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Two Theses about the Distinctness of Practical and Theoretical Normativity

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0. Introduction

It is a common presupposition of much philosophical work, both past and present, that in the study of normativity there are at least two distinct domains to investigate: practical reason and theoretical reason. The former is principally concerned with actions and certain mental states relating to actions, and the latter is principally concerned with beliefs and other doxastic states.

The history of this division of the study of normativity dates back at least to Aristotle, and I conjecture that it has been importantly reenforced in contemporary thinking by the programmatic division of the study of practical and theoretical reason by Kant into two separate *Critiques*.[1] In current writings, the practical/theoretical divide is not only accepted as a general organising principle, but it is commonly thought to reflect a philosophically consequential difference in normative kind.

One of the main upshots of the distinction in current writings is that theoretical normativity is claimed generally to arise from or to track considerations of truth, quite independent of any substantive theorising about the nature or sources of practical normativity. This may be thought of as the *alethic thesis* about theoretical reason. Those same philosophers have varying views about the source of practical normativity, but the usual candidates include morality, prudence, and goodness *simplicter*.

Many philosophers who accept the alethic thesis and who think that morality, prudence and goodness are the source of practical normativity believe that there is a genuine difference in normative kind between the domains of theoretical normativity and practical normativity. Yet it is

[1] Kant (2002) and Kant (1999).

not entirely clear what it is for there to be a genuine difference in kind between the different domains of normativity.[2] Both domains are commonly thought to include shared normative entities, such as *reasons* and *oughts*. Failures to comply with oughts from either domain are seen as being more significant than failures associated with breaches of etiquette or social convention. To put the point as a question, is there a genuine difference between the domain of practical normativity and the domain of theoretical normativity, or is it merely convenient to group reasons and oughts by whether they concern action propositions or belief propositions?[3]

This chapter offers some tentative thoughts about what it is to treat different domains of normativity as reflecting deep differences in normative kind, as opposed to as distinctions of (significant) philosophical convenience. My suggestion is that there are two ways to understand the claim that there are different domains of normativity as reflecting deep differences in normative kind. The first is by considering stances on the question of whether there can be unresolvable conflicts between domain-specific final oughts. The second is by considering the relation of types of reasons (e.g. for action, belief, feelings, etc) to their sources.

This chapter explores both approaches and explains how they are different. In doing so, it offers some reflections on constraints on theory choice, and how to address the diversity of constraints that arise from different theoretical starting points. The overall aim of the chapter is to better understand the connections and differences between two seemingly linked ways of understanding what it is, or would be, for there to be genuinely distinct normative domains.

1. The *ought* view

One answer to the question of what it means for there to be genuinely distinct domains of normativity is to say that there are domain specific final oughts. This is the *ought view*. The ought view has a weaker and stronger version:

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[2] This is a question which has been explored interestingly in Skorupski (2009).

[3] Or if you prefer, action types and beliefs.

The weak ought view (WOV): There is a final ought for each genuinely distinct domain of normativity. Additionally, there is a non-domain specific all things considered ought.

The strong ought view (SOV): There is a final ought for each genuinely distinct domain of normativity. There is no additional non-domain specific all things considered ought.

SOV and WOV invoke some terminology that is technical rather than entirely natural. The remainder of this section sets out the notions of *final ought* and *all things considered ought*, and also offers some remarks about why it is terminologically disadvantageous to replace 'ought' with 'most reason'. It concludes more substantively with an explanation of why SOV is more suitable as an account of what it is for there to be genuinely distinct domains of normativity than WOV.

1.1 Final and non-final oughts

'Ought' is the name I use to pick out the final normative operator as a concept and as a property. It is a name that used to be commonly in use in philosophy for this concept and for correlative property, but it has been displaced to some degree by locutions containing the word 'reason': for example 'most reason'.[4]

There are various possible ways of understanding the notion of a *final ought*. At minimum, a final ought is one that is verdictive within its domain. Within the domain of practical reason, if one finally ought to φ, then the totality of normatively relevant considerations determine that one ought to φ. One could specify domains more or less finely. For example, one might want to treat

[4] See §1.3 for more discussion.

morality as a domain and prudence as a domain, in which case there would be final oughts for each.

Final oughts contrast with *non-final oughts*. Two well known non-final oughts are *prima facie* and *pro tanto* oughts.[5] The former can be defeated and the latter outweighed. Perhaps there are other possible non-final oughts. For our purposes, we should understand non-final oughts as only being oughts relative to an incomplete body of considerations, ones that jointly underdetermine what one finally ought to do.

1.2 Oughts: final and all-things-considered

I said in the previous sub-section that final oughts are verdictive within a domain. If there is only one general domain of normativity, then there is only one final ought. This leaves open the further question of whether there is a non-domain specific ought, what I shall call an 'all-things-considered' ought, that is more fundamental than domain specific final oughts when there is more than one domain of normativity.

The all-things-considered ought, as it is understood here, is an ought about which one can no longer ask further intelligible ought questions.[6] As a toy illustration, we can imagine that there are only two normative domains, practical normativity and theoretical normativity. Suppose that in the practical domain, one finally ought to cause oneself to believe x. In the theoretical domain, one finally ought not to believe x. We should take 'cause' as a success verb here. The final practical ought and the final theoretical ought are not mutually satisfiable. It is intelligible to ask which ought ought to be satisfied. What one is asking about is what one ought to do[7] all-things-

[5] For a detailed discussion, see Reisner (2013).

[6] This way of putting things is not very precise. It is *a priori* for the concept of *all-things-considered ought* that there is no further *ought* to appeal to. For the property of being something that one *all-things-considered ought* to do (with 'do' understood as a universal verb), it is the *ought* property that trumps all others, given the complete set of normatively relevant facts.

[7] 'Do here should be understood as a universal verb and not specifically an action verb.

considered. The all-things-considered ought is final in the sense that it is verdictive, given a complete body of considerations. It differs from other final oughts in that it is not domain specific. The difference between WOV and SOV concerns whether there are distinct domains of normativity, if there is also an all-things-considered ought.

It is important to emphasise that although one can pick out the concept of all-things-considered ought by considering whether there are further intelligible ought questions, this does not suggest that the all-thing-considered ought is determined by weighing or comparing various domain specific final oughts. It may be that there is a domain independent way of weighing up all normatively relevant considerations that bypasses domain specific final oughts and arrives directly at an all-things-considered ought.

1.3 Final ought and most reason[8]

It has become increasingly popular in the literature to replace *ought* with *most reason*.[9] Although one is free to use terms of art as one wishes, there is much to be said against current practice. There are two ways to think of normative reasons, hereafter just 'reasons'. One is as any unit of normative currency. The other is as a specific kind of normative entity that differs from other possible normative entities, such as side-constraints, duties, etc. Different problems with the use of *most reason* arise for two different ways of thinking about reasons.

One way of thinking about reasons is as a specific kind of normative entity that contributes to final oughts through weighing. On this view, reasons have amongst their properties weights which can be compared. Accordingly, what there is most reason to do is whatever has the most weight of reason supporting it.

Understood this way, that there is most reason to do something is not sufficient to determine whether one ought to do it. There are three reasons why. The first is that understood as entities

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[8] Comments from the audience at the Uppsala Higher Seminar in Practical Philosophy were particularly valuable in the development of this section. Jonas Olson in particular has pressed me to explain why it is advantageous to use 'ought' rather than 'most reason'. See also Broome (forthcoming) for a more extensive discussion of *ought* and *most reason*.

[9] For a small sampling of examples, see: Dancy (2000), Parfit (2001), and Smith (2013).

that only contribute to oughts through their weight, reasons may not exhaust all the normatively relevant considerations. There may be other kinds of normative considerations, for example side-constraints or normatively basic *prima facie* oughts, that trump the contribution of reasons in the total normative calculus.

The second pertains specifically to the domain of belief. As John Skorupski points out,[10] there can be most reason in this sense to believe *x*, but nonetheless that may not be enough reason to make it the case that one ought to believe *x*. There may only be slightly stronger reason to believe *x* than to believe not *x*, in which case one ought to suspend judgement.

The final reason why we should be dubious about replacing *ought* with *most reason*, if we take reasons to be particular kinds of normative entities, is that on some views reasons themselves are analysed in terms of oughts. John Broome has argued, for example, that reasons are explanations of oughts.[11] Stephen Kearns and Daniel Star have argued that reasons are evidence of oughts.[12] These analyses, which seem substantive and intelligible, turn out to be circular if the same property appears both in the *analysans* and the *analysandum*.

The other way of thinking about reasons is as a category containing all types of units of normative currency. On this way of thinking about reasons, we must think of *most* in a different way. *Most* cannot specifically be a way of accounting for amounts or weights, as there may be kinds of reasons (now understood as any sort of normative entity) that do not have weights or amounts. Brute *prima facie* oughts or side-constraints will come out as reasons, but they cannot be weighed and do not have quantities associated with them. *Most reason* then has nothing to do with particular kinds of normative entities nor with any particularly natural way of understanding 'most'. 'Most reason', like 'ought', just denotes something that gets a top normative ranking, however the rankings are constructed. It is therefore preferable to use 'ought' rather than 'most reason' for the sake of clarity when picking out the concept and correlative property of a final ought.

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[10] Skorupski (2011).

[11] See Broome (2004 & 2013).

[12] This view first appears in Kearns and Star (2008).

1.4 The weak and strong ought views

There are two very general types of comparability questions for a theory of normativity. One is whether different kinds of considerations for the same type of thing (an action, a belief, etc) can be compared to determine what one ought to do, believe, etc. The other is whether considerations or verdicts of a putative normative domain can be compared to those in other putative normative domains. This is the question of whether there is an all-things-considered ought.[13]

The ought view tries to capture the distinctness or specialness of different domains of normativity by identifying genuine normative distinctness with domain-relative final oughts. If the domain-relative final oughts are directly comparable with respect to a verdictive all-things-considered ought, it suggests that the domains are distinguished at best by being two species of the same genus. It is unclear what status domain relative final oughts have as final oughts in this case. They are not at normative rock bottom. Just how distinct comparable – but at least putatively different – normative domains are may depend on precisely why they are comparable.[14]

This concern suggests that WOV does less to clarify what it is that makes different normative domains genuinely distinct than does SOV. According to SOV, distinctness amounts to the incomparability of domain specific final oughts.[15]

2. Theories and structures

The main work of this chapter is to suggest two different ways of understanding the claim that there is a genuine distinction in kind among different domains of normativity. One proposal is SOV, that what it is for there to be genuinely distinct kinds of normativity is for there to be fundamentally incomparable final domain specific oughts. Or to put it another way, it is for

[13] I discuss the different types of comparability in detail in Reisner (2004, ch. 3 & 2015).

[14] See Reisner (2015) for more discussion.

[15] In §4 I discuss *the reasons matching view*, which offers a more specific way of understanding normative distinctness that is compatible with the existence of an all-things-considered ought.

conflicts between domain specific final oughts to be in principle unresolvable.

SOV is an interesting way of understanding what it is for there to be genuinely distinct domains of normativity in part because it invites interesting methodological questions about normative theorising. One may arrive at SOV, or its negation, from two different theoretical directions. SOV or its negation can each be the consequence of particular theories of normativity, by which I mean accounts of what determines what one ought to do, believe, etc. One may also arrive at SOV or its negation by considering the nature of ought itself, before one has committed to a particular normative theory.

This section and the next consider this broad methodological question raised by SOV, namely how to address theoretical disagreement about whether there are distinct domains of normativity, when the disagreement arises from arguments about normative theories on one side and about the nature of ought itself on the other.

Unfortunately, the foregoing discussion is conducted at a high level of abstraction without much reference to particular authors' views or approaches. I believe that in the present context it is distracting to engage in the kind of exegesis that would be required to show that particular authors have adopted one or another of the methodologies discussed here. It is my hope that by setting out these methodological issues in the way that I have, they may prove useful in providing a framework for philosophers interested in trying to argue in favour of one normative view over another, when existing arguments for the views themselves depend on quite different methodological assumptions.

Particular theories of normativity and also particular accounts of the nature of ought may deliver the conclusion that practical and theoretical normativity are genuinely distinct domains of normativity. Others may be neutral about whether this is so. Still others may entail that there are no distinct normative domains. For present purposes we can set aside theories of normativity and accounts of the nature of ought that are neutral and instead just consider those that entail that

there is, or alternatively is not, a genuine distinction between practical and theoretical normativity. I shall call the view that there is such a distinction, 'distinction realism' or just 'realism'. Its opposite I shall call 'distinction anti-realism' or just 'anti-realism'.

2.1 Theory drivenness and first-orderism

It is possible to argue in favour of distinction realism or anti-realism antecedently to first order normative theorising. A first order normative theory should be understood as a theory that tells us about what oughts and reasons there are and how they come about. Realism and anti-realism are structural claims, and there is often the possibility of arguing about structure quite independently of first order substance.

If this is so, conclusions about distinction realism or anti-realism, arrived at independently of first order normative theoretical commitments, may constrain which first order normative theories are possible. If distinction realism is true, and a particular first order normative theory entails distinction anti-realism, then that first order normative theory cannot be true.

Yet some proponents of a particular theory of normativity may well resist the thought that whether their view is correct, much less whether it is in play theoretically, is a matter that can be resolved by high-level independent theorising about distinction realism or anti-realism. This resistance could be motivated by one of two, perhaps tacit, methodological commitments.

The first commitment is to *theory drivenness* (TD). To be theory driven in this sense is to think that there is sufficiently good support for a particular first order normative theory that we are in a position to reject other philosophical views that entail the theory's falsehood. More tenably, TD may require us to reject other philosophical views that entail in one form or another that the preferred theory is a non-starter. This weaker version of TD would be sufficient for rejecting structural views about normativity in general that entailed the wrong (from the perspective of the preferred theory) one of realism or anti-realism.

The second commitment is to *first-orderism* (FO). FO gives priority in general to arguments that can be made about first order theories of practical and theoretical normativity, and other relevant areas of normativity, without appealing to independent considerations about the structure of normativity itself. FO could be weakened in various ways, but this is a good approximation of the relevant methodological commitment.

It may be useful to note that the kind of commitment I have in mind for FO is not strictly parallel to a common way of understanding debates in normative ethics, to which it bears a superficial similarity. There is a tradition according to which normative ethics and metaethics are either completely or to a significant degree independent of each other. FO makes no such assumption with respect to what might be thought of as the normative and metanormative domains. It is instead a claim about which domain has priority in setting the basic correctness conditions for the other. Put another way, FO sanctions making inferences about distinction realism or distinction anti-realism from a first order theory, but it forbids, or at least places a demanding standard on inferences about the possible correctness of first order normative theories based on independent arguments for realism or anti-realism.

2.2 Structurism

It is easy enough to construct analogues of TD and FO, in which priority is given to theoretical considerations in the metanormative domain over those in the normative domain. We may put the analogous views of both kinds under the heading of 'structurism'. The heading is a useful one, because it stands as a reminder of an important restriction on which aspects of the metanormative domain are methodologically salient.

The term 'metanormativity' is sometimes used analogously to 'metaethics'. When it is used in that way, it names that field of inquiry concerned with the use and meaning of normative language, the nature of thoughts involving normative concepts, and the nature of normative properties, if

there are any. In metaethics, commitments about language, thought, and metaphysics can ramify into normative ethics. Two examples involve the (claimed) derivation of utilitarianism, one from forms of naturalist realism and the other from cognitive irrealism.[16] It is quite possible that there are similar strong links between some first order theories of normativity and some metanormative theorising, in its analogous-to-metaethics guise, but I shall not explore the matter here.

Structurism is in principle silent on the relationship between classical metaethics-like metanormative verdicts and first order normative theories, although it is not my intention to rule out the possibility of linkages. Structurism picks out a particular feature of metanormative theorising, namely the metanormative verdicts on the unity or plurality of the final normative operator, *ought*.[17] There is a unified final normative operator if there is an all-things-considered ought. There is a plurality of final normative operators if there are multiple domain specific final oughts and no all-things-considered ought. A strict structurist would be committed to the view that independent theoretical verdicts about whether there is one final ought or one for each domain of normativity would serve as an absolute restriction on first order theoretical theorising.

If it is on the one hand a necessary consequence of a particular first order normative theory that there are separate final oughts for each domain, and if it is a consequence on the other hand of independent theorising about the structure of normativity that there is a single final ought that is not domain specific, then the first order theory will be treated by the strict structurist as being excluded.

Structurism, like TD and FO approaches, can be given a slack formulation. In the slack formulation, structurism is a view about the degree of priority that is given to preserving the preferred structure when it conflicts with a preferred first order normative theory. Strict

[16] See Railton (1986) and Skorupski (2011).

[17] These verdicts can be of two types: those which concern concepts and those which concern properties. I shall not carefully distinguish between the two types of verdicts, in order that I may simplify the discussion.

structurism and strict versions of TD and FO approaches represent opposite ends of a methodological spectrum, along which different relative balances of priority may be assigned.

2.3 Degree of priority for slack methodologies

As a naming convention, we can choose of which approach a particular methodological commitment is a slack version by looking at whether it assigns more weight to TD and FO considerations or to structurist ones. The interest of slack approaches is that they offer in principle a method whereby competing claims from TD and FO considerations can be weighed against structurist claims. The question of how to formulate slack versions of TD and FO approaches and of structurism proves tricky on reflection. We may consider first a simple way of construing slack theory-first or slack stucturist methodologies and then a more complicated way of doing so.

Compare three distributive principles, the *principle of utility*, *maximin,* and the *weighted telic inequality principle*. We may think of the spectrum of views as having for one pole a principle, the principle of utility, that gives no priority to reducing inequality and gives absolute priority to maximising (expected) wellbeing. The opposite pole is given by individualistic maximin. Individualistic maximin gives absolute priority to improving the wellbeing of the worst off person. The weighted telic inequality principle gives greater priority to identical improvements in total wellbeing if they are concentrated in the relatively worst off.[18] However, it allows that a less equal distribution with a greater total quantity of wellbeing may be strictly better than an alternative distribution having both less inequality and less total wellbeing. The polar principles – utility and individualistic maximin – each give total priority to just one feature of a distribution. The weighted telic inequailty principle is slack, because it assigns relative weights to utility and inequality.

[18] For a more detailed discussion of priority in the context of telic egalitarianism, classical utilitarianism, and Rawls's distributive principles (including maximin), see Hirose, 2015.

There appears to be no strong analogue to utility and priority to the worst off for TD/FO and structurist approaches. This is because the influence of supports for different kinds of theories is being weighed up, rather than features within a single, for example, aggregative theory.

Alternatives to the straightforward approach may involve multiple steps. Here I sketch a simple multi-step slack methodology: *amplification*. Amplification requires a two step weighing process. The first step assigns a degree of support to the preferred first-order theory and to the preferred structurist theory. By 'preferred theory', I mean in each case that it is the most strongly supported theory of its type (either a first order normative theory or an account of the nature of ought).[19] The second step is to apply a coefficient that amplifies or diminishes the individual degrees of support for final comparison between the first order theory and the stuctural theory. A restriction on the second step is that the amplification and attenuation should be complementary.

There are many other possible alternatives, but amplification is a convenient model for discussion, and I shall refer back to it in §3.

3. The metaproblem

The previous section proceeded at a high level of abstraction, but the main thought is quite straightforward. Philosophers working on theories of normativity sometimes find argumentative support for particular first order theories of normativity. Other times, they find argumentative support for claims about the structure of normativity, for example with respect to its unity or disunity and whether there can be genuine normative conflicts. One might have convictions about what to do when the best supported first order theory has structural entailments that conflict with the best supported theory of the structure of normativity.

Let us introduce the notion of a *comprehensive theory of normativity*. A comprehensive theory of

[19] Of course, there need not be only one top ranked theory. It may be better to talk about non-dominated theories than top ranked ones. However, this adds complications that are largely orthogonal to my interests here.

normativity is both a first-order normative theory and a structural theory. Projects trying to work out such theories have become popular in recent years.[20] With varying degrees of explicitness, the authors argue in such ways as to suggest a preferred methodological balance. The chosen methodological balance can be philosophically consequential. Independent arguments for structural unity are seen as having different degrees of importance. Assigned enough importance, they can rule in or rule out competing first-order theories.

Because the choice of how to balance arguments that support incompatible first-order and structural views has important theoretical consequences, it would be helpful to be able to say something about the metaproblem. One way to understand the metaproblem is through the apparatus of amplification. There, it is the problem of how to assign the amplifiying and attenuating coefficients to the initial levels of support for the first-order theory and for the structure. This metaproblem, like many others, has no obvious general solution. In the remainder of this section, I shall outline two possible strategies for addressing the metaproblem of how to prioritise theory-first and structurist considerations.

3.1 Appeals to concepts

One way that conflicts between the entailments of first-order normative theories and various normative structures might be resolved is by appeal to conceptual analysis or just necessary or sufficient conditions for certain concepts, when a full blown analysis is not in the offing.

Ought is a concept that provides a natural starting point. After all, first-order normative theories are generally concerned to tell us what we ought to do, believe, and feel, and the concept of *ought* may prove to have first order entailments as well as structurist ones. I have discussed earlier

[20] Parfit (2013a & 2013b), Scanlon (1998 & 2014), and Skorupski (2011) have written large works of this kind. Miriam McCormick (2015) has also written a book that should be regarded as offering a starting point for a comprehensive theory of normativity, although the book has as its main focus normative reasons for belief.

in the chapter how structurists might develop arguments by appealing to the nature of ought.[21] In doing so, I was tacitly assuming a picture on which the only available entailments from *ought* were structurist. In the present context, the conceptual analysis of *ought* is expected to yield both structurist and first order normative entailments. I am not sure which expectation is correct, but we should assume the latter for this part of the discussion.

If we had an independent analysis, or a set of necessary or sufficient conditions, for *ought*, then we might find a solution to the metaproblem at hand. This is because an analysis or weaker account of *ought* might have either first-order entailments or structural ones. A notable example of the former is G.E. Moore's contention that the real definition of *ought to do* is *that action which maximises good*.[22] Analytic naturalists have reached a similar conclusion, also for reasons of analysis.[23] Other philosophers claim to derive structurist conclusions from accounts of *ought*. I have suggested this, at least indirectly, at times.[24] Recently, the study of *ought* has regained its vigour, and there are many examples of accounts that have structurist implications.[25]

It is significant that analyses or accounts of *ought* do not uniformly deliver first-order or structurist verdicts exclusively. This makes the adoption of an *ought*-centric solution to the metaproblem dialectically fair. If it were *a priori* that analyses or accounts of *ought* only delivered stucturist verdicts, for example, then appealing to those analyses or accounts to solve the metaproblem could be fairly regarded as just plumping for structurism in the first place.

A second concept that may prove of use is that of *being a reason*. Much the same can be said *mutatis mutandis* about *being a reason* as can be said of *ought* in this context. It remains to be seen

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[21] Williams (1973) might be read this way.

[22] Moore (1903).

[23] Most famously J.J.C. Smart (1956).

[24] See Reisner (2015 & forthcoming).

[25] A sampling of some recent accounts includes Broome, (2013); Cariani (2013), Kolodny and Macfarlane (2010); Wedgwood (2009); and Zimmerman (2007 & 2015). Broome also thinks that there are first-order consequences to the analysis of *ought*. See Broome (*ibid*. ch. 1).

whether one or the other is more perspicuous for the purpose at hand.

3.2 Systematic metanormativity

There is disagreement amongst philosophers about the degree of independence exhibited by metaethical theories from normative ethical theories. One approach would be to (aim to) derive a normative ethical theory from a metaethical theory, and the other would be to make one's metaethical theory consistent with a (suitably) wide range of normative ethical theories.

The analogue of both approaches to giving a theory of systematic metanormativity can be dialectically neutral with respect to dispute between first-orderism and structurism. There are two important constraints. The first constraint avoids hidden structurism. It applies to approaches that do not entangle the first-order theory with the metatheory. For those approaches, it is important that the metatheory neither assumes a substantive structurist outcome as a *desideratum* nor uses the production of a particular substantive structurist outcome as evidence for the correctness of the theory. To do so would be to smuggle in structurism.

The second constraint applies to approaches that entangle the first order normative theory and the metanormative theory. For these approaches, there is a ban on setting a substantive first-order theory as a *desideratum* for a successful metanormative theory, and there is a concomitant ban on appealing to the first-order theory entailed by the metaetheory as evidence for the metatheory itself. An example in metaethics elucidates the point. Let us suppose that Kantian metaethics entail Kantian normative ethics. That Kantian normative ethics are claimed to be correct is sometimes adduced as a consideration in favour of Kantian metaethics. In the context of trying to solve the metaproblem, analogous adductions are ruled out.

3.3 Some remarks about the two strategies

An interesting feature of both strategies is that they solve the metaproblem by ignoring it. And this is not accidentally so. Solutions to the metaproblem can assume neither first-orderism nor strutcurism. And it is not clear how – beyond assumption or stipulation – disagreements about weighting in a slack theory could be neutrally resolved.

One general way to avoid assuming one approach or the other is look for a different philosophical method. In this case that method is an appeal either to analysis or to classical metaethical considerations. These methods are neutral in this context because, if successful, they deliver both at least a partial first order normative theory and a structure *ab initio* without a conflict between the first-order theory and the structure that requires resolution in the first place.

It is reasonable to ask whether these approaches solve the metaproblem in any interesting sense. It is clear that they do not solve the metaproblem in a strict sense. What they do offer is a method for neutrally refereeing disagreements between first-order theories and structural claims by providing an independent way of delivering a comprehensive normative theory.

4. Reasons and the distinctness of domains of normativity

We now turn to the second way of understanding the claim that there are genuinely distinct normative domains: to look at the relations between reasons and their sources.

Reasons and oughts share some basic structural features. At least in case of owned oughts,[26] both reasons and oughts relate an agent to an action or a mental state. A simple schema of each relation would look like these:

> *R-schema*: Fact *f* is a reason for agent *A* to φ.
>
> *O-schema*: Agent *A* ought that *A* [do] φ.[27]

[26] See Broome (2013) ch. 2 for a discussion of owned and unowned oughts.

[27] The o-schema can be expressed by what I have called 'o-form sentences' elsewhere. See Reisner (2004) and also

Reasons differ from oughts in one crucial respect: reasons relate particular facts to agents and actions in a counting-in-favour-of relation. For example the fact that my coffee gets cold too quickly is a reason for me to switch to using an insulated mug. Oughts do not, at least explicitly, relate particular facts to those things that one ought to do. The corresponding ought claim is just that I ought to switch to using an insulated mug.

Yet there are explanations of why we ought to do something. One kind of explanation of an ought is given by the balance of reasons and other non-final normative considerations. On the other hand, the explanation of why a particular fact is, for example, a consideration that counts in favour of doing something – is a reason – is not usually given by way of citing some further balance of reasons. The explanation instead looks to be something like a principle of normativity or some other *in-favour-of* makers. I have called the in-favour-of makers 'sources'.[28] The important thought is that counting-in-favourness does not occur in a vacuum. The counting-in-favour relation is grounded or explained by something else.

On my view, the explanation is a particular kind of further normative fact, although not one that is a reason. An example should make things clearer. Suppose Odd asks Even for the time. Let us suppose that Even's wristwatch, which he believes with good reason to be accurate, says that it is 17:00. The explanation or ground for this reason is that the evidence – the information from Even's wristwatch – strongly suggests that the time is in fact 17:00. The ground or explanation is evidential. I shall maintain my past custom and call the category that *being evidence for* falls under in this example 'being a source'.[29]

Broome *ibid*.

[28] See Reisner (2004 & 2015).

[29] Reisner (*ibid.*). Broome (2013) works out a more detailed account of the relation between reasons and sources. Guindon (forthcoming) presents an alternative view to Broome's.

4.1 Matched and unmatched sources for types of reasons[30]

A theory of reasons comprises many parts. It says something about the structure of reasons, about how they are compared, about what they are and whether they are fundamental, and about what gives rise to them. It also divides reasons into *types*. A type of reason is identified by looking at what the reason is a reason for. This leaves the grain of the typology of reasons open, pending more substantive theorising. One might think that all reasons for feelings fall under the single heading of 'affective reasons', or one might think that there is no general type of reason like an affective reason, but rather several different types individuated as finely as kinds of feelings for which there can be reasons. I shall be working with a coarse typology in the rest of this chapter for the sake of convenience.

One can think of types of reasons and their sources as being either *matched* or *unmatched*. A source and a type are matched if there is a particular kind of connection between them. They are unmatched if no special kind of connection holds between them.[31]

It is difficult to say very much that is contentful about the particular or special connection that must hold for a type of reason and (one of) its source(s) to be matched.[32] This is because matching is typically something that occurs within the context of substantive normative theory.

As an example, consider an apparatus developed by Sven Danielsson and Jonas Olson.[33] They introduce the notion of a *correctness reason*. That Josefin has been wronged is a reason for her to feel angry. That Josefin will win a prize for feeling angry is also a reason for her to feel angry. Yet there is something different about these two reasons for Josefin to be angry. It at least seems that there is something appropriate, correct, or fitting about feeling angry when one has been wronged. One

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[30] This section owes much to comments by Patricia Mindus on an earlier version of this material.

[31] Hieronymi (2005) suggests that sources and reasons can be matched by considering what question a reason bears on. Worries about this and other kinds of matching can be found in Reisner (forthcoming).

[32] The matched/unmatched distinction is another way of spelling out the *reasons specialism/reasons generalism* distinction developed in Reisner (2004 & 2015).

[33] Danielsson and Olson (2007).

may, at least on some views, still have a reason to be angry when one will get a prize for it, but there is no question of appropriateness, correctness, or fittingness. Anger fits being wronged; it does not fit receiving a prize for being angry.

The matching relation is in the background of the very idea of a correctness reason. Correctness reasons depend on there being something about the attitude of anger, or the concept of the attitude of anger, that makes it correct when one has been wronged in something like the way that that fact there is snow on the ground makes the belief that there is snow on the ground true. Reasons for anger are matched to being wronged as a source just as reasons for belief are matched to truth as a source.[34] That Josefin has been wronged is not a correctness reason for her to be glad, supercilious, or magnanimous. Those attitudes are not appropriate or are not fitting with respect to being wronged. There is nothing about those attitudes, or the concepts of them, that matches them to being wronged as a source of reasons for them.

This example only provides what I hope is an intuitive illustration of how matching is supposed to work. Particular types of actions or attitudes on some views have their own special sources of reasons. The best known views that posit these relations are constituvist ones.[35] However a theory specifies the matching relation, the core idea is that matched source/reason-type pairs are matched in a way that is in some way special to them. The alternative is for a reason type and its source to be unmatched.

The matched/unmatched distinction is intended to be exhaustive. Therefore a type of reason and (one of) its source(s) are unmatched just if they are not matched. It may be useful to consider an example. Some theories may not assign any special importance to the type of reason when

[34] The exact analogy is difficult to work out. Truth is normally thought to be a source of reasons for belief, but those reasons are, or are given by, evidence for the contents of the belief, rather than by the actual truth of its contents. The analogous story for correctness reasons is difficult to articulate. For worries about correctness reasons, see Reisner (2009).

[35] For an excellent discussion about constitutivism about reasons, see Kastafanas (forthcoming).

distinguishing its sources. We can imagine a theoretical view about reasons that says that a sufficient condition for something to be a reason of any type is for it to be a consideration that speaks to the goodness of that for which it is a reason. That my believing I can speak Swedish would make me happier and that my drinking a glass of wine would make me happier are reasons for me respectively to believe that I speak Swedish and to drink a glass of wine. The fact that one reason is for a belief and the other for an action is neither here nor there according to this view. The source for each of these reasons is goodness, and it is unmatched because the source bears no special connection to the reason's being for a belief or for an action *per se*.

4.2 Matching and distinction realism

The idea of a matching relation between a reason and its source allows us to frame the second way in which we can understand distinction realism. Here distinction realism would be the view that there are at least some matched reasons and sources. I shall call this version of the view the 'matching realism view' (MRV).

Turning back to the ought view, we can see that MRV is not equivalent to SOV. MRV does not have direct implications for whether there is an all-things-considered ought or whether there are unresolvable normative conflicts between (putative) domains of normativity. MRV does not even entail that there are domain specific final oughts.

Understanding why MRV and SOV come apart is easier when one considers the distinctive emphasis of each account. MRV is a thesis about how reasons arise, not how they aggregate. Not uncommonly, views about how reasons arise are linked to how they aggregate, but one need not assume a link. One could adopt the view that there are brute weighing relations amongst reasons of the same type arising from different sources, as one might in weighing pragmatic and evidential

reasons for belief.[36] One might similarly adopt the view that there are brute weighing relations between reasons for action and reasons for belief when they conflict.[37]

MRV's silence on aggregation also means that it does not say anything about whether there are domain specific final oughts. If there are brute weighing relations among different types of reasons or reasons of the same type with different sources, it may be that the only genuine final ought is the all-things-considered ought. In that case, one might still talk loosely of 'domain specific final oughts', but that would simply be a matter of convenience rather than a reflection of a conceptual or ontological commitment.

Conversely, SOV concerns the aggregated units rather than the units of aggregation. It is silent on the question of whether there are matched or unmatched reasons, or both. And it is silent on the more fundamental question of whether there are reasons at all.

5. Conclusion

MRV and SOV represent, respectively, theory-first and structurist accounts of distinction realism. MRV sets out a criterion within a normative theory and SOV sets out a criterion for the structure of relations amongst final oughts. A comprehensive normative theory may meet the criterion for MRV but not SOV and *vice-versa*.

This is interesting and in some ways surprising. There is a thesis I have discussed elsewhere, which I call 'normative separatism'.[38] It is the view that there are genuinely distinct and incomparable domains of normativity with a final ought for each and no more fundamental all-things-considered ought. It is in content the same as SOV, but it was intended to describe a theoretical view about the structure of normativity rather than to serve as a criterion for there

[36] I discuss how this might be done in Reisner (2008).

[37] Such a conflict is described in §1.2.

[38] Reisner (2004 & 2015).

being distinct domains of normativity. When I have discussed normative separatism in the past, I have suggested that there are reasons to expect it to be linked to what I called in the same places 'normative monism and reasons specialism',[39] which is essentially a strong version of MRV. In parallel, the former was intended as a theoretical position about the relation between reasons and sources rather than as a criterion for there being genuinely distinct domains of normativity.

But now it seems that we can understand what it is for there to be a genuinely distinct domains of normativity in two different ways, one structurist and one at the level of normative theory. Authors like me who discuss the distinctness of theoretical and practical normativity may wish to take care about which of these two kinds of distinctness they are discussing.

[39] Reisner (2015).

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