Les ateliers de l'éthique
The Ethics Forum

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Introduction

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Volume 11, Number 2-3, Fall 2016

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1041766ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1041766ar

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Publisher(s)

Centre de recherche en éthique (CRÉ)

ISSN

1718-9977 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this document

Naar, H. & Palmira, M. (2016). Metaethics, Normativity, and Value: Introduction. *Les ateliers de l'éthique / The Ethics Forum*, *11*(2-3), 65–69. https://doi.org/10.7202/1041766ar

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METAETHICS, NORMATIVITY, AND VALUE

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INTRODUCTION

Some of the central questions of moral philosophy revolve around the nature, representation, and apprehension of moral concepts and properties, such as *good*, *permissible*, *wrong*, and the relation they bear to one another, if any. The list of questions taken up in contemporary analytic moral philosophy is familiar enough: "Are moral values and norms objective or subjective?," "Is there any link between what's good/bad and what's obligatory/forbidden, and if so, which of the two pairs should come first?," "Are moral values and normative facts reducible to nonmoral/nonnormative facts?," "Are moral judgements expressive of cognitive states, or do they rather express our affective non-cognitive responses to morally relevant actions?"

Answering these questions amounts to accomplishing the difficult task of unifying metaphysical, semantic, normative, and psychological considerations. The articles contained in this special issue jointly rise to this unity challenge by approaching the domains of the evaluative and the deontic from several interconnected perspectives.

In "Goodness: Attributive and Predicative," Michael-John Turp investigates the celebrated distinction between *attributive* and *predicative* uses of "good" made by Peter Geach and subsequently deployed by authors such as Philippa Foot and Judith Jarvis Thomson. According to Geach, our uses of "good" are chiefly attributive—that is, they require specification of the kind of thing that is said to be (or not to be) good, as in "This is a good move," "*The Broom of the System* is a good book," and so on. Geach famously maintained that the absence of a predicative reading of "good" has far-reaching metaethical implications: we should stop asking the classical metaphysical question philosophers have been after since G. E. Moore—i.e., "What is good?"—and instead ask: "What is it to be a good human being?" Turp contends that acknowledging the linguistic datum

that several uses of "good" are attributive does not *ipso facto* make the traditional question of what good *simpliciter* is meaningless or philosophically insignificant. His argumentative strategy unfolds in three steps. First, by drawing an analogy with the attributive evaluation carried out in the assessment of artefacts, Turp stresses that an adequate account of attributive goodness be functional in kind, just like the goodness of a spade is determined on the basis of its function, which goes over and above the designer's intentions and the present and personal concerns of the user. Secondly, Turp evaluates the prospects of a neo-Aristotelian functional account of natural goodness, notably that by Philippa Foot. This account maintains that, in order to establish what's good for us, we should seek to discover what traits are conducive to evolutionary fitness, or what way of life serves our interests best. While Turp does not directly take issue with such an account of attributive goodness, he emphasizes an important asymmetry between human beings and other living beings: we have a capacity for rational reflection that enables us to pursue an assessment of the value of whatever conception of attributive goodness is recommended by a naturalistically oriented approach. Given our capacity for rational reflection, the question whether we reflectively endorse a life in which we assign priority to our self-interest will remain nonetheless open for us. That is to say, we can meaningfully ask: "Is a life that is good in the attributive sense a life that is worthy of pursuit?" (p. 81). This, Turp maintains, amounts to asking a question about the predicative goodness of a certain conception of the (attributively) good life. In this way, Turp vindicates the philosophical legitimacy of inquiring into the question of what the moral good *simpliciter* is.

Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen's starting point in "'On-Conditionalism: On the Verge of a New Metaethical Theory" is the fact that some people, metaethicists and laypersons alike, justifiably believe that they don't know whether value claims are expressive of cognitive states, such as belief, or conative states, such as preference. This meta-metaethical preoccupation leads Rønnow-Rasmussen to lay the foundations for a new metaethical theory, what he calls *On-Conditionalism*, for those speakers (and thinkers) who have no settled yes-or-no opinion on the longstanding debate between cognitivism and noncognitivism. On-Conditionalism maintains that when these speakers make a value claim such as "Pleasure is good," such a claim is expressive of the cognitive state *that pleasure is good on condition that goodness exists*. Importantly, Rønnow-Rasmussen explores the question of the nature of this conditional belief. He expresses scepticism towards reducing such an attitude as a belief to a conditional in the the form "you ought/ought not to believe that x is good, if you learn that goodness exists/does not exist" (p. 97). Rønnow-Rasmussen notices that "I can go on believing that x is good on condition that goodness exists even if I believe that goodness does not exist" (p. 97), so it would be a mistake to say that learning that goodness doesn't exist forbids me from believing that something is good *conditional* on the existence of goodness. This leads Rønnow-Rasmussen to explore two possible nonreductionist accounts. The first draws on the well-tried distinction between occurrent and dispositional states, and claims that a conditional belief is a dispositional state with a multiple propositional content. While

expressing sympathy towards this proposal, Rønnow-Rasmussen points out that it needs to be supplemented with an account of the occurrent states that speakers are in while making value claims and being agnostic about the cognitivism vs. noncognitivism debate. He therefore puts forward the hypothesis that value claims (1) express beliefs with a categorical content that are the product of a conditional dispositional state, (2) play an explanatory role in precautionary contexts, and (3) are not causally dependent on those beliefs on which nonconditional categorical evaluative beliefs are taken to depend (e.g., the belief that goodness exists). Rønnow-Rasmussen claims that conceiving of the central cognitive attitude introduced by On-Conditionalism in these terms captures the occurrent sense of conditional belief and has the potential to provide a new version of internalism about motivation to the effect that our moral claims are conditionally motivating up to the addition of some external factor.

In "Two Conceptions of Practical Reasons," Christoph Hanisch contrasts Joseph Raz's chiefly realist account of practical reasons with Christine Korsgaard's contructivist account—in relation to various issues in practical philosophy and action theory. While Raz takes reasons for action to be facts that obtain independently of our agency, Korsgaard takes them to be facts generated by constitutive features of the deliberative standpoint. Principles, thereby, play different roles in deliberation on the two accounts. On Raz's view, the role of principles is merely "to guide the activity of organizing and systematizing 'normative facts' [e.g., reasons] and 'aspects of the world' in the correct manner" (p. 113). By contrast, Korsgaard takes principles to be prior to reasons in virtue of the fact that our identities as rational agents are themselves constituted by principles, guiding, as they do, our practical reflection. After introducing these two accounts of practical reasons, Hanisch suggests that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, the accounts can in fact be combined in an interesting way. Drawing an analogy between practical reasons and placebo drugs, he argues that, even if practical reasons may ultimately derive from our agency, they must be seen as independent of us in order to "exhibit first-personally perceived authority and normative force" (p. 115). A certain illusion—the illusion of the independence of practical reasons—may be necessary for practical reasons to play their role in the constitution of our agency as construed by constructivists. The assumptions we make as deliberative agents, in other words, may be—and perhaps should be—different from the claims we accept when we do metaethics: "As practical deliberators and agents we need Razian realism about the reasons we have, even if, on a different level of reflection, we might have to acknowledge them as originating in our subjective self-understanding" (p. 115). Hanisch ends his discussion with the issue of the relationship between practical reasons and motivation. In particular, he puts forward a view of how agents are guided by principles that does not fall prey to the worry that the constructivist account of rational motivation is too cognitively demanding. In addition, inspired by Hegel, Hanisch argues for a view of action based on reasons, which allows for practical deliberation to occur *after* the action was performed, in turn departing from the classical view that reasons are the causes of actions of this sort.

In "A Stringent but Critical Actualist Subjectivism about Well-Being," Stéphane Lemaire tackles the issue of what version of subjectivism about well-being someone attracted to this view should accept. According to subjectivism about well-being, "something is good for an individual if and only if this individual has a certain type of pro-attitude A toward this object under conditions C" (p. 134). One central question is then how best to characterize the relevant conditions. In particular, should the relevant pro-attitudes be ones the subject actually possesses or ones the subject would possess in some counterfactual, idealized conditions? In his article, Lemaire defends a version of *actualism*, according to which it is actual pro-attitudes that matter in determining what is good for one. To this end, Lemaire lays out three desiderata for a theory of well-being. First, an adequate theory should accommodate the fact that what is good for one often departs from what one happens to desire (to believe to be good, etc.), a desideratum that is typically taken to motivate both nonactualist and objectivist views of well-being. Second, an adequate theory should not be such as to alienate people from what is good for them. For something to be good for one, it should somehow matter to one. In contrast to the previous desideratum, this desideratum is usually taken to motivate subjectivism in general and actualist subjectivism in particular. To these desiderata—both of which are commonly accepted in the subjectivist literature—Lemaire adds a third one: "At least in some cases, it seems unacceptably paternalistic to act toward someone as if something that matters to him or her counts for nothing" (p. 135). According to Lemaire, we need to accept the claim that what matters to someone counts towards his or her well-being in order to explain why certain paternalistic interventions are wrong—why, for instance, it is wrong to insist that a certain career would not be good for one in cases in which one is very enthusiastic about it and deeply cares about pursuing it. Lemaire goes on to argue that extant actualist versions of subjectivism fail to satisfy the two antipaternalistic desiderata, and that a more "stringent" form of actualism—one that does not resort to any idealization strategy—is called for. According to Lemaire, an adequate actualism about well-being should not discard "badly informed" pro-attitudes as irrelevant, let alone detrimental, to what is good for one. The more stringent the actualism, however, the less apt it appears to deal with the first—normative—desideratum. Lemaire ends his article by outlining a version of actualism—Stringent Critical Actualism—which, while focusing entirely on actual pro-attitudes, makes room for a normative assessment of so-called 'defective' attitudes.

In "Les attitudes appropriées *verbatim*" (in French), Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni discuss a popular way of understanding evaluative concepts—namely, that to think of an object as having a certain value is to think of it as meriting a certain kind of response. On this sort of view, therefore, evaluative concepts such as GOOD, BAD, ADMIRABLE, and so on are analyzed in terms of appropriate attitudes. To be successful, Deonna and Teroni suggest, such an analysis should meet two challenges. On the one hand, for it to genuinely reductive, a Fitting-Attitude (FA) analysis should not appeal to attitudes whose possession requires a mastery of the evaluative concepts to be analyzed. It should not be the case, in other words, that to think of something as meriting a certain kind of

response presupposes thinking of it as being good, bad, admirable, and so on. This is what Deonna and Teroni call the "psychological challenge." On the other hand, the account must meet a normative challenge: it should not understand the normative notion of appropriateness or merit itself in terms of evaluative notions. Deonna and Teroni's aim is to provide a version of the FA analysis that meets both of these challenges. After arguing that an adequate FA analysis should appeal not only to generic attitudes—such as love and hate, desire and aversion, etc.—but also to more specific ones such as emotions (for this would allow the advocate of the FA analysis to elucidate *thick* evaluative concepts), they go on to discuss contemporary approaches to emotions that may be combined with an FA analysis. According to the dominant form of such approaches, the relation between emotions and evaluative properties is that the former somehow put us in touch with the latter. Although there are various ways to spell out this idea, a natural way to interpret it is to say that an emotion *represents* a certain kind of evaluative property. The first task is then to develop a version of this view that meets the psychological challenge. This is where the perceptual theory of emotions comes in, as it claims that, in order to experience an emotion with a certain evaluative content (e.g., "This is disgusting"), the subject need not possess the evaluative concept one would deploy to specify that content. Although this may appear to be a step in the right direction, Deonna and Teroni note that what we should be interested in is not so much emotions themselves, but our *concepts* of them. So even if experiencing an emotion need not require the possession of the relevant evaluative concepts, having an idea of that emotion may. And this claim, Deonna and Teroni go on to argue, is something the perceptualist cannot avoid easily. Following recent works, Deonna and Teroni argue that emotions do not possess an evaluative content at all—hence do not represent values—but constitute distinctively evaluative stances or attitudes that can be felt towards the very same content. Thus, one can be afraid, glad, or sad regarding the same state of affairs. Deonna and Teroni argue that this "attitudinal theory" can be combined with an FA analysis in a way that meets the psychological and the normative challenges.

The last contribution of the present special issue is the first full French translation of Peter Railton's ground-breaking article "Moral Realism" (1986). As is well known, Railton defends a naturalist reductionist version of realism about moral properties. Railton's article contains a discussion of all the main questions analytic metaethicists have been wrestling with for more than one hundred years. So, we suggest using it as a reference point to navigate the five new contributions of this special issue and gauge their individual merits in advancing an understanding of the good and the right.