

Jussi Suikkanen and Antti Kauppinen, eds. *Methodology and Moral Philosophy*. Routledge 2018. 250 pp. \$160 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781138322097); \$48.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780367664664).

Moral philosophy has its own methodologies and unlike natural sciences that base their explanations on the results of experiments and observable facts, it involves pre-theoretical moral attitudes and conceptual analyses. Despite their methodological differences, philosophy in general and science have always been close-knit. Einstein's discovery of special relativity, for example, was informed not by any specific doctrine of space and time, but by the philosophy of David Hume and Ernst Mach. And while philosophy has often provided the intellectual background for sciences, the 'experimental methods' of the natural sciences continue to influence new ways of doing moral philosophy. A recent illustration is the emergence of experimental moral philosophy as the empirical study of moral intuitions. Given such developments, there has hardly been a better time to embrace methodological innovation in moral philosophy, but also for a critical self-reflection on the part of moral philosophers and the methodologies they use, and the editors of this collection of essays, Jussi Suikkanen and Antti Kauppinen, have done a great job in providing, aptly, such an opportunity.

In bringing together a range of perspectives and views, the book encourages a methodological pluralist approach against the views that moral philosophy should have a single method, on a par with the 'experimental methods' of the natural sciences. Its main target are two extreme approaches: the Rawlsian 'reflective equilibrium' method and methodological anarchism, the view that anything goes in moral theorising so long as the results are plausible. Many ethicists today, Suikkanen recognises, do not find reflective equilibrium the best method anyway, or even explicitly employ it (3). However, the dissatisfaction with this method has led some to embrace an extremely liberal view that ethicists should not be required to follow any strict methodological rules. One problem with this kind of liberalism, Suikkanen says, is that it disconnects claims and the arguments used for defending these claims.

The collection comprises eleven chapters, including the introduction, which are thematically grouped into four sections. The three chapters of Part 1 ask what role the empirical methods should play in ethical theorising. In chapter 2, 'How to Debunk Moral Beliefs,' Victor Kumar and Joshua May claim that empirically based global sceptical debunking arguments cannot challenge all our moral beliefs, partly due to the complexity of our belief formation, partly due to the difficulty with identifying influences, such as evolutionary ones, that both constitute a main basis for moral beliefs and that are majorly defective. They endorse a more selective debunking strategy that can provide better evidence of actual unreliability. I find their suggestion credible, not least because it does not discredit the role of emotion, allowing that emotional responses are not necessarily responses to morally irrelevant factors and thus unreliable guide to morality.

In chapter 3, 'Who's Afraid of Trolleys?,' Antti Kauppinen defends the standard methodology of normative ethics, and the epistemic value of thought experiments such as trolley cases, by responding to debunking empirical concerns, such as presentational factors that can hinder moral competence. He rightly points out that while weak intuitions are most vulnerable to situational effects, strong intuitions that survive critical scrutiny in the context of a philosophical debate can justifiably support purported moral principles. More broadly, Kauppinen argues that we should understand ethical inquiry as a social process in which many of our convictions are positively challenged and corrected by others. As he says, '*I may know something because we know it*' (67). In

appealing to a good epistemic practice, which involves training intuitions, Kauppinen offers a balanced view about their role in supporting the candidate moral principles. Unembarrassed, and for good reason, he denies that the empirical data about philosophers undermines the assumption about their expertise. Kauppinen has a point: philosophers are more skilled than ordinary folks at making a cognitive effort—part of their training—in rationalizing intuitions, responding to thought experiments, and at identifying and avoiding morally irrelevant features of individual cases.

In chapter 4, ‘Learnability and Moral Nativism: Exploring Wilde Rules,’ Tyler Millhouse, Alisabeth Ayars and Shaun Nichols challenge the moral nativist thesis about innate constraints on moral learning. They present empirical evidence which shows that people are capable of learning peculiar rules such as ‘Wilde rules’—named after Oscar Wilde’s aphorism that a ‘gentleman never offends unintentionally’—which permits bringing about some consequences deliberately but prohibits allowing those consequences to arise. In demonstrating the flexibility of rule learning, this contribution is conceptually liberating in suggesting that cultural universals can be explained by means other than cognitive constraints on the structure of moral reasoning.

Part 1 discusses new methods. In chapter 5, ‘Metaethics From a First-Person Standpoint,’ Catherine Wilson examines the sources of normativity by reflecting on her own experiences of teaching metaethics. Wilson’s methodological approach, which aims to counter moral scepticism (105), merits attention and she does a good job arguing that metaethical progress and the acquisition of moral knowledge can, nonetheless, be gained only through first-personal reflection.

In the next chapter, ‘Consequentialism and the Evaluation of Action *qua* Action,’ Andrew Sepielli argues that the goodness action-guiding standard is more authoritative than the rightness or ‘ought’ standard (110) and that consequentialism is the correct account of ‘when it’s good for something to exist’ (115). Regardless of whether we agree with Sepielli’s theory of authoritativeness, he plausibly draws attention to what matters, beyond our strivings for personal excellence. What matters is not just whether some action is a good one, with respect to some limited category, but whether it is good, given the past, present and future consequences of its existing.

The three chapters of Part 3 critically evaluate some of the most prominent methods used in moral philosophy recently. ‘The Similarity Hypothesis in Metaethics,’ Chapter 7, by Christopher Cowie, offers a persuasive defence of the metanormative method in metaethics by responding to the objections to the similarity hypothesis, the claim that practical normativity and theoretical normativity, at the level of their metaphysics, are relevantly similar.

In chapter 8, ‘The That,’ James Lenman criticizes ‘the picture of the Humean as committed to an extreme and arbitrary voluntarism’ (158), maintaining that ‘the passions in our soul remain the source of normativity’ (162). Lenman persuasively argues that what protects us from arbitrariness is the fact that we have acquired ‘an affective character shaped by a normative conceptual repertoire absorbed from one’s wider social world’ (163). True enough, we are emotional and caring beings, where caring ultimately involves the point when ‘I’ gives way to ‘we’ (157). Here, Lenman echoes Simon Blackburn’s ‘emotional ascent,’ reminding us that we care about certain things even when we don’t believe there are any robust moral facts, and without any need for a metaphysical ratification. Granted, caring can also involve being driven by arbitrary feelings and emotions. More generally, Lenman’s (Humean) brand of constructivism, which is meant to be supported by metaethical expressivism, will not persuade those who deny that expressivists can accommodate the objective features of normative moral judgements, and/or those who think that Humeanism undermines the cognitive element of the emotions.

In chapter 9, ‘Footing the Cost (of Normative Subjectivism),’ Jack Woods argues that a subjectivist conception of an ontic normative universality about evaluating ourselves and others does

not undermine the functional role of moral judgements. I find Woods' claim we can justifiably evaluate others' actions by means of our own subjective norms and evaluative judgements that play a role for us in regulating our behaviour (175) largely compelling, and I am sympathetic with his desire to avoid Kant's categoricity, although one worry is that his conception of normative universality may imply an implausible account of what it is to accept a norm.

Finally, the last two chapters of Part 4 critically examines the role our first-order normative intuitions ought to play in the evaluation of metaethical views, engaging with the question of whether doing first-order normative ethics is one of the methods we can rely on when addressing metaethical questions.

Part 4 opens with chapter 10, Pekka Väyrynen's 'Normative Commitments in Metanormative Theory.' Väyrynen offers a 'recipe' for generating instances of interdependence between a metanormative theory and a first-order normative theory. It includes the premise that certain metanormative claims contain factors that make a normative difference, where this means being normatively relevant, and where the claim about normative relevance is a normative claim. While the idea that metaethics can have normative implications is not new, Väyrynen's approach is instructive and commonsensical. For example, if we think that moral principles are metaphysically contingent, this commits us to certain first-order claims about what we should do in the actual world, and not in some possible world in which some different moral principles are true. Particularly compelling is Väyrynen's implicit response to the issue of reflective equilibrium method; while his general recipe sets the parameters for a non-arbitrary way of deciding whether one should adjust a normative theory, given certain metaethical commitments, it leaves open the possibility that normative implications need not affect the credibility of a metaethical theory.

This brings me to the last contribution to this volume, chapter 11, Matthew Silverstein's 'Revisionist Metaethics.' In line with Väyrynen, Silverstein considers the metaethical implications of ethical theories, but he doubts that metaethics can make real progress by pursuing the method of reflective equilibrium that values first-order theories for their power to explain our moral intuitions. To the contrary, Silverstein maintains that some of our core ethical convictions, especially those that bear traces of their religious origins, should be questioned, echoing an objection to the reflective equilibrium method: our central moral intuitions and commitments are subject to cultural and religious influences and biases. Silverstein acknowledges the possibility that some universalist intuitions may be reconciled with explanatorily powerful anti-realist metaethical theories. And he is right that not all intuitions are created equal. But he is wrong, in my view, that we should necessarily revise our central normative including ethical intuitions (especially those that survive rational scrutiny) if they happen to be inconsistent with reductive theories that are explanatorily powerful and intensionally adequate.

Together, this collection of papers provides fresh impetus to methodological debate in moral philosophy. It is true that, as the editors observe, insufficient attention has been given to the methodological issues in moral philosophy, particularly in comparison to other areas of philosophy, and this much-needed collection fills a gap in the relevant literature.

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