



Pluralism and Disagreement

Can moral motivation pluralism survive meta-ethical disagreement?

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Abstract

Meta-ethical pluralism is a recent set of theories claiming that multiple of the currently relevant meta-ethical theories can be correct at the same time. I will focus on a pluralist analysis of moral motivation that claims that speakers have different concepts of moral opinion, and defend this from an objection that it fails to account for meta-ethical disagreement as the parties are speaking past each other. In this paper I develop a way to respond to the objection by claiming that the disagreement can still be accounted for. The disagreement, I claim, is still present as the relevant parties both believe, and intend to communicate, that only one of their answers can be correct at the same time (the claim that pluralism is false). Pluralism can therefore still account for the disagreement, as the presence of disagreement seems to depend on non-pluralists holding beliefs that make their positions incompatible.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTERNALISM AND EXTERNALISM

One of the central questions in metaethics is the question of moral motivation, the relationship between moral opinions and motivation to act. It is generally not a controversial assumption that, all else being equal, people will prefer to do acts that they consider morally right over those they consider morally wrong. This is a case of moral motivation: a person is motivated to do something because of a moral opinion that they hold. The nature of the relationship between motivation and judgment has itself become a metaethical discussion: while a relationship is agreed to exist, there is disagreement regarding if moral judgment necessarily comes with motivation, or if the relationship is contingent. These positions are referred to as *internalism*, and *externalism*:

- Motivational Internalism: If someone holds the moral opinion that it is wrong to commit a particular action, they are necessarily motivated not to commit that action.
- Motivational Externalism: It is not the case that someone who holds the moral opinion that it is wrong to commit a particular action is necessarily motivated not to commit that action.

The relevance of this discussion is closely tied to the cognitivist versus non-cognitivist positions on the nature of moral judgements. If it is the case that moral statements are expressions of preference, they should necessarily be connected to motivation in some way, but if they are ordinary propositions we have less reason to believe there is a necessary connection.

The internalist position is sometimes stated in weaker terms, such as allowing for exceptions in cases of motivational disorders, or for individual exceptions of motivation as long as the community in general necessarily connects the opinion to motivation. For the purposes of this paper it will not be necessary to draw a distinction between different forms of internalism.

Since these positions agree that most moral opinions will in fact be accompanied by motivation, the discussion tends to center on what our intuitions say about certain theoretical edge cases, like the amoralists. The amoralist is a person who, while holding moral opinions about certain things, completely lacks motivation to act according to these opinions. The question is here if this kind of person is conceivable. An internalist would argue that such a person is not conceivable as their opinions are something other than moral opinions, since you cannot hold a moral opinion without being motivated to anything, while the externalist would view the amoralist as perfectly conceivable.

One of the basic presuppositions of the dispute between internalists and externalists is that their positions are not compatible with each other. If one were to be correct, the other one has to be false. In the article *Uniformity and determinacy in metaethics*, Michael B Gill refers to this as the uniformity-determinacy assumption: “The assumption was that our ordinary discourse is uniform and determinate enough to vindicate one side or the other of these meta ethical debates. Call this the Uniformity-Determinacy or UD assumption” (Gill, 2009). He claims that metaethicists assume ordinary discourse to be determinate enough to prove some metaethical positions correct, and uniform enough to prove at most one position to be correct. This assumption is argued to be inferior to his opposite assumption, that ordinary language is neither uniform nor determinate enough to establish a metaethically correct position.

A similar position has been argued by Ragnar Francén (Francén, 2010). While it has been assumed that parties in the moral motivation debate share the same concept of moral opinion, and are having a discussion of what that concept entails, Francén proposes that the disagreement is best analyzed as the parties referring to separate concepts of moral opinion. This, he claims, avoids the problems resulting from the lack of ability to dismiss opposing intuitions about motivational edge cases. The theories that claim a relativism between different metaethical positions are called *metaethical pluralism*.

The subject of this paper will be a response to a critique that has been raised against Francén’s version of metaethical pluralism, the objection from disagreement. Opponents of pluralism have objected that Francén’s position fails to explain that these disputes seem like genuine disagreements, even though the positions are compatible under his theory. This text will explain the relevant positions, Francén’s theory, and the objection to his claims. I will then try to show how pluralism can survive this objection, while considering some earlier responses by pluralists.

1.2 MORAL MOTIVATIONAL PLURALISM

Metaethical pluralism is a term that has been applied to a few different positions, which are generally connected by making relativist claims regarding metaethics. An example of a pluralist position can be found in Michael B Gill (2019), who argues that different uses of “right” or “wrong” can have different semantic content. This paper will focus on the position held by Ragnar Francén in the paper *Moral Motivation Pluralism*, where he claims that the parties in the discussion about moral motivation have different concepts of moral opinion, and that both positions are therefore correct in reference to the separate concepts of moral opinion (Francén 2019).

Franc en argues that, since the moral motivation discussion centers around intuitions about amoralists, a good argument for either side will have to find a way to dismiss the intuitions of the opposing side. This has not yet been achieved: the argument would have to show that the opposing side either lacked the competence to have correct intuitions regarding these cases, or were considering the wrong cases altogether. Both seem unlikely. There is no apparent lack of philosophical competence on either side (unless the holding of the opinion is itself viewed as incompetent), and all relevant cases have been widely discussed. This leaves us with good reasons to reject both internalism and externalism.

If it is the case that moral opinions are either intrinsically linked with motivation, or not intrinsically linked with motivation, internalism or externalism should be true, and only one of them should be true. Franc en argues that we do not necessarily need to conceptualize internalism like this. He cites Tresan (2009), who drew a distinction between what he called *De re* internalism, and *De dicto* internalism. Of these two, the former requires intrinsic connection. It says that if something has the nature of a moral opinion, it could never fail to be connected to motivation. The latter is about relations: it says that that thing could have failed to be connected to motivation, but that if it does, it does not count as a moral opinion anymore.

Using Franc en's example about planets: they are necessarily accompanied by stars, but there are two ways to understand this necessity.

- *De re* necessity: If something is a planet, that object could necessarily not have failed to orbit a star
- *De dicto* necessity: Something necessarily needs to orbit a star to count as a planet

While it is true that planets necessarily orbit stars, only one of the above examples seem to capture what we mean when we say that planets necessarily orbit stars. The *De re* statement seems to be false as the object in question might as well have failed to orbit a star in some other possible world, though it wouldn't count as a planet in that case. The *De dicto* statement is not a claim about the intrinsic nature of planets, but a claim about whether a particular object can count as a planet depending on if it orbits a star. The difference between these forms of necessity lies in their actuality: A claim that can more reasonably be interpreted with *de re* necessity is something like "If something began to exist, it necessarily has a cause". This statement is probably more accurately interpreted as an attempt to make an intrinsic claim about the necessity of causation in all possible worlds, and not about what actually counts as having begun to exist.

Compare this to motivation: a *de dicto* internalist would not deny that an instance of a moral opinion could stop motivating somebody, only that that particular thing would

then cease to count as a moral opinion. This makes internalism easier to accept even for cognitivists, as it no longer claims anything intrinsic about moral judgment as a state of belief, only about the extensions of the terms used. Interpreting the discussion according to *de dicto* rules opens for the possibility of a pluralist answer to the discussion: it could be the case that internalists and externalists simply have different concepts of moral opinions that differ in their extensions. The extension of a concept is the range of objects that can be correctly categorized as examples of that concept. The extension of the concept of a cat, for example, are all things that are cats. Since some people are willing to classify the amoralists as holding moral opinions and some not, they are willing to classify different things differently, which may be explained by them having slightly different concepts of moral opinions (differing in extension regarding motivation).

This does not seem to be that uncommon of a phenomenon. Francén uses the pope as an example (2010 p. 134): Even though he is a man, and he is unmarried, people can have differing intuitions regarding if he is to be counted as a bachelor. Here they seem to both have concepts of bachelors, that will capture the same objects in the majority of cases, but differ in edge cases. They have slightly different concepts of bachelor, that have not coalesced into one as the example is generally not useful to us. This is similar to the debate about moral motivation: all parties agree that moral opinions generally tend to come with motivation, but people have been left with differing extensions regarding examples that do not tend to come up in practice (like the amoralists).

The article concludes that this kind of argument is especially plausible in this case, as the debate has settled on only discussing intuitions about cases where none of the intuitions can be dismissed (Francén, 2010,p. 146). The parties seem to be agreeing on the exact nature of the case they are discussing, differing only on if they are willing to classify it as a specific concept or not. Therefore, Francén claims that the best explanation is that they have different concepts of “moral opinion”.

2 OBJECTION FROM GENUINE DISAGREEMENT

2.1 AGAINST PLURALISM IN METAETHICS

The objection from disagreement will seem familiar to people interested in moral relativism and similar positions. Moral relativism claims that different moral opinions have different truth values depending on who holds them: a cultural relativist would

say that a statement that something is wrong, means only that the speaker's culture disapproves of the act. These kinds of claims are often met with an objection from moral disagreement. The objection says that if the cultural relativist claim is true, then it is impossible for people from different cultures to have a genuine moral disagreement. Consider this example:

- Person A, from culture 1: Lying is wrong
- Person B, from culture 2: Lying is not wrong

If cultural relativism is true, the first person's claim means "Lying is disapproved of by culture 1" while the second claim means "Lying is not disapproved of by culture 2". Since these claims refer to separate cultures, their truth-values do not exclude each other, and cultural relativism can be met by the criticism that a lot of things that intuitively seem like disagreements can no longer be counted as genuine disagreements. Individual relativism is vulnerable to the same argument: if all moral statements refer back to the opinion of the speaker, it is impossible for two people to have a genuine moral disagreement. These things seem false: disagreements in ethics are commonplace, even between relativists, and intuitively they seem to be genuine disagreements where the parties do not only speak past each other.

In the article *Against pluralism in metaethics*, Jens Johansson and Jonas Olson (2015) argue that this same argument can be reused against moral motivational pluralism. Their article shows that if Francén's view would be correct, the internalist and externalist are not actually disagreeing with each other. The person claiming that internalism is true will be making a true statement in reference to their concept of moral opinion, and the same holds for the externalist.

- Internalist: If someone holds the moral opinion-1 that it is wrong to commit a particular action, they are necessarily motivated not to commit that action.
- Externalist: It is not the case that someone who holds the moral opinion-2 that it is wrong to commit a particular action is necessarily motivated not to commit that action.

In the above example, the parties are making claims about the nature of different things (moral opinion-1 and moral opinion-2) and the truth-values of the claims are therefore independent of each other. This makes it possible to apply the same criticism that is made against relativism here also: the parties in the internalist-externalist dispute are arguably not, according to Francén's theory, in disagreement with each other. Johansson and Olson claim that this is implausible, as the disagreement about motivation is long-going and seems genuine (Johansson and Olson, 2015). This is the form of the argument:

- P1: If MMP is true, the internalist-externalist debate is not an instance of disagreement
- P2: The internalist-externalist debate is an instance of disagreement
- S: MMP is false

3. PREVIOUS SOLUTIONS

In this section I will consider earlier attempts to save metaethical pluralism from objections from disagreement. I will argue that most of them fail to be a solution to the objection when it is directed to motivation pluralism specifically.

3.1 MICHAEL B. GILL'S RESPONSE

In *Indeterminacy and variability in metaethics* (2009), Gill defends a version of pluralism that differs from Francen's (Indeterminacy-Variability). In the article, he attempts at a preemptive defense of the disagreement objection. Let me consider if this could be used as a reply to the disagreement objection to Francén's view.

According to Gill, different metaethical analyses are correct for different moral statements: A statement such as "eating meat is wrong!" might in some cases be best analyzed with, for example, cultural relativism, where the speaker uses "wrong" to refer to an aspect of their culture. In other cases it could be better analyzed with something else, such as "wrong" meaning an objective divine commandment. This makes his position vulnerable to a disagreement objection. To defend himself, Gill shows examples of some normative moral disagreements that don't need to touch metaethical commitments. He compares this to the way a pair of mathematicians can debate about a specific proof, while still holding different commitments regarding the ontological status of numbers. Gill then mentions how other debates can be very likely to showcase the difference between the metaethical commitments of the parties. In these situations, he argues, the discussions will often shift into prescriptive meta-ethical disagreements, about how morality ought to be analyzed. Again taking meat eating as an example, a discussion could be held about the wrongness of eating meat where the parties should be analyzed as having different commitments: one is referring to objective commands from god, the other to cultural traditions. While it might seem that these people are speaking past each other, Gill claims that discussions like these evolve into prescriptive meta ethics. If different metaethical

commitments are behind the disagreement, it can be interpreted as a disagreement about the nature of the concept of wrongness and where it applies: The parties are truly disagreeing about if god or culture matters in this case.

Gill's response targets the critique that normative disagreements might not be genuine under his theory, defending them by claiming that they will depend on “how one ought to think about morality’s requirements in the first place” (p. 221). The genuinity of normative disagreement then depends on prescriptive metaethical disagreements. While this does give us reasons to view continued disagreement in metaethics as valuable even if pluralism is correct, and is therefore a relevant defense of pluralism, It doesn’t directly meet Johansson and Olson’s objection that descriptive meta ethics fails to count as disagreement. I will attempt to argue that a defense of pluralism can go further, and also account for descriptive meta-ethical disagreements.

3.2 STIJN VAN GORKUM’S RESPONSE

In the paper *Metaethical Pluralism and disagreement*, Van Gorkum writes about pluralism from the lens of variable versus absolute content of moral term (van Gorkum, 2020). The pluralists, he writes, will tend to argue that some metaethical problems can be best explained by moral terminology having varying content in different cases of ordinary use: The term “wrong” might in some cases refer to the speaker’s culture disapproving of something, and it might sometimes refer to a claim of universal moral law. This runs into the disagreement objection, that some disagreements that seem genuine will be explained as people talking past each other, since their terms have different contents.

Van Gorkum responds to this by drawing a distinction between pragmatics and semantics regarding speech. He concedes that pluralism will have to accept that a lot of what seems like ethical disagreements will not be expressed by semantically incompatible statements, but argues that the parts the parties disagree on being expressed by pragmatic implicature does not make the disagreements less genuine. For the opponents of pluralism to succeed, they need to show that there are regular semantic incompatibilities in ordinary language, and that it is they that fuel the disagreement. Van Gorkum will instead try to show that moral disagreements are often grounded on non-semantic incompatibilities. He claims that quasi-expressivism is the best solution to this issue (van Gorkum, 2020, p. 470).

Quasi-expressivism is similar to metaethical expressivism, which claims that moral language does not express propositions, but only attitudes regarding the issue at hand. A moral expressivist would therefore claim the meaning of a phrase like “charity is good” is something like “Hooray for charity!”. Quasi-expressivism differs

slightly, as it claims that the expression of attitudes is not a necessary function of the semantics of the claim, but a pragmatic expression of the speaker's intentions. As this form of expressivism allows for both descriptive propositions and expressions of attitude, it can explain multiple kinds of disagreement.

Van Gorkum claims this can be used to defend pluralism, as genuine disagreements about ethical issues will often also touch on opposing attitudes to specific actions. A cultural relativist and a moral realist can have a genuine disagreement even with their separate meta-ethical commitments, as they are still generally motivated to act in different ways. If they, for example, were to discuss vegetarianism, one might claim "eating meat is wrong" while the other states that "eating meat is not wrong". Even though "wrong" might mean different things in the statements, both uses of the word are pragmatically connected to an attitude of disapproval, which in turn can fuel a disagreement.

The issue with the above arguments is that they, like Gill's, deal primarily with first-order moral disagreements. While this is the subject of the majority of Van Gorkum's paper, he offers a few quick responses to the criticism that Johanson and Olson make (van Gorkum, 2020, p. 476): that disagreements about metaethics might fail under pluralism. After citing Gill in responding that a prescriptive disagreement about which concepts should be used can survive, he hints at the response I will develop in this paper. Van Gorkum writes that some meta-ethical positions are still in disagreement, as long as they claim exclusivity with each other. If two people both reject pluralism, and claim one position as universal truth, pluralism will allow for them to be both in error and in disagreement (p.477).

4. DISCUSSION

The claim made by Johansson and Olson is that there is no actual incompatibility between the externalist and internalist positions if MMP is true. This, they claim, commits MMP to stating that there is no genuine disagreement between the holders of these positions, which is counterintuitive. I will contend that it is not so clear that the truth of MMP makes the positions totally compatible when held by different speakers. The form of my argument is to assume that MMP is true, and then argue that it is reasonable to still consider the internalists and externalists to be

disagreeing. I will construct the argument around the *de dicto* interpretation of the moral motivation discussion.¹

There are two possible ways to interpret what is meant by disagreement in Johansson and Olson's objection: one stronger, and one weaker. The stronger interpretation is that disagreement is present only when one party is actually right and one party is wrong, while the weaker interpretation is that if one party is right, the other has to be wrong. They differ in that the weaker interpretation allows disagreement to be present even if both parties are wrong. In this paper I will assume the weaker interpretation of disagreement, as the stronger one means MMP necessarily fails to account for disagreement. Since MMP claims the internalist and externalist statements about moral motivation can be right at the same time, the stronger interpretation would make the disagreement objection circular. The weaker interpretation does however open up for a way to avoid the objection.

The reason that it is counterintuitive for the internalists and externalists not to be in disagreement is that the debate is something that is clearly thought to be worthwhile and thought-provoking: they clearly believe to be discussing views with competing truth values. This means that they clearly believe the truth of their positions to be incompatible with each other. Here might also lie a key to retaining the incompatibility: The claim that the positions are incompatible, combined with the endorsement of one position, might constitute a conjunctive claim that is incompatible with the similar conjunctive claim that the positions are incompatible, combined with the endorsement of the opposite position. To show:

DISPUTE A

- Person one, the internalist: Me and other parties in the internalist-externalist share the same concept of moral opinion, refer to the same class of things with the term "moral opinions", and moral opinions are necessarily accompanied by motivation
- Person two, the externalist: Me and other parties in the internalist-externalist share the same concept of moral opinion, refer to the same class of things with the term "moral opinions", and moral opinions are NOT necessarily accompanied by motivation

Their statements are split into two main parts, where the first part claims that they share (and refer to) the same concept of moral opinion, and the second is a claim

¹ It would also be possible to make my argument using the *de re* interpretation. Under that interpretation, the parties would be referring to completely different sets of objects with different intrinsic natures when they talk about moral opinions. The *de dicto* interpretation allows them to generally be able to refer to the same objects, with only peripheral variation regarding the amoralist cases. While both versions work, I will use the *de dicto* version as I find it more intuitive.

about that concept. Both of the statements agree regarding the first part, and state negations of each other's claims in the second part. They are clearly making incompatible statements: only one of them can be true at any particular time. This fulfills the requirements for the weaker interpretation of disagreement: assuming MMP is true, both statements are false, but if one were to be correct the other would be false.

Logical compatibility between two statements is independent of the actual truth value of the statements: it depends only on the logical possibility of both of them being true at the same time. In the statements above, their incompatibility depends on the second part being negations of each other, and they are negations of each other because the first part states that "moral opinions" refers to the same thing both times. As long as the first part is included, the statements will therefore be incompatible, independently of the truth value of the first part. Moral motivational pluralism is the claim that parties in the internalist-externalist debate have different concepts of moral opinions, and the first part of the statements above is a claim that the parties share concepts of moral opinions. It is therefore a claim that MMP is false. This means that a claim that MMP is false combined with an endorsement of one side of the debate, is logically incompatible with the same claim but with the opposite endorsement, regardless of the truth value of MMP.

After I developed this solution, I noticed that Van Gorkum claims something relatively similar in his article: using an example of people arguing about which things have intrinsic value (in a scenario where both things have intrinsic value), he writes: "they give conflicting answers to the question which things have intrinsic value, and that they mistakenly assume that only one of them can be right does not make their disagreement any less valid – only, perhaps, a bit pointless" (van Gorkum, 2020, p. 477). I will attempt to show how we have good reasons to believe that the claim that only one of them can be right is very much accepted and expressed in professional philosophical discussions about moral motivation.

4.1 DISAGREEMENT IN THOUGHT

Regarding these statements, my claim is that the disagreement that we have intuitively held to be genuine is actually genuine even if MMP is true, since all of the parties have believed things that render MMP false. I show this claim by showing the formal incompatibility of these things stated as sentences. This opens the argument to the criticism that these things might not actually be stated at all: the parties in the debate usually do not state the particular things that were requirements for the disagreement to hold, so MMP still has to accept that this debate was not a genuine

disagreement. Here it will be useful to draw a distinction between disagreement in thought and disagreement in speech. It is true that if MMP is true, many instances of dispute in the moral motivation debate do not actually count as disagreement in speech, as the main statements made are not incompatible. Disagreement in thought does however seem to be present: both parties believe the things included in the previously examined statements, and the sums of all of their beliefs regarding this subject, including the belief that MMP is false, are therefore incompatible on those grounds.

The disagreement in thought seems to be primary to the disagreement in speech in this case. If both parties explicitly stated the totalities of the webs of belief regarding moral opinions, they would be making statements that were formally logically incompatible. They chose not to state some of these beliefs as they are taken to be uncontroversial within this discourse. If one of the parties found out that the other party did not hold the belief that externalism and internalism were incompatible, they would find the need to state and argue for this belief before the focus on motivation itself could resume. The focus on disagreement in thought also matches with what we usually consider to be a disagreement: when people disagree about something through incompatible beliefs that both parties know the other holds, we usually don't consider this a less genuine disagreement even if the parties don't utter the incompatible propositions.

4.2 SPEAKER MEANING

A distinction between speaker meaning and conventional meaning should also be drawn, similar to Van Gorkum's use of speaker-intentional pragmatics. The conventional meaning of an utterance is the semantic meaning according to some set of conventions about the use of speech (such as a specific language). Speaker meaning refers to what proposition the speaker is trying to convey with the utterance, and it can differ from conventional meaning through things such as implicature. As for the moral motivation debate, there is a case to be made that the negation of MMP is usually a part of the speaker meaning of statements such as "Internalism is true, not externalism!". The speaker here will usually try to convey that this sentence is true regarding the concept of moral opinion shared between them, and not their personal, non-shared, concept of moral opinion. If the latter was meant, this would generally not be understood by the parties within this debate.

If the speaker meaning of the type of statements similar to the one in the previous paragraph can be held to include the statement that MMP is false, the claim that the disagreement is retained even with the truth of MMP is furthered. Consider an instance of disagreement between two persons from different cultures, who both share a language that they are competent, but not fluent, in. They hold different

beliefs and express these through statements in their shared language that manage to convey to each other that they disagree. If it were the case that the lack of total fluency in this language led to the statements themselves not being completely semantically incompatible, this would not make us count the event as less of a disagreement. We seem to consider speaker meaning more important than conventional meaning when it comes to disagreement.

4.3 DEPENDENCE ON THE SHARED BELIEF

The greatest reason to accept that the belief that the parties share a concept of moral opinion is enough to render them in disagreement even if the belief is false, is that there is a causal relation between the parties holding this belief, and that they actually engage in this debate. This is why this kind of argument is possible for pluralism, but not for ordinary moral relativism. The strength of the disagreement objection to moral relativism lies in the fact that moral relativists still seem to have normative ethical disagreements with each other. That is, two persons that believe themselves to hold completely compatible opinions enter into debates between each other about which one is true, with the implication that they are incompatible. This makes the belief that they actually are compatible less believable. The same argument is much weaker against metaethical pluralism, as we lack reasons to expect that pluralists will enter into these disagreements with each other. All relevant internalists and externalists believe their positions to be incompatible, and adherents of pluralism generally do not argue amongst each other about internalism and externalism. It appears that holding the belief that the concept of moral opinions is shared, is literally what causes a person to enter into the internalist-externalist debate. Since the dispute itself happens because of the holding of this belief and not the truth value of this dispute, it being false should not make the disagreement less genuine.

It's worth noting that the above only holds for descriptive arguments. A descriptive claim is a claim about how things happen to be, such as a claim about what relation moral opinions currently have to motivation. Pluralists do not have these arguments, as they view them as compatible positions in this case. This is distinct from a prescriptive argument, about how things should be. Pluralists very much can claim that everybody should use a specific concept of moral opinion because it would gain us in some way. This is not the point of the argument: Moral motivational pluralism simply claims that the descriptive arguments are mistaken.

4.4 A POSSIBLE OBJECTION

My account for how pluralism can still hold that internalists and externalists are in disagreement depends on them making an error when they talk about motivation. The error they make is their false implied claim that they are using the same concept of moral opinion, which allows their descriptive claims about moral opinion to be true while the entirety of their positions can still be incompatible. This account is thus relatively close to some type of error theory, the idea that all moral statements are false and therefore in error. The difference lies in where the error is claimed to be: this solution to the disagreement objection doesn't need to claim that the main statements about moral motivation are in error. There are however some ways to interpret the semantics of these discussions that can lead to a pseudo-pluralistic error theory, where claims about moral opinions both refer to separate concepts, and are always false. Below is one example of how a possible objection to my solution can lead to these kinds of conclusions.

One of the arguments for metaethical pluralism in the case of moral motivation is that it is hard to find good reasons to reject the intuitions of one half the parties involved: a successful argument on one side would have to somehow show that the other side is incompetent regarding the subject, which doesn't seem to be the case. It might therefore feel counterintuitive that the pluralist answer has to claim that practically all the parties in the debate necessarily fail to speak about what they are (according to my argument) attempting to speak about – namely a shared concept of moral opinions. An opponent of pluralism might claim that, if speaking about the same concept is so critical to the beliefs of the parties, they could reasonably be expected to succeed in referring to the same concept.

Let us return to the initial type of the dispute that I showcased:

- Person one, The internalist: I and my opponent hereby refer to our shared concept of moral opinion, which is necessarily connected to motivation
- Person two, The externalist: I and my opponent hereby refer to our shared concept of moral opinion, which is NOT necessarily connected to motivation

It might seem that it should be possible to force a conversation to be about a shared concept in the case of a specific disagreement. It seems slightly counterintuitive for it to be literally impossible to speak about something all parties clearly are trying to speak about. Forcing the shared concept as in the example above might not be how the debate usually looks, but it could still cause a problem for pluralism. It could be claimed that implying MMP to be false in normal instances of this debate is very similar to forcing a referral to a shared concept.

I want to show that this is not much of a gain for the proponents of the traditional view of this debate. Let us entertain the idea that it actually is possible to force the parties not to refer to their separate concepts. What are they then referring to? Keeping with the *de dicto* interpretation of the concept, a moral opinion is simply a member of a class of objects with a set of requirements for a thing to be a member of this class. As the externalist and the internalist positions have a different set of requirements, it is unclear what class of objects both parties could agree to refer to as moral opinions. Requirements for membership of a class is necessary to know which objects are part of the class, and it is uncontroversial that the parties have separate requirements for membership. It remains unclear what their “shared concept” actually is.

Could a metalinguistic solution be found? The debate could be conceptualized as a disagreement about *what* they are actually talking about. The internalist could claim that the “shared concept” refers to something which follows the internalist definition of a moral opinion, and the externalist could claim the opposite. The issue then arises that it is a debate which can not have a solution. For a side to accept a definition of something that can also be shared, they have to abandon the part of their requirement which is incompatible with the others. Accepting the *de dicto* interpretation, the dispute is about the definition of the concept, and sharing a concept is therefore impossible unless the differences that make it a disagreement are preemptively abandoned.

It seems there can be no shared concept of *de dicto* moral opinion between an externalist and an internalist. “The shared concept” is a definite description that posits the existence of such a thing, and since there is no such thing, the statement becomes false. Claiming that normal instances of the internalist-externalist debate manage to force the object of the conversation to be their shared concept therefore exposes the traditional view to something possibly even less appealing than Pluralism. That is, some kind of metaethical error-theory where all parties have always made false statements. It’s hard to see how a *de dicto* interpretation of the debate can avoid falling into either pluralism or error-theory.

5. CONCLUSION

Johansson/Olson have claimed that Francén’s pluralism is made implausible by the fact that it doesn’t correctly account for the disputes between externalists and internalists being genuine disagreements. Francén’s theory makes this objection possible as he claims the parties are referring to different concepts, which means that statements that would normally be logically incompatible if they were speaking about the same concept are no longer incompatible. Previous defenses against

similar objections touch upon other parts of metaethics where pluralism is relevant, but their arguments were generally not that useful in this case, as they primarily defend themselves from criticism on how to account for first-order moral disagreement. I proceed to defend Francén's theory by arguing that the parties are still in disagreement as they hold beliefs that their analyses are incompatible, and intentions to communicate those beliefs. This idea is supported by disagreement in this field seemingly depending on the parties holding the belief that pluralism is false. I further try to show that other intuitively reasonable ways to escape this scenario fail through other means.

I believe that I have made a reasonable case that this version of pluralism will not have trouble accurately describing instances of meta-ethical disagreement. There are a few ways my arguments can have been mistaken. It is possible, though probably unlikely, that descriptive meta-ethical disagreements will start to regularly occur even between pluralists. This would weaken the case that disagreement is dependent on the belief that pluralism is false. It might also be that pluralism fails from another direction, or that de dicto internalism turns out to be weak: As my arguments are currently structured, they are only concerned with defending pluralism from the disagreement objection from the perspective that pluralism is otherwise a plausible view.

Further research on this subject could explore the relationship between this solution and error-theory, along with the pseudo-pluralist error theory about moral motivation. As it stands though, I believe we have good reason to accept that moral motivational pluralism can account for meta-ethical disagreement.

6. Sources

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