Notes on *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*

notes by Jacob Williams • last updated 2025-08-03

“Introduction: Metaethics and Normative Ethics” by David Copp

Copp gives an overview of the book’s chapters. I feel like the connections between the metaethics chapters, especially, seem a little freewheeling and didn’t give me a totally clear framework for organizing them.

I like how Copp casts a few different approaches to morality as different ways of retaining the idea “that an adequate account of morality must show it to be a *necessary* truth that *every* person who is subject to morality has good practical reason to be moral” (Copp 16) in the face of the challenge from the “neo-Humean theory… that rationality is basically a matter of efficiency in serving one’s intrinsic ends or goals, [which] are taken as given…” (Copp 16). The four ways: allow that some people “are not subject to morality”, or adopt “a version of ethical egoism”, or try “amending the neo-Humean account” somehow, or reject the neo-Humean account. (Copp 16)

Copp frames his discussion of normative ethical theories by asking “two closely related questions. What is the basic matter of moral concern? And what are the fundamental or basic moral truths?” (Copp 19)

Copp does *not* classify rights-based and Kantian theories as “deontological”, because in them, “judgments about the rightness of action are derivative” as in consequentialism. What they derive from judgments about: consequentialism—“value or goodness”; Kantianism —“rational agency”; rights-based theories—rights. (Copp 21)

Copp says “[t]raditional deontology recognizes three significant moral statuses”: “constraints”, “duties of special relationship”, and “options”. (Copp 24)

Some things I’ll be interested to read about:

- Copp says that Quinn (who wrote a chapter on divine command theory) deals with the Euthyphro dilemma by saying God’s commands are rooted in God’s goodness; Copp points out the obvious problem (not in these words) that something analogous to the

Euthyphro dilemma then applies to the notion of goodness. (Copp 7) Does Quinn have a reply? (update: I don't feel like Quinn's chapter addressed this)

- Copp thinks normativity is somehow related to the idea that: "Moral judgment, especially judgment about what one ought to do, has a kind of characteristic direct relevance to action or choice. This idea is unfortunately vague." (Copp 9) He wrote an article listing "three 'grades' of normativity" (Copp 9).
- The chapters on virtue ethics and ethics of care apparently "do not aim to provide a theory of right action." (Copp 20)
- McNaughton and Rawling's criticism of "the indirect view" of consequentialist decision-making, in which we use consequentialism to choose the way of deciding what to do (instead of just trying to do what consequentialism would prescribe). (Copp 23)
- McNaughton and Rawling apparently propose a version of deontology without constraints (but having the other two statuses mentioned above). (Copp 25)

The notes mention a 1998 Kagan paper about how "consequentialist theories can have different 'evaluative focal points.'" (Copp 33)

"Part I. Metaethics"

"1. Moral Realism" by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord

Sayre-McCord points out how disagreements about moral realism sometimes involve disagreements about what counts as moral realism:

> …what one person might embrace as a successful defense of moral realism, another might see as, at best, a view one would embrace once one had given up on the thought that there are genuine moral facts. (Sayre-McCord 41)

Relatedly, he notes that disagreements between error theorists and moral realists can take two different forms: (1) about the existence of e.g. "objectively prescriptive facts, or categorical reasons, or nonnatural properties…" (Sayre-McCord 53) or (2) about whether any of those are prerequisites for moral realism.

Three criteria for a successful moral realism: (Sayre-McCord 43)

1. "make sense of how [moral] facts fit with other facts in the world"
2. "show[] them to be facts to which we might have some access, such that we might have evidence for our beliefs concerning them"
3. "reveal[] the facts as providing reasons to act or not act in various ways"

He says identifying moral with natural properties was popular "[a]t the turn of the twentieth century" (Sayre-McCord 44), but Moore's Open Question Argument shifted the debate. (Sayre-McCord 45) Sayre-McCord thinks the water/H2O counterexample shows a problem with the Open Question Argument (Sayre-McCord 50), but that it still "does properly highlight something distinctive about moral thinking. No defense of moral realism can be successful without giving an account of the distinctive nature of moral thought." (Sayre-McCord 51)

Two significant concepts:

- "**motivational internalism**": the idea that you can't *believe* something is right without feeling motivated toward it in some way (Sayre-McCord 51)
- "Humean view that **motivational states (e.g. desire) and beliefs are distinct** existences" (Sayre-McCord 51, emphasis added) (I'd like to understand this better; the footnote says "[t]he *locus classicus* for this argument is David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*…" (Sayre-McCord 61))

He says that together, these "impl[y] noncognitivism…" (Sayre-McCord 51) So realists must reject one or the other.

"Reason internalism" is one alternative to motivational internalism, which says (IIUC) that to believe something is right means believing you have a reason to do it. "This view has the resources to acknowledge that sometimes people fail to be motivated appropriately by their moral judgments while also being able to explain the distinctive connection between such judgments and actions." (Sayre-McCord 52)

Both reason internalism and motivational internalism, Sayre-McCord thinks, are ways of trying to explain "the distinctive nature of moral thought" mentioned above—something he says both "[r]ealists and antirealists alike" (Sayre-McCord 52) must do.

Sayre-McCord points out that belief in moral facts seems unjustified unless they somehow "actually figure in our best explanations of our experience." (Sayre-McCord 55) (The endnote seems to imply Sturgeon 1985 and Boyd 1988 attempt to argue they do; this would be interesting to read more about.)

He gives some thoughts on pages 57-59 on how to develop realism, which IIUC seem focused on investigating how/why moral beliefs arise.

"2. Theological Voluntarism" by Philip L. Quinn

Quinn first gives four theological reasons why Christians should find theological voluntarism attractive (though he doesn't think they're conclusive). I don't care about this.

Making morality depend on God's *commands* just one way of making it depend on God's *will*; Quinn focuses on this option in order to avoid complexities such as the fact that all wrongdoing is in a certain sense willed by God (if God exists) since he permits it. (Quinn 69)

Quinn does not take a stance on whether to "explicate the dependence relation [between wrongness and God's commands] in terms of causality rather than supervenience or versa" (Quinn 70). I don't understand what the supervenience option—saying "wrongness supervenes on some property such as being forbidden by God…" (Quinn 70)—would mean.

Quinn mentions how Anscombe thought our conception of morality was a holdover from what Quinn calls the "divine law conception" (Quinn 72). For Quinn, this gives more credence to that conception; as an atheist who supports notions of duty/obligation, maybe I should give more thought to Anscombe's point.

Quinn explains the Euthyphro dilemma and why the divine command theorist must take the option of saying what's right depends on God's command. He describes two difficulties this raises: "the arbitrariness objection" (Quinn 74) (God could tell us to torture babies) and what Wierenga calls "the 'Depriving God of Goodness' objection" (Quinn 75) (calling God good ought to mean more than just saying he obeys his own commands).

Quinn's strategy is to say God's commands are constrained by God's nature. (Quinn 76), and:

> It is usually assumed that the divine nature contains essential properties that God could not lack and that there are divine activities that God could not fail to engage in. (Quinn 77)

I think this resolves the problem *if* you say the constraint is that God's nature must conform to an external standard of goodness—but then I would say the divine command theory is less appealing than just deriving a theory of morality directly from a theory of value. (I.e., I think if you have a notion of objective goodness, you can argue that the very concept of seeing something as good implies some obligation to promote it.)

Anyway, Quinn *doesn't* seem to think God is constrained by an external standard. Rather, he mentions a theory by Alston on which God himself *is* the standard. To me it seems like the arbitrariness and Depriving God of Goodness objections should both apply to this notion of goodness. Unless you want to say it's just a *coincidence* that God is opposed to torturing babies for fun in all possible worlds, don't you need to be able to say that the *reason* he's opposed to it is that it's bad?

"3. Ethical Naturalism" by Nicholas L. Sturgeon

Regarding "naturalistic fallacy": Sturgeon says "philosophers…have mostly stopped using this term" (Sturgeon 94).

Sturgeon says Moore's Open Question Argument, if valid, would show ethical properties can't be natural *or* supernatural properties. I sort of thought the point of the argument was just to show ethical properties can't be reduced to non-ethical properties. Sturgeon points out that (among other issues) Moore's argument doesn't apply to nonreductive forms of ethical naturalism (Sturgeon 98–99).

Why might we think ethical properties could be both natural and not reducible to other properties? One thing Sturgeon says is:

> …a standard feature of scientific progress has been terminological innovation, in which new terms are introduced for properties not previously recognized, and there is no reason to think that this process is or ever will be at an end. So there is no assurance that, if "good" or some other transparently ethical term stands for a natural property, this must be a property that we can (or even: will be able to) also represent with nonethical terminology. (Sturgeon 99)

He mentions an "apparent causal role of ethical properties in the natural order" (Sturgeon 100) as a reason to believe in them. I would like a longer discussion of this; the example he mentions (the argument in the *Republic* "about whether being a just person makes one's life better or worse" (Sturgeon 100)) is perhaps evidence that some people *believe* ethical properties have causal powers, but why should we take them seriously? (Perhaps the metaethical theory I favor does basically imply ethical properties have causal powers, though—specifically, an experience having the property of being valuable has some sort of power to create desire for it?)

An interesting benefit(?) Sturgeon claims for nonreductive views is that it allows you to deny that there are "exceptionless ethical generalizations" (Sturgeon 102).

Regarding the is-ought gap, Sturgeon says "many have come to regard an is-ought gap as nothing special: they see similar gaps everywhere." (Sturgeon 104) This motivates an epistemology where bridging such gaps is normal. I'd like to read more about this.

On the problem of disagreement, Sturgeon suggests "there has not been a long history of ethical debate" (Sturgeon 108) meeting the conditions that would lead to consensus. He also draws an analogy to the question of God's existence, noting that people continue to see atheism as reasonable despite its inability to win consensus. (Sturgeon 108)

Sturgeon talks a bit about whether we should expect morality to be universally motivating—he at least thinks the arguments for that aren't strong enough to merit dismissing ethical naturalism, and he thinks ethical naturalism can explain why "typical humans would normally have reasons of considerable weight for promoting moral goods and honoring moral duties." (Sturgeon 111) He also thinks "one can defend a less hedged version of this thesis" (Sturgeon 111)—I wonder how.

Sturgeon quotes some things Mackie says about how "purely descriptive" properties could, if the world were a certain way, make it true (Sturgeon's summary) "that there is a single way of life that is appropriate for human beings" (Sturgeon 112). Sturgeon suggests that this would really amount to having ethical properties, and such debates "resolve into empirical disagreements…" (Sturgeon 113) about whether the world is set up like that. This seems wrong to me, because there's still a gap between saying something *does* promote human flourishing

and that you *should* promote human flourishing (plus, don't you need a standard for resolving conflicts among different elements of human flourishing?).

"4. Nonnaturalism" by Jonathan Dancy

LOL at this: "The debate between these two camps is vitiated by the fact that there is no agreed account of what it is to be natural." (Dancy 123)

First, Dancy discusses Frank Jackson's analytic naturalism (Dancy calls it a "two-term naturalism") and two arguments for it (Dancy 123) (I have no confidence I'm representing these well):

1. We wouldn't be able to recognize rightness in different actions unless there were some shared descriptive property about those actions.
2. For any ethical property, there must be some disjunction of actions (including a total description of the possible world in which the action occurs) that would satisfy that property, and the ethical property is equivalent to that (descriptive) disjunction.

Dancy also discusses Sturgeon's view, calling it "one-term naturalism", which argues ethical properties exist since they have "a causal role" and should be called natural since "there is no reason to invent a special new metaphysical category … for them to come in." (Dancy 125)

In response to Jackson's first argument Dancy includes a nice quote from Josh McDowell; excerpt: "Understanding why just those things belong together may essentially require understanding the supervening term." (Dancy 128, quoting McDowell 1998, p. 202) Dancy also says some stuff about "the design structure of connectionist machines" that I don't understand.

In response to Jackson's second argument Dancy thinks we may doubt whether the evaluative and descriptive sentences actually "ascribe the same property" (Dancy 128).

Dancy doesn't think the Open Question argument works. It might not even work against analytic naturalism, if we accept an objection based on "appeal to a distinction between obvious and unobvious analytic truths." (Dancy 129) And the possibility of "terms with different meanings, that pick out the same property" (Dancy 130)—as with heat and "molecular kinetic energy"—means it doesn't refute nonanalytic naturalism. Also, per Sturgeon, it doesn't eliminate the possibility that "good" is an irreducible natural property.

Dancy discusses an argument from Parfit, derived from Sidwick, called the "Triviality Objection", which he thinks can defeat many forms of analytic and nonanalytic naturalism but not Sturgeon's or Jackson's.

Then he talks about another Sidgwick-and-Parfit argument, the "Normativity Objection", which he says "reach[es] the heart of the matter." (Dancy 133)

> Moral and other evaluative facts have a feature that no natural fact could have, namely, normativity. (Dancy 132)

Dancy says realists can't construe normativity as a "force", but I think some realist views essentially do (e.g. Rawlette's seems to suggest that the feeling of pleasure is inherently motivating). I guess Dancy doesn't interpret that as a "force" since he does discuss that kind of view.

Dancy thinks "normativity cannot be explicated in terms of some relation to motivation, and that if it could, it is a feature that natural facts could have, and so would be of no help to the nonnaturalists." (Dancy 134) (One issue he mentions is that nonnormative facts are sometimes motivating, "such as that this course of action promises a lot of pleasure." (Dancy 133))

Dancy rejects equating 'ought' with normativity, in part because **he doesn't think "the notion of a reason is… explicable in terms of some relation to an ought."** (Dancy 134). (Or does he think that? Footnote 14 says he thinks "the notion of ought can be explicated in terms of reasons…" (Dancy 143); maybe he thinks it only goes that direction, or maybe I misinterpreted the discussion on p. 134.) This was a surprising take to me and I'm not sure what I think of it. (Dancy also thinks we can have merely "enticing reasons" which don't "generate oughts". (Dancy 135) I'm inclined to reject this, but it may be a case of it not fitting with my model rather than it not having intuitive appeal…)

Dancy's own account of normativity is that there's a "*family* of normative concepts" (Dancy 137, emphasis changed from 'concepts' to 'family'). Normative facts tell us about what is "relevant to the question what to do" (Dancy 137), either directly or by telling us how other facts are relevant. This doesn't mean they have to actually tell us what to do; e.g.:

> Value-facts… are facts about practical relevance of a rather indeterminate sort (not merely facts *of* indeterminate practical relevance). As one might put it, if a violin is a good one it has reason-giving features, and we know on which side they fall (the pro rather than the con side, as it were)—but we don't yet know what those reasons are reasons to do, to believe, or to feel." (Dancy 138)

The crucial distinguishing thing about normative facts:

> …there is a difference in subject matter… between the fact that another fact is of practical relevance and a fact that is of practical relevance. (Dancy 139)

> …it just isn't true … that the fact that this action maximizes welfare (say) has the same subject matter as the fact that that fact would make the action right. (Dancy 140)

Dancy ultimately doesn't seem to think he's definitively rebutted naturalism, in part because we'd need to settle on what counts as natural.

"5. Antirealist Expressivism and Quasi-Realism"

Blackburn says expressivism traces back to ideas from e.g. Hume, but only became popular in response to the Open Question Argument.

Against intuitionism:

> Among other problems, it gives no account of why we should be interested in the propositions that, on the theory, form the subject matter of ethics. Just as colors seem to be entirely optional objects of concern, so norms, values, duties, rights, and indeed other things that floar free of the natural world must surely be optional objects of interest. For those of us mired in practical matters, such as human pleasures and pains, desires and needs, the world of ethics would seem to be something of a distraction. (Blackburn 148)

I find that comment frustrating; isn't the account of 'why we should be interested' simply: we can directly perceive that we should be interested? Arguably, questions like *why should I be interested in not feeling pain* come down to that too.

"The most influential metaphor" explaining expressivism:

> Anscombe contrasted two different ways of using a shopping list. In the first, the list directs the subject's purchases. … In the second, the list records the subject's purchases. (Blackburn 149)

Blackburn addresses some potential difficulties for expressivism, including:

- Weakness of will: "…in honest-to-God weakness of will, the moral vector is still operating, and this can be shown by subsequent remorse, or embarrassment at being caught, or a variety of discomforts." (Blackburn 151)
- People being wrong about their own moral views: "Expressivism … den[ies] that the speaker is describing his own mind. He is voicing his mind, that is, putting forward an attitude or stance as the attitude or stance that is to be held." (Blackburn 151)
- Moral judgments seem to vary along a "probable/certain dimension" (Blackburn 152): "We might suggest a difference in the 'robustness' with which an attitude is held, measured by the amount of evidence or persuasion it would take to shift it." (Blackburn 152)

In section 3, "Expressivism and Error", Blackburn notes that moral discourse has a "realist surface" and asks how much of this is compatible with expressivism. His own "quasi-realist" theory is meant to show most of it is. To me it still sounds more like quasi-error-theory…

> Suppose, for example, a realist trumpets the mind-independence of ethics. … Denying women the vote is wrong, whatever your [sic] or I or anyone else thinks. … This is to be assessed in the standard way, of imagining scenarios or possible worlds in which you or I or others think that women should not have a vote, and passing a verdict on them. Naturally, these scenarios or possibilities excite

> condemnation, and so the answer is that denying women the vote is wrong, whatever you or I or anyone else thinks about it. In giving that answer one is, of course, standing *within* one's own moral view. One is assessing the scenario in the light of things one thinks and feels about such matters. But that is no objection, since there is no other mode of assessment possible. One cannot pass a verdict without using those parts of one's mind that enable one to pass a verdict. (Blackburn 154)

> …consider the idea that on any moral issue, there is just one right answer. Rather than seeing this as a metaphysical thesis, testifying to the completeness of Moore's world of Norms and Forms, the quasi-realist will encourage a pragmatic or practical construal. The doctrine can be seen as a strenuous piece of practical advice: when there are still two things to think, keep on worrying. Beaver away, and eventually, it is promised, one opinion will deserve to prevail. (Blackburn 155)

Section 4 discusses an argument, by Geach and derived from Frege, against expressivism. This is philosophy-of-language stuff that I'm not very interested in right now.

Section 5 discusses expressivism's relationship to Aristotelian views, Kantian views, naturalism, and minimalist theories of truth. (Blackburn seems to see more compatibility with Aristotelian and Kantian views than I might have expected.)

"6. Biology and Ethics" by Philip Kitcher

> In the past decades, evolutionary theorists have solved a longstanding problem, the problem of *biological altruism*. As the behavioral biologist defines the term, an organism A acts altruistically toward another organism B just in case A's action increases B's reproductive success while diminishing A's own reproductive success. (Kitcher 166)

The solution is an appeal to inclusive fitness for closely-related organisms, and reciprocal altruism for others. But Kitcher says this doesn't explain "*psychological* altruism" (Kitcher 168) and might not even explain biological altruism in humans. Interesting!

Kitcher has a theory in which humans' (and certain other primates, iiuc) altruism originates "as a result of the selection for coalition-forming propensities that gave rise to opportunities for optional games…" (Kitcher 169)

> *Psychological* altruism, I suggest, consists in a tendency to adjust one's desires, plans, and intentions in light of one's assessment of the desires, plans, and intentions of others, the adjustment consisting in bringing one's own attitudes closer to those attributed to the others… (Kitcher 169)

> One of the important features of the coalition game is that **attempts to calculate good strategies for playing it are hopeless**. A blind disposition to empathize with

> others would do just as well as (maybe better than) a process of estimating future benefits. (Kitcher 170, emphasis added)

Kitcher warns against taking the fact that primates sometimes behave in ways calculated to promote their own interest as evidence that altruistic behavior must also be a calculated attempt at self-interest (see p. 171).

Kitcher thinks "we evolved a capacity for normative guidance" (Kitcher 172) to enable us to live in much larger groups than other primates.

In reference to ancient law codes:

> The picture we obtain shows how societies that have achieved unprecedentedly high concentrations of population are **encountering novel sources of social conflict** and how they are modifying their traditional norms to cope with them. (Kitcher 173, emphasis added)

Kitcher thinks an account like his does count against viewing morality as knowledge and in favor of noncognitivism. But he doesn't think this necessarily means we can't have "progress" in morality. Kitcher claims: "Progress as convergence on the truth is too simple a view even for the paradigm case, that of the sciences." (Kitcher 177) Sounds like you'd need to read his other stuff to understand why he thinks that though.

Crucially he doesn't think his account tells us that progress means improving "social cohesion", even though that (IIUC) is what made morality adaptive. "We might say that the function of morality is the enhancement of social cohesion ***via* the amplification of our psychological altruistic dispositions**." (Kitcher 178, emphasis added)

Why care about morality? Kitcher says:

> From the perspective I've sketched, nihilism begins to look like a psychopathology, a deliberate rejection of part of ourselves. (Kitcher 180)

My reply would probably be: following moral norms *also* sometimes requires deliberately rejecting/sacrificing part of yourself. The hard problem in metaethics is to explain why an individual should give morality precedence in such situations.

"7. Sensibility Theory and Projectivism" by Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobsen

Hume is a source of views categorized as **sentimentalism**: "the thesis that evaluative concepts are *response-invoking*: they cannot be analyzed or elucidated without appeal to subjective responses—in particular, to the sentiments." (D'Arms and Jacobson 190)

Some motivations for sentimentalism:

- “it makes sense of *internalism*…” (D’Arms and Jacobson 191)
- “to help solve the puzzle over *essential contestability* and *univocity*.” (D’Arms and Jacobson 195, emphasis added); “to secure a shared subject matter for evaluative dispute (for instance, over what is wrong or funny) among people with different outlooks (ethical perspectives or senses of humor).” (D’Arms and Jacobson 196)
    - On why achieving a univocal *wrong* is difficult: a footnote rejects defining wrong as “not to be done”, because “someone might think it an open question whether or not to perform certain wrong actions, perhaps because nonmoral considerations sometimes outweigh moral ones.” (D’Arms and Jacobson 214)

> Roughly speaking, claims about what is funny, shameful, and fearsome are claims about what to be amused by, to be ashamed of, and to fear. (D’Arms and Jacobson 196)

There are **projectivist** versions of sentimentalism, including noncognitivism and error theory; and **perceptivist** versions, including some kinds of dispositionalism as well as **sensibility theory**, the focus of the chapter. Both can be contrasted with **objectivist** views such as intuitionism. The chapter makes an analogy to theories about color to illustrate these different views.

Projectivism needs to deal with the “critical gap”, the “difference between being in an emotional state and making an evaluative judgment—between being amused, ashamed, or angry and thinking something genuinely funny, shameful, or wrong.” (D’Arms and Jacobson 197) The authors don’t think typical projectivist approaches are adequate.

> Projectivism faces a *conflation problem*: it is ill equipped to differentiate between various kinds of endorsement of our sentiments, so as to fix on those that constitute evaluative judgment. (D’Arms and Jacobson 199)

(Examples: recognizing things as regrettable even though an embrace of positive psychology has made you less prone to regret them; recognizing something as enviable while condemning your own envy. I’m not sure I really understand the problem for projectivists here.)

The chapter suggests that instead of “a difference between sentiment and judgment”, we should handle the critical gap as “a gap between sentimental appearance and reality.” (D’Arms and Jacobson 200) Dispositionalism attempts this by specifying e.g. “X is red if and only if X is such as to look red to normal human observers under standard conditions” (D’Arms and Jacobson 200) (note that it “must specify the privileged conditions … substantially”).

Obstacles to applying dispositionalism to values:

- the greater variance in “our emotional propensities” (D’Arms and Jacobson 201)

- “Whatever standard conditions are chosen, we should not be inclined to grant that people under those conditions cannot be mistaken about values…” (D’Arms and Jacobson 201)

Sensibility theory deals with these by appealing to a notion of **meriting**; quoting McDowell:

> …a virtue (say) is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit the appropriate ‘attitude’ …, but rather such as to *merit* it… (D’Arms and Jacobson 202, quoting McDowell 1985 p. 143)

I don’t really understand what this gets you. The chapter’s authors seem to acknowledge that an individual’s value judgments are still ultimately only valid from the perspective of that individual. And they think “the metaphysical dispute between sensibility theory and projectivism… amounts to less than first appears.” (D’Arms and Jacobson 204) The main benefit they see for sensibility theory sounds kind of obscure and technical to me, having something to do with projectivism needing e.g. “to analyze the funny by way of amusement, [which means] we must be able to grasp that sentiment without appealing to the concept of *funny*. Proponents of sensibility theory deny this possibliity…” (D’Arms and Jacobson 204)

“8. Moral Sentimentalism and Moral Psychology” by Michael Slote

Two examples:

> [Michael] Stocker asks us to imagine someone visiting a sick friend in the hospital who insists, to his friend and to himself, that his visit is motivated by a sense of duty rather than any feeling or concern for his friend. (Slote 220)

> Similarly, Bernard Williams describes a hypothetical case where a man who sees that both his wife and some stranger are in danger of drowning has to decide whom to save. If … the man first checks or thinks he has to check to see whether morality accords him and others a permission to favor one’s wife over strangers, then, according to Williams, he “has one thought too many.” (Slote 220)

Slote says these “have led many in the direction of forms of virtue ethics that place particular relationships at the center of the moral life. What has not so widely been recognized, however, is that [such cases] also favor sentimentalism over rationalism.” (Slote 220)

Slote discusses early sentimentalists Hutcheson and Hume. Sentimentalism led to utilitarianism but was then sidelined for a long time; “although ‘emotivism’ represents a sentimentalist kind of metaethics and was around through most of the twentieth century, the idea of a normative (virtue) ethics based in sentiment was pretty much in the shade until the so-called feminine ethics of caring emerged during the 1980s.” (Slote 224)

Slote thinks “the rightness and wrongness of actions **depends on underlying motive** and … fully **empathic caring/concern for others is the morally best of human motives**.” (Slote 228, emphasis added) This is *not* “supposed to follow from anything established by pure or scientific

psychology" (Slote 228) but rather is a basis which, once accepted, gives normative significance to the pyschological facts.

Since **empathy includes biases** toward humans, kin, and nearer / more immediate concerns, Slote's view endorses those biases rather than seeing them as problems to deal with. He suggests **some of our deontological tendencies**, like preferring to let die rather than kill, can also be understood as implications of a "causal immediacy" (Slote 230) bias.

Slote thinks that when we express moral approval/disapproval, it's based in "empathy *for the agent's empathy or lack of it*." (Slote 234) (He thinks it's important for a "sentimentalist metaethics" to have an account of approval/disapproval in which they don't "contain or involve… the belief or judgment that something is right…", to avoid "circularity" (Slote 233).)

Slote wants a **sentimentalist form of moral realism**, "suggested, or at least hinted at, by a number of philosophers, including David Wiggins, Nicholas Sturgeon, and Stephen Darwall…" (Slote 236) He thinks it should use "Saul Kripke's ideas about 'reference fixing.'" (Slote 236) I'm not sure I understand Slote's proposal; I *think*, maybe, he's saying basically that when we talk about e.g. right/wrong, what we mean by those words is dependent on facts about human psychology in the actual world but we would hold the meanings constant when talking about other possible worlds (even though human psychology may be different in those worlds). If so I am very skeptical of characterizing this as realism.

The problem that empathy might be used to justify racism is discussed in a paragraph on page 237-238.

"9. Moral Relativism and Moral Nihilism" by James Dreier

Two definitions:

> Nihilism is the view that there are no moral facts. (Dreier 240)

> Relativism is the view that moral statements are true or false only relative to some standard or other…. moral relativism says that determinate answers to questions about what we morally ought to do can only be had once a frame is specified, either explicitly or tacitly. (Dreier 240)

Dreier downplays the difference between these. He does say "nihilism may be truer to common-sense moral concepts than relativism" (Dreier 260) and uses the "disagreement argument" to illustrate why, but ultimately he seems to favor relativism. While moral talk may be implicitly absolutist, so (he says) were "common-sense judgments of mass, or length, or duration" (Dreier 161), and discovering that the underlying absolutist assumptions are false does not render the judgments false.

Dreier thinks that certain concepts have built-in a standard to use when judging instances of the concept, but moral concepts don't.

Dreier discusses Mackie's queerness and relativity arguments, and thinks Gilbert Harman's observation argument expresses an insight that's crucial to both those arguments; Harman says:

> …you do not seem to need to make assumptions about any moral facts to explain the occurrence of . . . so-called moral observations (Dreier 247, quoting Harman 1977 p. 6)

In section 5 Dreier says "moral relativism as I have been understanding it does not seem to have any particularly unpalatable normative moral consequences." (Dreier 256–57) He points out that it does *not* imply you must be tolerant of other cultures' practices when they violate your morality (even though you recognize the practices are right according to *their* morality, you guide your actions by your morality, not theirs); and to the extent tolerance *is* justified, it's for reasons that might also be recognized "in absolutist conceptions of the nature of morality." (Dreier 256) I think this is reasonable so far as it goes, but does not address the more fundamental issue of why we should be committed to any moral system in the first place.

In section 6 Dreier gives the following argument for nihilism based on (but strengthening/fixing/clarifying) one from Mackie:

> Moral goodness would have to be such that sincere judgment about *it* is intrinsically motivational. But, there is no property such that sincere judgment about it is intrinsically motivational. So, there is no such thing as moral goodness. (Dreier 258)

The idea is that morality requires internalism, but internalist reasons aren't real. "For the [second] premise to be false, there would have to be a property whose apprehension would move any rational being as such." (Dreier 259)

In support of morality requiring internalism Dreier gives a thought experiment about a culture that has two sets of words, one corresponding more to our common-sense moral concepts but not seen as important to them, and one corresponding to utilitarian concepts which they do see as practically important.

Dreier alternatively provides an argument for relativism based on the idea that morality requires internalism; instead of the second premise above, it has: "But, which properties motivate depends on the psychology of the judging agent." (Dreier 259)

"10. Humean Theory of Practical Rationality" by Peter Railton

Neo-Humeans can be categorized as:

- "*internalist* with regard to reasons for action…" (Railton 270)
- "*externalist* with regard to morality…" (Railton 270)

…because they think having a reason to do something requires being (able to be?) motivated to do it, but there's no guarantee all agents can be motivated to be moral for the sake of being moral (as opposed to being motivated e.g. by threat of punishment).

Three issues Railton mentions:

- is it really true "that no goals are inherently irrational"? (Railton 271)
- is it self-defeating in some situations involving coordination among agents or with oneself over time? (Railton seems to think the theory can be adjusted to handle this)
- "Many of the arguments neo-Humeans offer on behalf of the idea that desire cannot be based upon reason could be applied with equal force to belief." (Railton 273)

Regarding the last point:

> Believers need to have multidimensional norms permitting tradeoffs between content and evidence, explanatoriness and reliability, particularity and generality, relevance and alternatives. No one set of such norms seems rationally required. It is unclear in epistemology, as well as ethics, how to resolve fundamental differences between individuals concerning which claims or rules of inference are "self-evident" or basic. Attempts to defend such a position would seem to need principles of evidence and logical validity, thus begging the question. Thus, neither belief nor desire seems to be based on the faculty of reason alone. (Railton 273)

Railton indicates Hume saw beliefs more like feelings, so maybe this wouldn't have been an issue for him.

Regarding Hume's intermediate view which "is neither pure skepticism nor its refutation, but… a mixture of an initial, default trust or nonskepticism toward ordinary experience and belief-formation, while recognizing that one can offer no self-standing reason for this" (Railton 277):

> We find an echo of Hume's view in the modern Bayesian position that all reasoning, deductive as well as inductive, calls for "priors"… (Railton 278)

"11. Morality and Practical Reason: A Kantian Approach" by Stephen Darwall

The "*Kantian thesis* has four aspects" (Darwall 282):

- "*Normativity* says that if an act is morally wrong, then there is some genuinely normative reason not to do it." (Darwall 282)
- "*Universality* stresses that this holds universally, for every agent and every situation." (Darwall 282) (Apparently Darwall is only saying the meaning of normativity itself is

universal, not *necessarily* that there are any universal moral principles - see p. 286.)

- "*Supremacy* says further that the reasons against wrongdoing are invariably conclusive, that they always override or defeat any reasons to the contrary." (Darwall 282)
- "And *necessity* asserts that these three aspects all hold… necessarily." (Darwall 282)

Darwall says Kant separately argued (a) that this is what our common-sense understanding of moral obligations involve and (b) that there really are moral obligations of this sort.

One argument Darwall gives for this being at least a correct analysis of moral concepts has to do with responsibility and blame (I think this captures really well why I think noncognitivism and relativism of the sort described in chapter 10 undermine the intended content of moral judgments):

> Blaming someone commits one to thinking there was a good reason for the person not to have done what he did (normativity). It would simply be incoherent to judge someone blameworthy while acknowledging there really was no reason whatsoever for him not to have acted as he did. It seems incoherent, indeed, to blame while allowing that the wrong action, although recommended against by some reasons, was nonetheless the sensible thing to do, all things considered (supremacy). (Darwall 292)

Kantianism wants to ground morality in rational norms. Darwall first argues that if "the instrumental principle" were "the only norm of practical reason… then there [would be] no reasons for acting at all…" (Darwall 294) He points out that if your actions are incompatible with some hypothetical imperative you believe regarding a goal you accept, the instrumental principle does not necessarily tell you to change those actions; it's equally compatible with changing your goal.

Darwall also rejects giving special status to an egoistic norm. In thinking about a case where an agent doesn't care about her own welfare and what might cause her to change her mind, he concludes not only that "the case for the validity of moral reasons is no worse than that for prudential ones" but also that "the agent's own good will be reason-giving for her only if she has a value that makes it reason-giving for anyone." (Darwall 296)

Darwall discusses a couple problems with a Humean account of where normative reasons arise. One is that if "an agent has reason to do only what he desires" then "it would be impossible for an agent ever to do otherwise than what he had the weightiest normative reasons for doing" which "would deprive 'normative' reasons of any guiding or normative force." (Darwall 296) He's also skeptical that "an agent's desires are even *a* source of practical reasons" (Darwall 296); in discussing one example he says "her desire seems less a source than a response to reasons that are there anyway (Scanlon, 1998, pp. 33-55)." (Darwall 297)

Here's a key claim that I'm uneasy with:

> Anyone thinking seriously in this area at all must start from the assumption that there are *some* normative reasons for acting, since that is a necessary presupposition of the deliberative standpoint. (Darwall 297)

Darwall describes Korsgaard's argument for the source of the categorical imperative, rejects it, and gives his own. I didn't follow his fully but it has something to do with the presuppositions involved in making "second-personal" requests to people. I'm skeptical that this can ground a categorical imperative; it seems like the usefulness of being able to make such requests given our actual circumstances, and the probability of them often being accepted given human psychology and game theoretic considerations, is enough to explain people making them.

"12. Free Will and Moral Responsibility" by John Martin Fischer

Section 1 lays out what I recognize as basically van Inwagen's Consequence Argument (see https://brokensandals.net/2019/10/van-inwagen-incompatibility-handout.pdf). Fischer plans to "assume that the argument is sound and explore the implications…" (Fischer 324)

Fischer rejects arguments by Taylor, van Inwagen, and Searle which claim we do or must view our actions as not causally determined. His key point is that "knowledge does not eliminate the point of deliberation (the need to figure out which door it would be best to choose to open)…" (Fischer 326) I agree; this lines up with what I wrote in "The meaning of 'choice'".

Fischer also rejects neo-Kantian views that say we must at least "regard" ourselves as not determined when doing practical reasoning.

Fischer lists "three views about the concept (or 'nature') of moral responsibility" (Fischer 333):

1. "…an agent's moral responsibility consists in her being an appropriate candidate for ascriptions of certain ethical predicates, such as 'good,' 'bad,' 'courageous,'…" (the "moral ledger" view) (Fischer 333)

2. "…when an agent is morally responsible for some behavior, it would not be inappropriate to expect the agent to provide an explanation of the behavior in question." (Fischer 333) (I associate this view with Scanlon's *What We Owe To Each Other*)

3. "…an individual is morally responsible for some behavior in virtue of being an apt target for one of the 'reactive attitudes' on the basis of the behavior." (Fischer 334) (Strawson's view)

Fischer considers the Principle of Alternative Possibilities to be a difficulty for reconciling compatibilism and moral responsibility on any of those views, but that it can be overcome.

He thinks Frankfurt cases show that “lack of alternative possibilities cannot in itself and apart from indicating something else explain” (Fischer 338) a lack of moral responsibility.

In discussing “the ought-implies-can maxim” (Fischer 344), Fischer mentions his theory which distinguishes between “guidance control” and “regulative control.” (Fischer 351)

Fischer apparently sees himself as an incompatibilist yet thinks moral responsibility is compatible with determinism. IIUC he just doesn’t think determinism is compatible with *freedom* and therefore it’s important that responsibility not require freedom.

“Part II. Normative Ethical Theory”

“13. Value Theory” by Thomas Hurka

Hurka discusses some different versions of hedonism. To avoid the objection that different pleasures don’t share any common property, one “rival view identifies pleasures as those sensations people want to have… just for their qualities as sensations. It is not clear, however, that this view successfully picks out only pleasures; can someone not want the sensation of redness just as that sensation?” (Hurka 359–60)

Against the view that desire theory “implies that people should form intense desires that are guaranteed to be satisfied…” the chapter notes it’s more common to “hold that when a person desires some state of affairs, that state is what is good; the desire is a condition of value in something else rather than a part of what has value.” (Hurka 362) I’m skeptical this solves the problem.

An interesting thing in the chapter is how Hurka casts various views as versions or semblances of “organ unity” views. E.g., moral desert and placing value on ecosystems can both be seen that way.

“14. Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism” by David O. Brink

Some dimensions along which consequentialisms vary:

- Maximizing vs satisficing
- Direct vs indirect
- Agent-neutral vs agent-relative reasons
- What they’re analyzing, e.g. “actions, motives, individual lives, institutions, and moral codes.” (Brink 381)

Brink notes that the satisficing view is generally motivated by the sense that the maximizing view is too demanding, but that the maximizing view can accommodate this intuition by separating praiseworthiness/blameworthiness from right/wrong.

An interesting footnote on Williams's "one thought too many" comment: "the worry seems to apply to a variety of optimizing theories, not just impartial conceptions." (Brink 418) So e.g. (this is my example, not the book's) maybe creating art because you've calculated it will increase net happiness rather than because you are drawn to create beauty is "one thought too many".

Brink gives an argument for perfectionism, i.e. "that a person's good consists in activities that exercise and express her capacities for practical deliberation" (Brink 392), based on the idea that personhood itself is related to "capacities for practical deliberation and regulation of the will that mark one as a responsible agent." (Brink 391) Later in the chapter he extends this argument in conjunction with a reductionist view of personal identity to try to explain "the normative significance of associational bonds." (Brink 406)

An interesting point Brink makes about side constraints: you probably wouldn't endorse them from behind a veil of ignorance.

Brink points out that allowing people to have "options" of putting personal priorities over impartial ones also seems to call for endorsing "constraints" (but maybe not side-constraints) against "interfering with the projects of others." (Brink 397)

Brink does not think Parfit-style reductionism about personal identity is enough to deal with the separateness-of-persons concerns, since we may still have greater duties to those we have a greater *degree* of psychological connectedness with.

Brink's discussion of "temporal neutrality" on page 402 doesn't question that it's something natural from within the perspective of a single life. But this made me realize I'm not totally sure how intuitive I find it. Like, I definitely believe it's reasonable to endure some pain now for much greater pleasure later; but, would I think it's reasonable to have a prolonged period of my life be bad in order to have another period be really great, compared with both periods being more mildly positive? Is my hesitance purely skepticism that the former genuinely maximizes net benefit?

"15. Deontology" by David McNaughton and Piers Rawling

This includes some discussion of varieties of consequentialism - "Simple", "Sophisticated" (from Railton), motive, rule - and whether each should be concerned agent-neutral or agent-relative.

The authors seem to favor Ross's form of deontology. Unlike Kant's or Scanlon's views, this holds there are multiple basic principles which aren't unified by any "test that principles must

pass" (McNaughton and Rawling 432). They also have some sympathy with particularism, but they don't think "that *all normative* features have variable valence." (McNaughton and Rawling 434)

The discussion of particularism helped me understand why someone might hold it. Instead of thinking we need principles in order to judge cases, we may note that we think we can judge principles by trying to imagine counterexample cases. Also, determining whether a principle applies to a case requires another principle about how to apply principles, etc, so "[e]ventually, there must be a brute application without appeal to rules." (McNaughton and Rawling 434)

The chapter also discusses Kant's and Scanlon's views as forms of deontology, but the authors are more aligned with Ross.

An interesting point:

> …the Rossian contends that there are a variety of moral considerations, and faces the apparent challenge of explaining what makes them all moral—but is there some underlying feature that explains what makes, say, all logical considerations logical? (McNaughton and Rawling 441)

An argument they make against consequentialism is that it cannot account for "underivative agent-relative obligations" (McNaughton and Rawling 442), and the loyalty we should have for friends is one such obligation (consequentialism might give us other reasons to be loyal, but they aren't the right sort).

Interestingly, their preferred form of deontology does *not* include absolute constraints.

> What justifies constraints? That their violation is bad is no answer, for then how could it be forbidden for someone to violate a constraint in order to prevent worse actions by others? The strategy of introducing morally relevant positional facts does not help. … the only positional possibility is to claim that my violating a constraint… is a bad *for me*. …this, at best, *might* ground a *permission* not to violate the constraint under these conditions. (McNaughton and Rawling 449)

They address objections to this no-constraints view including the worry that it would give others permission to try to interfere with your exercise of options or your fulfillment of personal-relationship-based obligations, or the worry (from Kagan) that without certain constraints the option to not help someone at personal cost will imply an option to harm them for personal gain.

"16. Moral Rights" by Hillel Steiner

> What is distinctive… about the duties that figure in rights language is that, within the rules constituting them, they are permissibly *alterable* or alternatively *enforceable* by virtue of certain choices to that effect. (Steiner 462)

There are *interest* and *will* theories of rights. Steiner thinks rights need to be compossible (they should never make mutually exclusive claims) and that only will theories can guarantee this.

Examples of things that may be different under the two kinds of theories: euthanasia, environmental harm against future people, abortion…

Part of why rights need to be compossible is that they are supposed to have supremacy over other moral considerations, so there's nothing else to appeal to if they themselves conflict. One argument for this:

> …the resolving role of moral rights in moral disputes is not to dissolve disagreement but rather to determine *who*–in the face of indissoluble disagreement–ought to decide what is to be done. (Steiner 468)

There's a problem about whether you can have a right to enforce someone else's right when it requires violating another's right - Steiner gives an example from Sen about whether one can forcibly take a cell phone from one person in order to save another's life. Steiner suggests one may be obligated to do this and also obligated to compensate the cell phone's owner for the violation of their right.

"17. Kantian Normative Ethics" by Thomas E. Hill Jr.

(I did a poor job of taking notes on this chapter.)

One issue with the universal law formulas:

> Even if we can always find some apt maxim description that allows us to reach common-sense conclusions, we are not really being guided by the formulas if we need to rely on our understanding of the right conclusion in order to find the best statement of the maxim. (Hill Jr. 488)

An interesting perspective on all the formulas:

> Finally, … there is philosophical reason, as well as textual evidence, for treating Kant's supreme moral principle (in all its versions) as describing an essential framework for moral deliberation and discussion rather than as an independent and determinate guide, as some have assumed. In a world of tragic cultural and individual conflicts, moral philosophy needs to articulate a point of view from which, despite substantial differences, human beings can work together toward reasonable, mutually acceptable principles and policies. This purpose is defeated if a theory *too readily* renders judgment on a wide range of controversial moral issues. This is not to say that a moral theory should not in the end sharply condemn certain conventional moralities. The point is that moral theorists should

> be careful not to unduly allow their own strong moral convictions about particular issues to shape their ideas about what is essential to a moral point of view. (Hill Jr. 494)

"18. Virtue Ethics" by Julia Annas

> Virtue is the disposition to do the right thing for the right reason, in the appropriate way… This involves two aspects, the **affective** and the **intellectual**. (Annas 516. emphasis added)

Affective: how you feel about what you're doing matters; ideally you're doing right without any internal resistance or conflict.

Intellectual: it's a 'learning-how'; "For virtue ethics, the purpose of good moral education is to get the pupil to think for himself about the reasons on which he acts, and so the content of what he has been taught." (Annas 517)

Virtue ethics must focus on "life as a whole" (Annas 520). It contends that virtue is necessary (and maybe sufficient) for flourishing/eudaimonia.

> When people disagree as to whether someone did or did not ruin his life by performing an action that is honest but loses him a job he has aimed for, we do not expect them to resolve the dispute by appeal to some neutral list of indicators that a way of life is worth living. (Annas 521)

Annas tries to respond to the worry that virtue ethics is egoistic. I haven't decided whether I'm convinced.

> The person who aims at living a flourishing life by living in a fair, generous, and brave way is not aiming at *her* good, as opposed to the good of others. … Living in a flourishing way is an activity, the ongoing activity of a life, and living in a brave, generous, and so on way is a specification of what that is.
>
> Hence it is a mistake to claim that the virtuous person's motivation is egoistic because it is aimed at her flourishing and not mine, or yours. She aims at her own flourishing and not mine just in the sense that she is living her life and not mine. (Annas 522)

Annas says virtue ethics rejects the idea of "a 'theory of right action', which will tell us which actions are right, or give us an account of what makes an action right, and can be used by anyone, at any stage of moral development, with any level of interest in being a good person." (Annas 524) She references Rosalind Hursthouse's *On Virtue Ethics* and "Virtue Theory and Abortion". (Also, she points to the latter to claim "A virtue ethics approach to abortion in particular has been extremely influential." (Annas 525))

While not all forms of virtue ethics are naturalistic, Annas seems sympathetic to the idea that science somehow provides a basis for believing "not only that it benefits me as an individual

to be virtuous, but also that it benefits humans to have the virtues because of the kind of animals that we are." (Annas 527) It doesn't seem like the chapter explains why this would be, and it's unclear whether "benefits" here should be taken with regard to a sort "neutral list of indicators" as rejected above or something else.

In classical virtue ethics, "I am not virtuous unless I have thought through and understood for myself the reasons on which I act…" (Annas 528)

"19. The Ethics of Care" by Virginia Held

(My notes from here on out may be shorter/worse due to having less free time.)

Held notes that "ethics of care" covers a range of theories, but typical characteristics include:

1. Emphasizing how humans are dependent on care from others rather than assuming "the image of the independent, autonomous, rational individual" (Held 538).
2. "…in the epistemological process… the ethics of care values emotion rather than rejects it." (Held 538)
3. "…rejects the view… that the more abstract the reasoning about a moral problem the better, since the more likely to avoid bias and arbitrariness, and the more nearly to achieve impartiality. … To most advocates of the ethics of care, the compelling moral claim of the particular other may be valid even when it conflicts with the requirement usually made by moral theories that moral judgments be universalizable…" (Held 539)
4. "…it reconceptualizes traditional notions about the public and the private" (Held 541) and better addresses "the moral issues that arise between interconnected persons in the contexts of families, friendship, and social groups." (Held 541)
5. It has a different "conception of persons" (Held 541), in which we start out in relationships rather than start as independent and enter into relationships.

> Care is not, I think, the same as benevolence, because care is more the characterization of a social relation than the description of an individual disposition, such as the disposition of a benevolent person. What caring societies ought to cultivate are caring relations, often reciprocal over time, if not at given times. It is caring relations, rather than persons as individuals, that especially exemplify the values of caring. (Held 546)

> Care is probably the most deeply fundamental value. There can be care without justice: there has historically been little justice in the family, but care and life have gone on without it. There can be no justice without care, however, for without care no child would survive, and there would be no persons to respect. (Held 549)

I didn't get much sense from this chapter as to the concrete implications of ethics of care; perhaps some of the books mentioned, like *Starting At Home* by Nel Noddings, would help me. One thing Held says is:

> Instead of seeing the corporate sector, and military strength, and government and law as the most important segments of society deserving the highest levels of wealth and power, a caring society might see the tasks of bringing up children, educating its members, meeting the needs of all, achieving peace and treasuring the environment, and doing these in the best ways possible to be those to which the greatest social efforts of all should be devoted. (Held 550)

"20. Particularism and Antitheory" by Mark Lance and Margaret Little

Two varieties of particularism:

1. "Some… are animated first and foremost by suspicion of the justificatory role of theoretical generalizations in morality. …their central concern is to reject the idea that moral inquiry is a theory-building project." (Lance and Little 568)
2. "Another group… are animated centrally by a denial of a specific model of how reasons work—namely, in virtue of being subsumable under exceptionless explanatory generalizations." (Lance and Little 568)

Jonathan Dancy is a key example of the latter.

Seeking normative vs deliberative principles: "sorting out the nature of moral reality" vs "figuring out procedures to make our moral way" (Lance and Little 570).

> Classical Principles … are exceptionless, explanatory, interrelated moral generalizations that are capable of serving key epistemic functions. (Lance and Little 571)

"21. Intuitions in Moral Inquiry" by Michael R. DePaul

> Although it would be misleading to suggest that there is no controversy about it, there is nevertheless a substantial consensus about how we should conduct moral inquiry. Very many philosophers explicitly endorse the method known as reflective equilibrium, and even more end up conducting their moral inquiries in ways that can easily been seen to fall under the description of reflective equilibrium. (DePaul 597)

DePaul defends the method of reflective equilibrium. I mostly found myself nodding along. I liked his point that we mustn't forget to include *ourselves* in our reflection:

> It is significant that the focus of all this reflection is propositions the inquirer believes or might believe, and the logical and evidential connections that hold

> among various such propositions. Through the course of all these reflections, what the inquirer seemingly need not reflect upon is himself. Specifically, he need not reflect upon his ability to imagine the interests of others or his level of sympathetic understanding of such interests. He need not reflect about whether any experiences he has had, either in the first person or by way of his reading, viewing plays or films, or even listening to music, might have impaired his capacity to understand certain interests sympathetically. He need not reflect upon how he might try to enhance his ability to imagine the lives of others or acquire more sympathetic understanding of their interests. Surely, if it made any sense at all to include sympathetic understanding as one of the characteristics of a competent moral judge, it makes sense to require people to reflect about such things in the course of their efforts to construct a moral theory, and, depending upon the upshot of these reflections, to seek to develop their imaginations and their sympathetic understanding. (DePaul 606)

“22. Theory, Practice, and Moral Reasoning” by Gerald Dworkin

This chapter has an amusing epigraph, attribution unknown:

> A philosopher is someone who seeing something work in practice, wonders whether it will work in theory. (Dworkin 625)

This chapter discusses “normative claims about the proper use of theories” (Dworkin 626), considering these approaches:

- deductive inference from moral rules to actions
- “intuitive balancing” of the “relevant factors” provided by theory (Dworkin 627)
- “Norm specification”
- “Virtue theory”
- “Reflective equilibrium”
- “Particularism”
- “Casuistry”

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