**NEW CONCEPTIONS OF RATIONALISTIC MORAL REALISM**

1. ***Varieties of moral realism – A brief survey***
   1. *How should we construe the main theses of moral realism?*

Realism in the most general sense – “a declaration of independence” (E.Sober) – problems of interpretation of the notion of independence (of moral values, properties, principles, facts, beliefs, desires, opinions, decisions) “degrees” of independence - a variety of conceptions of realism – Pre-theoretical intuitions providing the material for a series of metaphors: “discovery”, as opposed to “creation”, “construction”, “invention”, “projection” by the human subject

1.2 *A proposal for a definition of the “core” (R) of moral realist doctrines*

(R) (1) Moral judgments (statements) can be literally true or false

(2) Some moral judgments are literally true

(3) There is an independent moral reality in virtue of which true moral

judgments are true

(4) We can and do know the truth of some moral judgments

(Thomas 1993) [“A moral realist emerges as one who holds of moral claims that some of them, when literally construed, are straightforwardly true” (Sayre-McCord 1991) Difficulties of interpretation – ambiguities of meaning]

1.3. *Levels of the debate*

a) ontological (3) [*realism* vs *irrealism*/*antirealism* – strict –traditional sense of the term ] b) logical –semantic (1) (2) [*descriptivism* vs *non-descriptivism*, *realism* vs *antirealism*] c) epistemological (1) (2) (4) [*cognitivism* vs *non-cognitivism*, *rationalism* vs *sentimentalism*] d) psychological [*internalism* vs *externalism*, the role of emotions, moral development] e) methodological [*foundationalism* vs *coherentism*, *theory* – *antitheory*, *generalism* – *particularism*] f) normative (substantive ethics) [relations among main normative theories and realist or antirealist views - utilitarianism, Kantian ethics and Neo –Aristotelian virtue ethics]

1.4. *Forms of moral irrealism/antirealism*

a) *emotivism*, *prescriptivism*, *projectivism*, *quasi-realism* [Ayer, Stevenson, Hare, Blackburn, Gibbard) - rejection of (1) ] b) *error theories*, *fictionalism*, *eliminativism* [Mackie, Papineau – rejection of (2) (4) ] c) Dummettian antirealism – usually not invoked in the debate – Dummett himself has suggested that we should not apply his conception of realism/antirealism to the area of ethics]

1.5. *Proposed strategy – in search of criteria for adjudicating the debate* (Virvidakis 1996)

Start with the irrealist/antirealist challenge – examine and try to rebut or defuse the force of the main arguments against moral realism – try to assess and develop the arguments, counterarguments- and models of moral realists – adopt an approach of “reflective equilibrium” – shifting but also combining perspectives also involving the normative level – lay emphasis on semantic and epistemological considerations taking into account Crispin Wright’s (1992) proposal for a minimalist but not totally deflationary conception of truth and for specifying criteria of a realist stance, which include, apart from “evidence transcendence” , a) convergence of beliefs explained by the “cognitive command” of reality; b) inference to the “best explanation” of beliefs possessing “cosmological” width”; c) order of determination of predicates (“detective” or “projective”) in biconditional statements of the form “x is m iff x provokes responses R in subjects S [distinction elaborated following Plato’s *Euthyphro*]

1.6 *Antirealist arguments*

1) profound/radical disagreements – irreducible relativity of moral judgments(Mackie) 2) the existence of moral dilemmas (Williams) 3) the “queerness” of moral facts and moral properties that cannot be accommodated within a naturalist framework – their intrinsically motivating quality – (Mackie) – 4) the inability to reconcile the presumed objectivity and the practicality of moral judgments [ The “moral problem” according to Michael Smith (1995) :

1. Moral judgments express beliefs
2. Moral judgments have a necessary relation with the will, that is, with motivation
3. Motivation implies, among other things, the existence of the appropriate desires]

1.7. *Initial (default?) realist arguments*

1) *the phenomenology of moral life* – the natural conviction that in moral debates there is a “truth of the matter” about which we may be wrong

2) *the indispensability of the notion of truth* in the construction, interpretation and assessment of arguments in ethics (- the surface semantic features of moral discourse)

1.8. *Schools” – models of moral realism*

1) *American naturalist school / “Cornell realists”* – (P. Railton, R.Boyd, D.Brink, G.Sayre-McCord, N.Sturgeon) – Naturalist approach pursuing the analogy between moral and scientific realism or realism in the philosophy of mind. Reductionist (but not eliminativist) and non-reductionist variants. Quest for“moral kinds” *supervening* on natural, biological, psychological, sociological properties – synthetic identity of the (moral) good with properties of states of affairs making possible the satisafaction of basic needs, leading not only to survival, but also to health, flourishing, promotion of pleasure, elimination of pain and suffering. Externalism in moral psychology. Consequentialist and often utilitarian normative commitments – recent attempts at a reappropriation of Aristotelian notions – Reductionist variants – “Analytic descriptivism” (Jackson) - related to moral functionalism /“Canberra realists”

2) *British school of neo-intutionism and theories of moral sensibility* (D. Wiggins, J.McDowell, J.Dancy, D.McNaughton). Model of dispositional anthropocentric realism often appealing to *the analogy between moral properties and secondary qualities such as colour*. Non reductionist, anti-scientistic, broader naturalism, or non-naturalism. Respectively, affinities mostly with the tradition of moral sense (Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Hume), interpreted in a realistic direction, with traditional intuitionism (Clarke, Price, Moore), and with German phenomenogy of value (Scheler, Hartmann). Internalist moral psychology, adoption of a form of virtue ethics, but also extreme particularism and act-deontology (Dancy). Emphasis on “thick” rather than thin concepts of moral properties [e.g. courage, generosity, rather than goodness, rightness or justice]. Moral epistemology based on some form of perception of value properties or particular patterns of moral salience, usually –but not necessarily- based on the training of the emotions

3) *“Rationalist” school (*J.Katz, C. Larmore, T. Nagel,,R.Nozick, M.Smith, H.Putnam (?) ) – More or less formalist model often relying on *the analogy between ethics and mathematics*, combining in its strongest version an intuitionist epistemology with a Platonist ontology, and in its weaker versions an anthropocentric modalist or structuralist, “realisationist” conception of moral reality with some form of Kantian intuitionism appealing to “facts of reason” –compatible to a certain degree with constructivism (Granger, 1995). Most philosophers in this school seem to endorse a form of ideal, cognitivist internalism (referring to a state of ideal rationality - to the motivation attainable by an ideal observer and agent). Emphasis on principles, norms and opinion-independent reasons for action rather than on value properties. - Kantian, or quasi-Kantian normative commitments.

1.9. *Problems at the turn of the century*

We soon realize that the realist positions of all three schools are very difficult to defend if they assume a “strong” form. Moreover, it can be argued that the least persuasive is the approach adopted by the thorough-going naturalists, especially of the reductionist kind. (Problems with *supervenience* - “Moral twin earth” thought experiments –Timmons/Horgan). The intuitionist option pursued by the “British” school, is confronted with epistemological difficulties besetting its particularist moral ontology and worries about virtue ethics at the normative level. Thus, we may have reasons to prefer moral rationalism, but not in its traditional Platonist version, and we may be unable to support it with a full-blown realist ontology. We could then try to elaborate a version of moderate rationalist realism, sufficiently robust to buttress moral objectivity in a satisfactory way, but without objectionable metaphysical and epistemological commitments – compatible with a broader naturalism, and preferable to antirealist alternatives.

1.10. *Strategies of moderation of realist claims*

Here we could discern a certain number of strategies of “moderation” of realism possibly leading to a moral or less substantial transformation of the original positions. These include: a) The rejection of the ontological level altogether and defending some kind of “irrealist cognitivism” rejecting the very idea of moral entities or normative and evaluative properties – or the reinterpretation of the realist moral ontology in order to deal with a number of objections (Skorupski 1999, 2010) b) A thorough critique of foundationalism and defense of coherentism in moral epistemology c) A Kantian “anthropocentric” or “transcendental” contrual of moral realism ( in the direction of Putnam’s “internal realism”) d) Attempts at the relativization or contextualization of realist theses – based on the compatibility of realism with some versions of non-objectionable mild relativism or pluralism (Boyd (?) Sayre McCord) e) Forms of “weakening”, or “impoverishing” moral reality – adopting a “minimalist” ethics. (Virvidakis 1999)

1.11. *New perspectives for the study and possibly the adjudication of the debate –*

One wonders whether such strategies of moderation make possible the elaboration of interesting intermediate, compromise positions which may be the result of synthesis of insights form both sides, or eventually encourage the development of *quietist* tendencies. In any case, we have to deal with more *quietist* approaches in the area of metaethics – (Dworkin 1996, 2011). Moreover, it must be observed that by the mid 90’s most philosophers tend to admit that metaethical disputes cannot be resolved through armchair abstract argumentation, and one has to pursue research at the substantive first-order level, trying to determine whether convergence towards the recognition of objective normative reasons is not only possible, but also actual.(Smith 1995)

1.12. *Particular tendencies and developments*

a) Further adjustment and applications of strategies of moderation. - The elaboration of various intermediate positions

b) Shift to a more general study of the origin and the status of different forms of normative judgments and of the phenomenon of normativity as a whole – a discussion of normative reasons for action but also reasons for belief.

c) Emphasis on the development of first-order normative theories which may eventually sustain metaethical claims

d) Who is still afraid of Platonism? – Non-naturalism and intuitionism without tears - New approaches and conceptions of naturalism and non-naturalism

e) Appeals to research in neurophysiology, cognitive psychology, cognitive science

f) Varieties of quietism

***2. Versions of rationalistic realism without substantive metaphysics***

**2.1**. ***Dworkin’s value realism for hedgehogs* (2011, 2013)**

2.1*.*1. *Basic theses and arguments*

a) The unity of value – a domain of more or less tightly interconnected elements

b) The “metaphysical independence of value” (2011, 9) “ungrounded realism” about values -no need for any natural or supernatural metaphysical support- (2013, 15,22)

c) The appeal to “Hume’s principle”: one cannot support a value judgment – an ethical or moral or aesthetic claim – just by establishing some scientific fact about how the world is or was or will be (2013, 26-7)

d) A negative attitude concerning metaethical inquiries - quietism (?)

e) A contrast between “external” and “internal” scepticism – the need to deal only with the latter – a rejection of “Archimedean” epistemology

f) A critique of subjectivism – the acceptance of strong objectivism “all the way down”

g) An account of moral concepts regarded as interpretive – seeking *reflective equilibrium* which may lead to objectively correct/ true answers – truth conceived as success in enquiry attained in different ways, depending on each particular field

h) A distinction between *product value* and *performance value*

i) A plea for the adoption of a “religious attitude” (compatible with agnosticism and atheism)

2.1.2. TEXTS

- Realists argue that the best nonmoral philosophical arguments show that moral judgment can indeed be objectively true, or are factual, or describe reality, or something of the sort. “Anti-realists” argue that the best arguments show exactly the contrary, whatever the contrary is (2011, 10)

- Value judgments are true, when they are true, not in virtue of any matching but in view of the substantive case that can be made for them. The moral realm is the realm of argument, not brute, raw fact….

- How shall we classify the independence thesis? In what philosophical pigeonhole does it rest? Is it a kind of moral realism? Or constructivism? Or even anti-realism? Is it itself a nonmoral metaphysical theory? Or a quietist or minimalist theory that just ignores rather than really escapes troublesome metaphysics? None of these labels fits exactly –or exactly doesn’t fit- because each is stained with the mistaken assumption that there are important philosophical questions about value that are not to be answered with value judgments (2011, 11)

- The religious attitude accepts the full independent reality of value. It accepts the objective truth of two central judgments about value. The first holds that human life has objective meaning or importance. Each person has an innate and inescapable responsibility to try to make his life a successful one: that means living well, accepting responsibilities to oneself as well as moral responsibilities to others, not just if we happen to think this important, but because it is important whether we think so or not. The second holds that what we call ‘nature” – the universe as a whole and in all its parts –is not just a matter of fact but is itself sublime: something of intrinsic value and wonder (2013, 10-11)

– “the religious attitude rests finally on faith..science and mathematics are, in the same way, matters of faith as well…This kind of faith is not just passive acceptance of the conceptual truth that we cannot justify our science or our logic or our values without appealing to science or logic or value. It is is a positive affirmation of the reality of these worlds and of our confidence that though each of our judgments may be wrong, we are entitled to think them right if we have reflected on them responsibly enough (18-19)

- nothing but another value judgment can support a judgment of value (90)

– a more abstract conviction that I count as a matter of religious faith: that each person has an intrinsic and inescapable ethical responsibility to make a success of his life” (114)

- in this fundamental respect religious theists and religious atheists are at one. The existence or non existence of a god does not figure in the instinct of value that unites them (156)

**2.2**. ***Parfit’s rationalistic synthesis of normative theories* (2011)**

2.2.1. *Basic theses and arguments*

a) A Rejection of naturalism and sujectivism

b) Rationalist cognitivism without metaphysics or ontology

c) A defense of possibilism vs actualism – the thesis that “there are, in the wide sense, many events and other things that are merely possible, since these things are never actual. These merely possible things are not observable features of the spatio-temporal world.. All our practical thinking , and much of our thinking about the world essentially involves the belief that there are such things.” (vol. 2, 487)

d) a convergence of Kantian deontology, Rule-Consequentialism and Contractualism (a “triple theory” – different ways of climbing the same mountain

2.2.2. TEXTS

- There are some claims that are irreducibly normative in the reason-involving sense, and are in the strongest sense true. But these truths have no ontological implications. For such claims to be true, these reason-involving properties need not exist either as natural properties in the spatio-temporal world, or in some non spatio-temporal part of reality…. We might call ourselves *Non- Metaphysical Non-Naturalist Normative Cognitivists*. But since our main claims are about reasons, I shall call us *Rationalists*. Those who reject Rationalism I shall here call *Naturalists.*  Though some of these people are not Normative Naturalists but Non-Cognitivists or Nihilists, these people are all *Metaphysical Naturalists.* (vol. 2. 486)

- Just as there are some things that we *could* have done, there are some things that we *should* have done. And there are some things that we have reasons to believe, and to want and to do. Those claims, we can add, do not conflict with what Russell called our *robust sense of reality.* Unlike entities that are merely possible rather than actual, such normative properties and truths do not have a *lesser* ontological status. Like numbers and logical truths, these normative properties and truths have no ontological status. These properties and truths are not, in relevant senses, either actual or merely possible, or either real or unreal. In asking whether there are such normative truths, we need not answer ontological questions. There are I believe, some such truths, which are as true as any truth could be. (vol. 2, 487)

**2.3**. ***Scanlon’s reasons fundamentalism* (2014)**

2.3.1*.* *Basic theses and arguments*

a) A form of realistic cognitivism about reasons – a more explicit and positive approach to metaethics without however any “heavyweight” metaphysics or ontology – however going beyond an earlier *procedural realism* (1998) – in the sense specified by Christine Korsgaard (1996)

b) The fundamental nature of reasons which cannot be reduced to non normative truths or facts

c) A definition of reasons as relational facts – the relation of “simply counting in favor of an action or attitude”/ “no further explanation of reasons need or can be given: the “grip” that a consideration that is a reason has on a person for whom it is a reason is just being a reason for him or her”(44)

d) The distinct character and irreducibility of the *domain* of practical thought / - but pure normative statements do not presuppose claims incompatible with the scientific view of the world –

e) A critique of different kinds of subjectivism – appeals to desires or to the will

f) A study of different metaphysical and epistemological issues regarding reasons and their motivational force (relational character, determinate truth values, supervenience, knowledge, practical significance/motivation and normative authority, strength, optionality)

g) The pursuit of reflective equilibrium which provides a way to overcome the “conceptual /intuitive dilemma” (73) – it would be wrong to seek a kind of causal theory of knowledge as in the case of perception - the prospect of attaining determinate truth values

h) Differents conceptions of independence (*judgment* independence, *choice* independence -of standards-, independence from *what we are like*)

i) A combination of a form of contactualist moral constructivism with realism about reasons for action

2.3.2. TEXTS

-a qualified defense of a realistic cognitivism about reasons: a view that is cognitivist in holding that claims about reasons for action can be correct or incorrect, but realistic also in recognizing that there may be limits to the range of cases in which such claims have determinate truth values.(2)

- truths about reasons are fundamental in the sense that truths about reasons are not reducible to or identifiable with non normative truths, such as truths about the natural world of physical objects, causes and effects, nor can they be explained in terms of notions of rationality or rational agency that are not themselves claims about reasons. Reasons might be fundamental in the further sense of being the only fundamental elements of the normative domain, other normative notions such as *good* and *ought* being analyzable in terms of reasons.” (2)

-accepting a scientific view of the natural world does not mean accepting the view that the only meaningful statements with determinate truth values are statements about the natural world, or that things in the natural world are the only things we should be ontologically committed to in Quine’s sense (18)

- takes as basic a range of domains, including mathematics, science, and moral and practical

reasoning. It holds that statements within all of these domains are capable of truth and falsity, and that the truth values of statements about one domain, insofar as they do not conflict with statements of some other domain, are properly settled by the standards of the domain that they are about. (19)

- this reasoning is itself internal to the domains in question. It proceeds by appeal to our best general understanding of the nature of the concepts basic to the domain in question and to the most obvious particular truths within it… My final clarification is that this domain-centered view does not hold that first-order domains are entirely autonomous, and that nothing beyond the (evolving) standards of a domain can be relevant to the truth of statements within it.(20-1)

- the question of what domains there are is left open (23)

- the question of which of us is correct is a normative question, which can be answered only through normative reasoning. It is a question about the content of the best account of the normative domain - the realm of reasons (29)

- is a reason for” is a four-place relation, R(*p, x, c, a*), holding between a fact *p*, an agent *x*, a set of conditions *c*, and an action or attitude *a*. This is the relation that holds just in case *p* is a reason for a person *x* in situation *c* to do or hold *a*. (31)

- I am rejecting this general idea of existence and arguing that genuine ontological questions are all domain-specific. I am thus endorsing what John Skorupski refers to as “a more radically anti-metaphysical view” (*The Domain of Reasons*, pp. 440–1). Although,…I am not suggesting that (in Skorupski’s words) “ontology should be swept away as a pseudo-subject,” but rather that it should be understood in a domain-specific way. (24n)

- although the facts that are reasons are often natural facts, normative facts can also be reasons (32)

- My working hypothesis is that other concepts normally regarded as normative, such as good, value, and moral right and wrong, are best understood in terms of reasons, or at least that judgments involving these concepts are best understood in terms of claims about reasons insofar as these judgments are genuinely normative—that is to say, not interpretable in physical, psychological, or social terms that are clearly non normative - the concept of a reason is fundamental to the normative domain, and cannot be analyzed in *any* other terms, normative or non normative. (34-5)

- the relation between the normative and the non-normative is more like the relation between the mathematical and the physical: “mixed” mathematical facts vary with non-mathematical facts; the particular facts they vary with being determined by pure mathematical facts, which do not themselves vary at all (41n)

- I am not claiming that there is a relational property “in the natural world,” that is to say, a

naturalistic relational property, corresponding to the relational concept “being a reason for.” Normative truths, in my view, constitute a distinct realm and need no natural or special metaphysical reality in order to have the significance that we commonly grant them, …normative judgments are about our reactions to the natural world, rather than about that world itself (specifically… about the *appropriateness* of these reactions). (52-3)

- When a rational agent does something that he or she judges him or herself to have reason to do, this judgment makes sense of the action in normative terms and explains it, because the action is what one would expect of a rational agent who accepted that judgment. (55)

- Normative truths do not require strange metaphysical truth-makers. Such truths are determined by the standards of the normative domain itself. Even if this is accepted, however,it might be claimed that these standards are insufficiently well defined to determine what is true, normatively speaking (62)

- Having a desire to do something typically involves thinking, or imagining, that there is something to be said for doing it.And from the point of view of an agent it is the considerations that are seen as desirable, rather than the fact of having the desire, that provide reasons for acting. (88)

- Our grounds for thinking that judgments about a subject are judgment-independent lie not just in the existence of *de facto* agreement, but also the tendency of the judgments of different competent judges to converge, and the stability of our own judgments. It is important, for example, that there is such a thing as discovering errors in our thinking about the subject, and that when we conclude that something is an error this conclusion is generally stable (93)

- many truths about reasons for action are both judgmentindependent and choice-independent. There is disagreement about whether this is so. But even if truths about reasons are independent of us in both of these senses they are not all “independent of us” in the further sense of being *independent of what we are like*. (94)

- My own Contractualist theory of moral right and wrong could also count as a constructivist account in the broad sense I am considering (in this case, a constructivist account of individual morality).. If it would be reasonable to reject any principle that would permit a certain action, then that action would be morally wrong. And the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on what the correct outcome of this procedure would be, whether or not anyone has carried it out. (96)

- On this account, judgments of right and wrong will have a particular form of objectivity—will be judgment-independent or choice-independent—just in case judgments about what individuals in certain circumstances could reasonably reject have these forms of objectivity. In contrast to Rawls’ constructivist account of justice, however, my constructivist account makes the truth values and the objectivity of moral judgments depend on fully normative judgments about reasons for action. These are judgments about what individuals in specified circumstances who, among other things, care about finding principles others could also accept, would have reason to do. The question of present concern is whether there could be a constructivist account of *these* judgments—that is, of the general domain of facts about which things individuals in various circumstances have more reason to want to have, or to avoid. Such an account would involve a process for arriving at conclusions about whether a given consideration is or is not a reason for a person in certain circumstances to act in a certain way. For reasons mentioned above, assessing thevalidity of the steps in this process cannot involve making independent judgments about which things are or are not reasons for action. (97)

- Although I think that constructivist accounts of justice and morality have considerable plausibility, I do not believe that a plausible constructivist account of reasons for action in general can be given. (98)

- Moral reasons, which are often cited as examples of reasons with special strength, are best understood on this multilevel, relationship model. Particular moral principles, such as ones requiring fidelity to promises, or forbidding acts that cause harm to others, are judgments

that certain considerations provide conclusive reasons for (or against) certain actions in certain circumstances. Being moral involves holding these judgments, just as being a friend involves seeing oneself as having special reason to help one’s friend when the need arises. There is then the further question of what reason one has to hold these judgments and try to live by them—i.e. what reason one has to take morality seriously. I believe that the best answer to this question lies in the fact that they are required by a relationship with other rational beings that one has reason to want, specifically, the relationship of seeing them as beings to whom justification is owed. To fully defend the judgments of priority among reasons that moral principles involve, one must argue, as in the case of friendship, that the burdens of accepting these judgmentsare not so great as to make it unreasonable to hold them (115)

- when we reflect on a principle, and ask ourselves what that principle requires, we are *always* engaging in moral reasoning, not just deriving a conclusion from some given rule. This is true in clear cases as well as in difficult ones. To see a principle as having “moral force” in a given case always involves seeing what it requires as the content of a justifiable set of interpersonal standards. (119)

- The only way we have of establishing the truth of normative judgments is through direct, piecemeal application of the method of reflective equilibrium. This method can provide us with justified confidence in the truth of some judgments about reasons for action, and hence with justified confidence that questions of this kind can have determinate answers. But it provides no assurance that such questions always have such answers. Whether this is so in any given case will depend on the outcome of this method when applied to that case…

We do have nothing to rely on except our best *judgments* about which things are reasons, although our confidence in these judgments can be justified in the ways I have described. There is nothing more that we could ask for. To be realistic about reasons we must accept this fact. (122-3)

2.4. ***Nagel’s normative realism* (1986, 2012)**

2.4.1. *Basic theses and arguments*

a) A rationalist normative and moral realism without any substantive ontology of properties

b) An opposition to dominant scientistic naturalism /a critique of Neo-Darwinian orthodoxy

c) A defense of the possibility of an account of the world as involving an irreducible mental and teleological dimension - implying “some kind of value in the result towards which things tend”

d) A critique of subjectivism

e) A recognition of the limits of argunentative resources for defending the alternative conception and establishing the full reality of value

e) Some form of *objective idealism*

2.4.2. TEXTS

- The picture that I associate with normative realism is not that of an extra set of properties of things and events in the world, but of a series of possible steps in the development of human motivation which would improve the way we lead our lives, whether or not we will actually take them. We begin with a partial and inaccurate view, but by stepping outside of ourselves and constructing and comparing alternatives we can reach a new motivational condition at a higher level of objectivity. Though the aim is normative rather than descriptive, the method of investigation is analogous in certain respects to that of seeking an objective conception of what there is. We first form a conception of the world as centerless –as containing ourselves and other beings with particular points of view. But the question we then try to answer is not “What can we see that the world contains, considered from an impersonal standpoint?” but “What is there reason to do or want, considered from this impersonal standpoint? (1986, 139-140)

“Realism is not a metaphysical theory of the ground of moral and evaluative truth. It is a metaphysical position only in the negative sense that it denies that all basic truth is either natural or mathematical. It is metaphysical only if the denial of a metaphysical position like naturalism itself counts as a metaphysical position But value realism does not maintain that value judgments are made true or false by anything natural or supernatural” (2012, 101)

“value is not just an accidental side effect of life; rather there is life because life is a necessary condition of value” (2012, 123)

3. ***Conclusions / critical remarks – An attempt at a comparative assessment***

There are many clear points of convergence in the general cognitivist approaches of the philosophers whose works we are discussing, as well as in many of their main theses and arguments. However, there are also interesting points of divergence. Scanlon is more cautious in his analysis, trying to secure a realistic basis for *normative reasons* as a whole, but realizing the limits of the ambitions of any project aiming at the rationalistic defense of *moral* normativity. Unlike Dworkin, he doesn’t hesitate to engage in careful metaethical theorizing, although he agrees with the other rationalists that moral reasoning cannot and should not aspire to any naturalistic -or non naturalistic- metaphysics and ontology. Parfit and Dworkin are much more ambitious in the scope of their philosophical enterprises, while Dworkin and Nagel point to comprehensive worldviews which seem to inlude more or less platonist and intuitionist assumptions, reminding us of some of G.E. Moore’s metaethical claims. Of course, Dworkin insists on his methodological commitment to an interpretationist account of ethical and moral concepts and to a coherentist epistemological model b

ased on the quest for a reflective equilibrium of our normative judgments and principles, but ends up acknowledging the religious quality of his faith in intrinsic value. One wonders whether the various tensions among the views that we have attempted to outline could be successfully resolved. I any case, we should pursue the study of the origin and of the nature of normativity, and particularly or ethical and moral normativity, also taking into consideration analogous positions endorsed by other philosophers of a more or less rationalistic persuasion.

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