which we acquire knowledge, the skeptical problem becomes more of a tautology than anything else. In this way, it can be dismissed, not because it is not a valid problem, but because it is a necessary corollary of the way in which our cognitive faculty functions.

Hence, skepticism should no longer be viewed as something to be defeated. This stems from the fact that skepticism, in the way it has been traditionally understood, is a result of that which allows us to know at all; as such, it is a necessary by-product of the functioning of our cognitive system, of that which allows us to create that sphere in which the object can be known to the subject in the first place. So, what Kant does is not to defeat skepticism, but to re-order the reception of skepticism, where the skeptic – previously seen as raising a valid point about the dichotomy between our experience of reality and reality itself – is now seen as pointing out a tautology and, moreover, a sure sign that experience has obtained. Moreover, Kant demonstrates that we can have a lesser kind of knowledge justified by the necessary conditions of its obtaining, synthetic a prior knowledge.

II.II.V. Skeptical Conclusions

For Kant, then, the reason why the problems associated with skepticism can be overcome stems from the way in which the source of skepticism (namely, the subjective conditions for experience) is also that which creates the possibility of experience. Here, it is critical to recognise that experience is simultaneously a means and an obstacle to knowledge, but given that it is our only means, we cannot remove experience without also removing knowledge (albeit knowledge of appearance). Through this process of reasoning, Kant brings to the table something that the skeptic had not taken into account: namely, the nature of the functioning of our cognitive faculty. Given that we are always immured within our

personal experience of reality, which is conditional upon certain subjective elements (which themselves do not belong to reality), skepticism becomes a triviality. In essence, Kant's reading of the situation suggests that the skeptic is doing something akin to pointing out the fact that a disabled person cannot run the 100-metre sprint. This incapacity is inherent to the very possibility of human cognition, and so it follows that we can no longer bear down on it as harshly as we used to. Moreover, we can longer look on skepticism with so much antipathy, since it is a part of us. Before Kant, no person had ever recognised this, and so Kant has a remarkable influence on the present debate. From my perspective, Kant's contribution to this debate is to give a satisfactory response to the skeptical problem precisely by making it into something which is not a problem, but rather an inherent feature of human cognition.

For Kant, skepticism is no longer an enemy of knowledge but rather an ally. This sounds like a paradox, but it hinges on the notion that the only knowledge that is available to us is not really knowledge but rather appearance; it is the kind of knowledge in which skepticism obtains (i.e., in which the mind-independent reality remains unknown). For this reason, it is my contention that Kant should – strictly speaking – be called a skeptic. However, the factors which make Kant a skeptic are also those which, at the same time, makes skepticism innocuous.

I have attempted to put forward a preliminary exposition of what is known as the traditional 'subjective phenomenalist' reading of Kant's realm of appearances, with the 'noumena' interpreted as what would be (but cannot be) the 'real object' of knowledge, the result being that Kant is read as endorsing skepticism. (For a recent sophisticated example of the traditional reading of Kant in relation to skepticism, but a reading which sees Kant as powerless against and amounting to skepticism rather than himself intentionally embracing skepticism, see the chapter on Kant in Barry Stroud's book, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (1984).) The aim of this section has simply been to articulate this outlook on Kant without engaging with or at least seeking briefly to counter any of the many criticisms of such a reading of Kant that have been introduced over the last four decades. It is not intended to reflect, or in any way rely upon, Kant's attitude toward skepticism itself. I briefly mentioned the *middle-course* between "skepticism and dogmatism" and interpreted it as an endorsement of skepticism, without heavily engaging

with Kant's Refutation of Idealism. This is simply intended to be a preliminary sketch of how the position could work.

It may well be that taking a more pragmatist approach to defending moral realism might be more palatable. As a potential example for how this could be done, Sami Pihlström (2005) manages to adapt Kantian thinking into a kind of moral realism consistent with pragmatism. Although there is a sense in which the synthetic a priori could be diluted to a pragmatic form in this way, this is merely a possibility that I wish to raise rather than to actively explore. This I think is because Blackburn might still be able to count his expressivism as preferable. Bloomfield (2001) also has underpinning his defence of realism lack of certainty about our moral thinking, less pressing than Kant's originally, which again I take to be an advantage as a reflection of what is the case in relation to the question of certain knowledge of what we ought to do (or more crucially, whether there are genuinely any truths of this kind in the first place).

III. The Advantages of Realism with Kantian Humility Over Blackburn's Projectivism

I hope to have shown that my solution to Blackburn's modal challenge can be adjusted to varying metaphysical strengths, that can suit different understandings and explanations of moral realism. Even more metaphysically heavy-handed forms of realism can defended with a kind of 'Kantian Humility', a term with I have borrowed from Rae Langton (1998). Whilst Langton uses the term 'Humility' as a basis to leave open room for reconciling Kant's Transcendental Idealism with empirical realism (the view to that our experiences can be said to be veridical insofar as they reflect objective truth, to put it very crudely), which it could be seen to be in tension with, particularly on more 'phenomenalist' interpretations. Whilst for Langton, the humility is supposed to simply describe the position of accepting that one does not know the intrinsic and causally inert properties of things-in-themselves (noumena, but also phenomena, since for Langton they are one and the same entity), I am using it to describe the position of not knowing intrinsic (and possibly causally inert) moral properties.

In spite of these possible Kantian accounts of realism to defend, Blackburn's argument against moral realism could nevertheless end up packing a punch, as long as Blackburn is able to provide a convincing case for why his projectivism would be clearly preferable to my synthetic reconciliation of moral realim and supervenience. In order to resist such argumentation, I will now suggest two potential shortcomings of Blackburn's projectivism that my proposed account does not suffer from: the first is the concern about the capacity to explain objective moral justification on a projectivist basis, and the second is a concern to explain moral progress on an anti-realist basis (I will be looking at a suggestion intentionally tailored to fit projectivism).

III.I. Concerns about Moral Objectivity in Blackburn's Quasi-Realism

In discussing the issue of moral relativism and moral objectivism, Blackburn (1999, p. 215) drew on the example of a member of the Taliban to make the following point, in the face of potential accusations of committing to a kind of moral relativism:

> It is not that conflict of attitude is unimportant. The relativist will say 'it is your attitude against his and *neither of you can show that the other is wrong*'. The conflict is 'merely' a conflict of attitude in the sense that there is no proof procedure. This, I should say, also contains a grain of truth, although only a very small grain. For, after all, it is strictly false. I can show that the Taliban is wrong by the simplest means: any educated female is a perfectly good illustration of his error. My wife shows how wrong he is, and so do millions of other women. So perhaps the complaint is that I cannot *show the Taliban himself* that he is wrong for, after all, he is blind to the illustration or takes it the wrong way.

Here, it is important to recognise one fundamental problem. In particular, there is a failure to appreciate one of the very bases on which Blackburn argues against moral realism: namely, the lack of logical entailment from non-moral properties to moral properties. In what sense can someone *show* how wrong the Taliban is in this case, other than showing what is the case and expressing an attitude about it? Blackburn might be making something of a tempting appeal to one's moral judgment with this example, but in pointing to such an example Blackburn is clearly utilising what are likely to be relatively uncontroversial

attitudes amongst his readership. However, if one were to put such attitudes aside, or were to consider another example where one did not so obviously have clear attitudes, then the question becomes more problematic.

In relation to this concern though, Blackburn can simply acknowledge that this problem exists, but point out that it's a problem that he would be happy to admit to, since it resulted from an attempt to divorce moral considerations from one's attitudes, which he would argue is impossible to do. Blackburn as a result can simply argue that this problem is just as likely to speak in favour of his projectivism as it is to speak against it, since he "refuses to give ethical facts a typical explanatory role" (Ibid. p. 216). In terms of where these concerns lie, an objection may still stand in so far as projectivism could be construed as lacking this explanatory role, and as a result, doubts can be raised on the capacity of Blackburn's projectivism to fully capture objective moral justification. This is not going to amount to anything more than a clash of intuitions on what ethical facts really are.

Although I do not take this concern to be adequate to undermine the assertion that Blackburn's projectivism is preferable. However, concerns about the possibility of accounting for the possibility of moral progress without moral realism might I hope be more fruitful.

III.II. Can There Be Moral Progress Without Moral Realism?

It might appear conventional to treat moral realists as having the upper hand over moral anti-realists in accounting for the phenomenon of moral progress. Nevertheless, in spite of this treatment, Catherine Wilson (2010) not only claims that moral anti-realists can adequately explain moral truth and moral progress, but also that their account could be preferable to those available to the moral realist. In doing so, she argues that in fact it is the moral anti-realist who has the upper hand over realists in this situation. First of all, she defends the treatment of moral claims as theoretical conjectures, analogising between moral beliefs and scientific beliefs as a way in which to explain moral truth as a postulated endpoint of the theoretical development of collective morals. Following this, Wilson explains moral progress in terms of the generating and dissipating of collective narratives. The core of this explanation is that collective narratives of this kind can ratify a change in collective moral beliefs as a process of progression or deterioration. According to this

viewpoint, the argument leads to a situation in which the unavoidable conclusion is that moral truths are simply moral claims that will survive scrutiny. In turn, Wilson argues that the anti-realist realist account is preferable because it avoids making a commitment to the following issues: firstly, that moral truths are independent of perspectives; secondly, that there are moral truths that cannot be known; and thirdly, that in every moral dispute, someone must hold a false moral belief. In this section, my aims are as follows: firstly, to argue that the account of moral progress articulated by Wilson can be accommodated within a moral realist framework; secondly, to defend the realist account against Wilson's claim that anti-realism is preferable when considered in relation to realism; and finally, to draw attention to the inherent issues contained within the account that Wilson gives.

III.II.I. Wilson on Moral Progress without Moral Realism

In discussing the matter of moral progress, it has long been the case that moral realists have been treated as having the upper hand when considered in relation to their anti-realist counterparts. On the one hand, moral realists provide accounts of moral progress in terms of the way in which the moral beliefs of certain agents move towards a fuller understanding of a moral reality. The notion held by moral realists, therefore, is that this fuller understanding of an independent moral reality is accompanied by subsequent improvements in the moral behaviour of the agents. Contrastingly, on the other hand, moral anti-realists seem to encounter a series of conceptual difficulties when attempting to explain how the phenomenon of moral progress can take place. If it is the case that moral truths are in any sense relative (or at least dependent upon the perspectives of moral agents), then there does not exist an independent moral reality that can be better understood. In view of this, since such an independent moral basis is lacking, the objective basis on which moral progress takes place is ambiguous. In particular, it is important to note that any claims about the improvement of moral beliefs or behaviours over time can only be based on (and hence be valid in virtue of) other moral beliefs or behaviours.

In response to this conceptual difficulty, the moral anti-realist has three options: firstly, she can reject the existence of any genuine moral progress; secondly, she can provide an account of objective moral progress on the moral realist's terms; or finally, she can establish an anti-realist framework within which it is then possible to explain the phenomenon of moral progress. In her paper, 'Moral Progress Without Moral Realism',

Wilson (2010) chooses to defend the third option. Not only Wilson claim that moral anti-realists can provide an adequate account of both moral truth and moral progress, but Wilson also claims that the account she gives is preferable to those available to the moral realist. In doing so, Wilson argues that in fact, it is the moral anti-realist who has the upper hand over realists on the matter of moral progress.

In terms of the argument Wilson gives in her paper, first of all, she (2010, p. 98) defends the treatment of moral claims as "theoretical conjectures that face the tribunal of reason and experience and that may be accepted or rejected accordingly". In turn, she defends an analogy between moral beliefs and scientific beliefs, which represents part of her attempt to account for moral truth as a postulated endpoint of the theoretical development of collective morals. Following this, Wilson explains moral progress in terms of the generating and dissipating of collective narratives. The core of this explanation is that collective narratives of this kind can ratify a change in collective moral beliefs as a process of progression or deterioration. In view of these considerations, Wilson maintains that moral truths are simply moral claims that will survive scrutiny, and moral progress is the change in moral beliefs that is regarded upon the scrutiny of collective theoretical narratives to be valid and irreversible.

The immediate aim of the present essay is firstly to cast doubt on both Wilson's claim that an anti-realist account of moral progress is possible. Following this, a series of objections will be raised to refute Wilson's claim that the anti-realist account of this phenomenon is preferable to a realist account. For the purpose of achieving these aims, it will be necessary to discuss how moral progress and moral realism ought to be defined, only then proceeding to examine the arguments underlying these claims in greater detail.

III.II.II. How Wilson Defines Moral Realism and How Moral Progress Ought to Be Defined

In her paper, Wilson (2010) draws on the following definition of moral realism given by Shafer-Landau (2003, p. 15):

> Realists believe that there are moral truths that obtain independently of any
> preferred perspective, in the sense that the moral standards that fix the moral

facts are not made true by virtue of their ratification from within any given actual or hypothetical perspective.

Although I will not be straightforwardly disagreeing with the chosen definition of realism that Wilson (2010) draws on, it is worth pointing out that Shafer-Landau's (2003) definition of realism must be compatible with the following necessary conditions for the view to hold:

(i)   Moral judgments must take the form of moral beliefs that do not necessarily have any attitudinal content to them (i.e., moral cognitivism);

(ii)   It is not the case that moral truths are all systematically false (i.e., a moral error theory is not correct).

Actually, these two conditions might be said to be not only necessary but also jointly sufficient conditions for realism. Naturally, this kind of realism would be weaker than the one that Wilson has in mind, but it is important to recognise that it fits clearly with the following characterisation articulated by Sayre-McCord (1986, p. 3.):

Realism involves embracing just two theses: (1) the claims in question, when literally construed, are literally true or false ... and (2) some are literally true. Nothing more. (Of course, a great deal is built into these two theses).

Crucially, this weaker form of realism is also potentially compatible with metaethical views that fit much more closely to the account of moral truth that Wilson advocates. A notable example of this, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is moral constructivism. Even if moral truths are determined by principles constructed by moral agents, so long as one is committed to the claim that there is only one correct way in which to construct moral principles (and therefore there is only one correct set of subsequent moral claims), constructivists can be committed to this form of realism. It is my contention that, in order for moral progress to be possible, this weaker form of moral realism has to hold. This will have significant bearing in due course.

For the moment, however, although I will not be arguing for any particular way in which to define or account for moral progress, it is evident that there should exists at least one necessary condition. This can be stipulated in the following way: Moral progress can only be said to have been made when "a subsequent state of affairs is [morally] better than a preceding one, or when right acts become increasingly prevalent" (Jamieson, 2002, p. 20).

It seems self-evident to me that Wilson would not take issue with such a stipulation, since this condition seems to fit perfectly with Wilson's (2010, p. 105) own characterisation of moral progress:

> Moral progress… implies the solution of problems that are outstanding in conflicted dyadic relationships, including social relationships between groups of people, and between individuals…To make moral progress is to increase one's capability to live harmlessly and innocently in the world, as well as to promote productive co-operation and to reduce the number of retaliatory and punitive episodes experienced by oneself and by others.

In view of the definitions given above, it is now possible for us to address Wilson's arguments properly.

III.II.III. Wilson's Argument for Moral Progress Without Moral Realism

At the outset of her argument, Wilson (2010, pp. 105-106) examines the following two scenarios:

> 1a) M used to subscribe to the phlogiston theory of combustion, but now she has come to favour the oxygen theory.
> 1b) M used to subscribe to the oxygen theory of combustion, but now she has come to favour the phlogiston account.
> 1a) is a story of epistemological progress, 1b) of deterioration.

Following this, Wilson then draws an analogy with a moral case:

2a) M used to hold that slave labour was sometimes necessary for a society, but now she holds that no one should own slaves.

2b) M used to hold that no one should own slaves, but now she holds that slave labour is sometimes necessary for a society.

It is perhaps of interest to note that the claim that slave labour being 'sometimes necessary for a society' and the claim that 'no one should own slaves' are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, aside from the potential to take Wilson here for granted for the purposes of the her argument, there are other clearer examples of bi-directionality that she produces (one of which I will mention later). In any case, by analogising with Peirce's account of scientific claims, Wilson defends the treatment of moral claims like 2a) and 2b) as "theoretical conjectures that face the tribunal of reason and experience and that may be accepted or rejected accordingly" (Wilson, 2010, p. 98).

In turn, Wilson (ibid, pp. 110-112) argues that the following claims that realists are committed to are "questionable", which serve as reasons for why this account of moral truth and progress is preferable to the one that a moral realist can provide:

(i)   Moral realists are committed to moral truths as being independent of any perspective (hypothetical or otherwise), when in fact Wilson (Ibid, p. 111) claims that they depend on the existence of beings that – as a result of both their own capacities and their environment – are capable of interaction that can lead to moral harm and/or injury. For on the basis of Wilson's own account, there would otherwise be no moral conjectures to ratify, and hence no moral truths.

(ii)   Moral realists are committed to the claim that there are moral truths that can never be known, which stems from the fact that agents are epistemically limited. However, Wilson (ibid) claims that since the ratification of moral truths takes place by way of conjectures, no moral truths exist that will never be known. Following the ratification of a moral conjecture, then it can be claimed that it was *always* true, even before ratification. It can even be claimed that it *would have* been true even if it were never ratified. Moreover, on the basis of the argument that there are no limitations to moral knowledge of the kind that might – by analogy – make a kind of complete scientific knowledge possible, Wilson

(2010) claims that the commitment moral realists have to inaccessible moral truths is arbitrary.

(iii) Moral realists are committed to the claim that in every moral dispute, at least one participant must hold a false moral belief. In contrast to this position, Wilson (2010, p. 112) claims that this is actually not the case, since her account can accommodate her claim: if neither of the disputed moral beliefs is ever ratified, then none of them will ever be elevated to the status of moral truths.

III.II.IV. Potential Setbacks for Wilson's Argument

First of all, it seems appropriate to address Wilson's (ibid) concerns about the various realist claims she considers. This stems from the fact that each of the concerns Wilson presents do not appear to demonstrate good reasons for determining that moral anti-realism preferable. With respect to Wilson's first claim, namely, which seeks to demonstrate a flaw in the way in which realists are committed to moral truths as being independent of any perspective (hypothetical or otherwise), it is important to recognise that by the weaker definition of realism I suggested earlier, moral constructivists may count as moral realists. In view of this, moral truths may be dependent on the one correct idealised conception of a moral perspective. Even in the event that one rejects this weaker definition in favour of Shafer-Landau's (2013, p. 15) stronger version, Wilson's (2010) point simply represents a rejection of realist intuitions. As such, it is not a case against the long-held conclusion that realists hold the upper hand in accounting for the phenomenon of moral progress when compared to anti-realists.

Regarding Wilson's second claim, which seeks to suggest that the realist commitment to the claim that there are moral truths that can never be known is "questionable", at a fundamental level, it seems as if certain relativistic or intuitionistic (i.e. non-inferential) approaches to moral realism can rule out the possibility of inaccessible moral truths. Although it may well be that such approaches could be problematic in their own right, it once again seems that Wilson's concern here simply amounts to a rejection of realist intuitions. As such, it fails to demonstrate a basis for claiming that anti-realism is preferable to the realist alternative. At the same time, it is important to recognise that Wilson's accusation of arbitrariness may actually serve as a potential point of disanalogy between

moral and scientific truths. This is because in the moral case, it seems by definition impossible for there to exist conceptually inaccessible scientific truths.

Regarding Wilson's third claim, which argues that the realist commitment to the notion that at least one participant in every moral dispute must hold a false moral belief is "questionable", it is worthwhile to point of accounts such as those formulated by Hills (2013). According to Wilson's (ibid) account, there does exist cause to consider that faultless moral disagreement is possible under a realist framework. This possibility seems particularly plausible in cases of supererogation, so without further demonstration of how such cases might be inherently problematic, Wilson's concern here appears to be unsubstantiated and, hence, unfounded.

In view of the above systematic refutation of each of Wilson's core concerns, we may conclude that at most, Wilson has demonstrated with her concerns that her anti-realist account of moral progress is preferable to those who reject certain intuitions which underlie moral realism. This is important to consider since those who reject the foundational intuitions associated with moral realism are likely to be sympathetic to moral anti-realism as a view anyway.

At the same time, it is similarly noteworthy that additional concerns can be raised about the content proposed within Wilson's anti-realist account itself. Ultimately, these issues relate to Wilson's commitment to the existence of bidirectional narratives. Consider the following as a case in point (Wilson, 2010, p. 109):

> 3a) N used to believe lying was always wrong, but now he has come to
> believe that it is sometimes permitted to lie.
> 3b) N used to believe that one is sometimes permitted to lie, but now he has
> come to believe that lying is always wrong.

Depending upon the relevant collective beliefs shared in society, the first of these cases might be a case of moral progress and 3b) a case of moral deterioration (or *vice versa*). In response, however, the following question can be asked: What is the explanation for some narratives being bidirectional and others not?

Any attempt to answer this question would apparently generate a dilemma for Wilson. She could perhaps provide an objective explanation for the matter of why certain narratives are bidirectional and others not, but her account would then be faced with accusations of underlying realist commitments. This stems from the fact that the only basis on which narratives can be determined to be bidirectional would not be a process of collective belief ratification.

In an equivalent manner, Wilson could, and perhaps in all likelihood would, claim that there is no objective basis for narratives being classified as bidirectional or 'uni-directional', and that this would also be a result of the process of belief ratification. Nevertheless, at this point it might be argued that the notion of moral progress loses its significance. In order to demonstrate that Dale Jamieson's necessary condition for moral progress is satisfied, for instance, it has to be claimed that a certain narrative of moral progression is 'uni-directional'. Noteworthily, that claim itself can only be supported by looking at one particular context, one set of collective beliefs, and without some reason for choosing one context over another (and no objective one can be provided). Consequently, the support becomes arbitrary, and so all narratives are potentially bidirectional.

III.II.V Conclusions on Moral Progress

The purpose of the present essay has been to demonstrate various considerations by which it is reasonable to conclude that Wilson has not managed to convincingly demonstrate a way to incorporate a satisfactory account of moral progress into a moral anti-realist framework. At the very least, it is not at all clear why the matter of moral progress gives moral anti-realists an upper hand. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the question, however, remains open as to whether there is a viable alternative account of moral progress available to a moral anti-realist. In order to be viable, such an account would not be able to rely on the theoretical ratification of moral claims. That being said, given that an anti-realist conception of moral progress seems to inevitably require an unsatisfactorily weakened conception of it, I am not optimistic.

IV. Final Thoughts

This thesis concluded its first chapter with the following summary of Blackburn's (1985) argument:

1) It is analytically necessary that, if in one situation certain moral as well as non-moral properties obtain, there must be the same moral properties in all situations with the same set of non-moral properties.
{Necessarily [(∃x) (G*x & Fx) → (∀y)(G*y → Fy)]}

2) There being a set of such non-moral properties without any moral properties does not entail a logical contradiction. In other words, it is analytically possible for these non-moral properties to obtain without any moral properties doing so.
{Possibly (∃x)(G*x & ¬Fx)}

3) Given premises 1 and 2, any viable metaethical view must explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

4) Moral realism cannot explain how both premises 1 and 2 are true.

Conclusion: Moral realism is not a viable metaethical view.

The second chapter addressed the possibility of rejecting the second premise, and determined that the views required to do so are questionable, at least in light of my adjustment to Strandberg's Open Question Argument. The third chapter provided a survey of attempts to deny the first, third, and finally fourth premises of Blackburn's argument. In accepting the first three, I determined that the fourth premise was the one that needed rejecting. After providing an account of how this might be done, by highlighting the possibility of a Kantian reconciliation between moral realism and moral supervenience, I then sought to examine how such an account could be both genuinely realist, and an attractive prospect for constructivists as well as traditional Kantian realists.

In view of the considerations that the present chapter has been concerned with, which have ranged from the contextualising the Kantian reconciliation of moral realism and moral supervenience within Kant's own work, to issues of a priori synthetic moral supervenience, as well as a *prima facie* contemporary argument for moral realism as a necessity for explaining moral realism, I have brought together four key concluding thoughts. These are given as follows: firstly, it is reasonable to acknowledge that metaethical certainty is not something that exists in any form of moral discourse; secondly, as an extension of the first point, we may conclude that there is no knowledge that can be accessed that solves the mystery; thirdly, extending the notion of Blackburn's mystery, we may conclude that supervenience is mysterious for a realist, but only in so far as morality itself is mysterious (that is, supervenience is simply noting how morality *must* behave analytically, which I have argued Kant alludes to in the first section of the GMS, taking morality for granted); and finally, it is reasonable to argue that in view of the third remark, embracing this mysteriousness can in fact be construed as realism (for it simply leaves open the possibility of an agnostic or sceptical position of the metaphysical underpinnings of the defence of moral truths), in recognition that the possibility of moral obligation (or else at least, normativity) remains in itself a mystery.

I have aimed to offer some initial steps to addressing that mystery on a Kantian basis (that is, responding to it with humility), to cater for the spectrum of metaphysical views that I have defended as realist here. What this humility amounts will depend on where one falls on the spectrum. At the more heavily metaphysical end of the spectrum, one would need to commit to a flat-out sceptical form of moral realism, where moral truths might be thought of in a platonic fashion (i.e., eternal and immutable), but can never be known. However at the other end of the spectrum, as a moral constructivist, the humility would only extend to admitting a need to accept an agnostic position in relation to the metaphysical underpinnings of defending moral facts. A constructivist may still defend morality in terms of facts of practical reason, hence alleviating the sting of outright moral scepticism, so long as the independent status of moral truths is defended (with practical justification). How much of a potential sting scepticism might still have will simply depend on the account of Kantian constructivism being defended. Nevertheless, the Kantian constructivist can still defend supervenience adamantly and acknowledge that, since moral facts are not outright analytically necessary, mixed worlds are analytically possible, but argue they are nevertheless *synthetically* (practically) impossible.

The constructivist explanation of moral supervenience would in fact be very similar to the one that Blackburn offers. If moral properties are simply ones pertaining to the practical reasoning of moral agents , then one can explain the impossibility of mixed worlds based on the consistency of agents' principles with practical reason itself. To use Blackburn's examples, there are no possible worlds where (at least generally) there will be principles violating practical reason that underpin all actions by virtue of a certain set of relevant facts except those that occur in a different hemisphere. Equally, there will not be possible worlds where there are principles violating practical reason underpinning all actions by virtue of a certain set of relevant facts unless they take place after t1.

Ultimately, Blackburn's modal challenge has been problematic for realists, insofar as it has required realists to acknowledge that some humility is required when defending moral facts. However, in light of Zangwill's (1995) 'Kantian Diagnosis' of the challenge, I hope to have defended a 'Kantian Treatment' that adequately answers it.

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