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Locating Morality

Moral Imperatives as Bodily Imperatives

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J.L. Mackie's classic 'argument from queerness' poses the following challenge: how, if at all, can we reconcile the apparent *prescriptivity* or *imperatival* quality of moral claims with their purported *objectivity* or, similarly, *universality*?¹ In order for moral claims to have both of these features in combination, moral properties would have to be 'queer', Mackie famously argued (1977, §1.6) There are no such properties in the universe as we know it, via ordinary scientific methods. That is, roughly, nothing is *prescriptive*—in telling us what to do, and motivating us to do it—and also *objective*—in doing this regardless of our desires, will, motivations, preferences, or (Mackie added) social norms and conventions (1977, §1.5–§1.6; pp. 80–2).

Many theorists in contemporary metaethics take Mackie's point as given, accepting that such 'queer' properties are elusive in natural and social reality.² So the purported *prescriptivity*, or *objectivity*, or *naturalness* of morality (and any other normative claims which you think of as having these features³) will have to be reconsidered. For some theorists, e.g. avowed non-naturalists, this may not represent a genuine bullet to bite.⁴ For others

¹ Mackie uses numerous different terms more or less interchangeably to get at the former idea, in particular. He says that moral claims purport to be *prescriptive*, *directive*, *practical*, *action-guiding*, and also 'calls for action', in addition to saying that they purport to be *imperatives* (1977, p. 40). More on this to follow, in §1.2.3.

² I focus on the metaphysical rather than the epistemological aspect of Mackie's argument, the former being what I need to set up my intervention.

³ E.g., self-regarding reasons and/or epistemic claims. But I set these aside, since they are orthogonal for my purposes.

⁴ Mackie himself, of course, recommended a sweeping form of error theory, at least in the first instance. However, interpreting Mackie's eventual views aright is not so clear-cut, partly in view of his subsequent proposed *reinvention* of ethics, which much of the remainder of the book is concerned with. A lot is going to depend on how revisionary one can be without changing the subject entirely.

of us, however, the aspiration implicit in Mackie's challenge lingers. The goal of explaining the supervenience of the moral on the natural (however one wants to cash this out—clearly no straightforward matter) is similarly widely shared. Hence the following further quandary, as memorably expressed by Mackie, when it comes to finding a suitable *location* for morality:

What is the connection between the natural fact that an action is a piece of deliberate cruelty—say, causing pain just for fun—and the moral fact that it is wrong? It cannot be an entailment, a logical or semantic necessity. Yet it is not merely that the two features occur together. The wrongness must somehow be ‘consequential’ or ‘super-venient’; it is wrong because it is a piece of deliberate cruelty. But just what *in the world* is signified by this ‘because?’ (1977, p. 41)

In this chapter, I want to suggest an approach to this question and Mackie's famous challenge (as I prefer to call it, eschewing the use of ‘queer’ as a pejorative) which has yet to be fully explored, and seems to have considerable promise in rising to meet much of it. The resulting view also has auspiciously humane-seeming first-order ethical implications. At least a hint of the idea which I want to develop can be found in the closing lines of Christine M. Korsgaard's *Sources of Normativity*:

Of course there are entities that meet these criteria . . . John Mackie must have been alone in his room with the Scientific World View when he wrote those words. For it is the most familiar fact of human life that the world contains entities that can tell us what to do and make us do it. They are people, and the other animals. (1996, p. 166)

But Korsgaard's intriguing and, in my view, fruitful suggestion hasn't been widely taken up in the literature to date—not even by Korsgaard herself, in relation to Mackie's challenge, if I am not mistaken. In this chapter, I'll try to begin to address this omission, and within a reductive naturalist and broadly Humean framework, as opposed to Korsgaard's neo-Kantian constructivism.

To see where I am going with this, consider the question—‘Why shouldn't I kick a dog for fun?’—which the villains of the collective metaethical imagination have been asking for generations. On the view about morality's source I go on to develop, the ultimate answer to this question consists in the way the dog stands to suffer bodily—specifically, to be put into a ‘make it stop’ state of body and mind by the would-be kicker.

There's something intuitive to the point of obvious about ideas in this vicinity, when it comes to first-order normative questions about the correct criterion of right action, and whether and why certain actions fall under it (or fail to). But I believe that their metaethical significance tends to be underestimated.⁵

⁵ Why so? Likely a mixture of factors—including, I hazard, a view about pain and suffering as consisting in ‘raw feels’, rather than imperatives, as well as a tacit tendency to

I'll be focusing in this chapter on the *moral claims* or *imperatives* (terms I alternate between, merely for the sake of terminological variety) which I call *basic* or *core* (ditto). Core moral claims are meant to be normative in their own right, and also to place *constraints* on which other actual claims will make normative claims on us. Those which call for *violating* core moral claims, for example, may be held to be *immoral* and hence unfit to make normative claims on us *qua* moral agents, I argue.

My central goal is to explore the possibility of identifying core moral claims with the states of mind (or again, better, body and mind) which I call *bodily imperatives*—e.g. the ‘make it stop’ state of mind mooted earlier, in the dog case.⁶ Such states will often arise and galvanize a subject when they are experiencing unremitting pain, severe thirst, hunger, sleeplessness, humiliation, terror, torment, or similar. Some philosophers of mind, in particular Colin Klein (2007; 2015), have recently argued that token pain states *just are* bodily imperatives. The imperative theory of pain (and other acute distress states, plausibly, by extension) is admittedly controversial. But its critics are often objecting primarily to the *identification* of pain with imperatives like the above ones. And I do not need an identity thesis for my purposes (although I find it tempting). All I need is the—to my mind, intuitively compelling—idea that pain and other acute distress states are often closely *associated* with such bodily imperatives. These include emotional distress, and distress with a social intentional object (e.g. one’s loved ones being threatened). So, by bodily imperatives I don’t mean something crudely or narrowly physical, but rather something visceral, consuming, inescapable. This will become clearer in the discussion of them that follows (§1.1.3).

I'll be combining this idea with another I've defended at length elsewhere, viz., that the desire-like, conative, or ‘world-guiding’ states of mind which make normative claims on agents *need not belong to the agent on whom the claim is made*, on a broadly Humean or desire-based view in metaethics (Manne, 2015). Indeed, on the view I defend, *any* subject’s bodily imperatives can make moral claims on *any* moral agent. Bearing this in mind, I believe that bodily imperatives are a good candidate for constituting the core moral claims or basic imperatives of morality. And although a full development and defence of this view would be impossible in this short space, I hope to have at least made it visible and demonstrated its interest by the end of this chapter, as well as bringing out some of its limitations and disappointments.

picture morality as centralized, univocal, and speaking in a booming voice, rather than a whimper.

⁶ And normative claims of *other* kinds, in particular self-interested ones, will presumably have to be explained in terms of metaphysically similar materials, lest the theory take on an unattractively motley appearance. See §1.1.5, and also Manne, 2015.

1.1 CLAIMS OF THE BODY

1.1.1 Democratism as a Humeanism

It will help to begin by situating the idea of basic moral imperatives as bodily imperatives within the family of Humean or (as the terms are used, equivalently) desire-based views in metaethics, in order to keep an eye on its natural competitors. I will take as my point of departure two ideas of Mark Schroeder's which are fruitful in this connection. The first is that, when it comes to metaphysically explaining normative reasons (or normative *claims* on us, to leave room for the distinction between *claims* and *reasons* which I draw in §1.2.4⁷) a would-be reductive naturalist should cast their net quite widely. That is, we should consider explaining normative claims in terms of members of a broad class of the mental states or psychological features which Schroeder stipulatively labels *desires*. His examples of desires in this sense include intentions, whims, cravings, pleasant sensations, and attitudes of valuing (2007, p. 9). In my view, it is natural to construe this broad and technical notion of desire as encompassing any state of mind on the part of a subject with a ‘world-to-mind’ or ‘world-guiding’ direction of fit. Such states of mind effectively *ask* that the world be made, or alternatively kept, a certain way; that is, the world is supposed to come to fit the mind of the subject the desire belongs to. In contrast, belief-like states of mind aim to *represent* the world accurately; their contents are supposed to fit the way the world is, or will be (in the case of predictions). Desires in the intended, broad sense of the term hence have *satisfaction* conditions; whereas belief-like or world-guided attitudes instead have *truth* conditions.

The second idea of Schroeder's (2007, pp. 2–10) which I want to borrow is that we should initially keep our options open, when it comes to settling on a particular version of a Humean theory in metaethics. For many purposes, including my own, it is useful to understand these as a family of views united by:

The Minimal Humean Commitment: All of the basic normative claims made on agents are metaphysically explained by desires of some kind.⁸

⁷ Very briefly, to head off confusion—I think of normative reasons as being normative claims which pass a further, motivation-based test. Roughly, a reason for an agent A must be such that A would recognize this reason and be motivated to act on it, if A were *maximally receptive* to such recognition. This is close to the form of reasons internalism which I defend elsewhere (Manne, 2014), cashing it out there, as here, as a defeating or ‘vetoing’ condition on reasons.

⁸ Although I borrow this formulation from Schroeder, he may have implicitly intended an agent-centred or intra-agent restriction. But helpful personal correspondence

This basic commitment can be, and has been, taken in numerous different directions. For it leaves wide open the question of when, how, and which of someone's desires will give rise to normative claims—and, I'd add, on whom.

Schroeder (2007) for his own part has developed a particularly sophisticated version of a Humean theory of reasons, viz., 'Hypotheticalism,' which will serve as my stalking horse intermittently in what follows. According to the Hypotheticalist, the basic normative claims on an agent (which Schroeder takes to be reasons, unlike me; see note 9) are all metaphysically explained by her own desires. Specifically, an agent will have a reason to X iff and because X-ing would promote the satisfaction of some desire of hers, as compared with doing nothing. This is effectively to relax the strength of the *promotion relation* which desire-based theorists have traditionally employed here. Schroeder's innovation hence helps to mitigate the problem that Humean views characteristically face of *under-generating* reasons, particularly moral ones (more on this to follow, in §1.2.2).

I want to go in a different—indeed, in some ways, opposite—direction. On the metaethical view I'll go on to explore, basic moral claims on agents *just are* desires (i.e. world-guiding psychological states) of a certain kind. But these desires may belong to subjects *other than the agent*—any creature with the relevant kinds of desires whatsoever, I'll be assuming.⁹ This is to relax the intra-agent restriction implicit in agent-centred, desire-based views, such as Hypotheticalism. So, the move I'm making will give rise to a view which, in skeletal form, and restricted to core moral claims for the time being, would be this:

Democratic Humeanism (Skeletal Version): Any core moral claim on an agent A to X for the sake of a subject S consists in some kind of desire on S's part that could be fulfilled or promoted by A's X-ing¹⁰ (Manne, 2015).

confirms we're in agreement that a view need not be restricted in this way in order to belong to the same family for many purposes, e.g. preserving an elegant form of reductive naturalism.

⁹ Technically, there is room to allow that the only moral subjects are human beings (or some such). But I'll bracket off such conceptual possibilities in what follows, since they seem to me so implausible.

¹⁰ Compare Christine M. Korsgaard's 'publicity of reasons' thesis. In Lecture 4 of *Sources*, Korsgaard defends the view that reasons, by their very nature, have an essentially *public* character. Korsgaard draws on Wittgenstein's private language argument in this connection. As I interpret Korsgaard, on the resulting picture, reasons do not belong to anybody in particular, and are by their very nature *shared*, or at least shareable, across agents. (Korsgaard's target being the 'egoistic myth' that we retreat into 'private deliberative spaces and then re-emerge to announce the results', as opposed to deliberating *together*; 1996, p. 141.) Korsgaard's view certainly provides an important precedent and

Note that this leaves room for moral subjects who are not themselves moral agents (e.g. human infants and most if not all kinds of non-human animals). It is also meant to allow the subject *S* and the agent *A* to be one and the same *person* in the limit case, so as not to rule out by conceptual *fiat* the possibility of core moral duties to the self. One more point of preliminary clarification: the set of agents on whom the subject calls may be more or less restrictive, determinate, or specific. The subject may call out for *anybody's* help whatsoever in certain cases. This will be important for my ensuing purposes.

The skeletal version of Democratic Humeanism—or ‘Democratism’, to introduce a pithier name for it this time around—obviously contains large lacunae, concerning *which* desires on the part of which subjects will constitute core moral claims on whom (i.e. on which agents). In much of the first half of this chapter, I'll be taking up these questions. I'll do this by initially winnowing the class of desires I want to focus on here twice over—first to what I dub ‘calls for action,’ (§1.1.2) and then to the subclass of calls for action I'm calling ‘bodily imperatives.’ (§1.1.3) I'll go on to indicate how one might construe these as core moral claims (§1.1.4), and how to proceed from there in turn to developing a view which encompasses further moral claims, with a broader social basis, and other normative claims besides which (e.g. self-regarding claims, and other-regarding claims which are not naturally viewed as moral), using the same set of metaphysical building blocks. (§1.1.5) Then, in the second half of the paper, I will consider some of the costs, benefits, and let-downs which would flow from going Democratic about the basic source of morality.

1.1.2 Calls for Action

Elsewhere, I've suggested that the desires which constitute basic normative claims have what I dubbed a ‘call for action’ structure. Such desires on the part of a subject *S* distinguish a set of ordered pairs of agents and actions, {*A*, *X*}, such that *S* would be willing for *A* to *X* in service of some end of *S*'s, *E*.¹¹

valuable inspiration for Democratic Humeanism (see, e.g., the passage I quoted in opening). But my idea is nevertheless importantly different. According to Democratic Humeanism, reasons still belong to individual agents. Indeed, I think it is actually crucial that they do so, since it will enable us to make sense of the fact that they represent prescriptive claims on particular people (as I argue in Manne, 2015, §2). So, rather than deleting the place for the agent in the relevant predicate, I want to go the other way, in effect—and to think of both reasons and the desires they consist in as relative *twice over*, i.e. to subjects as well as to agents.

¹¹ Note that, on the account I develop elsewhere, a normative claim's strength or weight will be proportional to both the *depth* or *fundamentality* of the subject's end *E*, as

All told then, the desires which count as ‘calls for action’ can be represented with an ordered triple, like so:

<Subject (S), end (E), {< agent (A), willed means (X)>}>

To unpack this bit-by-bit, it gives us:

- S, the *subject* of the desire, i.e. the human or non-human animal who is possessed of a will, and who *issues* this call for action—which may be *voiced aloud* or *inward and silent*, and issued *voluntarily or no* (of which more shortly).
- E, the subject’s *end*, which corresponds to something which S *desires for its own sake*, and for *her own sake*, moreover.¹² This might be represented (not wholly uncontroversially) as a *proposition* S wants to come true (or to remain so).
- {<A, X>}, a set of ordered pairs of agents A and means X such that S would be willing for A to X in service of achieving E (whether or not any of these agents *hear* this call, and perhaps even regardless of their being in a position to).

So much for calls for action; now for the proper subset of these I’m dubbing ‘bodily imperatives’.¹³

1.1.3 Bodily Imperatives

Imagine yourself in a state of intense pain, even agony. There is a real sense in which the body rebels and recoils against such sensations. Some philosophers of mind, most notably Colin Klein, have even argued that pain *just is* a command or imperative issued by the body, e.g. to protect a certain part of it.¹⁴ Sometimes people writhe almost as if they are trying to escape their

well as the *necessity* and *efficacy* of A’s X-ing in order for E to ever come to fruition (Manne, 2015, §3).

¹² These two conditions are needed to avoid standard problems to do with double-counting reasons.

¹³ The notion of a ‘call for action’ obviously resonates with Stephen Darwall’s notion of a second-personal reason (2009) and, more recently, his discussion of ‘bipolar obligations’ (2013, chapter 2). But there are important differences too: e.g. the embodied nature of core moral reasons on my account, as well as the fact that I end up being more equivocal about the notion of authority.

¹⁴ Among the features of Klein’s ‘imperativism’ about pain that makes it particularly congenial for my purposes is its billing pains as imperatives which motivate directly, or in an unmediated way, and as hence being analogous to second-personal commands. This jives remarkably well with the line of thought I pursue in §1.2.4. Klein wants us to take the parallel between pains and imperatives in ordinary language literally *in general*; he

own skin. (See Korsgaard 1996, p. 147.) Sometimes they cry out. Sometimes they suffer in silence, but have to grit their teeth in order to do so.

Such pain is hence closely associated with a kind of ‘make it stop’ state of body and mind, as I propose to think about it, for my initial purposes. But there are many other states or, perhaps better, movements of the will which are similarly gripping and involuntary, in a sense I’ll expand on shortly. Think of the feeling of being trapped, and wanting to be free; the ‘let me go’ inward lunge of a frightened animal, be they human or non-human.

Severe thirst is like this too. The mandate to find something to drink when one is parched has an absorbing, compelling quality. Ongoing hunger is an interestingly tricky case, since it is easily dulled by the weakness which lack of calories is the common cause of. As this shows, bodily imperatives need not be *intense*, although they go *deep* (in a sense which, again, I’ll explain in a moment). They can be the waning chill felt by someone right on the edge of frostbite.¹⁵

Examples in this vein are easy to multiply. Think of the feeling of struggling to draw breath; the desperate need to sleep; the yen for silence when there are loud, jarring noises which you can’t control. Think of the frantic urge to protect those you love when they are in danger. Think of the feeling of burning with shame, and wanting to disappear, having been subject to the most brutal, degrading, or humiliating forms of treatment. Such viscerally experienced states of desperation will often be at least partly emotional in nature, and may owe to social proclivities, practices, and sensibilities which are more or less particular to particular kinds of animals. They are not intended to be restricted to the narrowly bodily or physical needs which most if not all animals have in common with one another. So states which rely on intelligent and distinctively human capacities, if there are any, are still eligible to count as being bodily imperatives, on my intended conception. This is reflected in my ensuing characterization of them as distinctive kinds of calls for action.

But first, what other states might belong in this family? This question is difficult if not impossible to answer by introspection, let alone in the abstract, for those of us who have had the good fortune not to have suffered in the relevant ways (or only rarely and briefly). Many people have asked me whether some men’s urge to rape might be among them. The answer is ‘no’, although the need *not* to be violated certainly is. What makes me say this? Whatever the merits of my subsequent proposed account of bodily

argues they have the same kind of content, motivating role, and direction of fit, strikingly (2015, §1.1–§1.3).

¹⁵ When one’s body temperature drops below a certain threshold, one begins to feel warmer—a particularly cruel deception. (See Manne, 2015, §3.)

imperatives, we have an epistemological guide as to what counts as being among them for adult human beings which seems to me reliable. It has also been subject to rigorous and extensive testing—would that it were otherwise. Bodily imperatives are the sorts of states which torturers are able to use against their victims. For when the body is protesting, people can be broken.

1.1.4 Bodily Imperatives as (Distinctive) Calls for Action

Having indicated roughly what I mean by a bodily imperative, I will now offer a constitutive account of them as a special kind of *call for action*. I propose to do this in terms of three of their features which are relatively distinctive, especially in combination, although I don't want to rule out the need for further additions for other purposes.

First, bodily imperatives tend to be levelled towards an especially *unspecific*, or open-ended, set of agents, rather than to particular agents whose help we would be willing to accept in some endeavour. In other words, we tend not to be too fussy about who responds to our most desperate pleas, cries, appeals, and entreaties, in comparison with other calls for action (where we will often insist on doing something for ourselves, or only want the help of particular other people, e.g. our intimate relations).¹⁶ Subjects whose bodily imperatives go unmet for any length of time will often be reduced to a kind of howling at the moon—for help from somebody, anybody, nobody in particular. (See Manne, 2015, §2)

Second, bodily imperatives are typically issued *involuntarily*, and hence are more or less non-negotiable, when it comes to the sorts of embodied, vulnerable, sentient creatures who we know and are ourselves, as human animals. There are states of the will which one cannot will oneself not to be in. (They are the ‘involuntary voluntary’, as it were, then.) When someone is in intense pain, say, his will tends to be *mobilized* in such a way that he cannot choose to disregard it, or avoid being held its captive. Whereas one can often, with effort, prevent oneself from being gripped in this way by other, more ‘first-world’ desires, e.g. ones which are consumerist in nature. The desire for a new iPhone may be intense; but it is usually possible not to let one’s will be galvanized by the allure of it.

True, people differ in the degree to which they actually manage to prevent this, and the strategies they may have to use in order to do so. But the important point is that it is comparatively difficult if not impossible to disengage one’s will in this way when it comes to the movements of the will

¹⁶ See Manne, 2015, §2, for a discussion of first-personal intentions as a subtype of second-personal calls for action, wherein the subject calls on herself *qua* agent to undertake some action to some purpose.

I'm calling bodily imperatives. Even if someone being tortured manages not to give in, or to crack under pressure (as we say), he will be in a state of profound *ambivalence*, rather than indifference.¹⁷ His countervailing commitments, and his will itself, may be strong enough to enable him to stand firm, or even to keep from crying out. But his body will continue to protest inwardly against such treatment, arguably in order for it to count as being torturous.

Third, and finally, bodily imperatives typically go *deep* or are comparatively *fundamental* desires for a subject. The basic idea, which I've given a more precise gloss elsewhere (2015, §3), is that one of S's ends, E1, is deeper or more fundamental than another of S's ends, E2, if S would choose for E1 to be satisfied prior to E2, all else being equal. We shouldn't assume that those goods which are standardly slotted at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs ~~are always going to be~~ a subject's highest priorities. But they will at least tend to be among them.

So, to summarize, we can represent bodily imperatives as calls for action ($\langle S, E, \{A, X\} \rangle$) distinguished by:

1. The relatively *unspecific* and often *universal* set of agents A whose help S would be willing to accept in service of achieving E.
2. Their being issued in a largely *involuntary* way, it being difficult if not impossible for S *not* to be subject to these galvanizing movements of the will.
3. The end E going especially *deep* or being comparatively *fundamental* when it comes to S's priorities.

1.1.5 Explaining other Normative Claims using these Resources

It's worth pausing over a significant advantage of Democratism over other, existing forms of Humeanism at this juncture. Once we have distinguished a class of core moral claims or (to remind you, equivalently) basic moral imperatives, then we seem to have principled reasons for saying that some calls for action (or other desires, for that matter) are *morally objectionable* or, simply, *immoral*. (The latter judgment being a decisive, or 'all in', moral verdict.) If there is a basic moral claim on an agent A to X for the sake of S1, constituted by S1's bodily imperative, then another subject S2's call for A to actively *disregard*, *violate*, or *flout* ~~this~~ bodily imperative is immoral in this

¹⁷ Ambivalence (or, sometimes better, being 'in two minds' about something) involves the subject's simultaneously desiring or welcoming *and* being averse to the relevant state of affairs (possibly under different descriptions); whereas indifference involves *neither* desire nor aversion, such that the subject does not mind what happens 'one way or the other'.

way (e.g. cruel, sadistic, wanton, etc.).¹⁸ It is immoral in the obvious and indeed literal-minded sense of directly contravening one of the core claims of morality.

The notion of an immoral call for action (or, again, desire more generally) having been given a Humean-friendly characterization, we can say that the moral claim it might otherwise make on an agent will be cancelled or *silenced* (to use John McDowell's expression). The thought essentially being this: as a moral agent, your most basic (although by no means only) task in life is to abide by subjects' bodily imperatives, and prevent them from being ignored, violated, flouted, etc. Another subject's calling for you to do just that therefore runs counter to the fundamental aims of the exercise.¹⁹ It is natural to think that such calls for action do not represent morality's claims on us as its agents, even if they could or would do otherwise.²⁰

Other types of calls for action could also be argued to be constrained by bodily imperatives. Consider a subject's desire to ignore, violate, or flout her *own* bodily imperatives which, remembering to construe the notion of bodily imperatives in the intended sense, would effectively constitute self-torturing. Even if there are no moral duties to the self, such self-destructive tendencies could be argued to make no normative claims on agents whatsoever (including the subject *qua* agent, absent a defence of special self-permissions).

Having distinguished a class of *immoral* as well as *self-destructive* desires, it becomes easier to see how the picture might be developed from that point onwards. On the simplest subsequent version of Democratism, we would say that any other call for action (i.e. one that is neither immoral nor self-destructive) gives rise to normative claims of the expected kind, given their source and intended targets.²¹

For example, *self-interested* or *self-regarding normative claims* would then comprise the (again, non-self-destructive, and perhaps also morally acceptable²²) calls for action which are made by an agent on *herself qua*

¹⁸ As before, I leave open the possibility that S1 and S2 may be one and the same subject.

¹⁹ This doesn't provide an answer to the 'Why be moral?' question, of course. But, like many theorists, I tend to doubt that one can be provided that would not be either irrelevant, or question-begging.

²⁰ For a helpful analogy, consider citizens in a toy direct democracy who are entitled to vote for or against, or even propose, any law—bar proposing or voting to *prevent* other, similarly situated citizens from doing so. I thank Barry Maguire for the comparison. Consider too that freedom over one's person does not extend to the freedom to *give up* one's freedom, i.e., to sell oneself into indentured servitude.

²¹ On an alternative, more complex view, any call for action would be a normative claim only if it did not call for violating, ignoring, or flouting *deeper* or more fundamental ones.

²² The latter condition would be endorsed by someone who holds that moral crime never pays, and that the satisfaction of wicked desires doesn't truly benefit a subject. I find this view implausible, but again, it shouldn't be ruled out by conceptual *fiat*.

subject. We might also want to extend the view to encompass further *other-regarding normative claims* in the form of a subject's (morally and prudentially acceptable) calls for action which go well beyond her bodily imperatives. At least some such claims are not naturally called moral (in my idiolect, at any rate).²³ For example, consider someone's asking you to do them a minor favour.²⁴

And importantly, we should also countenance normative claims which have a *social basis*, these tending to be somewhat under-discussed in contemporary metaethics, in my view. Consider the *norms of valid social practices*, which can themselves be conceived as calls for action with a collective or group subject, rather than an individual one. I have argued in previous work that such norms constitute genuine normative claims on the participating agents to abide by them, when the practice as a whole is *valid* (Manne, 2013). And I suggested that, as a substantive normative matter, the validity of a practice will plausibly have to do (somehow) with its being generally conducive to the flourishing of people and other creatures, and not inherently prone to violate the rights of anyone. The large lacuna in this proposal was spelling out the notion of validity in a way that was compatible with my metaethical ambitions. Some people quite reasonably worried that whatever resources were adduced to fill in the picture would inevitably compromise its potential to offer a supplement to enrich other forms of reductive naturalism. The above resources offer genuine hope for spelling out the notion of validity in an appropriate way—e.g. most simply, by saying that valid social practices cannot be prone (roughly, liable to non-accidentally cause) anyone's bodily imperatives to be violated, ignored, flouted, etc. Otherwise, the relevant practice would be morally unacceptable. Calls for action of either an individual or collective kind are constrained by the calls for action which are irrevocable and go the deepest, as with bodily imperatives as I've defined them.

We might also distinguish a class of social practices which are *vital* in the sense of being the only or best way of promoting the fulfilment of everyone's bodily imperatives (*inter alia*), for people and other creatures living together,

²³ Alternatively, or in addition to this, one might take this to be the place to locate some normative claims to perform morally supererogatory actions.

²⁴ Note that each of the types of normative claims above is meant to be *non-derivative*. Following on from there, a great deal of work of course remains. We would have to offer a suitable account of instrumental and other derivative (e.g. pre-emptive) reasons, and reasons provided by reasons which *would* exist in possible worlds which extend this one into the future. There is also the category of epistemic reasons to consider (whether or not these can be understood as hypothetical being highly controversial). Finally, we will have to take normatively non-basic claims and reduce them to the normatively basic ones (whatever these may be).

in the material and social world as we know it. The norms of vital social practices might then be argued to have a greater moral significance than the norms of merely valid ones. We could also look at practices which are conducive to or vital for satisfying desires which are *not* bodily imperatives, but nonetheless go relatively deep or are fairly fundamental according to the definition outlined in Section 1.1.4. (Here is where we might hope to extrapolate an appropriate normative story about practices such as truth-telling, promise-keeping, special obligations, and so on. Cf. Hume on the artificial virtues.)

Of course, spelling all this out properly would be a huge undertaking, requiring far more space than a single chapter to tackle—all the more so since there would be advantages in exploring multiple lines of inquiry in tandem, so as to leave room for theorists with different views in first-order normative ethics to go their different ways here. The point in this section has just been to suggest that, although the task in front of us is doubtless a formidable one, it doesn't seem insurmountable in principle, at this juncture. There are seemingly sensible ways to proceed, which would throw up a wide range of theoretical choice-points. But this is as it should be, and warrants pressing onwards ~~in exploring the central idea.~~

1.2 QUEER METAETHICAL THEORY

1.2.1 Reconsidering Mackie's Challenge

If we construe basic moral imperatives as bodily imperatives, and imagine the rest of the picture filled out in some suitable way (as per §1–5), then how far could we go in meeting Mackie's challenges? The view would presumably be just as acceptable as a form of *reductive naturalism* as any other member of the Humean family. On this picture, normative claims are just *actual* claims which meet certain constraints (e.g. they are not immoral or self-destructive), with these constraints themselves spelled out in terms of actual claims with a more basic normative status (including, but not necessarily limited to, bodily imperatives; see note 31). Democratism will also make short work of the supervenience of the moral on the natural, since it *identifies* moral and other normative claims with natural ones. Moreover, Democratism seems to have *prima facie* plausible first-order ethical implications. This will come out in bits and pieces during the course of what follows.

But I now turn to the main question which will concern me for the remainder—the extent to which Democratism might vindicate moral claims' reputation for being *prescriptive* or *imperativital*, on the one hand, as well as *objective* or, similarly, *universal*, on the other. I return now, in other

words, to Mackie's classic challenge about their odd combination of features (i.e. the unfortunately named 'queerness' worry). It is time to put this question to the Democrat.²⁵

1.2.2 Objectivity and Universality

The idea that moral claims are *objective* permits of numerous different readings. And, on a Democratic picture, the *categoricity* of morality—such that its claims hold independently of what *any* subject happens to want, will, desire, and so on—is course off the table now, as it would be on any other Humean or desire-based metaethical theory. However, according to this picture, basic moral claims will be *universal* or nearly so, due to their *non-specificity* (recalling §1.1.4). Insofar as you accept the idea that the relevant bodily imperatives are a more or less indiscriminate plea or cry for help—i.e. levelled towards someone, anyone, no one in particular—then the same can be said of the moral claims they constitute.

Basic moral imperatives will be *objective* in a sense too, bearing in mind the many different ways in which this idea can be cashed out. It strikes me, however, as being a particularly important one (although theorists will no doubt differ in what scratches their itch for objectivity in ethics). For while these moral imperatives could hardly be more dependent on desires (in the broad or formal sense that encompasses bodily imperatives, recall), they *will* be independent of the desires of the agent on whom the claim is made. It will not be 'up to us' what morality asks of us as agents. Nor will it be up to us as *subjects* which core moral claims extend from us to others.²⁶ For bodily imperatives involve movements of the will that are themselves *involuntary* (again, as discussed in §1.1.4). All in all, Democratism will vindicate the objectivity of moral claims in a sense which might be called *non-negotiability*, both from the perspective of the agents on whom they are made, as well as the subjects from whom they originate.

My sense is that Democratism may stand a better chance of making sense of morality's universality than even the most well-developed forms of agent-centred Humeanism. I have in mind the views defended by Julia

²⁵ According to an informant in sexuality studies, Mackie may or may not have intended the term 'queer' as a reference to homosexuality, given the time, place, and context. But it's possible, especially given the nasty pun it seems to make for—the idea that two features are innocent enough on their own, but don't naturally go together.

²⁶ Cf. adaptive preferences, and the idea that a subject cannot by dint of will dissolve a moral claim exerted on others by (e.g.) her desperate hunger. However, her aversion to being force-fed may also exert a *competing* claim on agents *not* to do so, leaving those who wish to help her facing two irrevocably conflicting claims—though one of them may be stronger.

Markovits (2014), in addition to Schroeder's Hypotheticalism. However, both Markovits and Schroeder do impressive theoretical work to argue that their agent-centred Humean theories (respectively) can capture the universality of moral reasons after all. So we shouldn't expect an easy victory for the Democrat here by any means. (Nor the reverse vis-à-vis prescriptivity, which I'll turn to in §1.2.3.)

Different as Markovits' and Schroeder's views are, in both their form and their aim, they encounter a similar dilemma.²⁷ The attempt to accommodate moral reasons' *universality* as an agent-centred Humean tends to come at the expense of their purported prescriptivity—despite the latter being one of the main traditional attractions of such a view. For example, on Schroeder's Hypotheticalism, reasons are massively over-determined, such that an agent A will have a reason to X iff and because A has a desire which would be promoted by her X-ing, as compared to doing nothing. This allows Schroeder to claim that there may be reasons for any agent to do the morally right thing, since this would always promote the satisfaction of her desires to some extent or other (2007, §6.3). But, as Schroeder freely admits, it seems highly unlikely that A will be *motivated* to X, if this would promote some desire of hers only in the most foolish or roundabout of ways. Schroeder offers the example of eating one's car, in order to get one's daily dose of iron in. Such a perverse method of desire-satisfaction—cutting off your nose to spite your face, if the point of ingesting iron is good health in the long run—will not, and should not, inspire motivation. (Sure, you'd get your iron in; but it would kill you in the process.) It seems similarly implausible to say that such a desire *prescribes* this action for you—as the discussion of prescriptivity in Section 1.2.3 will serve further to confirm. Does this desire tell you to do this, or command this action inwardly? The answer is surely 'no'. I don't think it even hints it.

Markovits pursues a very different strategy in service of similar goals, and mounts an impressive argument that the norms of procedural rationality put rational pressure on an agent to recognize the value of *others* as well as herself, in order to make sense of the value she attaches to her own ends and projects. The natural and inevitable worry about this argument is that, once the notion of procedural rationality is made sufficiently broad, it's not clear that agents will or even should always care about what they *would* value, were they in full compliance with the norms of procedural rationality. It hence becomes increasingly unclear that normative reasons are connecting with the cares and concerns of the *actual* agent, as opposed to an idealized,

²⁷ Markovits, for example, is not a reductive naturalist, since she takes the norms of procedural rationality to be irreducible.

fictional character loosely based on a real-life person. And this might be thought to compromise the *prescriptivity* of normative reasons, in at least one of the three senses I'm about to distinguish.

1.2.3 Varieties of Prescriptivity

When it comes to the prescriptivity or the imperatival quality of moral claims, Mackie uses a large—indeed, somewhat bewilderingly large—range of terms seemingly interchangeably for getting at what he has in mind. He speaks of such claims as being *directive*, *practical*, *action-guiding*, and (least familiarly but, in my view, perhaps most suggestively) as being ‘*calls for action*’. He also speaks of the claim that an action is morally obligatory as representing it as having “‘to-be-pursuedness’ somehow built into it”. The claim that an action is wrong similarly represents it as having the property of ‘not-to-be-doneness’, *mutatis mutandis*.

Richard T. Garner draws a useful distinction between two different ideas that seem to be entangled in Mackie’s discussion, under the heading of the above family of terms, concepts, and properties (1990). The first is the idea that moral claims *tell us what to do*, i.e. that they *recommend* or *require of us* an action, in much the same way as a second-personal imperative, instruction, social norm, or rule might. (Mackie himself mentions the example of parade ground orders, 1977, p. 29.) The second is the idea that moral claims may *motivate* us to act under suitable conditions. Both ideas in turn admit of numerous different readings.

It might seem that the first, ‘telling’ quality of moral claims is something which Democratism is well placed to capture. Basic moral claims will have an imperatival quality on this view because the states of mind they consist in are *in fact imperatives*. They have a content which aims to *regulate* the world, rather than representing it. They have ‘the form of the norm’, i.e. their nature and structure mirrors that of the normative claims they constitute.

However, the idea that a claim tells us what to do, and might motivate us to do it, may be analytically distinct but more intimately related (as a causal or constitutive matter) than Garner’s discussion allows. For it’s not obvious that a claim which has the *form* of an imperative, but no realistic chance of getting a motivational *grip* on its would-be addressee, is really telling them what to do—as opposed to merely trying, and failing to. By way of an analogy: a hand extended towards another person, only to be ignored or refused by them, does not make a handshake. Similarly, perhaps, with the attempt to tell someone to do something. (‘You certainly told him.’ ‘He wouldn’t listen. But I tried to.’)

These thoughts motivate the idea that there may be different grades of *motivational involvement*, as it were, between a candidate prescriptive claim

and its would-be recipient. I suggest distinguishing three of these in the present context. A *weakly prescriptive claim* only has to have the *form* of a norm, as discussed in Section 1.2.1. It asks for something, is ‘world-guiding’, or recommends an action. But it may not be capable of being *followed*, in the sense of having the capacity to directly inspire motivation in any of its intended recipients. The actions which are solicited may have to find their motivation in other sources. (This would plausibly be true of a belief or judgment that I ought to X if (a) the Humean theory of motivation is true, and (b) motivational internalism about the relevant kind of ‘ought’ judgment is false. In which case, a desire of some kind to X must be added to the judgment, in order to explain my X-ing.) A *moderately prescriptive* claim will both have the form of a norm, *and* be capable of being followed, i.e. it may directly inspire motivation in an agent who is maximally well-positioned to respond to it. (Cf. Korsgaard’s influential discussion and construal of ‘the normative question’, 1996, chapter 1.) A *strongly prescriptive* claim would add a third condition: the claim might *actually* motivate the agent to whom it is levelled, if *she herself* were maximally receptive to ‘getting the message’, as we say. An agent hence counts as being *addressed* by a claim that is strongly prescriptive with respect to her, by any standards. It *speaks* to her, as an agent, and it speaks to *her*, personally. She may not be motivated by it, when the situation is not optimal. But she is not being talked past, or at, but *with or to*.

Democratism clearly upholds the weak prescriptivity of core moral claims, as I indicated earlier, in view of the imperatival form of their constituents. But what about the two stronger forms of prescriptivity, which require further connections between moral claims and motivations? It’s natural to assume that the moderate prescriptivity of moral claims will go by the wayside on this picture. For many theorists think that others’ bodily imperatives (among other calls for action they might issue) will not be capable of inspiring motivation in *me* as an agent. Only my own desires can do this (so the thought continues).

As I said, it’s a natural thought. But I believe it should be questioned.

1.2.4 Moderate Prescriptivity, Not Lost?

How do desires motivate? This is obviously a huge and contentious issue in moral psychology, whose answer may be different for different desires in the world-guiding family. But according to a view about deliberation which I find attractive, and which I think of as particularly apt when it comes to desires with a ‘call for action’ structure, such occurrent desires can be understood as *making proposals*, *asking* for something, or issuing *demands*

of ourselves that we respond to them. (Deliberation being a kind of conversation with oneself, as Korsgaard argues; see 1996, chapter 3.) Such desires may whisper in our ear, when an appealing way of satisfying some standing desire presents itself. ‘Do it! Eat the apple!’ they might tell an agent who prefers honeycrisps, when she is hungry for an apple, and when one is available (provided suitable background conditions hold, e.g. she doesn’t believe it’s rotten, it’s hers for the taking, etc.). To have an occurrent or operative desire on this view is hence to have a kind of little inner motivational speaker, which gives voice to pleas, suggestions, requests, demands, and imperatives, including bodily ones. These may be more or less present to consciousness, and certainly needn’t be inwardly rehearsed—just as one’s deliberations about what to believe may be more or less conscious, explicit, etc. And it may take more or less skill to listen properly or even *hear* the voice of desire at all, let alone to translate its inchoate demands into a viable plan of action. But, whatever the case, desires of this kind are constantly directing us to *act*, whether or not we choose to go after that which subsequently attracts us (or, as we put it in certain contexts, to give in to the ‘voice of temptation’). Agents don’t then just *go*, or succumb to bare urges; when they act on the calls for action which they make on themselves, they are responding intelligently to a kind of inner guidance.

If I can be motivated by calling for an action from *myself* as an agent, then what makes others’ calls for action from me different, in terms of their potential to give rise to motivation directly? I think that the answer to this question may, in the end, be ‘nothing’. Others may call on me from the outside, versus within. This is a difference; but does it make one?

One difference you might naturally point to here in the first instance is epistemic. I can know my own desires, whereas the desires of other people and creatures are comparatively inscrutable. But we need to draw a distinction in the vicinity of the contrast between objective and subjective reasons, or ‘oughts’. An agent obviously can’t be expected to respond to a claim on *them* to which she is not *privy*, in the sense of not being aware of the non-normative fact which provides the reason (on the most prevalent theoretical picture available at the moment, and *mutatis mutandis* for the alternatives). And my own desires can seemingly be opaque, just like other people’s—even basic states like one’s creeping hunger can easily go unnoticed until they reach a certain threshold (e.g. irritability, weakness, and bodily cues, like a rumbling stomach), or we receive certain reminders (e.g. a dinner bell, cooking smells, other people’s prodding). We need to focus on calls for action which an agent actually *hears*, or is privy to, in order to have a suitable basis for comparison.

Let’s return to the relevant supposed asymmetry between self and other. Is the idea supposed to be that *any* desire with a call for action structure

which I make on myself and heed is *going actively to* engage my will, or move me automatically, absent counteracting forces? But this seems false. I have many such desires, idle ones, which I'm not at all tempted to act upon. What about the weaker idea that my desires *might* play this role, i.e. that it makes sense or is intelligible to respond to them by so acting? This much is plausible. But again, why think that my own desires are the only kinds of calls that can do this? My dog Panko's asking me to pet her can be my command, on the face of it. (The example is a useful one, because corgis are terrible liars. So the possibilities of acting and insincerity won't be distracting.)

But don't *I* have to be motivated, that is disposed, to respond to Panko's manifest desire for me to pet her, as evidenced by her nuzzling my hand? Mustn't there already be a desire of my own in the background of my mind, in the form of a disposition? This argument has to me the flavour of a truism adduced to reach a substantive conclusion—that is, a fallacy. Are the dispositions being posited anything more than a theoretical construct based on what is going to happen, by hypothesis? And again, can't the same be said with respect to my own case?

It is certainly true that desires of my own motivate me, when they do, from a different *perspective* than those which belong to others. I relate to the former first-personally, the latter second-personally. The motivational speaker lives in me, versus *you*. But this may be just a restatement of the fact that the desires are mine and thine, respectively. Why does this matter one way or the other, when it comes to the possibility of directly inspiring or motivating *action*? I don't see why, increasingly. Maybe we are confusing what is likelier or easier with all that is possible. And even the claim about relative likelihoods and ease seems dubious on reflection. Some people seem to find it easier, if anything, to respond to the claims of others, particularly loved ones. So it may be of a piece with an illicit egoism or chauvinism in philosophy to insist that my own desires have a special power to motivate, whereas others' must be rerouted through the self as a proxy server. This sounds like an *ethical* stance, and not a universal one, masquerading as a fact of moral psychology. It might even be selfishness dressed up as philosophy.

Of course, I don't pretend that anything I've just said is decisive. But I hope to have indicated some of the relevant complexities, and cautioned against making quick assumptions about the superior motivating power of one's own inner 'asks' of oneself versus others—such that a person's responding to his baby's cry of hunger by feeding her would require a more elaborate psychological story than his getting himself a sandwich, to assuage his own hunger. For this reason, I think the extent to which the normative claim-motivation connection must be lost to a *Democratist* in metaethics may be overstated. And the possibility that the *Democratist* can

do justice to the moderate as well as weak prescriptivity of moral claims seems worth pursuing further.

1.2.5 Strong Prescriptivity, Lost

Still, there are limits here. Strong prescriptivity in particular seems bound to fail on this view, unless one is exceptionally (and in my view, unduly) optimistic about the power of others' bodily imperatives to motivate any agent. Some agents certainly *seem* to be unmoved by the pained, inarticulate whimpers of vulnerable people and creatures. For my own part, I am inclined to take these appearances at face value. People can respond directly to others' calls for action; ~~and~~, people being varied and variable, they may fail to.

Strong prescriptivity is closely related to Bernard Williams' proposed internalist constraint on reasons—which should be understood as a necessity claim only, to the effect that a reason for an agent A to X must be capable of *motivating* A to X, following a course of sound practical deliberation on A's part. (See Manne 2014, for discussion.) So one might think one that can't be a reasons internalist *and* a Democrat.

Williams-style reasons internalism is highly controversial, of course. So it's not clear how many theorists would be put off by this conflict. This includes some of the most sophisticated Humeans, interestingly. Schroeder, Markovits, and David Sobel, all take Williams' constraint on reasons to be excessively strong—although the constraint which Markovits proposes in its stead is meant to capture its spirit, while avoiding ~~the conditional fallacy~~.

As it happens though, I am a proponent of internalism about reasons, and have defended an even stronger necessity condition than the one that Williams defended. So if this was flatly inconsistent with the view developed in this chapter, then it would be awkward for me personally. Let me therefore pause for a moment to explain how my views hang together.

For, although I'm the first to confess to containing multitudes, this particular inconsistency is merely apparent. One of the explicit assumptions I made in defending reasons internalism, and without which I wouldn't buy into it, is that *reasons aren't everything*, normatively speaking. That is, I believe there are *reasons*, on the one hand, which are normative claims capable of motivating the agents in such a way as to meet the internalist constraint. And then there are normative claims which just *ask* something of us, and it would be in some sense *bad* if we ignored, all else being equal. (E.g., assuming that there aren't normatively weightier claims being made on us simultaneously, such that we can't respond to both of them.) But these claims may fail to exert a distinctive kind of rational demand, which

requires that their recipient be capable of being rationally persuaded of their validity. It would hence not be *irrational*, or *unreasonable*, or even *less than fully rational* for an agent to ignore such a claim. It would just be a shame, or a disgrace, or a pity. Or so I've argued, following in Williams' footsteps.²⁸

The idea on offer in this chapter is meant to provide the beginnings of the story about what metaphysically explains normative *claims*, rather than fully fledged reasons. And, if one accepts the normative claim/reason distinction, then one can actually be a reasons internalist *regardless* of one's views about the metaphysics of the former. We should then think of normative claims as having to pass a further, motivation-based test in order to count as reasons for the agent on whom they are levelled. Otherwise, they won't have the right further features to count as reasons for an agent, which are the entities with which we can reason *with* them, on my view. I call this 'the veto power view' about the normative significance of an agent's motivations on her reasons. Of course, it's no special boon that the Democratist can endorse this reasons internalist addendum. It is designed to be available to anyone who thinks of reasons as something over and above the normative claims they build on.

What about theorists with other, more standard commitments though? If one was not attracted to reasons internalism on independent grounds, then one could simply identify moral and other normative claims with reasons, for all that I have said. If one *was* attracted to reasons internalism, but did not want to draw the normative claim/reason contrast, then Markovits' view would be a prime contender for one's allegiance. However, as I noted earlier, there is a worry that it may gain the *universality* of moral reasons at the expense of certain kinds of *prescriptivity*. We can now make this worry more precise, using the distinction between three different grades of 'motivational involvement'.

Recall that, on Markovits' picture, reasons will be tied to the concerns and commitments of the agent via the norms of procedural rationality. This conception of procedural rationality needs to be quite expansive to generate universal moral reasons (based on ends like the value of humanity, which Markovits argues everyone is under some rational pressure to adopt, given their investment in pursuing their existing ends). But it will then be unclear that every agent is really being *addressed* by, or won't be *alienated* from,

²⁸ This kind of reasons internalism is close to Williams' own (1981), but ends up placing an even stronger necessity constraint on reasons. Roughly, I believe that an agent's state of maximal receptivity to a normative claim should be restricted to those states which she is *also* receptive to getting herself into, via broadly rational processes. This normative claim will then be a *reason* for this agent.

their reasons.²⁹ For it's unclear that they will actually care about fully adhering to the norms of procedurally rationality, thus understood.

Markovits fully recognizes this dilemma as a challenge for her view. (And see Markovits, Forthcoming, for an interesting discussion of it.) And it doesn't seem fatal, by any means. What is suggests to me is that Markovits' internalism is unlikely to uphold the strong prescriptivity of (moral and other) reasons, although it does well at making sense of the moderate form. Surprisingly though, this may put it on all fours with Democratic Humeanism, if my preliminary line of argument in Section 1.2.4 is defensible.

But this is a very general problem. The stronger the form of reasons internalism you endorse, and the less you are willing to idealize or abstract away from the agent as she is, the fewer agents can likely be held to have moral reasons to behave rightly. Hence, if one endorsed a view about the metaphysics of normative reasons which Williams-style reasons internalism fell out of, rather than the constraint coming by means of an addendum, then moral reasons would stand little chance of being universal. So I think that my way of going is a possibility worth considering.

I also find it a more satisfying answer than existing Humean ones to the question of where morality is located, or where it *lives*, so to speak. On such a view, being beholden to moral standards ultimately comes down to being beholden to other people and creatures, rather than to the standards of procedural rationality. I think theorists will differ in which source for morality they find more intuitive. For my own part, however, I favour the body.³⁰

But, when all is said and done, I nevertheless accept that Democratism will fail to deliver something which many theorists aspire to get for moral claims, whether or not they try to cash it out in terms of the strong prescriptivity and, relatedly, reasons internalism which will fail on this picture. Namely, there is a widespread hankering for something more by way of the *rational authority* or *binding force* of morality. Can we live without it? Or rather, do we have to? I will briefly take up this question at the end of Section 1.3.

²⁹ ‘Alienation’ is the term which Markovits generally uses in this context, following Peter Railton.

³⁰ Cf. what Mark Schroeder calls the ‘Wrong Place’ objection to Humeanism (2007, §2.4). For example, it seems odd to hold that an agent Ryan’s reason to help a subject Katie who is in need of his help is provided by Ryan’s desires. Isn’t it the fact that Katie needs help that is the source of this reason? Schroeder does admirable work in trying to show that his view can honour this appearance. But Democratic Humeanism can make sense of it immediately.

1.3 CONCLUSION: QUEERING THE SUBJECT?

Back to the dog who is perennially on the verge of being kicked in metaethics. Let me close by working through a case in point discussed by David Enoch, in service of suggesting that metaethical Democratism has considerable explanatory power as well as plausibility. This will also serve as a reminder and summary of what my account will have to say about comparable instances of deliberate cruelty (*inter alia*), as well as the fun or pleasure which might be had in so doing. (Namely, that these call for core moral claims to be flouted, and are in this sense immoral. They hence don't make claims on us of a *moral* kind, at a minimum.)

In his *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism*, Enoch opens by describing an interpersonal conflict, in which your disputant believes there's nothing wrong with causing dogs serious pain—that, morally speaking, their pain 'just doesn't count'. It's not that your disputant believes that dogs are mindless machines; nor are they labouring under any other non-normative illusions. They just don't care about causing dogs to suffer (2011, p. 23).

Suppose now that you and your disputant have to make a joint decision, where their favoured course of action would cause serious pain to a dog, and yours wouldn't. (Enoch doesn't offer any story behind the set-up, unfortunately; but it wouldn't be hard to supply one.) Intuitively speaking, you seem to be allowed—or indeed required—to insist on doing things *your way* in this case, at least all else being equal. As Enoch puts it, you may and likely *ought* to 'stand your ground' in this case, insisting that the dog not be injured (2011, p. 24).

What explains this asymmetry, as distinct from other conflicts, in which it seems more appropriate to compromise (by flipping a coin, or similar) if you and your partner in crime are at odds over what to do? Enoch has his own answer, which is that there is an *objective fact of the matter* when it comes to morality (2011, chapter 1). And he uses this idea to kick off his impressive, book-length defence of a non-naturalist, 'robust realist' position in metaethics.

I don't think Enoch's attempt to break the symmetry here is successful, on grounds I've explained with my co-author David Sobel, and which I won't rehearse again in this context (Manne and Sobel, 2014). I just want to indicate how to think about this case as a metaethical Democratist, in terms of where the relevant moral claims are coming from.

The first thing to say is that there are *three* of us involved, not two. And although my disputant wants to do something which would cause serious pain to the dog, the dog's pain militates against this *by its very nature*.

Moreover, if my disputant wants to override the dog's will in this way for its own sake, then this is a *morally objectionable preference*—they are calling for another's calls for action (i.e. the dog's) to go unanswered. There may be nothing to be said for letting this person do as he pleases, then; he may not even have *self-regarding reasons* to do so (recalling §1.1.5). And there is also a clear sense in which he has a *mistaken belief*, or represents the world inaccurately, in thinking that the dog's pain does not count, morally.³¹ The dog's pain *does* count morally, on a Democratic picture—not because there is an irreducibly normative fact of the matter that a dog's pain counts, nor (similarly) objective moral reasons not to cause the dog pain. Rather, the dog's pain counts *by* exerting moral claims on us directly, just as would the pain and suffering of any other sentient creature—along with other 'don'ts' and 'musts' with a similarly desperate, irrevocable, and visceral quality. This is where in the world I believe we will ultimately find the 'not-to-be-doneness' and 'to-be-pursuedness' of morality: our bodies.

But there is something clearly missing from this picture, you might think. Where and what in the world is normative *force* within it? You might have gone looking for power, but what you find is vulnerability. The dog's bodily imperatives are all very well, you might say. But what would explain morality's capacity to obligate or *bind* us? 'Animals and babies can't be sources of morality', one metaethicist helpfully informed me recently; 'They seem like the opposite!' (The opposite of what? 'Dog' spelled backwards...)

I concede that the view on offer will be disappointing to some people. Many metaethicists in particular covet more by way of rational authority for morality. For, according to Democratism, it will be perfectly possible for some agents to flout or ignore basic moral claims on them without being irrational, unreasonable, or even less than fully rational—as opposed to cruel, callous, or, as the case may be, shattered. Unlike god's voice, or arguably even the voice of Reason (reasons?), the voice of many sentient creatures does not, will not, and seemingly cannot, reach some people.

But do we think that this is false? Or do we just wish it weren't true? For my own part, it is the latter much more than the former. Indeed, on reflection—none too happy reflection—moral claims *do* seem devoid of any force we could non-euphemistically call 'binding' (cf. Foot, 1972). In the natural and social world, we witness some agents treating other people

³¹ Note then that Democratic Humeanism is in a good position to explain both the world-guided as well as world-guiding aspects of moral *judgments*, without invoking McDowell's controversial notion of a 'desire.' This is because the agent (or judge's) mind is supposed to fit or be guided by a region of the world which consists in *the mind of another creature*, who is in turn in a state of mind with a world-guiding direction of fit.

and creatures in the most terrible and cruel of ways (as well as ways that are admirable and kind, of course). The idea that such agents are somehow compelled to do otherwise by invisible moral forces seems to me increasingly like an exercise in wishful thinking. True, when theorists talk of moral reasons and ‘oughts’, there is a tendency to thump the table as if they mean business. They seem to have in mind something beyond what the Democratist could supply, in terms of power or force or authority. But, as Mackie pointed out, this doesn’t tell us anything of the reality of what they’re talking about. Perhaps Anscombe was right that these terms have been emptied of much of their sense, and have a ‘merely mesmeric’ force without a god in the picture. (A god who, unlike Anscombe, I don’t believe in.)³²

So I think that moral claims consisting in bodily imperatives are non-negotiable and universal, and that they tell us what to do. They also set constraints on what morality can be, in terms of what else it may ask of us, in our capacity as moral agents. When we are privy to these claims, they *may* motivate us to act; they can intelligibly be followed. But, by the same token, they *may not*, and it seems they often fail to. One naturally wishes there were more. I suspect that there isn’t.

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³² As Julia Driver (2009) points out, the secularist’s *modus ponens* may have been Anscombe’s *modus tollens*.

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