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A TELEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE PLAUSIBILITY OF MORAL KNOWLEDGE

A Thesis

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by

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Contents:

INTRODUCTION

Evolution is the prevailing doctrine that through accidental mutation and natural selection life arose from dead matter to its present form through nothing else but the operation of physical law.[1] Thomas Nagel recognizes such adherence to the exclusive operation of physical law as an assumption rather than a "well-confirmed hypothesis." Nagel sees this assumption lacking explanatory power. Specifically he doubts "whether the reality of such features of our world as consciousness, intentionality, meaning, purpose, thought, and value can be accommodated in a universe consisting at the most basic level only of physical facts."[2] The purpose of this thesis will be to explore Nagel's doubt in the area of value, more specifically the area of doubt concerning the correlation between moral judgments and moral facts.

Statement of the Problem

My thesis attempts to answer Gilbert Harman's challenge that moral judgments appear unwarranted because, given current scientific accounts, evolutionary theory can explain moral judgments without invoking their truth. I explore Harman's challenge to moral realism through Sharon Street who sees Harman's critique as posing a dilemma for the moral realist: either there is or is not a correlation between evaluative judgments and mind-independent evaluative truths. If the latter is the case, then the result is moral skepticism, which will clearly not aid the realist's endeavor. On the other hand, the former, Street argues, is untenable given scientific grounds: had the environment from which man's evaluative tendencies arose been different, this would likely have changed the outcome of one's evaluative judgments. So, it is improbable that natural selection

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[1] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 11.

[2] Ibid., 13.

happened to correlate moral facts with moral judgments, which leaves moral knowledge in doubt.

However, the impact of Harman's challenge permeates moral realism on non-naturalist and supernaturalist accounts as well. I explore this strain of thought through Richard Joyce, who argues that if naturalism cannot make the case for moral realism, then neither non-naturalism nor supernaturalism can. For if a non-moral genealogy, which he provides, is able to account for moral beliefs, then why posit the need for independent moral truths that are causally inert? Joyce's main contention, which is of kindred spirit with Harman and Street, is that the rational human, due to parsimony, would recognize that such moral truths are seemingly unnecessary because they play no explanatory role. C. Stephen Evans calls into question the assumption that man's beliefs in moral realism satisfy the explanatory structure needed to correlate moral judgments to moral truths.[3] So, an explanation is needed in order to provide a tight correlation between moral facts and moral judgments that is not the result of luck. Otherwise, if the inference to the best explanation is due to luck, then moral judgments are unwarranted due to the obvious severing of their tight connection to the truth.

It seems that Joyce is right that an open mind is needed, and that the possibility remains open for vindication of moral knowledge. In order to clarify the nature of Harman's challenge, the distinction between justification (or warrant) and explanation is needed. It seems that the conditions for satisfying justification are lower for moral belief B, which correlates to moral fact F, than those conditions associated with explaining the correlation from B to F. It seems that there is warrant for the belief in moral facts:

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[3] C. Stephen Evans. *God and Moral Obligation*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013. 160.

torturing children for fun is wrong, or murdering an innocent individual is wrong. These are actions that seem to be warranted. But Harman, Joyce, and Street realize that there is an undercutting defeater for moral knowledge if the conjunction of naturalism and evolution obtains.[4] Given our proto-human ancestry, beliefs arise by being reproductively advantageous, which requires an explanation of how or if moral beliefs correspond to moral facts. It is unclear whether such an explanation functions as a defeater for moral knowledge, rebutting or undercutting, but it is clear that an explanation is needed to show how man's moral judgments correlate to moral facts.

Is moral knowledge essential for moral discourse? Moral anti-realism appears to be a possibility so doing away with moral knowledge as untenable might be consistent with retaining moral discourse. However if moral knowledge is not possible, this would appear to strip morality of its essential undergirding. Moral claims would no longer have the authoritative nature leading to a sober and perhaps regrettable truth. If morality is simply due to the selective pressures of natural selection, then there is arguably no longer bad or good, and right or wrong—or at least a good enough explanation for moral knowledge of such realities. Joyce's non-moral genealogy would seem to provide a compelling case for moral error theory; Joyce admits that moral realism, even moral knowledge, might remain a possibility, but his argument suggests they are extremely unlikely.

J. L. Mackie provides the most well known case for a moral error theory. Moral error theory is the concept that the referent of moral discourse is *not* the immovable and

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[4] I am using the term "naturalism" to indicate the belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and excludes supernatural explanations. I use the term "evolution" more generally, and will later on delineate the different theses that comprise evolution following the distinctions Alvin Plantinga provides in his book *Where the Conflict Really Lies?*.

unchangeable moral authority that is needed in order to substantiate moral claims. An objective referent needed to ground moral claims is either non-existent or inaccessible to human faculties. Thus, there is a disconnect between moral judgments and moral facts. Mackie's argument of queerness highlights the potential disconnect. The metaphysical nature of morality leads to an epistemological problem as Mackie sees it.[5] If there were objective values (independent of any agent's motivational structure or cultural consensus) then they would be constructed of unique properties or qualities that are unlike anything else in a purely natural universe void of anything that goes beyond material matter and physical causality. If God exists however, Mackie suggests that moral properties would not be queer.

The question then becomes how do man's faculties come to know such unique propositional truths—on the assumption they do exist? Joyce and Street carry on the vein of Mackie's thought and think that evolutionary processes suggest a probable disconnect between moral facts and moral judgments. It seems such judgments, under naturalism, appear unwarranted due to the obvious severing of their tight connection to truth.[6] Joyce and Street argue forcefully for no other option other than the severing between moral facts and moral judgments.

How, then, can one salvage the correlation of moral judgments with moral facts? We can glean help from the recent writings of David Enoch. Enoch offers a solution based on pre-established harmony: that normative facts account for our normative judgments. Normative evaluative facts are a sub-category of normative facts proper. The

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[5] "The Subjectivity of Values." In *Essays on Moral Realism*, edited by Geoffrey McCord, by J.L. Mackie, 95-118. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988. 111-113.

[6] I am indebted to Kegan Shaw who helped clarify this point.

genesis of the idea can be seen in mathematics. It seems inherently or at least instrumentally conducive to survival and replication that man's mathematical judgments correlate to mathematical facts. For if one cannot judge quantitatively the sums that correlate to mathematical facts, then one can see how this would be a detriment to the end aim of survival and replication. The previous is not to suggest that mathematical truths are *not* causally inert, but suggests that man's "normative beliefs have been shaped by selective pressures towards ends that are in fact – and quite independently – of value."[7] This provides a plausible sketch as to how man's judgments can correlate to causally inert facts. If one can grant that survival and replication are roughly good in some sense, then this pre-establishes the harmony between moral judgments and moral facts. Natural selection can shape normative judgments in the direction of evolutionary beneficial beliefs that are not necessarily true beliefs. However, it seems "that the two may be systematically related."[8]

However, such an explanation seems problematic in a naturalistic world. Moral facts do not seem queer as such; rather, moral facts are queer in a naturalistic/Russellian world. Man's faculties, in a naturalistic world, as Alvin Plantinga points, are not necessarily aimed at true beliefs but are at least evolutionary beneficial. If moral judgments do correlate with moral facts it could be the result of a miracle, which Sharon Street argues for. Street argues that the likelihood that such a miracle does obtain is highly doubtful. The sentiments of Street are echoed by Nagel and Joyce as well, no friends to theism. Thus the former explanation would not seem to be the best account, at least in a naturalistic worldview.

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[7] Enoch, David. *Taking Morality Seriously*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 168.

[8] Ibid., 169.

Enoch does not go far enough in establishing the correlation between moral facts and moral judgments, or so I will argue. He fails to show how moral faculties are aimed at truth and not solely at beneficial evolutionary beliefs. Alvin Plantinga's attack on naturalism appears sufficient to question the reliability of our belief-producing mechanisms, given the conjunction of naturalism and evolution. That is, there is little to no reason to think that advantageous beliefs are concerned with truth, especially as it pertains to beliefs that are not remotely concerned with survival and reproduction. For example, it is hard to see how the truth of this proposal would benefit my reproductive advantage. So, naturalism coupled with evolution leaves morality wanting, as Nagel, Harman, Street, and Joyce recognize. This can be seen through counter-examples that show the deficiency of a morality predicated on naturalism alone and shorn of a robust teleology. Natural selection, when coupled with naturalism, cannot systematically rule out actions that we *know* are *wrong*. For example, can naturalism and evolution systematically rule out rape in every case? It seems that if the human race depended on the procreation of two lone survivors, but one was unwilling to comply, rape would be the *right* action. But is rape ever the right action? It seems that evolution would not only commend but also command one to rape. Thus, a purposive feature is needed to ensure, or adequately account for, a correlation between moral judgments and moral facts.

Design plans need purpose, and evolution in a naturalistic world is at best quasi-purposive.[9] The former is quasi-purposive in that the *telos* does not have any causal power, which explains why such abhorrent acts could be commanded as previously illustrated. Angus Ritchie attacks secular theories for their lack of purposiveness. He

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[9] Ritchie, Angus. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 51.

argues that secular theories either weaken the notion of objectivity or they feature an explanatory gap and are not able to account for such strong objectivity and moral knowledge because of its deficient teleology. One of his theses, which he does not flesh out with great specificity, is that a sufficiently rich teleological explanation, in contrast, *can* account for our ability to know moral truths. Ritchie thinks this can be done through agent causation: agent X knew that Y was objectively good, and has the power and the means to bring about Y… and *did* bring about Y (X being God and Y being the ability for moral judgments to correlate to moral facts). Such purposive teleology seems to be the missing piece needed for an explanation of our ability to know moral truths. Thus, it seems that profitable work can be done in the exploration of synthesizing natural selection with God-given teleology in order to account for moral knowledge.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this thesis will be to explore the possible correlation between moral facts and moral judgments. Is there a correlation and, more importantly, if there is a correlation what is the best explanation for it? Assuming moral realism I will sketch an account of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts. I will contend that, even in light of the challenges posed by Gilbert Harman, Richard Joyce, and Sharon Street, moral realism in a theistic worldview can provide a robust enough teleology to warrant belief in the correlation between moral judgment and moral facts.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

The importance of this problem can clearly be seen in Gilbert Harman's challenge and its continued implications posed by Richard Joyce. If moral judgments are unwarranted due to the plausibility of explaining moral judgments without appealing to

their actually being true, then moral knowledge is in serious trouble. Moral realism cannot account for the correlation of moral facts to moral judgments by sheer coincidence, which is a dubious explanation to say the least. In contrast, if it can be effectively shown that a rich account of moral ontology and knowledge is possible, evading the objections adduced, this can and rightly should contribute to rational confidence that vitally important moral truth claims can continue to be affirmed as items of knowledge. Since such basic human affirmations as human dignity, equality, worth, and value—denials of which have historically led to gross atrocities—are included among such moral truth claims, the importance of retaining our capacity to salvage such convictions against skeptical and anti-realist challenges should be obvious.

Limitations

The discussion of this paper will be limited to fleshing out a possible solution to Gilbert Harman's challenge as echoed by Richard Joyce and Sharon Street. However, this will not include a defense of moral realism; rather, the discussion will assume moral realism and focus solely on the epistemological account of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts.

Thesis Statement

I will argue that a robust agent-caused teleological account of a non-reductive realist conception of morality is able to warrant confidence in moral judgments in light of skeptical concerns.

Chapter 1:
A Cause of Crisis for Darwinian Theories of Value

There are few philosophers more adept than Thomas Nagel (1937-), and even fewer who are as skilled to critically appraise one's own position as he. In his 2012 publication, *Mind & Cosmos*, Nagel not only scrutinizes but also expands on the limitations of a naturalistic *Weltanschauung*. However, Nagel does this neither by adhering to unquestioned pre-commitments nor by toting partisan lines. Nagel seeks to genuinely question the current orthodoxy about the cosmic order because he sees the current orthodoxy as a "product of governing assumptions that are unsupported, and that it flies in the face of common sense."[10]

The Commitment to Naturalism

The evolutionary predicament arises in a naturalistic *Weltanschauung*. Naturalism is the view or theory that seeks to account for everything having arisen from or being reducible to natural properties or causes. Such an approach excludes supernatural or spiritual explanations. Nagel thinks that it is *prima facie* highly implausible that "life as we know it is the result of a sequence of physical accidents together with the mechanism of natural selection."[11] Let N represent naturalism as a whole. Allow E to represent the evolutionary process with a more delimited focus on natural selection. Thus, N&E would be the conjunction of the worldview of naturalism with the theory of evolution. So what would naturalism coupled with evolution (N&E) have to explain? Such a theory would have to account or have something to say concerning all areas pertinent to the human condition. A *Weltanschauung* should be able plausibly to explain areas pertinent to the

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[10] Thomas Nagel. *Mind and Cosmos*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 5.

[11] Ibid.

human condition and specifically, in the present case, morality. Thus, according to N&E, morality should admit of a physical explanation, yet it is just such an explanation that appears lacking. So says Nagel, no friend of theism.

There are two questions in general that stand in need of an answer according to Nagel, and that have an impact on morality. First, given current evolutionary theory, with its emphasis on naturalism, what is the likelihood that self-reproducing life forms should have come into existence through physical causality alone? Life is a formidable phenomenon to have arisen out of a lifeless cosmos. Secondly, granting that life could have come into existence, what is the likelihood that accidental, selectively advantageous viable genetic mutations were sufficient for natural selection to produce the moral faculties that actually exist?[12] What intensifies the challenge for N&E is to answer the former questions is that N&E is confined to naturalistic resources alone. If N&E is indeed true, then N&E should be up to the large task of explaining adequately and well the diverse range of phenomena we find today.

Dependence on Natural Selection

The best explanatory account for the human condition (consciousness, cognition, value, meaning, and purpose) available to naturalists is evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theory is often cast as a purely physical *Weltanschauung* that potentially could account for the diversity and origin of life. However, as with most terms after popularization, there is ambiguity as to what evolutionary theory does or does not encompass. In order to avoid ambiguity and confusion one needs to specify and delineate what is contained and what is not contained under the umbrella term of evolution.

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[12] Ibid.

There perhaps could be more, but there are at least six potential theses that evolution could potentially advance.[13] (1) There is the *ancient earth thesis* that claims the earth is very old, "perhaps as old as 4.5 billion years old," although it doesn't seem that a specific figure is necessarily required. The main idea is that the earth is very old. (2) Next, there is the claim that life progressed from that which was relatively simple to relatively complex forms. When life first arrived on the earth it was in the form of simple unicellular life forms as seen in bacteria and algae. Then more complex life such as multi-cellular life forms, coral and jellyfish, then amphibia, then reptiles and culminating finally with human beings. This process can be called *the progress thesis*, although, as will be shown in more depth below, there could be potential discrepancy as to what or who is exactly the culmination of progress. (3) The third thesis, *descent with modification,* states that the dramatic differences in living organisms today is due to offspring differing in small, subtle, adaptive ways from their parents. (4) Tying into the third thesis, the fourth is the *common ancestry thesis:* that there was a single locus of life that was the seed by which emerged, as Gould states, the "tree of evolutionary descent linking all organisms by ties of genealogy."[14] Thus, according to *the common ancestry thesis* all living things are cousins of each other.

The naturalistic mechanism of descent with modification (5) is the *thesis of natural selection.*[15] There are other proposed processes but natural selection is the most popular candidate. Natural selection describes the process by which selective pressures will ensure the promulgation of those traits, which develop from random genetic

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[13] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*. New York: Oxford, 2011. 8-9.

[14] Ibid., 9.

[15] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 51.

mutation, that are instrumentally conducive to survival and replication of the species.[16] Thus, if trait Y is conducive to species S, then Y will remain prevalent in S.[17]

The final thesis (6) is that life originated from non-living matter without any supernatural aid. Thus living matter arose from non-living matter from the laws of physics and chemistry, which Alvin Plantinga calls the *naturalistic origins thesis*. However, as Plantinga goes on to state, the *naturalistic origin thesis* is not a part of evolutionary theory proper.

It seems that natural selection becomes the mechanism for development and modification.[18] For the other theses would seem to be incomplete without a mechanism to bring about progress, diversity, and adaptation. As a result naturalism must rely on the thesis of natural selection to account for the wide array of observed phenomena and explanatory burden.

The Mind: An Unlikely Occurrence

One of the great advances in the physical and biological sciences is their ability to account for observed phenomena in the cosmos without the inclusion of the mind in the physical world.[19] The current amount of accessible information in man's understanding of the world has exponentially increased in the last several decades in unprecedented ways. With the increase of information one is now able to observe the intricacies of the

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[16] Ibid.

[17] The trait should be promulgated all things being equal and barring any cataclysmic event that would wipe out the species regardless how beneficial a trait might be.

[18] I am open to the possibility of there being other mechanical means to account for the diversity of species and presence of the mind. However, until there are other plausible means to account for the former factors that need explanation, it seems that naturalism as a worldview must rise or fall on the adequacy of explanation that is provided by the conjunction of naturalism and evolution (either one or more of the delineated theses).

[19] Nagel. *Mind & Cosmos*. 8.

human body and the finely tuned nature of such particular bodies. However, such observation would be unintelligible if there were not a mind to perceive it. This phenomena—the world being observed and the world apt for observation—seems to imply that the mind is not just a spandrel[20] of the evolutionary process, but rather that the mind is a basic aspect of nature.[21]

Can N&E account for the occurrence of such an odd basicality as the mind? One must remember that naturalism rules out anything that is or has any nonphysical or immaterial properties. If evolutionary biology is a theory about the physical world, then due to its very strictures it should be in principle unable to account for that which is or has nonphysical properties.[22] If there are additional ingredients such as "qualia, meanings, intentions, values, reasons, beliefs, and desires," then there are only two options: 1) such peculiarities and their occurrence would either need a plausible naturalistic account, or 2) the common or folk usage of such concepts would be fundamentally mistaken.

The first alternative seems to be unavailable to the naturalist. For irreducible non-natural properties that are not fundamentally physical in nature would be a defeater for naturalism. For naturalism states that all properties or substances are not just partly

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[20] A spandrel would be a feature that is the byproduct of another characteristic of N&E, rather than a direct product of N&E.

[21] Nagel. *Mind & Cosmos*. 16.

[22] Due to the limitations of the current project time cannot be spent discussing non-reductionist naturalists nor those who are under the persuasion that moral properties supervene on natural properties. However, the former positions will be touched on indirectly in chapter 2's discussion of Richard Joyce's non-moral genealogy. If Joyce's non-moral genealogy were successful at adequately accounting for moral judgments, then it would epistemically undermine all other theories. Joyce's non-moral genealogy would show how moral facts do not play any explanatory role in the development of one's moral faculties. As a result, if Joyce's non-moral genealogy is successful then Joyce will have provided an undercutting defeater for both non-reductionist naturalists and those who posit that moral properties supervene on natural properties.

physical, but are *only* physical. So, there is no viable way accessible to the naturalist to incorporate such non-natural properties within its *Weltanschauung.*

The second alternative appears the only viable course to be undertaken for the naturalist: that such folk concepts are fundamentally mistaken. It needs to be said that the purpose of this paper is not to show the irreducibility of qualia, meanings, intentions, values, reasons, beliefs, and desires, but to present a probable means of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts. Thus, the potential deficiency in explanation for N&E would be its inability to account for the primacy of the mind and its moral faculty rather than the mind being a spandrel of physical law.[23]

It seems that Nagel is correct in that "it is no longer legitimate to imagine a sequence of gradually evolving phenotypes, as if their appearance through mutations in the DNA were unproblematic: as Richard Dawkins does with the eye."[24] Questions central to the human condition need not only a *possible* explanation, but a *probable* one. Nagel aptly states that "the consensus of scientific opinion does not in this matter require us to subordinate the incredulity of common sense."[25] The area of morality is one crucial area in need of careful examination.

A Cause for Doubt

In principle naturalism seems saddled with being unable to account for the likely occurrence of the mind, so Nagel thinks. As a result, morality will appear to be an unlikely occurrence as well on naturalism. What best accounts for man's ability to know mind-independent evaluative truths? For if N&E is the case, moral judgments should

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[23] Ibid., 15.

[24] Ibid., 9.

[25] Nagel. *Mind & Cosmos.* 7.

correlate to moral facts. However, the challenge posed by Harman and Joyce will place the correlation in doubt.

Harman's challenge focuses on the notion that man's evaluative judgments can be explained entirely without their being true.[26] This is to say that, as a result of evolutionary theory (natural selection understood through processes such as kin selection, direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, etc.), man's evaluative judgments are do not possess warrant for their tight connection to moral facts. The focus of Harman is on both the ability to account for moral judgments apart from their truth, and on whether moral facts are needed to explain anything. Thus, if moral facts are explanatorily superfluous then moral discourse becomes preferential discourse. Harman's conclusion is conditional: if evaluative facts are not reducible to facts about nature, then moral discourse becomes futile because moral theories cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed; the truth values of moral propositions are unable to be determined for they describe a reality that is epistemically out of reach.[27] Clearly, realist theories of value must be able to provide an answer to Harman's challenge if they are to maintain plausibility.

To help delineate the direction of the discussion it is helpful to recall the two foundational questions previously posed by Nagel: (1) First, given current evolutionary theory, with its emphasis on naturalism, what is the likelihood that self-reproducing life forms should have come into existence through physical causality alone? (2) Secondly, granting that life could have come into existence, what is the likelihood that, as a result of physical accident, a sequence of viable genetic mutations should have occurred that was

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[26] Richard Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. 184.

[27] Ibid., 184-185.

sufficient to permit natural selection to produce the organisms that actually exist?[28] Our primary concern will be the second question. It will be granted that N&E could produce the current cognitive capacities and abilities of the human mind to function as they do. The plausibility of moral knowledge in light of Harman's challenge will become the focus of the discussion. Due to the constraints of the current project it will be assumed that there are moral facts to be known. Moral facts imply that there are truths that do not depend on human consensus. Such truths do not depend on any particular states of affairs but obtain through all states of affairs. Thus moral or evaluative judgments (I will use these terms interchangeably) should correlate to evaluative truths or moral truths. Nagel's second question, restricting it to fit the present discussion and assuming moral realism, becomes this: What is the likelihood that, as a result of physical accident, a sequence of viable genetic mutations should have occurred that was sufficient to permit natural selection to produce in man the ability to acquire moral knowledge of a mind-independent realm?

As seen in a brief look at Harman's challenge, there is cause for doubt. If there are good reasons to think that which underlies man's use of moral language is *not* something authoritative but simply a web of groundless evaluative judgments, then does not a moral error theory ensue? So first, one must ask, are there good reasons to think that Gilbert Harman's challenge, as carried on by Richard Joyce and Sharon Street, is sufficient to warrant a moral error theory?[29]

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[28] Nagel. *Mind and Cosmos*. 6.

[29] Recall that a moral error theory has been described on page 4 through J.L. Mackie taking note of the queerness of moral properties and their epistemic inaccessibility.

Chapter 2:
A Lack of Warrant for Moral Judgments?

The previous chapter explored a potential crisis for Darwinian theories of value. Consider the absence of explanation for how dead matter produces life. Even granting that life could have arisen, there still remains *the mind* that seems to be an unlikely occurrence: an unlikely occurrence so improbable that, as Nagel says, it seems not to have been an afterthought, but rather a basic aspect of nature. Any theory that cannot account for it and its proper function would appear to be incomplete. The possibility that N&E cannot account for it, and specifically moral cognition, was merely mentioned before, but quite a bit more can and should be said to show that naturalism undermines moral knowledge.

Morality as Properly Basic.

It appears that moral discourse or evaluative judgments are a basic fundamental aspect of human nature. Human nature does not have to be clearly defined. For whether one thinks such a nature is the result of a cosmos consisting solely of physical matter subsumed under the laws of physics or if human nature is the product of a benevolent deity, it seems both are referring to those properties or qualities that comprise the human condition. For present purposes let human nature stand for those identifying features that individuate man from the world around him, regardless of how his essential properties came to be. It seems at least plausible that human nature is a basic individuating factor of humanity. Some argue (Scott Smith for example) that naturalism is inconsistent with there being natures as such. However, perhaps there are good reasons to think so, then that would be enough to count human natures as a basic individuating factor for

humanity. Some traits can be shared with other entities, but any *thing* that has a human nature is in fact a human. The question remains: Are moral judgments an essential *potentia* of human nature?

Prima facie reflective equilibrium seems to warrant confidence in moral judgments: there exists a tight connection between moral judgments and moral facts with little luck involved. Reflective equilibrium is achieved when "(i) singular judgments (which are intuitively compelling to us) and (ii) our systematization of these judgments into general rules; rules which also bring them into harmony with the judgments of other people."[30] It appears that there are singular moral judgments that seem to supervene on a moral principle or at least the idea of universally prescriptive moral principles: principles such that there are no cultures who *do not* make moral judgments based on a particular moral principle or a set of particular moral principles.[31] However, if there are singular moral principles, the sanctity of life being a possible one, then why is there such disagreement? Perhaps either there are no universally prescriptive moral rules or that man does not have the cognitive make-up to know such rules. There seems to be a way to avoid the dilemma. J.R. Lucas argues that:

> [Good judges] do not decide the cases in accordance with some bad rule-
> say that of deciding for the party, which bribes them most-, or they would
> be bad judges. Nor do they show their impartiality by deciding cases by
> the toss of a coin in court; or they would still be bad although now
> impartial judges. But they do not decide the case according to some good
> rule: else the parties would have been able to see what the decision was
> going to be and would have settled out of court. So good judges decide

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[30] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 16-17.

[31] It would appear that at least one moral principle is needed to establish the basicality of morality, which would be the result of reflective equilibrium since it would be the loci of many singular moral judgments. As a result, the systematization of all singular moral judgments concerning the sanctity of life, for example, should establish a harmony concerning the sanctity of life specifically, but more generally it should warrant the basicality of moral judgments.

their cases neither according to any rigid rule, good or bad, nor randomly, that is accordingly to a no-rule. There is thus not an exhaustive disjunction between being in accordance with some definite rule and being completely unruly, between the conclusively justified and quite unjustified.[32]

Lucas' argument seems to suggest that there is a way to avoid the dilemma that Mackie forces on the moral objectivist: that if there are such rules man should be able to know them or an epistemological free-for-all.[33] Lucas does not use the term "reflective equilibrium", but as Ritchie notes that is exactly what Lucas is doing. So how do good judges judge? It would appear that judges come to the inference of the best rule by basing those rules on universally prescriptive principles. This would explain the discrepancy of the application of principles. For the application of moral principles is dependent upon cognitive abilities and cognitive abilities vary due to a number of reasons, but are there universally prescriptive moral principles? C.S. Lewis notes in the first chapter of *Mere Christianity* as well as in an appendix of *The Abolition of Man* the surprising commonality of normative moral claims throughout the cultures of the world: the sanctity of life being one possible principle. The application of the previous principle is where discussion begins. It is usually agreed that murdering innocent individuals is morally wrong, at least without a sufficient reason to warrant the action. Innocence and those deserving of rights, however, are not so easily agreed upon. The previous is seen clearly in the discussion surrounding abortion where disagreement focuses around the fetus. Is the fetus a person, and if it is, is it a person worthy of rights? The previous question is not so clear, but what is typically clear are moral principles. Reflective equilibrium seems to

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[32] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 17.

[33] Ibid.

warrant such principles, which would make morality properly basic for human nature. Thus any plausible account of moral knowledge would need to show that moral discourse is a likely occurrence. Proper basicality would mean that one is within her epistemic rights to have warrant in the reliability of her moral faculties, at least minus defeaters. Just as the mind seems to not have been an unlikely occurrence, moral discourse highly improbably to have been an after thought as well.[34]

If man has evolved with moral discourse as an identifying feature of his condition then natural selection is the likely means by which that faculty developed. Natural selection encourages those traits that promote the survival and replication of the species. In its selection of traits natural selection encourages moral discourse, because it is beneficial and encourages survival and replication. It is important to note that traits are not necessarily reducible to genetic material. Thus it is possible to have natural selection occur at the genetic level as well as at a cultural or communal level. This is not to say that all traits inherited are beneficial. But those characteristics that encourage the promulgation of the individual and the species tend to maintain prominence.

Any theory's inability to account for the basicality of moral discourse speaks against it. So as Nagel finds a theory lacking if it cannot explain the mind, it seems a theory would be equally lacking if it were unable to account for moral discourse.

The Grounding of the Epistemological Challenge

The foundation of the epistemological challenge for moral knowledge seems to be that there *are* irreducibly normative truths and facts about the world. That one *should not*

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[34] To say that morality is properly basic is not to suggest that mentally handicapped individuals or babies are less human. To be human is to have the capacity, in essence, for the development of a moral faculty. Neither rocks nor non-human biological life has the capacity for the development of a moral faculty, at least in the robust sense as seen in humanity. Thus, humanness, in essence, always possesses the ability for the development of a moral faculty regardless if the faculty ever comes to fruition. It is in the former sense that morality is properly basic.

torture children, one *should not* rape, and one *should* care about her future well-being are examples of normative truths. It is at least remotely possible that the examples given could be mistaken for normative truths, but it seems that there are at least some such truths. These particular truths appear to exist independently of and are not dependent upon human consensus. Such truths are true in all worlds, to use the language of modality. It could even be said that such truths and facts would obtain even if there were no one to conceive or perceive them.[35] These are the particular types of truths that are of such a unique kind that J. L. Mackie called them "queer" or odd. For moral truths or evaluative truths possess moral clout: a binding prescriptive that cannot be discarded due to a change of volition. Mackie says, "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."[36] Moral truths possess a prescriptive power that holds even without a desire or interest in abiding by them. Moral truths are sufficiently odd without a god to create them, so thought Mackie.

Moral truths appear to be a type of normative truth. Moral truths are unique in that they place a claim, duty, or obligation on a rational agent that when violated tends to be accompanied by a sense of alienation and guilt. Moral truths denote a type of "ought-ness" or "should-ness." For example, one might say that a child "ought" to respect her parents. Or one may hear that it "ought" to rain tomorrow. What is the difference between the previous two uses of "ought"? In the latter case "ought" implies that there is a significant chance of precipitation: Given condition X one should expect to see effect

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[35] One must remember that mind-independent truths are being assumed here for the purposes of this paper.

[36] Mackie. "The Subjectivity of Values." *Essays on Moral Realism*. 111.

Y. This idea is a matter of fact or a judgment. Another type of matter of fact judgment would be saying that a rock "ought" to fall when let go above the ground. A matter of fact "ought" may appear similar to moral "ought"s but are clearly distinct. It is clear that weather and the rock do not contemplate about their actions. When one says that X ought to Y in this sense, one is merely describing what occurs or what is expected to occur. If one tries to insert moral culpability she is either joking or is confused.[37]

Aristotle likened "ought" to a matter of flourishing. A machine needs oil in order to flourish. So a machine "ought" to have oil. Likewise humans are made to flourish and virtues help them flourish. Thus, humans "ought" to be virtuous: "justice is a virtue needed for human flourishing and being unjust is therefore harmful to the person."[38] As a result, there are "ought"s that provide moral reasons even though one might not be obligated to act in accordance with the moral reason.

On the other hand, the "ought" concerning the child respecting her parents is used in a moral sense that evinces what C. Stephen Evans calls the "Anscombe intuition."[39] G.E.M Anscombe calls it an "emphatic" ought.[40] An emphatic ought is a moral ought. A moral ought does not describe an action as a matter of fact. There is no moral duty that a rock should adhere to the law of gravity. C. S. Lewis highlights this distinction between

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[37] One should note that there are prescriptive non-moral ought's as well in aesthetics, epistemology, and other areas, but discussion will be limited to moral ought's.

[38] C. Stephen Evans. *God and Moral Obligation*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013.11

[39] Ibid.

[40] G.E.M. Anscombe. "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (Cambridge University Press, 1958). 5-6.

the law of nature and the law of human nature.[41] The rock is a part of the former while the disobeying child is an example of the latter. The latter case, the law of human nature, one can choose to either obey or not, and it is the ability of choice that makes it peculiar in a naturalistic world. One realizes there is a distinctly different type of expectation when expecting a rock to fall due to the law of gravity and expecting a child to respect her parents due to a moral law. Moral discourse is usually used in a volitional way that suggests that an agent can choose either to adhere to the standard or not. It seems that to negate the ability to choose, or at least to act on one's desire, would also negate the ability to condemn. Such a moral code, moreover, appears to be cross-cultural. Lewis highlights this trans-historical and trans-cultural agreement of moral principles in an appendix to *The Abolition of Man.* For it can be seen that most, if not all, societies hold their citizens accountable for their actions to at least some degree and that there is a fair bit of moral overlap when it comes to content that derives from the overarching principles.

Obligations and duties derive, on a social model of moral obligations, from institutions or persons that possess proper authority. The authority imposes certain expectations and requirements on those rational agents under their particular authority. The moral duty is only incurred when there are rational agents involved and, more specifically, functioning as such. So it would seem to be the case that the normative claims of morality appear only to apply to rational beings under an authority.

Any authority, as Robert Adams argues, will not do. For moral discourse appeals to an authority that has a demand on all rational agents regardless of their choice or

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[41] C. S. Lewis, and Kathleen Norris. *Mere Christianity*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980. 4.

preference. Richard Joyce compares moral duties to institutional "oughts." Institutional "oughts" are a type of normative claim. They place a duty or obligation on those who are a part of the institution. Different employees have to abide by company rules, and athletes have to abide by the rules of the game. Those who join an institution willingly choose to abide by the prescribed institutional "oughts." Soccer players agree to not use their hands to play the ball, or incur a penalty for failing to do so. Companies may have prescribed rules against crude or inappropriate behavior and usually have consequences for not following the companies' rules. However, such "oughts" are limited to those under that institution, but what type of institution do moral "oughts" consist of? Moral "oughts" are not used in a conditional way as institutional "ought"s are. Rather moral truths do not depend on societies, institutions, or anyone's personal preferences. Moral truths place unique obligations on all persons that seem to transcend space, time, and human consensus. But how does one explain the correlation between man's evaluative judgments and human mind-independent evaluative truths?[42]

Gilbert Harman's Challenge

Gilbert Harman's challenge focuses on the idea that if moral judgments are epistemically undercut, then one loses warrant for her moral judgments. If moral judgments do not correlate to moral facts, what do they then represent? On Platonism, one can see a vast Platonic-like chasm of moral truths in the heavenly realm separated from and independent of the moral judgments that are down in the world of shadows.

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[42] This is not to say that God cannot function as the locus of value and the source of moral obligation. Indeed I would agree with Robert Adams in that he argues that God is part of the relevant social context. Truths are not mind-independent for they are located in the mind of God. On such a view, it seems that one may at least be able to say moral truths are not *human*-mind dependent.

Should moral facts be subjected to Ockham's razor and discarded for offering no additional explanatory power beyond what can already be explained without them?

Harman argues that "if there is no reductive account available explaining how moral facts relate to naturalistic facts, then moral claims cannot be tested, moral theories cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed, and we have no evidence for the existence of moral facts."[43] Harman never affirms the antecedent of the previous hypothetical, but he clearly emphasizes that "there is a real problem about testing moral claims if they are not reducible to naturalistic claims."[44]

To illustrate the challenge, Joyce uses Harman's example of asking one to imagine that a cat is being tortured with gasoline.[45] Rather than settling for cat torture, which is passé, let's consider torturing children instead. Better yet, let's have Joy witness a group of individuals torturing children for fun. It seems obvious that such an action is wrong, and one "ought" not to act in such a manner. Such an act seems to have the universal quality of being wrong in all times and in all places. Such an act would be morally wrong even if there were no one to commit the act. So how does Joy form the moral judgment that torturing children for fun is wrong?

It seems reasonable that one would without conscious reasoning form the moral judgment that burning a child with gasoline is morally wrong. It is properly basic. The fact that Joy stumbles upon the group torturing a child for fun is what causes her moral judgment. The moral fact of the act being wrong, so Harman argues, does not seem to play any relevant role in the moral judgment. One does not have to assume any "moral

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[43] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. 184-185.

[44] Richard Joyce. *The Myth of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 185

[45] Ibid.

fact" whatsoever. The assumption of moral facts as Harman states would be "irrelevant to the explanation of your making the judgment you make."[46] The only thing that an individual would need is that there are some prevailing moral beliefs in place that are defined sufficiently enough as to be reflected in one's judgments. Such beliefs could be predicated on principles that aid survival and replication.

Harman makes little reference to any moral sensibilities. Harman's challenge does not even have to make reference to evolutionary theory or natural selection. All that is needed is a complete explanation, genealogy, of moral judgments that does not make reference to moral facts. The truth or falsity of moral judgments, in the grand scheme, is irrelevant if such a case can be made. Evolutionary theory is only one among other possible means that could be used to affirm the antecedent of Harman's hypothetical challenge. There could be a Marxist or Freudian explanation that can account for judgments without facts. If the inference to the best explanation can be shown to be a sufficiently plausible non-moral genealogy of how evaluative judgments arose, then moral judgments would be undermined. Thus, moral judgments would seem to have a potentially undermining defeater if the previous case could be made.

There may be some lingering confusion as to what exactly is being proposed by Harman. Harman does not argue that moral facts should be jettisoned or gotten rid of.[47] All that he is stating is that moral facts are threatened. It seems plausible, especially on naturalism, that moral facts can be shown not to have any connection with the judgments that are supposed to reflect those moral facts. Recall Joy witnessing a group of

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[46] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. 185.

[47] Ibid., 186.

individuals burning a child just for fun. There is nothing good that is going to come from this action other than the seemingly sadistic satisfaction of the individuals who are participating. So, how does Joy *know* that the action is wrong? Suppose that there is a reductive explanation of how Joy comes to form the judgment that the heinous act she witnessed is wrong. What would such a reductive explanation for Joy's moral judgment look like? An explanation would likely be found in causal connections of physics and chemistry, most ultimately. The reason that Joy felt or formed the judgment that the action was wrong is explained by natural selection causally selecting those traits in Joy's proto-human ancestry that allowed her species to survive and replicate culminating in her seeming to apprehend the wrongness. However, this explanation would not be anchored in any mind-independent reality that the action committed is in fact wrong. Could it be the case that the rug, so to speak, has been pulled out from under moral judgments?

The problem becomes apparent in that if there is an empirical reductive account for how moral judgments are formed then moral facts do not factor in the explanation at all. As a result, moral judgments would need an additional feature to explain the correlation to moral facts. Harman takes the previous account of the formation of Joy's moral judgment to be generalizable. If this were the case, then such an explanation of moral judgments independently of moral facts would seem to be problematic. The inherent tension should be clear if it is not already. The phenomena of moral judgments requiring nothing to account for their truth would seem to yield a metanarrative that emasculates and reduces moral authority to nothing more than communal preference at most.[48]

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[48] Gilbert Harman and other naturalists argue that their presentation of moral judgments is true. In fact, given their pre-commitment of naturalism it does in fact appear that moral judgments are undermined.

Let it be noted that the epistemic justification needed for Harman's challenge is not altogether farfetched.[49] There is no need to postulate brain in the vat or Matrix-like hypotheses. The success of such extreme hypotheses is indeed difficult to confirm or disconfirm, since all experiential data and the basic underlying structure are indeed dependent on the machine relaying the neural impulses for one's supposed perception and cognition. There is no need for anything so *ad hoc* in Harman's challenge. Rather it is much more basic and primitive. All that needs to be shown is a plausible empirical means that can account for moral judgments without making appeal to the moral facts that they are thought to represent. As a result, if the best explanation is an evolutionary empirically based explanation that undermines moral judgments, then moral judgments will be undercut by normal epistemic standards.[50]

A Possible Account Seen Lacking

One could argue, as Michael Ruse does, that the ontological grounding of morality is redundant given the fact that evolution provides a non-moral genealogy of moral judgments.[51] Although this may seem parsimonious, it does not take into account the possibility of moral facts being reducible to non-moral facts. Joyce points out that there are reductionistic explanations for a variety of facts.[52] For example, there are reductionistic explanations for humans, cats, even sneezes. One could explain a cat in

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However, I would like to note that my current presentation of both Harman and Joyce's positions is under the assumption of naturalism being the case, which thereby shows naturalism's limitations as it applies to moral judgments. However, a possible vindication of moral judgments will be argued for in Chapter 3 in a theistic worldview. It is then under a theistic framework that I think moral judgments are vindicated.

[49] Joyce. *The Myth of Morality.* 188.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 189.

terms of physics and chemistry and locate the zoological category under one of the sciences, and thus cats would be reductionistic in one sense. There also seems to be a *catness* that stands above and beyond physics and chemistry. So, arguably, by parity in reasoning, even if cats can be reduced in one sense, it doesn't follow that *catness* has been exhausted by such an analysis. Similarly, morality too has something of an essence that isn't explained away by one form of reductionist analysis.

Harman is adamant that moral naturalism is in need of more than just mere speculation. Nagel in *Mind & Cosmos* found Dawkins' arguments in *The Blind Watchmaker* inconclusive, since Dawkins' arguments throughout the book were too speculative. Dawkins relies on mere logical possibility, but without showing how such a process is likely to occur one cannot find his arguments very plausible or compelling. Harman in a similar fashion argues that the mere possibility of moral naturalism conjoined with its implications about moral reductionism accomplishes nothing. There in fact needs to be an empirical account with some degree of specificity to show how such a reduction plausibly obtains. Remember the previously stated hypotheses: Hypothesis A says that there is a non-moral genealogy of moral judgments. Hypothesis B affirms instead that postulated moral facts account for moral judgments. It may also be possible to reduce moral facts to non-natural facts, which can be added to the previous hypotheses. For clarification let's call the hypothesis whereby moral facts reduce to non-moral facts B'. As a result, global naturalists will have to fall on one of the previous hypotheses to account for moral knowledge.

Even though global naturalism may be the prominent position in academia there are moral non-naturalists as well. Moral non-naturalists think that moral facts are

independent of the natural world. A possible supernatural metanarrative anchors moral commands in the will or character of a supernatural agent. The agent, in turn, would have to have some means of relaying or conveying the moral code to man. The distinguishing characteristic of hypothesis C is there is an agent responsible for the orchestration of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts. Likewise hypothesis C will have to contain some degree of specificity to warrant confidence in moral judgments.

Harman is concerned that moral judgments are epistemologically undercut due to hypothesis A being able to account for moral judgments *absent* moral facts. Hypothesis B's more robust version B' postulates that moral facts are buried in non-moral facts. Harman does not argue that moral facts have no role to play in explaining moral judgments, but "that they threaten to be so unless we can find a place for them within our naturalistic explanation."[53]

Harman's Challenge Extended

Richard Joyce aptly notes a unique and unintended consequence of Harman's challenge. One can recall that Harman's argument states "that if there is no reductive account available explaining how moral facts relate to naturalistic facts then moral claims cannot be tested, moral theories cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed, and we have no evidence for the existence of moral facts."[54] However, it seems that either with the success or failure of moral naturalism to vindicate moral judgments, supernaturalism is sunk either way, as Joyce notes:

> Once we have a complete non-moral genealogy of moral judgment, if moral naturalism succeeds non-naturalism and supernaturalism are sunk, and if moral naturalism fails non-naturalism and supernaturalism are sunk. Thus non-

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[53] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality. 186.*

[54] Joyce. *The Myth of Morality.* 185.

naturalism and supernaturalism suffer most in this argumentative fray, whereas the moral naturalist is defeated only through independent arguments having nothing to do with Harman's challenge.[55]

The first chapter explored a potential crisis for Darwinian theories of value. Granting that the mind and consciousness could have arisen from a purely naturalistic means, it was shown questionable that value could have come about in such a way. Thus, the discussion focused on the possibility of moral knowledge. Moral realism, assumed for this discussion, presents a problem for the proponent of N&E. Harman's challenge illustrates the tension: How does man's cognitive apparatus, through evolutionary means, come to know mind-independent moral facts? The driving force or the machine of evolution is natural selection. So, how does natural selection account for the correlation between moral judgments and moral facts in a naturalistic *Weltanschauung*?

The plausibility of natural selection accounting for moral knowledge lies in the ability of natural selection to show a fairly specific means of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts. Nagel makes special mention of the lack of specificity in his critique of Richard Dawkins. Dawkins merely postulates the possibility of the eye having come about by naturalistic means, but never offers a specific account to show the plausibility. Logical possibility does not entail plausibility. A plausible theory of moral knowledge needs a good deal of specificity to address Harman's challenge. Nagel's view of the mind tries to provide the specificity needed. Nagel thinks an adequate theory should be able to show that the *mind* is a likely occurrence. Moreover, any theory that cannot show how moral knowledge is likely to have occurred would seem deficient, especially in light of the prominence and prevalence of moral discourse. Thus, a robust theory of moral knowledge will need enough specificity to show the likelihood of how

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[55] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality. 210.*

man's moral judgments correlate to moral facts. This paper will seek to provide some of the specificity needed for the correlation between judgments and facts.

Rather than exploring each variant of moral naturalism the focus will be aimed at an account that, if successful, would call into question all theories of moral naturalism. It is through this account, when explicated, that the success of moral naturalism to vindicate moral judgments will seem doubtful. Richard Joyce, who extended the case of a non-moral genealogy, argues that hypotheses B, B', and C will be shown superfluous as a result of the success of hypothesis A. It would seem inappropriate and a moot point to explore any of the other hypotheses if hypothesis A has already undercut moral judgments. But is Richard Joyce's account of a non-moral genealogy successful?

Richard Joyce's Non-Moral Genealogy

Richard Joyce realizes that without a successful non-moral genealogy then Harman's challenge is nothing more than a theoretical academic exercise. But what if it is possible? What if there is a plausible account of how moral judgments arose independently from the moral facts they are supposed to represent? The antecedent part of the Harman's challenge is exactly what Joyce thinks he is able to provide. If Joyce is able to provide the missing antecedent for Harman's challenge, then there would be significant doubt cast on the possibility of vindicating moral judgments. In fact if Joyce's metanarrative is successful, then moral judgments are not descriptive of a transcendent reality as once thought, but are preferentially established and subject to flux based on culture and the environment.

Joyce's argument focuses on the development of practical rationality in man's proto-human ancestry as the mechanism that gave rise to moral judgments. If evolution is

the case and natural selection is the driving force, then natural selection gave rise to man's practical reason. N&D, in fact, would be responsible for all of man's cognitive processes, including practical rationality and not solely moral judgments. Practical rationality provides "reasons for actions" that "are something which we are accustomed to quite independently of the moral framework. This wider non-moral notion of having a reason comes from practical rationality."[56] Moral judgments would then seem to be a subset of practical rationality: namely those reasons for actions that are a part of the moral framework. So, there may be an inherent connection among the two. Natural selection simply states that traits, which are conducive to survival and replication, are selected for. Thus, if practical rationality is one of the individuating features of what it means to be a human being, then it seems important to begin the discussion there.

Practical Rationality as Properly Basic

It seems that practical rationality has to be able to adequately perceive how the world is. This is not to suggest that practical rationality necessarily produces true propositions, but the actions or judgments practical rationality produces would seem related to how the world actually is. This seems to infer a type of realism, and since moral realism is being assumed, a type of metaphysical realism would result as well. Moral realism is committed to a type of metaphysical realism. Angus Ritchie lays out two theses of metaphysical realism (MR) that should add clarification.[57] The first thesis of metaphysical realism (MR1) states that the world has properties that exist independently of human beliefs or conceptual schemes. The second thesis (MR2) is reflective of MR1 in

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[56] Joyce. *The Myth of Morality.* 48.

[57] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 19.

that statements are true if and only if they adequately reflect the way the world is in MR1. Moral realism similarly has two theses that parallel MR in their claim of objective moral truths. The first thesis of moral objectivism (MO1) states that the moral order has certain properties that exist independently of human beliefs or conceptual schemes. The moral order would obtain even if there were no humans to perceive it. The second thesis (MO2) of moral objectivism is that statements are true if and only if they are an adequate representation of the way the world is in MO1. By this analysis, MO can be properly understood as being a subset of MR.

The question that should arise is how does one *know* if a statement adequately reflects the way the world is? It appears that the only available resource to discern such moral truths, assuming there are moral truths to be known, is with the use of practical reason (PR). It does not seem that a specific account for or a defense of PR is needed, but why? PR can be understood in a basic or primitive sense. One can think of the example that Richard Joyce provides.[58] Joyce has one imagine that a person asks, "Why should I be interested in practical reason?" To ask the question is to show an adherence to PR. It seems that to deny PR is to be its adherent much like to deny the law of non-contradiction one would have to use it in the realm of theoretical reason.

So, if PR is the result of natural selection, then what does this have to say about PR? If PR came about by natural selection, then PR is a trait that helps bring about the survival and replication of the human species. So, any trait or disposition that PR decides on would itself likely be beneficial to survival and replication. But does not the inescapability of PR seem eerily similar to moral claims? Morality may be more deniable than PR, but the two seem to be at least plausibly related.

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[58] Joyce. The *Myth of Morality*. 49.

One can recall from the previous discussion on institutional "ought"s that PR is also non-institutional. Institutional "ought"s derive from organizations that can place duties or obligations on those individuals under their authority. Institutional "ought"s are normative claims that individuals can chose either to perform or not perform. Institutional "ought"s only apply to individuals who are under *that* authority. One is not bound to the demands of institutions of which one is not a part. However, moral claims are relevantly different in that they are binding regardless of the individual's preference or contingent institutional affiliations. It seems that torturing a child for fun is wrong regardless of the situation and regardless of personal preferences. In a similar fashion it seems that practical rationality provides a non-institutional ought. For how does one respond to someone who asks why he or she should have a reason to perform the actions that he or she has reasons to perform? It seems that such a question would be unintelligible.[59] Thus, practical rationality is properly basic like morality: both have warrant, in the absence of rebutting defeaters.

$$PR \supset \sim MK / PR // \sim MK$$

Richard Joyce constructs his argument and anchors it on practical rationality. His argument is a follows: Let "PR" stand for "There is Practical rationality" and "MK" stand for "There is moral knowledge."

$PR \supset \sim MK$

$\underline{PR}$

$\sim MK$

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[59] Ibid., 53.

So, Joyce's argument is relatively simple: If there is practical rationality then there is no moral knowledge. There is practical rationality; thus, there is no moral knowledge.[60] Practical rationality has already been shown to be a basic fundamental aspect of the human condition and to attack premise two would be futile. For it does not seem a viable option to attack practical rationality with practical rationality. As a result, Joyce's argument hinges on him showing how practical rationality leads to probable undermining of moral knowledge.

It is important to add something about natural selection. Natural selection often gets mischaracterized as a means that promotes the self over the community.[61] In order for traits to be selected for and for survival and replication to flourish throughout a species, however, it seems that community would be the only way to achieve such ends. Thus, natural selection may be inherently communal.

The Natural Selection of Helping

Natural selection is the mechanism of evolution but the parts that comprise it are essential. No machine can effectively function if it is without essential parts. No community can flourish if an essential member or group of members are missing or not functioning properly. So some of the essential components of natural selection to ensure helping within the community are kin selection, mutualism, and reciprocity. No one atomistic piece alone can begin to constitute Joyce's argument for a non-moral genealogy; rather, one must step back in order to see the mosaic.

Helping behavior is essential to any community or species. Alluded to earlier was how it is hard to imagine a possible state of affairs whereby the relentless promotion of

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[60] Ibid., 154.

[61] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. 13.

the individual would in the long term pay off. There seems to be enough empirical evidence to suggest that such a state of affairs cannot be the norm or continually maintained. For the individual will need others. Community seems to be an essential attribute to the flourishing of the individual.

Natural selection would be incomplete if it did not have some way to account for the familiar phenomenon of natural inclination towards one's kin. Kin selection is an essential component for natural selection to ensure the propagation of the species. Genes reproduce and so the gene that reproduces the most wins. Organisms are the vehicles that allow genes to reproduce.[62] Thus, an organism that is helpful towards her family members, those who share the same genetic material, is a beneficial vehicle for the gene to inhabit. If one family member sacrifices herself for the benefit and continuation of two or more members of her family who share the same genes, then that is a win. Kin selection does not have to be drastic either. Merely sharing food or educating your own would suffice. One can see that viewing natural selection as inherently individualistic does not seem to be accurate.

Is there any empirical evidence to support the idea of kin selection? Harman rightly points out that unless there is a theory that can specifically account for how a non-moral genealogy developed then that theory would be incomplete. Many species choose quantity over quality and exhibit low amounts of helpful behavior. However, social insects exhibit an extreme amount of helpful behavior. Bees have a suicidal sting and there are castes of ants that are born sterile. If natural selection is to maintain plausibility then there has to be a physical explanation for the discrepancy among the species. Charles Darwin even recognized the potential problem of social insects and how they

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[62] Ibid., 19.

could potentially provide a defeater for his theory.[63] However, W. D. Hamilton was able to give a physical account for such discrepancies. Hamilton picked up on the genetic relatedness of the social insects. Mammals at most share 50% of their genetic material with their kin. However, male bees have half the number of chromosomes as the female bees, and females share up to 75% of genetic material with their "sisters." Hamilton came up with the following rule to express his findings: $rB > C$. r is the degree of relatedness, B is the benefit to the cost of the recipient, and C is the cost to the individual. So, as a result one would naturally expect a high amount of sacrificial behavior in those organisms who share a high amount of genetic relatedness as opposed to those with less genetic relation. This allows an empirically confirmed theory that adequately expresses reality and can be used for predictability in the future. So, if two creatures were not related, then one would not expect to see a high degree of helping behavior.

Although there is a strong degree of helping between non-kin observed as well, though, how can kin selection account for this? Joyce argues that there would have to be proximate mechanisms that would allow kin selection to function properly.[64] However, given a novel environment such proximate mechanisms that originally evolved for the recognition of kin could also "kin select" on non-kin. Different species are attracted to their kin by scent, smell, or sight.[65] In an appropriate environment proximate mechanisms work well enough, but one can see how a novel environment would produce a different response. The anthropologist Joseph Shepher found that there is a strong tendency for the people raised on kibbutzim not to be attracted to any individual with whom they were

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[63] Ibid., 20.

[64] Ibid., 21.

[65] Ibid.

raised regardless of genetic relation.[66] Rather than nature selecting a "sibling detector,"

the simpler "familiar-from-childhood-detector" would appear to be sufficient. This would

in turn help reduce the negative effects of incest, thus adding replicative advantage to the

species. Clearly, kin selection when formulated as such is a powerful tool for the utility

of natural selection.

Another powerful tool that will help strengthen Joyce's case for a non-moral

genealogy is mutualism.[67] Joyce illustrates this idea through a pride of lions, but it seems

that a group project will equally illustrate the concept as well. A group project in

academia is one that sometimes arbitrarily assigns students to comprise a group who must

work together to "survive." The students must work together to survive for a common

goal and a common purpose. If one member of the group fails, then they all fail.

However, such a relationship does not entail an ongoing relationship. The group of

students come together to fend off a common enemy, much like a group of small birds

coming together to fend off a larger bird. Each instance of coming together has increased

their reproductive fitness. There is a tacit agreement among the individuals that once the

goal has been achieved there is no expectation that the group continue. Thus, mutualism

is the pursuit of an end that is reached "if all perform their part, but loses all advantage if

only one performs."[68]

Direct and indirect reciprocity are also essential means that aid the case for

Joyce's non-moral genealogy. Kin selection is limited when there are instances of

individuals lending aid or help to those who have not been picked up by the "familiar-

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 22.

[68] Ibid., 23.

from-childhood-detector." So, if proximate mechanisms fail to misappropriate *kin-ness,* then reciprocity is able to complement the developing mosaic. Robert Trivers, who first saw the process clearly, called it *reciprocal altruism.*[69] He observed primates who spent valuable time, time that could be used for food gathering or arranging sexual intercourse, grooming primates who were not picked up by the "familiar-from-childhood-detector." What possible advantage could there be sacrificing for the grooming of unrelated conspecifics? Trivers observed the process of *reciprocal altruism,* which is a cooperative venture whereby the recipients receive more costs than benefits for the participants.

Direct reciprocity can also be observed at "cleaning stations" on a coral reef.[70] Small "cleaner fish" (or shrimp) approach a "host fish" with a unique swimming pattern that indicates its willingness to clean the host. If the larger fish wants a cleaning then the fish will open up its mouth and gills to indicate that it desires a cleaning. The large fish could at any point take an easy meal, but does not. Coral reefs can only support so many willing cleaner fish. So, breaking the reciprocal relationship would not serve in the survival and reproductive advantage of the large fish. If the environment were different and there were an abundant number of willing cleaner fish, then the large fish may be able to have an easy meal. But since the coral reef only supports a limited number of willing cleaner fish, it would not be in the reproductive advantage for the large fish to do so. Likewise the cleaner fish must put itself in danger and risk being eaten. Sure the fish could pick up scraps of food from the larger fish's gills, much like those who imitate cleaner fish, but this would not be selectively advantageous in the long run. In order for

[69] Ibid., 24.

[70] Ibid., 25.

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reciprocity to function properly, each member has to be willing to risk a potential loss for a greater gain.

Reciprocity is an evolutionary means that is often over simplified and whose intricacies are often overlooked. One can grasp an idea of directly reciprocal processes as illustrated in the preceding paragraph. However, by incorporating indirect reciprocity the necessary constituents of community begin to take shape. Charles Darwin sums up the power of indirect reciprocity quite poignantly: "Love of praise and the strong feeling of glory, and the still stronger horror of scorn and infamy," when coupled, are a "powerful stimulus to the development of social virtues."[71] Indirect reciprocity centers on the idea that individuals "reap what they sow." It is easy to imagine this sort of dynamic in a communal context in which reputation and word of mouth powerfully affect one's survival and replication. For reputation is a powerful tool that can either aid or hurt the individual, but seems to aid the community or species as a whole. The concept of indirect reciprocity is a robust and fruitful concept, but is there empirical evidence to corroborate its explanatory prowess?

A plausible example of indirect reciprocity in nature can be seen, as Joyce points out, in Amotz Zahavi's study of the Arabian babblers.[72] Zahavi's research focuses on babblers who are social birds that display helpful behavior towards each other. Acts include but are not limited to feeding non-kin or acting as a lookout. Zahavi noticed that some of the birds would be more than eager to help by shuffling each other out of the way to become a lookout or giving food to unwilling recipients. Zahavi calls this the "handicap principle" where birds look to raise their status in the group, and thereby

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[71] Ibid., 31.

[72] Ibid., 32.

increase their reproductive fitness in the group in the hopes of such behavior paying off. Clearly, a concept that is more developed in the human species but can be seen in the less cognitively inclined species.

Group selection is the final tool, and can also be seen as a culmination of the previous components of natural selection functioning properly in an appropriate environment. Joyce explores the functioning of group selection in tribes and cultures.[73] Those kin, tribes, cultures, and states that are able to collectively work together feature a reproductive advantage. Group selection is an integral part of Joyce's mosaic of a non-moral genealogy. However, as Joyce realizes, to account for the development of a moral sense, natural selection has more explanatory work to do.

Moral Clout

It seems that regardless of the number of developed helping traits one can still not secure the moral sense of authority that is required to encompass moral judgments. Darwin made mention in the previous section of the "horror of scorn and infamy." Joyce realizes the powerful impact of scorn, shame, and ill repute. He grounds such notions in the concept of guilt. It is in and through the concept of guilt that natural selection is able to bring about the required authorial clout to ground the moral faculty from which moral judgments are derived.

Joyce interestingly describes the moral sense and consciousness as co-referential. The moral sense and consciousness would have to be co-referential because they are individuating characteristics of what it means to be human. For one does not call the lion unjust for killing the gazelle like one condemns the innocent human slaughtering of elementary school children, but why? If both cases are the product of natural selection,

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[73] Ibid., 37.

then why the discrepancy? The answer appears to be consciousness. The lion is unable to contemplate its actions. However, man is constantly able to worry and fret about his actions. A basic feature of practical rationality is the ability to think about the future. Charles Darwin describes the relation between the moral sense and consciousness as follows: "Any animal whatever, endowed with well marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, as in man."[74] It is interesting to see, as even Darwin notes, that given practical rationality—what Darwin calls conscience and intellectual powers—a moral sense is soon inevitable. Thus, it seems that practical rationality and a moral sense are uniquely and inextricably intertwined, if not co-referential, but how does a moral sense develop from a non-moral genealogy?

Non-human primates are interesting, especially their social behavior and ability to feel guilt.[75] Other animals do not display guilt or even the proto form of it. For dogs the tail-between-the-legs can be described as guilt but is more than likely punishment avoidance. However, non-human primates display a proto form of guilt that cannot be accounted for in a similar manner. Christopher Coe and Leonard Rosenblum's study of the macaque monkeys and their submissive behavior to the dominant male is helpful here. The dominant male usually obstructs the sexual activity of the submissive males. Even when the dominant male is behind a plexiglass window the submissive males still refuse to engage in sexual activity even when they are not physically threatened. What is interesting is when the dominant male is removed altogether: at that point the sexual

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[74] Ibid., 101.

[75] Joyce. *Myth of Morality.* 138.

activity among the submissive males increases significantly. Once the dominant male returned Coe and Rosenblum noticed that the submissive behavior of the non-dominant males increased dramatically. Coe and Rosenblum conjecture that "animals can incorporate behavioral rules which are associated with their social role and can respond in a manner that acknowledges a perceived violation of the social code."[76] Toshisada Nishida also reports a case where a dominant male did a "sneak attack" upon a subordinate that went beyond social hierarchy.[77] The infraction elicited an attack from the subordinate in which the dominant chimp did not defend himself to the degree one would expect. The subordinate chimp was "confident that, because he was on the side of justice, there would be no retaliation," Nishida describes.[78] The dominant male's reluctance to retaliate is attributed to his infraction and the evidence of guilt. Joyce cites the previous reports, not as an overwhelming empirical declaration, but instead to make known the type of evidence that is available.

Guilt is the basis for developing a sense of "inescapable authority."[79] For such an inclination would potentially serve reproductive fitness far better than "clear headed calculation." It is the concept of guilt, as Joyce argues, that moves cognition to action.[80] Consciousness is an area that exceeds the current project. However, as seen in a brief exploration of the relationship between consciousness and guilt, the development of guilt is the basis of Joyce's non-moral genealogy. No feelings or dispositions carry the moral

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[76] Ibid., 139.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 140

[80] Ibid., 138.

clout needed to induce action other than the non-negotiable nature of (the feeling of) guilt that produces an internal reason for action.

Unreliability of Moral Judgments

This has been a brief sketch of Richard Joyce's non-moral genealogy.[81] If his case is plausible and probable, then this should cast into question the reliability of our moral judgments. For what has been presented is a non-moral genealogy with corroborating empirical evidence. Thus the antecedent of Harman's conditional challenge has been arguably satisfied. On this analysis, the development of moral judgments does not seem predicated or dependent on truth or a process aimed at truth. Natural selection aims to ensure the survival and replication of genes, and moral facts do not appear to play an explanatory role. Consider the following: It seems that incest would be judged to be wrong regardless of any moral fact.[82] What do moral theorists point to in order to describe why Parent-child incest is wrong? If one were going to avoid appealing to a brute fact, then there would have to be some additional component, such as this one: such an action causes a traumatic experience for the child. So, in a case of incest that causes trauma it seems that one would have to point to the trauma that causes the *wrongness* of the action. However, it does not seem that natural selection is particularly concerned with childhood trauma. One can imagine a counterfactual case where parent-child incest does not traumatize the child. The idea that can be abstracted from the previous case is that humanity would have evolved to judge incest as forbidden regardless of whether or not

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[81] Richard Joyce's position is laid out in full in his *Evolution of Morality* and *Myth of Morality*. The former provides a concise explication of his project.

[82] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. 165.

"incest is wrong" is a moral fact. One may argue that the case presented only undermines judgments of incest, but such a case points rather to an entrenched problem.

The underlying problem in such a case is that it highlights a deficiency in the faculty that produces moral judgments (Fmj). If Joyce is right, then Fmj is aimed at survival and replication. Moral facts do not seem to be the end aim of Fmj. Joyce's argument would not be a case of the genetic fallacy because the process is not aimed at truth. If Fmj happened upon correlating moral facts to moral truths it would be a matter of sheer luck or coincidence. For it seems that motivational reasons are distinct and separate from moral reasons, which is the defect in Fmj if one expects Fmj to be aimed at truth.[83] In this case of Fmj its origin compromises its ability to correlate moral judgments to moral facts.

Summary

A brief account of Richard Joyce's non-moral genealogy has been presented as a continuation of Harman's epistemic challenge to moral judgments. Rather than staying at an abstract level, Joyce provides empirical evidence to corroborate his non-moral genealogy of moral judgments, which, as Harman argued, is needed to move his theory from being possible to probable. Hopefully, one is able to feel the weight of Joyce's non-moral genealogy.[84] For if Joyce is correct then there is no reason to think that N&D are able to explain the correlation between moral judgments and moral facts. Moral knowledge, it seems, is in deep trouble if there is no way to bridge the gap.

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[83] We can have moral reasons without having obligations.. One may even have the best moral reasons or best reasons overall without a moral obligation. Moral reasons seem to point beyond mere survival and replication.

[84] One is able to find Richard Joyce's argument at length in *Evolution of Morality* and *The Myth of Morality.*

Sharon Street offers her own argument against the reliability of Fmj that echoes Joyce's argument and will leave a preview of the only available options left to the proponent of moral knowledge. Street argues that initially the moral realist will have to explain the correlation between the impact of evolutionary forces on man's evaluative judgments and independent evaluative truths that moral realism posits.[85] This in turn will lead to a dilemma for the moral realist. She will either have to posit that there is no relation between them, which would seem to collapse into skepticism. Or on the other hand the moral realist will have to show how evolutionary forces favored man's proto-human ancestors who grasped moral truths. The latter will be argued for in the next chapter.

In light of Joyce's argument it seems that moral knowledge is all but sunk. For unless one wants to bite the skeptical bullet, it seems there is no other option in light of the current evolutionary account of moral judgments. However, there might be a plausible solution in spite of the case presented. One will recall from chapter 1 that the conjunction of naturalism, as a *Weltanschauung*, and evolutionary theory presented a crisis for neo-Darwinian theories of value. In light of the conjunction N&D it seems that there is an empirically verified non-moral genealogy to defeat moral judgments. However, could there be a plausible account that could show how natural selection could warrant moral judgments in light of Joyce's undermining non-moral genealogy?

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[85] Sharon Street. "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value." *Philosophical Studies* (2006). 1.

Chapter 3:
A Vindication of Moral Judgments

It is apparent that the conjunction N&D faces difficulties in trying to account for the correlation between man's evaluative judgments and evaluative facts given current evolutionary theory. However, as Nagel rightly points out, any theory that cannot account for the mind or show it to be a likely occurrence would seem to be inherently problematic. Rather than making the mind secondary as naturalism does, would a theory that focuses on the mind as primary be able to vindicate moral judgments? The mind allows one to know truth, so it would seem that the mind's *telos* would be a faculty that is naturally aimed at truth. So perhaps a teleological account of a non-reductive realist conception of morality is necessary for addressing the epistemic challenge to moral judgments.

Joyce's argument is as follows: if there is practical rationality, then there is no moral knowledge; there is practical rationality; therefore, there is no moral knowledge. Given the foundational nature of practical rationality the second premise is beyond dispute. One would have to use practical rationality in order to defeat Joyce's second premise, which is a contradiction. Thus, one will have to argue that practical rationality does not lead to there being no moral knowledge. It seems rather that if there were not the possibility of moral knowledge, then there would be no practical rationality, which would be absurd. The counterfactual claim would ultimately vindicate the possibility and plausibility of moral knowledge.

$$\sim\text{MK} \supset \sim\text{PR}/ \text{ PR}// \text{ MK}$$

Moral discourse seems deliberatively indispensable[86], as David Enoch argues,

> When you allow yourself to settle a deliberation by reference to a desire, you commit yourself to the normative judgment that your desire made the relevant action the one it makes most sense to perform. So even with the desire at hand, you still commit yourself to a normative truth.[87]

Enoch is claiming that if after deliberation one chooses an action based on her desires, then that desire makes the most *sense* to perform. This claim may be too strong, for it seems plausible that due to weakness of will individuals make choices that *do not* make the most sense to perform, in spite of possibly knowing the action that *does* make the most sense to perform. Ritchie adds, "agents do not only deliberate about what is the right thing to do. They also deliberate about whether to do the right thing."[88] Justification creeps into the discussion, because one's needs are compared with the wants and needs of others. Is one justified in her desires or is her action unjustified in comparison to the desires and wants of those around her. One is trying to get something *right* in her comparing opposing and differing desires with her own. It is the previous notion that does not make sense without some independent standard. It seems to strain credulity that sense could be made of deliberative discourse "without the *prima facie* independence of this standard." The question, in light of moral judgments seeming to have a lack of warrant as illustrated in the previous chapter, is this: Is a correlation still possible? It seems that moral knowledge is possible, for one can still appeal to brute facts or a miraculous correlation between evaluative judgments and evaluative facts. However, can

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[86] Enoch. *Taking Morality Seriously*. Chapter 3.

[87] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments*. 24.

[88] Ibid., 25.

one do better? Is there an explanatory account that shows how moral knowledge is made

probable, not by a divorce from the scientific community, but rather by incorporating

natural selection into a *Weltanschauung* that sees the mind as primary? It seems possible

that if one begins from the mind and speculates about the origin of it, then one may be

able to offer an account that will be able to answer Harman and Joyce's challenge.

The argument of this chapter will be simply to give a primitive sketch of what a

possible solution to Joyce's challenge may look like. The goal is to lay out a plausible

alternative and then invite the reader to consider which theory seems to possess more

explanatory power.

The argument set forth in this chapter is the following:

Assume ~MK
~MK → ~PR
So ~PR
PR
PR & ~PR
Thus, MK

PR still represents practical rationality and MK still stands for moral knowledge. If one

uses transposition on Joyce's first premise, and argues for MK then the result would be a

reductio ad absurdum. For it will be argued that MK is so essential to human nature that

without MK there would be no PR, which is absurd. So, it will be left for the remainder

of the chapter to show that the mind is a faculty such that, not only is PR aimed at truth as

N&E argues, but MK is aimed at truth as well. Thus, PR and MK are inextricably linked.

How to Understand the Epistemological Challenge

Before trying to understand and attempt to solve Harman's epistemological

challenge it is best first to understand the challenge. The challenge could apply to

epistemic access, justification, knowledge, tracking, or reliability. Indeed there could be

additional areas that are left out, but it seems that the previous areas mentioned are the main categories that are potentially being challenged. Rather than conflating terms and hiding a potential solution behind a veil of ambiguity, it is best to argue for a tight connection between moral judgments and moral facts.

The problem is often broached in talk of epistemic access. Assuming that there are normative truths, man's cognitive faculties arguably have epistemic access to independent truths. But how does access obtain? Or by what means is such knowledge acquired? If it can be shown that there is no way to explain the means of access then it would seem that there is no access to moral truths, or at least lack of warrant to believe in such access. One would have to remain a skeptic due to an intractable epistemic challenge to evaluative judgments. However, what does epistemic access entail? It seems in order to justify access one would have to define or explain it in terms of justification or knowledge or warrant, I suppose. Conditions X, Y, Z provide the evidence for access. Or perhaps one could account for access by means of supplying the necessary sufficient conditions for moral knowledge. The problem becomes one of ambiguity. What does *access* entail?

It seems that it is best to answer the epistemic challenge not in terms of access, but rather in terms of *correlation*.[89] Correlations are sought in light of a conspicuous relation. Imagine that Michael has many beliefs about a distant village dedicated to Boston cream doughnuts. Suppose that many of his beliefs about this paradise are in fact true. That is to say his beliefs correspond to the state of affairs of the Boston cream

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[89] The epistemological challenge is often approached in terms of access, justification, knowledge, and reliability. For a discussion of how to understand the epistemological challenge, David Enoch's Chapter 7 in *Taking Morality Seriously* presents a convincing case for *not* understanding the challenge in terms of access, justification, knowledge, and reliability. Ibid., 158-159.

village. Such a correlation would be *striking*—the aforementioned conspicuous relation. In fact such a correlation would seem to be too miraculous to believe without an adequate explanation. The reason one looks for an explanation is that there is so striking and conspicuous a correlation whose coincidence strains credulity without a robust explanation on offer.

Mind-independent truths are causally inert, and it cannot be that man's judgments are caused by those facts. Mathematicians often seem to achieve a striking and conspicuous correlation between their conclusions and mathematical truths. How do one's mathematical judgments correlate to causally inert mathematical facts? Similarly how do one's evaluative judgments correlate to evaluative truths? It seems that the answer will not lie in a nomothetic, strictly causal explanation, as Joyce has made clear, but rather a non-reductive realist conception of morality. This is the sort of picture that seems potentially plausible for addressing the lack of warrant for moral judgments.

Moral Judgments Vindicated

Rather than pushing natural selection beyond its explanatory limits in a nomothetic explanation, a teleological explanation seems to offer a better account for the correlation between evaluative judgments and evaluative truths. Natural selection is only quasi-teleological, because the *telos* in question does not have any causal power, at least in a naturalistic worldview.[90] As has been said natural selection's end aim is survival and replication, and truth does not necessarily have to accompany the process, as seen in Fmj. However, if one implements the idea of the mind as primary, could natural selection then account for the correlation between evaluative judgments and evaluative truths?

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[90] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 51.

Natural selection has been argued to be a process that is aimed at survival and replication, but are not these goods in and of themselves? Assume that survival and replication or whatever natural selection aims at is at least in some respect trivially good.[91] This does not entail that everything is good that is aimed at in every respect or is not outweighed by other considerations down the evolutionary road. All that one needs to assume is that survival and replication are good and certainly better than their opposites. Selective forces whose end aim is survival and replication have developed man's judgments. Keeping in mind that natural selection's end aim is good, it makes sense that man's judgments have developed to correlate with those normative truths. However, it seems that to carry on in this argumentative fray is to radically reduce the authoritative nature of morality. Enoch argues for a "pre-established harmony" to account for the correlation between moral judgments and moral facts, but in a "godless version".[92] He does so as to not burden moral realism with any ontological commitments, but it seems that moral realism is already committed to the existence of God. So, there "is no ontological parsimony gained by ignoring God's reality."[93] God is in fact needed to flesh out a teleological account of moral knowledge. God knows that survival and replication are good and PR would be pre-established towards those ends.[94] It is important to note that moral clout is needed or imposed by moral discourse otherwise it would seem to reduce the moral "right" to a functional "right". The possibility of moral knowledge *is*

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[91] Enoch. *Taking Morality Seriously.* 168.

[92] Evans. *God and Moral Obligation*. 180.

[93] Ibid.

[94] It seems that to focus solely on survival and replication is to cheapen the purpose and function of morality. Morality is more than survival, but is concerned with human flourishing, living the good life, and the *summon bonum*. So, it would seem a difficult task for Enoch and Platonism to be able to adjudicate a robust conception of morality. However, such a topic will not be able to be addressed in full here.

"queer" as J. L. Mackie and other error theorists opine, but only to forms of moral realism that are committed to metaphysical naturalism. However, morality and moral knowledge are not surprising if God is included. This is not to suggest that evaluative truths are a function of evaluative judgments, nor does it suggest that evaluative judgments causally track evaluative truths. Rather man's moral judgments "have been shaped by selective pressures towards ends that are in fact – and quite independently – of value."[95] Thus, the correlation between moral facts and moral judgments is explained by the connection between natural selection and value, which is the fact, but not solely the fact that survival is good.

A teleological explanation seeks to account for an event or class of events, or in the present case, the capacity of some being for a particular end. Thus, X is either part of the end state for Y or X is part of the means, which brings about Y.[96] As a result, the explanation should be able to account for why Xs produce Ys. This is why natural selection does not appear to offer a valid account of the ability to *know* moral truths on its own. For such moral truths (Ys) are not always explained by natural selection (X), and in turn lend to an improbable explanation of correlation.

Natural selection, as a quasi-teleological account, is insufficient in accounting for how moral judgments correlate to moral facts, but an intentional agent may be able to account for the correlation. If an agent wants to bring about a desired state of affairs, then she would have a means to reach that end, if it were within her power. So, if she acts on the means, she will then arrive at her desired end. However, such an explanation says

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[95] Enoch. *Taking Morality Seriously.* 168..

[96] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 49.

nothing of the previous state of affairs being objectively valuable.[97] Thus, agent explanation needs an additional feature.

It cannot be said that the collective whole of humanity's moral judgments in turn become the moral facts that moral judgments correlate to. If the previous were true, then quasi-realism could account for this phenomenon.[98] However, it seems then that the wrongness of murder is not simply a matter of collective opinion. If it were, if members of the collective whole changed their mind, then murdering could be the right action. This would rob morality of its objectivity. That which is "objectively" right is not dependent on the majority of opinion.

The following would be a possible teleological account of moral knowledge:

(1) God knew Y (man's judgments correlating to moral facts) was objectively valuable in that man's survival would be good in a robust way due to God's making it so.

Then
(2) God has a good reason to bring Y about.
So,
(3) God wanted to bring about Y,
(4) Knew the best means to bring Y,
(5) Had the power, and
(6) Took the action,
Which then explains why
(7) Y occurred.[99]

Thus, if the prior claims were the case, then it would be possible to offer an adequate explanation of man's moral awareness.

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[97] Ibid., 50.

[98] Ibid., 74.

[99] Ibid., 164.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a defense of the existence and nature of God; rather, the discussion will pertain to fleshing out the story of how God, understood as X, provides an explanation of how moral judgments correlate to moral facts.[100] The first premise argues that God *knew* Y is objectively valuable, but how does God *know* that which is objectively valuable?

The God of classical theism is a just and righteous God.[101] This idea separates Him, and, more importantly, His character from the distinctly human deities that are normally considered when discussing the Euthyphro Dilemma. So, classical theism associates God as the source of Being, and the source of the Good.[102] There is no separating the Good from God or vice versa, for both terms are co-referential, even though they don't mean the same thing.[103] David Baggett and Jerry Walls, in concert with a number of other contemporary theistic ethicists, argue that God is Good and, indeed, the Good.[104] God commands according to His nature, but all commands are not analytic.

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[100] God should be understood, in the following argument, as the God of classical theism with attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, omni-benevolence, and other attributes that are deducible from the former. A rough conception should suffice for the present purpose of charting the intended course. A further treatment of teleology and God's attributes as a possible explanation for moral knowledge is forthcoming. This paper will not broach the question of whether simplicity ought to be included among such attributes.

[101] Glenn C. Graber. "In Defense of a Divine Command Theory of Ethics." *Journal of The American Academy Of Religion* 43, no. 1 (March 1, 1975): 62-69. 66.

[102] Ibid., 87.

[103] This idea should not be seen akin to that of Richard Swinburne who says that God is good, in so far as He acts. For Swinburne argues that all of God's acts are for some end and that end must be a good thing. It seems apparent that God's acts are good. However, contrary to Swinburne, it does not appear to follow that all of His acts are good by logical necessity. Swinburne argues that ethical truths are analytic, and would be the case even if God were not. Swinburne chooses to see the Good as independent of God. However, Swinburne's view binds God and makes Him dependent on and subservient to the Good by grasping the second horn of the Euthyphro Dilemma. However, it seems that such a concession is problematic and unnecessary. R.G. Swinburne "Duty and the Will of God." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4: (1974): 219. *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 101.

[104] David Baggett, and Jerry Walls. *Good God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 97.

God commanding or acting in a way that is not consistent with His nature would seem to be a metaphysical impossibility.[105] God cannot do anything that is a logical contradiction, as it applies to God going against His nature. Moral truths appear not to flow deductively from reason, and if one were to deny some moral truths, it does not seem that would necessarily entail a logical contradiction.[106] It seems plausible to think of at least some moral truths as contingent. So, one can see how God would *know* that which is objectively valuable. This, in turn, is the metaphysical foundation for the epistemic process of how God can account for the correlation of moral judgments to moral facts.

The question now pertains to how this foundation relates to Fmj being aimed at moral facts. The human awareness of the conditions needed for flourishing and the objective moral order cry out for an explanation.[107] The correlation that natural selection just happened upon the moral order appears highly unlikely.[108] However, this does not mean that a theistic explanation of moral knowledge has to contradict or deny the process that is described by natural selection. Ritchie thinks that a conjunction of theism with natural selections is a perfectly viable option:

> A theistic explanation of the emergence of moral knowledge need not conflict with a version of the theory of natural selection. The theist need not deny that the processes described by evolutionary biology explain the generation of human convictions about ethics, and their capacity to reason about these convictions and refine them. All that the theist needs to add to the account given by evolutionary biology is the claim that the world is providentially ordered so that the interaction of the quasi-teleological process of natural selection and of the spandrel-like features it generates yield an outcome which enable human beings to apprehend that which is of objective value.[109]

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments*. 59.

[107] Ibid., 185.

[108] Joyce. *The Evolution of Morality*. 184.

Thus, a synthesis between classical theism and natural selection has one crucial advantage. Gilbert Harman's challenge is that moral judgments lack warrant due to their obvious severing of their tight connection to truth.[110] Richard Joyce goes on to expand Harman's challenge by arguing that naturalistic evolution makes it unlikely that moral knowledge is possible.[111] However, if the world through natural selection is providentially orchestrated to allow humans to apprehend that which is objectively valuable this would seem to strengthen the case for moral knowledge in a way that is unavailable to the metaphysical naturalist. In fact Enoch's case appears to be stronger on theism than on Platonism. It seems that Platonism is unable to provide the moral clout that is needed to make sense of moral discourse. Platonism also appears to have a hard time unpacking a robust sense of morality that touches on the flourishing and development of the individual as well as the community. Theism is able to bridge the gap from trivial goodness to human flourishing. For it seems that the essence of morality is more than survival and replication.

Concluding Remarks

This has been a discussion focused on the undermining and possible vindication of moral judgments. The environment of moral judgments has been presented in, hopefully, a fair and genuine manner, showing their landscape. It seems that depending on whether the mind is seen as primary or not, moral judgments then either possess warrant or not.

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[109] Ritchie. *From Morality to Metaphysics: The Theistic Implications of Our Ethical Commitments.* 174.

[110] Ibid

[111] Ibid., 199.

It seems that moral judgments have a rebutting defeater given practical rationality in a naturalistic world. Fmj is not necessarily or even likely aimed at true beliefs concerning moral judgments. As a result, one cannot maintain warrant for moral judgments if naturalism is the case. Thus, genuine moral knowledge would not seem to be the inference to the best explanation for moral judgments.[112]

On the other hand, theism seems to be able to offer a plausible and perhaps probable account as to warrant the tight connection between moral judgments and moral facts. For one can think of Fmj being encompassed within an overall design plan by God. For Fmj to produce a moral judgment that corresponds to a moral fact there are several factors that are involved. For the correlation to be explained it needs Fmj to function properly in an appropriate environment and be aimed at the production of true beliefs. This in turn would seem to account for the correlation, especially in light of Enoch's argument that survival and replication are a good.[113] It is important to remember that morality seems to encompass more than simply survival and replication. In fact the notion that morality is primarily about survival and replication alone, on theism, strains credulity, despite our intrinsic value. In turn moral knowledge would be a basic and fundamental feature of practical rationality, but would not stop there. For the Fmj would just be a basic aspect of PR. Both MK and PR would be basic and ultimately at least

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[112] It seems that Joyce may not be able to account for the reliability of PR. In fact it seems that judgments produced by N&E could all be epistemically undermined. This area has been explored in detail by Alvin Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism. In fact, Thomas Nagel seems persuaded by Plantinga's argument in his book *Mind & Cosmos*. However, the potential impact of Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism, and more specifically Joyce's first premise, would be an interesting discussion for another paper. For now if PR is reliable in a naturalistic worldview it seems that PR would defeat moral judgments. Alvin Plantinga. *Warrant and Proper Function*. New York: Oxford, 1993. Chapter 12.

[113] Plantinga. *Warrant and Proper Function*. 39.

consistent in referring to the ultimate process of survival and replication that is man's rational faculty. Fmj would be a subset of PR, which is designed by God and aimed at truth, and it could account for the correlation of moral facts to moral judgments. As a result if there were no MK, then there would be no PR. However, such a conclusion is absurd and in a theistic worldview it seems that moral judgments could be vindicated. A teleological account can plausibly explain the agent causation needed for man's cognitive faculties to function appropriately. For if God is essentially a mind then man's practical rationality would reflect the mind of God, potentially and plausibly anyway, and perhaps especially as it pertains to moral judgments. A discussion of the resemblance between man's moral judgments and the mind of God seems to be an area fruitful for discussion, especially as a fuller unpacking of the purpose of moral knowledge is needed. It seems that morality hearkens to something deeper than only survival and replication, but touches on the idea of flourishing in a robust sense of the moral good. However, a brief sketch describing how the process could possibly function has been presented.

The ultimate answer of moral judgments has been left open. With what has been said there seems to be potentially only two approaches: Either there is a potential crisis for Darwinian theories of value or there is a plausible teleological and likely theistic solution to vindicate moral judgments. As is usually the case, it seems that primacy of either nature or the mind will determine the end aim of natural selection as it relates to the purpose of moral judgments.
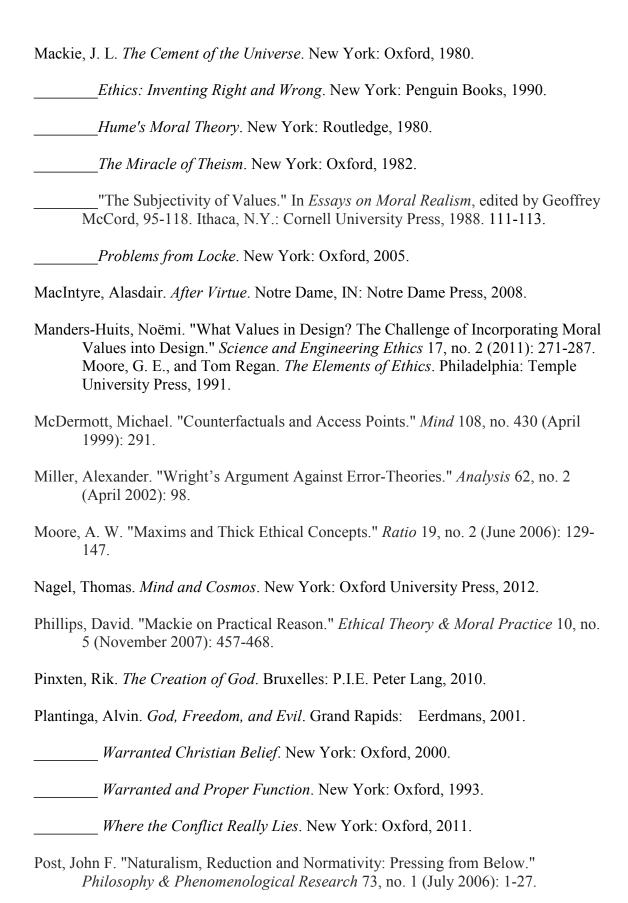
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