

*Rational Argument in Moral
Philosophy: Some Implications of
Gordon Baker's Therapeutic
Conception of Philosophy.*

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ABSTRACT

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This work is an investigation into philosophical method and rational argument in moral philosophy. It makes an original contribution to human understanding, by taking some of the tools and techniques that Gordon Baker identifies in the later work of Wittgenstein, and using them as a way of fending for oneself in an area of philosophy that neither Baker, nor Wittgenstein, wrote on. More specifically, a discussion of some different aspects of the contemporary literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism is used as a vehicle for illustrating how Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy offers alternative possibilities for how we can do philosophy, and what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. I maintain that, by considering some indicative ways in which Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy can dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of perplexities found in the existing literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, we can liberate ourselves from the traditional/theoretical view of how we ought to do philosophy, and an understanding of rational argument in moral philosophy, to which we need not be committed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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Works by Ludwig Wittgenstein

BB (1958). *The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Blackwell.

PI (1953/1958). *Philosophical Investigations*. (eds.) G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees. tr. G. E. M. Anscombe. 3rd edn. Oxford: Blackwell.¹

PR (1975). *Philosophical Remarks*. (ed.) R. Rhees, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White. Oxford: Blackwell.

¹ References to *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, are to sections (e.g. PI §1).

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For Laura, Elliot & Arlo

INTRODUCTION

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This work is an investigation into philosophical method and rational argument in moral philosophy. It makes an original contribution to human understanding,¹ by taking some of the tools and techniques that Gordon Baker identifies in the later work of Wittgenstein, and using them as a way of fending for oneself in an area of philosophy that neither Baker, nor Wittgenstein, wrote on. More specifically, a discussion of some different aspects of the contemporary literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism is used as a vehicle for illustrating how Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy offers alternative possibilities for how we can do philosophy, and what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. I maintain that, by considering some indicative ways in which Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy can dissolve, rather than solve,² the kinds of perplexities found in the existing literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, we can liberate ourselves from the traditional/theoretical view of how we ought to do philosophy, and an understanding of rational argument in moral philosophy, to which we need not be committed.

In this investigation, particularism is broadly understood as a denial of the view that the possibility of rational (moral) thought and judgement is in some way dependent on an adherence to underlying principles of one sort or another. Although consideration of the particularist position can be seen in a variety of contemporary philosophical

¹ Following Hacker (2013: 3-28) I take philosophy to be concerned with the clarity of human understanding as opposed to knowledge in the sense that philosophy neither explains nor discovers the essence of things in the world, and instead sets out to remind us of what is already in plain view. See also *PI* §126.

² I use the term 'dissolve' here in the sense of making a problem disappear/no longer trouble someone, rather than 'destroying' a particular erroneous position. Compare Baker (2004:155 & 164) and *PI* §133 with DeGaynesford's (2004: 12) description of dissolving a problem in McDowell's philosophy.

contexts, including the philosophies of language,³ science,⁴ and sport,⁵ the existing literature on this topic is dominated by the question of whether the various branches of axiology (value theory) are to be understood as inevitably principled endeavours or not. Or, in other words, the conflict between particularism and its critics is dominated by a dispute over the extent to which the very possibility of value judgement depends on the existence of an appropriate supply of underlying principles, patterns or rules.

While debates around particularism are becoming increasingly popular within the field of aesthetics,⁶ the present project specifically focuses on how we understand particularism within the context of moral philosophy. Although John McDowell is often thought of as the founding father of contemporary moral particularism,⁷ it is Jonathan Dancy who is generally taken to be the central figure in the existing literature on this topic (Smith, 2011: ix). Typically recognised by both his critics and advocates as an “innovative and incisive philosopher” (Hooker, 2013: 1),⁸ Dancy is often credited as being responsible for bringing attention to particularism as a position in moral metaphysics and the philosophy of reasons and normativity. Prior to Dancy bringing this iconoclastic position to ‘mainstream’ attention, western moral philosophy had traditionally been dominated by two assumptions. The first assumption is that the very possibility of morality and/or moral judgement is dependent on the existence of moral principles.⁹ The second assumption is that the task of the moral philosopher is one of putting forward theories outlining those rules or principles under which morality ought

³ See Dancy (2004), Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b), and Whiting (2010).

⁴ See, Larvor (2008), Cartwright (1983 & 1999), and Sandis (2006).

⁵ See McFee (2004: 129-148), and Culbertson (2012).

⁶ See Bender (1995), Bergqvist (2009a, 2010 & 2015), Kirwin (2011), and McKeever & Ridge (2011).

⁷ For arguments in favour of this claim see Dancy (1993: ix-xiii), and for arguments against see Cray (2007a: 40).

⁸ For other indicative example of the status and respect afforded to Dancy’s work, see also McDowell (2013: 13), Little (2013: 113), Wallace (2013: 138), and Darwall (2013: 168).

⁹ See Dancy (2004:7), and McKeever & Ridge (2006: 3-4).

to be governed. In presenting his particularist challenge to the orthodox conception of morality as a principled endeavour, Dancy has provoked significant debate between advocates of moral particularism, and their critics.¹⁰

In using Dancy's (2004) moral particularism as a backdrop for illustrating some implications of Baker's therapeutic philosophy for our understanding of rational argument in moral philosophy, this investigation concentrates on three specific areas of the contemporary moral particularism literature. More specifically, this work focuses on the topics of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, in relation to the account of moral particularism presented by Dancy (2004). Whereas the existing moral particularism literature is typically dominated by a traditional/theoretical conception of rational argument and doing philosophy, it is not the purpose of this project to formulate alternative theories to refute, replace, or buttress those proposed by Dancy (2004). In contrast to the existing literature on the above aspects of Dancy's position, the aim of this investigation is to draw attention to examples of how the later Baker's therapeutic approach to doing philosophy can dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of issues typically found in the dispute between advocates and critics of Dancy's work. In doing so, I intend to show, by means of worked examples, that there are other possibilities for how we can do philosophy, and think about rational argument in moral philosophy. As such, I maintain that we need not be committed to a traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument about moral matters.

¹⁰ For instance, see the anthologies on moral particularism edited by Hooker & Little (2000), and Lance, Potrč, & Strahovnik (2008), as well as the collection of essays in tribute to Dancy edited by Bakhurst, Hooker, & Little (2013).

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

In chapter one I set out a brief overview of Dancy's (2004) account of moral particularism, and illustrate a number of key theses and concepts associated with his position, such as the doctrine of "holism in the theory of reasons" and the "non-codifiability" thesis. In doing so, I draw attention to the influence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy on the development of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, and identify his account of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge as important aspects of this position where someone engaged with the existing particularism literature may experience a sense of philosophical puzzlement. In response to this, I propose that one reason for this sense of puzzlement is the way in which critics and advocates of Dancy's view typically frame their engagement with his work in a traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy. That is, a view of philosophy where the primary task of the philosopher is to discern the metaphysical essence of x, and/or formulate explanatory theories about it. In contrast to the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism, I recommend that what we need here is not a more sophisticated theory of moral competence, conceptual learning, or moral knowledge, but an alternative way of doing philosophy that can help us dissolve, rather than solve, our 'problems'.

Chapter two of my project is concerned with explicating what I take to be the salient features of one alternative to the received kind of approach to Dancy's (2004) position, a conception of philosophy which I suggest can liberate someone from his or her perplexities around Dancy's (2004) view of the moral landscape, and the arguments for/against this view within the existing particularism literature. While the approach to philosophy I shall outline here is grounded in Wittgenstein through the later work of Gordon Baker (2004), I take this therapeutic conception of philosophy to be that of Baker (2004) rather than Wittgenstein per se. After illustrating the key aspects of the

later Baker's (2004) way of doing philosophy found in his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later texts, I move on to draw attention to some of the prominent features of Baker's own philosophical writing. In doing so, I propose that aspects of Baker's own writing style, such as his use of the interlocutor, are also important elements of his philosophical approach. In particular, I highlight Baker's (2004) openness to other ways of undertaking philosophical investigations (where appropriate), as a significant reason why his conception of philosophy as therapy is both useful and attractive for the present project.

In the penultimate section of this chapter I also outline, and dissolve, what I maintain are some of the most potentially damaging criticisms of the therapeutic view of philosophy advocated by the later Baker (2004). The first criticism suggests that, insofar as Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy is radically at odds with the traditional/theoretical approach that underpins the majority of contemporary analytic philosophy, any investigation grounded in the former method does not warrant the term 'philosophy'. The second criticism considered here is the claim that Baker's (2004) alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy is an inappropriate way of thinking about moral matters, on the basis that it restricts us to describing rather than explaining and understanding moral phenomena. Finally, I also acknowledge that while this chapter broadly describes the alternative, therapeutic, approach to philosophy I shall use in this investigation, it does not illustrate any specific tools or techniques for liberating someone from his or her philosophical puzzlements. I maintain that, like the philosophical method(s) of Wittgenstein, the tools and techniques of Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy as therapy are best illustrated through the use of examples.¹¹ In the chapters that follow, I outline some of these philosophical tools and techniques by using them as a means of dissolving the kinds of 'problems' found in the existing

¹¹ See PI§133

literature on the topics of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism.

The purpose of chapter three is to illustrate, by means of an example, how Baker's therapeutic approach to doing philosophy offers other possibilities for how we can think of rational argument in moral philosophy. More specifically, this chapter focuses on some of the way in which Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy can dissolve someone's puzzlement around Dancy's (2004) account of moral competence. I propose that within the existing literature, this topic is a paradigm example of how advocates and critics of Dancy's position adhere to a traditional/theoretical view of philosophy and what counts as rational argument. A consequence of this way of doing philosophy is that, those engaged with this debate typically seek to solve their perplexities by formulating increasingly complex theories of what moral competence *must* entail.

In contrast to the existing literature on Dancy's account of moral competence,¹² I suggest that the sense of philosophical puzzlement someone may experience here, need not be due to an inability to solve the question of whether or not Dancy's position lacks an adequate theory of moral competence. Instead, I suggest that someone's perplexity may be due to a combination of unconscious pictures that frame the discussion of moral competence within the existing literature, and a craving for generality that blinds us to their influence. In response to this, I identify and draw attention to some of the possible underlying assumptions that frame how Dancy's account of moral competence is thought of, and offer examples of how someone can liberate themselves from his or her perplexities, through an acknowledgement of such unconscious pictures.

¹² See Kihlbom (2002), Dancy (1993, 1999, 2004 & 2007), McNaughton (1988), Garfield (2000), Bakhurst (2005), Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b), Thomas (2007 & 2011), Lance & Little (2008), Leibowitz (2014), McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2007), Whiting (2007) and Albertzart (2013).

Chapter four utilises a further aspect of the contemporary moral particularism literature as a backdrop for illustrating how Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy offers other possibilities for how we can think about what counts as rational argument in the context of moral philosophy. More specifically, this chapter focuses on the debate in the existing moral particularism literature around the extent to which advocates of Dancy's position can plausibly explain our ability to learn 'right' from 'wrong'. Or in other words, whether or not Dancy is able to provide an account of conceptual learning that is compatible with the central features of his particularist vision of morality. In particular, this chapter uses Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy, as a means of analysing the way in which advocates and critics of Dancy's position typically approach the topic of conceptual learning by way of various theories found in cognitive neuroscience, or philosophical arguments abstracted from the later works of Wittgenstein.

Whereas the existing literature on this aspect of Dancy's moral particularism typically adheres to a traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, I maintain that our puzzlement here is not because we have thus far been unable to find *the definitive* theory of particularist conceptual learning. Rather, I propose that the source of our perplexity here is unconscious pictures of how we must think about this topic. In order to persuade someone to let go of unconscious pictures that hold them captive, I do not set out an explanatory theory of what conceptual learning must entail for Dancy's moral particularism. Instead, I offer Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances as one of many alternative pictures of how we could more helpfully see how our concepts can be related.

In chapter five, I set out to illustrate a further example in support of my view that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. More specifically, this task shall

be approached by offering some possible ways in which Baker's later therapeutic conception of philosophy can liberate someone from his or her confusions around the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism and moral knowledge, without getting them trapped by some other equally confusing picture of what moral knowledge must entail. Following a brief overview of how the topic of moral knowledge is currently perceived within the existing particularism literature, I illustrate how Baker's (2004) technique of bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use can be used to dissolve someone's puzzlement here and thus persuade them to leave behind their previous view(s) of how moral knowledge must be thought of in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism. I then move on to suggest that another way in which Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy can liberate someone from his or her particular puzzlement is by drawing attention to neglected aspects of the ways in which we use the term 'knowledge' in our everyday practice.

In chapter six, I consider some implications and criticisms of my proposal that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical understanding of how we ought to do philosophy, or what counts as rational argument about moral matters. In the first part of the chapter, I consider two methodological suggestions that, I maintain, may be of benefit to advocates of a Dancy-style moral particularism. In the remainder of the chapter, I set out, and respond to, a number of potential criticisms of Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy, and, by extension, my wider project. In doing so, I draw attention to particular aspects of Baker's work, and offer objects of comparison from other areas of practice, in order to illustrate indicative examples of other conceptions of rational argument in the context of moral philosophy.

The final section of this work consists of a brief reflection on this investigation, where I seek to reaffirm its original contribution, acknowledge its limitations, and outline possible directions for future research that builds on the present project.

CHAPTER ONE

DANCY AND MORAL PARTICULARISM: A BACKDROP FOR THIS INVESTIGATION

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In this chapter, I set out the key features of Dancy's moral particularism, and suggest why the existing literature on this topic¹ offers a useful backdrop for my wider project of showing how Baker's later conception of therapeutic philosophy can liberate us from the dominant traditional/theoretical view of how we ought to do philosophy, and what counts as rational argument about moral matters. This task shall be addressed in three stages: first, by setting out an overview of how moral particularism is generally viewed within the existing literature; second, by explicating the salient features of Dancy's account of moral particularism; and finally, introducing Dancy's conception of moral knowledge, conceptual learning, and moral competence as key topics within the particularist literature where I am concerned, as are others.

The Existing View of Moral Particularism

The objective of this section is to explicate the existing view of how Dancy's moral particularism is understood within the context of the contemporary literature. Given that particularism is often a negatively defined thesis,² this shall be achieved through means of a comparison with the generalist view to which particularism is usually offered in opposition within the existing literature. In doing so, it is not my intention here to provide a definitive exposition of either position. My rationale for this is that

¹ For indicative examples, see Dancy (2004), McKeever & Ridge (2006) and Lance, Potrc & Strahovnik (2008).

² For example, see Dancy (2013), and Kuusela (2011: 80-86).

the sheer scale of such a task would be incompatible with a project of this limited size and scope, and the various forms that generalism and particularism take in different contexts, lack sufficient similarities to facilitate any absolute direct comparisons or favour one version over another in all cases. As Richard Holton (2002: 191) puts it, “particularism is not a single doctrine, but a family of doctrines”.³

Moral particularism is officially a doctrine in meta-ethical theory (Dancy, 2004: 190). Its advocates maintain that particularism offers a genuine and direct challenge to the orthodox conception of morality as a principled endeavour (Smith, 2011: 2). By this, it is not meant that particularism sets out to replace familiar moral theories, such as consequentialism, with a more radical or controversial system of ethical maxims and/or values. Rather, moral particularism sets out to change how we view the very shape of the moral landscape; it is more a suspicion than a claim, as Dancy once put it.⁴ The nature of this reorientation is best understood by means of a comparison between the dominant generalist picture of the moral landscape and the particularist alternative. For clarity of explanation, I shall begin this comparison by describing the main features of moral generalism.

Moral Generalism

The basic premises of moral generalism can be summarised in two claims. First, the very possibility of morality and/or moral judgement is dependent on the existence of moral principles.⁵ And second, that the task of the moral philosopher is to discover the essence of the ‘good’, and codify it into those rules or principles under which

³ See also, Smith (2011: 3) and Väyrynen (2011: 247).

⁴ See Lind & Brännmark (2008: 3)

⁵ See Dancy, 2004:7 and McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 3-5.

morality ought to be governed. It is this broad picture of a moral landscape shaped by principles that has come to dominate the majority of western moral philosophy.

Although philosophers as diverse as Kant and Mill typically disagree at the normative level as to what constitutes the morally right thing to do, and why that is the case, they can all be seen as holding the generalist view that morality is a principled endeavour and that the moral agent is a person of principle. However, while each of the philosophers mentioned above can be seen as advocating a normative generalist moral theory, 'generalism', in the context of the contemporary generalist/particularist dispute in meta-ethics, is typically neutral as to the normative ethical question of what one ought to do in order to be moral. That is to say, 'generalism', as a meta-ethical theory, is not a matter of trying to define the correct content for our moral principles. Rather, in the context of their dispute with particularists, advocates of moral generalism set out arguments as to why we ought to define the shape of the moral landscape in terms of general moral principles.

Moreover, just as there are a wide variety of differing generalist moral theories within normative ethics, there is likewise a number of different generalist positions within the domain of meta-ethics. It is important to recognise therefore that moral generalism is not a single theory. Rather, it is a family of related positions which, in the context of the wider generalist/particularist debate, are united by the idea that moral principles play a fundamental role in shaping the moral landscape (Väyrynen, 2011: 247). For instance, although constitutive generalists like Jackson, Pettit & Smith (2000), and regulative generalists such as McKeever & Ridge (2006) and Väyrynen (2008) agree at the grand strategic level that morality is a principled endeavour, they differ in terms of how we are to understand moral principles.

For the constitutive generalist, moral principles are analytic truths and a constitutive component of moral judgement insofar as our competent use of a moral concept is contingent on an acceptance of the fundamental moral standard set out in the moral principle that defines the correct application of that concept (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 11-12). For instance, my understanding of the concept ‘promise’ is contingent on my knowing that breaking a promise is *always* wrong for doing so undermines the very idea of promising. That is to say, if everyone went about breaking promises as and when they felt like it, the concept of ‘promising’ would become meaningless. Regulative generalists, however, typically understand moral principles as ‘action-guiding standards’. That is, moral standards which, for most of the time, function as guides to the appropriate action or disposition that most people, but not everyone, should adopt (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 10). For example, while breaking a promise is generally wrong, there may be cases where I must break a promise for a greater good such as saving someone’s life.

However, given that the primary concern of the present study is moral particularism and the objections to it, it is not my intention here to restrict the scope of my investigation to those objections held by a specific form of generalism. Instead, I shall remain open to drawing on different aspects of the generalist literature relevant to the task of examining how we understand moral particularism.

Moral Particularism in General

At its most trenchant, moral particularism denies the claim that morality is a principled endeavour on the basis that moral principles are at best ineffectual, and at worst lead us towards poor moral judgments. According to the particularist picture of the moral landscape, if we take a principle such as “the right action is the one which

brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number” as the basis of morality, we can quite easily draw attention to examples where such a principle is ineffectual for moral judgment or leads to acts that we may consider immoral. For example, this principle is ineffectual to apply, as, on the one hand, happiness is something that can’t be measured objectively, while on the other hand the principle itself is unclear as to who actually counts in our equation for the greatest number. Likewise, this principle may also lead to immoral action such as where a group decide to commit a murder on the basis that it would make them happy.

In contrast to the generalist, the particularist maintains that we cannot and should not look for general principles to make our moral decisions for us. Rather, moral judgements should be made on a case-by-case basis where each case is decided on the merits of the morally salient features present (McNaughton, 1988: 190). We can therefore, crudely summarise the difference between the moral generalist and the moral particularist as follows: whereas the generalist views moral matters as framed by moral principles, the particularist tends to see moral situations as “saturated with unique combinations of morally salient features” (Little, 2000: 276).

However, despite the clear differences between generalist and particularist positions, they have two things in common. The first commonality between moral generalists and moral particularists is that they are united by the shared assumption that morality ought to be rational (Kirchin, 2007: 10). That is, the claim that within both our moral discourse and our moral decisions, our capacity for moral reasoning is neither arbitrary nor a matter of impulse. A second area of commonality is that, like generalism, particularism is “not a sharply defined position, but a family of

views, united by an opposition to giving moral principles any fundamental role in morality” (Väyrynen, 2011: 247).⁶

Although there have been a number of (often conflicting) attempts to provide a detailed taxonomy of the different forms of moral particularism,⁷ an exhaustive analysis of each of these moral particularisms is beyond the remit of this project. For present purposes, I therefore restrict the scope of this investigation to the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy. The rationale for this is that, while there are a number of other distinct accounts of particularism within the contemporary literature,⁸ it is predominantly Dancy’s work that is cited as the target of criticism. This is not to imply that Dancy’s particularism is somehow deficient in comparison to other accounts. Instead, I maintain that Dancy’s work receives the most attention within the existing literature because it best encapsulates the features of particularism towards which people are most likely to be hostile.

According to Dancy (2004:5):

morality has no need for principles at all. Moral thought, moral judgment, and the possibility of moral distinctions – none of these depends in any way on the provision of a suitable supply of moral principles. This claim is what I call particularism.

However, whereas Dancy (2004) rules out such a possibility that moral principles play an important role in how we are to understand the moral landscape, other variants of particularism such as those advocated by Garfield (2000), Lance & Little

⁶ See also Flynn (2010: 140) and Smith (2011: 2).

⁷ See Sinnott-Armstrong (1999), Crisp (2000), McKeever & Ridge (2006), and more recently Väyrynen (2011).

⁸ For example, see McDowell (1979) and Garfield (2000).

(2008)⁹ and to some extent McDowell (1979) all have a role for moral principles in their picture of the moral landscape. For instance, Garfield (2000) takes his account of moral particularism to be following that of McDowell (1979) insofar as he advocates a specific role for moral principles as “open textured *summaries* of our moral knowledge” (Garfield, 2000: 198). That is to say, Garfield (2000) accepts the possibility of general moral principles insofar as they are “suitably festooned with *ceteris paribus* clauses” (ibid: 200) and as mere summaries of prior case verdicts have only a heuristic as opposed to justificatory role in moral practice.

Similarly, although Lance & Little (2008) reject the view that morality is governed by universal moral principles, they are quite comfortable with the use of what they call ‘defeasible moral generalisations’. Lance & Little describe their idea of a defeasible moral generalisation as being “an important kind of generalisation that is both fundamentally explanatory and fundamentally porous” (Lance & Little, 2008: 54). By this, it is meant that moral generalisations can play an explanatory role in our moral judgement but in doing so we must be aware that they are also deeply contextual and open to exceptions. So for example, in acknowledging a principle such as ‘promises ought to be kept’ as generally true, we are also aware that it is not true in some contexts where keeping a particular promise may be morally undesirable.

It is important to acknowledge here that, while Lance & Little’s work on defeasible generalisations raises interesting questions around the extent to which the viability of the particularist account of rationality advocated by Dancy is dependent on support from/the acceptance of some form of contextually-sensitive, exception-riddled general principles, this line of enquiry falls outside the scope of the present

⁹ It is worth noting here that Lance & Little (2008) describe their position as a form of ‘moral contextualism’ in order to distinguish it from Dancy’s account of moral particularism.

investigation. My only intention in drawing attention to Lance & Little's notion of defeasible generalisations here, is to emphasise the radical nature of Dancy's moral particularism in comparison to the accounts advocated by his contemporaries within the existing particularist literature.¹⁰ As emphasised above, it is not the intention of this work to identify or formulate alternative explanatory theories of practical rationality to replace that of Dancy.

Dancy's Moral Particularism

Having illustrated a general overview of the existing literature on moral particularism, I shall elaborate in more detail on the salient features of Dancy's account of this position. In doing so, it is worth acknowledging that while he has been articulating and defending a particularist view of morality for over 30 years, his account of moral particularism has understandably evolved over time since his highly influential paper *Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties* (1983).¹¹ Consequently, although this investigation is concerned with Dancy's moral particularism as a whole, it will predominantly consider the account of his position set out in his magnum opus *Ethics Without Principles* (2004).

Although Dancy has always broadly advocated an unprincipled conception of the moral landscape where our understanding of moral situations is motivated by the salient features of the particular case at hand, he has since refined his initial suspicions about moral metaphysics into a highly sophisticated meta-ethical theory

¹⁰ For a detailed argument against Lance & Little's claim that their account of defeasible generalisations is superior to Dancy's conception of practical rationality see Bergqvist (2009a: 44-70). See also Smith (2011: 147-148).

¹¹ While this specific paper is rarely discussed in the more recent literature on moral particularism, it is cited as having made a significant impact on tort law in the USA. For examples of the impact of this paper see American Law Institute (2010: Ch 3. Sec 8), and University of Reading (2014: 1-4).

of the nature of moral reasons as indistinct from other types of reasons for action. That is to say, in contrast to generalists such as Hooker (2000b), Dancy (2004: 133) does not conceive of moral reasons as operating any differently to other types of reasons such as aesthetic, practical or political reasons.

For example, according to my practical reasoning it need not follow that it is safe to jump from a particular cliff into the ocean just because we see someone else do so successfully. If we are aware of the high fatality rate associated with the practice of cliff diving, we might decide against jumping into the ocean. Conversely, if we are an experienced cliff diver and have ascertained beyond reasonable doubt that the area of water below the cliff is free of rocks and of sufficient depth to prevent injury, we may rationally choose to make this jump.

Likewise, while someone may be aware of a general moral principle such as ‘do not steal’, they may encounter a case of stealing where this principle need not hold. If I discover that a co-worker has broken into my house and stolen my life-saving medication, I may on the one hand conclude that it is perfectly acceptable to break into their house in order to retrieve said medication, yet on the other hand decide against this course of action once I discover they needed the medication to save the life of their sick child.¹²

In both the moral and the non-moral case above, our reasons for and against a given action appear to be operating in the same way. Depending on the context of the case at hand and what we know about it, different features of the case can operate as reasons which may cause us to act in different ways. If Dancy is correct in seeing this similarity between how moral and non-moral reasons operate, we can reasonably

¹² I paraphrase this way of explaining Dancy’s way of seeing moral reasons as indistinct from other types of reasons from Kraft’s (2006: 43) example of an art-thief.

think of his moral particularism as “a narrower instantiation of a wider theory about how reasons function” (Smith, 2011: 19). As Dancy (2004: 15) remarks:

particularism is supposed to be a doctrine about how moral reasons work, and what is required or not required for them to operate as they do... Undistorted views about how reasons work lead naturally to a particularist account of moral thought and judgement.

An important corollary of Dancy’s claim here is that if moral reasons operate in the same way as other types of reasons, then the model of rationality that underpins his particularism need not be seen as exclusive to moral matters. Indeed, both Dancy (2004) and his advocates such as Bergqvist (2009a) can be seen as trying to reinforce the particularist picture of morality by drawing attention to other areas of our everyday practices where they maintain that same conception of rationality appears to be at work. For instance, Dancy argues that the model of rationality found in moral particularism is “indeed applicable, not only to our competence with other reasons, practical and theoretical, but also to our linguistic competence” (Dancy, 2004: 198). Similarly, Bergqvist (2009a) claims that independent support for the particularist view of morality can be derived from the fact that “neither the structure of aesthetic evaluation¹³ nor linguistic competence and semantic rationality¹⁴ need be regarded as driven and sustained by a suitable supply of principles or rules” (Bergqvist, 2009a: i).

A further area of philosophy which suggests Dancy’s particularist conception of rationality appears to be in play in other aspects of our practical lives is the

¹³ For discussion of particularism in relation to aesthetics see Bender (1995), Bergqvist (2009a & 2010 and 2015), Kirwin (2011), and McKeever & Ridge (2011).

¹⁴ For arguments in favour of a particularist account of semantic rationality, see Dancy (2004), and Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b). For arguments against this view see Whiting (2010).

philosophy of science. For example, Larvor (2008: 497) highlights various parallels between moral particularism and the work of Feyerabend. Cartwright (1983 & 1999) also advances a version of scientific particularism, while Sandis (2006) and Larvor (2008) draw heavily on the work of Dancy in their accounts of scientific particularism.

Having located Dancy's moral particularism within his wider conception of reasons, I shall now outline what I take to be the three key features of Dancy's particularist conception of morality: his view of holism in the theory of reasons; his commitment to the non-codifiability thesis; and the influence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy on the development of his moral particularism.

Holism in the Theory of Reasons

According to Dancy (2013), the ideal moral agent is someone who is acutely sensitive to the moral reasons present in a given case. This sensitivity is a matter of identifying the reasons present and the ways they interact. What typically differentiates Dancy's (2004) account of how moral reasons work from that of the moral generalist is his emphasis on variability both in terms of how a reason's relevance, and the contribution it makes to our overall judgement. This account of moral reasons is derived from Dancy's wider conception of what he calls holism in the theory of reasons. In order to better understand the relationship between Dancy's (2004) moral particularism and his commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, it is useful to first illustrate the atomistic account of how reasons function, which holism is often contrasted with.

In its most basic form, atomism in the theory of reasons is the claim that if x counts as a reason to ϕ in case t_1 , then it must also count as a reason to ϕ in cases t_2 ,

t_3 , t_4 and t_n . For example, the fact it gives me pleasure (x) was a reason to eat the ice cream (ϕ) yesterday (t_1), so therefore the fact it gives me pleasure (x) is a reason to eat an ice cream (ϕ) at any point in the future (t_n). Consequently, on the atomist model, reasons are therefore said to be contextless insofar as they carry their practical relevance with them from one case to another (Dancy, 2004: 7). Or in other words, atomistic reasons possess a fixed valency. That is, a feature always maintains its status as a moral reason and retains both its polarity (i.e. whether it is a reason for or against an action/disposition) as well as the moral weight it contributes to the case (Flynn, 2010: 140). For instance, assuming the sanctity of life is a moral reason not to kill, it will always continue to be a moral reason not to kill regardless of the context.

In contrast to the atomist model of reasons, holism in the theory of reasons denies the claim that if x is a reason to ϕ at t_1 , it must also be a reason to ϕ at t_n . Instead, holism in the theory of reasons maintains: firstly that whether a feature counts as a reason for or against ϕ -ing may change depending on the context of the case at hand. And second, that its practical relevance or status as a reason is also dependent on the presence/absence of other features which may act as what Dancy (2004) calls ‘enablers’, ‘disablers’, ‘favourers’ or ‘defeaters’ in this context. That is, other features present which render ϕ -ing permissible/unacceptable in this context, or favour/prohibit the consideration of a particular action/disposition in the case at hand. For example, the fact that it is dishonest may act as a reason not to lie to a friend about the purpose of an unusual object. However, if we remind ourselves that we are playing Call My Bluff, then the context of the game entails that the potential dishonesty of my lie is defeated by the fact this is the purpose of the game.¹⁵

¹⁵ Dancy (1993: 60-61) uses a similar example featuring the game ‘Contraband’.

Importantly, on the model of holism advocated by Dancy (2004), there is no difference between moral reasons and other types of reasons. If holism in the theory of reasons is true, all reasons are holistic insofar as they are dependent for their status and polarity on the content of the case at hand. Thus, in contrast to the fixed valency of atomistic reasons, the reason-giving force or valence of an holistic reason is variable insofar as it is derived from the context of the case (Smith: 2011: 20). As such, the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) can in one sense be seen as one particular instantiation of a much wider theory he holds about how reasons function (Smith, 2011: 23).¹⁶

Although Dancy's (2004) account of moral particularism draws heavily on his account of holism in the theory of reasons, it is important to point out here that holism need not entail particularism,¹⁷ and my concern in this investigation goes beyond the relationship between Dancy's moral particularism and holism in the theory of reasons. While the atomism/holism distinction was initially seen as mirroring that of generalism/particularism insofar as generalists have traditionally been regarded as atomists and particularists as holists,¹⁸ these debates are now seen as orthogonal to one another.¹⁹ Indeed, within the contemporary generalist/particularist debate there has been a growing trend for generalist theories that embrace the contextual nature of holism.²⁰

In particular, while the constitutive generalism of Jackson et al (2000) adheres to a rigidly atomistic conception of reason and value, regulative generalists

¹⁶ Although this topic is discussed briefly in Dancy (2004), a more detailed account of Dancy's wider theory of reasons is best seen in Dancy (1993) and (2002).

¹⁷ See McKeever & Ridge (2005a, 2005b & 2006), and Väyrynen (2006)

¹⁸ See Dancy (2004: 7).

¹⁹ See McKeever & Ridge (2005a & 2005b).

²⁰ See Flynn (2010).

such as McKeever & Ridge and Väyrynen maintain that a holistic model of reasons is entirely compatible with the claim that the shape of the moral landscape is to be defined in terms of general moral principles. More specifically, for some regulative generalists,²¹ moral principles are seen as being ‘hedged’ insofar as their truth factor is not diminished by the possibility that there may be counter-instances where there is a good reason not to adhere to that principle.²² For instance, the fact that I may have to break a promise in order to save a life does not entail that a principle such as ‘it is wrong to break promises’ is false. Although holism is no longer the exclusive territory of the particularist, it is Dancy’s understanding of how reasons function that provides the basis for another key aspect of his model of moral particularism: his commitment to the non-codifiability thesis.

The Non-Codifiability Thesis

In its simplest form, the non-codifiability thesis can be seen as an extension of the broadly Aristotelian view that how one should live cannot be codified into a universal formula or principle. The origin of the non-codifiability thesis can be attributed to John McDowell’s denial of the claim that it must be “possible, in principle, to spell out a universal formula that specifies the conditions under which (a) concept...is correctly applied” (McDowell, 1998: 62), and the dominant view of rationality “that imposes a deductive structure on moral thought and action which requires the existence and use of principles” (Smith, 2011: 31).

Although this investigation is only concerned with the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy, it is important to note on the one hand that Dancy’s commitment to the non-codifiability thesis is clearly influenced by

²¹ McKeever & Ridge (2006) being the exception here.

²² For a more detailed theory of hedged moral principles see Väyrynen (2009).

McDowell insofar as they share a similar concern that the dominant approach to moral philosophy is framed by an unfortunate picture of how rationality must be (Smith, 2011: 31). At the same time, it is also worth clarifying that on the other hand the moral philosophies of Dancy and McDowell arise out of entirely different starting points. Whereas Dancy's (2004) commitment to non-codifiability is motivated by his concerns with the nature of reasons, the main features of McDowell's moral philosophy "primarily result from a critique of what he considers to be mistaken accounts of moral knowledge" (Smith, 2011: 29).²³

Although the non-codifiability thesis is a much wider doctrine often found in discussion of McDowell's reading of Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations',²⁴ as well as the contemporary literature on thick evaluative concepts,²⁵ these wider debates are tangential to the present investigation. In the context of Dancy's moral particularism, the non-codifiability thesis can be understood as the claim that we cannot and ought not to attempt to codify our moral experience or patterns in our use of moral concepts into general principles. From the particularist perspective, the rationale for this claim can be broadly understood as follows: if holism in the theory of reasons is true, then we cannot predict in advance the contribution a particular non-moral property will have towards the moral nature of an action or disposition (McNaughton, 1988: 193).

Consequently, we have no basis on which "we can move in any smooth way to show how [a non-moral property] will function [morally] in a different case" (Dancy, 1993: 60). Or in other words, if Dancy's (2004) account of holism in the

²³ See McDowell (1979).

²⁴ For example see McDowell (1984 & 1992).

²⁵ For indicative examples of McDowell's influence on this debate see Roberts (2011 & 2013).

theory of reasons is correct, it appears as if we do not have sufficient grounds to generalise from a particular case to all cases of this type in general. Moreover, for Dancy (2004) the idea that we ought to try to codify our experience of particular moral cases, or our use of moral concepts into general principles is both mistaken and likely to lead us in to making bad moral decisions. For example, it might initially appear morally attractive to abstract a principle such as ‘do not lie’ from my past experience where morally speaking I should not have lied. Yet, would it still be morally attractive if I were to adhere to this principle when asked by an axe murderer if his intended victim was indeed hiding in my house?

Thus far I have set out a brief overview of two key features of Dancy’s moral particularism, and how this meta-ethical theory is understood within the context of the existing literature on moral particularism. While I acknowledge that Dancy’s (2004) own account of his position is obviously much richer and more subtle than I have sketched here, the points I have briefly explicated above are more than sufficient to establish these salient aspects of Dancy’s moral particularism. As we have seen, at the centre of Dancy’s (2004) thesis is the claim that moral particularism is committed to both holism in the theory of reasons and the non-codifiability thesis. The former commitment is concerned with the claim that our moral reasons have a ‘variable valence’. That is, what counts as a moral reason in favour of ϕ -ing in case x_1 , may be a reason not to ϕ in case x_2 , and/or be morally irrelevant in case x_3 . The latter commitment is the idea that we ought to reject the generalist claim that we can codify either the outcomes of our past moral experience, or the correct use of our moral concepts, into moral principles from which future decisions can be made. The final key feature of Dancy’s moral particularism I wish to draw attention to here is the influence of the later work of Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein and Moral Particularism

Within the existing literature, a number of advocates of the view that particularism is influenced by Wittgenstein, such as Dancy and Little²⁶ have described our resistance towards the particularist picture of morality as being as a kind of ‘philosophical vertigo’.²⁷ By this, I take Dancy and Little to be using the term ‘vertigo’ here in the same sense as McDowell (1981). That is, as a metaphor for describing the phenomenon whereby a philosophical investigation leads us into a position that is in *one* sense analogous to a fear whose manifestations are often irrational, despite the fact that its original basis is rationally grounded. As McDowell (1998: 207) puts it, it is as if the ground has disappeared beneath our feet and we are terrified by the thought that there is nothing holding our practices together other than the reactions and responses we learn in learning them. Someone may be fearful of the lack of true moral principles in the particularist picture of the moral landscape even though “there is no (first-order) philosophical basis for worrying about the ‘lack’ in question” (Boult & Pritchard, 2013: 33).

In using the metaphor of vertigo to describe someone’s resistance to the particularist picture of morality, Dancy and Little acknowledge the influence of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy on their work. Indeed, Little (2001b) even goes as far as to describe moral particularism as offering a picture of the moral landscape where “Wittgenstein’s later philosophy offers lessons that should help dispel the sense that

²⁶ See Dancy (1993: 84) and Little (2001b: 163)

²⁷ The term ‘particularist’ is used to describe Little here on the basis that the work cited was published during her ‘particularist phase’. That is, prior to her formal rejection of this label in favour of what she calls a ‘contextualist’ approach to morality (see Lance & Little, 2008).

the picture is anything suspicious or alarming” (Little, 2001b: 163).²⁸ Similarly, Bergqvist (2009a: 34-35) suggests that this can also be seen in how Dancy’s (2004) wider account of rationality in linguistic and moral practice is derived from the following Wittgenstein inspired passage by Stanley Cavell (1969: 52):

We learn and teach words in a certain context, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into future contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals not the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of significance and of fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls “forms of life”. Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rests upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (because it is) terrifying.

This sense that the later work of Wittgenstein has an important role to play in how we can better understand moral particularism is also shared by a number of contemporary Wittgenstein scholars. For instance, according to Kahane, Kanterian & Kuusela (2007a: 18) one emerging way in which the influence of Wittgenstein’s work on contemporary moral philosophy can be seen is through the development of the debate around particularist ethics. That is, the ideas found in Wittgenstein’s later work can be seen to play a role within the development of moral particularism insofar as appeals to, and acknowledgements of the later works of Wittgenstein are

²⁸ It is worth noting here that Little is using the term ‘picture’ in a different sense to that of Baker (2004).

commonplace within the contemporary particularist literature.²⁹ One notable exception here is that while Dancy (2004: 197) describes his project as “Wittgensteinian”, he does not actually cite Wittgenstein directly in this particular work. Rather, he cites Stanley Cavell whose own work is heavily influenced by Wittgenstein. Dancy (1983) does however, explicitly refer to Wittgenstein as one of the inspirations of/influences on his particularism.

Some Problematic Aspects of Dancy’s Moral Particularism

Although the relationship between Dancy’s particularist ethics and the later work of Wittgenstein is well established within the existing literature, I maintain that the ‘traditional’/‘theoretical’ approach to philosophy³⁰ Wittgenstein can be seen as cautioning against in his later work has also regrettably become a feature of the debate between advocates of Dancy’s moral particularism and their critics. In its simplest form, this approach to philosophy can be characterised by the desire to assimilate both the method and products of philosophy to those of a theoretical super-science (Baker & Hacker, 1980: 489). Just as the scientist responds to a scientific problem by a repeated process of hypothesising, experimenting and drawing conclusions on which to base future hypotheses, theoretical philosophers aim to break down the perennial problems of philosophy by inventing “tentative hypotheses as solutions to them.... [and] hoping gradually to supplement and improve [them] in the light of further rigorous thinking” (Baker & Hacker, 1980: 459).

²⁹ For indicative examples of particularist appeals to Wittgenstein’s texts see Dancy (1983, 520), and (1993: 85) as well as McDowell (1998: 58-62 & 202-209), Garfield (2000: 190-193), Little (2001b) and Luntley (2002). For indicative examples of appeals to Wittgenstein’s text from a generalist perspective see Crisp (2000: 25-32), Jackson et al (2000); Raz (2006) and Lotfi (2009).

³⁰ Horwich (2012: 21) describes this view as ‘T-philosophy’ in the sense that it is both ‘traditional’ and ‘theoretical’.

In its moderate form, this approach to philosophy is underpinned by the following two assumptions: first, that there is an underlying scientific methodology common to both natural science and philosophy. And second, that the methods and beliefs of science are equally applicable to investigating the problems of philosophy. The origin of this view of how we ought to do philosophy can be seen in the method of logical analysis advocated by Bertrand Russell.³¹ Arguably the most famous example of Russell's method can be seen in his discussion of denoting phrases such as proper names and descriptions in *On Denoting*.³²

Russell's theoretical approach to doing philosophy is based on the idea that the task of philosophy is to *solve* philosophical questions by refuting mistaken doctrines and developing sophisticated metaphysical theories for the purpose of explaining and/or discovering the hidden essence which unifies our language and its relationship to the world, as well as the very nature of the world itself. For Russell, this task is to be achieved by using formal logic to develop and test one's hypotheses as if one were a scientist weighing up physical evidence. By uncovering a proposition's underlying logical form, philosophers avoid being misled by the surface grammar of natural language.

In addition to the form of theoretical philosophy proposed by Russell, there has been a trend in recent analytic philosophy and in particular the philosophy of mind, to adopt more extreme forms of this approach such as 'new scientism'.³³ Advocates of more extreme forms of contemporary scientific philosophy are typically motivated by the view that natural sciences such as biology, chemistry and physics are the most authoritative lenses through which we can interpret life, and

³¹ See Russell (1917: 97-124).

³² See Russell (1905: 479-493).

³³ For a detailed overview and criticism of this trend see Sorell (1991).

thus the scientific method is the only appropriate way of conducting philosophical investigations.

The paradigm example of this extreme scientific approach is arguably Paul M. & Patricia S. Churchland's theory of eliminative materialism in the philosophy of mind.³⁴ In its simplest form, eliminative materialism is the combination of two distinct yet related claims. First, descriptions of mental events and processes in terms of beliefs and desires are a mistaken hangover from our 'folk-psychology' explanations of human behaviour.³⁵ And second, advances in cognitive neuroscience will ultimately replace this 'folk-psychology', and provide the answers to many central questions posed by philosophers working in areas as diverse as epistemology, practical reasoning, perception and semantic theory (Churchland, 2006: 29).³⁶

While I do not wish to identify Dancy's critics and their interlocutors as explicitly holding a scientific view per se, I maintain that one significant reason for our aversion towards Dancy's position is the way in which the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism is framed by the sort of "T-philosophy" that Horrich (2012) suggests Wittgenstein counsels us against in his later work. That is, traditional/theoretical philosophy. Although the model of moral particularism advocated by Dancy has been subject to a wide range of different criticisms, a

³⁴ See Churchland, P.M. (1981 & 1994) and Churchland, P.S. (1986).

³⁵ As an aside, it is worth noting here that the Churchlands treat folk psychology as if it were a theory and thus "its concepts must serve the purpose of formulating laws describing and explaining the regularities which the theory purports to discern" (Hacker, 2001b: 60). In assuming/insisting that even our everyday use of concepts is theoretical in this sense, it is reasonable to identify Churchland as being locked into a particular scientific picture of how philosophy must be done. See also Churchland (1994: 310-311).

³⁶ Another example of P. M. Churchland's scientific approach to philosophy can be seen in the way in which he responds to a rhetorical question about the future direction of philosophy by claiming "the answer could hardly be more obvious: into the brain" (Churchland, 2006: 32).

comprehensive examination of them all is beyond the scope and scale of this investigation. Therefore, I shall restrict the present investigation to criticisms of the following three aspects of Dancy's moral particularism: moral competence; conceptual learning; and moral knowledge.

Although these are not the only aspects of Dancy's moral particularism where I maintain our disquiets may arise due to the way his interlocutors frame their quarrel in theoretical terms, there is a strong rationale for this choice of topics. First, they are prominent topics within the existing moral particularism literature which have concerned me and others engaged with Dancy's work.³⁷ And second, someone can reasonably make conceptual connections between these topics that can be seen in our everyday use of these terms as well as the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism. That is, on the one hand, we often talk about knowledge as something we can learn and can show that we have learnt something such as a particular concept through demonstrating that we can go on operating competently with it. While on the other hand, Dancy's account of moral knowledge is bound up with his accounts of moral competence and conceptual learning insofar as his description of these aspects of his position often takes place in the same passages of his work.³⁸

Another way of looking at these apparently problematic aspects of Dancy's position is in terms of three broadly related lines of criticism: first, that the version of moral particularism advocated by Dancy is problematic insofar as it lacks an appropriate account of moral competence³⁹ or 'practical wisdom';⁴⁰ second,

³⁷ For indicative examples of philosophers engaged with Dancy's moral particularism see the anthologies on this topic compiled by Hooker & Little (2000), and Lance, Potrč, & Strahovnik (2008).

³⁸ For instance, his account of moral knowledge and his account of competence are both discussed in overlapping remarks found in Dancy (2004: 141-143).

³⁹ See Hooker (2000b: 15) and Bakhurst (2005: 265).

advocates of Dancy's moral particularism are unable to provide a plausible theory which explains our ability to learn 'right' from 'wrong' that is compatible with the findings of cognitive science;⁴¹ and finally, Dancy's account of moral knowledge is both epistemologically implausible, and counter-intuitive, in comparison to the generalist alternative.⁴²

More specifically, the first line of criticism I shall address in this investigation,⁴³ is bound up with Dancy's (2004) rejection of the generalist claim that our competence in moral matters is dependent on the existence of an appropriate supply of moral principles which we can use to make inferences from previous to present cases. The crux of this criticism is the claim that given Dancy's commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, and the non-codifiability of the moral landscape, how can an advocate of his moral particularism reliably project their understanding of morality on to new and potentially strange situations and thus count as a competent judge of moral situations?

Although Dancy (2004) offers an account of particularist practical wisdom qua competence with practical concepts, this explanation of what moral competence entails is heavily criticised by both those hostile and sympathetic to his overall position. For instance, McKeever & Ridge (2006) argue that if there is no finite totality of things that can act as a reason for/against ϕ ing, beings with limited cognitive capacity such as ourselves cannot competently discern when and/or why x counts as a reason for/against ϕ ing or is irrelevant to the case at hand, without principles to guide us. Similarly, although he is generally supportive of Dancy's

⁴⁰ McKeever & Ridge (2006), and Leibowitz (2014) refer to moral competence as 'practical wisdom'.

⁴¹ See Jackson, Pettit & Smith (2000).

⁴² See McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2008).

⁴³ See chapter three.

particularism, Bakhurst (2005: 265) is concerned that Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence is inadequate insofar as it only tells us that a competent moral agent makes the right decision in moral cases, and remains silent as to how we develop this competence.

The second line of criticism I critically assess in this work relates to Dancy's attempt to explain our ability to learn the difference between moral concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong'.⁴⁴ The most famous example of this line of criticism is Jackson et al's (2000) pattern argument. In its simplest form, the pattern argument states that given humanity's finite cognitive capacity for learning, we would be unable to learn what constitutes a right or wrong action without the presence of common codifiable patterns that group things together so to instantiate them as belonging to a particular concept or category and thus allow us to move from a set of existing examples to new cases. This, Jackson et al claim, means that Dancy's commitment to the non-codifiability of the moral landscape and holism in the theory of reason, renders the possibility of a particularist explanation of how we learn to distinguish the correct use of concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong' implausible.

As I shall subsequently illustrate, while Dancy and advocates of his moral particularism⁴⁵ have attempted to buttress their position through appeals to various theories of cognitive science such as connectionist networks, case-based reasoning and prototype theory, this has not been entirely unproblematic. On the one hand, some critics of Dancy's account of conceptual learning have suggested that at best appeals to the theories of cognitive science give Dancy's particularism no advantage over generalism in explaining how we can tell right from wrong.⁴⁶ On the other hand,

⁴⁴ See chapter four.

⁴⁵ See Salay (2008).

⁴⁶ See Väyrynen (2008: 98).

other critics have argued that Dancy's (1999 & 2004) account of how the findings of cognitive science support his moral particularism is mistaken and these scientific theories actually show that our capacity for conceptual learning hinges on some underlying form of patterns which could be codified into general principles.⁴⁷

The final line of criticism to be analysed as part of this project can be broadly summarised by the claim that Dancy's (2004 & 2008) account of moral knowledge, and its corresponding epistemology, is inferior to the alternative theory of moral knowledge advocated by regulative generalists such as McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2008). According to Dancy (2004: 142), moral knowledge is always contingent on the case at hand and known to us a priori.⁴⁸ Moreover, Dancy also claims that moral knowledge is a type of uncodifiable, non-propositional, knowledge that is both manifest in our ability to go on using moral concepts appropriately on the basis of a given case, and acquired through the contentless skill of discernment.

Criticism of Dancy's account of moral knowledge typically focuses on different reasons why his view of moral knowledge as something that is both contingent and a priori is problematic. Although regulative generalists tend to agree with Dancy that there is an a priori aspect to our moral knowledge, they deny the possibility that there is an a priori element available to particularists (Leibowitz, 2014: 46-47). Moreover, even if we accept the possibility of contingent a priori knowledge, the leading theories and explanations of this position do not "establish knowledge of the right kind of contingencies, or... inspire confidence that we could have enough contingent a priori knowledge to provide a basis for ethics" (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 161).

⁴⁷ See Guarini (2010).

⁴⁸ I go on to elaborate Dancy's specific use/understanding of the term 'a priori' in chapter five of this investigation.

In this chapter I have set out a brief overview of the main features of the model of moral particularism advocated by Dancy, and identified his account of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge as specific aspects of his position where those who engage with his work can be described as having experienced a sense of philosophical vertigo. That is, within the existing moral particularism literature, Dancy and advocates of his position have been subject to significant criticism which suggests we should eschew his theory of moral particularism on the basis that his underlying accounts of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge are at best less plausible than the generalist alternatives, and at worst just plain wrong.

However, in contrast to the existing literature on the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy, I maintain that the traditional/theoretical approach of setting out philosophical arguments for this position is counter-intuitive. As we have seen, Dancy's moral particularism is both committed to non-codifiability, and heavily influenced by the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. Consequently, the idea of trying to convince someone to accept this account of moral particularism by using a philosophical approach which presupposes philosophy as being concerned with discovering and codifying the essence of things into general principles and propositions is rather odd. If we are to persuade someone that they need not be worried by the sense of philosophical vertigo Dancy's moral particularism may bring about, perhaps what we need here is not a more sophisticated theory of moral competence, conceptual learning, or moral knowledge, but an alternative way of doing philosophy. In the chapter that follows, I move on to illustrate the central features of an alternative, therapeutic, conception of philosophy grounded in the later work of Wittgenstein.

CHAPTER TWO

AN ALTERNATIVE, THERAPEUTIC, APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY

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In this chapter I shall illustrate the salient features of an alternative, therapeutic conception of philosophy that is grounded in Wittgenstein through the later work of Gordon Baker (1986a, 1986b, 1996, 2002 & 2004).¹ This chapter is divided into five parts, followed by some brief concluding remarks. In the first section I offer a brief overview of Baker's wider conception of philosophy as therapy in which his alternative approach is grounded. The next section of the chapter is concerned with illustrating the key aspects of the later Baker's approach to doing philosophy found in his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein. The section that follows moves on to look at some of the prominent features of Baker's own philosophical writing which I maintain can be seen as important elements of his approach to doing philosophy. In the fourth section of this chapter I draw attention to what I take to be the most important feature of Baker's therapeutic, philosophical method in the context of this investigation. That is, his openness to other ways of undertaking philosophical investigations. In doing so, I offer reasons why Baker's approach to philosophy is more appropriate for the task of the present work than other methods. In the penultimate section of the chapter I outline, and dissolve what I anticipate to be some of the most significant objections to Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy.

¹ All references to Baker's later work, and his conception of therapeutic philosophy, are derived from these indicative texts unless indicated.

While the central ideas of this therapeutic vision of philosophy can be seen as having a Wittgensteinian pedigree, I have chosen, for practical and academic reasons, to reflect these ideas as they are presented by Baker, rather than Wittgenstein himself. One such reason is the fact that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is notoriously difficult to understand due to both the subject matter Wittgenstein was concerned with, and the way in which he presented his ideas. As Wittgenstein's former student G. H. Von Wright once remarked "because of the depth and originality of his thinking, it is very difficult to understand Wittgenstein's ideas and even more difficult to incorporate them into one's own thinking" (von Wright cited in Malcolm, 1984: 17). Despite the wealth of textual and biographical resources available, no clearly, definitive, understanding of Wittgenstein's work has emerged,² and scholarly dispute over both the detail, and aim, of Wittgenstein's philosophy has been the subject of numerous journals and books.³

Although a number of highly respected philosophers have published detailed, textual exegesis on Wittgenstein's later work,⁴ I have chosen to ground the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy at the heart of this investigation, in the *later* work of Gordon Baker. In addition to being widely regarded as a groundbreaking Wittgenstein scholar for his work with Peter Hacker on their landmark series of analytical commentaries on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Baker has also received scholarly acclaim for his subsequent rejection of this

² See McGinn (1997: 1) and Kahane et al (2007a: 2).

³ For example, see Baker (2004, 2002, 1986a & 1986b), Baker & Hacker (1980 & 1985), Crary (2000), Diamond (1988), Glock (1996), Hacker (2013, 2001a, 2000, 1997, 1996 & 1993), Horwich (2012), Hutchinson and Read (2008), Kuusela (2014 & 2008), McFee (2015b & 2005), and the collection of essays contained in Kahane et al (2007b).

⁴ I have in mind here, Peter Hacker and Gordon Baker, Graham McFee, Hans-Johan Glock, Mary McGinn, and Oskari Kuusela amongst others.

‘orthodox’ approach, in favour of an entirely therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy.⁵

However, given that his later therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein’s work was developed in a series of journal articles over a number of years prior to his death, Baker does not present a fully developed conception of philosophy per se. Consequently, the alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy that I will describe in this chapter is my development of the skeleton Baker built up over a period of time. In outlining Baker’s later view of philosophy as therapy, I have not restricted the source material for this investigation to those papers found in his posthumous collection of essays *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*. Rather, the therapeutic approach to philosophy at the centre of this project is informed by a range of articles and books which collectively chronicle a distinctive phase in the development of Baker’s later conception of doing philosophy.⁶

Finally, while this conception of philosophy can be described as influenced by Wittgenstein, in the sense that it takes Baker’s therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein’s later works as its starting point, I take no stand here as to whether or not this vision of philosophy is that of Wittgenstein himself. Indeed, Baker is conscious to emphasise that careful, scholarly, reading of Wittgenstein’s text can only establish how we might interpret Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy, and whether a particular interpretation can be justified, is always open to dispute.⁷ Consequently, I take the alternative approach to doing philosophy discussed in this chapter to be that of Baker rather than Wittgenstein per se.

⁵ See McFee (2015b: 7), Kuusela (2014: 72), Crary (2007c: 297), and Kahane et al (2007a & 2007b).

⁶ See Morris (2004: 1-2 & 2007: 67-68), and McFee (2015b: xii-xiv & 41-42).

⁷ See Baker (2002: 38) and Morris (2004: 2).

Baker's Later Vision of Philosophy as Therapy

Prior to drawing attention to the main features of Baker's approach to doing philosophy, it is important to first understand his wider underlying conception of philosophy as therapy in which it is grounded. The purpose of this section therefore, is to set out a brief overview of Baker's wider therapeutic vision of philosophy as suggested by his later work on Wittgenstein's texts. In order to draw attention to the relevant facets of Baker's view of philosophy, this task shall in part be addressed by means of a comparison with the orthodox Wittgensteinian view of philosophy advocated by P.M.S. Hacker.

The vision of philosophy advocated by Hacker is based on his 'orthodox' interpretation of Wittgenstein's later work which he originally developed with Baker in their ground-breaking series of commentaries and essays on the *Philosophical Investigations*⁸ as well as his single authored work. As Baker's later therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later work is often taken to be a reaction against the views he previously shared with Hacker, I maintain that Hacker's orthodox Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy offers a useful foil for illustrating the development of the alternative view of philosophy as therapy advocated by the later Baker.

However, in utilising Hacker's view of philosophy as an object of comparison for the purpose of illustrating Baker's vision of philosophy as therapy, it is useful to acknowledge the similarities between these two conceptions of philosophy as well as the differences. For example, in the context of this investigation one prominent similarity is the fact that the notions of philosophy

⁸ Only the first two volumes (1980 & 1985) were jointly written by Baker & Hacker. The final two volumes were completed by Hacker alone. However, as McFee (2005) points out, subsequent editions of the first two volumes have since been extensively 'revised' by Hacker to reflect a position closer to his own view than that shared by Baker during the period they were originally written. Thus, where these volumes are referred to within this work, it is the earlier, unedited, Baker & Hacker editions of these texts

advocated by Hacker and the later Baker can be seen as a reaction against the traditional/theoretical picture of philosophy discussed in the previous chapter. The caveat here is that, although there is typically agreement on this top-level view, Hacker and the later Baker differ insofar as while the former typically rejects the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy outright, the latter only rejects the view that it *must* be *the correct* approach.

In contrast to the traditional/theoretical view of philosophy, Hacker and Baker are not concerned with the task of discovering new knowledge by means of discerning the essence of things. Instead, Hacker and the later Baker both see philosophy as concerned with conceptual matters insofar as it “simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (PI §126). In other words, rather than developing metaphysical theories that explain phenomena in the world, Hacker and the later Baker advocate a vision of philosophy where the task of the philosopher is to dissolve philosophical ‘problems’ by drawing attention to “the workings of our language... in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them” (PI §109).

Philosophy as a Therapeutic Endeavour

Another significant characteristic that the later Baker’s conception of philosophy shares with that of Hacker is that they both conceive philosophy as a therapeutic endeavour.⁹ However, while they agree on the benefits of Wittgensteinian therapy, they “disagree about the point of this liberation...and the methods for achieving it” (Morris, 2007: 73). On Hacker’s orthodox Wittgensteinian view, philosophy is therapeutic in the sense that it is concerned with the task of mapping the logical

⁹ See Hacker (1972: 116) & (1993: xiv) and Baker (2004).

geography of our language for the therapeutic purpose of curing various diseases of the intellect (Kahane et al, 2007: 23). This is achieved by policing the boundaries of sense and arresting any linguistic criminal who trespasses into nonsense (Morris, 2004: 18).¹⁰

An important consequence of understanding philosophy as therapy in this way is that, on Hacker's view, there are actually two independent aims of philosophy. The 'positive' aim of replacing our desire for general explanatory theories with detailed descriptions our language use; and the 'negative' aim of removing those philosophical prejudices that confuse us (Morris, 2007: 67-68).¹¹ By dispelling the prejudices that give rise to conceptual confusions, Hacker's Wittgenstenian therapy is able to cure us of the intellectual disease of talking nonsense.¹²

In this respect, Hacker can be seen as affording philosophy the responsibility of not only policing the boundaries between sense and nonsense, but also the task of clarifying the limits of what philosophical questions we can reasonable ask (Baker & Hacker, 1980: 457). By this, Hacker's conception of philosophy is not restricted to particular topics per se. Rather, it is limited as to the *types* of questions it may ask about them. That is, for Hacker, philosophical questions are not "questions in search of an answer, but questions in search of a sense. [And] the task of arguments in many domains of philosophy is not to answer questions, but to show that they lack sense" (Baker & Hacker, 1980: 478).

In contrast to the way in which Hacker describes his vision of philosophy as therapeutic, Baker sees philosophy as having an *entirely* therapeutic purpose. By this,

¹⁰ See also Hacker (2000: 96) "the guardian of the bounds of sense"

¹¹ See also Hacker (1972: 18), (1996: 232–238), (1997: 10) and (2001a: 31).

¹² See Hacker (2007a: 100).

he is not suggesting it is therapeutic in the sense that it alleviates the symptoms of our philosophical anxieties by offering various doctrines which limit our journey beyond the boundaries of sense. Rather, the later Baker's view of philosophy is entirely therapeutic in the sense that it is concerned with helping particular individuals move past their cravings for increasingly complex philosophical theories. The therapy does not offer treatments for managing the symptoms of our philosophical problems, in the same way our GP may prescribe tablets to suppress the symptoms of hay fever. Rather, philosophy is seen as a therapeutic activity for helping "afflicted individuals give up [their] craving and become new persons" (Kahane et al, 2007: 23). In other words, the aim of Baker's later conception of philosophy as therapy is not to cauterise the scope of what we may sensibly say, but to advocate the use of a variety of tools and techniques for getting clear as to the relevant aspects of our language which are causing an individual some particular discomfort.

Another way of looking at this difference between Hacker and the later Baker's conceptions of philosophy is how Baker (2004) rejects Hacker's dual-aim conception of philosophy. That is to say, Baker (2004) rejects the view that: on the one hand a philosopher has the positive task of replacing our desire for general explanatory theories with detailed descriptions of our language use, while on the other hand the negative task of removing those philosophical prejudices that distort the grammar of our language.

Rather than setting out doctrines on the limits of our language, Baker (2004) advocates a vision of philosophy with the single aim of acknowledging different 'pictures' or ways of looking at our language for the purpose of dissolving philosopher's 'thought cramps' (Kahane et al, 2007: 10). However, as Morris (2007:

75) rightly points out, it would be inappropriate to see Baker's single-aim conception of philosophy as either a purely negative approach or merely that of Hacker, only without the positive aim.

The Influence of Wittgenstein & Waismann on Baker's Philosophy.

Another relevant feature of the later Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy as therapy is the influence of an *analogy* with psychoanalysis. In drawing attention to this feature of Baker's work, it is important to recognise that this analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis is not meant to imply that his vision of philosophy is identical to psychoanalysis in either method or goals. Rather, it is an analogy in the sense that there are salient similarities *and differences* between psychoanalysis and Baker's view of philosophy, where the former can be useful for illustrating different aspects of the latter through means of a comparison.¹³

The key to understanding this influence on Baker's later vision of philosophy is his claim that Waismann's *How I See Philosophy*¹⁴ and *Diktat für Schlick*¹⁵ provide an elaboration of Wittgenstein's own analogy with psychoanalysis (PI §133). More specifically, Baker (2004: 179) rejects the accepted view of *HISP* as "the elaboration and exploration of an *analogy*...(between conceptual analysis and Freudian psychoanalysis).....to clarify aspects of philosophical analysis as practiced by Wittgenstein". Instead, Baker (ibid) suggests that the vision of philosophy found in *HISP*, is in fact a description of a distinctive approach to philosophy which, at least during the 1930s, came to dominate Wittgenstein's own work. More

¹³ See Baker (2004: 146).

¹⁴ Henceforth referred to as *HISP*.

¹⁵ Baker (2004: 206) claims that Wittgenstein dictated this text to Waismann in December 1932.

specifically, what has become known as “our method” (VoW: 69) is a particular approach to philosophy “learned from Wittgenstein, demonstrated in the writings of Waismann and Schlick, and advocated as the model for the style of thinking of the Vienna Circle” (Baker, 2004: 145).

For Baker (2004), grasping the ways in which “our method” and psychoanalysis are analogous is crucial for the alternative approach to philosophy he derives from Wittgenstein’s later work. In particular, the significance of Waismann’s work with Wittgenstein during this period is arguably seen in the way in which “our method” is such a radical departure from the existing approach to conceptual analysis at the time. The starting point for this is Baker’s (2004: 207) suggestion that it may be helpful to treat Wittgenstein’s analogy with psychoanalysis as specifically concerned with “our method” as opposed to philosophy as a discipline per se.

One way in which Baker’s therapeutic vision of philosophy is influenced by this analogy between “our method” and psychoanalysis is their shared understanding of what a philosophical problem entails (Baker, 2004: 212). Unlike the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, philosophical problems, for Baker, are not abstract puzzles such as word searches, or enigmatic mysteries in need of a solution in the same way that one tries to solve an equation in mathematics. Moreover, in contrast to Hacker, Baker (2004) also rejects idea that a philosophical problem is an intellectual discomfort or ‘headache’ that results from a conceptual puzzle which *accidentally* causes some individual confusion. For example, they may have misunderstood what is written in front of them. In doing so, Baker (2004) also rejects, the orthodox view of Wittgensteinian therapy as being like a public health campaign against common diseases of the intellect (Baker, 2004: 132).

Instead, philosophical problems here are “individuals’ *troubled states of mind* which have as their intentional *objects* particular conceptual confusions, tensions, paradoxes or puzzles” (Baker, 2004: 212).¹⁶ More specifically, as Morris (2004: 6) points out, Baker sees philosophical problems as not merely the cause of our anxiety, but the anxiety itself. That is, philosophical problems are the problems perplexing particular philosophers in the sense that they are *personal* disquiets. As such, “our method” is radically individualistic (Baker, 2004: 181). Not everyone shares the same problems, has them for the same reason, or experiences them at the same time. Although I may dissolve a particular problem that is presently bothering me, other people may become afflicted by it at another time and for perhaps different reasons (Baker, 2004: 210).

An important caveat here is that, although Baker’s (2004) conception of philosophy as therapy is radically individualistic, he does not preclude the idea that our philosophical disquiets are also not limited to an individual or located in a particular temporal space. That is to say, many people can be puzzled by the same thing (perhaps for different or similar reasons), or that a problem which concerned *me yesterday* may not concern *me tomorrow*, but may concern someone else either now or twenty years in the future. Consequently, like psychoanalysis, the treatment offered by “our method” is focussed on dissolving problems by removing the particular issue that is troubling an individual or changing his or her view on them. In this context, Baker (2004) sees the notion of dissolving problems as taking on a specific purpose where “clarity about what our words mean is meant to make misguided cravings, drives, urges or prejudices disappear” (Baker, 2004: 183).

¹⁶ Original emphasis.

This shared view of what a problem entails also brings out a further important aspect of how Baker conceives of philosophy as a therapeutic endeavour. At the heart of both “our method” and psychoanalysis is the idea of “negotiations with others.... (readers and interlocutors, real or imaginary) about pictures” (Baker, 2004: 269). In contrast to Hacker’s view of a picture as a literal description of grammar, Baker (ibid: 264) understands a picture as being akin to a way of seeing things. That is, in holding a picture (either consciously or unconsciously) the way in which we describe how we see things may be governed by particular patterns. Just as the psychoanalyst may try to cure us of our personal problems by uncovering some underlying/sub-conscious way in which we see things, the inspiration for Baker’s (2004) therapeutic vision of philosophy is the idea that the origin of our philosophical problems are unconscious pictures, or objects of comparison, such as “analogies between propositions and ordinary pictures, or the picture of words as labels stuck on things” (Morris, 2004: 7).

Such analogies and pictures are said to be unconscious in two ways. In one sense, a picture can be unconscious insofar as the person affected has not explicitly articulated how it frames their thinking. For example, the fact we use the same word ‘measure’ in our talk about units of time and units of mass may lead us to think that as they can both be ‘measured’ they must have other common properties that allow us to do so. In another sense, a picture is unconscious insofar as the person affected is oblivious to the possibility of alternative pictures or objects of comparison. That is, they see *this* picture as the *only* picture.¹⁷ Indeed, the most trenchant forms of unconscious pictures for Baker (2004: 186) are those concerned with deep-seated dogmas as to how language works or must work. Examples of this might be, for

¹⁷ Baker (2004: 184-185)

some individuals, Augustine's picture of language (PI §1), or the way in which we often take sentences to only ever function in one way (PI §304), and that there *must* be a common thread running through all uses of a particular term (PI §65). Consequently, like Hacker (1972: 134), Baker (2004) also sees such unconscious pictures as leading us into a desire for generalised metaphysical theories.

Turning now to other ways in which the later Baker's (2004) conception of therapeutic philosophy is influenced by his use of Waismann's work in understanding that of Wittgenstein, one further significant feature of his view is an emphasis on freedom. This emphasis on placing freedom at the heart of his vision of philosophy puts the later Baker (2004) at odds with the orthodox Wittgensteinian view of philosophy he previously developed with Hacker. Whereas Baker & Hacker (1980: 485-486) utilise somewhat militant language in describing their orthodox Wittgensteinian vision of philosophy, the later Baker (2004: 190-191) stresses two ways in which the notion of freedom is central to his idea of therapeutic philosophy.

First, freedom is considered the goal of philosophy. Second, freedom defines the conduct of "our method". More specifically, on the one hand Baker understands freedom to be the goal of philosophical therapy insofar as "our method" is concerned with liberating us from the dogmas which blind us to other possibilities that lie in plain sight before us. That is to say, philosophy can be seen as a form of liberation insofar as the act of dissolving a philosophical problem involves freeing us from the tyranny of a particular picture which holds us captive (Morris, 2004: 8). Whereas, on the other hand, Baker sees freedom as defining the conduct of "our method" insofar as someone suffering from thought cramps must *freely* choose to engage with the therapy on offer, and whether or not to recognise those pictures, analogies, similes, etc that hold them captive. That is to say, they are free to reject the objects of

comparison or alternative pictures suggested by the philosopher, who must not attempt to bully them into accepting these examples by beating the patient into submission with the force of logic or grammar (HISP 18, 29).

Another way in which Baker's vision of philosophy as therapy is influenced by this analogy between "our method" and psychoanalysis, can be seen in the way in which he views the relationship one may have with an interlocutor. Following on from placing freedom at the heart of his alternative approach to doing philosophy, Baker (2004) also rejects the way in which traditional/theoretical philosophers and orthodox Wittgensteinians treat their interlocutor (whether real or imaginary) as if they are an opponent one must defeat. For Baker (2004: 192), the practice of "our method" is very much a two-way dialogue with someone suffering a particular bewilderment. On this view, our interlocutor is akin to a patient looking to be released from their suffering. Consequently, the way in which we engage with our interlocutor cannot take the form of a passive, impersonal or confrontational exercise in arguing x to be the case. Likewise, we cannot hope to 'cure' our interlocutor of their disquiet by merely compiling a dossier of linguistic facts pointing out where they have transgressed the bounds of sense.

Such an approach would neither liberate them from the picture that holds them captive, nor respects their intellectual freedom. Instead, "our method" takes the form of a "sympathetic, open-ended discussion which demands the interlocutor's active participation" (Baker, 2004: 217). "our method" demands the interlocutor's active participation in the sense that if it is to be successful it must be freely chosen by the patient in the same way that an addict can't be helped in quitting their problem unless they actually want to do so. Thus in a sense, "our method" sees the dissolving of a philosophical problem as a form of persuasion as opposed to demonstration

(Baker, 2004: 188). What is important here is not that the interlocutor is given a way out of the proverbial fly-bottle (*PI* §309), but rather they are freely persuaded to take this route out and understand why they are doing so.

The final major way in which Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy is influenced by the way he sees "our method" and philosophy as analogous is their openness to other possibilities. By this I take Baker as emphasizing that we should be open to both alternative interpretations of passages of a text we are engaging with,¹⁸ and other possible ways of doing philosophy. When Wittgenstein suggests "here is one possibility" (*PI* §244) or "here we might say" (*PI* §49) Baker reads Wittgenstein as offering *one* possible way of looking at our language use as a means of dissolving our disquiet. By introducing the notion that we should be open to other possibilities, Baker is not implying that anything and everything should be seen as a tool for curing our thought-cramps. Rather, he is drawing our attention to the fact that, on the one hand, *this* possibility is not the *only* possibility, yet on the other hand, not *any* reading or method will do, and that we should be mindful how in some contexts particular readings or methods may be more appropriate than others. If we consider going back to the emphasis Baker places on the therapeutic aspect of his vision of philosophy, we may wish to think of this openness to other methods in the same way that a therapist acknowledges that a particular treatment may not work for everyone, but it might be a more appropriate place to start with than another.

In this section, I have explored and described the underlying conception of philosophy as therapy in which Baker's alternative approach to doing philosophy is grounded. The next part of this chapter shall move on to describe some of the key

¹⁸ See Morris (2004: 12).

features that may be found in a philosophical investigation undertaken through Baker's therapeutic approach.

The Therapeutic Approach of Philosophy for Baker

In this section, I shall consider how someone could actually go about using the later Baker's therapeutic way of doing philosophy. By this, it is not my intention here to set out in detail a step-by-step guide, or system, for applying Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy. As Morris (2004: 11) rightly points out, Baker's alternative view of doing philosophy does not contain some algorithm that can be mechanically applied to every philosophical problem.¹⁹ Instead, the purpose of this section is to identify and describe the form of investigation that someone utilising this style of philosophy may use to alleviate themselves from his or her thought-cramps.

More specifically, Baker (2004: 209) suggests that "our method" is typically practiced through a particular style of investigation concerned with addressing an individual's particular philosophical problem by, working with them in, making its source perspicuous. The following discussion therefore focuses on two key aspects of how Baker (2004) suggests we can approach the task of dissolving our philosophical problems. First, his vision of grammatical investigations as a means of philosophical therapy. And second, his understanding of perspicuous representations as the goal of our grammatical investigations. In order to draw attention to the relevant features of this form of investigation, I shall illustrate what I take to be the later Baker's (2004) approach to philosophy by means of a comparison of the similarities and differences between Baker's (2004) understanding of grammatical

¹⁹ See also: Baker (2004: 33).

investigations and perspicuous representations with the orthodox Wittgensteinian account advocated by Hacker.

Grammatical Investigations as a Means of Philosophical Therapy

Given that the origin of Baker's alternative philosophical approach is his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later work, an appropriate starting point for this is arguably the idea that philosophy is typically practiced through a particular style of "grammatical investigation" (PI §90) where "we must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place" (PI §109).²⁰ However, this notion of doing philosophy by means of a grammatical investigation should not be confused with some form of applied linguistics. A grammatical investigation, in this sense, is not a matter of using empirical theories to map out the structures of sentences in a particular language. The term 'grammar' is not used to refer to the syntax of signs in our sentence structures, but rather the *use* of words within the practice of using language (McGinn, 1997: 14). It is precisely our practice of using language that is at the heart of both Hacker's and the later Baker's conceptions of philosophy. Like Wittgenstein their goal here is to dissolve those philosophical problems that arise in the inappropriate use of our words.

Insofar as the task of philosophy for both Hacker and the later Baker is the undertaking of a grammatical investigation, the aim of the philosopher is (following Wittgenstein) to achieve a 'clear view' of that which is troubling us. This task of achieving a clear view of our philosophical problem, by clarifying the use of our language, is not merely a matter of producing a definitive set of grammatical rules, but one of achieving *complete* clarity whereby our philosophical problems

²⁰ See also PI §126 & BB18.

completely disappear (PI §133). Or in other words, the goal of our grammatical investigations is to dissolve our philosophical problems by making their source perspicuous. This notion of achieving a perspicuous representation of that which is troubling us is arguably the central feature of how Hacker and the later Baker go about doing philosophy insofar as it “earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things” (PI §122).

Perspicuous Representation

Although Hacker and the later Baker agree on the importance of achieving a perspicuous representation of that which is troubling us, they disagree on what this entails. For instance, on Hacker’s orthodox conception, a perspicuous representation is concerned with providing an arrangement of representation of grammatical rules that make things perspicuous (Baker, 2004: 28-29). More specifically, a perspicuous representation *must always* take the form of a *complete* and *surveyable* description of how symbols of our language are used. That is to say, a perspicuous representation always consists of a grammatical description of a concept one wishes to make perspicuous. Consequently, it is impossible to have a perspicuous representation of our grammar itself as this would be a pleonasm (ibid). In this sense, Hacker (1996: 109) takes perspicuity to be a consideration of particular arrangements of grammatical rules which enables them to be easily committed to memory and later reproduced accurately.

In contrast to this, Baker (2004: 42) suggests that *any* representation which makes its subject matter clear to someone may count as a perspicuous representation. Thus a perspicuous representation of grammar is therefore quite sensible. If one doesn’t know or can’t understand a particular word or its usage, we can clear this

confusion by offering a perspicuous representation of the word's grammar. Moreover, while Baker (2004) acknowledges that perspicuous representations can make clear how symbols of our language are used, he suggests that they can also be descriptions of other 'language games'. These other language games may act as objects of comparison for drawing our attention to different aspects of that which is bothering us. Consequently, Baker (2004: 42) suggests that perspicuity is not a property belonging to a representation, but a description of a representation's function. That is to say, a perspicuous representation is one that makes what is represented perspicuous.

A related feature of Baker's (2004) understanding of perspicuous representation is his view that perspicuity is not a binary concept where something is either perspicuous or it is not. Whereas Hacker maintains that one description of our grammar can be no more/less perspicuous than another, in the same way that the formula for calculating the area of a circle is no more/less self-evident than the formula for calculating its circumference, Baker (2004: 42) suggests that there is no good reason to think that a particular representation is not more or less perspicuous than another.

Moreover, Baker (2004) also denies Hacker's view that a difference we might perceive between multiple perspicuous representations of an area of our grammar is merely a difference in how the grammatical rules are selected and arranged (Hutchinson & Read, 2008: 151). Instead, Baker (2004) takes perspicuous representations as being indicative of a particular way of seeing things, in the same sense that Augustine's picture of language is just one way of looking at our grammar amongst many. That is, a perspicuous representation is perspicuous for *someone's* way of seeing things but not necessarily others.

Another key element of Baker's view of perspicuous representation is his rejection of Hacker's claim that the criteria for determining a perspicuous representation are actually unclear, and we cannot deduce in advance any way of determining whether or not other descriptions of the grammar of our language are an adequate perspicuous representation. Instead, Baker (2004: 43) maintains there are tolerably clear criteria for perspicuous representations. That is not to say there is a formula that can be automatically utilised for identifying perspicuous representations, but rather, we can clearly identify perspicuous representations such as the illustration of the colour octahedron found in the *Philosophical Remarks* (PR §51-52). In a sense, Baker (2004) sees perspicuous representations as like a count-noun whose use is akin to a landmark or reference point. Just as the Eiffel Tower is a recognisable landmark in Paris, so too is the illustration of the colour octahedron a distinct perspicuous representation in Wittgenstein's texts.

Similarly, while the orthodox view also insists that a perspicuous representation can be either correct or incorrect and thus there are no clear criteria for judging a perspicuous representation's effectiveness (Hutchinson & Read, 2008: 152), Baker (2004: 44) maintains that there *is* a clear criterion for judging the success or adequacy of a perspicuous representation. The criteria for judging a perspicuous representation's adequacy are concerned with whether or not it cures the particular individual's thought cramps brought about by not knowing how to go on in the case at hand. As such, whether or not a perspicuous representation is successful is relative to the particular context. On Baker's reading, a perspicuous representation is distinct from the notion of a correct, conceptual analysis. It is not necessary for a perspicuous representation to make clear every aspect of what is represented. A perspicuous representation only needs to make clear "*some* puzzling aspect of 'the use of our

words' and that it can serve as a centre of variation or a point of reference for making clear a *large class* of cases of the use of certain symbols" (Baker, 2004: 44).

Finally, the later Baker also denies Hacker's claim that perspicuous representations are necessarily additive. On Hacker's view, a philosopher is able to combine a series of related perspicuous representations to produce a more comprehensive whole in the same way that a cartographer might combine maps of Buda and Pest in order to produce a map of Budapest. That is to say, we can combine multiple perspicuous representations of a thing's parts in order to gain a perspicuous representation of the whole. Instead, Baker (2004) points out that sometimes there is no single or gestalt representation that simultaneously illuminates all relevant aspects of that which is represented. Indeed such a representation may cover-up aspects which multiple representations draw our attention to. An important implication of this is that there need not be a single or definitive perspicuous representation that dissolves all possible philosophical problems people may encounter when talking about a particular area of our language such as psychological concepts.²¹

Although Baker (2004) suggests that the form of our account is earmarked by the notion of a perspicuous representation, this does not entail that there is some single philosophical method through which this is achieved. On the contrary, following Wittgenstein, Baker (2004) insists there is no single method for acquiring a perspicuous representation but rather many different ones.²² More specifically, in contrast to the traditional conception of the method of philosophy as an exercise in argument and logic, Baker (2004) presents the philosopher with an open-ended range

²¹ For further discussion on the differences and similarities between the orthodox conception of perspicuous representation and that put forward by Baker see Hutchinson & Read (2008: 151-152). See also Kuusela (2008: 228-237).

²² This view is also shared by Hacker (1972: 137).

of different conceptual tools and techniques, found in the later works of Wittgenstein, which can be used in a variety of different ways to dissolve our philosophical problems.

This is not to suggest that Wittgenstein did not put forward philosophical arguments per se. But rather to draw attention to the fact that the *Philosophical Investigations* is written in such a way that it does not contain philosophical arguments of the form ‘premise, premise, conclusion’, for doing so would on the surface of things appear to commit Wittgenstein to holding the very form of philosophical theories he sets out to reject (*PI* §109).

In a sense, the later Baker’s (2004) approach to doing philosophy can be likened to a form of “therapy” (*PI* §133) or the “treatment of an illness” (*PI* §254). As Baker & Hacker (1980: 486) rightly point out, this is a rather apt analogy insofar as the fact that there are different therapies to cure a patient’s problems can be said to mirror the way in which Baker (following Wittgenstein) suggests a range of conceptual techniques that can be used to cure the diseases of our intellect. In the next section of this chapter I shall draw attention to some of the tools and techniques of Baker’s vision of philosophy as therapy.

Some Tools & Techniques of Baker’s Philosophical Therapy

The purpose of this section is to illustrate some of the tools and techniques of the alternative conception of philosophy advocated by the later Baker (2004), which may be useful for the purpose of the present investigation of Dancy’s moral particularism. As stated in the previous section, following Wittgenstein (*PI* §133), Baker (2004) maintains that there is no one method of how we ought to do philosophy as therapy, but rather we employ a range of different tools that can be used in different ways to

dissolve particular philosophical problems. An important implication of this point is that like therapy, there is no necessary connection between a particular tool or technique and how we ought to address a particular problem. Rather, there are different tools and techniques available to us, and the task at hand is to discern which is the most appropriate in this context.

On the question of how Baker's (2004) therapeutic philosophy is practiced, I maintain that there are two primary characteristics of his approach to alleviating our philosophical problems. On the one hand, Baker (2004) makes significant use of the different tools and techniques he identifies within Wittgenstein's later remarks. These include (but are not limited to): offering objects of comparison and presenting alternative pictures; pointing out family resemblances and neglected aspects of our language; grammatical analysis of our use of language in practice; and other tools for helping us get clear of whatever unconscious pictures may be holding us captive.²³ On the other hand, there are also a number of discernable features of Baker's writing which I claim play important roles in how he goes about curing our thought-cramps. Some examples of these neglected aspects of Baker's approach to doing philosophy are his use the interlocutor, as well as his deliberate avoidance of offering formal conclusions.

While I have identified some of the techniques and tools Baker draws attention to in Wittgenstein's later works, it is not my intention here to offer a detailed explanation of what these tools and techniques entail, or how they can be utilised. My rationale for this is that many of the methods Baker offers for the purpose of dissolving our philosophical problems are best illustrated by means of an

²³ It is important to note here that these tools and techniques are not mutually exclusive. For example, Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances could (as I have done in chapter four of this investigation) be used as an object of comparison.

example.²⁴ Consequently, for purposes of clarity, I shall put off the task of giving a detailed description of an individual tool or technique that Baker identifies in his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later work until such time as I am motivated to use it when engaged in the purpose of dissolving a particular puzzlement in later chapters. Instead, the remainder of this section shall focus on illustrating some of the features of Baker's writing relevant to the task of the present investigation.

Baker's use of the Interlocutor

An important feature of Baker's own way of doing philosophy is the parallel between how he suggests Wittgenstein uses an interlocutor in his later work, and the way he approaches his own interlocutor when writing about Wittgenstein. As suggested previously, Baker (2004) sees the interlocutor in Wittgenstein's later work not in terms of an opponent, but rather as someone actively looking to be released from his or her particular bewilderment. Thus, in contrast to both the work of many orthodox Wittgensteinians, such as Hacker,²⁵ and most contemporary analytic philosophers, Baker does not single-out and confront his interlocutor in an attempt to point out flaws in their theories or force them into seeing things his way. Rather, he invites his interlocutor to become an active participant in sympathetic open-ended discussion about the particular aspect of Wittgenstein's work with which he is concerned.²⁶

However, despite this strong similarity between the way in which Baker sees Wittgenstein's use of an interlocutor and how he engages with his own interlocutor, there is one significant difference between Wittgenstein and Baker in regard to the interlocutor. Whereas Wittgenstein would often explicitly use dialogue with an

²⁴ See also (PI §133).

²⁵ See the treatment of Baker (2004) as an interlocutor vis-à-vis opponent in Hacker (2007a).

²⁶ For an example of this see Baker (2004: 124-125).

interlocutor in his text,²⁷ Baker (2004) does not typically engage with an interlocutor (either real or imaginary) in this way. Instead, Baker can be seen as trying to “engage his reader in a dialogue whose principal goal is to effect a change in ways of seeing things” (Baker, 2004: 155). As such, it is arguably the reader who Baker (2004) takes to be his interlocutor, not in the sense an opponent, but as someone who is open to other possibilities.

On the use of an interlocutor in the present investigation, it is important to note that although I will be exploring the work of numerous authors who have written on Dancy’s moral particularism, it is not my intention to single out any particular philosopher as either my interlocutor vis-a-vis opponent, or my ideal interlocutor who I believe is in need of philosophical therapy. While I may engage with an interlocutor, following Baker, I take my interlocutor not to be an opponent (real or imagined) but a willing reader who is open to other possibilities. In doing so I shall occasionally issue a reminder of this by describing the interlocutor as a ‘willing interlocutor’.

However, it is worth noting here that, this use of the interlocutor does present a significant, methodological challenge. Whereas a genuine interlocutor (either real or imaginary) is able to respond to the philosopher as part of the therapeutic dialogue, the reader of a philosophical investigation does not have the same degree of input into the dialogue, or the ability to respond to what the philosopher is saying. While the author of a therapeutic investigation may attempt to treat the particular philosophical problem of a specific interlocutor (real or imaginary) in a given case within the text, it is highly unlikely that someone reading the investigation will perplexed in the same way, if at all. Although the philosopher may try to engage the

²⁷ For indicative examples of Wittgenstein’s use of the interlocutor see PI §189, §281, §246 and §296

reader by problematising the issue at hand, and subsequently offering indicative examples in the hope that the underlying point they are trying to draw attention to transcends the particular examples they are using, it is acknowledged that the reader is not an interlocutor in the same sense as the ones found in Wittgenstein's later work.

Baker's Avoidance of Offering Philosophical Conclusions

Another feature that strikes me in Baker's (2004) alternative approach to doing philosophy is his use of artistic terms such as 'coda' and 'envoi' instead of 'conclusion' to describe the final section of a number of his papers. For example, although Baker (2004) only uses the term 'coda' in describing the final sections of chapters two (66), nine (198) and twelve (277), he does use other terms borrowed from the arts for different yet related purposes in other chapters.²⁸ A generally accepted convention of academic writing (especially in the sciences) is that at the end of a piece of work the author presents a brief concluding section where they summarise their work and offer a final concluding statement. This concluding statement typically illustrates the key argument, thesis or theory proposed by the author and usually why it is better than or builds upon the other options discussed. Given that this convention is tacitly expected when writing for academic purposes, the fact Baker (2004) eschews it suggests that it may be an important and purposeful aspect of his approach to writing philosophy. More specifically, I maintain that we have good grounds to believe this is a deliberate choice on Baker's part.

Insofar as conclusions typically summarise an author's thesis/theory, the idea of a philosophical conclusion in this traditional sense would appear to be anathema to

²⁸ See Baker's (2004) use of the term 'envoi' to describe the final section of chapter eleven.

Baker's view of philosophy as therapy in two respects: first, given his rejection of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, it may seem odd to embrace one of its key conventions. Baker (2004) is also at pains to stress that he is not putting forward *the* definitive theory of how one should read Wittgenstein, or any QED type arguments of the form 'premise, premise, conclusion'. Second, it would also be inconsistent with the view that "if one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI §128).

Moreover, I also maintain that Baker's (2004) decision to describe the final section of his papers using terms borrowed from the arts is not a matter of merely using an arbitrary replacement for the term 'conclusion'. Just as Wittgenstein is often credited with paying painstaking attention to detail over the construction of his manuscripts,²⁹ I would like to offer Baker's choice of the term 'coda' as evidence of Baker's own meticulous attention to detail. I believe that this choice of terminology is a conscious one on Baker's part insofar as it resonates with his view of Wittgenstein as not offering theses on anything. That is to say, the use of the term coda is more than a deliberate way of avoiding the implications of labelling the final section of a paper as the conclusion.

Given Baker's own love of music, the term 'coda' may be seen as being used in a musical sense in his writings.³⁰ By this I am referring to the fact that, in music, 'coda' is also often used to denote a passage of music at the end of a larger piece. However, while a musical coda is similar to the conclusion of an argument insofar as it may recycle key themes of the larger work, it is also very different. First, a musical coda doesn't pull the best bits together in order to create some kind of synthesis of the whole piece. Second, a coda in music is just part of a piece of music. Like a coda

²⁹ See Morris (2004: 3).

³⁰ See Baker's obituary in *The Independent* written by Hacker (2002).

in a piece of music, the final sections of Baker's texts do not set out any claims or judgements as to how things are per se. Instead, they bring the piece to a close in such a way that invites willing interlocutors to consider the work further.

Following Baker, I have also made a conscious decision to avoid the use of the term 'conclusion' to describe the final section of either my overall project, or any of its constituent chapters. The rationale for this is to reinforce the fact that Baker's alternative approach to doing philosophy is not concerned with proposing theses or making metaphysical claims as to how things are. However, in doing so, it is not my intention here to slavishly copy Baker's use of terms like 'coda' and 'envoi'. Rather, I shall utilise terms such as 'concluding remarks' or 'reflections' for the purpose of remarking on what I have done in a chapter or the investigation as a whole without implying any form of metaphysical theory, or that it is the correct or only way of seeing things.

Having illustrated some of the key features found in Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy, as well as his wider conception of philosophy as therapy, the next part of this chapter shall move on to describe in more detail what I maintain is the main, unique, aspect of Baker's therapeutic philosophy for the purpose of this investigation. That is, the way in which Baker's openness to other methods allows someone to draw on the possible insights found in other approaches to doing philosophy where appropriate to the investigation at hand.

Baker's Openness to Other Methods

This section is concerned with what I take to be the key, unique, feature of Baker's (2004) vision of philosophy as therapy in the context of the present investigation: his openness to other methods. More specifically, the purpose of this section is to draw

attention to the fact that in adopting Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, we need not abandon some of the possible insights found in other ways of doing philosophy. In suggesting how someone could utilise other methods within Baker's wider vision of doing philosophy, I hope to not only develop Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy, but also offer a compelling rationale for advocating Baker's way of doing philosophy as the basis of this investigation. However, in doing so, it is not my intention here to argue or imply that Baker's later work contains the correct reading of Wittgenstein, or the definitive method of how philosophy ought to be done. Rather, I wish to issue a reminder of the importance Baker places on our remaining open to other possibilities (Morris, 2004: 4).

This aspect of how Baker sees the later works of Wittgenstein has two significant implications for his own vision of philosophy as therapy. First, Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy is concerned with persuading an interlocutor to remain open to other possible ways of seeing things, as opposed to insisting that x must be this way or y can't be that way. Second, his approach to doing philosophy is not dogmatic or prohibitive as to the tools and techniques one may use to persuade willing interlocutors to liberate themselves from whatever unconscious picture may be holding them captive and bringing about their thought-cramps. That is to say, the alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy at the heart of this investigation "does not purport to state how philosophy *must* be conducted... [rather]... tolerance of alternatives is combined with a clear recommendation of 'our method'" (Baker, 2004: 180).

One other method which I maintain could be a useful tool for this investigation, if used within the context of the later Baker's vision of philosophy, is the orthodox Wittgensteinian approach advocated by Hacker. While this might seem

controversial or counterintuitive, given the schism in their work on Wittgenstein, my rationale for this suggestion is that, although Hacker (1972: 116) acknowledges his Wittgenstein-inspired vision of philosophy is therapeutic (*PI* §133), this idea is seldom connected with a recognition that there are many different types of therapy (Baker, 2004: 201). As such, we need not dismiss any particular insights offered by Hacker's approach to doing philosophy, or even treat the philosophical approaches of Hacker and the later Baker as mutually exclusive. One could, therefore, incorporate aspects or particular techniques found in Hacker's Wittgenstein-inspired style of philosophy, within Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach.

For example, if my therapeutic use of one of the tools/techniques advocated by Baker is not persuasive enough to liberate an interlocutor from his or her philosophical problem, rather than try a different tool/technique found in Baker's later work, it could be more useful on this occasion to follow Hacker and point out where our interlocutor has transgressed the bounds of sense by talking nonsense. In doing so, we might make our interlocutor so uncomfortable that he or she walks away from their previous picture of what was perplexing them of their own accord. The important caveat here being that, we only do so with the intention that, we don't allow our interlocutor to become equally trapped by the alternative picture presented by Hacker's method.

Another source of philosophical tools and techniques which I maintain could be helpful to this investigation can be seen in the works of other therapeutic philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein. By this, I am referring to not only those philosophers whose view of Wittgenstein is relatively similar (yet not strictly

identical) to that of the later Baker (2004),³¹ but also the so-called New Wittgensteinians³² such as Rupert Read, Alice Crary, and to some extent John McDowell and Stanley Cavell.³³ While a detailed overview of the New Wittgensteinians and the salient similarities, and differences, between their conceptions of philosophy and that of the later Baker is beyond the scope of the present work, it may be useful to acknowledge that, like the later Baker, the New Wittgensteinians generally advocate “persuasive modes of discourse (i.e. modes of discourse that aim to elicit affective responses) [which] can as such make direct contributions to [our] understanding” (Crary, 2007a: 119). And yet, in contrast to Baker, typically reject the elucidatory view of the *Tractatus*³⁴ in favour of a resolute reading, such as that developed by Cora Diamond and James Conant.³⁵

However, in the same way that I have previously advocated utilising elements of Hacker’s style of philosophy within Baker’s alternative, therapeutic, approach, I also propose a similar openness to other Wittgenstein-inspired philosophical methods is entirely consistent with Baker’s later view of philosophy. For instance, if I am unable to persuade someone to let go of an unhelpful unconscious picture by means of the tools and techniques found in Baker’s later work, I could, for a particular purpose, borrow a device from the work of one of the New Wittgensteinians, such as Crary’s (2007a) favoured technique of drawing attention to examples and

³¹ I have in mind here Katherine Morris, Graham McFee, Leon Culbertson and Oskari Kuusela amongst others.

³² According to Kahane et al (2007: 7) this term is derived from a collection of articles on the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* published under the title of *The New Wittgenstein* (2000) edited by Alice Crary & Rupert Read.

³³ It is worth noting that the ‘New Wittgenstein’ is not a single coherent reading of Wittgenstein’s work, but a family of overlapping positions presented as a coherent philosophical movement by Crary (2000).

³⁴ See Kahane, Kanterian, and Kuusela (2007: 10).

³⁵ For an overview of the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* see Diamond (1988), Crary (2000), Conant & Diamond (2004), and Kahane et al (2007: 7-8). See also Crary (2007b).

illustrations from literature as a means of persuading an interlocutor to see something differently.³⁶

Although the tools and techniques of other therapeutic philosophers can be used within the conception of philosophy advocated by Baker, we should be mindful of an important caveat. While other philosophers may be described as having a therapeutic approach, their understanding of what the scope and aim of this view of philosophy as therapy entails is not necessarily the same as Baker's. In particular, Morris (2004: 14) notes that, although there are some synergies between Baker & the New Wittgensteinians, Baker was also critical of their overly programmatic treatment of Wittgenstein's distinctive and multi-faceted vision of philosophical therapy in an unpublished review of *The New Wittgenstein*.

As I understand it, there are two important aspects of Wittgenstein's analogy between philosophy and therapy which the New Wittgensteinians generally neglect. The first neglected aspect of the analogy between philosophy and therapy I wish to draw attention to here is the fact that just as different types of health problems require different therapies, or even different approaches to therapy in order to treat them, so to do diseases of the intellect. For example, some intellectual diseases may be like depression insofar as they commonly affect many different people, at different times, and in different ways for different reasons.

In cases like this, the best form of treatment is often a person-centred approach, where a particular individual needs to be persuaded to leave go of that which is concerning them, perhaps through means of a two-way dialogue that helps them re-orientate themselves in relation to how he or she came to see such and such as a problem. Likewise, other intellectual diseases may be more like a virus in that

³⁶ See Crary (2007a: 127-163).

while they affect individual people, there could be some underlying commonality between the different patients' illness. In this sort of case, a more appropriate form of healthcare may be to assemble a dormant form of the disease and use it to vaccinate an entire population in order to develop collective/herd immunity from its effects.³⁷

The second neglected aspect of the analogy between philosophy and therapy I shall put forward here is the fact that it would seem rather inappropriate to preface one form of treatment over another prior to actually examining the patient. For example, live vaccines might be a very useful tool for a doctor insofar as they can be used to immunise a population against the spread of infectious diseases. However, it would seem rather bizarre to assume that a doctor should arbitrarily treat *all* health problems through the use of live vaccines. On the one hand, arbitrarily administering a live vaccine to a patient with depression would make no sense as a form of treatment as the nature of their condition is not viral. On the other hand, administering a live vaccine could also prove fatal in some cases such as where a particular patient has a pre-existing medical condition or allergy to one of the vaccine's ingredients.

Consequently, just as a dogmatic adherence to a particular treatment or approach in healthcare isn't always helpful, one could reasonably see why a philosopher who tried to solve all philosophical problems by means of a particular technique or approach, without considering the case at hand, could end up getting nowhere with their investigation or indeed making their problems worse.³⁸ Indeed, Baker (2004: 162) draws attention to the possibility that in practicing philosophy as

³⁷ See also, McFee (2015b: 19).

³⁸ For a possible example of this, see my discussion of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy and the particularist literature on conceptual learning in chapter four.

therapy (“our method”) we can easily fall into dogmatism if we forget the analogical status of the language-games we are using to dissolve a particular problem. Thus, while we can utilise philosophical tools and techniques found in the work of other therapeutic philosophers within the conception of philosophy as therapy advocated by Baker, I maintain that the reason for this is Baker’s openness to other methods where appropriate to the particular case, rather than the fact that these other methods are ‘therapeutic’. My rationale for this is that, while the latter way of seeing things may tempt us to think of the incorporation of other therapeutic tools and techniques into Baker’s (2004) approach to doing philosophy as the development or refinement of a philosophical theory, the former can act as a reminder to be conscious of the dangers of falling into dogmatism.³⁹

In addition to the possibilities offered by Wittgenstein-inspired conceptions of philosophy, I also maintain that potential sources of philosophical tools and techniques which may be useful to this investigation can also be found other approaches to doing philosophy. For example, insofar as Baker (2004: 277) identifies affinities between his conception of philosophy as therapy and the methods exhibited in the work of Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty, it may be appropriate in some contexts to use philosophical techniques as diverse as those found in phenomenology or genealogy, as a means of liberating someone from a particular unconscious picture.⁴⁰

Similarly, although approaches to philosophy inspired by Wittgenstein are, as we have seen, typically viewed as a reaction against traditional/theoretical philosophy, Baker does not rule out the possibility that there may be cases where what is required to loosen the grip a particular unconscious picture has on someone is

³⁹ Or indeed a form of dogmatic anti-dogmatism whose influence on our thinking may be equally dangerous. For further discussion on this topic see Kuusela (2008).

⁴⁰ See also Baker (2004: 222).

an alternative theoretical model or an arrangement of logical symbols. According to Baker, “a model (or *ubersichtliche Darstellung*) may make visible a pattern or system in our word-use where none was apparent...and in this way it may remove grammatical anxiety...[or]... neutralize the strong attractions of making metaphysical uses of our words.” (Baker 2004: 158). The important caveats here are that in doing so, we are mindful to present the model *as a model* and not “a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy)” (*PI §131*), and that, although we can construct sound arguments by arranging true premises in valid argument forms, our confidence in the truth of these premises typically requires “discussion of putative counter-cases or exceptions... [just like] one would have over standard discursive presentations” (McFee, 2015a: 102). What I take McFee (2015a) to be drawing attention to here is the centrality of context to the question of whether or not the argument is sound. For example, the truth of a premise such as “Socrates is a man” is in one sense contingent on the context of who or what I am referring to by the name Socrates. Although Socrates was the name of a man who lived in Greece, I could equally be talking about my friend’s car, or my neighbour’s cat.

However, as pointed out previously, in encouraging us to remain open to other possibilities Baker (2004) is not advocating that *anything* per se can/should be used as a tool/technique for breaking the grip of a particular picture that holds us captive. For example, bullying someone until they concede that ‘such and such isn’t the only way of seeing x’ is not an appropriate philosophical method. Likewise, offering a logical proof as one way of seeing a philosophical utterance may be a useful tool for liberating someone from a particular disquiet at t_1 , but completely unhelpful for another disquiet, or at t_2 . What I see Baker as drawing our attention to

here is the fact that, on the one hand *this* possibility is not the *only* possibility; yet on the other hand, not any method will do and thus we should be mindful how in some contexts particular tools/techniques may be more appropriate than others.

So far, this chapter has illustrated what I take to be some of the key features of Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy. In what follows, I anticipate and respond to a number of arguments against the use of Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy as a way of thinking about moral matters.

Some Objections to Baker's Therapeutic View of Philosophy

The purpose of this section is to pre-empt the typical kinds of objection that might be raised in response to the philosophical approach of this project. In particular, this section shall outline and dissolve what I maintain are two of the most potentially damaging criticisms of the therapeutic view of philosophy advocated by the later Baker. The first line of criticism I shall consider is the view that, insofar as Baker's conception of philosophy is radically at odds with the traditional/theoretical approach, investigations grounded in the former method do not warrant the term 'philosophy'. The second objection I shall explore here is the claim that Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy is an inappropriate way of thinking about moral matters as it restricts us to describing rather than explaining and understanding moral phenomena.

In raising these lines of objection, I will draw on the kind of general criticism of Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to philosophy put forward by Gellner (1979) amongst others. Although the origins of these criticisms are not directly concerned with the therapeutic conception of philosophy advocated by Baker per se, I maintain that these criticisms are relevant here in the sense that they clearly articulate some

indicative examples of the types of things a traditional/theoretical philosopher might object to.

What is left of philosophy?

One way of criticising this work on methodological grounds might be to argue that Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy fails to achieve anything of significance that warrants the name 'philosophy'. As Baker (2004) acknowledges, the fact that his conception of philosophy as therapy moves away from the traditional/theoretical approach of arguing what must be the case, in favour of offering new possibilities,⁴¹ "might leave one wondering how anything is achieved if nothing is proven – or at least why the achievement belongs to philosophy" (Baker, 2004: 213). As we have seen, for traditional/theoretical philosophers, the underlying objective of their enterprise is typically to discover the essence of things, and arguing why x must be the case, or refuting y. As Morris (2004: 10) writes, someone might reasonably ask:

What is left of philosophy, of rational argument, if we do away with [proofs and refutations]? And... does it not make philosophy just too easy? If all [Baker's therapeutic approach] is doing is revealing alternative possibilities, where does the work, the boulder-rolling that is the day-to-day business of the professional philosopher come in? We can trade possibilities 'til the cows come home!'.

Insofar as Baker's later therapeutic approach to philosophy does not adhere to the same goal as the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, and is not grounded in the same notion of what must constitute a rational argument, it may appear counterintuitive to describe what Baker is doing as 'philosophy'.

⁴¹ See Morris (2004: 10).

In response to this objection, I suggest that, while the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism, for example, may be dominated by the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, it need not follow that other forms of rational argument are undeserving of the title 'philosophy'. More specifically, I maintain that any sense of perplexity or puzzlement that may lead someone to criticise Baker's later conception of philosophy on these grounds is due to the influence of an unconscious picture(s) of how things must or cannot be, rather than some inadequacy of the philosophical approach at hand. For example, they may be unable to recognise the possibility of doing philosophy in other ways because they are held captive by unconscious pictures of how we must do philosophy and/or what rational argument ought to encompass.

One way we can liberate an individual from this kind of unconscious picture is by drawing attention to other areas of practice where rational argument may also consist of persuading someone to see things in *this* way as well as (not instead of) *that* way. In particular, it may be worth making a comparison here between the form of rational argument qua persuasion found in Baker's therapeutic philosophy, and the way in which professional art critics may argue about how we should consider a specific piece of art. According to Sibley (2004), while even the most highly respected art critics "cannot prove by argument or by assembling a sufficiency of conditions that something is graceful" (Sibley, 2004: 137), this does not entail that the art critic's practice is irrational. Instead, Sibley maintains that the job of the art critic is to draw attention to features of the piece at hand that may act as a sort of key for helping an individual in seeing the point the critic is trying to make. As Sibley (2004: 136) writes:

By merely drawing attention to those easily discernable features which make the painting luminous or warm or dynamic, we often succeed in bringing someone to see these aesthetic qualities. We get him to see B by mentioning something different, A. Sometimes in doing this we are drawing attention to features which may have gone unnoticed by an untrained or insufficiently attentive eye or ear...[and] sometimes they are features which have been seen or heard but of which the significance or purpose has been missed in any of a variety of ways.

In a sense, the form of rational argument found in the later Baker's therapeutic approach to doing philosophy is akin to that of the art critic insofar as they are both concerned with persuading someone to re-orientate how they see something by bringing to light some of its previously neglected aspects.⁴² For Culbertson (2015), a helpful way of thinking about the kind of rational persuasion at work here is to imagine "pulling one aspect to the fore, and pushing others to the background" (Culbertson, 2015: 14). For example, in persuading someone to appreciate a painting as an accomplished work of art, I might draw to the fore the artist's refined brushstrokes, and in doing so make the subject of the painting a background consideration.

Although an advocate of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy might argue that in formulating explanatory theories they are also pulling particular aspects to the front and pushing others to the background (i.e. they draw something to our attention by making it say, a sufficient condition), I maintain they are doing so in a different sense and for a different purpose. In contrast to how the conception of rational argument underpinning the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy

⁴² As an aside, it is worth noting here that in explaining this feature of Baker's work, Morris (2004: 11) offers an example of pointing to unnoticed aspects in ambiguous drawings, and getting someone to think about a poem or a painting in a different way.

can be seen as concerned with replacing incorrect theories with the correct one, for Baker, the task of drawing attention to a particular feature or way of seeing something as important need not entail a denial of any of its other features, or imply any kind of hierarchy. Something we might push to the background in one case, might be drawn to the fore in another, much in the same sense as Dancy's (2004) holism of reasons acknowledges that what might be a reason to ϕ at t_1 might not be a reason against ϕ ing, or completely irrelevant at t_2 .

However, as Culbertson (2015: 14) rightly points out:

Often pushing aspects to the background can lead to us becoming blind to them altogether. Or, to put it another way, pulling a certain aspect to the fore can lead us to being gripped by a particular picture to the point that we seem incapable, or at least have great difficulty, in seeing things other ways.

An important corollary of Culbertson's (2015) point here is that, although we comfortably operate in other areas of practice (such as aesthetics) with a similar conception of rationality to that underlying Baker's conception of philosophy, this pulling forward and pushing back of aspects can also lead us into puzzlements. More specifically, it can lead us into insisting that things must be like this, and consequently fall back into a traditional/theoretical line of reasoning where x must be like this, but *that* entails *this*, and it must bring about the problem of such-and-such (Culbertson, 2015: 14).

Given the difficulties Culbertson (2015) draws attention to, I am inclined to agree with Morris' (2004: 11) claim that the later Baker's conception of philosophical argument, qua rational persuasion, is more than worthy of the term

‘philosophy’ insofar as it is arguably a more ambitious and delicate task to persuade someone to re-orientate their entire way of looking at something, or let go of a previously entrenched picture of how things must be, than it is to assemble a QED-style argument, or a sound logical proof that x cannot be true, and y must be the case.⁴³ Whereas argument in the sense of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy typically seeks to change the incorrect theory of something for the correct one, the later Baker’s conception of philosophy as therapy leaves everything as it is, but offers other possibilities for our way of looking at it. The fact that Baker’s therapeutic view of philosophy is concerned with possibilities rather than absolutes does not entail that it is any easier than the traditional/theoretical way of doing philosophy. As Morris points out, “it may take a genius (of Wittgenstein’s standing) to reveal alternative possibilities in a clear and compelling manner” (Morris, 2004: 11). While I may offer possibilities until the cows come home, the task of persuading them to do so of their own accord, and understanding why they are doing so, is not as easy as one might assume.

“Is this ‘ostrich philosophy’?”

Another relevant criticism of Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to philosophy, such as that advocated by the later Baker, is the accusation that they are unable to provide an appropriate basis for thinking about matters of moral philosophy. More specifically, ‘Wittgensteinian views of philosophy’ may be seen as inappropriate for investigating topics such as Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism, on the grounds that

⁴³ See Baker (2004: 164, 187 & 209).

they restrict us to describing rather than explaining moral phenomena.⁴⁴ As Zangwill (2006: 265-266) puts it:

This somewhat Luddite view says that all we can do is *describe* our moral practice; we cannot *explain* it...We simply walk the moral walk and talk the moral talk. But this is ostrich philosophy. It is a refusal to see that there are questions that can be asked.

One way of understanding what Zangwill (2006) might mean here is to say that Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to philosophy are the antithesis of moral philosophy. Traditionally, the task of the moral philosopher is precisely that of asking difficult questions about moral matters, and providing explanations of why x is or cannot be the case. In contrast, the Wittgensteinian avoids these important issues and buries their head in the sand like an ostrich until the problem has gone away.

For Zangwill (2006: 266), moral judgements are phenomena in the world and therefore we can ask what they are, and what explains them, in the same way in which we might ask about a historical event such as the holocaust, and how it can be explained. Moreover, Zangwill (2006) also suggests that like the holocaust, any denial of the idea that moral phenomena can be explained is “both obscurantist and irresponsible” (Zangwill, 2006: 266). By focusing on description alone rather than explanation, Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to philosophy, like that of the later Baker, are obscurantist insofar as they cover potentially valuable insights into the nature of morality. In doing so, conceptions of philosophy inspired by Wittgenstein could also be seen as irresponsible in the sense that by failing to gain any kind of

⁴⁴ See PI§109

explanation for why an action was wrong, they prevent us from learning about particular cases so we don't make the same mistake again.

In reply, I suggest that this line of criticism may be the result of an unconscious picture of how we must explain something. One such unconscious picture might be the view that explanation must consist in providing the definitive theory or account of something 'going on behind the scenes' which constitutes the essence of the thing to be explained. Another unconscious picture could be the idea that the activities of description and explanation must be mutually exclusive. In order to break the grip of these unconscious pictures it may be useful here to consider a comparison between the form of rationality at work in Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy, and the kinds of cases in aesthetics where this distinction between the explanatory and the descriptive breaks down. In making this comparison, my only intention here is to suggest that drawing attention to an example of rational argument qua persuasion in the aesthetic case may be useful for helping an individual see how this kind of reasoning need not appear strange when thinking about moral matters.

One example of where this distinction breaks down can be seen in the way in which we might rationally persuade someone why a particular piece of instrumental music is profound. According to Kivy (2004: 463), generally speaking, a work of art or literature is often described as being profound if it meets at least three conditions:

it must be able to be 'about' (that is, it must possess the possibility of a subject matter); it must be about something profound (which is to say, something of abiding interest or importance to human beings); it must treat its profound subject matter in some exemplary way or other adequate to that subject matter (function, in other words, at some acceptably high aesthetic level).

Thus as Kivy (ibid) points out, although Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Goethe's *Faust* are typically taken to be exemplary works, only the latter is seen as profound. Whereas the former work is a clever, well-written comedy, it lacks depth. In contrast to this, the latter is typically described as profound due to the sophisticated way in which it addresses a range of profound themes such as religion, morality, and relationships. While this appears to be a rational way in which we can explain what counts as a profound work of literature, Kivy (ibid) points out that the same can't be said about instrumental music for it is not about anything. Despite this fact, critics often agree that some instrumental music can appropriately be described as profound in the same sense as a work of literature. Kivy (2004: 469) for instance offers the example of Bach's *The Well Tempered Clavier* as a piece of profound instrumental music despite the fact he is unable to see any rational justification (in the sense of appealing to necessary and sufficient conditions) for doing so. Although there is no rational justification qua necessary/sufficient conditions for describing *The Well Tempered Clavier* as profound, a critic can still offer a rational explanation for why *The Well Tempered Clavier* is profound, and yet Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Flight of The Bumblebee* is not, by describing and comparing the features of both pieces.

In illustrating some ways of dissolving these indicative criticisms of Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy, the purpose of this exercise has been to draw attention to some potential kinds of objection, and suggest why we need not be puzzled by the notion of argument qua rational persuasion that lies at the heart of his conception of philosophy as therapy.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have explicated the salient features of an alternative, therapeutic conception of philosophy grounded in Wittgenstein through the later work of Gordon Baker. In doing so, I have taken the rough outline of a conception of philosophy that Baker sketched in his later therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, and developed it in two important ways. First, by means of a series of comparison with other ways of doing philosophy, and second, by drawing attention to neglected aspects of Baker's own writing, such as his use of the interlocutor, and his openness to other methods where appropriate.

Having outlined the key features of the later Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, I then moved on to anticipate and dissolve some relevant, indicative, examples of the sorts of criticism that may be raised in objection to its use in exploring topics in moral philosophy. In particular, I set out to pre-empt the claims that, Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy does not warrant the term 'philosophy', and it is an inappropriate way of thinking about moral matters, as it restricts us to describing rather than explaining and understanding moral phenomena. In response to these objections I offered some comparisons between the rationale underlying Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy, and cases in aesthetics where we typically accept rational persuasion as an appropriate form of argument.

Although this chapter has described, in broad terms, the vision of philosophy used in this investigation, I have not as yet illustrated any specific tools or techniques congruent with Baker's later conception of therapeutic philosophy. Given that Baker's later vision of doing philosophy is best illustrated through use of an example, I maintain that the best way to persuade someone to liberate themselves from the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, and what counts as

rational argument in moral philosophy, is to utilise Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy as a means of fending for oneself. It is this task that shall form the basis of the next few chapters of this investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTICULARIST MORAL COMPETENCE: AN ALTERNATIVE, THERAPEUTIC, APPROACH.

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The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate, by means of a worked example, why we need not be committed to a traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. This task will be addressed by outlining some indicative ways in which we can use some of the tools and techniques congruent to Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy to dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of perplexities found in the existing literature on moral competence in relation to the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). More specifically, in contrast to the contemporary debate on this topic, it is not my intention here to replace an incorrect theory of particularist moral competence with the correct one. Rather, this chapter shall show how, in concrete cases, the kinds of perplexities found in the existing particularism literature on moral competence might be dissolved by using Baker's therapeutic philosophy as an effective means of persuading someone to acknowledge possible underlying positions which frame the debate at hand.

This chapter proceeds in three stages: first, I set out a brief overview of how the topic of moral competence is currently addressed within the existing literature on moral particularism; second, I identify and bring to light some of the possible unconscious pictures that underlie the way in which the existing literature on particularist moral competence is framed; and finally, I utilise some of the tools and techniques found in Baker's alternative, therapeutic, way of doing philosophy to help us liberate ourselves from these unconscious pictures.

The Existing Approach to Thinking About Particularist Moral Competence.

In this section, I set out a brief overview of what is meant by the term ‘moral competence’ in the context of the debate between advocates of Dancy’s moral particularism and their critics. I then move on to describe in more detail the account of moral competence set out by Dancy (2004), as well as some of the ways in which he has since refined his position. The objective of this exercise is not to present the definitive account of what Dancy understands moral competence to consist in for the particularist, but to offer an overview of this topic that provides a suitable initial basis for my overall aim of illustrating why this aspect of Dancy’s moral particularism may be better explored through the later Baker’s vision of philosophy as therapy.

Moral Competence and the Existing Literature on Dancy’s Moral Particularism.

When we talk about competence in the context of moral matters, we generally associate it with the ability to make good moral judgements in new and potentially unique situations. For example, we often describe someone who tends to make good moral judgements as being moral competent, while someone who typically makes poor moral judgements (as opposed to choosing not to make the right decision) may frequently be characterised as morally incompetent. While generalists and particularists tend to agree that moral competence is an important aspect of our understanding of the moral landscape, they often disagree on what this competence entails.

Consequently, the topic of moral competence (sometimes referred to as ‘practical wisdom’)¹ has received considerable attention within the debate between

¹ See McKeever & Ridge (2006), and Leibowitz (2014).

moral particularists and moral generalists.² For instance, regulative generalists such as McKeever & Ridge, and Väyrynen tend to emphasise the role of an individual's ability to make context-sensitive judgements, whereas constitutive generalists such as Jackson et al take our ability to make competent moral judgements as entirely a matter of adherence to rules. Similarly, whereas Dancy and his advocates often characterise particularist moral competence in terms of exercising a contentless skill of discerning the morally salient features of the case at hand, moral contextualists like Lance & Little (2008) argue that moral competence consists in the skill of recognising and mastering the use of defeasible generalisations.

That is, a generalisation that is both explanatory and porous insofar as it has a number of exceptions which cannot be eliminated (Lance & Little, 2008: 61). For example, while a competent biologist may explain part of the life-cycle of fish through defeasible, general claims such as 'fish eggs turn into a fish', they do so in the knowledge that there are also an infinite number of other possibilities such as the fish egg "being enucleated with sheep DNA and becoming a sheep, [or] breaking down into nutrients for a turtle, [or] being irradiated and turning into a strange and horrible swamp monster" (Lance & Little, 2008: 67). These other possibilities, and the statistical fact that most fish eggs do not become fish, do not diminish the competent use of such a generalisation in a narrative explanation of the life-cycle of fish.³

² For indicative examples of particularists who have to some extent touched on the topic of what 'competence' entails see Kihlborn (2002), Dancy (1993, 1999, 2004 & 2007), McNaughton (1988), Garfield (2000), Bakhurst (2005), Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b), Thomas (2007 & 2011), Lance & Little (2008), and Leibowitz (2014). For generalist cases see McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2007), Whiting (2007) and Albertzart (2013).

³ For more detailed explanation and discussion of defeasible generalisations see Strahovnik (2008: 4), and Lance & Little (2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007 & 2008). For an argument as to why Dancy's moral particularism need not make use of this concept, see Bergqvist (2009a: 44-70).

Putting the specific details and relative advantages/disadvantages of these different positions to one side, what is important here is the fact that where the generalist and the particularist typically tend to disagree is (generally speaking) the extent to which moral competence is dependent on the existence and application of an appropriate set of moral principles. This disagreement is often formulated in terms of the following problem: given the particularist's commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, and the non-codifiability of the moral landscape, how can someone who the particularist counts as a competent judge reliably project their understanding of morality on to new and potentially unique situations?⁴ In what follows, I take this problem as a starting point for my description of Dancy's account of moral competence, and how it is viewed within the existing literature on moral particularism.

Dancy's Account of Moral Competence

In contrast to the above accounts of practical wisdom offered by moral generalists, Dancy (2004) maintains that the competent moral judge is not the person who extracts a set of general moral principles from his or her past experiences and somehow applies them to new and unusual moral cases. Instead, Dancy describes the competent moral judge as someone who is: first, suitably sensitive to the sort of reasons for/against ϕ ing in the context at hand, as well as how they may function here as enablers/disablers (Dancy, 2004: 152); and second, able to reliably track the interlocking saliences of the different features present in a given case on the way to arriving at an overall moral judgement (Dancy, 2004: 143).

⁴ See for example Dancy (2004: 142)

As to how a competent moral judge goes about making moral decisions in practice, Dancy (2004: 142) claims that they are able to reliably project their understanding of morality on to a new and potentially unique situation by exercising their skill of discernment. According to Dancy, discernment is not a single skill per se, but a combination of related abilities through which we are able to “discern the salience of those features that are salient in a situation, and the overall evaluative shape of the situation” (Dancy, 2004: 143). More specifically, on the account of discernment favoured by Dancy (*ibid*), this skill is comprised of two distinct, interconnected abilities: first, an ability to identify the features of the situation which are for/against ϕ ing in this case; and second, the ability to utilise the information acquired by the former ability to determine how the different features combine to reveal an overall answer to the question of what ought I to do *here*.

In order to better understand Dancy’s (2004) account of particularist moral competence, it may be useful here to clarify the picture of moral rationality within which he takes a competent particularist moral agent to be operating. According to Dancy (2004: 190), it is not obligatory for our picture of moral rationality to be identical to what we might consider to be rational in other contexts. For example, we might consider a rational engineer to be someone whose engineering decisions are based on fixed rules of physics and an assessment of how these interact in a particular case. In contrast to this, Dancy maintains that to be a rational and competent moral judge it is not necessary for one to be a competent rule-processor or assessor of the contribution made by the individual features of a case (if indeed there are any to be assessed) when abstracted from context.

More specifically, Dancy (2004: 190-191) rejects what he calls the “kitchen scales” view of rational moral judgement that is often associated with certain forms

of generalism. I take this conception of moral rationality as the form of moral judgement typically attributed to the constitutive generalism of Jackson, Petite & Smith (2000), as well as simplistic forms of moral generalism & universalism. On the kitchen scales approach, the ‘weight’ of a reason for/against ϕ ing is fixed in terms of both polarity and value. That is, it treats moral rationality as being underpinned by an atomistic approach to reasons, whereby the weight of x , as a reason to ϕ , is not affected by the presence/absence of other features of the case. As such, the task of the competent moral judge is to identify the weight of each individual feature present, before working out whether the reasons for or against ϕ ing have more collective weight. If the reasons for ϕ ing weigh more than the reasons against, then ϕ ing is permissible.

In contrast to this, Dancy (2004: 191) subscribes to a holist picture of moral rationality whereby reasons have a “variable valence”. That is, the polarity, value and status of a feature or consideration in a case, as a reason to ϕ , can be affected and/or changed by the presence/absence of other features present. More specifically, Dancy (ibid) advocates what he sees as a moderate, rather than an extreme form of holism in the theory of reasons. Whereas extreme holism in the theory of reasons is committed to the claim that the status of a feature to act as a reason to ϕ is entirely dependent on the context of the case at hand, moderate holism acknowledges what Dancy (ibid) calls the “default” rational polarity/value of a feature. A ‘default reason’ is a consideration that arrives ‘switched on’ or ‘switched off’ as a reason for/against ϕ ing, in advance of its presence in the particular case at hand. If x is a default reason to ϕ , then the competent moral agent knows in advance that x is a consideration that is likely to count in favour of ϕ ing in all cases where x is present.

This is not however, to say that a default reason is an invariant reason or possesses a fixed polarity/value/status as a reason. Although certain considerations may 'by default' arrive 'switched on', they can be switched off by the context of the case. That is, they can be reversed, annulled or made irrelevant by other features present. Similarly, other considerations that are by default 'switched off' can be 'switched on' if the context is appropriate (Dancy, 2004: 112-113). This notion of a default is central to Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence. The particularist's ability to competently assess the rational contribution of a consideration to a case is reliant on two things: first, a shared knowledge of the default (assuming that there is a default for this consideration); and second, knowledge of the types of features that may override the default by changing its polarity or rendering it irrelevant.

However, Dancy (2007: 90-92) has since refined his view on default reasons in light of McKeever & Ridge's (2007: 62-63) argument that this way of making the distinction between default and non-default reasons collapses into a distinction between variant and invariant reasons. According to McKeever & Ridge (*ibid*), as Dancy (2004) has described it, a non-default reason is one that counts as a reason for/against ϕ ing if it is switched on by an enabler. Consequently, it appears as if default reasons do not require enablers insofar as they arrive already switched on. The problem here is that, if default reasons do not require an enabler (which they also take as including the absence of a disabler) then they are invariant, while if they do need an enabler, how is it possible for them to arrive switched on?

Dancy's (2007) solution here is to suggest that all reasons have enablers in the sense that an enabler permits the ϕ ing, while the question of whether X is a

default reason or not is concerned with whether it ‘needs help’.⁵ Although a default reason may be intensified, reversed, or made redundant by the features of the case at hand, it requires no help from the features of the case to count as a reason for/against ϕ ing. Conversely, a non-default’s status as a reason for/against ϕ ing is dependent on help from a feature of the case at hand.

It is important to recognise here that Dancy’s (2007) concept of a reason having help is not the same as that of having an enabler. One way of thinking about this is through the following example which I develop from Dancy (2007: 92). While walking across some fields with my two young children, we encounter a stile. Assuming that the stile is not broken or blocked by anything, I am able to climb over it by myself, without any help. Likewise, my eldest son is also able to climb over the stile himself, but only after I’ve offered some helpful advice on how to do so. My youngest son however is unable to climb the stile himself and requires me to facilitate his crossing into the next field by carrying him over the stile. In the case of my climbing over the stile, the appropriate enablers are present (i.e. an absence of disablers) and I can climb the stile by default insofar as I need no help to do so. Although my eldest son is able to climb the stile by himself, he can only do so following help rather than by default. My youngest son is initially prevented from climbing over the stile because it is much bigger than he is (which in his case acts as a disabler), and he only manages to cross into the next field because I carry him over the stile (my ability to do so being the enabler for his crossing).

⁵ For an alternative response to McKeever & Ridge (2007) on behalf of moral particularism see Thomas (2007). This response is concerned with the claim that “the normative landscape is flat and our best account of practical reasoning represents it precisely as such” (Thomas, 2007: 77). It is worth noting however that Dancy (2007: 89) rejects Thomas’ suggestion – see Thomas (2007: 83 fn16).

Although the notion of a default plays an important role in Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence, he explicitly rejects the idea that competence is a matter of knowing what the default contribution a feature of a case may be, and then making inferences from this to its actual contribution in the case at hand.⁶ According to Dancy (2004: 191), particularist moral competence cannot be an inferential account of moral competence for two reasons. First, the default contribution of a feature is insufficient to act as a premise in an inference, and second, it would be difficult to articulate the outcome of such an inference in a robust enough way to hold as a conclusion. In contrast to either rule-based or inferential accounts of competence, Dancy rejects the view that our ability to make competent moral judgements is in any way dependent on, or evidence for, the existence of general moral principles.

For Dancy (2004), particularist moral competence is also a form of competence with practical concepts. In this respect, it is analogous to Stanley Cavell's (1979) Wittgenstein-inspired view of linguistic competence as a form of *projective understanding* insofar as a competent speaker of a language and a competent moral agent can tell the difference between uses of a concept when they come across it in different contexts (Dancy, 2004: 143). Cavell (1969: 52) writes:

We learn and teach words in a certain context, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into future contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals not the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of

⁶ See Dancy's (2004: 106) rejection of Brandom's (1994: 89) claim that we move from each case of where a concept can be applied appropriately through the use of inferences.

significance and of fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls “forms of life”. Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rests upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (because it is) terrifying.

Following Cavell, Dancy (2004) argues that the competent speaker of a language is able to go on operating with various linguistic concepts by discerning the contribution they make to a sentence based on the context of the utterance. Likewise, the competent moral agent is someone who is able to go on applying moral concepts in practice appropriately. Or in other words, when you are a competent user of a moral concept you are able to tell the practical difference it makes in new situations based on the context of the case at hand. For example, a competent user of the concept ‘cruelty’ is someone who knows the type of difference it can make to our choice of actions (Dancy, 2004: 107). To be a competent user of a practical concept such as ‘cruelty’ one needs to first understand the kinds of ways in which it can act for/against ϕ ing. And second, be able to identify how it is operating in different contexts. To extend an example from Cavell (1979: 181), whereas a competent user of the word ‘feed’ can tell the difference between the use of this term in sentences such as ‘feed the fish’, ‘feed the myth’, and ‘jam the transmission feed’, a competent user of a moral concept such as ‘cruel’ can grasp the difference between different contexts it may be used i.e. ‘oh you’re too cruel mistress’, ‘the grand national is cruel’, and ‘goodbye cruel world’.

In summary, Dancy (2004 & 2007) rejects the generalist view that the possibility of moral competence is in some way dependent on the existence of moral principles, in favour of a particularist alternative based on the skill of discernment

and knowledge of default reasons. According to Dancy, this account of moral competence is a form of competence with practical concepts that is akin to the account of linguistic competence he identifies in Cavell's Wittgenstein-inspired philosophy of language. Having briefly examined Dancy's (2004) account of moral competence and his underlying vision of particularist moral rationality, the next section of this chapter shall briefly explore what I take to be the main criticisms of this aspect of Dancy's position as found within the existing literature on moral particularism.

Some Criticisms of Dancy's Account of Moral Competence

In this section I outline two of the main criticisms of Dancy's account of moral competence, and explore responses to them. In particular, this section will focus on Bakhurst's (2005) concern that the version of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) has nothing substantial to say about what moral competence could entail for the particularist, and McKeever & Ridge's (2006) arguments for why we ought to abandon the model of particularist moral competence advocated by Dancy (2004) in favour of their regulative generalist alternative. In considering these objections to Dancy's account of moral competence, it is not my intention here to resolve this aspect of the dispute between moral particularism and moral generalism. Instead, the rationale for this task is to set the ground work for the penultimate section of this chapter by providing further illustration as to how the topic of moral competence is approached within the existing literature on moral particularism.

Bakhurst's Criticism

The first main concern regarding Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence is put forward by Bakhurst (2005). Although he is broadly sympathetic to the particularist position, Bakhurst (2005) is worried by the fact that generalists such as Hooker (2000b: 15) appear to have identified the lack of a plausible account of moral education as a significant criticism of moral particularism. More specifically, Bakhurst (2005: 265) is concerned by the claim that the version of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) is unable to make any substantial claims about the nature of particularist moral education because it lacks an appropriate account of moral competence. By moral competence, Bakhurst is concerned here with the process Lovibond (2002) calls "ethical formation". This is the idea that the purpose of moral education is to develop adults able to represent themselves to others as holding particular values and attitudes as their own; as taking their actions and words seriously; and being the authentic authors of their words and deeds.

According to Bakhurst (2005: 265-266), the task of providing a substantial theory of moral education is relatively unproblematic for the generalist. Given their commitment to atomism in the theory of reasons, a generalist is able to set out an account of moral competence in terms of a moral agent's knowledge of the correct moral principle(s) and/or their ability to apply them in concrete and abstract cases. Bakhurst (2005) attributes this ability to know and apply moral principles to the fact that atomism in the theory of reasons entails that what is a reason to ϕ in one case, *always* counts as a reason to ϕ at all other times. In making this claim, I take Bakhurst to be concerned here with the constitutive generalism of Jackson et al rather than the position occupied by regulative generalists such as McKeever & Ridge, or Väyrynen.

In contrast to the view of the constitutive generalist, Bakhurst (2005: 268) points out that the particularist account of moral competence advocated by Dancy (2004) is arguably more problematic for a number of reasons. One such reason is that Bakhurst (2005) sees Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence as being too narrow in the sense that it restricts our understanding of moral development to responses to moral reasons for acting in particular cases. In other words, it relegates consideration of other aspects of morality such as virtues, values, and other qualities of character to the role of secondary considerations.

On the other hand, Bakhurst (2005) also expresses concern that Dancy's account of particularist moral competence is austere insofar as it makes no claim as to what *is* right/wrong or the *nature* of moral competence itself. In particular, Bakhurst (2005: 268) describes what Dancy does say in regard to moral education as a "conversation stopper" rather than an invitation for engagement with these topics. For instance, in terms of how we actually acquire or develop our moral competence, Bakhurst (*ibid*) draws our attention to the fact that Dancy actually says very little other than acknowledge that our ability to discern how the features of a case function as reasons in new and unique situations "is a sophisticated one, which children develop as they grow up; presumably it is one for which some form of training is virtually essential" (Dancy, 2004: 142). Moreover, in terms of how we can actually develop our moral competence in practice, Dancy (1993: 64) (following Aristotle) states that "for us it is probably too late... for those who are past educating, there is no real remedy".⁷

As such, it appears as if Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence tells us "little more than that a competent moral agent 'gets things right

⁷ For further exploration of particularism and Aristotle, see Irwin (2000) and Kraft (2006).

case by case” (Bakhurst, 2005: 265). Consequently, Bakhurst criticises Dancy on the grounds that if he is unable or unwilling to explain what particularist moral competence consists in, then he can “surely have nothing to say about how that competence is acquired” (Bakhurst, 2005: 268). In support of this point, Bakhurst offers the case of the competent violin player as an analogy for why one might be dissatisfied with Dancy’s account of moral competence. If we apply Dancy’s understanding of what competence entails to playing the violin, then the type of competence involved in playing the violin is to be understood as merely a matter of acknowledging “the relevant skills as they manifest themselves in performance and [recognising] that they are skills of the kind one acquires in learning to play the instrument” (Bakhurst, 2005: 268). Bakhurst subsequently argues that we would not ordinarily accept such a description of the type of competence involved in playing the violin, so on what basis should we accept a similar account of moral competence put forward by Dancy?

Although Bakhurst (2005) doesn’t expand on this example, one way of understanding his point here is that, if moral judgement is a practical concept, then we should be able to explain what competence in moral judgement entails in the same way that we can do so with other practical concepts. To extend Bakhurst’s above example: if we ask an expert violin tutor what makes someone a competent violin player, we ordinarily expect them to give a detailed explanation. For instance, they may offer a detailed account of how a competent violin player plays all the right notes of a piece in the right order, using a range of appropriate techniques such as glissandos and vibrato. If asked to explain further, they may also offer various theories and methods through which someone is able to formally develop the specific skills required to play the violin competently.

Moreover, Bakhurst (2005: 270) is also worried by what he sees as Dancy's failure to account for two further fundamental intuitions as to what moral competence entails. First, knowledge of what matters morally, and second, knowledge of the reasons why what matters morally matters when it does.⁸ Or in other words, Dancy (2004) does not provide an attempt to reconcile his account of the competent moral judge as someone who can tell what matters morally from case to case, with his commitment to holism in the theory of reasons. If the competent particularist moral judge is someone who can tell what matters morally from case to case, then how can a finite being such as ourselves delineate the contours of what may matter given that *anything* could matter (Bakhurst, *ibid*)?

In response to Bakhurst, an advocate of Dancy might reasonably argue here that these concerns regarding particularist moral competence have arisen because he has ignored key aspects of Dancy's account. For instance, Bakhurst (2005: 278) relegates Dancy's (2004) discussion of defaults, to a brief endnote. Here, Bakhurst dismisses the notion of defaults, as being so underdeveloped that it is unable to shed any light on the issue of moral competence, and claims that Wittgenstein would hardly take such an idea seriously.

As such, it may strike someone that the reason why Bakhurst is bothered by Dancy's account of particularist moral competence is because he has only considered a small aspect of Dancy's text. However, in Bakhurst's defence it is reasonable to draw our attention to the fact that neither Dancy's (2004) account of defaults, nor his particularist theory of meaning, provide a rich and compelling account of the "constitution of moral character" (Bakhurst, 2005: 270), or actually set out a substantial explanation as to how the particularist can develop their moral

⁸ See Little's (2001a) account of moral particularists utilising generalisations to understand why we should do what we should do.

competence. Moreover, Bakhurst is not the only author within the existing generalist/particularist literature who finds Dancy's account of particularist moral competence troubling. McKeever & Ridge (2006) for instance, express a similar concern from a generalist's perspective.

McKeever & Ridge's Criticism

The second main criticism of Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral competence is that of McKeever & Ridge (2006). This line of criticism is similar to that put forward by Bakhurst (2005) in two ways. First, like Bakhurst (2005), McKeever & Ridge (2006) reject the atomistic conception of moral reasons associated with constitutive generalism, and second, McKeever & Ridge's (2006) share Bakhurst's (2005) concern in regard to the relationship between particularism's commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, and Dancy's (2004) account of moral competence.

Unlike Bakhurst (2005), the purpose of McKeever & Ridge's criticism of Dancy (2004) is not to highlight an aspect of particularism which they believe can be improved upon. Instead, McKeever & Ridge (2006) argue that we should abandon the particularist view of moral competence in favour of a regulative generalist alternative based on the "internalization of a finite and manageable set of non-hedged moral principles which together codify all of morality" (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 139).⁹ In putting forward their criticism of Dancy (2004), McKeever & Ridge (2006) are careful to point out that their aim here is not to argue that the particularist position is wrong per se. Rather, their goal here is to persuade us that their regulative

⁹ The account of regulative generalism advocated by McKeever & Ridge differs in this respect from that of Väyrynen (2006, 2008 & 2009) here insofar as Väyrynen embraces and defends the use of hedged principles, whereas McKeever & Ridge do not.

generalist account of moral competence bears greater resemblance to our phenomenological experience of making moral judgements, and our intuitions about how this is indeed possible.

McKeever & Ridge's (2006) criticism is primarily concerned with the issue of how a moral agent can reliably judge what counts as a reason to ϕ in new and unfamiliar situations. According to McKeever & Ridge (2006: 142), the process where a moral agent judges the extent to which x is a reason to ϕ , can be summarised as follows: on approaching the case at hand, one first surveys the features of the case to see if x is present. Assuming x is present, one must subsequently ascertain if x is defeated in its status as a reason to ϕ . This requires the identification of any further features of the case at hand which may act as disablers/enablers for x . These must then be weighed in order to work out whether or not x is defeated as a reason to ϕ .

If potentially anything can act as a reason to ϕ , it would appear as if the competent moral agent is one who knows all of the possible types of reasons, enablers, defeaters, etc that might be relevant to the case at hand in order to know that there are no other stronger competing types of reasons, enablers, defeaters, etc. If the competent moral agent was not sensitive to all relevant moral features, then either the presence of morally relevant features she was unaware of would undermine her claim to moral knowledge about the case or her ability to make reliable moral judgements in new and unfamiliar situations is something extraordinary that cannot be rationally explained.

One way of understanding McKeever & Ridge's criticism here is in terms of how the non-monotonicity of practical reasoning "seems to pose a challenge to the plausibility of moral particularism because it threatens to overwhelm the judging subject with too much potentially relevant information" (Thomas, 2011: 152).

According to Thomas (2011), moral reasoning is a form of practical reasoning and thus typically non-monotonic. That is, a form of reasoning where the reasoner “draws conclusions tentatively, reserving the right to retract them in light of further information” (Strasser & Antonelli, 2014). What Thomas (2011: 152fn3) calls “the problem of informational complexity” occurs here on the basis that if the competent moral agent must know all possible reasons for/against ϕ ing, and if there is no finite totality of things that can act as a reason for/against ϕ ing, then beings with limited cognitive capacity such as ourselves cannot competently discern when and/or why x counts as a reason for/against ϕ ing or is irrelevant to the case at hand.

In contrast to Dancy’s (2004) view that the competent moral agent does not need to know the status of every possible morally relevant feature of the case as a reason to ϕ , McKeever & Ridge claim that the most rational solution to this problem is to assume that the list of potential reasons, enablers, defeaters, etc is both finite and short enough to be manageable. That is to say, the most likely explanation of how one can reliably make moral judgements is that moral competence involves the ability to articulate knowledge of all potential reasons, defeaters, enablers and disablers, as well as how they interact in the form of general moral principles.

In order to reconcile this assumption with their commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, McKeever & Ridge (2006) put forward an argument based on the type/token distinction. One way of understanding this style of distinction is to think of the different ways in which we can make the same value out of a number of different coins. For instance, we can make the value *type* £1 in a number of different *token* ways such as 5x20p coins, 2x50p coins, 100x1p coins, etc. McKeever & Ridge (2006) argue that although there may be an infinite number of recognisable tokens, it is possible to make a similar distinction between a finite and manageable

number of types of reasons and an infinite number of recognisable tokens or instantiations of those reasons. For example, a comedian may know that there is good reason not to tell a particular joke on television because it may cause offence to members of the audience. In this case, ‘the fact that it may cause offence’ functions as the *type* of reason why she should not tell the joke, while the members of the audience who are likely to be offended are the *token* reasons. The comedian knows that there is good reason not to tell the joke because it is a type of joke that may offend, but she does not need to know every token member of the audience it may offend.¹⁰

According to McKeever & Ridge (2006: 143), it is possible for finite beings such as ourselves to deal with the potentially infinite number of reasons, enablers, defeaters, present in a case as long as we know the complete, manageable list of reason types. Although a single type of reason for/against ϕ ing may have a large or infinite number of tokens, if we know how to classify them as belonging to a particular type of reason, we quantify over them and still know approximately how strong those reasons are for/against ϕ ing. The caveat here is that, although it is possible to quantify over different tokens of a particular type of reason, we cannot quantify over different types of reasons in this way (McKeever & Ridge, 2006:143).

At this point, one may reasonably point out that McKeever & Ridge’s (2006) claim that it is possible to divide an infinite number of token reasons into a finite number of categories or types hinges on a significant misunderstanding of mathematics: the fact that infinity is a mathematical concept and not a very large number.¹¹ Consequently, an advocate of Dancy’s may well argue that to suggest that

¹⁰ McKeever & Ridge (2006: 143) give a similar example of a pilot knowing not to make jokes about air disasters over an airplane’s tannoy system.

¹¹ See Barrow (2005: 51-77).

an infinite number could be divided by a finite number, makes as much sense as claiming it is possible to divide 'linear' by a finite number. Even if it were possible to divide infinity by a finite number, this problem of informational complexity would still apply to their regulative generalism for if we divide an infinite number of token reasons into a finite number of types, each type will possess an infinite number of tokens. Although our finite cognitive capacity could potentially know all possible types of reasons, there is still a question as to how we would be able to categorise an infinite number of token reasons into a finite number of reason types. Consequently, it appears as if this problem is equally as troublesome for other holist pictures of the moral landscape such as regulative generalism.

At this point it, is worth drawing attention to an alternative response to McKeever & Ridge put forward by Thomas (2011). The crux of this response is that, contrary to McKeever & Ridge, Thomas (2011: 152) argues that the non-monotocity of practical reasoning offers prima facie support for the view that particularism offers the best explanation of our ability to make moral judgements. However, in making this claim, Thomas (2011: 153) acknowledges that the position he is defending is distinct from that of Dancy insofar as he acknowledges a role for non-self-hedging hedged-principles in moral judgement.¹² Or in other words, while "ethics certainly involves hedged principles...[they] cannot be self-hedging: there cannot be a 'that's it' operator" (Thomas, 2011: 151).¹³

In addition to the above argument from information complexity, McKeever & Ridge (2006) also offer two thought-experiments which they claim demonstrate the fact that the generalist account of moral competence extends to unusual cases better

¹² In this respect, Thomas' (2011) position is closer to that of Garfield (2000) and McDowell (1979) than Dancy. See Thomas (2011: 152: fn2).

¹³ For discussion of the idea of a 'that's it' operator in moral principles see Holton (2002).

than the particularist alternative. The first of these thought-experiments is concerned with the case of Wanda the interstellar morality-column journalist. Wanda is a person of practical wisdom who travels to an alien world where the culture is quite unlike that of her own. Putting issues of anthropological practice to one side, McKeever & Ridge (2006: 146) argue that if Wanda is practically wise in the generalist sense, then she will be able to reliably ascertain the normative status of ϕ in the alien culture as long as she is given sufficient time to do so, and a complete list of non-moral facts about the alien culture. However, if Wanda was practically wise in the particularist sense she would not be able to ascertain the normative status of ϕ because her “practical wisdom is a local and contingent affair and of course must be shaped by the features which tend to matter morally in our own environment” (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 148-149).

The second thought-experiment outlined by McKeever & Ridge (2006) is derived from Abbott’s (1884) science fiction satire *Flatland*. This is a fictional story about two-dimensional shapes where one’s social class is directly proportional to the number of sides one has. At the bottom of the caste system are single lines, while at the top are those polygons with so many sides they appear to resemble perfect circles. Part of the *Flatlands* mythos is the idea that although male polygons are typically born with one more side than their father, the invention of the Circular Neo-Therapeutic Gymnasium has presented some inhabitants of Flatland with the opportunity to risk their infant’s lives for the one-in-ten chance this treatment may transform them into a circle and thus promote them to the top of the social class system.

According to McKeever & Ridge (2006), it would be easier to ascertain if this practice was morally acceptable if we were morally competent in the generalist

sense rather than the particularist sense. The argument here is that, on the particularist account, it would be “hard to see how a person of practical wisdom could ever be rationally confident that there was not some further reason or defeater... that she had not asked about” (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 153), whereas the generalist would be able to derive their answer from a finite and manageable list of moral principles.

However, in contrast to McKeever & Ridge’s intended goal here, someone could reasonably point out that insofar as they do not address their own challenge to Dancy, rather than persuade someone to adopt their regulative generalist view of moral competence, the thought-experiments described above only serve to undermine the possibility of an account of moral competence for *any* holist picture of the moral landscape. As such, I maintain that someone for whom the existing literature on this aspect of Dancy’s moral particularism brings about a sense of philosophical vertigo is arguably no better off having considered McKeever & Ridge’s criticisms of Dancy and the theoretical responses to them.

In this section, I have elaborated on how the topic of moral competence is thought about within the existing literature on moral particularism by illustrating some of the main criticisms of Dancy’s position. In the next section I shall further outline the dominant picture of moral competence within the existing particularist literature by critically examining some of the contemporary theories and defences of moral competence offered as alternatives to that advocated by Dancy.

Other Theories of Particularist Moral Competence.

This section critically discusses a number of contemporary theories of moral competence, and the extent to which they are compatible with the account of moral

particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). For practical reasons, I restrict the discussion here to a brief overview of what I take to be the most prominent theories of particularist competence discussed within the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism: the Dreyfus model of moral competence qua cognitive skill acquisition; and Bakhurst's (2005) virtue based approach to moral competence.¹⁴

In contrast to existing debate between advocates of Dancy's moral particularism and their generalist adversaries, it is not the intention here to identify *the correct* account of what particularist moral competence must entail, or provide arguments as to why a specific theory is able to refute the problems of particularist moral competence suggested in the previous section. Rather, the purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the contemporary literature on moral competence and moral particularism in preparation for the penultimate section of this chapter.

The Dreyfus Model of Developing Moral Competence

The first alternative theory of particularist moral competence I shall consider here is Dreyfus & Dreyfus' (1990) account of how one becomes a competent moral judge. The Dreyfus model of how our moral competence develops is concerned with an analogy between morality and chess that has since become highly influential within the contemporary debate between advocates of Dancy's moral particularism and their critics. Within the existing literature, discussion of moral competence qua rational moral judgement often involves the use of analogies between morality and chess as

¹⁴ Other theories of particularist moral competence discussed within the contemporary literature include Bergqvist's (2009a) account of discernment as the basis for competent moral judgement, and Kraft's (2006) alternative virtue-based account of particularist moral competence.

well as references to Dreyfus & Dreyfus' work.¹⁵ For instance, Dancy (2004) offers the case of a competent chess player as an analogy of what it is that the competent moral judge needs to be aware of in order to make a rational moral judgement. Just as a competent chess player is able to make rational judgements as to the best possible move without necessarily being aware of all of the possible contributions made by different pieces in different positions on the board, Dancy (2004: 112) claims that the competent moral judge need not be aware of *every* possible feature of a case in order to discern whether or not it makes a difference.

At the centre of this analogy is an alleged parallel between the way in which moral particularism rejects the view that competent moral judgement is dependent on moral principles, and claims made by experienced chess players that their success is due to their having dispensed with the use of tactical rules or maxims when judging their next move. This can be seen in an emerging trend in contemporary chess literature whereby players are advised to develop their full potential as a chess player by abandoning the classical rule-based approaches to learning the game in favour of what Watson (1998) calls "rule independence". Just as particularists reject the idea of moral matters as essentially framed by principles in favour of seeing moral situations as "saturated with unique combinations of morally salient features" (Little, 2000: 276), rule-independent chess players divest themselves of the "multitudinous generalities, rules and abstract principles (of) classical chess... in favour of a pragmatic investigation of individual situations" (Watson, 1998: 97).

In addition to the apparent synergies between the understanding of competent judgement in the particularist and chess literature, this analogy between particularist moral competence and competent chess playing can also be traced back to Dreyfus &

¹⁵ See Dancy (2004), McKeever & Ridge (2006: 86 & 218), Little (2000: 297) and Schwind (2006) amongst others.

Dreyfus' (1990) work on the phenomenology of judgement and skill acquisition. According to Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990), the idea of competent judgement being based on rules or principles is incompatible with both our phenomenological experience of making judgements, and scientific evidence. In order to test this hypothesis, they conduct a series of empirical experiments where chess grand-masters compete in master-level matches while simultaneously completing other cognitive tasks that utilise the area of the brain taken to be responsible for rule-following. Following these experiments, Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990) make two observations about the general nature of competent judgement in the context of a chess match. First, it is possible to correctly make complex judgements in new cases without reference to principles, and second, those chess players who have progressed to grand-master level have done so *because* they intuitively know what to do in any given situation without relying on rules or principles.

Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990) subsequently infer that competence in other forms of judgement is also not reliant on reference to principles, and competent judges are such because they have transcended the need to consult general principles when faced with new and unfamiliar cases. In particular, Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990) suggest that the moral expert does not get things right on the basis of applying ever more sophisticated maxims in new situations, and that moral principles are not an essential aspect of the phenomenological experience of ethical deliberation for a competent moral agent. Just as there is no theory or rule that determines a master-level move in chess, neither is there a corresponding moral principle that guides expert ethical deliberation. For the competent moral agent, ethical deliberation

consists in analysing the salient features of the case, as opposed to searching for moral principles that deliberate for the agent by proxy.

In terms of how we acquire moral competence, Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990) offer an account of developing the skill of moral judgement as if it were akin to that which we acquire when learning how to play the game of chess. While a beginner chess player may learn the game using a set of rules for determining the action they should take such as ‘castle early’, we often give small children simple rules to follow such as ‘do not tell lies’. As they grow in competence, a child may come to revise their early rules in the same way that a chess player may develop more sophisticated tactical maxims for playing in light of their growing experience. For example, while a chess player may adopt complicated strategies such as *The London System*,¹⁶ a moral agent who is growing in competence may base their judgements on more complex maxims like ‘do not tell lies, unless the consequence of not lying is likely to bring about some greater evil’. As the increasingly competent chess player experiences more and more games they eventually realise that, although these maxims appear successful on some occasions and unsuccessful on others, there is no correlation between the features of the game situation and the success of their maxims. Likewise, as a moral agent makes judgements in more and more new and unique situations, they may come to see that moral principles may actually hinder their judgement.

At this point, a generalist may argue that the Dreyfus model is problematic for particularists in two ways. First, it is incompatible with a holism in the theory of reasons, and second, it is still dependent on the use of moral principles. In regard to

¹⁶ The London System is a particular group of related opening moves in a game of chess that gained popularity in London during the 1920s. Noted advocates of this approach include Croatian grand master Vlatko Kovačević. For a detailed explanation see Johnsen & Kovačević (2005).

the first concern raised, the analogy on which the Dreyfus model is based breaks down because the account of competency in chess is incompatible with the particularist's commitment to holism in the theory of reasons and values. More specifically, the object of a game of chess is always to place your opponent in checkmate. The notion of checkmate is a binary term insofar as a player is either in checkmate or they aren't. Moreover, what counts as checkmate in one case, must also count as checkmate in all other cases. In contrast to the chess concept of checkmate, particularists take a holist view of both reasons and values. For the particularist, what is the right thing to do in one case may not be the right thing, or irrelevant in another. Likewise, what counts as a reason to ϕ in the first case can be defeated by the presence of other features present in another.

In terms of the second concern raised on behalf of the generalist, one might reasonably draw attention to the fact that although the expert chess players have dispensed with principles, the way in which they acquire the skill of discernment is dependent on the acquisition and use of principles. Thus, on the face of it, even though the particularist may have dispensed with the notion of moral principles, if the analogy holds, the very possibility of particularist moral competence also appears to be dependent on the use of moral principles.

Although it may appear as if the Dreyfus model of moral competence is initially dependent on the use of moral principles, there is some consensus within the wider literature on moral particularism that we need not see this as being problematic. In particular, McNaughton (1988: 202) argues that the fact we often teach children simple moral principles such as 'do not lie' and pretend that they are exceptionless does not undermine the particularist position. Rather, they are a convenient pedagogical tool that we use for the good of our children until they are

able to dispense with these moral training wheels and navigate the moral maze for themselves.

In this sense, McNaughton (1988) compares the process of moral education to that of academic writing. When we were undergraduates we may have been taught a number of stylistic rules for use when writing essays. As we became more proficient academics we learnt that although some of the greatest philosophers have purposely deviated from these rules to great affect “they could not have started without stylistic guidelines of any kind – rules which are, for the most part, acceptable” (McNaughton, 1988: 203).

However, while a number of commentators on both sides of the wider generalist/particularist debate accept McNaughton’s (1988) claim that the particularist can use moral principles as pedagogical aids without any contradiction,¹⁷ not everyone engaged with the existing literature finds this suggestion unproblematic. On the one hand, not all generalists agree that the use of moral principles for pedagogical purposes is compatible with Dancy’s moral particularism. Hooker (2000b) for instance argues that, from a practical point of view, society would be better off to assume that morality is a principled affair regardless of whether this assumption is true or not (Hooker, 2000b: 1). Although Hooker’s paper is primarily concerned with an argument around the practical predictability of others, someone could reasonably develop his remark that we should eschew moral particularism on the basis that it cannot provide an adequate account of moral education (Hooker, 2000b: 15) along a similar line. That is, even if Dancy’s moral

¹⁷ For example, McNaughton’s (1988) account of how the particularist acquires moral competence is accepted unquestionably by other particularists such as Bergqvist (2009a: 30) and some generalists, notably McKeever & Ridge (2006) and Väyrynen (2008). Garfield (2000) can also be seen as implying a similar view to McNaughton in regard to the pedagogical use of principles for the particularist.

particularism were compatible with the use of moral principles qua pedagogical training wheels, on what practical basis should we abandon these training principles if they work fairly reliably?

On the other hand, Dancy (2004: 5) explicitly rejects the view that moral judgement is in any way dependent on moral principles, and makes no reference to the caveat in the passage I have previously cited from McNaughton (1988). As we have seen, Dancy also eschews the kind of defeasible generalisations advocated by Lance & Little (2008). As such, someone could reasonably conclude from this that the Dreyfus model of moral competence is insufficient to defuse the sense of philosophical vertigo associated with this aspect of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism.

Bakhurst's Virtue-Based Account of Particularist Moral Competence

A second theory of moral competence found in the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism is that put forward by Bakhurst (2005). Despite his initial concern regarding Dancy's (2004) account of moral competence, Bakhurst (2005) is in fact broadly supportive of Dancy's wider position. While he views the issue of moral competence as an area of concern for Dancy's moral particularism, Bakhurst denies that this challenge is insurmountable. This can be seen in the way in which the central topic of Bakhurst's paper is a detailed rejection of Hooker's (2000b: 15) claim that we should eschew moral particularism on the basis that it is unable to provide an adequate account of moral education. According to Bakhurst (2005), the most challenging reading of Hooker's (2000b) claim is not that moral particularism is unable to provide an adequate account of moral education per se. But rather, the

more modest claim that the existing accounts of particularist moral competence are unsatisfactory.

In response to Hooker (2000b), Bakhurst proposes a virtue-based account of moral competence as well as an accompanying framework for its consideration and cultivation through moral education (Bakhurst, 2005: 272). According to Bakhurst the aim of this account is not to set out *the definitive* system of moral education or even make any theoretical claims as to what particularist moral competence would entail. Rather, he sets out to respond to Hooker's (2000b) concern by offering a plausible and compelling story as to how we become competent moral agents, that is compatible with the particularist picture of the moral landscape (Bakhurst, 2005: 273).¹⁸

Before examining Bakhurst's (2005) model of particularist moral competence in greater detail, it is first worth briefly setting out his list of pre-requisites for the possibility of developing moral competence. Whereas the generalist is able to make competent moral judgements based on an appropriate supply of correct moral principles, the particularist has to evaluate the different features of the case and discern their status as reasons for/against ϕ ing in that particular context. In order to do this in a competent and rational manner, the particularist must be able to demonstrate some level of conceptual reasoning and arguing skill. Consequently, Bakhurst (2005: 272) identifies the development of such perceptual, reasoning and arguing skills as pre-requisites for his virtue-based account of particularist moral competence.

¹⁸ Bakhurst (2005) isn't the only particularist who advocates a virtue-based approach to particularist moral competence. For instance, Kraft (2006) offers a similar account of particularist moral competence acquired through indoctrination into a community of practice, where appropriate virtues are passed from moral expert to moral novice.

In terms of what this virtue-based account of particularist moral competence actually looks like, Bakhurst (2005) describes it as being comprised of four distinct yet interrelated aspects: first, the indoctrination of desirable values; second, the acquisition of particular characteristics or virtues attuned to the promotion of those values; third, a range of mature emotional responses; and finally, a sense of autonomy and accountability for one's own actions.

More specifically, the first aspect of Bakhurst's (2005) virtue-based account of particularist moral education is the broadly Aristotelian idea that moral competence is something acquired by children as they develop.¹⁹ Given this view, Bakhurst (2005: 270) suggests that the first task of developing a particularist account of moral competence is to consider how we wish our children to develop as moral agents, and the broad values we wish them to acquire in their formative years. For example, if I want my children to grow up respectful of others, then I might wish them to value the notion of respect. Although Bakhurst (2005) acknowledges that identifying particular values with which to indoctrinate our children presupposes they are generally morally relevant, he denies this approach is incompatible with particularism. Such values are contestable and it would be "naive to think such values represent a stable set of generally morally relevant properties" (Bakhurst, 2005: 271).

The second feature of Bakhurst's (2005) account is the idea that particularist moral competence also involves the acquisition of appropriate qualities of character or virtue. Given that the list of possible virtues is open-ended, Bakhurst (2005: 271) is careful to point out that, while the acquisition of appropriate virtues is important for the development of our moral competence, this does not entail a commitment to

¹⁹ One might consider this somewhat bizarre given Bakhurst's initial concerns about the view of moral competence advocated by Dancy (2004).

an Aristotelian unity of the virtues. That is, the claim whereby the possession of *all* appropriate virtues is a pre-requisite for the genuine possession of *any* virtue.

The third main feature of Bakhurst's (2005) virtue-based account of particularist moral competence is concerned with the relationship between our moral judgements and our emotional responses to them. According to Bakhurst (2005: 272), moral competence involves having an appropriate emotional response to moral cases. For instance, whereas the competent moral agent may feel anger in cases of injustice, and remorse in cases of wrong-doing, a moral novice may demonstrate inappropriate emotions or remain emotionless in response to new and unfamiliar situations.

The final aspect of Bakhurst's (2005) account of particularist moral competence is the idea that the competent moral agent is the 'author' of their moral judgements insofar as they are both autonomous and accountable in what they do.²⁰ More specifically, by 'autonomous', Bakhurst (2005) is not advocating the notion that the competent moral agent chooses their values. Rather, the competent moral agent is one for whom any shift in moral values would also "represent a fundamental change in the kind of person they are" (Bakhurst, 2005: 272). For example, a shift in one's position on the supposed 'right to life' would entail for the competent moral agent a change in their behaviour/attitude when confronted with moral cases where the 'right to life' may be morally relevant such as the issue of euthanasia. Similarly, Bakhurst (2005: 272) also argues that the morally competent agent is accountable in the sense that they take responsibility for their moral actions/dispositions and are prepared to offer reasons in defence of their position to those with whom they disagree.

²⁰ This terminology is borrowed from Lovibond (2002).

Although Bakhurst (2005) maintains that his account of particularist moral competence is both plausible and tells a compelling story, there are still a number of ways in which it may trouble us. For instance, a generalist may point out that Bakhurst's attempt to define particularist moral competence in terms of virtue is problematic insofar as virtue theory is often associated with generalism (Bakhurst, 2005: 271).²¹ One way in which this might bring about thought cramps is the assumption that if possessing a particular virtue ϕ is always seen as good, then we can abstract a moral principle from this whereby one should always ϕ .

Another way in which one might find Bakhurst's (2005) virtue-based account of particularist moral competence problematic, is that it appears to limit the scope of moral education to character development. While developing the character of our children is a salient aspect of moral development, it is not the same thing as being a competent moral judge. While I can develop many morally desirable traits such as kindness, patience and a willingness to help others, without the ability to make good moral judgements these traits are at best useless and at worst may lead me towards morally inappropriate decisions. For example, if someone asks for my help the fact I am a kind person with a desire to help could result in the morally acceptable action of me helping an old lady across the road. On the other hand, these same traits, when not checked by a sense of moral competence, could result in me helping someone commit a crime.

The aim of this section has been to critically evaluate a number of different accounts of moral competence within the existing literature on moral particularism. Although both Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1990), and Bakhurst (2005) offer initially

²¹ For further discussion of this point see Irwin (2000). For examples of how generalists emphasise the need to acquire virtue see Hooker (2000a) and O'Neil (1996). For similar claims made by those sympathetic to particularism see Garfield (2000).

compelling and plausible accounts of how we might understand moral competence, both raise a number of potential difficulties for the model of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). However, I maintain that this does not prove the falsehood of particularism, or offer sufficient reason as to why we should adopt some form of generalism. Rather, all we can reasonably say is that, at some point, commentators on both sides of the debate between Dancy and his critics, have become concerned by the idea of particularist moral competence. In the section that follows, I shall explore the topic of particularist moral competence using Baker's (2004) alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy. In doing so, I hope to offer a persuasive illustration of why we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy.

An Alternative, Therapeutic, Approach to Thinking About Particularist Moral Competence.

In this penultimate section of the chapter, I shall utilise some therapeutic techniques congruent with Baker's conception of philosophy, as an effective means of bringing to light and dissolving the kinds of unconscious pictures that may frame the way in which someone might approach the topic of moral competence in relation to the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). It is important to issue a reminder here that, on the one hand, the unconscious pictures I examine here are not the only unconscious pictures that might trouble us, or the most likely to trouble us. While, on the other hand, the task of identifying every possible unconscious picture that might bring about one's thought cramps here is impossible.

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have explored some of the theoretical approaches to moral competence found within the existing literature on moral particularism. Whereas the existing literature has focused on explicating and defending increasingly complex accounts of how advocates of Dancy's moral particularism must understand moral competence, in what follows I maintain that the sense of philosophical puzzlement Dancy's particularism may bring about is not due to an inherent fault in this position per se. Rather, it may be more helpful here to think of our disquiets as due to unconscious pictures that hold us captive regarding how we must approach this issue, and what the nature of this issue is.

More specifically, the aim of this section shall be achieved by using Baker's therapeutic approach to doing philosophy, as a means of bringing to light the kinds of unconscious pictures that might, in specific cases, frame the way in which the topic of particularist moral competence is thought about in the existing literature. By drawing attention to examples of cases where these underlying assumptions may conflict with our other sensibilities, I hope to show that it is possible to dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of problems found in the existing literature on moral competence in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism. In doing so, I will illustrate, by means of example, reasons in support of my wider view that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical conception of how we ought to do philosophy, or what counts as rational argument about moral matters.

Some Unconscious Pictures that may frame one's thinking about Particularist Moral Competence.

Although there are significant disagreements in the existing literature on particularist moral competence, I maintain that it is possible to discern a number of features

common to the different, competing, accounts. These similarities, or common features, are not shared theses, or positions one adopts explicitly or even argues for. Rather, they are underlying assumptions, or positions one might hold subliminally, which bring about our puzzlements. One such common feature is a tendency to submit to our cravings for generality,²² insofar as we feel that we must provide a theory/account of moral competence and its acquisition. Another common feature is the assumption that it is possible to find the *correct* account of moral competence, and doing so will confirm whether the moral landscape is generalist or particularist in nature.

Within the existing literature, these unconscious pictures of how we ought to approach the topic of moral competence in relation to Dancy's moral particularism are arguably most clearly visible in McKeever & Ridge (2006). By this, I am not claiming to have diagnosed McKeever & Ridge themselves as suffering from any particular thought cramps. Rather, I am suggesting that there is reasonable evidence in their text to suggest that someone engaged with this literature may be vulnerable to suffering from certain thought cramps brought about here.

One source of evidence for why someone might become trapped by these unconscious pictures can be seen in the way in which a significant part of McKeever & Ridge's criticism of Dancy (2004) is based on a claim that regulative generalism provides a better theory/account of moral competence.²³ According to McKeever & Ridge (2006), we should eschew particularism on the basis that the regulative generalist theory of moral competence bears greater resemblance to our phenomenological experience of making moral judgements, and our intuitions about how this is indeed possible. In considering McKeever & Ridge's (2006) line of

²² See BB 17

²³ See McKeever & Ridge (2006: 139).

criticism against Dancy (2004), someone might be struck by the view that not only must we offer explanatory theories of moral competence, but it is also possible to discover the *ideal* theory which resolves the wider debate between advocates of Dancy's moral particularism and their critics.

However, it is important to recognise that being captured by these unconscious pictures is not restricted to those who engage with the generalist aspects of the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism. Despite Bakhurst's (2005: 278) claims that he hasn't put forward any theoretical explanation of moral competence and that it is not his aim to set out an indisputable account of moral education, it is possible to see why someone who engages with this paper may be struck and held captive by these unconscious pictures. For instance, the fact that Bakhurst (2005) treats Hooker's (2000b) criticism of moral particularism as a problem in need of a response, vis-a-vis an account of particularist moral competence, may awaken our unconscious craving for generality in the form of metaphysical theories or explanatory accounts.

Moreover, despite Bakhurst's (2005) insistence otherwise, it is also reasonable to suggest that one may easily come to unconsciously see the issue of moral competence as one where it must be possible to discover an ideal theory/account. For example, although Bakhurst (2005) describes the aim of his paper as offering a plausible story of how the particularist may develop moral competence, he adds the caveat that this is despite the fact "some would *misguidedly* prefer their children to develop *differently*" (Bakhurst, 2005: 278).²⁴

Finally, while Dancy (2004) does not offer an explicit/detailed theory of particularist moral competence or its acquisition per se what he does say about this

²⁴ Emphasis added.

topic relies heavily on his underlying account of moral rationality and his notion of defaults. Although Dancy's (2004) approach to particularist moral competence is arguably less likely to lead one into being held captive by these unconscious pictures than that of either Bakhurst (2005) or McKeever & Ridge (2006), his reliance on this idea of defaults to explain particularist moral competence may lead to someone unconsciously craving a form of generality vis-a-vis theoretical explanation. Moreover, the way in which advocates of Dancy's view of moral competence typically argue their case by identifying a range of problems associated with the generalist alternative, but not Dancy's position, could also strike someone that it is possible to discover an ideal/correct account of moral competence insofar as it will be a particularist account.

Objects of Comparison

Before engaging with some of the unconscious pictures associated with the existing discussion of moral competence in relation to Dancy's moral particularism, it is first worth elaborating Baker's (2004) reading of Wittgenstein's use of objects of comparison. For Baker (2004: 36), the act of offering objections of comparison is central to dissolving an individual's philosophical problems. Just as unconscious pictures can bring about our disquiets, conscious analogies or objects of comparison offer one possible cure for such troubles of our intellect. More specifically, objects of comparison can take a range of different forms, including examples, alternative pictures, language-games and analogies that reveal neglected aspects of our language through both similarities and dissimilarities of what is compared (PI 130).

However, offering an object of comparison is not a matter of pointing out claims as to how reality must correspond (PI 131). Although Wittgenstein (ibid)

warns us that our tendency to present models or analogies as representations of how things must be in the world is “a dogmatism into which we fall so easily”, he does not preclude the use of theories or models *as* objects of comparison. As Baker (2004: 33-34) points out, Wittgenstein (PI §107) acknowledges the possibility that one can utilise models/theories as objects of comparison and avoid being sucked into empty metaphysical claims, if those models are used deliberately for a particular purpose and one is clear that it is an object of comparison.

Although we may use particular analogies as objects of comparison, an object of comparison is not an argument from analogy. In contrast to arguments from analogy, objects of comparison are not concerned with demonstrating *x* to be the case. Instead they reveal aspects of our everyday language use that cure our prejudices towards relating a particular concept to everyday explanations as opposed to “rejecting these explanations as being clearly inadequate” (Baker, 2004: 82).

For example, Wittgenstein (PI §67) offers an analogy between concepts and rope as an object of comparison to help his interlocutor break free of a particular unconscious picture of how our language must operate. That is, the view that *all* instances of a given concept, such as ‘game’, must have a single common essence that binds together all cases of the correct usage of the term ‘game’. Or in other words, the idea that *every* instance of a game shares a common property or feature, which can be used as criteria for necessary/sufficient conditions for classifying new cases of games. In order to break the spell that this unconscious picture may hold over us, Wittgenstein (ibid) suggests that it may be more helpful to contrast the difficulty in discovering the essence of ‘game’, with the fact that the strength of a rope lies not in some single continuous thread that runs throughout its length, but in a series of interlinking fibres criss-crossing throughout.

According to Baker (2004), when we offer an object of comparison there are two things going on. First, we are not discovering any hidden facts about our language and its relationship to the world. Although we haven't changed the way in which our words are used, an object of comparison can make whatever is troubling us suddenly look very different (Baker, 2004: 82). Baker (ibid) describes this aspect-shifting experience as being comparable to emigrating abroad insofar as it liberates us from any preconceived idea of how things ought to be by opening up our awareness of new possibilities for how we can see that which is troubling us. And second, the purpose of an object of comparison is not to get one's interlocutor hooked by an alternative picture which may replace one set of thought cramps with another. As Baker (2004: 190) comments, what may be a useful object of comparison for helping us see a particular aspect of something may also generate fresh dogmas insofar as it can blind us to other aspects of what we are looking at if not accompanied by an appropriate reminder of this.²⁵

So far, this section has suggested some of the possible unconscious pictures that frame the existing literature on moral competence in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, and outlined Baker's (2004) later therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's technique of offering objects of comparison as a way to free people from the unconscious pictures that hold them captive. I shall now move on to illustrate by means of an example, how this particular philosophical technique offers one way in which we can dissolve some of our thought cramps regarding moral competence.

The first object of comparison I would like to offer as an illustration of how Baker's (2004) alternative therapeutic approach to doing philosophy can dissolve this

²⁵ See also PI (§131-132) & HISP (34)

kind of perplexity is reading. Imagine three people who we ordinarily describe as competent readers of the English language. Lets call them A, B, and C. When we give them a passage in a book to read out, they each say the word on the page in a flowing manner, making appropriate pauses where indicated by the punctuation. Assuming there is no evidence to suggest any of them have previously memorised the words and corresponding speech patterns, it appears as if they are all doing the same thing given that they are able to read what is written on the page.

However, when we ask them how they are reading, they each give a different description of what they take themselves to be doing. A tells us that they are reading phonetically. B reveals he is dyslexic and discerning the words on the page based on the context of what is being read. C suggests she is recalling the shapes of words from past experience. Given that they all produce the required output (the correct words being spoken in an appropriate way) from the initial input, on what basis would it be reasonable to describe them as not being able to read, following the revelation that they are doing so in different ways?

In our everyday use of terms such as ‘competent reader’, we typically ascribe them to people based on the fact that all we see them doing is taking the written input and ‘reading’ it out loud appropriately. The fact that they are all reading in different ways need not mean that it is mistaken to describe them all as being able to read. What is important here isn’t some kind of process going on inside any of their heads and whether or not it conforms to a particular theory of what constitutes reading. Rather, it is the fact that for all intents and purposes, they are each reading the words on the page and saying them out loud in an appropriate manner. The existence of/reference to a theory of reading is not a precondition of our ability to say whether it is reasonable to describe someone as a competent reader or not.

Comparing our ascription of ‘competent reader’ to the way in which we might describe someone as a ‘competent moral judge’ might offer one way in which we can free ourselves from the unconscious picture whereby we *must* have a theory as to how one makes competent moral judgements. For instance, when we describe someone as able to make competent moral judgements, we ordinarily do so based on judgements they make in particular cases as opposed to any form of process that might be going on inside their head and whether or not it accords with a particular theory.

Thus, just as competence in reading need not be a matter of following a process that adheres to a set of fixed criteria for what counts as reading, competence in making moral judgements need not be a matter of following a process based on the essence of moral judgement. In other words, we might say that reading is akin to moral judgement insofar as competence need not consist in carrying out a process in accordance with the correct theory of how it should be done, but rather our ability to go on performing the task in an appropriate manner. Consequently, there is no good reason to think we must give an account/theory of what is going on when someone is reading or making a moral judgement, in order to rationally describe them as being competent.

A second object of comparison I shall offer as an illustration for how Baker’s alternative therapeutic approach to doing philosophy may break us free of these unconscious pictures, is learning to play a musical instrument such as the guitar. By way of an example, consider the case of Jones and Mellor - two guitar players from the same band. Insofar as they can both play all of the same pieces of music, one might reasonably describe them as equally competent guitar players. However, just because they are equally competent, it doesn’t follow that they both learnt to play in

the same way. It might be the case that on the one hand Jones went to a prestigious music school where he was taught to play guitar using the CAGED system.²⁶ While on the other hand, Mellor spent months listening to songs on the radio and figuring out how to play along.

Moreover, although Jones and Mellor are physically doing the same thing when they play guitar, they are not doing the same thing as when they were learning to play or even the same thing as each other when they were learning to play. For instance, Jones may have started learning to play guitar by memorised the different scales, and undertaken numerous stretching exercises designed to build finger strength until he could play all scales well at high speed. In contrast to this way of learning to play guitar, Mellor may have initially trained his fretting hand to make particular shapes resembling certain chords and moved them up and down the neck until they sounded right.

In order to break free of the unconscious picture of moral competence as something which we must learn via some ideal theory, it may be helpful to remind ourselves of two ways in which learning to play the guitar, and learning to make moral judgements are similar. First, just as different people may become equally competent guitarists by learning in different ways, different people may also learn to become equally competent moral judges in different ways. Second, just as what we do when playing the guitar isn't the same thing as we did when learning the guitar, what we do when we make moral judgements is not the same thing we did when learning to make moral judgements. As such it makes no sense to find some ideal account of how everyone must learn to play guitar or make moral judgements by

²⁶ The CAGED system is a method of learning to play the guitar based on a series of movable chord shapes. It is named after the way in which the five basic shapes correspond to the chords C, A, G, E, and D when played in the open position.

discovering some underlying essence of what particular individuals are doing when they do these things.

Alternative Pictures

If the use of different objects of comparison fails to persuade someone to abandon their view of how particularist moral competence must be understood, another useful technique Baker identifies in Wittgenstein's later remarks is the idea of offering someone an alternative picture of that which is bothering them. In particular, the alternative picture of moral competence I wish to draw attention to here is that put forward by Alice Crary (2007a). However, in offering Crary's (2007a) account of moral competence as an alternative picture, it is not the aim here to replace an incorrect picture with the correct one.²⁷ While doing so may release us from the grip of one dogma, this would come at the price of being gripped by another, equally dangerous dogma. As Baker (2004: 190) reminds us: "if one picture blinds us to some aspect of things, another antithetical picture may well blind us to others".

In response to what she sees as our frustration with our desire to understand conceptual competence "in terms of an image of travel along ideally rigid rails" (Crary, 2007a: 24), Crary offers what she takes to be a pragmatic account of moral competence, where our ability to discern the appropriate use of moral concepts is dependent on "sensitivities acquired in the process of learning language" (Crary, 2007a: 40). Like Dancy (2004), Crary (2007a) sees competence with a concept as concerned with demonstrating a practical ability to show sensitivity towards the

²⁷ In clarifying this point I am further differentiating my overall project from that of Crary (2007a) insofar as unlike *this* investigation, her goal is to replace the dominant view of the moral with an alternative based on the work of Cora Diamond. See Crary (2007a: 3).

“importance of similarities and differences among members of some set of a concept’s uses” (Crary, 2007a: 41).

Although Crary’s (2007a) account of moral competence is similar to that of Dancy (2004), insofar as they both derive their positions from Cavell’s (1979) understanding of linguistic competence, Crary goes a step further than Dancy in arguing for an explicitly non-explanatory account of moral competence. According to Crary (2007a), it is inappropriate to try and pre-determine what counts as conceptual mastery in a given situation on the basis that linguistic competence isn’t fixed as “different individuals may qualify as masters of a concept when they have developed sensitivities to the importance of different (and equally genuine) similarities and differences among its use” (Crary, 2007a: 41). That is to say, although we can appropriately describe someone’s use of a concept as competent, our sensitivity to new cases of where this concept may be used appropriate can in principle continue to develop. For instance, I might reasonably describe my young son’s use of a given concept as being competent insofar as it makes sense/accords with our everyday customs and practices, yet simultaneously be aware that his ability to project this concept into unfamiliar situations is limited in comparison to my own.²⁸

In contrast to the traditional/theoretical approach of the existing literature on moral competence in relation to Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism, this section has sought to explore this topic through Baker’s conception of philosophy as therapy. This task has been addressed in two stages. In the first part of this section, I identified a number of similarities between the protagonists in the existing literature, and suggested that they may be indicative of unconscious pictures someone might

²⁸ See also, Carvell’s (1979: 171-173) example of a child’s use of the word ‘kittie’.

subliminally hold. These subliminal assumptions may subsequently frame the way in which one approaches the topic at hand. In the second part of this section, I offered objections of comparison, and alternative pictures, as ways in which someone could liberate themselves from their perplexities by dissolving, rather than solving, the problem at hand.

In offering objects of comparison and alternative pictures, as possible ways of treating these thought cramps, I am not affording them any form of privileged status as *the correct* tools for this particular problem. Rather, I acknowledge that they are some tools, amongst many, that can be used to persuade someone to change their attitude towards that which is concerning them. However, in acknowledging this point, it is not my intention here to provide a comprehensive overview of each of the different ways in which Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy could help us dissolve the philosophical problem at hand. Similarly, as Morris (2004) points out, Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy sees our disquiets as highly individual insofar as different people may be puzzled by different things, at different times, and for different reasons.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have outlined some indicative ways in which the kinds of perplexities found in the contemporary literature on moral competence, in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, can be dissolved, rather than solved. In particular, I have drawn attention to some possible underlying assumptions which I maintain frame the way in which this topic is considered, and offered objects of comparison, and alternative pictures, as ways in which someone could liberate themselves from their disquiets. By dissolving these philosophical problems through

tools and techniques congruent with Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy, this chapter has illustrated, by means of examples, why we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy.

CHAPTER FOUR

MORAL PARTICULARISM & CONCEPTUAL LEARNING: AN ALTERNATIVE, THERAPEUTIC, APPROACH.

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In this chapter I present a further worked example in support of my view that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. More specifically, this chapter utilises the topic of conceptual learning in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, as a vehicle for illustrating how Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy offers one alternative, there are others, to the traditional/theoretical understanding of how we can engage in rational argument in the context of doing moral philosophy.

In contrast to the existing literature on this aspect of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, it is not the purpose of this chapter to offer any explanatory theories of what conceptual learning must entail in order to be compatible with the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). Instead, the aim of the chapter is to persuade someone to remain open to my overall project on rational argument in moral philosophy. This task shall be accomplished by showing how, in specific cases, the kinds of perplexities that may arise in relation to this aspect of the contemporary moral particularism literature might be due to subliminal, underlying, views of how we ought to do philosophy and/or what counts as rational argument in this context. By using tools and techniques congruent with Baker's therapeutic philosophy, I hope to show how these perplexities can be dissolved through the acknowledgement of such unconsciously held views, and how they clash with our other sensibilities.

The aim of this chapter will be addressed in four phases: first, elucidating the generalist claim that our ability to learn the difference between moral concepts such as

‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is incompatible with Dancy’s particularism; second, exploring the way in which advocates and critics of Dancy’s position approach this topic by way of various theories found in cognitive neuroscience; third, examining how the existing literature on Dancy’s moral particularism also considers this topic through appeals to arguments derived from the later work of Wittgenstein; and finally, using Baker’s alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy as a means of liberating someone from the kinds of perplexities found in the previous sections, by identifying shared underlying assumptions that may appear problematic when brought to light.

Conceptual Learning in the Existing Particularist Literature.

The purpose of this section is to set out a brief overview of *one* way in which the criticisms towards particularist conceptual learning may have arisen within the existing literature. Although a number of commentators have been critical of the extent to which a moral particularist is able to learn the difference between moral concepts such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’,¹ this section will focus on what I take to be the main criticism of the possibility of particularist conceptual learning raised by constitutive generalists.² That is, the claim that an atomistic conception of how our concepts operate is a necessary condition for our ability to learn to distinguish between different moral concepts such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. The paradigm example of this line of criticism can be seen in what has become known as Jackson et al’s (2000) ‘pattern argument’. In what follows, I shall briefly outline the key features of Jackson et al’s argument as well as

¹ Within the existing literature, aspects of this concern are to some extent discussed explicitly by McNaughton (1988), Dancy (1999), Jackson, Pettit & Smith (2000), Hooker (2000b), Luntley (2002), Bakhurst (2005) and Salay (2008). Implicit discussion of this concern can also be seen in McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2008), as well as in the anthologies on the wider generalist/particularist debate compiled by Hooker & Little (2000), and Lance, Potřč & Strahovnik (2008).

² For a brief overview of constitutive generalism and how it differs from the regulative generalism advocated as advocated by McKeever & Ridge, and Väyrynen see chapter one.

some of the initial particularist responses, which lead to the wider dispute between advocates of Dancy's moral particularism and their critics.

The Pattern Argument

Jackson et al's (2000) pattern argument can be seen as an attempt to undermine Dancy's moral particularism by refuting the possibility of a particularist account of how we are able to learn the difference between moral concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong'. More specifically, Jackson et al (2000) argue that contrary to what the particularist may believe, our ability to learn the difference between moral concepts is dependent on two things. First, the supervenience of a thing's moral properties on its non-moral properties, and second, the existence of codifiable patterns that group things together, so to instantiate them as belonging to a particular concept or category.

According to Jackson et al (2000), these two essential features of our ability to learn the difference between moral concepts are incompatible with the central features of the model of moral particularism advocated by Dancy. That is, our ability to learn how to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' is incompatible with the particularist's commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, and the non-codifiability of morality. In particular, Jackson et al (2000: 88-89) claim that the idea of holism in the theory of reasons is an erroneous phenomenon that will eventually "wash out" when placed under further scrutiny. Consequently, Jackson et al (2000) maintain that we ought to abandon the particularist picture of the moral landscape in favour of that presented by constitutive generalism.

The starting point for the pattern argument is a particular view someone might hold as to how we understand the relationship between our concepts and the world. This assumption is usually referred to as the 'representational picture of language'. According to the representational picture of language, our concepts refer to things in the

world and can thus be explained and differentiated in terms of purely descriptive language. For example, I can reasonably differentiate between a car and a plant by describing the differences between their functions, appearance, composition, etc.

However, if we accept this representational picture of language we may run into the problem of how a purely descriptive language can be used to distinguish axiological concepts that don't correspond to a particular object in the world. For instance, although we can identify what a 'chair' is in purely descriptive language, and we could subsequently describe the features of a 'good chair', we can't point to a specific thing in the world that is designated a 'good'. One solution to this problem found in the existing literature on moral particularism is the view that things in the world have moral properties *in virtue of* their non-moral properties. That is to say, the moral properties of things in the world are *dependent* on their non-moral properties in the sense that "whenever we think that something has a moral property, we must do so *because* it has some non-moral property" (Dreier, 2006: xxii).³

Zangwill (2006: 270) calls this claim the "Because Constraint". To paraphrase an example from Zangwill (*ibid*): if I were to ask someone why they thought Adolf was bad, and they replied that Adolf is bad because he has a strange moustache, I can reasonably dispute this claim on the basis that the property of having a strange moustache does not entail in itself that someone is bad. If someone were to reply that there was no reason why Adolf was bad, he just is, this may seem a less unsatisfactory explanation for their judgement than the former reason for describing Adolf as bad. According to Zangwill (2006), in the former case "a person takes an irrelevant ground to be relevant, but at least he has some ground, albeit a bad one... [but in the later case they]... have no ground at all" (Zangwill, 2006: 270). If we are to legitimately describe Adolf as 'bad' then we do so on the basis of an appropriate reason for his badness – that

³ Original emphasis.

is, through reference to something which makes him bad such as the fact he murdered thousands of innocent people and/or committed various other crimes against humanity.

Another way of describing the Because Constraint is the claim that our ability to talk about moral matters or use moral concepts is dependent on a connection between a thing's moral and non-moral properties, whereby the former are said to hold due to the latter. Or in other words, the Because Constraint "either is, or explains, moral supervenience" (Zangwill, 2006: 273). Like Zangwill, constitutive generalists such as Jackson et al (2000) maintain that the relationship between a thing's moral and non-moral properties is to be explained by the notion of supervenience. In this context, supervenience is the idea that the moral facts and properties of X are dependent on the non-moral properties of X in such a way that changes to the moral properties of X can only occur after changes have occurred to the non-moral properties of X. In the case of my moral dilemma to X or Y, it is precisely this supervenience of the moral on the non-moral that makes it a matter of moral judgement. Any moral difference between X and Y is dependent on a non-moral difference between X and Y. Otherwise X and Y would be one and the same, and thus no moral dilemma would exist.

Although the supervenience of the moral on the non-moral does not entail that there is anything unifying the descriptive and moral properties, Jackson et al (2000: 86) argue that it would be problematic for the particularist if there was no patterned connection between the descriptive and the moral. For Jackson et al (2000), our ability to differentiate between moral concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong' is dependent on the existence of linguistic patterns that identify and group together actions and/or dispositions based on their moral value. If this is correct, then given Dancy's commitment to the non-codifiability of the moral landscape and holism in the theory of reasons, his explanation of how we learn to distinguish the correct use of concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong' would be implausible.

Given humanity's limited capacity for learning, we would be unable to learn what constitutes a right or wrong action without the presence of common patterns that allow us to move from a set of existing examples to new cases. In identifying the relevant features of a case and the role they may play, what we are really identifying are formal descriptive patterns, which explain why particular actions and/or dispositions are grouped together on the basis of their moral value. As these patterns can be cashed out in purely descriptive language, we can abstract from the case a principle that explains this pattern.

If the constitutive generalist is right in their claim that a moral agent's ability to understand finite patterns linking the descriptive and the moral underpins our capacity for conceptual learning, the particularist faces a dilemma. The crux of which is how the particularist is to understand these patterns. If the pattern(s) is cashed out in purely descriptive terms, a moral predicate is applicable when it is, in virtue of the descriptive characterization of the pattern(s), linking descriptive features of the world with the application of moral predicates. The advantage of this interpretation is that once one has grasped the underlying pattern, one can abstract from it the necessary and sufficient conditions under which it is appropriate to use a particular moral concept. Alternatively, if the pattern(s) is not to be cashed out in descriptive language, moral particularists appear to be committed to a Moorean non-naturalism whereby moral properties are non-descriptive and sui-generis (Jackson et al, 2000: 88).

Some Initial Responses to the Pattern Argument

Having described the central features of Jackson et al's (2000) pattern argument I shall briefly outline some contemporary responses found within the literature on Dancy's moral particularism. One such response to the pattern argument is concerned with the way in which Jackson et al (2000) appear to dismiss moral particularism as false purely

on the grounds that it collapses into a form of Moorean non-naturalism which is also false. Here, someone could point out that this criticism is mistaken in two ways. First, as Dancy (1999: 64) points out, it is fallacious to object to a particularist conception of morality simply by describing it, and second, while moral particularism and Moorean non-naturalism share some commonality, it need not follow that the former collapses into the latter, or that one entails the other.

More specifically, on the first point, Dancy (ibid) argues that it is fallacious to offer a description of his conception of morality as a criticism of that picture the moral landscape as this is akin to arguing that 'X is bad because it is X'. According to Dancy, it is clear to see that statements like 'because it is X' not only fail to act as valid reasons for why 'X is bad', but are insufficient to act as reasons at all. A familiar example of this type of circular reasoning is often encountered when a child repeatedly states that they need to have the latest toy/gadget 'because they need it'. As many parents may recognise, in such cases we often point out that this is not a reason in any sense, let alone one for purchasing the item in question. If we readily accept that this type of argument doesn't hold in the case of the child demanding a new toy, why should a similar argument hold against Dancy's moral particularism? Conversely, if we grant this line of argument against Dancy's position, someone could reasonably point out that Jackson et al can have no complaints if an advocate of Dancy's moral particularism made a similar criticism against constitutive generalism.

Moving on to the second sense in which Dancy (1999) maintains that Jackson et al's criticism is mistaken, someone may draw attention to the fact that moral particularism and Moorean non-naturalism are not identical insofar as they only share some common aspects, and thus it need not follow that the former collapses into the latter, or that one entails the other. Indeed, Dancy (2000: 139-140) rightly points out, moral particularism and Moorean non-naturalism are clearly distinct in terms of their

understanding of value-holism.⁴ While an advocate of Dancy's moral particularism may hold that the status of N as a reason to ϕ need not have a fixed moral value which transcends the case,⁵ advocates of Moorean non-naturalism would reject the claim that moral reasons have a variable valency. That is, the view that a reason may have value X_1 in context Y_1 and value $-X$ in context Y_2 . For example, 'because it would help them achieve their wider goal' may be a reason in favour of fixing your supervisor's computer, but not for buying the psychopath a new set of knives. In contrast to this, the non-naturalist insists that if the intrinsic qualities of P remain constant when moving from one concept to another, then the intrinsic value of P must also remain the same for its intrinsic value supervenes on P's other intrinsic qualities.

Although some forms of moral particularism may share the Moorean view that moral properties are sui-generis and non-natural,⁶ it need not follow that Dancy's account of moral particularism must conceive of moral properties as supernatural and/or only accessible via some sort of mysterious faculty. One strategy an advocate of Dancy's moral particularism could avoid this dilemma is through an appeal to what McDowell (1994: 88) calls a naturalism of second nature. This is the idea that if we expand our conception of the natural beyond the subject matter of the natural sciences, we can simultaneously deny that moral properties must be a matter of empirical science, or supernatural. For McDowell, a moral fact is a fact concerned with reasons for a particular action. If through some process of personal and cultural maturation or education (*Bildung*) we come understand x as a reason for action, we could also

⁴ See also Dancy (2004: 168), Fletcher (2010: 164) & Brown (2007: 456-457).

⁵ Dancy (2004) does utilise what he calls 'default reasons' whereby a feature can 'arrive switched on' as a reason to do or not do ϕ by default, but it can be mitigated or 'switched off' by the presence of defeaters for it not to count as a reason in a particular case.

⁶ Dancy (1999: 64-65) has no real problem with moral properties being sui generis.

reasonably see *x* as natural, although it may not technically belong to the realm of the empirical sciences.⁷

Moreover, someone could also reasonably point out that while there are some similarities between Dancy's moral particularism and Moorean non-naturalism, Moore's doctrine is arguably better identified with a version of moral generalism. Insofar as it accepts that the moral landscape can be mapped out in terms of patterns or principles cashed out in descriptive language, Moorean non-naturalism is compatible with a basic conception of hedonistic act-utilitarianism. On this account, the rightness of an action can be explained as a non-natural property insofar as an action can potentially maximise happiness on a hedonistic interpretation (McKeever and Ridge, 2006: 96).

A second response to Jackson et al, found within the existing literature on Dancy's particularism, is concerned with the claim that moral judgement is dependent on constitutive moral principles, on the basis that we understand moral concepts by acknowledging they may apply if the "descriptive features mentioned in its naturalistic analysis are present" (McKeever and Ridge, 2006: 99). More specifically, this second response to the constitutive generalist is based on Moore's (1903) open question argument.

An open question argument suggests that if it were possible to define the concept of intrinsic goodness in terms of some other descriptive quality (N), then questions of the form 'X is N, but is N good?' would be conceptually closed in the same way as 'Phil is an unmarried man, but is Phil a bachelor?' is. However, whereas the latter is conceptually closed in virtue of the question being true by definition, Moore (1903) argues the former should remain conceptually open on the grounds that no property N corresponds to the concept of 'good' as a matter of tautology. For example, 'God's will is good' is not a tautology for there is nothing contained in the term 'God's

⁷ For a more detailed overview of McDowell's position here, as well as criticisms of this view, see Miller (2003: 257-270).

will' that identifies it alone with 'good'. Similarly there is no self-contradiction involved in the claim 'God's will isn't good' for we have no way of testing the validity of this statement. The competent speaker's understanding of moral concepts such as 'good' is not confused or diminished by the fact they may be open concepts.

Jackson et al's (2000) objection appears to be resolved, for the open question argument demonstrates that ethical maxims cannot be thrust upon us on the basis of them being true by definition. Further attempts by the constitutive generalist to deny such questions are open are misplaced. Even if there was an agreement over how the relevant facts were cashed out in descriptive language, the fact that there is such deep disagreement in moral deliberation implies that even the most accomplished users of moral concepts would find some degree of openness in the relevant questions (McKeever and Ridge, 2006: 100).

A final response to the pattern argument that can be seen within the existing literature on moral particularism is the claim that the notion of the supervenience relation, on which the pattern argument is based, incorrectly describes the relationship between an action's moral and non-moral properties. According to Dancy (2004: 86), the supervenience base is concerned with *all* of an action's non-moral features, rather than just those that make that action wrong. This description of the relationship between a thing's moral and non-moral properties brings up two issues for the constitutive generalist. First, someone could say that the idea that all the non-moral features of a wrong action are constitutive of that action's wrongness is highly counterintuitive. For example, imagine the case of someone who makes a racist poster. While one might reasonably see the racist language/imagery as a wrongmaking feature of this action, it is difficult to see how the poster's rectangular shape is also a wrongmaking feature of this action. Second, if the patterns governing the supervenience of a thing's moral properties onto its non-moral properties is constitutive of our ability to correctly apply moral

concepts, then these principles are so complex that there is “effectively no chance that they should be capable of recurring” (Dancy, 2004: 87). That is to say, if a principle only has one instance then how can it be used to guide future moral judgement or classify multiple cases?

More specifically, Dancy (1993: 73-79) suggests that a better way to think about the relationship between something’s moral and non-moral properties is in terms of resultance.⁸ One way of describing this concept is to say that resultance is the relationship between a property of x and the features of x in virtue of which we can reasonably say x has that property.⁹ For example, we may say that a picture is beautiful in virtue of some of its other features such as its subject matter, or the artist’s choice of hues, etc. Dancy (1993: 74) describes what it is for something to have a particular resultant property like beauty as its “resultance base” or ground. In the previous example, the resultance base for the beauty of the pictures consists in those properties of the picture which makes that picture beautiful or can be said to act as the ground for its beauty.

While not all properties per se are resultant, Dancy maintains that “everyone agrees that moral properties are resultant” (Dancy, 2004: 85).¹⁰ As such, in the case of a moral property such as wrongness, the resultance base for an action’s wrongness is said to be comprised of those properties which make the action wrong. Or in other words, the resultance base for its wrongness consists of the action’s wrongmaking features in the sense of being those features which count against its permissibility (Dancy, 2004: 86). For example, the wrongness of an action might consist in it also having the properties of being a case of stealing, or bringing about harm.

⁸ See also Dancy (2004: 85-93)

⁹ See Dancy (1993: 73 & 2004: 85), and Potrc (2004: 167).

¹⁰ Dancy cites Moore (1942: 588) and Ross (1930, 121-123) as examples of ‘arch-generalists’ who he takes as agreeing with his point.

While the resultance relationship between a given property of x and those features that bestow on x that property can also be expressed using the word ‘because’,¹¹ i.e. this picture is beautiful because of the artist’s choice of hues, or this act is wrong because it is stealing, it is important to note that Dancy’s use of ‘because’ here is not the same as that of Zangwill’s (2006) Because Constraint. As we have seen, the resultance base for an action’s wrongness consists in only the wrong-making features of that action, while the supervenience base consists in “*all the non-moral features of the action*, not just those that make it wrong” (Dancy, 2004: 86).¹² While constitutive generalists such as Jackson et al maintain that the supervenience of an actions moral properties on its non-moral properties entails that we can, in theory, abstract necessary and sufficient conditions (and thus moral principles) for governing the correct application of our moral concepts on the bases, Dancy (2004: 86) points out that we cannot define a property’s resultance base *in general*. A resultant property is constituted by *this* resultance base in *this* case, and *that* resultance base in *that* case for “a property that is resultant may be one that there are very many different ways of acquiring, and there need be no way of capturing all those ways at once” (Dancy, 2004: 86).¹³

For Dancy, there are two important points related to this distinction between supervenience and resultance. The first point is that the supervenience base is much bigger than the resultance base, insofar as it consists of all of the reasons for and against an action’s wrongness, as well as all of the enablers and disablers present. The second point is that “if the action is made wrong by the features in the resultance base it cannot also be made wrong by the features in the supervenience base” (Dancy, 2004: 86). It would not make sense to claim that the features in favour of an action being right were

¹¹ Dancy (1993: 73)

¹² Original emphasis.

¹³ See also Dancy (1993: 74).

simultaneously wrong-making. The features of the case may favour, disfavour, or be irrelevant as to why an action is wrong, but not at the same time in the same case.

However, according to Dancy (2004: 87-88), neither supervenience nor resultance are able to generate moral principles suitable for guiding action. On the one hand, Dancy offers two reasons why the kinds of principles generated by the supervenience relation are unable to guide action. First, if the supervenience relation between an action's moral and non-moral properties includes all properties of that specific action then "these principles specify complexes of such a size and in such detail that there is effectively no chance that they should be capable of recurring. A principle that has only one instance... could never be a guide for judgement" (Dancy, 2004: 87). And second, the sorts of principles derived from the supervenience base are unable to tell us what is wrong or right and why this is so because "as far as supervenience is concerned, all features of the present case, including those that count in favour of the actually wrong act, are equally relevant" (Dancy, 2004: 87). On the other hand, principles derived from the resultance base are unable to guide action for "the resultance base, in a given case, is too narrowly delimited to ensure that where it recurs it will have the same effect" (Dancy, 2004: 88).

A generalist may object here that Dancy's account of the resultance base is too restricted in scope, and claim that if we extend the range of the resultance base we will encounter a point where the wrongness of an action can be unequivocally established prior to the level of the entire supervenience base (Dancy, 2004: 90). However, Dancy (ibid) reasonably questions the extent to which such a point is actually needed to explain our ability for conceptual learning, and suggests that if one is discovered it would be more a case of serendipity than anything else.

At this point, someone might be persuaded to abandon their initial criticism of the possibility of conceptual learning for Dancy's moral particularism. However,

despite the prevalence of non-naturalist responses to the pattern argument within the existing literature, Dancy (1999) also suggests that it would seem rather bizarre if the particularist's ability to learn right from wrong was dependent on our acceptance of a non-naturalist metaphysics. It is this suggestion from Dancy which arguably provokes a wider dispute within the existing literature as to how his vision of moral particularism can provide an account of our ability to learn right from wrong. It is this further aspect of the existing literature which shall form the basis of the remainder of this chapter.

Cognitive Science Based Defences of Conceptual Learning and Dancy's Moral Particularism.

Moving on from the previous discussion, this section will offer a brief overview of the recent trend within the wider literature on Dancy's moral particularism to shift the focus of this dispute around conceptual learning into the domain of the cognitive sciences.¹⁴ In particular, this section will focus on the three main theories of cognitive science discussed within in the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism: connectionist networks, case-based reasoning, and prototype theory. In doing so, I hope to elucidate the dominant understanding of this aspect of Dancy's position.

Connectionist Networks

The predominant theory of cognitive science discussed within this aspect of the literature on Dancy's moral particularism is arguably the connectionist neural network model of conceptual learning. In order to see why Dancy (1999: 67)¹⁵ suggests

¹⁴ For indicative examples of this see Dancy (1999); Guarini (2005, 2010, 2011, 2013); Horgan & Potrc (2006); and Salay (2008).

¹⁵ It is worth noting here that, despite the difference in publication date, Dancy (1999) was explicitly written as a direct response to an early draft of Jackson et al (2000). Moreover, although Dancy (2004) does not explicitly discuss the issue of a naturalist response to Jackson et al (2000) in any detail, he does refer readers back to Dancy (1999). See also Dancy (2006: 128)

connectionist networks as scientific evidence for the plausibility of particularist conceptual learning, it is worth clarifying what the idea of a connectionist network entails. One way in which this can be done is through a comparison with the von Neumann model of computer architecture which forms the basis of the type of computers which we use in our everyday lives. The von Neumann model of computer architecture is typically made up of: an input source such as a mouse or a USB drive; a memory unit containing instructions/data; a control unit for interpreting the instructions; a processing unit that performs arithmetic and logical operations; and an output such as a monitor or printer (Figure 1).

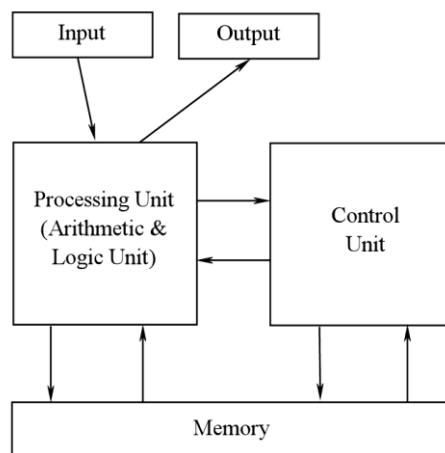


Figure 1: Simplified von Neumann Computer Architecture

A von Neumann computer works by carrying out simple rule-based arithmetic operations of the following type: take the contents of memory location M_1 ; perform operation O_1 on it; and return the result to memory location M_2 . An operation is just a simple logical rule or mathematical process such as ‘add 1’ or ‘divide by 3’. The range of individual operations a von Neumann machine can perform is usually limited to simple tasks such as ‘add’, ‘subtract’, ‘check if x is bigger than y’, etc. More complex computations such as those involved in rendering the graphics of a modern video game,

are made up of multiple, extended sequences of these simple operations called programmes.¹⁶

In contrast to the von Neumann computation model, a connectionist network is made up of multiple layers of processing units or ‘nodes’, all interlinked by connections of varying strength. In its simplest form, a connectionist network may have a minimum of three layers of interconnected nodes: an input layer; a hidden layer; and an output layer. Each node in the input layer is connected to every node in the hidden layer, and every node in the hidden layer is connected to every node in the output layer (Figure 2).

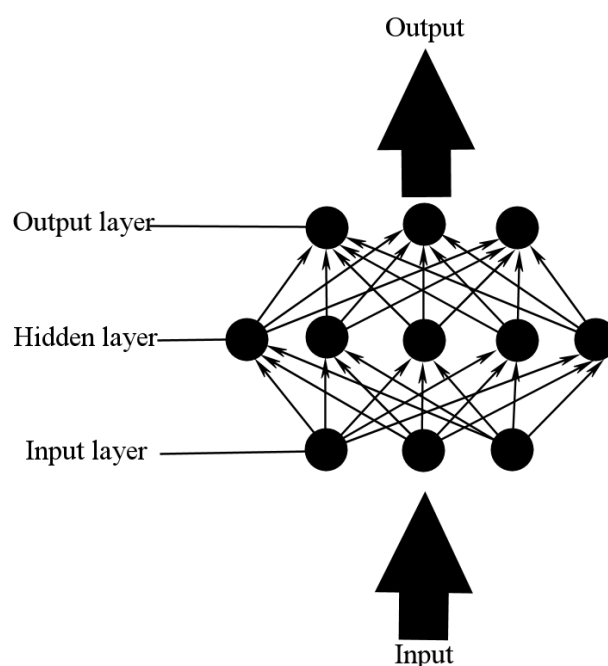


Figure 2: A simple, three-layer connectionist network.

Although there are different types of connectionist neural network models, the basic idea behind them is the same. They attempt to model cognition by mimicking the way neurons in the brain are arranged in clusters and communicate with each other by firing signals of varying strength back and forth.¹⁷

¹⁶ For a more detailed description of the workings of a von Neumann machine and its evolution see Pratt (1987).

¹⁷ For a more detailed explanation of how connectionist systems work and how they differ from the von Neumann machines that make up our everyday computers see Churchland and Sejnowski (1999), Bechtel (1999), and Salay (2008).

Within the existing literature on conceptual learning and moral particularism, there are two main reasons given as to why connectionist networks offer an attractive starting point for advocates of Dancy's (2004) position. The first reason is that, in contrast to the von Neumann model of computation, connectionist networks do not classify concepts by following fixed rules, manipulating symbols or performing logical inferences. Rather, they are non-linear dynamic systems that undergo changes of state.¹⁸ Consequently, they 'learn' concepts by having their neural network's weight spaces 'sculpted' by experience and their node activation levels stimulated appropriately.¹⁹ The second reason is that, unlike the von Neumann model, the pattern of nodes firing and the weights of the connections between them are not internal representations of a moral concept such as 'right' stored within the network. As such, the firing of particular nodes when distinguishing a specific concept does not present the type of pattern that could be codified into a principle.

However, despite these initial similarities there is significant disagreement over the extent to which the connectionist network model supports Dancy's claims of how the particularist can tell the difference between right and wrong. For example, Salay (2008) and Guarini (2010) argue that the similarities between what particularist conceptual learning may be like, and the connectionist network model breaks down under further scientific investigation. More specifically, although Guarini (2010, 418-419) acknowledges the prima facie plausibility of Dancy's appeal to connectionism, he rejects Dancy's argument on the basis that a connectionist network would be difficult to upscale to cope with a larger case-set without utilising the type of general pertinence found in contributory standards. As Dancy (2004) rejects the notion of contributory

¹⁸ See Bechtel (1999: 157) & Churchland and Sejnowski (1999: 143).

¹⁹ Casebeer (2003: 158)

standards, it would appear that connectionist networks do not provide an appropriate model of conceptual learning for his particularism (Guarini, 2010: 420).²⁰

Similarly, Salay (2008) also rejects Dancy's appeal to connectionism on the grounds that it hinges on a number of false assumptions about connectionist networks. The first of those concerns Dancy's argument in favour of connectionism which can be set out as follows:

1. The configurations of weightings within a connectionist network can change without affecting the network's ability to differentiate between concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong'.
2. Two networks of equal competence can have different weightings assigned.

Therefore: There is no configuration of network weightings that represent a particular concept and thus connectionism provides an example of conceptual learning without the need for any pattern from which moral principles can be abstracted.

According to Salay (2008: 394), Dancy's appeal to connectionism is mistaken because a single concept can be represented in different ways without the content of that concept being affected. For example, a telephone number can be represented by Roman numerals, binary code, or Arabic integers.

Salay (2008) also points out that Dancy confuses a network in training with a network that has already learned a skill. During a network's training phase the weights of the connections between the nodes will shift dramatically. As the network becomes more proficient at distinguishing 'right' from 'wrong' the changes in weightings become more stable. Once the network becomes stable it is said to have 'converged' and thus learnt the skill of differentiating 'right' from 'wrong'. However, if there really

²⁰ Also see Guarini (2013).

was no pattern uniting instances of ‘rightness’, the network would never be able to converge and thus never learn how to differentiate ‘right’ from ‘wrong’. Therefore, it appears as if Dancy is mistaken on two accounts. First, in assuming that the changes in connection weights means that the firing of nodes in the network does not represent a pattern, and second, that radical changes within the network will continue after it has learned the skill (Salay, 2008: 395).

Case-Based Reasoning

Another attempt to defend the possibility of conceptual learning in relation to Dancy’s moral particularism on empirical grounds is Salay’s (2008) appeal to case-based reasoning (CBR). Although Salay (2008) rejects Dancy’s appeal to connectionist networks, she is broadly sympathetic to his model of moral particularism. However, on Salay’s reading, the problem here is not whether generalisations can be made in our moral judgement. Rather, the issue at stake is the extent to which the generalisations apply to the reasoning underpinning our conceptual learning. According to Salay (2008) this can be resolved by distinguishing between ‘local’ and ‘global’ generalisations within our conceptual learning.

On the one hand, the comparisons in rule-based reasoning are global insofar as they are underpinned by a global pattern that transcends the particular case. As patterns of global generalisations are defined prior to the advent of a moral judgement, they can be codified into formal rules from which we can abstract moral principles. On the other hand, the criteria for comparison in case-based reasoning is only decided at the time of judgement and is thus said to be local, and thus compatible with particularism (Flynn, 2010: 147). According to CBR, a Dancyan moral particularist is able to discern ‘right’ actions from ‘wrong’ actions by appealing to local as opposed to global generalisations when making comparisons with past experience (Salay, 2008: 396). This, Salay claims,

is the appeal to cognitive science that Dancy (1999) should have made in response to the challenge of Jackson et al (2000).

However, at this point, someone could reasonably draw attention to the way in which Salay (2008: 402) emphasises how underneath every local generalisation there is a global generalisation that makes it possible. For example, our ability to judge that the particular actions of a child are a type of counting game, requires a previous global generalisation about those features that are generally relevant to judgements as to what a counting game is. Thus, insofar as Salay (2008) admits that local generalisations are dependent on global generalisations, someone might reasonably point out that her position is incompatible with that of Dancy (2004). While there are some forms of particularism that do utilise something to case-based reasoning within their account of reasoning,²¹ Salay's appeal to cognitive science here arguably provides a more accurate model of how regulative generalism utilises what McKeever and Ridge (2006: 201) call local specification.

Local specification is one way in which regulative generalists attempt to bridge the gap between abstract ultimate moral standards and moral principles applied in moral judgement in a way that is compatible with holism. On this understanding, a moral principle functions to guide one's action in line with ultimate moral standards by defining the local conditions under which any given action complies with the ultimate moral standard. For example, if 'treat others with respect' was an ultimate moral standard, it would be insufficient to meaningfully guide action on the basis that it does not define who or what counts as an other or what it entails to treat them with respect. While more locally specific moral principles are required to apply ultimate moral standards, these localised principles are not ultimate moral standards in themselves.

²¹ The paradigm example of this within the existing particularist literature is Little (2000). However, this approach is more recently associated with the type of moral contextualism put forward by Lance & Little (2008).

Local specification merely entails that a moral principle functions to guide in such situation by providing the further particulars as to who/what counts and what respect entails in this setting.

Prototype Theory

The final main example of the use of references to cognitive science within this aspect of the existing literature on conceptual learning and moral particularism is Dancy's (1999) appeal to prototypes. Here, Dancy (1999) responds to the naturalist challenge of Jackson et al (2000) by arguing that empirical studies of prototypes by Rosch & Mervis (1975) and Rosch et al (1976) confirm that conceptual learning does not rely on the existence of any natural patterns. Rather, our ability to learn and apply concepts can be explained in terms of prototype theory.

Prototype theory rejects the idea that conceptual learning is concerned with learning the necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of concepts. Instead, conceptual learning is a matter of recognising the frequency of salient but not necessary properties present in paradigm instances of a particular concept. For example, 'flight' may be a salient feature for typical cases of the concept 'bird', yet it is not a prerequisite for X to fly in order for it to qualify as a 'bird'. Emus, for instance, are flightless but still birds, while wasps can fly but are definitely not birds.

Advocates of prototype theory claim that, as our neural networks are exposed to different instances of a concept, we begin to develop a mental repository of that concept's most typical features. Using this knowledge we abstract a prototype of what this concept entails. New cases are subsequently judged in relation to how they compare with the prototype. The closer a category member is to the prototype, "the more attributes it has in common with other members of the category and the less attributes in common with contrasting categories" (Rosch and Mervis, 1975: 602).

On the face of it, it appears as if there are a number of reasons why Rosch & Mervis' (1975) account of prototype theory is an attractive basis for an account of how Dancy's moral particularist is able to learn the difference between concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong'. First, our ability to judge the proximity of a new case to a particular prototype is not dependent on any pattern at the level of that prototype's features, and the possibility of multiple prototypes is not dependent on any pattern of shared relevant qualities. Second, a prototype is distinct from a pattern in a way that supports Dancy's position. Whereas a pattern is an abstract object with its salient features already determined, a prototype is a "real concrete instance of the type, and contains many features that are not, and are not recognised to be, important to its functioning as such" (Dancy, 1999: 71). Finally, there also appears to be a number of synergies between the origins of Dancy's moral particularism and Rosch & Mervis' prototype theory. One such synergy is the way in which Dancy sees his moral particularism as being essentially 'Wittgensteinian' in spirit, while Rosch & Mervis (1975: 603) see their research into prototype theory as empirical confirmation of Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblances.

However, someone might point out here that Dancy's (1999) appeal to prototype theory is as problematic as his appeal to connectionist networks. For instance, Rosch & Mervis's claim, that their work is an empirical confirmation of Wittgenstein's principle of family resemblances, is inherently problematic on two grounds. First, it was never Wittgenstein's intention to set out a grand family-resemblance theory of concepts.²² And second, as we have seen, given his explicit rejection of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, it appears rather odd to support a theory of cognitive science by means of an appeal to Wittgenstein's later remarks.

²² See PI §109

Moreover, although his appeal to prototypes has a *prima facie* plausibility, Dancy (1999) appears to be confusing prototypes with paradigm standards. While a paradigm standard may correspond to an actual instance of the concept, the prototype is not identical to any particular instance of the concept. For example, my prototype for ‘bird’ may not resemble a real bird at all insofar as it may have features typical of an emu and a penguin. Even if Dancy was correct that a prototype was akin to a paradigm standard, the fact that we may be able to codify this standard into general principles through local specification suggests that prototype theory is unsuitable as the basis of an explanation of conceptual learning for his account of moral particularism.

There are also a number of arguments within the existing literature on moral particularism that suggest an explanation of conceptual learning based on prototype theory is actually more congruent with the picture of morality advocated by regulative generalists. Väyrynen (2008), for instance, draws attention to what he sees as a key role principles play in any account of conceptual learning based on prototype theory, which particularism is unable to account for. That is, the way in which principles facilitates our ability to revise and develop our prototypes in order to become more proficient moral judges.

More specifically, Väyrynen (2008: 97-98) argues that principles allow us to refine our prototypes in a number of essential ways.²³ First, principles can help us pass over any misleading similarities between our prototype and the case at hand. Second, principles can be used to allocate greater significance to particular features of our prototype. Finally, principles in the regulative generalist sense are sufficiently flexible to allow us to extend our prototypes to include further relevant features. As such, it appears as if the extent to which prototype theory offers a naturalist explanation of how

²³ A similar argument can also be found in McKeever and Ridge (2006: 220).

Dancy's moral particularist learns to tell the difference between right and wrong is at best highly contentious.

Although connectionist networks, case-based reasoning, and prototype theory initially appear to offer plausible accounts of how Dancy's moral particularist is able to learn right from wrong, someone may be suspicious of, or hostile towards, the extent to which they are compatible with the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy. Insofar as theories of cognitive science give particularism no advantage over generalism in explaining how we can tell right from wrong (Väyrynen, 2008: 98), one might reasonably conclude that this aspect of the literature of Dancy's position has ground to a thought-cramp inducing stalemate.

In this section, I have set out an illustration of the way in which the possibility of a naturalist account of conceptual learning has been explored within the literature on moral particularism. In particular, this section has offered a brief synopsis of some of the recent attempts by advocates of Dancy's moral particularism to marshal theories of cognitive science in response to the naturalist interpretation of Jackson et al's (2000) pattern argument. In the next section of this chapter I shall go on to explore some examples of how those engaged with the topics of conceptual learning and moral particularism have tried to address this issue through appeals to the authority of explanatory theories extracted from the later works of Wittgenstein.

'Wittgensteinian' Theories of Conceptual Learning for Dancy's Moral Particularism

Although the vast majority of the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism and the topic of conceptual learning focuses on the extent to which various models and theories of the cognitive sciences *prove* either the generalist or particularist position,²⁴

²⁴ For indicative examples of this see previous discussion above.

there are also a number of attempts to do so on the basis of theories extracted from the later work of Wittgenstein. In what follows, I shall offer those attempts concerned with Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance (PI §65-71) as one indicative example of this approach.²⁵

Broadly speaking, Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance can be described as being concerned with the idea that we apply some of the words in our language on the basis of overlapping similarities between cases, as opposed to some underlying essence which binds them together (Baker & Hacker, 1980: 320). To illustrate this idea, Wittgenstein offers the concept 'game' as an indicative example (PI §66). If we examine a variety of different games, it becomes apparent that we are unable to find some common property that may act as the basis under which each of these cases are classified as 'games'. For instance, if we were to claim that x counts as a game if x is something that we play, then we could think of all kinds of cases (such as where x is a guitar) where this criteria would be inappropriate. On the orthodox reading of Wittgenstein's remarks (PI §68-70), the implication of this is two-fold. First, we are unable to provide a Merkmal-definition for the concept 'game' that holds in all contexts. A Merkmal-definition defines a given term based on that concept's key feature, and is often cashed out as a necessary and sufficient condition which enables us to distinguish particular example as belonging to a specific concept.²⁶ If we are unable to set out necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct use of a concept such as game, then strictly speaking it cannot be captured appropriately in terms of a Merkmal-definition. And second, our ability to understand a concept such as 'game' is not dependent on some ability to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for its use.

²⁵ Other indicative examples of appeals to the authority of theories found in Wittgenstein's text here include Lotfi's (2009) attempt to refute the particularist position on the basis of Wittgenstein's 'Rule Following Considerations'.

²⁶ See Vineis, (2008: 272).

Instead of being held together by some underlying essence from which we can extract such necessary and sufficient conditions of correct usage, Wittgenstein suggests that we classify the difference cases that belong to a given concept on the basis of the interconnected network of different and complex similarities between the different cases. The term ‘family resemblance’ here comes from the way in which these different connections are similar to how different members of a family can be seen as resembling each other in different ways such as physical features, personality, mannerisms, etc.

The use of Family Resemblance in the Existing Literature on Dancy’s Moral Particularism.

Within the existing literature on Dancy’s moral particularism, consideration of Wittgenstein’s remarks on family resemblances is typically concerned with the question of whether or not a suitable theory/justificatory account of how the particularist can learn the difference between concepts, such as right and wrong, can be extracted from Wittgenstein’s text. For instance, according to Jackson et al (2000), Wittgenstein’s doctrine of family resemblances is unable to underpin a particularist account of conceptual learning on two grounds. First, Wittgenstein’s description of the relationship between instances of a given concept bears little resemblance to the way in which we learn to differentiate between concepts in practice. And second, adopting an account of conceptual learning on the basis of Wittgenstein’s text would commit Dancy’s moral particularism to a form of meaning scepticism, whereby there is no specific semantic relation between a concept and its default or ordinary meaning in everyday use, and thus anything may count as the right or wrong way to use a given concept.

More specifically, in terms of their first argument, Jackson et al (2000: 83) seek to refute the view that moral particularism is compatible with Wittgenstein’s suggestion that the similarities between those cases where we use a given concept are related by

means of family resemblances. According to Jackson et al (ibid), particularists such as Dancy are committed to the view that “there is not even a highly disjunctive commonality or pattern that unites the right acts when described in descriptive terms”. This, Jackson et al (2000) maintain, runs in contrast to how Wittgenstein describes family resemblance concepts as operating.

For Tsu (2013), the crux of Jackson et al’s (2000) argument here is their view that in contrast to the particularist view of the moral landscape as being ‘shapeless’, Jackson et al (2000: 83) claim that family resemblance concepts are not shapeless, insofar as they possess a natural (non-moral) commonality.²⁷ As such, on Jackson et al’s (2000) reading, Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance concepts work on the basis that given sufficient examples of what constitutes a case of a given concept we can go on classifying new cases as either belonging or not belonging to this concept. Moreover, although in some cases it can be difficult to identify the specific pattern that unifies all instances where we use a family resemblance concept appropriately, we are still able to identify whether or not a new case belongs to this particular concept or is indeterminate, as long as we have encountered sufficient cases of that concept. For example, although I might not know the exact underlying pattern of features that determines whether *x* belongs to the concept ‘game’, I am often able to correctly classify *x* based on my past experience of having played various different types of games.

For Jackson et al (2000: 83), the fact that, at least in some cases, we are able to project from past experience, means that Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance not only demonstrates that there is a unifying pattern, but also that we have on some level discerned the complex commonality that defines the pattern for that concept. Or in other words, it is *because* of Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance that we can learn to tell the difference between moral concepts on the basis of some underlying

²⁷ By this, Tsu (2013) takes Jackson et al (2000) as following Blackburn’s (1992) view of ‘shape’ in terms of ‘commonality’.

unifying pattern without essentially being able to articulate what that pattern entails. Consequently, if Jackson et al (2000) are right about how a family resemblance concept operates then someone could reasonably suggest that any model of conceptual learning based on the idea of family resemblances is incompatible with particularism.

In terms of their second argument as to why Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances is unable to underpin the particularist position, Jackson et al (2000) insist that, even if these two doctrines were compatible, the consequences would be less favourable than the constitutive generalist view that they themselves advocate. More specifically, Jackson et al (2000: 87-88) argue that we should reject a Wittgensteinian account of conceptual learning on the basis that it problematically commits the particularist to a form of meaning scepticism. To illustrate this claim, Jackson et al (2000: 87) suppose that we assume Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance are concerned with describing some ability to grasp a concept based on previous examples without the existence of some underlying pattern that governs their similarities.

According to Jackson et al (2000: 88), what such a theory would show is that our classification of new cases as belonging to particular concepts requires some form of decision on our part. Sometimes this decision may be arbitrary, and other times it may be informed by external factors such as the salient features of the case at hand. However, if no unifying pattern were to exist in our diet of previous examples of a particular concept, then *all* new cases would require us to make a decision as to whether it belonged to that concept, and "any decision would be as good, semantically speaking, as any other" (Jackson et al, 2000: 88). In other words, if there is no transcendent pattern against which our use of concepts can be judged, then all uses of a concept are equally acceptable semantically.

Although we may encounter cases where it is indeterminate as to whether x belongs to one particular concept or another, this is perfectly compatible with the

existence of some underlying pattern of correct use for “it can be indeterminate whether or not a pattern is exemplified” (Jackson et al, 2000: 88). Consequently, Jackson et al (2000) argue that we should reject the idea that particularism and family resemblances are compatible on the basis that the existence of objective, transcendent patterns within our language provide a firmer basis for ethics than decisions that could be based on an individual’s own preferences or entirely arbitrarily.

Some Responses to Jackson et al on Wittgenstein.

Within the existing particularist literature, there are broadly speaking, two types of response to Jackson et al (2000). Those that promote Dancy’s position directly, and those that attempt to undermine the reading of Wittgenstein advocated by Jackson et al (2000). In terms of the former type of response to Jackson et al (2000), one indicative example of this can be seen in way in which a number of particularists, such as Dancy (2004) and Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b), have set out to describe non-sceptical accounts of meaning, influenced by Wittgenstein, that are compatible with the particularist position. In contrast to Jackson et al (2000), Dancy (2004) and Bergqvist (2009a & 2009b) reject the conventionalist reading of Wittgenstein’s remark that “the meaning of a word is its use” (PI §43), whereby the correct use (and hence meaning) of a concept is dependent on an adherence to the constitutive rules of our language.²⁸

For an indicative example of the latter type of response, we can consider the reply to Jackson et al (2000) put forward by Luntley (2002). Although Luntley (2002: 272) does not ally himself with Dancy’s account of moral particularism per se,²⁹ he does explicitly reject the model of generalism, and the reading of Wittgenstein advocated by Jackson et al (2000). According to Luntley (2002: 273), although Wittgenstein’s

²⁸ For arguments against a particularist account of meaning see Whiting (2007).

²⁹ “If particularism denies the existence of patterns, the position I develop is not particularist, but it is a critique of generalism” (Luntley, 2002: 272).

remarks on family resemblance can be read in a number of ways, there is no textual evidence to support the reading advocated by Jackson et al (2000).

Whereas Jackson et al (2000) imply that Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance provide support for a constitutive form of moral generalism, Luntley (2002) denies that this is the case. Instead, Luntley (2002) maintains that the purpose of Wittgenstein's remarks is two-fold. The first aim is to put forward an argument against essentialism. That is the view whereby in any case where x and y are similar, there must be an explanation/theoretical account of why these two things are similar. The second aim is to reject a form of realism in our patterns of conceptual application whereby "what makes our actual use of a word correct/incorrect is that it conforms to patterns transcendent of use" (Luntley, 2002: 275).

More specifically, Luntley (2002: 274) argues that the correct interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance is not the claim that there are no normative patterns of conceptual usage, or the view that we are unable to codify a pattern in advance of a case for the purpose of justifying the seeing of similarities. Rather, Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance is "a model in which the seeing of similarities is primitive and underpins the normativity of patterns" (Luntley, 2002: 274). Or in other words, the purpose of Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblance is not to deny there are any normative patterns of language use, but rather to acknowledge any such patterns are the product of our seeing things as being similar (Luntley, 2002: 280).

As such, Luntley (2002) also rejects Jackson et al's (2000) view that Wittgenstein's position lacks the sense of normativity required for the particularist to have a plausible grasp of conceptual learning. Instead, Luntley (2002) maintains that Wittgenstein's discussion of 'games' does not avoid the normative question of what constitutes the appropriate use of our concepts. Rather, Wittgenstein's goal here is to highlight the fact that there is no single thing that makes a standard, and no single

standard that defines appropriate use. That is to say, what may count as a standard for the appropriate use of a concept in case x may not count, or be totally irrelevant in case y. For example, the fact that it would make my friends happy may count as a reason why it is good to share this cake. But the fact it would make my friends happy would not count as a reason why it is good to shoot this person.

Although Luntley (2002) puts forward a number of criticisms of Jackson et al's (2000) use of Wittgenstein's remarks, someone could still remain confused by this aspect of the dispute between Dancy and his critics. For instance, we might still be puzzled by the fact that although Luntley's (2002) position is compatible with some forms of moral particularism such as that of McDowell (1979), his response to Jackson et al (2000) is incompatible with the model of particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). Whereas Dancy (2004) rejects the idea that there are any underlying patterns of our concept use, Luntley (2002) takes the view that such patterns exist but as a consequence of our seeing the similarities between cases of a given concept. Moreover, someone could be as unsettled by Luntley's (2002) treatment of Wittgenstein's text as they are by that of Jackson et al (2000). For example, in contrast to Luntley (2002), therapeutic readers of Wittgenstein's later work such as Baker (2004) typically reject the view that Wittgenstein's aim was to offer specific criticisms of particular philosophical theories such as essentialism and Platonic realism.

The aim of this section has been to explore the way in which those engaged with Dancy's moral particularism have attempted to justify or refute the possibility of particularist conceptual learning, through appeal to the authority of extracts taken from Wittgenstein's text. More specifically, this section has offered a brief overview of how both advocates and critics of Dancy's particularism have sought to extract a theory in support of their position based on Wittgenstein's remarks on family resemblances. However, having explored this aspect of the existing literature, I maintain that at best

the debate between advocates and critics of Dancy's account of moral particularism has again ground to a thought-cramp inducing stalemate.

Consequently, in contrast to the existing literature, I maintain that approaching this topic by formulating increasingly complex theories of conceptual learning based on either the findings of cognitive science or extracts of Wittgenstein's text is unlikely to liberate us from our puzzlements. In the next section, I shall use Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy as an alternative means of investigating the topic of conceptual learning in relation to Dancy's moral particularism. In doing so, I hope to offer persuasive examples of why we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, and what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy.

Particularist Conceptual Learning, an Alternative, Therapeutic, Approach.

In this section, I shall make use of some of the tools and techniques congruent with Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy, as an effective means of drawing attention to the kinds of unconscious pictures that, in specific cases, may subconsciously frame the way in which someone engages with the topic of conceptual learning in relation to the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). The object of this exercise is not to set out a therapeutic theory of particularist conceptual learning. Rather, by considering some examples where these underlying pictures may conflict with our other sensibilities, I intend to show that it is possible to dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of philosophical perplexities which can arise in this aspect of the contemporary moral particularism literature. In doing so, I present further worked examples in support of my wider claim that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical understanding of what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy, or how we ought to engage in philosophical investigation.

Some Unconscious Pictures that may frame our thinking about Particularist Conceptual Learning.

In order to help someone liberate themselves from their thought cramps, Baker (2004) suggests that it is often useful to bring to light those unconscious pictures which may be functioning as a prejudice towards other possibilities of how we might see that which is puzzling us (Morris, 2004: 7). One way of doing this is to broadly examine that which is puzzling us in order to find any similarities or dissimilarities which may act as unconscious pictures that blind us to other aspects of the issue or ways of seeing as. Although the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism contains significant disagreement as to the possibility of particularist conceptual learning, there are arguably some aspects in which critics and advocates of Dancy's particularism typically appear to agree. In particular, this section will focus on a couple of similarities that I suggest may be indicative of the types of unconscious pictures, which may bring about our disquiets. However, in focusing on particular similarities it is important to remind ourselves that not everyone perplexed by this aspect of the debate will be puzzled in the same way, by the same things, for the same reasons, or at the same time.

Consequently, the object of this exercise is not to pinpoint any definitive unconscious pictures as *the* source of our disquiets per se. Rather, the purpose of this section is to utilise indicative examples to persuade willing interlocutors of the value of exploring Dancy's moral particularism through Baker's (2004) alternative, therapeutic, approach to philosophy. In what follows, I shall offer a brief discussion of possible unconscious pictures underlying some of the similarities between the way in which advocates of Dancy's particularism, and his critics, have approached the topic of conceptual learning.

One such similarity in how this topic is approached is the way in which both sides of the dispute appear to treat their disquiets around the possibility of particularist

conceptual learning. That is, advocates of both positions can be seen as viewing the topic of conceptual learning as a ‘problem’ that one can solve in the same sense that it is possible to solve a scientific problem of the form ‘what are the constitutive elements of compound X?’. Or in other words, they tacitly insist on adopting a traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy.³⁰

The traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy which dominates this aspect of the existing literature on Dancy’s moral particularism can arguably be seen in two related similarities between the positions held by advocates and critics of Dancy’s work on the question of whether or not particularist conceptual learning is plausible. The first of these related similarities is the way in which Dancy, his critics, and his supporters all appear committed to offering a theoretical account as to how particularist conceptual learning is possible/impossible. For instance, Dancy (1999 & 2004) insists on offering both a non-naturalist account and a naturalist account of how advocates of his moral particularism are able to learn the difference between moral concepts such as right and wrong. Likewise, Jackson et al (2000) attempt to refute these possibilities by offering competing explanatory theories for how we *must* understand our ability to learn right from wrong.

The second of these further similarities between the traditional/theoretical approach of those concerned with the topic of conceptual learning in relation to Dancy’s moral particularism is perhaps best seen in terms of the way in which the existing literature appears to be predicated on a particular assumption. That is, the idea that the possibility of particularist conceptual learning hinges on whether or not advocates of Dancy’s moral particularism are able to provide a theoretical account, of how the particularist can learn the difference between right and wrong, that is underpinned by evidence from the cognitive sciences or extracts from the later remarks of Wittgenstein.

³⁰ See chapter one (p19)

A consequence of this is that some of Dancy's critics and advocates may appear compelled to undertake their investigation into conceptual learning as if it must either be an empirical matter of utilising the methods of cognitive science to reveal *the* hidden essence of our moral concepts in order that we can check that they are being used correctly; or a matter of Wittgenstein scholarship to find *the correct* reading of Wittgenstein's text which proves/refutes the generalist/particularist position.

Thus far, I have suggested a number of similarities between the ways in which advocates and critics of Dancy's moral particularism have explored the topic of conceptual learning. In contrast to the existing literature, I maintain that it is unhelpful to see these similarities between the generalist and particularist positions as setting common ground for the rules of engagement as to how we must approach the topic at hand.³¹ Rather, following the later Baker's (2004) vision of philosophy as therapy, I suggest that it may be more helpful to think of these similarities as indicative of some of the possible unconscious pictures which may hold someone engaged with this aspect of the contemporary debate on Dancy's moral particularism captive. As such it may be useful to see our puzzlements here as the result of being held captive by unconscious pictures as opposed to some inherent problem of Dancy's moral particularism.

Having briefly outlined some unconscious pictures which I suggest may bring about our thought cramps regarding the topic at hand, I shall now move on to utilise some of the tools and techniques that Baker identifies in Wittgenstein's later work in order to illustrate some ways in which willing interlocutors may liberate themselves from that which may puzzle them.

³¹ See Dancy's (1999 & 2004) view that it would appear odd *not* to offer both a naturalist and non-naturalist account of particularist conceptual learning.

Liberating ourselves from unconscious pictures of conceptual learning.

One way in which Baker's therapeutic approach to doing philosophy can help dispel our confusions, is by reminding us of Wittgenstein's suggestion to focus on how our language is actually used, "and in such a way as to make us recognize those [it's] workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them" (PI §109). In other words, if we are to help willing interlocutors free themselves from the unconscious pictures that frame their thought-cramps, we can do so by bringing these unconscious pictures to our attention through looking at the way(s) in which they may have gripped us in the first place.

A possible way in which these unconscious pictures of how we must do philosophy may have taken hold over us is through the inappropriate use of a simile between conceptual learning and cognitive science whereby language is taken in some contexts to be similar to scientific formulae. In order to illustrate how these unconscious pictures may have captured us, I shall paraphrase an example from Wittgenstein (BB: 45). Although the wooden floor on which I stand appears to be solid, my friend the physicist tells me that wood is not solid but in fact made up of millions of tiny particles surrounded by tiny pockets of empty space. However, to describe the floor as not solid on the later basis would be a strange use of language for if the flooring turns out not to be solid, one might ordinarily attribute this to it being rotten rather than a fact about the atomic structure of wood.

Our disquiet may arise here because the picture presented by the physicist may lead us to imagine wood as made up of atoms in the same way that a sand dune is made of sand. As our understanding and experience of sand dunes tells us they are not solid, the simile may cause a confusion to arise regarding the solidity of wood. Although the physicist has provided a scientific explanation of the concept 'solid', our confusion over the solidity of the floor arises because we have unconsciously adopted the picture of

empty space between the grains of sand in a sand dune and inappropriately applied this to how we understand the empty space between the atoms in a piece of wood.

While this simile between language and science is attractive to many philosophers,³² the above example offers us a number of reasons why the application of scientific method to philosophical questions can bring about rather than alleviate our thought cramps. For instance, a traditional/theoretical philosopher may attempt to solve the problem at hand by deducing a hidden essence of ‘solidarity’ before defining this essence in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of this concept. However, as the example suggests, the traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy does not produce some miraculous discovery in the same way that physical science research might. At best, one might say that, the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy replaces one disquiet with another.

Although philosophers often compare the way in which we use language with the fixed rules of calculus, Wittgenstein (BB: 25, PI:§81) draws attention to the fact that we rarely use language like this in practice. Take for example the conversation I may have with a baker in the process of purchasing a cake. In conversing with the baker I do not bring before me the conditions for the correct use of the concepts ‘cake’, ‘price’, ‘change’, etc. as if I were reading from a formulae chart. Even if the baker were to ask me ‘what do you mean by “cake”?’ I would not be able to provide a finite definition like those found in the sciences. That is, I would not be able to identify something common to all cakes in virtue of which they belong to the concept ‘cake’. However, does this lack of an all-encompassing definition mean that I do not understand what a cake is? No. In reality, the baker and I can quite easily use the concept ‘cake’ in our conversation without either of us knowing the necessary and sufficient conditions that unify all cakes under this concept. Our physicist friend may interject here: ‘if our concepts are not

³² For example, Russell (1905).

united by necessary and sufficient conditions, how do we use them appropriately?’ In response, I would like to offer Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance as *one* possible alternative picture of our ability to use concepts.

Family Resemblance as One Alternative Picture of how our concepts operate.

In offering Wittgenstein’s remarks on family resemblance as one alternative picture of how we can more helpfully think about conceptual learning, its not my intention *pace* Luntley (2002) to try and replace a *mistaken* picture of Wittgenstein’s remarks with the *correct* one on the basis of an appeal to textual evidence. Moreover, in contrast to Jackson et al (2000) and Tsu (2013), the object of this exercise is not to engage in appeals to Wittgenstein’s remarks in order to put forward a *definitive*, account of how we learn to tell the difference between concepts in order to resolve the dispute between Dancy and his critics. Rather, my use of family resemblances here is one possible alternative picture among many.

Although different Wittgenstein scholars may disagree on the detail and purpose of his remarks on family resemblance, one relatively unproblematic way we can read this aspect of Wittgenstein’s text is in terms of the following suggestion: in the majority of cases, the use of our concepts need not be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Although we may specify particular definitions of a given term for a particular purpose, these definitions of use need not be transcendental to the particular case at hand. In order to illustrate why family resemblance may be a useful alternative picture here, let us consider Wittgenstein’s discussion of ‘games’ as an object of comparison for moral concepts such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’.

In trying to understand how the different cases of games may be related, imagine that we ask ourselves what feature do board games, ball games, card games, videogames, mind-games, etc have in common? Suppose our physicist friend suggests

that perhaps games are unified by the competition between players? This may be true of say poker but can the same be said of sudoku? It could be that they are played in accordance with the ‘spirit of the game’. But what of the games that children make up as they go along? Although we can list various features generally associated with games; i.e. competition between players, the use of a ball or cards, etc. when we look at particular examples we may struggle to find any commonality other than the fact we can describe them all as being games. For example, in what way is sudoku similar to Ring-a-Roses, or Patience akin to ‘British Bulldog’, other than insofar as we can describe them as being games?

Ordinary, everyday examples of how we use language highlight not only how the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy may have lead the philosopher askew, but can also cover up those particular concrete cases from which we learn to grasp a particular concept. What the above example suggests is that there need not be a single feature common to all instances of the concept ‘games’. Rather, it could equally be the case that what we see is a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail” (PI: §66). That is to say, it may be more helpful to see instances of a particular concept as being connected via a family resemblance. Or in other words, to see particular instances of some concepts as related to each other by way of various different similarities. Rather like the way that members of a family are said to resemble each other (PI: §67).

Again, our physicist friend may complain that ‘without necessary and sufficient conditions to unify the meaning of concepts, wouldn’t our language fall into nonsense?’ If our concepts were truly unregulated then yes, anything could potentially belong to any concept on the basis of some vague similarity. For example, football and basketball are similar insofar as they both involve two teams competing to score by running around with the aim of putting a ball into a net. And yet, it would be mistaken to

describe an LA Lakers Vs Chicago Bulls match as a case of football. However, the short answer to the physicist's question is no. Although we are unable to circumscribe necessary and sufficient conditions for the appropriate use of our concepts, it need not follow that our language must descend into nonsense. As we can see in the example of games, our concepts are boundless until we draw a boundary for a specific purpose (PI: §69).

In using a concept such as 'game', we can draw a boundary for the context and/or purpose in which we are using that concept. For example, imagine a teacher who tells her class that they may bring in a game to play on the last day of term. In this context they may give the concept of 'game' rigid limits so as to prevent children playing football in the classroom. However, the teacher may also use the concept 'game' without any such restrictions when she asks her class to write about their favourite game. Although counter-intuitive to the method of science, Wittgenstein's description of how we extend our concepts is not something new or strange. For example, in our everyday language we are typically unconcerned by the fact that we happily use the word 'football' to mean a highly restricted conception of football in one context, and in an open-ended conception in another. On the one hand, the matches played in the Premier League strictly adhere to the constitutive rules prescribed for the game of football by the sport's world governing body FIFA. On the other hand, the actions of a child repeatedly kicking a ball against a wall does not accord with the constitutive rules of football *per se*, but we still use the concept 'football' appropriately in describing the child's activity.³³

If the appropriate use of concepts must *always* be determined by necessary and sufficient conditions as implied by investigations of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, then our conceptual learning would be a matter of knowing all necessary

³³ See (BB: 25).

and sufficient conditions of our language use. But, if this were the case, then either: the latter example would involve an incorrect use of the concept ‘football’. Or, the number of necessary and sufficient conditions required for using a particular concept appropriately would be beyond our finite cognitive capacity. However, this need not be the case universally for we can both accommodate the above example and use other concepts appropriately. The caveat being here that, although this may be true of many concepts (including moral concepts), it is not automatically true for *all* concepts such as technical terms with a highly prescribed meaning like ‘electron’, ‘specific gravity’, ‘integer’ etc. as well as numbers, arithmetic and wider mathematical operations.

In terms of reasons why Wittgenstein’s discussion of ‘games’ is a useful alternative picture for moral concepts it may be worth reminding ourselves that Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblance is not restricted to nouns such as ‘games’. As Wittgenstein points out (PI §77), any attempt to define axiological concepts found in aesthetics or ethics in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions may also lead to similar philosophical confusions. Thus just as there need not be a rule or principle that unites all instances of the concept ‘game’, the same can also be said of moral concepts such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. For example, although there may be many cases of killing that we may ordinarily consider to be wrong, it would make no sense to define an action as automatically wrong on the basis that it involved killing. Although there are many cases where we may want to say that an act of killing is wrong (one might think of killing a member of a rival gang in order to increase your reputation as a gangster), there are other cases such as ending the life of a sick animal, where it is not so clear cut that killing is automatically wrong.

In identifying Wittgenstein’s remarks on family resemblance as an alternative picture of how our concepts operate in our everyday language, I am aware that this example may not work for a particular individual at different times. However, in

contrast to the traditional/theoretical approach of the existing literature on this aspect of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, it is important to remember that the object of this exercise is not to replace an erroneous theory of conceptual learning with the correct one. Instead, the purpose of this section has been to draw attention to a particular underlying assumption that I maintain frames the existing debate, and subsequently offer an alternative picture as a means of show how, in specific cases, the kinds of perplexity found here can be dissolved through the acknowledgement of such underlying assumptions and their apparent clash with our other sensibilities. Even if the specific philosophical technique, or particular example, used in this section is ineffective for someone, it need not follow that Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy ceases to be of use here. Offering alternative pictures is just one of many philosophical techniques congruent with Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy, and someone who isn't liberated from their perplexity by this particular example may benefit from one of the other philosophical tools suggested elsewhere in this project.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this chapter has been to set out a further example in support of my wider claim that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. To this end, I have offered Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy as one possible alternative, by outlining some indicative ways in which the kinds of philosophical problems associated with the contemporary debate on conceptual learning in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism can be dissolved, rather than solved. In doing so, I have suggested that the kinds of perplexities that arise here are a result of underlying assumptions which frame the way in which this topic is thought about in the existing literature. In particular, I proposed that one way of persuading someone to let go of the

subliminal assumption that, where x and y are similar, there must be some theoretical explanation of that similarity, is to draw attention to Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance as one of many alternative pictures of how we could more helpfully think about the relationships between our concepts in everyday use.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORAL PARTICULARISM & MORAL KNOWLEDGE: AN ALTERNATIVE, THERAPEUTIC, APPROACH

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The purpose of this chapter is to set out a final, indicative example to support my wider claim that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in the context of ethical deliberation. This aim will be addressed by using the contemporary debate on moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's (2004) account of moral particularism, as a backdrop for explicating some of the different ways in which the later Baker's therapeutic vision of philosophy offers a rational alternative to the traditional/theoretical understanding of how we ought to do philosophy, and what rational argument about moral matters entails. By illustrating how, in specific cases, the kinds of philosophical problems associated with this aspect of the literature on moral particularism can be dissolved using different tools and techniques congruent with Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, this chapter offers good reasons as to why we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical view of what counts as rational argument or how we ought to do moral philosophy.

The chapter opens by setting out a brief overview of the account of moral knowledge favoured by Dancy (2004), followed by a summary of how others engaged with the existing literature on moral particularism have tried to criticise or defend this position. I then move on to bring to light *some* of the unconscious pictures I maintain may be responsible for our puzzlements, and utilise various therapeutic tools and techniques to persuade someone to abandon these unconscious pictures.

Dancy's Account of Moral Knowledge

In this section, I shall present an overview of Dancy's (2004 & 2008) account of moral knowledge, and trace its development within the existing literature on moral particularism by means of a brief comparison with the picture of moral knowledge broadly attributed to his generalist critics. Within the existing literature, it is possible to discern a tacit consensus between advocates of Dancy's moral particularism and their generalist critics that our consideration of moral matters can result in moral knowledge in particular cases. The existence of moral knowledge is thus, to some extent, typically agreed to be an area of common ground. However, while Dancy and his generalist critics tend to agree on the top-level question of whether moral knowledge is possible, they often disagree on the scope, shape and source of our moral knowledge and its corresponding epistemology (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 113).

Although there is no single, definitive theory of generalist moral knowledge, the majority of generalist accounts of moral knowledge found within the existing literature typically share one key feature which distinguishes them from the particularist picture of moral knowledge advocated by Dancy (2004). That is, the claim that moral knowledge must, in some way, be comprised of true, general moral principles. While constitutive generalists, such as Jackson et al (2000), and regulative generalists, such as McKeever & Ridge (2006), may, on one level, disagree on the precise details of what moral knowledge entails, they share an underlying commitment to a picture of moral knowledge based on general moral principles.

For instance, one way in which constitutive and regulative generalists disagree in regard to the nature of moral knowledge is the extent to which moral knowledge is also a

matter of judgement. Constitutive generalists, such as Jackson et al (2000), believe that insofar as moral principles are constitutive of our understanding of the moral landscape, moral knowledge is just knowledge of those moral principles which define the moral landscape. In contrast to this, regulative generalists, such as McKeever & Ridge (2006), maintain an important role for an individual's judgement within their account of moral knowledge.

In contrast to the generalist picture of moral knowledge, Dancy (2004) rejects the claim that moral knowledge is comprised of true general moral principles. Instead, Dancy (2004: 141) maintains that the basic form of moral knowledge for the particularist consists of what he calls "moral reason-facts". According to Dancy (2004), a moral reason-fact is always a particular fact about a specific case, rather than a fact in general. Or in other words, a reason-fact is a fact about what counts as a moral reason for/against an action in the particular case at hand. One example of a reason-fact might be something like 'in *this* case, x is a reason to ϕ '.

However, given Dancy's (2004) commitment to holism in the theory of reasons, this understanding of moral knowledge involves not only a recognition of the significant moral features present in the case, but also any other features that may act as potential enablers and/or disablers which could change the moral polarity and/or relevance of those features as reasons for/against ϕ ing. For example, if while walking down the street a man asks for my help in opening a car door, the fact he has asked for my help may act as a reason for me to open the car door for him. If it transpires that the man is asking me to help him break into a car he does not own, this may act as a disabler to what was previously a reason for me to help him. However, if the context of the situation is such that the car is filling up with water and the man is asking for my help to save the family

trapped inside, the fact that the man does not own the car becomes irrelevant as a reason for me not to help him break in to it. If, as this example suggests, the status of x as a reason to ϕ is contingent on the presence/absence of any enablers/disablers and thus restricted to the particular case, then our knowledge of such basic moral reason-facts is also contingent. That is to say, the status of x as a reason to ϕ is both specific to the moral issue at hand and can be modified by the context of the case.

Particularist Moral Knowledge & the Skill of Discernment

In terms of how the particularist acquires and uses moral knowledge when making moral decisions, Dancy (2004: 142) characterises the person of practical wisdom as she who is able to reliably decipher what is a reason for/against ϕ ing, and how the various contributions of these different reasons impact on our overall moral judgement. Given the particularist's commitment to holism and the non-codifiability of the moral landscape, Dancy (ibid) maintains that this ability to discern the salient moral features present in a particular case should not be understood as either a rule-based or inferential exercise. In discerning how the different features, enablers and disablers present in a particular case combine to produce an overall moral judgement, we do not abstract rules about how they may have operated previously and apply them to the new case. Likewise, on Dancy's (2004: 141) view, the moral features of a situation are not additive insofar as we do not treat them as if they were inferences in an argument that we follow to a conclusion.¹

¹ See also Dancy (2000: 139)

At this point, someone engaged with this aspect of the moral particularism literature might point out that although Dancy's account of moral knowledge is concerned with the significant moral features of the case as potential reasons for/against ϕ ing, it does not follow that our knowledge of moral reason-facts can be codified into a checklist of generally permissible propositions where ϕ ing is morally permissible or not (Bergqvist, 2009a: 34). However, if the particularist's ability to ascertain the status of X as a reason to ϕ cannot rely on rules or inferences from past experience, then someone could be perplexed by that fact that it would appear as if the particularist account of moral knowledge denies a role for past experience in our practical wisdom, while telling us nothing as to how we are to make moral judgements in new and unfamiliar situations.

In response to this type of concern, Dancy (2004) suggests that what the particularist brings to each new case is a type of knowledge-how, rather than an instance of knowledge-that. Broadly speaking, knowledge-that is typically understood as being knowledge of a true proposition that X is the case, whereas knowledge-how is described as an ability (or 'know-how') to perform an action such as Y intelligently in such a way that cannot be expressed in terms of true propositions.² More specifically, Dancy defines particularist moral knowledge as "a skill of discernment, not knowledge of a set of true general propositions discovered by thinking about previous cases and applied somehow to new ones" (Dancy, 2004: 142-143). It is this skill of discernment, as opposed to a list of true moral principles, which forms the basis of Dancy's (2004) account of moral knowledge.

² See Stanley & Williamson (2001: 411)

Again, someone puzzled by the literature on moral particularism might also interject here and reasonably point out that Dancy is merely replacing the question ‘what is moral knowledge?’ with the further question of ‘what is the skill of discernment?’. However, unlike in his answer to the former question, Dancy is quite clear as to what he believes the skill of discernment involves. That is, in terms of what is required to ascertain the relevant features of the case, and how they interact to produce our overall moral judgement, discernment is understood as being a single skill comprised of two interrelated aspects.

More specifically, Dancy (2004: 143) defines the first aspect of the skill of discernment as the ability to identify the overall salience, and evaluative shape, of the moral case at hand. That is to say, one is able to ascertain the moral weight of the different features present in any new situation, and identify whether any enablers or disablers for these features are also present. In regards to the second aspect of discernment, Dancy (ibid) suggests that this comprises our ability to determine how these difference moral reasons interact to produce an answer to the practical question of what is the appropriate action/disposition in this particular case. Although discernment involves two distinct abilities, it is treated as a single skill insofar as the possession of one of these abilities inevitably requires the other. That is, one can’t reasonably be said to possess the ability of ascertaining the right action unless they also know the reason(s) why it is right. And similarly, it would be counter-intuitive to suggest that someone could identify the relevant moral features of a situation and rational weight, but fail to come to a moral judgement.

A Perceptual Account of Particularist Moral Knowledge?

On further examination, someone engaged with this aspect of the existing generalist/particularist literature might also be tempted to claim that, given the particularist's knowledge of moral reason-facts is knowledge of the contingent features of the case at hand, the skill required to identify these reason-facts is a sensory or perceptual one. Insofar as our ability to discern moral reason-facts is concerned with things in the world and how they relate to each other as potential reasons, enablers and/or disablers for action, one might assume that we perceive this knowledge through our senses. Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that the skill through which this knowledge is acquired is also sensory or perceptual.

In suggesting that moral knowledge may in some sense be perceptual, it is generally agreed within the existing particularist literature this does not mean that we possess some kind of special superpower that allows us to sense morally relevant features, and their valence, in the same way that Peter Parker's 'spider-sense' allows him to sense danger.³ As McKeever & Ridge (2006: 77) point out, this understanding of moral perception stretches the metaphor of 'moral vision' too far. Likewise, Dancy is quick to point out that, as he understands it, holism entails that moral reasons function in the same way as other types of reasons and thus "we do not have or need a special moral sense, since moral reasons are not relevantly different from other reasons" (Dancy, 2004: 143).

³ Peter Parker is the secret identity of Spiderman, the main protagonist in the eponymous comic book and film series. After being bitten by a radioactive/genetically enhanced spider, Peter develops a number of super-human abilities. One of which is his 'spider-sense' which allows him to sense danger before the threat actually materialises. This is usually depicted as a pre-cognitive perception or form of sensory stimulation. See Raimi (2002).

However, someone could point out that while we may not acquire moral knowledge through some kind of moral ‘spider-sense’, this need not prohibit the possibility that the particularist’s ability to acquire moral knowledge is sensory or perceptual in nature. Indeed, advocates of perceptual moral knowledge often point out that the picture of moral perception sketched above hinges on misplaced assumptions or inadequate conceptions of what perception actually is (Smith, 2011:57). Although broader questions over the status of perceptual moral knowledge are not the concern of the present project, in order to better understand how Dancy (2004) arrives at this picture of particularist moral knowledge, it may be worth briefly exploring the possibility of discernment as a form of perceptual moral knowledge.

One account of moral perception as a source of moral knowledge is put forward by McGrath (2004) and Cullison (2009). This account defends the possibility of moral perception by arguing from comparisons between cases of moral perception and uncontroversial cases of non-moral perception. The purpose of this, is to suggest that “moral properties are relevantly similar to other complex non-moral properties that we clearly do have knowledge of” (Cullison, 2009: 160). For example, the fact I can perceive a case of torture to be morally wrong, is no different to the fact that I can also reasonably perceive that a philosophical argument is unsound, or that it is time to change my baby son’s nappy.

In contrast to McGrath (2004) and Cullison (2009), Audi (2010) argues in favour of a causal account of moral perception, where the content of our moral perception consists of an action/disposition’s prima facie moral properties. Given that moral perception is not identical to physical perception (Audi, 2010: 87), rather than having direct perception of the injustice of an action, we can perceive prima facie injustice

insofar as we know a priori that feature x of that action implies prima facie injustice. That is to say, whenever an action or disposition causes us to perceive the base properties of injustice, and we are aware a priori that these properties are the bases for injustice, then our perception of these base properties counts as a perception of the injustice of that action/disposition. In such cases, one is able to see that “an injustice is done, where one sees both that injustice is done and sees the deed as unjust” (Audi, 2010: 88).

Although a number of particularists favour a perceptual approach to moral epistemology, Dancy (2004: 144) rejects the idea that our ability to discern the relevant moral features of a case is somehow sensory or perceptual. Once we start to unpick the different models of moral perception on show, it quickly becomes clear why the particularist should abandon moral perception as their primary form of moral epistemology.⁴ For instance, although McDowell (1979) emphasises a perceptual capacity to be sensitive to those normative states of affairs which constitute our moral knowledge, and Vieth & Quante (2010) claim that moral perception is a cognitive and justificatory competence essential to the particularist perspective,⁵ these alternative models of particularism differ from that of Dancy (2004) insofar as they hold specific roles open for moral principles.⁶

Consequently, as Smith (2011) suggests, in rejecting a role for moral principles, advocates of Dancy’s moral particularism may feel compelled to eschew a perceptual account of moral epistemology on the basis that “the very idea of moral perception itself

⁴ See also McKeever & Ridge (2006: 92) and Smith (2011: 61)

⁵ Also see McNaughton (1988) and Garfield (2000).

⁶ For further discussion of the role of principles in McDowell’s particularism see Garfield (2000).

might be unintelligible other than in terms of its being a way of knowing that ultimately needs a non-particularist explanation” (Smith, 2011: 60). For instance, Audi’s (2010) claim that we can perceive the prima facie wrongness of an action hinges on a relationship of entailment between particular actions and particular moral values. That is, when we perceive the prima facie wrongness of an action, we do so because that action is always wrong, regardless of the context in which it is perceived.

While the particularist accepts that x , y , and z , as features of the case at hand, can act as reasons for why ϕ ing here is morally wrong, holism in the theory of reasons dictates that the presence of x , y , or z does not entail the wrongness of ϕ ing (Dancy, 2010: 105). Given the presence of a suitable enabler, ϕ ing could still be morally permissible regardless of the fact that x , y and z are all present. Conversely, ϕ ing could still be morally wrong even if x , y and z are not present. Thus, insofar as moral perception qua perception of prima facie moral properties is dependent on an atomistic (and hence codifiable) picture of reasons, Dancy (2010) rejects Audi’s model of moral perception as the basis of our ability to discern the morally relevant features of a case.

Moreover, even if McGrath (2004) and Cullison (2009) are right in claiming that moral perception is a non-inferential capacity, someone might still draw the conclusion that it is arguably dependent on the existence of moral principles. Blum (1991) for instance points out that although a moral agent’s capacity for perception does provides an epistemological alternative to that proposed by traditional generalist theories, “moral perception is formed and informed by general principles” (Blum, 1991: 702).

This however raises the question of, if our ability to recognise the important moral features of a case is neither perceptual nor sensory, how should the particularist understand and acquire the skill of discernment? For Dancy (2004: 144) the skill of

discerning the appropriate moral features and how they impact on the case is a capacity for judgement which occurs in both the recognition of reasons and the process of making an overall moral verdict. That is, prior to my overall judgement that X is wrong, I may first judge that Y is a relevant feature of the case that disfavors X. Although our senses may be utilised in the process of discerning reasons within new cases, it is our capacity to judge that is concerned with what counts as a reason in this case. That is to say, while I may *see* X, it is my capacity for judgement rather than my visual sense that determines the moral weight of the action in this case. Consequently, one might reasonably ask how Dancy's moral epistemology would benefit from the addition of an account of non-inferential moral perception such as that offered by McGrath (2004). Indeed, a less charitable view here may be to suggest that if we are concerned with discerning the moral weight of an action in a given case, and we are able to do so on the basis of our capacity for judgement, what would be the benefit of introducing a further layer of explanation of this ability?

Other Aspects of Dancy's Account of Particularist Moral Knowledge

In addition to rejecting a sensory/perceptual account of how one recognises the morally important features of the case, Dancy (2004: 144) also denies that there is an appetitive aspect to the particularist's capacity for judgement. In contrast to the Humean view of explaining intentional (and thus moral) action in terms of desire-based reasons as motivation for action, Dancy advocates a realist understanding whereby "a reason must be capable of explaining an action...(and)... no state of the world can motivate us unless it is recognised by the agent" (Dancy, 1995: 13). Although a number of other post-Humean accounts of intentional action have scope for a partially appetitive aspect of the

recognition of reasons,⁷ Dancy (2004) maintains that our capacity for judgement (and vis-a-vis the skill of discernment) is purely cognitive in nature.

In making this claim, Dancy (2004: 145) appeals to a distinction between the recognition and endorsement of a reason whereby the former is distinct from the latter on the grounds that a strong motivation or desire for X does not automatically entail the recognition of X as a strong reason for action.⁸ For example, while I may have a strong desire/motivation to eat an ice cream, I may recognise this as a weak reason for my stealing said ice cream. If this distinction between the recognition and the endorsement of reasons holds, then our capacity for judgement, and thus the skill of discernment, is purely cognitive in nature.

A further aspect of his account moral knowledge is the emphasis Dancy (2004: 146) places on the relationship between the modal status of moral reason-facts and their corresponding epistemology. Although holism in the theory of reasons implies that the particularist's knowledge of basic moral reason-facts is contingent, Dancy (ibid) denies the further implication that the particularist's moral knowledge is known a posteriori, in favour of a contingent a priori alternative. Although the topic of contingent a priori knowledge is a highly contested in contemporary epistemology, a comprehensive overview of this topic is beyond the remit of the present investigation. As we shall see later on, Dancy's description of moral knowledge as both contingent and a priori is often one of the main reasons why his moral particularism brings about a sense of philosophical vertigo. However, I shall leave these wider concerns to one side for now,

⁷ See Dancy's (2004: 145) treatment of both Garrard & McNaughton (1998) and Scanlon (1998).

⁸ See Raz (1986: 141)

and instead focus on outlining how Dancy understands this aspect of his account of moral knowledge.

According to Dancy (2004 & 2008), while particularist moral knowledge is dependent on empirical knowledge of the facts of the case at hand, it doesn't follow that moral knowledge itself is also empirical and thus a posteriori. The reason for this is that the relationship between moral knowledge and our experience of the empirical facts of the case, is one of what Giaquinto (1998) calls "negative dependence". By this, it is meant that although our moral knowledge requires a posteriori knowledge of the case at hand, it is not *grounded* in these a posteriori facts about the case. Rather, our moral knowledge is grounded in the idea that "certain facts stand in a normative relation to something else" (Dancy, 2004: 147). This is not to rule out the possibility that a particular case cannot explicate facts about reasons on the basis that our sensory knowledge is not the grounds for those facts. Indeed, it is only through particular cases that we learn how previously irrelevant features may become morally relevant. Although this knowledge is not a posteriori per se, Dancy (2004: 148) suggests that we shouldn't be alarmed by the idea of contingent a priori moral knowledge, for it is merely a sort of a priori knowledge we are not used to seeing as a priori.

The purpose of this section has been to offer a brief summary of the account of particularist moral knowledge as advocated by Dancy (2004). In rejecting the generalist explanation of moral knowledge as the knowledge of true moral principles, Dancy (2004: 142) adopts a view of moral knowledge as a form of knowledge-how. That is, a special type of contingent a priori knowledge of moral reason-facts acquired through the non-inferential cognitive skill of discernment.

Some Criticisms of Dancy's Account of Moral Knowledge

In this section I shall attempt to elucidate some of the ways in which philosophers engaged with the existing literature on moral particularism have attempted to either refute or defend Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral knowledge. In particular, this section is concerned with McKeever & Ridge's (2006) claim that we should eschew Dancy's picture of particularist moral epistemology on the basis that it is counterintuitive and less plausible than the regulative generalist alternative. For the purposes of this paper, I shall refer to this line of criticism as 'the argument from implausible epistemology'.

In order to get a clearer understanding of the key features of McKeever & Ridge's (2006) criticism of Dancy's (2004) account of moral knowledge, it may be helpful to first briefly set out the salient features of their regulative generalist account of moral knowledge. According to McKeever & Ridge (2006: 159), moral knowledge is comprised of two distinct, and yet interrelated aspects. On the one hand, there is the a priori knowledge of true moral principles such as 'do not ϕ '. And on the other hand, we have a posteriori knowledge of the key, contingent moral facts of the case at hand under which it is appropriate to apply our a priori knowledge of true moral principles.

In terms of the former aspect our moral knowledge, McKeever & Ridge (2006) maintain that such moral principles are said to be known to us a priori insofar as they are known to us as a matter of reason or thought. For instance, someone might claim that we know the moral principle 'do not lie' to be true a priori on the basis that, if everyone were to always lie to get what they wanted in life, nobody would believe what anyone else said to be true. Whereas, in regard to the later aspect our moral knowledge, McKeever & Ridge (2006) assert that our knowledge of the important features of

particular cases where we apply moral principles is known a posteriori insofar as this knowledge is acquired via our sensory/introspective experience of the world. For example, we may know a posteriori that this is an instance of lying insofar as we hear Jones telling Smith that x is the case, and physically see evidence that x is not the case.

Although there are both a priori and a posteriori aspects of moral knowledge considered when we make moral judgements, the key difference between McKeever & Ridge's (2006) account of generalist moral knowledge and the particularist alternative advocated by Dancy (2004) is the former's assertion that the knowledge we arrive at in the conclusions of our moral judgements must always be known a posteriori. It is primarily for this reason that McKeever & Ridge (2006) maintain that regulative generalism offers the superior account of moral knowledge insofar as it "fits well with a plausible account of the epistemology and modality of basic moral facts" (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 158).

The First Form of the Argument from Implausible Epistemology

The first form of McKeever & Ridge's (2006) argument from implausible epistemology is concerned with Dancy's (2004) claim that particularist moral knowledge is known a priori. The crux of this issue centres on the way in which Dancy (2004) sets out his distinction between what counts as a priori knowledge, and what counts as a posteriori knowledge. According to Dancy (2004: 146-147), a posteriori knowledge is that which cannot be known to us without experience, whereas everything else is known to us a priori. For McKeever & Ridge (2006), Dancy's (2004) view, that it is possible to classify a piece of knowledge as a priori on the basis that it is derived from some a priori premise(s), is unreasonable.

In contrast to Dancy (2004), McKeever & Ridge (2006) maintain that the correct way to distinguish between cases of a priori and a posteriori knowledge is to define what counts as a priori knowledge first, and then treat everything else as cases of a posteriori knowledge. In this respect, McKeever & Ridge adhere to the form of the a priori/a posteriori distinction set out by Bonjour (1998: 2), whereby a priori knowledge consists of those beliefs *entirely* justified by reason or pure thought alone, and a posteriori knowledge is concerned with those beliefs *partially* justified by appeal to sensory/introspective experience of the world. Or more specifically, knowledge is to be classified as a priori *if and only if* “its status as knowledge does not depend on its drawing any positive support from a posteriori sources” (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 159).

In separating out moral knowledge into a set of a priori and a posteriori components in this way, McKeever & Ridge (2006) claim that their regulative generalist account of moral knowledge is more attractive than the particularist alternative advocated by Dancy (2004) insofar as it provides a more plausible explanation for our intuition that there is an a priori aspect to moral knowledge. It is however, worth pointing out that McKeever & Ridge’s (2006) criticism of Dancy (2004) here is not the claim that, given Bonjour’s (1998) distinction between a priori/a posteriori, Dancy’s (2004) account of moral epistemology commits the particularist to the view that knowledge of basic moral facts can only be a posteriori. Rather, this form of McKeever & Ridge’s (2006) argument is concerned with the idea that moral knowledge must involve an a priori element, and there is no a priori element available to particularists (Leibowitz, 2014: 46-47). If Bonjour is right to insist on a priori knowledge being

entirely justified by reason/thought alone, then someone could reasonably see why Dancy's account of moral knowledge is likely to bring about a sense of perplexity.

The Second Form of the Argument from Implausible Epistemology

The second form of McKeever & Ridge's (2006) argument from implausible epistemology is concerned with the view that, regardless of whether or not contingent a priori knowledge is possible, none of the existing models of this type of knowledge are able to underpin the picture of particularist epistemology advocated by Dancy (2004). More specifically, the crux of this form of McKeever & Ridge's (2006) criticism is the view that the examples typically offered as cases of contingent a priori knowledge do not "establish knowledge of the right kind of contingencies, or... inspire confidence that we could have enough contingent a priori knowledge to provide a basis for ethics" (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 161).

One such account of contingent a priori knowledge considered by McKeever & Ridge is that put forward by Kripke (1972: 274-275). On Kripke's account, one can know contingent a priori propositions of the form 'the standard metre stick in Paris is one metre long'. On the one hand, this statement is knowable a priori because we grasp the term 'metre' through a fixed reference to the actual object 'the standard metre stick' in the real world. On the other hand, the statement is highly contingent for there may be parallel universes where the standard metre stick is not actually a metre long. Moreover, this claim about the standard metre is also contingent a priori without recourse to possible worlds. That is, someone might know this proposition a priori insofar as we know the meaning of 'metre' and 'the standard metre stick'. However, whether or not the metre bar in Paris is actually a metre long is also contingent because if someone

broke it in two or cut a bit off it, it wouldn't be a metre in length purely by virtue of it being the standard by which the measurement of 'a metre' exists. The metre is now out in the world.⁹

Although someone might find Kripke's (1972) argument persuasive as an example of contingent a priori knowledge, McKeever & Ridge (2006: 162) deny that contingent a priori knowledge of the type described by Kripke is able to underpin the particularist approach to moral knowledge advocated by Dancy (2004). According to McKeever & Ridge (*ibid*), a Kripkean understanding of contingent a priori moral knowledge would commit the particularist to an account of moral knowledge whereby the truth of a moral statement can be derived from semantic rules for its use. Consequently, if the truth of moral statements could be derived entirely from the semantics for using moral concepts, then we could in theory abstract constitutive moral principles from the semantics for moral concepts. For example, if the standard of 'evil' were to be fixed by reference to the reactions of Hitler, then we could abstract from this a moral principle of the form 'whatever Hitler approves of is evil' (McKeever and Ridge, 2006: 162). Moreover, Dancy (2004) also rejects the model of contingent a priori knowledge put forward by Kripke (1972) as the basis of particularist epistemology on the basis that "nobody could suppose that knowledge of a basic moral fact is gained purely by examining one's concepts, nor by thinking about the meanings of words" (Dancy, 2004: 148).

⁹ For further discussion of Kripke's view of contingent a priori knowledge see Bonjour (1998: 12-13).

A second account of contingent a priori knowledge examined by McKeever & Ridge is the case of Hawthorne's (2002) Swampscientist. For Hawthorne (2002), our difficulty in accepting the possibility of contingent a priori knowledge is not a matter of lacking a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for judging whether a piece of knowledge is contingent a priori. Although there is no definitive guidance on what counts as a case of contingent a priori knowledge, we have no "special difficulty in ascribing deeply contingent a priori knowledge" (Hawthorne, 2002: 268). Rather, our feelings of vertigo as to the possibility of contingent a priori knowledge arise because we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the philosophical difficulties associated with this type of knowledge.

In our everyday practice we are generally happy to ascribe knowledge to someone based on a number of reliable methods of belief formation. This willingness to ascribe knowledge is counterbalanced by a reluctance to do so based on the extent to which the case at hand is similar to past cases where it was mistaken to ascribe knowledge. For instance, if I ask a colleague 'who is the President of FIFA?' they may look up the answer on Wikipedia and I might ascribe knowledge to them on this basis. However, I may be reluctant to ascribe knowledge to them if, for example, I remember that records on Wikipedia may contain errors and are often edited maliciously.¹⁰ According to Hawthorne, while the competing intuitions that arise in cases of ascribing contingent a priori knowledge are not significantly different to those of standard cases, we feel more reluctant to ascribe contingent a priori knowledge as it bears no "especially

¹⁰ One famous example of this is the case of FIFA president Sepp Blatter receiving the Order of The Companions of OR Tambo award from the South African government under the name "Joseph Sepp Bellend Blatter" after his Wikipedia entry was sabotaged in 2010. See Wardrop (2010).

salient resemblance to our stereotypes of knowledge from which we project outward” (Hawthorne, 2002: 268).

In response to this, Hawthorne (2002: 269) suggests that if we rethink our approach to knowledge, contingency and the a priori, the idea that contingent a priori knowledge exists is much easier to accept. One such example of how we might consider knowledge to be contingent a priori in one context but not in another is that of the Swampscientist.¹¹ Following a fortuitous coming together of particles, Swampscientist emerges from the swamp with two main sources of information: an innate storehouse which “correctly represents the basic principles of interaction between physical bodies” (Hawthorne, 2002: 252), and a swampwatch. Using the innate storehouse, Swampscientist is able to generate various beliefs such as ‘a lightweight spherical object will move if it is struck by a heavier object’. Likewise, using the swampwatch, Swampscientist is able to tell the time.

The swampwatch and the innate storehouse have two key features in common. First, they were both created by a fortuitous coming together of particles, and second, they both reliably provide correct information. The main difference between the swampwatch and the innate storehouse is that one exists on Swampscientist’s arm, and the other only exists in his head. However, we are intuitively happier to say Swampscientist ‘knows’ what time it is by consulting his swampwatch, but less so to say the beliefs generated by his innate storehouse also count as knowledge.

¹¹ Hawthorne (2002) also offers other examples of different ways of thinking about contingent a priori knowledge - The Deducer and The Explainer.

According to Hawthorne (2002), our prejudice as to whether the different ways Swampscientist generates beliefs qualify as knowledge is based on similarities between the important aspects of the example and our everyday lives. In the case of the swampwatch, we are likely to view Swampscientist's claims as a case of knowledge because of the similarity between this example and our own experience of using a watch. While we are aware that watches may malfunction on occasion, we generally accept that a watch is normally an accurate method of keeping time. Consequently, when someone tells us the time after consulting a watch, we are typically inclined to ascribe knowledge to them. In contrast to this, we are less likely to ascribe knowledge to Swampscientist in the case of the innate storehouse because we judge the value of his claims in a similar way to how we evaluate the work of ordinary scientists. That is, "we do not ascribe knowledge to scientists whose beliefs are not based on sufficient evidence or who have failed to consider relevant alternative theories" (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 165).

While someone may accept Hawthorne's (2002) points regarding our attitude towards the possibility of contingent a priori knowledge, McKeever & Ridge (2006: 163-164) insist that Hawthorne's example of the Swampscientist is incompatible with Dancy's (2004) moral particularism on two grounds. First, insofar as each of the things Swampscientist is said to 'know' can also be known a posteriori, we have no reason to think that any of Swampscientist's claims to knowledge are contingent a priori. Second, Swampscientist's method of knowledge acquisition is inferential and thus incompatible with Dancy's (2004: 101-108) explicit rejection of an inferential model of particularist practical reasoning.

The Final Form of the Argument from Implausible Epistemology

Having suggested that leading contemporary accounts of contingent a priori knowledge are insufficient to underpin Dancy's moral epistemology, McKeever & Ridge (2006) move on to criticise Dancy's (2004) own defence of contingent a priori moral knowledge. This final form of the argument from implausible epistemology is based on what McKeever & Ridge (2006: 165-167) see as significant dissimilarities between Dancy's (2004) account of negative/positive dependence in particularist moral epistemology, and Giaquinto's (1998) original use of this distinction. Although Dancy (2004) takes his particularist epistemology to be influenced by Giaquinto (1998), McKeever & Ridge (2006) identify characteristics of Giaquinto's epistemology of the obvious which imply it is unable to act as a basis for Dancy's (2004) understanding of contingent a priori moral knowledge.

More specifically, the crux of McKeever & Ridge's (2006: 166) main criticism is concerned with why the experience on which these cases of knowledge depend, does not act as the grounds for that knowledge and thus render it a posteriori. For Giaquinto (1998), the paradigm of the type of non-inferential knowledge which constitutes the epistemology of the obvious is the case of Meno's slave. In the *Meno* [82b-84a], Socrates asks one of Meno's slaves how to double the area of a square he has drawn in the ground. When the slave is unable to provide the solution to Socrates' problem, Socrates takes this as proof that the slave knows nothing of the rules of geometry. However, once Socrates draws a few more squares, the slave experiences what Giaquinto (1998) calls an "Aha! Moment" where he suddenly understands it, and agrees with Socrates on the correct method of how to double the area of a square using Pythagoras' theorem.

In the case of Meno's slave, Giaquinto (1998) argues that "those experiences do not serve as reasons or grounds for the belief, because the believing does not depend on the believer's taking the experience to be veridical" (Giaquinto, 1998: 199). That is, his conclusion about Pythagoras' theorem is not undermined by the fact that his experience of Socrates' drawing of squares probably wasn't an experience of technically perfect squares. In this case, the status of the slave's knowledge as a priori is negatively dependent on a posteriori sources.

In contrast to this, in the context of Dancy's understanding of basic moral facts of the type 'X is a reason to ϕ ', a lack of veridicality between my experience of X in case 1 and X in case 2 may lead me to question my belief as to whether X is a reason for anything. For example, assuming I know that X is a reason to ϕ , my knowledge that ϕ may entail/promote X is a posteriori insofar as it depends on an experience (A) of ϕ ing and X. For instance, I may have seen actions similar to ϕ in the past which resulted in X. Unlike Giaquinto's (1998) example of Meno's slave, my believing that X is a reason to ϕ is contingent on my understanding of (A) as veridical. Otherwise, I would have no inclination to think 'X is a reason to ϕ ' is a basic moral fact. Consequently, it would appear as if the status of Dancy's (2004) knowledge of basic moral facts is positively dependent on a posteriori sources, and thus not a case of contingent a priori knowledge in the same way as Giaquinto's (1998) example.

Moreover, McKeever & Ridge (2006: 165) also argue that the type of knowledge learnt by the slave boy in the *Meno* is not the same as the type of knowledge advocated by Dancy (2004). On the one hand, geometrical knowledge is concerned with analytic truths such as the fact that a triangle always has three sides. On the other, "basic moral knowledge is not always obvious or acquired in an 'Aha!' experience" (McKeever &

Ridge, 2006: 166). For instance, we can come to see that an action we previously thought was permissible is actually wrong when it is pointed out by someone else.

Thus far, this section has been concerned with setting out McKeever & Ridge's (2006) argument from implausible epistemology as one indicative example of how the topic of moral knowledge is addressed within the existing particularist literature. For the remainder of this section I shall briefly outline some of the particularist responses to McKeever & Ridge (2006), and suggest why someone might find them problematic.

Responses to McKeever & Ridge in the Existing Literature

One example of the way in which someone engaged with the contemporary generalist/particularist literature on moral knowledge might respond to McKeever & Ridge's (2006) criticism of Dancy (2004) can be seen in Leibowitz (2014). Leibowitz argues that, despite McKeever & Ridge's (2006) claims to the contrary, there are at least two other options available to the particularist as to how they may explain what moral knowledge consists of. One such option Leibowitz claims to be available to Dancy (2004) is the idea that the particularist's contingent a priori moral knowledge may consist of exception-full or defeasible principles.¹²

These defeasible principles would, all-things being equal, be known to be true a priori, but could be 'defeated' by other relevant features present in the case at hand. On this model of defeasible a priori principles, someone could know, for instance, that a principle such as 'lying is wrong' is true a priori, but also that it could be defeated by other more salient features of the case at hand such as who was being lied to, and why

¹² See also Lance & Little (2008) and chapter one of this investigation.

they were being lied to. For instance, one common scenario offered as an example of ‘do not lie’ as a defeasible moral principle is the case of telling a lie to Nazi soldiers during World War II in order to save the life of a Jewish child. In this case, our imperative not to lie is defeated by the fact that, if we were not to lie, the Jewish child would be killed by the soldiers.

According to Leibowitz (2014: 45), the advantage of such defeasible a priori principles as the basis of particularist moral knowledge is that such principles cannot be used to deduce a given action’s normative status, but they can explain and support particular judgements. In this sense, claims such as ‘killing is wrong’ could be known a priori as a generic statement. By ‘generic statement’, Leibowitz has something in mind that is akin to a claim such as “a cheetah can out run a man” whereby *generally* speaking it is true that a cheetah can outrun a man, but it is *not necessarily* true in the same sense that a triangle has three sides is true.¹³ For example, if the cheetah and I were both at our optimal physical condition it is almost certain that the cheetah would be faster than me. However, if I broke the cheetah’s legs before the race I would easily be able to outrun it.¹⁴

The other alternative theory put forward by Leibowitz (2014) is based on the notion of supervenience. Or more specifically, the notion of supervenience (as distinct from resultance) set out by Dancy (2004: 86), rather than the idea of supervenience, as used by Bennett (1995: 19), which incorporates resultance. This is the claim that, a thing’s moral properties supervene on its non-moral properties. More specifically, supervenience is the idea that the moral facts and properties of X are dependent on the

¹³ This example is borrowed from Ziff (1972: 135-136).

¹⁴ For further discussion of this point see McFee (2010: 177-193), and Ziff (1972).

non-moral properties of X in such a way that changes to the moral properties of X can only occur after changes have occurred to the non-moral properties of X.¹⁵

Leibowitz (2014) claims that particularists can have moral knowledge in the form of necessarily true statements such as “(ST1) $\Box \forall x(Gx \rightarrow Mx)$ where x ranges over actions, G is a non-moral property of being in a specific completely defined world-state, and M is a moral property” (Leibowitz, 2014: 46). For Leibowitz (2014), statements of the type (ST1) are a source of knowledge compatible with particularism insofar as they “do not explain the rightness (wrongness) of actions and so... are not generalizations of the kind that generalists claim, and particularists deny, are essential to moral theorizing” (ibid).

However, while Leibowitz’s (2014) defence of particularist epistemology may offer some interesting points for consideration, a philosopher engaged with the contemporary generalist/particularist debate may still find some of his claims problematic. For instance, someone could see his proposed theories of particularist moral knowledge as either superfluous to, or incompatible with the form of particularism advocated by Dancy (2004).

In terms of the former theory, Bergqvist (2009a: 44-70) argues that defeasible principles of the type advocated by Lance & Little (2008) do not add anything to the particularist’s understanding of moral judgement that Dancy’s (2004) notion of default reasons does not already bring to the table. Moreover, while Bergqvist herself holds a more sophisticated view of this literature, someone might conceivably go as far to question the extent to which an account of particularist moral knowledge based on

¹⁵ For a more detailed account of supervenience in the existing literature on moral particularism, see chapter four.

defeasible principles is actually any different to the account of moral knowledge put forward by McKeever & Ridge (2006).

In response to Leibowitz' second alternative theory of particularist moral knowledge, someone may be struck by an apparent contradiction between the claims put forward by Liebowitz and the account of moral knowledge advocated by Dancy (2004). Although Liebowitz suggests a model of moral knowledge based on supervenience principles, it is doubtful whether supervenience principles such as (ST1) could provide a suitable epistemology for Dancy's account of moral particularism. For Dancy, moral properties supervene on non-moral properties in the sense that if action x has moral property A, other actions with *exactly* the same non-moral properties of x will have moral property A. All of an action's supervenience base encompasses "*all the non-moral features of the action, not just those that make it wrong*" (Dancy, 2004: 86).¹⁶ Consequently, given the extremely low probability that a case will arise where *all* of the non-moral properties are identical to a previous case, it is doubtful whether anybody could actually know any general principles generated by supervenience due to their complexity (Dancy, 2004: 88).¹⁷

So far, this chapter has been concerned with setting out an overview of Dancy's account of moral knowledge and some of the ways in which this has been defended/criticised within the existing literature on moral particularism. In the section that follows, I shall move on to explore the topic of particularist moral knowledge through Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy. In doing so, I shall suggest how we can dissolve, rather than solve, the kinds of perplexities encountered in the

¹⁶ Original emphasis.

¹⁷ For a more detail discussion of this point, see chapter four.

contemporary debate on moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism.

An Alternative, Therapeutic, Approach to Thinking about Particularist Moral Knowledge

In this section, I utilise a range of philosophical tools and techniques, found in Baker's later therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy, as an alternative way of engaging with the kinds of philosophical perplexities discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. In doing so, I hope to illustrate, by means of examples, why we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical understanding of doing philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in relation to moral matters. Unlike the existing literature on Dancy's (2004) account of particularist moral knowledge, it is not my intention to try and solve any of the problems raised in the specific debates considered previously. Rather, I will try to show how, in specific cases, we can dissolve these philosophical perplexities by bringing to our attention some possible assumptions which, I maintain, frame the way in which this topic is typically engaged with in the existing literature. By drawing out examples of where these underlying assumptions may clash with our other sensibilities, Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy can help someone liberate themselves from his or her particular philosophical disquiet. This alternative approach to philosophising about moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, is one example in support of my wider claim that there are other possibilities for how we can do moral philosophy, and think about rational argument in this context.

Some Unconscious Pictures that may frame our thinking about Particularist Moral Knowledge

Although I have outlined above some of the various similarities and disagreements on the topic of moral knowledge found within the existing literature on moral particularism, I maintain that there are a number of additional similarities between Dancy (2004) and his interlocutors insofar as their accounts of moral knowledge share a number of underlying assumptions. In contrast to the existing literature, I suggest that we need not see these similarities as evidence of any tacit ground-rules for how we must understand/approach the topic at hand. Instead, it may be more helpful to consider the possibility that these similarities between Dancy (2004) and his interlocutors are indicative symptoms of unconscious pictures of how we ought to do philosophy, which may bring about our puzzlements. By this, I am not claiming to diagnose any specific individual engaged with the existing moral particularism literature as suffering from particular mental cramps or confusions. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the fact that this aspect of how the topic of moral knowledge is discussed in relation to Dancy's moral particularism may strike someone in such a way that gives rise to thought cramps.

In particular, within the literature on moral particularism, one interesting feature common to the different approaches to moral knowledge is that they can be seen as framing the debate between Dancy and his interlocutors in terms of the metaphysical question 'what *is* moral knowledge'. For example, McKeever & Ridge frame their dispute with Dancy by claiming that he "*must* either understand moral knowledge as

straightforward empirical knowledge or hold that moral knowledge *is* contingent a priori” (McKeever & Ridge, 2006: 139).¹⁸

A possible consequence of framing philosophical problems about knowledge in terms of a metaphysical inquiry, such as that seen within the literature on moral particularism, is that the questions we may be drawn to ask give “a particular direction to philosophical enquiry, diverting attention from concrete cases (BB: 20) and [generate] dissatisfaction with what is ordinarily called ‘knowledge’” (Baker, 2004: 102). In contrast to the existing moral particularism literature, I maintain that this dissatisfaction need not be seen as a result of our not yet having discovered the correct account of moral knowledge. Rather, it may be more helpful to think of this similarity as being seen as symptomatic of someone being held captive by unconscious assumptions of how we must think about exploring this topic.

One way in which someone may be held captive by the former kind of unconscious assumption, is by thinking our puzzlement occurs because we are unable to find the “form of expression which fulfils a certain craving of the metaphysician which our ordinary language does not fulfil” (BB: 55). That is to say, because we have framed our concerns around moral knowledge as a metaphysical question, we may also feel compelled to find a solution to this puzzlement that also treats knowledge as something metaphysical. Given that there may be cases where we talk about knowing something as being a state of our mental apparatus, or as involving something going on inside our brain which is a manifestation of that knowledge,¹⁹ we may come to see knowledge as being something that is physically manifested in the brain. For example, in discussing

¹⁸ Emphasis added.

¹⁹ See PI §149 and PI §363.

how certain areas of the brain may flash on an MRI scanner when a patient is asked to recall mathematical facts, we may be tempted to see knowledge as being the firing of particular neurons in our brain in a certain way. Moreover, we could also come to see this picture as metaphorical, whereby knowledge is thought of *as if* it were an object that we can see, and possess in the same way that we might possess a book. For instance, in talking about activities such as teaching or knowledge transfer, we often describe cases where knowledge is said to be shared between individuals or imparted from one organisation to another, as if it were the same kind of activity as transferring a book off the shelf and into a bag.

Similarly, someone might equally be held captive by the latter kind of unconscious assumption that the topic of moral knowledge is something that *must* be explored in a particular way. One way this might occur is if we are struck by a similarity in the surface grammar between the metaphysical question ‘what is moral knowledge?’ and a scientific question such as ‘what is this unknown chemical?’. Insofar as these two examples grammatically appear to be asking the same type of question, i.e. what *is* X, it may be tempting to assume that both questions must be investigated in the same way. Given that a scientist can tell us that unknown substance X is H₂O by discovering its essence is a particular mix of hydrogen and oxygen, the above similarity in our surface grammar may lead someone engaged with the moral particularist literature to see the question ‘what is moral knowledge’ as one that must be approached by discerning the essence of moral knowledge.

Although there is no finite totality of possible unconscious assumptions that frame how we may philosophise about moral knowledge, I maintain that those I have briefly sketched here are sufficient for the purpose of this investigation, insofar as they

are indicative of the types of unconscious pictures that may strike someone engaged with this aspect of Dancy's moral particularism. In what follows, I shall now move on to illustrate by means of an example, some of the tools and techniques Baker (2004) offers us as a means to liberate ourselves from such unconscious pictures.

Bringing Words Back from their Metaphysical to their Everyday Use.

In his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later remarks, Baker (2004: 92-107) identifies the idea of bringing words "back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (PI §116) as one useful technique for dissolving the kind of problems that occur when philosophers try to grasp the 'essence' of things such as knowledge. In order to illustrate how this technique may offer a more helpful way of thinking about moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's moral particularism, we must first clarify the way in which Baker (2004) understands Wittgenstein's use of the terms 'metaphysical' and 'everyday' in this remark.

Given that Wittgenstein (PI §116) treats the terms 'metaphysical' and 'everyday' use as polar opposites, Baker (2004: 94) suggests that one way of understanding the contrast between these terms is as an antithetical pairing, where our grasp of one term is derived from the negative of the other. In this sense, it may be useful to consider 'metaphysical' and 'everyday' as cases of what Austin (1962) calls "trouser-words".²⁰ Trouser-words can roughly be understood as those concepts whose primary meaning is negatively derived by contrasting them with their opposite. For example, it only makes sense to consider the meaning of the word 'free' when we contrast it with what we mean

²⁰ For examples of 'trouser-words' see Austin's (1962: 70) discussion of the 'real'/'unreal' distinction, and Culbertson's (2007) discussion of 'human'/'inhuman'.

in this case by ‘unfree’. That is, when we describe someone as being ‘free’ here we could mean in the sense that ‘they are not imprisoned’, or that ‘they are available to talk’, etc.²¹

In contrast to the orthodox reading of Wittgenstein’s remark, where the everyday use of a concept is defined as those utterances that accord with the regular patterns of a language’s native speaker and all other usage is metaphysical, Baker (2004: 100) sees the term ‘everyday use’ as referring to all other uses of our language which fall outside of the traditional metaphysical sense. In other words, Baker (ibid) sees ‘metaphysical use’ as the dominant leg in this pair of trousers, while ‘everyday use’ is not limited to those utterances which adhere to standard speech acts. Consequently, whereas an orthodox reader of Wittgenstein such as Hacker may see this technique as concerned with identifying where a philosopher is speaking nonsense,²² and eradicating their misguided metaphysical uses by issuing reminders of the ordinary use of our concepts,²³ Baker’s technique of bringing words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use is concerned with persuading someone to abandon their metaphysical view of concepts like knowledge, by drawing attention to other possibilities of how this term can be used.

If we look at some of the disparate ways in which we use the verb ‘to know’ in our everyday practice, it appears odd to assume there is a singular essence of moral knowledge. Let us consider the following examples from Wittgenstein (PI §78): first,

²¹ See (Austin, 1962: 15 fn2)

²² On the orthodox reading, ‘nonsense’ here does not refer to abstract gibberish such as ‘gryhp ning nang nong’ but those uses of language that transgress the bounds of sense such as ‘what is it like to be a tree?’

²³ See Baker & Hacker (1980: 525-526).

when we say that we know a statistical fact such as how high Mont Blanc is; second, when we say we know how to do something such as use the word ‘game’ appropriately; and finally, when we know what something sounds like such as the noise produced by a clarinet. When asked to demonstrate that we know these things, we may respond by uttering ‘Mont Blanc is X feet high’, ‘you can use the word “game” when talking about football in a certain way’, and ‘a clarinet sounds like *this *makes clarinet noise**’.

Although we quite happily use the term ‘knowledge’ to describe the fact I can tell you ‘Mont Blanc is X feet high’, ‘the term game can be use to describe football’ and ‘a clarinet sounds like *this*’, it is difficult to see any obvious connection between these cases which unify their status as knowledge. That is, it is difficult to discern any obvious candidate for the essence of knowledge from these quite disparate uses of the word, let alone one which may act as the appropriate standard against which we are to adjudicate the competing accounts of moral knowledge put forward within the existing literature on moral particularism.

A Neglected Aspect of Moral Knowledge

If the above idea of bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use is unpersuasive in persuading someone to leave behind their perplexities around moral knowledge in relation to Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism, it is important to remember that there is no intrinsic link between this topic and the particular tools and techniques I have suggested to help liberate someone from his or her puzzlement. Rather than abandoning Baker’s alternative, therapeutic approach to philosophy, and returning to the existing literature’s goal of trying to develop some alternative metaphysical theory moral knowledge that is compatible with Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism, I maintain

that there are other therapeutic tools/techniques which may be equally or more useful for dissolving one's concerns.

An alternative, therapeutic, technique that may be useful here, is to draw attention to neglected aspects of the ways in which we use the term 'knowledge' in our everyday practice. In particular, one neglected aspect of our use of this term that may be helpful here is the fact that, within our everyday language use, we often express moral knowledge about particular cases in propositional language of the form 'I know it was wrong for A to ϕ at t_1 because x'. For example, I may state that I know 'it was wrong to steal the toys yesterday because they were a present for the orphans'.

Although Dancy (2004) and his critics insist that holism in the theory of reasons, and the non-codifiability thesis, entails that particularist moral knowledge cannot be propositional, I maintain that propositional moral knowledge of this type identified above need not undermine the particularist position. First, we are talking about knowledge *of* a particular case, and there need not be anything about this case which entails that it has some special status as a prototype/exemplar from which we can/should extrapolate a general principle. Second, insofar as it is knowledge *of a particular case*, it is always known to us post-hoc. That is, we know it as the *result* of our moral judgement about the particular case, rather than something that we bring with us to the task of making our moral judgement. Again, there need not be anything strange or disquieting about this use of the term 'knowledge', for we can, and do, go on operating with it as such within our everyday practice.

Moreover, in trying to persuade an advocate of Dancy's moral particularism to remain open to this alternative picture of moral knowledge, we could also draw closer attention to a similarity between this description of post-hoc propositional knowledge

and how Dancy (1993: 111-113) likens the activity of giving reasons to a form of narrative explanation. According to Dancy, when we give reasons for why things are just so in a given case of moral judgement “what we are doing is telling the story of the situation” (Dancy, 1993: 112). For example, if I tell a co-worker not to falsify their expenses as that would be theft, this need not entail me subsuming this action under some general principle such as ‘theft is wrong’. Rather, we can see it as a narrative explanation of the case at hand where I am drawing their attention to the salient features present here (i.e. he is not entitled to make fictitious claims to public money). More specifically, as Dancy (1993: 113) once remarked:

In giving those reasons one is not *arguing* for one’s way of seeing the situation. One is rather appealing to others to see it... the way one sees it oneself, and the appeal consists in laying out that way as persuasively as one can. The persuasiveness here is the persuasiveness of narrative: an internal coherence in the account which compels assent. We succeed in our aim when our story sounds right. Moral justification is therefore not subsumptive in nature, but narrative.

There is an important caveat here. In drawing attention to neglected aspects of how we use the term ‘knowledge’, and offering alternative pictures as a means of showing where, in specific cases, the kinds of assumptions underlying the existing particularism literature on this topic clash with our other sensibilities, this section has presented Baker’s therapeutic conception of philosophy, as a genuine alternative to the traditional/theoretical understanding of doing philosophy, and what counts as rational philosophical argument about moral matters.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this chapter has been to use the contemporary debate on moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's moral particularism, as a backdrop for illustrating why I maintain that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical view of how philosophy ought to be done, or what rational argument consists of in the context of moral philosophy. For this purpose, I have used tools and techniques found in Baker's therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, as a means of dissolving, rather than solving, some indicative examples of the kinds of perplexities someone might experience in relation to the contemporary debates around moral knowledge and Dancy's moral particularism. More specifically, I have addressed this task by drawing attention to the kind of underlying assumptions that may frame how we think about the question 'what is moral knowledge' in the context of Dancy's (2004) particularist conception of morality. In particular, I have offered an alternative picture of particularist moral knowledge, for the purpose of liberating someone from the assumption that the question 'what is moral knowledge' is a metaphysical question, and must be answered as such.

CHAPTER SIX
DANCY'S MORAL PARTICULARISM THROUGH
BAKER'S CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY:
SOME REMARKS ON RATIONAL ARGUMENT IN
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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As we have seen, despite the significant influence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy on the development of moral particularism, the existing literature on Dancy's account of this view is typically grounded in a traditional/theoretical conception of how we ought to do philosophy, and what rational argument must entail. On the one hand, critics of the particularist view such, as McKeever & Ridge (2006), typically frame their dispute with Dancy (2004) in terms of metaphysical questions about how we must understand the essence of morality. On the other hand, advocates of moral particularism, such as Salay (2008), have sought to buttress Dancy's (2004) position by setting out traditional philosophical arguments as to why moral generalism is wrong, and/or theoretical explanations for why morality cannot be a principled endeavour.

In contrast to the existing literature on moral particularism, I have purposely avoided offering any theories to replace, challenge, or support those set out by Dancy (2004). Instead, the purpose of the previous chapters has been to draw attention to the possibility that we can dissolve the sense of puzzlement generated by the idea that we ought to find a theoretical solution to explain the relationship between Dancy's (2004) moral particularism and our understanding of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge. In using the later Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy as an alternative means of exploring these topics in relation to Dancy's moral particularism, what my previous chapters show is that there are

other possible conceptions of rational argument that can dissolve, rather than solve, the problems that have arisen in the existing moral particularism literature as a consequence of our being held captive by an unconscious picture of what counts as rational argument, and a conception of how we must do philosophy, that we need not be committed to.

Having acknowledged the possibility that there is at least one alternative way of doing moral philosophy and thinking about what counts as rational argument in this context, this chapter moves on to consider some implications and criticisms of my overall claim that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, or what rational argument in moral philosophy entails. In the first part of this chapter, I outline some possible implications for a Dancy-style moral particularism. In particular, I offer two new options available to advocates of Dancy's particularism, were they to accept the methodological suggestions outlined in this project, and consider the extent to which they may, or may not, accept them.

In the second part of this chapter, I set out a brief, critical, discussion of some general objections to my overall project. The first objection I shall consider here is the view that it *is* possible to give explanatory theories as to what moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge must entail. A second objection to my wider project, is the accusation that analysing these topics through Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy is an intellectually vacuous exercise, in the sense that any insights gained are only true because I haven't actually made any philosophical claims. In responding to these criticisms, I shall draw attention to particular features of Baker's approach to doing philosophy, as well as objects of comparison from other areas of practice, for the purpose of illustrating that we can rationally dissolve the kinds of problems encountered in moral philosophy.

Some implications for a Dancy-Style Moral Particularism

Given his Wittgensteinian influences, someone might reasonably suggest that, the kinds of things Dancy (2004) typically says about moral matters are, in a sense, consistent with what an advocate of Baker's therapeutic philosophy may also want to say about morality. For example, on a charitable reading of his later work, Dancy (2004) is only arguing that there *need not* be moral principles, in response to critics who insist that morality *must* be a principled endeavour. As I have suggested in this project, the point of departure between Dancy and I, is primarily a methodological one. Whereas Dancy (2004) has gone about advocating and defending his views within the context of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy and rational argument, I have argued, by means of worked examples, that we need not be committed to this way of doing moral philosophy, and there are other conceptions of rational argument about moral matters. If an advocate of Dancy-style moral particularism is persuaded by my claim that we need not adhere to the methodological constraints in the existing moral particularism literature, then this project also opens up new possibilities for how someone might re-orientate their thinking through Baker's conception of therapeutic philosophy. In what follows, I shall briefly consider two methodological suggestions which I maintain may be of benefit to someone sympathetic to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism.

Dancy's Moral Particularism as an Alternative Picture of the Moral Landscape

The first methodological suggestion I shall offer here, is the possibility that we need not think of Dancy's position as an explanatory theory in moral metaphysics. Instead, an alternative suggestion might be to see the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) as one (of many) alternative picture(s) of the moral landscape, for

the purpose of liberating us from the generalist dogmas of how the moral must be understood. At this point, a critic of my project might reasonably raise an objection to this suggestion by arguing that all I have done here is change how I am describing Dancy's (2004) moral particularism. In response to this concern, it may be useful to assemble a reminder here of what Baker's (2004) notion of offering alternative pictures entails. For Baker (2004), a picture is not an argument or theory about what the essence of a thing *must* be like. Rather, it is akin to a way of seeing something in the same sense that a photograph presents *one* way of seeing what has been photographed.¹ It is a representation of something, from a particular perspective, which may highlight one or more of its aspects, while simultaneously hiding others from view.

Culbertson (2015) offers a particularly useful example of this notion of aspect-seeing in his discussion of the various ways in which we can view a Cruyff turn in football. Devised by Dutch footballer Johan Cruyff, the Cruyff turn is an evasive trick where an attacking player feints a passing move, only to use his or her striking foot to drag the ball behind his or her standing leg, before turning 180 degrees and moving away from an opposing player. According to Culbertson (2015: 14), drawing attention to a particular aspect of the Cruyff turn allows us to appreciate it in different ways. For example, by drawing attention to the biomechanical movements involved in executing this move, we can see the Cruyff turn as a football technique that can be learned or taught to others. Likewise, by highlighting the ease and grace of how Cruyff used this technique to bypass his opponents, we may appreciate it as beautiful or ingenious.

¹ See Baker (2004: 264).

An important caveat here is that “appreciating the Cruyff turn in one of those ways is not a denial of other possible ways of appreciating it (or, at least, it need not be)” (Culbertson, 2015: 14). As Baker (2004: 185) rightly points out, it doesn’t make sense to try and refute a picture as they can be neither correct nor incorrect. They just represent different aspects of the same thing. If I wish to persuade this individual to let go of one conception (i.e. that the Cruyff turn can only be appreciated aesthetically), what I need here is not stronger arguments, but to offer him or her a second, alternative, picture which draws his or her attention to other features. Thus, in the case of someone who insists that we can only appreciate a Cruyff turn aesthetically, I might for instance draw attention to particular biomechanical features of the technique to try and bring some of its other aspects to the fore. An important caveat here is that, in offering an alternative picture (i.e. a biomechanical description of the Cruyff turn), I am not replacing the first, and could equally offer the former picture as a means of combating the view of the latter.

In offering the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004), as one alternative picture of the moral landscape, my aim here is to dissolve someone’s cravings for metaphysical theories of what morality must be like, as opposed to replacing “one mythology of symbolism by another parallel theory” (Baker, 2004: 27). That is to say, I am not trying to replace an incorrect theory of morality with the correct one. Instead, as Baker (2004: 189) writes:

The decisive move is to sell the interlocutor some problem-dissolving alternative picture or analogy that he will acknowledge to be no less well ‘justified’ than his original unconscious one. Surrounding things with new possibilities has the power to dramatically change how things look to us.

For Baker (2004), the purpose of offering alternative pictures as a means of combating the unconscious pictures that hold us captive in our philosophical disquiets is not to refute mistaken pictures of how things must be.² Rather, it is to get us to recognise that, in thinking of something as a picture, we are also acknowledging the possibility of other pictures of what we are thinking about, and thus become liberated from whatever dogmatism is holding us prisoner.

At this point, it may be helpful to illustrate why we need not see this idea of thinking about Dancy's (2004) moral particularism in other ways as somehow problematic. One way of doing this is through a comparison with another form of moral particularism, such as that attributed to McDowell (1979). In offering the version of moral particularism found in McDowell's moral philosophy as an object of comparison for my reading of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism through Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy, I maintain that we need not see this alternative conception of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism as something strange, but rather as a neglected aspect of his view inherited from McDowell, which disappears in his later work.

Having illustrated the influence of McDowell's work on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism in chapter one, it is not my intention to give a comprehensive comparison of every aspect of these views.³ What will suffice for the task at hand is to draw attention to some of the differences and similarities of their projects and approaches to doing philosophy. One important area where Dancy and McDowell are similar in some respects, yet differ in others, is the influence of Wittgenstein on their conception of philosophy. As we have seen in chapter one, the later work of

² See Baker (2004: 157 & 184-190), Morris (2004: 10) as well as chapters two and three.

³ For an extensive, detailed, analysis of the relationship between the accounts of moral particularism advocated by Dancy and McDowell, see Smith (2011).

Wittgenstein has had a significant impact on the moral philosophy of Dancy and McDowell. In particular, their shared commitment to the non-codifiability of the moral landscape draws heavily on a therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein developed by Cavell (1969 & 1979).

However, despite this initial similarity, we have seen in previous chapters how Dancy is like the vast majority of other philosophers working in contemporary meta-ethics insofar as he can be thought of as writing in a traditional/theoretical academic style in the sense that he sets out arguments, and makes assertions about what is the case. For example, in *Ethics Without Principles*, Dancy (2004) takes his project to be an exercise in moral metaphysics concerned with identifying the right-making relation, as opposed to a project in moral epistemology and methodology. In particular, Dancy describes his account of moral particularism as a doctrine in meta-ethical theory (Dancy, 2004: 190). This explicit focus on moral metaphysics, rather than epistemology, marks an important difference with both his previous work *Moral Reasons*, and the moral philosophy of McDowell.

In contrast to Dancy, McDowell is not generally in the business of setting out anything like “a ‘position’ or ‘theory’.... which can be promoted as the successful outcome once its rivals... have been defeated” (de Gaynesford, 2004: 11). Rather, McDowell adopts what de Gaynesford (2004: 12) describes as a “destructive”, as opposed to “constructive”, method of philosophy, whereby he destroys problematic theories by drawing attention to their internal inconsistencies as opposed to setting out replacement theories. In a sense, McDowell’s (1994 & 1998) approach to doing philosophy can be seen, as akin to that of the later Baker (2004) insofar as they are both described as ‘therapeutic’ on the basis that they are concerned with dissolving rather than solving philosophical disputes. However, it is important to note that what

McDowell and the later Baker take this idea of dissolving a problem to involve differs significantly. The later Baker (2004: 155 & 164) sees the task of dissolving a particular problem as making it disappear so that, for the moment and for these reasons, it no longer puzzles a particular confused individual. In contrast to this, McDowell's view of dissolving a philosophical problem is often taken to be a matter of destroying a particular erroneous position from within (DeGaynesford, 2004: 12).

While it is important to recognise that, as pointed out in chapter two, the scope, scale and purpose of the therapy at play in McDowell (1994 & 1998) and Baker's (2004) approaches to philosophy is significantly different,⁴ an alternative, therapeutic, approach to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism need not be seen as anything strange in comparison to the existing moral particularism literature. However, the extent to which Dancy himself would accept my methodological suggestion here is another question. According to McFee (2015b: 25 & 29), the conception of philosophy Baker identifies in Wittgenstein's later work is radically person, and context, specific, in the sense of what Charles Travis (2008) has called "occasion sensitivity". Although Dancy, Baker, and Travis share a common influence in Wittgenstein, the radical contextualism of Travis' notion of "occasion sensitivity" does not fit neatly with the particularist account of meaning advocated by Dancy (2004). In particular, although Dancy's (2004) conception of defaults can, in a sense, be seen as high context-sensitive, it is nowhere near as radically contextual as the view of occasion-sensitivity advocated by Travis, McFee, or Baker. This is not to say that Dancy-style particularism is incompatible with Travis' occasion-sensitivity.⁵ Rather, my point here is to acknowledge that, while it may be an attractive option for

⁴ Also contrast Morris' (2004) overview of Baker's philosophical therapy, with de Gaynesford's (2004: 15) description of the form of therapy found in the work of McDowell.

⁵ For example, Bergqvist (2009a) offers an alternative, particularist theory of meaning that is influenced by both Dancy and Travis.

advocates of Dancy-style particularism, it is unlikely that Dancy himself would welcome the particular methodological suggestion I have outlined above.

Abandoning Dancy's Appeals to Cognitive Science

A second methodological suggestion that this project offers to advocates of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, is to recommend that they abandon the kinds of appeals to cognitive science advocated by Dancy (1999 & 2004) and Salay (2008), and instead, draw attention to examples of how our language operates in concrete cases, as a means of dissolving their philosophical disquiets. As we have seen in chapter four, attempts to buttress Dancy's moral particularism by presenting theories found in the cognitive sciences have, at best, done very little to break the stalemate between Dancy and his critics in the debate on conceptual learning. At worst, the attempts to explain particularist conceptual learning in terms of connectionist networks, case-based reasoning, and prototype theory, have arguably undermined Dancy's position, given the fact that they all depend, to some extent, on the existence of underlying principles or patterns.

Although this methodological suggestion would entail advocates of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism rejecting, what is arguably the centrepiece of, their existing response to the kinds of criticisms made by constitutive generalists like Jackson et al (2000), I maintain that this is an attractive option. One reason in support of this claim is to draw attention to the fact that Dancy's original motivation for appealing to cognitive science was the assumption that it would appear odd not to provide a naturalist account of particularist conceptual learning.⁶ One can be sympathetic to a Dancy-style moral particularism without requiring it to be grounded

⁶ See Dancy (1999: 65-66).

in a naturalist metaphysics, and, as Dancy (ibid) acknowledges, we might, given our Wittgensteinian influences, reasonably say that naturalists can look after themselves. Despite Rosch & Mervis' (1975: 603) claim that their research into prototype theory is empirical confirmation of Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblances,⁷ rejecting this overtly scientific approach to philosophy, in favour of Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, would be more consistent with Dancy's original Wittgensteinian influences, than his appeal to the cognitive sciences. Consequently, in contrast to my first methodological suggestion, I maintain that my idea of abandoning the kinds of appeals to cognitive science discussed in chapter four, is one that Dancy may remain open to.

In this section, I have attempted to clarify some of the implications of my project for a Dancy-style moral particularism. In particular, I have identified two plausible methodological suggestions which I maintain may be attractive to advocates of Dancy's (2004) account of moral particularism. In doing so, I have also briefly considered the extent to which Dancy may remain open to these methodological points. In what follows, I shall set out a brief, critical, discussion of some general objections to my overall project.

Some general objections to this project.

In this section, I shall respond to, what I maintain are, the two most likely objections to my claim that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. In responding to these lines of objection, it is not my intention to try and replace one way of thinking about how we understand philosophy and rational argument about

⁷ See chapter four, p140.

moral matters, with another. Rather, the aim of this section is to persuade someone to the plausibility of the wider claim of this project, by emphasising the fact that, when faced with someone who insists that only one course of action or explanation is possible, the act of pointing out that there are other, plausible, alternatives is at least as equally rational a way of rejecting or refuting a claim, as the methods found in the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy.

“But I can show why it must be like this...”

The first line of objection to my overall project is the claim that it *is* possible to give explanatory theories as to what moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge must entail. One way of thinking about this line of objection is the idea that someone could challenge the insights suggested in chapters three, four, and five by offering theoretical arguments as to why moral knowledge must be like *this*, moral competence cannot be like *that*, and/or we ought to have a scientific explanation of our ability to tell the difference between right and wrong. For example, an advocate or critic of Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism may attempt to undermine my discussion in chapters three, four, or five by setting out arguments in response to the alternative pictures I have offered. In particular, I anticipate such arguments to typically take the form “if that is like this,... then this is like that..., and this is like that..., but that means we face the following problem(s)” (Culbertson, 2015: 6). If an individual is not persuaded by the particular alternative picture I have offered in a previous chapter, they may be tempted to set out traditional philosophical arguments as to why we should reject my view that there are other possibilities which may dissolve the problem at hand, and/or offer a competing theory of how things must be.

In response, I set out to show why the rejection of a particular alternative picture need not undermine my view that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy, or how we understand rational argument in moral philosophy. This can be achieved by issuing a reminder of Baker's (2004) notions of person-relativity, and the interlocutor as an active participant, as well as offering objects of comparison from other areas of human practice where the rejection of one possibility does not entail that there is a problem with this kind of therapeutic approach. In drawing these comparisons, my aim here is to dissolve the puzzlement that may lead to the type of argument described above, rather than illustrating further alternative pictures of how we could conceive of moral competence, conceptual learning, and/or moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's moral particularism.

One of the key themes of Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy as therapy is his notion of person-relativity, i.e. the idea that "every philosophical problem is *someone's* problem" (Baker, 2004: 131).⁸ As we have seen in chapter two, Baker (2004) takes philosophical problems to be the thought-cramps of particular individuals in the sense that, although an individual can be puzzled in the same way for different reasons at different times, different people can also be puzzled in different ways for different reasons, at the same time, or at different times. Baker (2004) also places significant emphasis on how the philosopher is virtually unrestricted in the choice of philosophical tools, techniques, and examples that may be used to liberate someone from that which is puzzling them.

An important corollary of these two aspects of the later Baker's (2004) view of philosophy is that there is no finite totality of ways in which someone could be

⁸ See also Baker (2004: 68, 210 & 213), Morris (2004: 6).

puzzled, how we could persuade them to walk away from a particular position of their own accord once they see it as problematic, or ways in which we could fail to achieve this.⁹ As Morris (2004) rightly points out, it cannot be a matter of mechanically applying some algorithmic process to change someone's way of seeing what is perplexing them. The range of ways in which we can achieve this reorientation of someone's view of something is akin to the number of "methods for getting someone to perceive a hitherto unnoticed aspect in an ambiguous drawing. And they are as little guaranteed of success" (Morris, 2004: 11). Even if we do manage to find a philosophical tool/technique that alleviates a particular person's perplexity on a given occasion, Baker's later therapeutic approach to doing philosophy is essentially an always ongoing activity. While a philosopher may liberate one individual from their specific puzzlement using a particular tool/technique, other people may continue to suffer from the same puzzlement, or develop new problems (Baker, 2004: 210).

However, despite the fact that the highly individual, person-relative view of philosophy advocated by Baker (2004) acknowledges the fact that not every type or instance of therapeutic treatment works all of the time,¹⁰ this need not entail that there is something wrong with this approach to philosophy or that it is unable to alleviate any sense of puzzlement someone might experience when thinking about Dancy's (2004) moral particularism. For instance, if one particular alternative picture or object of comparison does nothing for someone's thought-cramps, they may still be able to benefit from these philosophical techniques. As Baker (2004) helpfully points out just as "a comparison which is illuminating for one purpose may be unhelpful or even obfuscating in another context... a pair of seemingly inconsistent

⁹ See McFee (2004: 51-52) & McFee (2010: 177-193).

¹⁰ See also Baker (2004: 147).

analogies may facilitate grasping different aspects of a single thing” (Baker, 2004: 69).¹¹ A philosopher can always go on offering new objects of comparison or alternative pictures to someone until they find one that does the job in the case at hand.

Moreover, if offering different examples of a particular tool/technique doesn't appear to be relieving a particular individual's puzzlement, there are other possibilities open to advocates of Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy. In addition to trying the same tool/technique with different examples of drawing attention to different aspects of what someone finds puzzling, we could utilise one or more of the vast range of other philosophical tools or techniques for this purpose. For example, if someone was not persuaded by my use of alternative pictures to try and dissolve their sense of puzzlement around say moral competence in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, I could instead try using Baker's (2004) technique of bringing the term 'competence' back from its metaphysical use to its everyday use. That is, I could persuade someone to let go of his or her metaphysical view of competence as some kind of platonic form or essence common to all instances of competence, by drawing attention to some of the ways we use the word 'competence' in our everyday practice. In doing so, I could show that there need not be a single common essence, by comparing why we use the term competent in different cases such as a competent racing driver, a competent speaker of the English language, and a competent use of colour.

This does not imply that there is any kind of hierarchy amongst the ways in which a philosophical disquiet can be dissolved. Indeed, the very idea of a hierarchy of treatments here would not make sense given the highly person-relative nature of

¹¹ See also Kuusela (2008: 93-94).

Baker's later conception of both philosophical problems, and his approach to their treatment. No philosophical tool or technique is superior to another, we just find them to be more or less appropriate than each other in particular cases, and what matters here is whether a philosophical tool/technique is able to help someone in the case at hand.

In a sense, the way in which a therapist may utilise various methods to cure someone suffering from a disorder such as severe depression is a useful object of comparison for Baker's (2004) notion of being able to use other tools and techniques to suit the needs of a particular interlocutor as well as his or her specific problem.¹² In the case of someone suffering from a disorder such as depression, the possibility that an initially prescribed form of treatment may not have worked for a particular patient in a given situation does not normally raise any concern about whether the approach to his or her treatment is flawed. Instead, we typically acknowledge and accept that a particular treatment might not work for the particular patient and his or her individual problem in this case, and, when this occurs, it need not be due to a fault of the treatment, but rather the fact that what may be needed here is a different approach.

If we are happy with the conception of rationality involved in using this kind of therapeutic approach to treating cases of a disorder such as depression, it is reasonable to suggest that we at least remain open to the possibility that "this too seems an intelligible point of view on diseases of the intellect" (Baker, 2004: 131). In offering the treatment of a disorder like depression as an object of comparison for how Baker suggests we treat philosophical problems, I propose that if we

¹² See Baker (2004: 131 & 153-154).

acknowledge the former to be a rational approach to treating an individual's personal problems, we need not see the latter as any different *in this sense*.

Thus far, I have set out to illustrate why a critic's rejection of a particular alternative picture offered in chapters three, four, and/or five need not lead us into seeking a competing theory of how we must understand a particular aspect of Dancy's (2004) moral particularism. In doing so, I have drawn attention to the importance of person-relativity for Baker's later conception of philosophy as therapy. However, as there is no guarantee that a critic may be persuaded by this, I shall now move on to issue a reminder of Baker's (2004) emphasis on the importance of the relationship between the philosopher and his or her interlocutor.

In chapter two, I highlighted how in contrast to many orthodox Wittgensteinians, and contemporary analytic philosophers, the later Baker (2004) invites his interlocutor to actively engage in sympathetic open-ended dialogue about that which is perplexing him or her. According to Baker (2004: 152) the task of the philosopher is therefore not one of engaging in dialogue with an individual suffering from deep-rooted intellectual puzzlement for the purpose of pointing out flaws in their position, or forcing them to accept a particular view as the correct one. Instead, the aim of this dialogue is to help the interlocutor come to see that their way of seeing what has been perplexing them has become framed by an unconscious picture or analogy of how they must approach the topic at hand. Baker's treatment for this puzzlement, is to persuade the interlocutor to recognise these unconscious pictures *as pictures*, and in doing so acknowledge the existence of other ways of thinking about that which is perplexing them.

More specifically, in drawing attention to the way in which Baker (2004) sees the relationship between the philosopher and his or her interlocutor, what is

important for present purposes is an often neglected aspect of his therapeutic approach to philosophy. The idea of liberating the interlocutor from his or her puzzlement is not merely a matter of convincing them to abandon a previously held view, but one's *voluntarily* acknowledgement of other possibilities as an *active* participant in the dialogue with the philosopher. For Baker (2004: 181), the idea of the interlocutor as an active participant in the therapy is essential to his conception of doing philosophy. This is not just in the sense of being a pre-requisite for the therapeutic activity, but as "a criterion of correctness for the diagnosis" (Morris, 2004: 8). For instance, insofar as it is the interlocutor's personal, philosophical problem, they have jurisdiction over how they are using particular expressions that may either lead them into or out of their perplexity.

Moreover, although a therapeutic philosopher can use various techniques to problematise the view that x is the only way, or we must see it like that, this still requires the engagement of one's interlocutor, because any reorientation of his or her way of seeing that which is perplexing them must be achieved voluntarily through cooperation rather than coercion.¹³ The aim of persuading an interlocutor to voluntarily acknowledge that something need not be like *this*, is not a matter of having the interlocutor merely accept what the philosopher is saying, but he or she understanding why they are doing so and having that 'a ha' moment where nothing has actually changed but they see things differently.¹⁴

An important implication of Baker's (2004) insistence that the interlocutor's participation in the therapy be both active and voluntary, is that the interlocutor is also free to reject the philosophical tools and techniques offered as a means of liberating them from their puzzlement, and/or the very activity of engaging in the

¹³ See Baker (2004: 132 & 213), and Morris (2004: 8).

¹⁴ See Morris (2004: 11), Baker (2004: 35) & *PI* §124.

therapy.¹⁵ As Baker (2004) acknowledges, “the interlocutor may remain entrenched in his way of seeing the thing (unaware, of course, that he is seeing the thing in a way – as opposed to simply seeing it). He may not try to see things differently; perhaps he will refuse to make the effort” (Baker, 2004: 283). In the case of the present investigation, someone engaged with the existing literature on the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) is free to reject any or all of the alternative pictures I have offered, or even refuse to engage with the project at all.

It is worth drawing attention here to a subtle difference between the extent to which it is typically rational to reject a particular alternative picture, and irrational to refuse to engage with the therapeutic approach. A useful object of comparison here is the way in which someone who refuses to accept the conclusion of a valid traditional/theoretical argument is taken to be irrational. On the one hand, I maintain that, unlike the case of someone who refuses to consider a valid argument, it is perfectly rational for someone to reject a particular alternative picture. Whereas, on the other hand, I suggest that it is equally irrational for someone to refuse to engage with the therapeutic process of dissolving their philosophical problem, as it is to refuse to consider a valid inference.

More specifically, in the former case, it is perfectly rational to reject an alternative picture. As we have seen, unlike traditional/theoretical arguments, an alternative picture is neither correct nor incorrect. Alternative pictures either work in a particular case or they don't, and their ability to dissolve a problem in one case does not entail that they will have the same effect in another case. If an alternative picture offered by a philosopher does nothing to liberate me from my philosophical disquiet, the rational thing to do is to reject it. However, it is worth noting here that

¹⁵ See Baker (2004: 213) and Morris (2004: 8).

while it is generally irrational to reject a valid argument, we are still able to do so. In contrast to this, I suggest that it is neither rational nor irrational for an individual to reject an alternative picture that dissolves his or her particular problem. Given that Baker's (2004) view of dissolving a problem involves an acceptance that there are other possibilities, it may, in one sense, be impossible for an individual to reject an alternative picture that liberates them from their philosophical disquiet, insofar as his or her liberation is the result of accepting the alternative picture as one other possibility. An important caveat here is that it is also perfectly rational for an interlocutor who is liberated by a particular alternative picture to subsequently, reject that alternative picture as the correct account of how things must be.

In the case of someone who refuses to engage with the therapeutic process of dissolving their philosophical problem, I propose that this is as irrational as refusing to consider a valid inference. This is not to say that the kind of rational argument qua persuasion found in Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy is any more or less persuasive than a valid inference, or vice versa, outside of a given context. Rather, as we have seen in chapter two, the persuasiveness of both forms of rational argument is typically inseparable from context. Given that the purpose of both styles of argument is to address a philosophical problem, it would appear rather odd to rule out a possible treatment prior to examining the illness.

However, while I acknowledge that someone's refusal to engage with the therapeutic process of dissolving their philosophical problem is as irrational as his or her refusal to accept a valid inference, I maintain that Baker's (2004) acceptance of the possibility someone might reject the alternative pictures offered, or refuses to actively engage with this project, need not be seen as a deficiency of this approach. It

may be useful here to consider examples from other areas of therapeutic practice that emphasise the active participation of the interlocutor, as an object of comparison.

One such form of therapy, which shares this feature of Baker's (2004) later approach to doing philosophy, is the treatment of someone suffering from addiction. In offering the treatment of addiction as an object of comparison it is important to emphasise that the aim here is to draw attention to some similarities between a critic's refusal to engage with this project, and the way in which we typically see a patient's refusal to engage with their treatment as not essentially a fault with therapeutic methods. However, in doing so, it is not my intention here to suggest that Baker's alternative, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy, and therapies used in the treatment of addiction are identical. What is important for present purposes is only that, in the case of someone who acknowledges to the therapist that they are addicted to a particular drug, the fact that they may reject the possible treatments on offer or refuse to engage with the therapist at all is not usually seen as a failure of the therapy. Instead, this is typically acknowledged as just how things are when dealing with this kind of case. Consequently, I maintain that if there is nothing irrational about the way in which an addict is both required to be an active participant in their treatment, and is simultaneously free to reject the therapy on offer, we also need not be concerned by the possibility that someone engaged with the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism may freely refuse to engage with the approach to philosophy at the centre of this investigation.

Thus far, I have set out to dissolve the claim that we must be able to devise the correct theories to explain our philosophical problems. In doing so, I have drawn attention to the person-relativity of Baker's (2004) method, as well as his emphasis on ensuring that one's interlocutor is an active participant in the philosophical

therapy, and have offered objects of comparison from other areas of practice. In contrast to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, my aim here has not been to argue for an explanation of why such-and-such cannot/must be the case. Rather, I have set out to illustrate that there are *other forms of rational argument* that can liberate us from being perplexed by questions of the form ‘how *must* we understand the essence of x in relation to Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism’.

“It is true because it says nothing...”

A second criticism of my claim that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy and what counts as rational argument about moral matters, is the view that my application of Baker’s (2004) conception of philosophy to the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004) is an intellectually vacuous exercise in philosophical quietism, i.e. that it fails to offer a positive contribution or offer any substantiative claims.¹⁶ One way of thinking about this line of objection to my previous chapters is in terms of the accusation that this investigation is intellectually vacuous in the sense that “it is true because it says nothing” (Gellner, 1979: 230). By this, Gellner (1979) is claiming that the main problem with a Wittgenstein-inspired approach to doing philosophy is that “apart from being extremely dull, it fails to provide any illumination or guidance” (Gellner, 1979: 223). For someone like Gellner, the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy offers two key things. First, it offers illumination, in the sense that it seeks to discover the essence of our concepts, as well as their relationship to the world and each other. Second, it also offers guidance, insofar as once we know the essence of something, we can extrapolate what we ought to do, or how this must be.

¹⁶ See McDowell (1994: 277)

Moreover, while advocates of therapeutic philosophy may suggest that what is achieved by this investigation is valuable insight in the sense that it offers a novel philosophical way of seeing something that is puzzling us, Gellner (1979) also argues that Wittgenstein-inspired philosophy merely opens up “the blind alleys of verbal ‘therapy’ and tends to close all others” (Gellner, 1979: 235).¹⁷ For example, when the therapeutic philosopher is asked to provide some form of philosophical insight or solution to one of the ‘perennial problems of philosophy’, his or her interlocutor is repeatedly told that such requests are inappropriate as this is not something philosophy can or should provide,¹⁸ and/or what is required here is not the gratification of our desires for illumination and guidance, but a treatment for our confusion.¹⁹

Whereas my concern in the previous chapters was to dissolve the kind of philosophical puzzlements with Dancy’s (2004) moral particularism that can arise from the traditional/theoretical approach to doing philosophy, a critic may argue that this prohibits the possibility of a correct theory of moral competence, conceptual learning, and/or moral knowledge. In particular, advocates of the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, such as Gellner (1979), might go as far to argue that this is not insight, but philosophical quietism, and thus will not suffice as the basis for saying anything meaningful regarding moral matters.

However, Baker (2004: 163) explicitly denies that the non-adversarial nature of his approach to doing philosophy entails that he is advocating a form of

¹⁷ As an aside, it may be interesting to compare this with Hacker’s criticism of the conception of philosophy that Baker (2004) identifies in his later reading of Wittgenstein. In particular, Hacker’s claim that Baker “disregards everything that fails to fit the psychotherapeutic straightjacket” (Hacker, 2007a: 116).

¹⁸ See Gellner (1979: 193).

¹⁹ See Gellner (1979: 223)

philosophical quietism. Instead, the non-adversarial approach of Baker's (2004) way of doing philosophy can be seen as both a reflection of his person-relative conception of philosophical problems, and a condition for the therapeutic treatment of his interlocutor. Moreover, while the later Baker's (2004) conception of philosophy as therapy may be seen as akin to philosophical quietism in the sense that it neither sets out to prove/refute particular philosophical doctrines, nor to make claims as to how things must be, they also share a number of salient dissimilarities.

One such dissimilarity is that whereas philosophical quietism may prohibit us from saying *anything* that may act as substantive guidance, Baker (2004) offers us clear guidance as to how we might go on. As Baker (2004: 218) writes:

The only product of the teaching is imparting a skill. (Results are of limited interest [someone's] confusions are unlikely ever to be repeated exactly). Case-studies are of interest in respect of the methods exhibited in the treatment of absolutely specific individual difficulties: what is demonstrated are procedures for untying the particular knots that someone has tied in his own thinking...or for putting a derailed wagon back precisely on the rails so that it can roll.

That is to say, Baker's later conception of philosophy as therapy offers guidance in the sense of illuminating a philosophical approach. We may use this approach for the purpose of liberating ourselves from unconscious pictures that hold us captive and give rise to our philosophical disquiets. There need be nothing strange or irrational involved in thinking about guidance in this way, for this is how we often experience it. For example, when a therapist gives advice to a patient it is rarely of the form 'x must be the case'. Rather, the kind of guidance a therapist typically gives to a patient often consists in offering suggestions for things to consider which may open up new

avenues of exploration, or persuade them to re-orientate how they think of something.

While I have offered examples of rational argument qua persuasion from other areas of therapeutic practice, it is worth pointing out that the objective of this exercise has been to offer one possibility as an object of comparison. The purpose of which is to illustrate how drawing attention to other possibilities can liberate someone from unconscious pictures of how things must be. It is therefore important to emphasise that the above examples are not the only, or indeed the best, alternative possibilities for what may count as rational argument in relation to moral matters. For instance, Bergqvist (2009a, 2010, & 2015) draws attention to similarities between the kinds of discourse found in discussion about moral and aesthetic cases.

In particular, Bergqvist (2009a) argues that the model of rationality associated with moral particularism can be seen in the kind of aesthetic evaluation suggested by Sibley (2004), and hence we can make a companions in guilt argument as to why we need not see this conception of rationality as problematic. More recently, following remarks found in Tanner (1964: 67-68), Bergqvist has considered the possibility that “moral argument be modelled on aesthetic evaluation, rather than the other way round” (Bergqvist, 2015: 3). By this, I take Bergqvist (2015) to be proposing that aesthetic evaluation offers a useful object of comparison for understanding moral argument in the sense that it illustrates that there are other possibilities for “what an argument *must* be like for it to count as rational” (Bergqvist, 2015: 5).

However, as pointed out in chapter two, emphasising the fact that there are other conceptions of doing philosophy and what counts as rational argument does not entail that just anything per se counts as a form of rational argument. Indeed, it is

unlikely that we would describe someone screaming obscenities or making threats, as offering a rational argument. Rather, in acknowledging that there could be other possibilities we “stress that being gripped by an alternative conception is likely to lead one into confusion at some point” (Culbertson, 2015: 17). The challenge for Baker’s therapeutic conception of philosophy is to persuade someone to let go of one picture of how things must be, without he or she being captured by the proposed alternative.

Another dissimilarity between philosophical quietism and Baker’s later, therapeutic, conception of philosophy, is concerned with how the latter is able to move one forward in philosophy, whereas the former does not. As I understand it, the sort of philosophical quietism that someone like Gellner (1979) or Zangwill (2006) typically criticise, is unable to move someone’s philosophical thinking forward, because it is unable to reject or refute an opponent’s claim that *x* must be the case. As we have seen, Baker’s therapeutic conception of philosophy does not set out to reject or refute an opponent’s claim in the same way that the traditional/theoretical understanding of philosophy does. That is, in contrast to the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, Baker’s therapeutic view of philosophy is not concerned with refuting the claim *x* is the case by arguing, QED-style, why *y* must be the case instead.

However, although Baker’s therapeutic philosophy is not concerned with refuting or rejecting philosophical claims in the same way as the traditional/theoretical view of philosophy, I maintain that the act of offering alternative possibilities *is* a rational way in which we can move someone forward with his or her philosophical problems. In particular, when faced with an interlocutor who insists that *x* is the only way/how things must be, Baker’s strategy of pointing

out that there are alternatives, is a rational way of rejecting or refuting the interlocutor's claim. What is important here is that, in offering alternatives, Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy is not concerned with refuting or rejecting *x* per se, but the claim that 'x is the way things must be'.

A good example of moving one forward in philosophy, by rejecting someone's claim in a manner consistent with Baker's therapeutic philosophy, can be seen in the way that Culbertson (2015) refutes Mumford's (2012a & 2012b) account of moderate partisanship as oscillation. In contrast to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy, Culbertson (2015) does not set out to refute Mumford's (2012a & 2012b) position by offering the correct explanatory theory of how someone watches sport. Instead, in admirably Bakerian fashion, Culbertson (2015) refutes Mumford's argument by pointing out that there are other possibilities for how we can watch sport, outside of the purist/partisan distinction that Mumford (2012a & 2012b) assumes must be the backdrop for *all* explanations of how one watches sport.

In this section I have set out to respond to some possible objections to my claim that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy and what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. In particular, an initial line of objection I considered was the argument that it must be possible to give philosophical theories that explain a given phenomena in terms of its underlying essence. A second line of objection I set out to critically explore, was the claim that Wittgensteinian approaches to philosophy, such as that advocated by Baker, are intellectually vacuous insofar as they are unable to move someone's philosophical thinking forward by refuting an interlocutor's claims. In dissolving these criticisms, and thus showing how Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy can move someone forward in philosophy, I drew attention to particular aspects of Baker's

work, and offered objects of comparison from other areas of practice, in order to illustrate indicative examples of other conceptions of rational argument in the context of moral philosophy.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have considered some implications and criticisms of my claim that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical understanding of how we ought to do philosophy and what counts as rational argument about moral matters. In the first part of the chapter, I critically discussed two methodological suggestions that, I maintain, may be of benefit to advocates of a Dancy-style moral particularism who are perplexed by aspects of the contemporary particularism literature. In the remainder of the chapter, I explicated, and dissolved, a number of potential criticisms of Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, and offered objects of comparison from other areas of practice, in order to illustrate indicative examples of other conceptions of rational argument in the context of moral philosophy. In the next, and final, part of this investigation, I shall offer some general, reflective, remarks on my project. In doing so, I shall reiterate the original contribution made by this work, as well as acknowledge the project's limitations, and identify opportunities for future research.

REFLECTIONS

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In this investigation, I have argued that we need not be committed to the traditional/theoretical conception of doing philosophy and what counts as rational argument in the context of moral philosophy. However, rather than setting out any competing theories of how we ought to do philosophy, or some universal criteria for judging an argument as rational, the objective of this investigation has been to show, by means of worked examples, that there are other possible ways of doing philosophy and thinking about rational argument in moral philosophy. To this end, I have utilised aspects of the contemporary literature on Dancy's moral particularism, as a vehicle for illustrating some implications of Gordon Baker's later therapeutic philosophy, for our understanding of rational argument about moral matters. In particular, the examples focused on in this project have been concerned with the topics of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, in relation to the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004).

As we have seen, the existing literature on these topics is typically dominated by the traditional/theoretical view of how we ought to do philosophy, and what rational argument should look like in the context of moral philosophy. In response, what I have done in previous chapters is to offer indicative ways in which some of the tools and techniques that Baker identifies in his therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's later work, can be used as a means of dissolving, rather than solving, the kinds of philosophical perplexities that arise in discussion of Dancy's views on particularist moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge.

By illustrating rational, therapeutic, examples of how one can move on from these kinds of perplexities in moral philosophy, I maintain that this investigation has

presented a number of compelling reasons as to why we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy, or any related assumptions as to what counts as rational argument in ethical deliberation. Moreover, in support of the central claim of this work, I have also considered a number of methodological implications of this investigation, and responded to some potential criticisms. In the final part of this project, I shall offer some brief reflections on this investigation. This will take the form of a short discussion of the project's original contribution to philosophy, as well as an acknowledgment of its limitations, and some possible directions for future research.

The Original Contribution of this Work

This project has sought to make an original contribution to human understanding, by taking some of the tools and techniques that Gordon Baker identifies in the later work of Wittgenstein, and using them as a means to fend oneself in an area of philosophy that neither Wittgenstein, or Baker, wrote on. By exploring aspects of the existing literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism, through Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, I have argued that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical view of how we ought to do philosophy, or what counts as rational argument in moral philosophy. In addition to this broader, methodological contribution to moral philosophy, this investigation has also made a modest, original, contribution to how we can understand Baker's later therapeutic philosophy, and, by extension, the contemporary debates on moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, in relation to Dancy's (2004) moral particularism.

Following a brief overview of the salient features of Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy, as well as how it differs from both the

traditional/theoretical view of philosophy, and the ‘orthodox’ reading of Wittgenstein’s philosophy advocated by Hacker, this project has drawn attention to some of the philosophical tools and techniques found in Baker’s later work. More specifically, in chapters three, four, and five, I illustrated some Bakerian tools and techniques in detail, by using them as a means of dissolving, rather than solving, the kinds of problems someone might encounter when thinking about Dancy’s (2004) views on particularist moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge.

In doing so, this work can also be seen as making an original contribution to the contemporary debate around Dancy-style moral particularism. In contrast to the existing literature on the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004), the aim of this project has not been to formulate competing theories of how we ought to understand moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge in relation to Dancy’s (2004) account of moral particularism. Rather, what differentiates this investigation from the existing literature is that “nothing is claimed to be discovered, but an alternative viewpoint is recommended to individuals who are stuck in a rut” (Baker, 2004: 197). In response to the stalemate between advocates and critics of Dancy-style moral particularism, I have: first, suggested some possible assumptions underlying this conflict; second, used a range of therapeutic tools and techniques to dissolve the kinds of perplexities which, in specific cases, may arise as a result of those underlying assumptions; and finally, proposed a number of methodological implications of my project, which, I maintain, would be beneficial to advocates of Dancy-style moral particularism.

The Limitations of this Work

Although this investigation can be seen as making a modest, original, contribution to philosophy, it is also important to recognise its limitations. In what follows, I shall draw attention to two particular limitations of this project which I acknowledge would benefit from further consideration. First, the scope of my consideration of Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy. And second, the extent of my engagement with the existing literature on moral particularism. By reflecting on these limitations of my work I hope to lay the groundwork for possible future research projects that build on the insights offered by the present investigation.

Some limitations of my engagement with Baker's therapeutic philosophy.

The first aspect of the present investigation I acknowledge to be limited is the depth and scope of my consideration of the later Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy. In chapter two, I illustrated what I take to be some of the salient aspects of the conception of philosophy Baker (2004) identifies in the later works of Wittgenstein. I also drew attention to a number of features of Baker's own philosophical writing, which I maintain also play an important part in his approach to doing philosophy. This included Baker's relationship with the interlocutor, avoidance of formal conclusions, openness to other possibilities, and the use of other methods, where appropriate for the purpose of liberating someone from his or her particular puzzlement. Moreover, given that there is no finite totality of possible cases where Baker's therapeutic conception of philosophy may be of benefit to a puzzled philosopher, I deliberately avoided trying to illustrate every possible tool or technique for liberating a puzzled individual from his or her personal disquiet. Instead, I sought to utilise examples found within the existing literature on Dancy's

moral particularism to develop an indicative impression of a few possible ways in which tools and techniques congruent with Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy can be used to dissolve our philosophical problems.¹

However, while I have drawn attention to the importance of Baker's (2004) use of psychoanalysis as an object of comparison for how we may do philosophy, I acknowledge that this investigation is limited by the fact I have not considered the implications of Baker's therapeutic approach for how we actually go about writing philosophy. For instance, whereas the traditional/theoretical approach to philosophy sets out to solve philosophical problems by formulating universal, explanatory, theories of what the phenomena at hand must be like, the later Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy is highly person-relative, and focuses on the personal disquiet of an individual interlocutor.

One implication of this is that, in writing philosophy using Baker's approach, the philosopher may be limited by the challenge of writing for an external audience. Although the particular philosophical problem a philosopher is treating is the personal disquiet of a specific interlocutor (either real or imaginary) at a given time, the audience typically sits outside of this therapeutic relationship. Whereas a genuine interlocutor is able to respond as part of their engagement with a therapeutic philosopher, the reader of an investigation such as this, does not have the same degree of input into the dialogue, or the ability to respond.

Moreover, generally speaking, it is very unlikely that someone reading a philosophical work grounded in Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy, will be

¹ It is worth noting here that this task would have benefitted from further consideration of Graham McFee's book-length treatment of Wittgenstein's later philosophy: *How to Do Philosophy: A Wittgensteinian Reading of Wittgenstein*, which was only published in the final weeks leading up to the completion of this project. In elaborating his own reading of Wittgenstein through that of Baker, McFee (2015b) offers significant scholarly and biographical knowledge of Baker's work.

puzzled by the same thing and in the same way as the interlocutor in the text. Although a philosopher can set out to problematise the topic under consideration, he or she may be caught between recognising the particular context in which he or she is operating, and working with concepts in a language game that he or she hopes will go beyond the particular context at hand. For example, in trying to liberate someone from a picture of the moral landscape where moral competence must be like *this*, the philosopher may offer other uses of the term competence as objects of comparison, or draw attention to particular features of our language. However, in writing within this philosophical approach, the philosopher can only offer indicative examples in the hope that the underlying point they are trying to draw to the audience's attention transcends the example of the particular case.

Some limitations of my consideration of the existing moral particularism literature.

A second limitation of this project is concerned with the scope of the literature on moral particularism I have engaged with. In particular, this investigation has: first, only focused on the account of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004), as opposed to other forms of moral particularism such as those attributed to McDowell, Garfield, or Thomas; second, looked at three specific aspects of Dancy's (2004) position, i.e. his account of moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, rather than his consideration of the nature of reasons, or the relationship between his account of moral particularism and virtue; and finally, focused on particular lines of criticism within the existing moral particularism literature instead of providing a comprehensive survey of every way in which Dancy's moral particularism may invoke a sense of philosophical puzzlement. For example, in chapter five, my discussion of moral knowledge in relation to Dancy's moral

particularism was dominated by the criticisms put forward by McKeever & Ridge (2006 & 2008).

In response, it is worth remembering that the literature on Dancy's (2004) moral particularism is only used here as a vehicle for illustrating the wider, methodological claims of this project. Given the way in which Baker saw philosophy as a highly person-relative enterprise, I have specifically chosen to restrict the scope of the examples used in this investigation to moral competence, conceptual learning, and moral knowledge, as three interconnected aspects of the account of moral particularism favoured by Dancy (2004). In particular, I have focused on certain key disputes within those aspects of the existing literature on moral particularism that have perplexed me. However, this is not to say that Baker's later, therapeutic, approach to doing philosophy could not be an effective means of dissolving other philosophical perplexities one might have, either in relation to Dancy's moral particularism, or in other areas of philosophy. In what follows, I shall move on to illustrate some of the possibilities for building on the present investigation through future research.

Scope for Future Work

This investigation has opened up a number of possible avenues for future scholarship and research on philosophical and methodological matters. One such opportunity for future development would be to further explore the insights that McFee (2015b) provides on Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy, and offer additional worked examples in support of my claim that we need not adhere to the traditional/theoretical conception of philosophy and what counts as rational argument about moral matters. In particular, a useful future project may be to illustrate in more detail, a broader

range of possibilities for how we can do philosophy and think about rational argument. Such a project is likely to comprise of a series of examples where other philosophical tools and techniques, congruent with Baker's later therapeutic philosophy, are used as a means of liberating an individual from his or her philosophical perplexities, by dissolving the assumption that there is a single, rational, way of doing philosophy.

Another line of future inquiry would be to explore how the later Baker's conception of philosophy as therapy offers other useful ways in which we can think about the form of moral particularism advocated by Dancy (2004). More specifically, this could be achieved in a number of ways not limited to: first, by revisiting those aspects of Dancy's moral particularism already discussed in this work, where someone's puzzlement may have arisen at a different time, and/or for different reasons, before subsequently using different philosophical tools and techniques to dissolve any sense of philosophical puzzlement present; second, by using Baker's therapeutic philosophy as a way of investigating other aspects of the existing literature on Dancy's moral particularism, i.e. our perplexities over questions about the nature of reasons, or the relationship between his account of moral particularism and virtue; third, by offering Baker's therapeutic approach to philosophy as one way of more helpfully thinking about forms of moral particularism advocated by philosophers other than Dancy, such as McDowell, Thomas, or Garfield; and finally, by illustrating some of the ways in which Baker's alternative, therapeutic, conception of philosophy can liberate someone from his or her puzzlement with the existing literature on particularism in other areas of philosophy, such as aesthetics or the philosophy of science, etc.

An alternative direction for future research might be to apply Baker's later therapeutic conception of philosophy, to someone's puzzlements in other areas of philosophy, outside of the literature on Dancy's moral particularism. In addition to Morris' (2004: 12-13) suggestions that the form of therapeutic philosophy advocated by the later Baker might lead us to read the works of past philosophers in more helpful ways, or re-conceive the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy, I propose that an interesting area of further research would be to investigate the kinds of puzzlements found in those aspects of the philosophy of mind, that have recently been considered by Peter Hacker.² In drawing attention to the possibility of looking at these topics while wearing Baker's spectacles as opposed to Hacker's, I maintain that, as well as offering alternative ways of dissolving someone's philosophical problems, a project of this kind may also be useful for developing our understanding of the later Baker's approach to doing philosophy by means of worked examples.

Closing Remarks

Having opened this investigation with a brief thought about Jonathan Dancy's influence on contemporary philosophy, I would like to draw this project to a close with a brief thought about Gordon Baker's contribution to philosophy, and its relationship to this project. In her introduction to *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*, Katherine Morris draws attention to a particular assumption that someone might have about Baker's contribution to philosophy. That is, a view of Baker as someone who has devoted his entire philosophical career to undertaking detailed, scholarly, exegesis of Wittgenstein's texts, instead of developing his own line of

² For example, see Bennett & Hacker (2003), and Hacker (2007b).

original philosophical thought.³ This view of Baker's contribution to philosophy is quite understandable, given the fact he wrote (and co-authored with P. M. S. Hacker) a significant number of ground-breaking books, and articles, which have gone on to help define and/or influence much of the contemporary Wittgenstein scholarship.

However, as Morris (2004: 1) also rightly points out, this understanding of Baker's philosophy contains a *suppositio falsi*. For example, while the essays collected in *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects* clearly illustrate aspects of Baker's highly original and alternative way of reading Wittgenstein's philosophy, Morris (2004: 12-13) suggests that Baker's larger body of work also offers two highly original contributions to philosophical understanding. The first of Baker's wider methodological contributions to philosophy, as developed in his later writing on Descartes,⁴ as well as his papers on mind styles,⁵ is to offer an alternative way of approaching the work of historical philosophers, that may inspire, or reveal, other possibilities for how we might re-conceive of the supposed perennial problems, or disputed concepts, in philosophy. The second original contribution that Morris (2004) identifies, is the idea that, by reading Wittgenstein through the later Baker's spectacles, someone can liberate themselves from unconscious pictures of how we ought to do philosophy. That is to say, Baker's later work may act as a catalyst for someone to not just acknowledge alternative possibilities for how we can do philosophy, but to go on and *do* philosophy in other ways.⁶

³ Morris (2004: 14 - note 1) remarks that Patrick Nowell-Smith (former Professor of Moral Philosophy at The University of Leicester) did indeed ask "When is Baker going to start doing his own work?" (Morris, 2004: 1).

⁴ See Baker & Morris (1996)

⁵ See Baker (1986a & 1986b).

⁶ For instance, see this investigation, McFee (2015b), and Culbertson (2015).

In closing, I would like to paraphrase a remark from McFee (2015b: xi):

[in this investigation, I have done] my best to read [the literature on Dancy's moral particularism] through Gordon Baker's spectacles; I accept, of course, that the spectacles do not fit; and that wearing them does not confer his philosophical genius.

By this, I acknowledge that Baker's spectacles do not fit in the sense that while he suggests that this conception of philosophy as therapy may have fruitful application in relation to disagreements about moral matters,⁷ and encourages us to make it our "own by applying it to any philosophical problem whatsoever" (Baker, 2004: 129), he also expresses caution that there may be limited scope for applying it to debates found in contemporary philosophy as I have done here.⁸ Consequently, if despite my best efforts, someone is not persuaded to remain open to the ideas discussed in this investigation, it is entirely my responsibility rather than due to any inadequacy in Baker's work. In such a case, I hope that at the very least this project may be seen as one indicative example of the value of Baker's contribution to philosophy beyond his status as a ground-breaking Wittgenstein scholar.⁹

⁷ Baker (2004: 222 fn37)

⁸ Baker (2004: 184)

⁹ See McFee (2015b: 7), Kuusella (2014: 72), Crary (2007c: 297) and the anthology of essays written in tribute to Baker, edited by Kahane et al (2007b).

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