

## **Moral Realism: A Rationalist Metaphysics-First Treatment**

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Develop a variety of moral realism that is broadly rationalist.

Long acknowledged that there are noncausal epistemologies for arithmetic, metaphysical modality of which rationalist treatments have been given, and that there ought to be a moral analogue of this too. But how is a parallel treatment to be given?

I offer an answer to this how-question.

### *1. Range of Options*

Possible relations between metaphysics and theory of concepts or theory of meaning:

met-first; no-priority; meaning- or concept- first; nonreferential altogether.

There have been noncausal metaphysics-first theories; application of this general form to morality.

### *2. General Form and Elements of the Rationalist Metaphysics-First Account*

Individuation Precedes Representation

Concept-possession consists in tacit knowledge of individuating principles.

Application to arithmetic.

Metaphysics of the moral: principles governing application of concept of moral goodness. All sorts of theory could be inserted in this slot

Understanding as tacit, no doubt partial, knowledge of these individuating principles.

This moral realism distinct from Korsgaard's more heady type "intrinsically normative entities"

Why it's rationalist: role of understanding in generating knowledge; and a priori status of fundamental principles

A feature of the account: No giving an account of concept possession in Individuation Precedes Representation cases without doing substantive theory of the domain - applies in moral case too.

### 3. *Etiology of Moral Beliefs*

Genealogy of particular moral beliefs: concerning Harman's argument, we should distinguish

causal explanation by facts about the domain, from  
use of constitutively truth-ensuring procedures

Importance of *constitutively truth-ensuring procedures*.

Truth and grasp not separable at this basic level. The facts that make  $5=7=12$  true also contribute to the explanation of why the thinker comes to judge that  $5+7=12$ .

### 4. *Contrast with No-Priority Accounts (McDowell, Wiggins)*

Answerability to the holding of reaction-independent conditions

'Fearfulness': a false analogy

Mind-dependent status

A priori status

### 5. *The Contrast with Expressivism*

Weakness of the Critique of Platonism

Loss of moral content

### 6. *Locating Rationalist Moral Realism: Natural Selection, Variant Concepts*

Distinguishing the questions:

What explains the persistence of moral beliefs in a community?

What explains why an individual acquires particular moral beliefs on a particular occasion?

Response to Street

No difficulty in point that grasping mind-independent arithmetical truths is adaptive, under the principle *Individuation Precedes Representation*

*Conclusion*

A middle way: combining mind-independence with accessibility.