

# Metaethical Deflationism, Access Worries and Motivationally Grasped Oughts

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## Abstract

Mathematical knowledge and moral knowledge (or normative knowledge more generally) can seem intuitively puzzling in similar ways. For example, taking apparent human knowledge of either domain at face value can seem to require accepting that we benefited from some massive and mysterious coincidence. In the mathematical case, a pluralist partial response to access worries has been widely popular. In this paper, I will develop and address a worry, suggested by some works in the recent literature like [8], that connections between ought facts and action prevent us from giving a similarly pluralist response to moral access worries.

## 1 Introduction

Mathematical knowledge and moral knowledge (or normative knowledge more generally) can both seem intuitively puzzling in similar ways. In both cases, we take ourselves to have many true beliefs. Yet, taking this claim at face value can seem to require positing a spooky coincidence. Given that we can't see or touch or otherwise causally interact with mathematical objects, why should there be any relationship between what mathematical principles people accept and what abstract mathematical objects actually exist? And how could it be anything but a mysterious coincidence that our moral beliefs line up with objective moral facts (as traditionally understood)?

In the case of mathematics, it's popular to give a partially (as Linnebo puts it [25]) a *metasemantic* pluralist response to these access worries. Such views maintain that (for one reason or another) almost any logically coherent pure mathematical sentences we could have adopted as axioms would have come to

express truths, so that (given accuracy about logical coherence) our acceptance of truth-preserving pure mathematical axioms no longer seems mysterious.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, such views let us reduce access worries about our knowledge of pure mathematics to access worries about our knowledge of logical coherence.

This raises the question of whether we can treat moral and mathematical knowledge analogously, giving a similarly metasemantic pluralist answer to moral access worries. Specifically, could we answer/avoid moral access worries by doing the following?

- Maintain that if we had applied “ought” in a different logically coherent way (while retaining current connections between acceptance of “ought” claims and action alongside certain other quasi-analytic principles) we’d have still qualified as speaking the truth about some suitable other notion ought\*.
- Reject all claims that our moral practices are specially fitting<sup>2</sup> in any way that would revive intuitive access worries (as a philosophical stance[13]). So, for example, don’t claim that our moral practice is uniquely correspondent with facts about supernatural posthumous rewards and punishment.

This answer to moral access worries is clearly incompatible with many forms of traditional moral realism – whose intuitive appeal centers on embracing exactly the kind of special truth-conduciveness or fittingness claims rejected in the two bullet points above [3, 20, 8, 10]. However, I think it can be quite helpful for philosophers of a different stripe: metaethical deflationists (like Humean Sentimentalists), who use access worries to motivate their favored deflationary

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<sup>1</sup>And such views avoid claiming our mathematical practices are especially fitting in some other way that could revive the appearance of commitment to a mysterious coincidence[16, 28, 30, 17, 3, 8]. For example, neo-Carnapian versions of this metasemantic pluralist approach maintain that if we’d adopted different logically coherent pure mathematical axioms, we’d have meant something suitably different by expressions like ‘there is’ and the relevant mathematical symbols, so these alternative mathematical axioms would still have expressed truths.

<sup>2</sup>c.f. [24]

(but still truth value realist) view of moral properties<sup>3</sup>. Such deflationists need to make it plausible that switching from traditional moral realism to their view helps answer/avoid access worries. And accepting the two points above suggests a way of doing this analogous to the following commonsensical position<sup>4</sup>. If I'd used words differently in certain ways (e.g., applying the word 'even' to numbers of the form  $2k + 1$  and odd to numbers of the form  $2k$ ), I would have meant something different by 'even' but still expressed a truth. And considering this fact can help dispel access worries that my knowledge that even numbers are divisible by two and odd numbers are not, requires a mysterious coincidence.

However, recent works by Justin Clarke-Doane[8] and Vermaire[31] suggest a worry that the metaethical deflationist position sketched above prevents one from acknowledging certain intuitive special connections between ought beliefs and action.

In this paper, I will develop this worry and try to answer it by appealing to the idea that 'all things considered ought' is (what I'll call) a *motivationally grasped concept*. I will argue that accepting the form of metaethical deflationism I've sketched (which embraces the above metasemantic pluralist answer to access worries) doesn't either prevent you from accounting for intuitive close connections between ought judgments and actions (as Clarke-Doane and Vermaire worry) or imply controversial claims about logically coherent sociopaths (as some other Hume-inspired metaethical deflationist views do).

In §2 I'll present the main worry to be considered: a claim that metaethical deflationists (who answer access worries as above) can't accept or explain the

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<sup>3</sup>Here I have in mind deflationary views, on which people with different sensibilities and dispositions to make practical choices (e.g., normal humans and psychopaths or paperclip maximizing robots) will tend to would express correspondingly different concepts with their moral-talk-like practices.

<sup>4</sup>For the purposes of this paper, I'll bracket analogous questions about epistemic normativity. However, I agree that the attractiveness of my proposal will be greatly impacted by whether a continuous story can be told about epistemic normativity. I try to provide and independently motivate such a story in [2] and [4].

truth of certain internalist principles connecting acceptance of ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ with intending to  $\phi$ <sup>5</sup>. Clearly, one possible response would be to simply reject these internalist principles. However, I’ll argue that if we don’t want to do that, we can explain the truth of these internalist principles in a way that’s compatible with the form of metaethical deflationism sketched above. In §3 and §4, I’ll propose a theory of ‘all things considered ought’ as (what I’ll call) a *motivationally grasped concept*, which is intended to provide such an explanation.

In §5 I’ll propose a theory of moral oughts as indirectly motivationally-grasped notions. And in §6 I’ll answer worries that my proposal prevents one from making adequate sense of current practices of (apparent) moral debate and disagreement.

## 2 Worries about Ought Belief-Action Connections

In [8] Clarke-Doane presents a possible challenge for the kind of metaethical deflationist position advocated above (alongside various other truthvalue realist views) as follows.

If moral (or all things considered) ought facts exist, these facts would have to be able to tell us what to do in a way that would end deliberation. But, he says, considering the conceivability of variant ‘oughtlike concepts’ ought\* and ought\*\* which pair a given agent with different responses to a situation (somehow) shows ought facts can’t thus end deliberation.

[E]ven if we all things considered ought to kill the one to save the

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<sup>5</sup>Note that I won’t try to argue for the existence of any important connections between ought talk and action in this paper. Rather, I will allow for the sake of argument that some such connection exists, and try to answer worries (of the sort raised by Clarke-Doane) that adopting the metasemantic approach to moral access worries advocated above prevents one from acknowledging it (or making sense of it).

five [in the trolley problem], we all things considered ought\* not (for some all things considered ought like notion, ought\*). And now the practical question arises whether to do what we all things considered ought, or all things considered ought\*, to do.

Various interpretations can be given to this rather brief remark (which I will return to and address more directly in appendix A). However, the version of the worry which seems clearest and most troubling to me goes as follows.

Intuitively, it would be (at least) odd for someone to accept that they ought to  $\phi$ , while (unconflictedly) lacking all intention to  $\phi$ . For example, we generally expect that someone who accepts ‘I all things considered ought to drive to Texas’ will intend to drive to Texas (absent further factors like weakness of the will or perhaps participation in a tragic moral dilemma). Now, I won’t try to analyze just what disjunction of states (e.g., either intending to  $\phi$  or experiencing akresia or taking oneself to be facing a tragic moral dilemma or...) is thus expected to accompany believing one all-things-considered ought to  $\phi$ . Instead, I’ll just grant (for the sake of argument) that some such expectations are common – and I’ll use the term ‘intending<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ ’ to stand for whatever intending-like state is expected to accompany acceptance that one-all-things considered ought to  $\phi$ . So we can say that many find a principle along the following lines attractive.

**Ought Judgement Internalist Principle:** It would be somehow odd for me to judge that I ought to  $\phi$ <sup>6</sup> while not intending<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ .

Accepting such an Ought Judgment Internalist (OJI) principle raises a prima facie challenge for the metaethical deflationist view suggested in the introduction to this paper. For, one might fear that such deflationism prevents one from

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<sup>6</sup>More specifically, it would be odd for a subject to judge that they ought to  $\phi$  without having a corresponding intention<sup>†</sup> under the mode of presentation they’d express by saying, ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’. There’s nothing odd about a person judging that they ought to  $\phi$  under the description ‘the person who will next meet the Russian spy ought to  $\phi$ ’ while unconflictedly lacking anything like an intention to  $\phi$ .

adequately explaining the connection between ought beliefs and intentions<sup>†</sup> it asserts.

For example, a traditional moral/practical normative realist might explain the OJI's claimed connection between ought beliefs and intentions<sup>†</sup> by saying that recognizing ought facts is *intrinsically motivating for all agents*, regardless of their desires<sup>7</sup>. This motivating power could explain why people who believe they ought to  $\phi$  tend to either intend to  $\phi$  or feel some conflict about their lack of intention to  $\phi$ .

However, advocates of my metasemantic solution to moral access worries plausibly cannot say the same. For, suppose that we say that all logically coherent variants on my ought attribution practices will express truths (about a correspondingly different concept). Then it may be that I have one ought-like concept, ought, and Immanuel has another, ought\*, such that I ought to switch the path of a trolley in a certain situation, but I ought\* not to switch the path of the trolley in that same situation. If I say that *only my notion (ought)* has intrinsic motivating power, then it looks like I'm taking my ought concept to be special in a way that would intuitively revive access worries. In principle, I could say that both ought and ought\* facts have the relevant motivating power (so that knowing that I ought to switch the trolley but ought\* not to would require having conflicting intentions<sup>†</sup>). But such a view is *prima facie* unappealing<sup>8 9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Or at least they can say this if they can adequately answer classic 'queer facts' [26] worries about whether any beliefs could be intrinsically motivating in this way.

<sup>8</sup>Compare this point to Vermaire's point in [31]

<sup>9</sup>One might argue (thanks to Danny Weltman for suggesting a version of this point) that the possibility of tragic moral dilemmas suggests that a linguistically competent person can simultaneously recognize ought-like facts that impose incompatible demands on action; doing so just requires a certain internal tension, characteristic of facing a tragic moral dilemma. This would, technically, block the argument above by showing it's possible to simultaneously hold incompatible intentions<sup>†</sup>. However, saying this doesn't really help with the problem above. For, given any situation, there are presumably a range of different logically coherent "ought" application practices analogous to our own (and hence different oughtlike concepts) that require all possible responses to that situation. But, we presumably don't want to allow that recognizing the truth about how all these concepts apply would reveal every situation to warrant the same kind of internal tension as a tragic moral dilemma.

Thus, one might fear that accepting and explaining the Ought Judgment Internalist principle above prevents one from adopting the form of metaethical deflationism advocated in the introduction.

## 3 Motivationally Grasped Oughts

### 3.1 Basic Proposal

In the rest of this paper, I will attempt to answer the above worry. I'll propose that we can explain the Ought Judgement Internalist principle, as follows.

Our grasp on (all-things-considered) ought-like notions partly consists in our disposition to obey certain linguistic rules – including one that connects ought beliefs to intentions. This rule says (roughly) ‘don’t accept that you ought to  $\phi$  when you don’t intend<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ ’<sup>10</sup>. And we can obey this rule by deciding what to do and then adjusting our ought talk to fit our intentions<sup>†</sup> – rather than vice versa. In this way, one might say that our all-things-considered ought concepts are **motivationally grasped**<sup>11</sup>.

To explain by analogy, consider our understanding of the first order logical connectives. Plausibly, we grasp such logical concepts partly by being disposed to obey certain inference rules. For example, one might say we grasp the concept of conjunction, partly in virtue of accepting something like the following wide scope rule<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup>In other words, the Ought Judgment Internalist principle holds because there are quasi-analytic/conceptually central rules connecting ought talk to intentions, not because of some kind of special motivating power of grasping ought facts.

<sup>11</sup>But note that appeal to intending<sup>†</sup> makes obedience to the Ought Judgement Internalist principle compatible with saying things like ‘I ought to  $\phi$ , but won’t because I’m too cowardly’

<sup>12</sup>As has often been noted, it’s not plausible that a narrow scope version of this norm (requiring everyone who accepts both A and B to form/maintain the belief that ‘A and B’) has this status. For, grasping the meaning of ‘and’ doesn’t require you to sit around and attempt to close your beliefs under conjunction, by drawing inference after inference to form new beliefs. It doesn’t even require you to infer that ‘A and B’ whenever you believe both A and B and the question of whether ‘A and B’ is raised. For ceasing to believe A or B is also an option.

$\wedge$  rule: ‘Don’t simultaneously accept both A and B and reject  $A \wedge B$ ’.

Similarly, I propose that we grasp an (all-things-considered) ought-like concept partly by accepting a certain collection of linguistic rules including (but perhaps not limited to) the following<sup>13</sup>.

**(Approximate) Ought Rule:** Don’t accept ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ while not intending<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ .

Importantly, this Ought Rule has a wide-scope form, analogous to that of the ‘ $\wedge$ ’ rule above. That is, it doesn’t require anyone who currently believes they ought to  $\phi$  to form a corresponding intention<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ . Rather, it merely requires us to (somehow) avoid the state of simultaneously believing we ought to  $\phi$  while not intending<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ .

Accordingly, we can explain the Ought Judgment Internalist principle above by appeal to the conceptual centrality of this Ought Rule, rather than by claiming ought beliefs have a mysterious universally motivating force. We can say that the extension of each person’s ‘ought’ concept reflects what ‘ought’ claims they’re disposed to (stably) accept – and hence (given their disposition to obey the Ought Rule) what they’re disposed to (stably) intend<sup>†</sup>. In particular, we might think of the situation as follows.

- My long-run dispositions to apply ‘all things considered (ATC) ought’ reflect a combination of first-person ought claims (fitting what I’m dis-

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<sup>13</sup>Because this paper is intended as a mere advertisement for a research program, I won’t commit myself to specific view about which other principles and rules (like perhaps the principles of deontic logic covered in [27]) are necessary or conceptually central to our grasp of ‘all things considered ought’ concepts.

Relatedly, I won’t propose a theory about exactly which variants on our actual “all things considered ought” application practices would count as employing variant ought-like concepts, as opposed to using the word “ought” to mean something entirely different. Because my aim is to solve/reduce access worries that our ought accuracy requires some mysterious coincidence, I just need to show certain variants on our actual practices would be equally truth conducive (and refrain from taking our practices to be special in some other ways). Questions about which of these variant *truth conducive* practices count as employing a variant *oughtlike concept* matter little.



posed to intend<sup>†</sup> given suitable information and reflection) with certain conceptually central platitudes (claims I treat as would-be analyticities), that might include axioms for deontic logic or claims like ‘One ought not sanction a person for taking an action, unless that person (ATC) ought to avoid that action.’

- Almost any <sup>14</sup> logically coherent such pattern of dispositions to apply ‘ought’ (given sufficient time for deliberation) will determine a corresponding extension (set of ⟨ agent, action ⟩ pairs, across all metaphysically possible worlds), for my word ‘ought’ to (rigidly) apply to<sup>15</sup>, with the following features.

- I can reliably<sup>16</sup> form true beliefs about what I ought to do (i.e., reliably deploy the concept expressed by first-person applications of *my* word “ought” by **forming an intention<sup>†</sup> about what to do** (that’s suitably robust under reflection and knowledge of descriptive facts) and then adjusting the ought claims I accept accordingly.
- I can reliably form true beliefs about what third parties ATC ought to do (in my sense of the word “ought”, by forming beliefs that follow from (or at least harmonize with) first-person oughts and various platitudes which I treat as would-be analyticities (more on this below).

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<sup>14</sup>See the point about conservativity above.

<sup>15</sup>There may be some indeterminacy in the application of the resulting concept, in cases where we aren’t disposed to make a judgment either way.

<sup>16</sup>I propose that changing your ought beliefs to match your intentions<sup>†</sup> is just a reliable way of forming true beliefs (not an infallible one), for the following reason. The extension of your all things considered ought concept will reflect how you’re disposed to apply the term given full descriptive knowledge of a situation and plenty of time for reflection where you might change a view you initially adopted – just as the extension of your term ‘bachelor’ reflects how you’re disposed to apply the term given sufficient time for reflection and retraction. Thus first person all things considered ought facts will tend to reflect what we are disposed to intend<sup>†</sup> given sufficient time for reflection. Accordingly, when we adjust ought beliefs to match hastily-formed intentions<sup>†</sup> (i.e., ones we’d be disposed to change, given more descriptive knowledge or time for reflection), we can wind up with false beliefs.

- People who (logically coherently) accept sufficiently different ought platitudes (i.e. are disposed to treat different ought sentences as quasi-analytic) or have sufficiently different intentions<sup>†</sup> will use the phrase ‘all things considered ought’, to express a concept with a correspondingly different extension.

Admittedly, deciding what to do and updating your all-things-considered ought beliefs to match might seem like an odd way of learning ought facts. However, I think it’s not so different from something we already acknowledge: the special access a person has to their own beliefs via what some philosophers call transparency reasoning – the process involved in, e.g., going from accepting ‘the sky is blue’ to accepting ‘I think that the sky is blue’. Just as you can reliably learn whether you believe the sky is blue by asking yourself whether the sky is blue (even though ‘the sky is blue’ does not entail ‘I believe that the sky is blue’), I’m suggesting you can reliably learn what you all-things-considered ought to do by settling (i.e., forming a suitably descriptively informed and reflectively stable intention<sup>†</sup> about) what to do, and then updating your “ought” beliefs accordingly.

### 3.2 No Commitment to Grounding and Constitution Claims

Now let me turn to some immediate worries and clarifications about the proposal above.

First, some philosophers have suggested that acceptance of an ought claim has both a belief and an intention/desire component. And my proposal might seem to imply that my acceptance that ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ is *partly constituted by* having the corresponding intention<sup>†</sup>. However, I want to reject this claim, because I think it’s possible (though rare) for people to believe they ought to

do something without having any corresponding intentions<sup>†17</sup>. Above I’ve suggested that having a motivationally-grasped all things considered ought concept requires being *disposed* to obey the Ought rule above (connecting ought acceptance to intentions<sup>†</sup>). But a person can be disposed to obey a rule while still occasionally violating it. Just as people who have correct inference *dispositions* sufficient to grasp the concept ‘+’ can sometimes momentarily err by accepting that  $2+3=6$  (e.g, when miscalculating tip), I think occasional odd situations where linguistically competent individuals fail to harmonize their ought beliefs with their intentions<sup>†</sup> (i.e., cases where they serenely accept an ought claim without having the corresponding intention or any internal struggle etc.) are possible. Indeed, considering the eery human capacity for failure of this kind might be important for understanding the history of inaction on climate change, global injustice etc.<sup>1819</sup>

Second, some theorists have suggested that facts about agents’ desires or choice dispositions *ground* ought facts. I want to reject any such grounding claim. Admittedly, I advocate a (partially) *metasemantic response* to access worries about knowledge of ought facts — which expects a close relationship

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<sup>17</sup>That is, it’s possible to believe you ought to do something without having an intention to do that thing or an internal conflict as per weakness of the will or a tragic moral dilemma etc.)

<sup>18</sup>Compare also Kierkegaard’s remark that, “In relation to their systems most systematizers are like one who builds an immense castle and lives in a shack nearby: they do not live in their own gigantic systematic buildings.”[22]). We might study what prompts these failures to align our ought beliefs with action, just as we study what prompts arithmetic failures.

<sup>19</sup>In [18] Horgan and Timmons propose a cognitivist expressivism, which differs from classic expressivism by maintaining that ought beliefs are a form of genuine belief. On this view, having ought beliefs is a sui generis, irreducible psychological state of ought-commitment to a state of affairs which contrasts with is-commitment (and there are no “metaphysically robust moral facts”). The state of ought commitment is (alongside other phenomenological features), “inherently motivational; one is typically motivated to judge and act accordingly (although [this] motivational strength can be outweighed”. Although I find much to sympathize with in Horgan and Timmons’ view, I disagree with them by favoring a looser connection between ought beliefs and motivation. On their view, it should be impossible for ought beliefs to come apart from motivation. In contrast, as noted above, I find it somewhat more attractive to say that ought beliefs without corresponding motivation are not impossible but just rare and pathological like (erroneous) refusals to accept instances of  $\&I$  or  $\&E$  (because having a motivationally grasped ought concepts requires something like a disposition to obey the Ought Rule, but this disposition need not always be realized).

between my actual world ‘ought’ application dispositions and the extension of my ‘all things considered ought’ concept (i.e., the set of  $\langle agent, action \rangle$  pairs across metaphysically possible worlds). However, (there’s strong independent reason to think) giving such a metasemantic explanation for our knowledge of a given domain doesn’t commit one to facts about that domain being grounded in (or necessarily covarying with) anything about human use dispositions. For example, presumably, if I’d used words differently in certain ways (e.g., applying the word ‘even’ to numbers of the form  $2k+1$  and odd to numbers of the form  $2k$ ) I would have meant something different by ‘even’ but still expressed a truth. And considering this fact can help dispel access worries (about my knowledge that even numbers are divisible by two and odd numbers are not). But, clearly, these divisibility facts aren’t **grounded in** or made true by anything about human language use (c.f., Boghossian on epistemic vs. metaphysical analyticity[7]).

Finally, unlike simple response dependence theorists[21], I’m not suggesting that any specific principle of connecting meaning to use dispositions (“‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ is true iff I’d be disposed to accept ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ in such-and-such descriptively characterized situation”) is an analytic truth, obvious to all competent English speakers. I am committed to the idea that meaning partly reflects (something like) ideal use dispositions. But the latter claim doesn’t imply that any specific metasemantic theory precise enough to enable reductive definition (‘x ought to  $\phi$  iff I would judge that he ought to  $\phi$  under such-and-such-conditions’) is obvious to all linguistically competent speakers.

## 4 Clarifications and Objections

Let me now raise and address some worries about the above theory of motivationally grasped concepts, in a way that I hope will clarify the costs and benefits of adopting it.

## 4.1 Privacy Worries

One striking and potentially troubling feature of my proposal concerns the privacy and (in a sense) even *ineffability* of what’s expressed by different peoples’ motivationally grasped all-things-considered-ought talk.

For example, my story suggests that competent English speakers can express different concepts (or at least pick out different extensions by) their ‘all things considered ought’ talk<sup>20</sup>, while being disposed to apply this term in (internally and phenomenologically) closely analogous ways. This might seem odd. However, I think we have independent reasons to accept that it is possible. For, each competent English speaker uses ‘I’ via broadly analogous inference rules but picks out a different person with the term.

Relatedly, one might worry that my story suggests the unpalatable conclusion that *we can never fully grasp* the variant ought-like concepts deployed by other people. To see why, return to the trolley example in §2, described as a case where I ought to switch the trolley but ought\* not to switch the trolley (where ought\* was the concept expressed by Immanuel’s ‘ought’ talk). Arguably, no single person could accept this description of their situation. For (by the Ought Rule above) linguistically competently accepting that I ought to  $\phi$  requires me to intend<sup>†</sup> to  $\phi$ . And — assuming that fully grasping Immanuel’s ought\* concept requires obeying an analogous Ought Rule for ought\* — accepting that I ought\* to not switch the trolley requires me to intend<sup>†</sup> not to switch it. But plausibly (as discussed above) a single person can’t simultaneously intend<sup>†</sup> to switch the trolley and intend<sup>†</sup> to not switch the trolley<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup>In this paper, I’ll often follow Eklund[10] and Clarke-Doane[8] in simply talking about different people expressing different *concepts* with the same word. However, one might posit a shared character to different English speakers’ uses of ‘I’, and hence an analogous shared character to different English speakers’ ‘ought’ talk. I won’t take sides on this issue (or how to think about such a shared character) here.

<sup>21</sup>In fact, arguably my proposal suggests that (strictly speaking) we can’t even share another person’s motivationally grasped “all-things-considered ought” concept in cases where their use is the same as ours and their term is coextensive. For in such cases, it will be an intelligible

Thus, one might claim that our all-things-considered ought concepts are objectionably private in the following sense. Although we can refer to others' motivationally grasped ought concepts via their status as the referent of others' words (and thus use some concept with the same extension), there's an important sense in which we can't fully understand and deploy them.

Such a conclusion might initially seem like biting a bullet. For, it suggests that no single being (or at least no agent) could grasp all (finely individuated) true propositions. However, I think we can (again) take the sting out of this bold conclusion by noting that the same conclusion is already motivated by common theories about the word 'I'. As Frege pointed out in [14], Dr. Lauben can seemingly refer to himself with 'I' and thereby think of himself in a way that's not (strictly speaking) equivalent to any shareable way that we can think about him (and all of us can use the same word 'I' to think of ourselves in an analogously private way).

Admittedly, I think one can sometimes use the word "ought" in special contexts to express a concept that's not motivationally grasped but known to be *extensionally identical* to another person's motivationally grasped ought concept and closely tied to it. Consider how a time-traveling sociologist might have a descriptive concept of 'the kind of thing the Victorians considered manly' which applies to exactly those things Victorians would classify as 'manly', without this sociologist treating the fact that something is manly as any reason for men to do it. Similarly, I want to suggest that we can (sometimes) use the word 'ought' in a sociological, advice-giving context which ensures that this word takes on the same extension as some other speaker's motivationally grasped ought talk. But such deferential/sociological uses of 'ought' won't express exactly the same

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epistemic possibility to each person that the other person *doesn't* have sufficiently similar values etc. to pick out the same extension with their use of the word "ought". It would be a cognitively non-trivial accomplishment (analogous to learning that Hesperus is Phosphorous or Locke's day man learning that he is the same animal as the night man) to learn that one ought to do exactly what one ought-in-that-other-person's-sense to do.

concept as the original speaker’s motivationally-grasped ‘ought’ in a fine-grained Fregean sense. For relevant conceptually central connections to intention<sup>†</sup> will be missing.

## 4.2 Pointlessness of third person ought claims

A final immediate worry about my proposal concerns its implications for *third person* all-things-considered ought talk. We often spend time thinking and talking about what third parties all things considered ought to have done (e.g., when gossiping, judging and backseat driving). Yet the story I’ve told so far has little to say about such third person all things considered ought claims. So one might fear that it implausibly suggests such talk is meaningless, confused, or unimportant.

In this section, I will begin to address this worry, while arguing that my account of third person all things considered oughts avoids some controversial consequences of one of its closest rivals in the literature (Street’s [29] Humean constructivism).

In [29] Sharon Street proposes that facts about what an agent has reason to do (and hence, presumably, what they all-things-considered ought to do) reflect something like what would best satisfy their ideally coherent desires. She also maintains facts about an agent’s reasons are correspondingly grounded in facts about their desires. So, for example, Street controversially holds that an ideally coherent Caligula all-things-considered ought to murder people. This claim is unpopular (or at least very controversial).

In contrast, my story about motivationally grasped oughts (as articulated so far) avoids this controversial consequence. For note that, I have suggested certain connections between my competent acceptance of “I ought to  $\phi$ ” claims and my intentions<sup>†</sup>. But this alone doesn’t imply *anything* about how (if at all)

the concept expressed by my linguistically competent ‘ought’ talk will apply to other people. This taciturnity lets us avoid Street’s controversial commitments regarding Caligula<sup>22</sup>.

Similarly, we can imagine a deeply apathetic person, Pierre, who constantly, non-conflictedly, feels no motivation to act. So, for example, he doesn’t even feel wistful regret that he lacks strong first-order values, or anxiety that he’s sinning against some highly valued but poorly grasped standard he doesn’t know how to learn more about. Does my proposal implausibly imply that, e.g., it’s not the case that Pierre ought to save a drowning child<sup>23</sup>?

My proposal avoids this problem, by implying very few constraints on what we can third personally claim Pierre ought to do. Above I’ve suggested saying that almost<sup>24</sup>) any logically coherent way of combining my first-person ought attribution dispositions (including dispositions to obey the Ought Rule above) with quasi-analytic principles connecting first and third-person ought claims would wind up being truth conducive (by securing a suitable meaning for ‘ought’). Thus my story is compatible with saying that people with common dispositions to intend<sup>†</sup> to praise and sanction can truly say (using their motivationally grasped all things considered ought concept) “Pierre ought to save a drowning child (despite the fact that saving a child is nothing to him)”.<sup>25</sup>

Admittedly, my proposal *does* suggest that a (sufficiently) deeply apathetic Pierre couldn’t truly say “I ought to save that drowning child”, while using his

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<sup>22</sup>My proposal also differs from Harman’s moral relativism[15] in this regard.

<sup>23</sup>Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this question.

<sup>24</sup>We might also require that the resultant ‘ought’ practice be conservative over much of the rest of your language[12], in the sense of, e.g., not letting one prove any new claims statable using only non-normative vocabulary (or any such claims that didn’t already express truths). But this requirement tends to be easily satisfied by practices that are logically coherent.

<sup>25</sup>Similarly, my story (so far) allows that some can truly say that “Pierre ought to do things likely to revive his ability to care about the world (leave the philosopher’s closet and garden or play billiards)” – and others can truly say “It’s not the case that Pierre should do something to break his current fortunate state of non-attachment”. Generally, as in the first person case, I’d suggest that people who use different logically coherent third person ‘ought’ attribution practices will tend to all express truths while employing slightly different concepts.



own motivationally grasped ought concept. However, I think this conclusion isn't as much of a bullet to bite, as it may appear. For (as I suggested with the sociologist example above and will expand on below) there are various important and common non-motivationally-grasped 'ought' usage practices Pierre could fully participate in (associated with advice crowdsourcing, persuasion and historical/psychological explanation). So lingering impulses to say that surely apathetic Pierre could still grasp the fact that 'he ought to save the drowning child', might be understood by reference to these.

Finally, despite the points above, some readers may have a further worry that my story leaves it uncomfortably mysterious *why we would ever care* to make and hear claims about what third parties like Caligula or Pierre ought to do. I'll address this worry via the (optional) addition to my core proposal in the next section.

## 5 Moral Oughts

So now let's turn from all things considered oughts to moral oughts. In this section, I'll propose a rough but (hopefully) motivating example of how access worries for moral oughts (not just all things considered oughts) could be answered. In doing so, I will also sketch a story about why third person all things considered oughts might matter to us.

Speaking a bit abstractly (to begin with) I want to propose an analogy between our grasp of moral oughts and our grasp of theoretical terms in psychology and cognitive science (like the superego or innate grammar modules). In both cases, one might sketch the following crude picture of how such terms get their meaning and extension. We grasp theoretical terms by (something like) associating them with certain core theoretical posits/would-be platitudes<sup>26</sup>, which

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<sup>26</sup>Here I use the term platitudes as a reference to Frank Jackson's [19], and the idea that

express the intended role these theoretical objects and properties are supposed to play in a larger theory.

In the psychological case, these platitudes might state a theory about how superego facts are supposed to help predict and explain concrete psychological and behavioral facts. In the case of moral oughts, these platitudes would express how moral oughts are supposed to combine with other descriptive and normative facts to predict (and perhaps, in a sense, explain) motivationally grasped first person all things considered oughts. And in both cases (crudely put) the relevant theoretical terms will non-defectively apply iff there's some possible choice of extension for the theoretical term which makes enough of the relevant platitudes come out true (without unduly changing the meaning/extension of antecedently grasped terms).

So, on this proposal, we accept certain core platitudes tying moral oughts to other descriptive and normative notions which function somewhat like a ramified implicit definition, as per Frank Jackson's proposal in [19]. However (to use Quine's metaphor), the periphery – which the internal parts of this web of beliefs aims to match – doesn't just include observation statements but also motivationally grasped first person all things considered oughts. For example, the platitudes associated with a typical English speaker's moral ought concept might include the following.

- If something is morally obligatory, then I all-things-considered ought to do it.
- If A isn't morally obligated to  $\phi$  then I morally ought (and hence all-things-considered ought) to not blame A for failing to  $\phi$  ( or punish them for it or demand compensation for it).

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conditional claims like 'If there is a superego then it does something like  $\phi$ ' might feel trivial/conceptually central/quasi analytic in cases where  $\phi$  is one of these theoretical platitudes.

And this can explain why claims about what Caligula all-things-considered ought (i.e. “ought” in my sense of the term) to do are significant and interesting to me. For (while maintaining the above expected platitudes) I can’t (coherently, while obeying the Ought Rule) deny that Caligula ought to eschew murder while simultaneously intending<sup>†</sup> to blame him or impose certain punishments on him for murdering<sup>27</sup>.

On the picture I’m sketching one can generally reliably form true beliefs about what third parties ought to do by combining knowledge of what *we* all-things-considered ought to do (got via forming intentions and the Ought rule above) with platitudes connecting moral oughts to all-things-considered oughts, like the ones above.

However, it should be noted that these platitudes are not completely unsailable. For (depending on what you care about and what intentions<sup>†</sup> you’re disposed to have) it’s not guaranteed that some extension can be found for your term ‘morally ought’ which lets it satisfy all the relevant platitudes and play its intended theoretical role in predicting all-things-considered-ought facts. This is exactly like how it’s not guaranteed that meaning can be assigned to your talk of the superego or an innate grammar module in a way that lets these terms play their intended/conceptually core theoretical role in predicting and explaining your more observable psychological behavior.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Crudely, I’m suggesting the following connection. If (while accepting the platitudes above) I say that Caligula all-things-considered can murder, I must also be willing to accept that Caligula morally can murder. And (according to the same platitudes above) one morally (and hence all-things-considered) ought not to blame/punish someone for doing things they morally can do. So if I say that Caligula all-things-considered can murder (and I accept all the platitudes above), then I must accept that I all-things-considered ought not to punish him. And I can only do the latter (compatible with the Ought Internalist principle above) if I intend<sup>†</sup> to not punish Caligula for murdering.

<sup>28</sup>Compare how there’s probably no way of assigning extensions to practical-normative concepts like noblesse oblige, the white man’s burden, manliness etc. which both satisfy relevant platitudes involving these terms and lets them fulfill their intended theoretical role of helping predict/track all things considered ought facts.

## 6 Disagreement

I will end this paper by considering a pair of worries about the intelligibility of our moral and all things considered ought disagreement practices (which I've delayed mentioning until my fuller story about these notions was on the table). The first worry concerns whether my theory implies that common responses to apparent disagreement about oughts are irrational. The second worry concerns whether differences between common responses to apparent moral vs. mathematical disagreement reduce the motivation for my proposal.

### 6.1 Presumption of Shared Subject Matter?

So first, one might worry that my proposal makes common responses to apparent disagreement about moral or all things considered ought claims like “Caesar ought not to have crossed the Rubicon” look irrational. Does my proposal imply the implausible conclusion that (as Street[29] puts it) “it is impossible for you and me sensibly to disagree about whether X is a reason to Y for A, since the answer might be ‘yes’ for me but ‘no’ for you”?

My main response to this worry is to deny that two parties must mean exactly the same thing by ‘ought’ to have a meaningful disagreement (or rationally respond to apparent disagreement over oughts in the way we ordinarily do). Someone who accepts my proposal can explain the rationality of conducting moral arguments *as if* all parties expressed the same concept with their ‘ought’ talk, as follows. In normal contexts it is rational to (defeasibly) assume that all parties practically deliberate in *sufficiently similar* ways for their moral and all things considered ought concepts to be nearly coextensive – so that the particular sentence “X ought to A” (and, to some extent, other sentences which come up in relevant arguments) is *very likely* to have the same truth value in all disputants’ ideolects.

Absolute confidence that a given utterance expresses exactly the same thing in my mouth and yours isn't needed to justify (largely) familiar practices of mutual questioning and argument over ought claims. Nor is it needed to justify beliefs that disputants genuinely do have *some* disagreement. For note that I don't need to know whether your concept of 'restaurant' applies to some weird edge cases like food trucks in the same way mine does, to reasonably have an argument about "whether the building housing our old favorite record store has now turned into a shoe store or a restaurant". I only need to have sufficiently high justified confidence that the business in question either counts as a restaurant on both of our favored senses of the term or neither<sup>29</sup>.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, my metaethical deflationism can borrow familiar ideas from expressivists for explaining our moral disagreement practices. For example, the expressivist can note that people seemingly making incompatible moral claims tend to have a *practical disagreement*/disagreement in action<sup>31</sup>, even if there's no proposition whose truth value they disagree on. Also philosophically minded disputants who accept some form of metaethical realism, can have a genuine further disagreement whenever they seem to disagree about 'whether agent A ought to  $\phi$ ', as follows. They agree in (falsely) believing there's a unique notion which both of their 'all-things-considered ought' talk refers to, and then disagree about how this unique favored notion applies.

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<sup>29</sup>Indeed, arguably we should never be completely confident that our interlocutors mean exactly the same proposition by some sentence under dispute as we do, given e.g. the existence of regional variants of English.

<sup>30</sup>To further motivate this point, consider a thought experiment inspired by ring species in biology. Imagine a chain of 500 cities speaking very similarly, but with a gradual shift in the application of the term "fuchsia" as one travels north, such that "fuchsia" is applied to red things in the first city and blue things in the 500th city. If the members of each city only talk to people in neighboring cities, their color talk might proceed just as smoothly as ours does. Since neighbors could be reasonably presumed to apply "fuchsia" similarly, acting on the defeasible presumption that something is fuchsia in my neighbor's sense if and only if it's fuchsia in my sense is a reasonable policy. So we can explain the fact that familiar ways of conducting arguments about whether something is "fuchsia" are rational and fruitful without taking both sides of these debates to be using the term to pick out exactly the same extension.

<sup>31</sup>By this, I mean that both parties are trying to achieve incompatible aims.

## 6.2 Moral vs. Mathematical Disagreement

A second worry for my proposed metaethical deflationism concerns differences between common responses to apparent disagreement in mathematical vs. moral discourse. In the introduction to this paper, I suggested it was attractive to treat moral and mathematical access worries similarly, given the various similarities between the two cases which have been noted in the companions in innocence literature. However, one might note that there's also an important disanalogy. We (currently) seem much more willing to accept logically coherent variants of our mathematical practices as expressing truths than logically coherent variants on our mathematical practices. Thus, (arguably) current mathematical practice much more obviously fits with and suggests metasemantic pluralism than current moral practice does. Does recognizing this difference significantly reduce the motivation for my project of answering moral and mathematical access worries analogously (via appeal to metasemantic pluralism)?

I want to acknowledge the relevance of disanalogy, but suggest two points that I think soften the blow.

First, we may be able to explain the differences between common moral and mathematical disagreement behavior in a way that's compatible with my proposal as follows. I've already suggested that the core motivationally-grasped ought talk discussed in this paper exists alongside other important kinds of ought talk (employed in, e.g., advice-giving, advertising<sup>32</sup>, persuasion and soci-

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<sup>32</sup>In the advertising case, we try to motivate someone to act in a certain way by highlighting descriptive facts, which we hope will relate to their methods of practical deliberation to produce a certain action. We try to get people to consider certain descriptive facts in the context of deciding specific practical questions. So, for example, we might say something like '...so that's why you ought to take some vacation, and here's why that vacation ought to be a cruise with Royal Caribbean'. Using "ought" deferentially to express something coextensive with our audience's ought concept is helpful for doing this. In the case of advice-giving, someone deliberating about whether to do something invites input (mention of descriptive facts that might help them end deliberation) from people who know their motivational structure fairly well.

Regarding advice-giving, I would also suggest that there can be interesting ambiguity about whether a person is looking for help deliberating simpliciter, or also expecting answers that reflect facts about your third person all things considered ought judgments and plans (e.g.,

ology). When using ‘ought’ in the latter ways we really do mean to pick out the same extension as our interlocutor. So we may be able to explain some of the differences in common responses to moral vs. mathematical disagreement (and corresponding different immediate appeal of pluralist/metasemantic answers to access to worries in domains) by noting the existence of such multiple uses of ought, which are not sharply distinguished in current practice<sup>33</sup>.

Second, it’s worth noting that some of our current tolerant/pluralist attitude to disagreement in mathematical practice (which fuels metasemantic pluralist responses to access worries) appears to be a relatively recent mathematical advance (cf. Kitcher’s story about resistance to accepting imaginary numbers in [23]). So perhaps some of this difference in attitude to apparent disagreement in both domains would disappear if the metaethical deflationist project I’m proposing in this paper succeeds!

Thus, overall, I think the theory of motivationally grasped oughts advocated above has significant resources to explain our current practices of handling apparent moral (and all-things-considered) ought disagreement, even in cases where this might initially seem quite challenging.

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seeking information about what they can do without risking certain kinds of sanctions from you). For example, this kind of ambiguity might come into play when an omnivore asks a vegan for advice about planning a frugal shopping list, or when a head of government asks an economist or communications expert for advice. The advice-asker may be asking about what they ought to do relative to their own values (more carefully: inviting facts and proposals to be mentioned that will combine with their own methods of deliberation to settle the question of what to do). However, they may instead be asking a question seeking information about what attitudes the *advisor* takes or intends to take (involving praise, blame, sanction etc.) e.g. seeking information about what the advise-seeker can do without risking certain kinds of sanction.

<sup>33</sup>Perhaps it is unsurprising that these heterogeneous uses are often not distinguished, given the points about our practical deliberations and motivationally grasped ought concepts being similar to most interlocutors, for it to be a good working hypothesis that extensional differences won’t matter to any particular question under consideration.

## 7 Conclusion

In this paper, I've defended a metaethically deflationist answer to moral access worries, which treats moral and mathematical access worries analogously in some important regards. I've tried to show (via a theory of motivationally grasped ought concepts) that this approach avoids certain bad consequences. In particular, accepting this approach doesn't prevent you from accepting and explaining connections between ought judgments and actions (as recent works by recent works by Justin Clarke-Doane[8] and Vermaire[31] might suggest) or require you to make controversial claims about what a logically coherent Caligula ought to do (like Street's Humean constructivism[29]).

## A Clarke-Doane's Two Criticisms

In this appendix, I will try to address some arguments presented by (whether or not endorsed by) Justin Clarke-Doane more directly<sup>34</sup>. In [9, 8] Clarke-Doane mentions two specific arguments that raise problems for the kind of metaethical deflationism (with parallel treatment of math and morals) I've advocated in this paper. I will consider these worries in light of the main arguments of this paper and also briefly consider a worry suggested by David Enoch's remarks on the phenomenology of first person deliberation in [11].

### A.1 Can Learning Ought Facts 'Settle What to Do?'

First, Clarke-Doane mentions (whether or not he endorses) a challenge to the very idea of moral/all things considered ought facts, as follows. If moral (or all-things-considered) ought facts existed, these facts would have to be able to

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<sup>34</sup>The comments below overlap with and modify my response to Clarke-Doane in [5], and (I think) gain significant further support from the case for a coincidence-reduction approach to access worries in [6]



‘tell us what to do’. But, the objection goes, considering the conceivability of variant ought-like notions shows ought facts couldn’t possibly tell us what to do, for the following reason.

[E]ven if we all-things-considered ought to kill the one to save the five, we all-things-considered ought\* not (for some all-things-considered ought like notion, ought\*). And now the practical question arises whether to do what we all-things-considered ought, or all-things-considered ought\*, to do.[8]

One can think of this argument as having the following structure.

1. **Premise 1:** If there are all-things-considered ought facts, knowing these facts must be capable of ending deliberation and telling us what to do in (approximately) this sense. When a person knows they ought to  $\phi$ , linguistically competent, non-akratic practical uncertainty about whether to  $\phi$  is either impossible or necessarily rare and unstable (like adding 2+2 and getting 5).
2. **Premise 2:** However, such non-akratic practical uncertainty is easily conceivable. For it is easily conceivable (not necessarily rare/pathological/requiring linguistic performance failure) that someone who knows that they ought to  $\phi$  could continue to deliberate about whether to do what they ought to do or what they ought\* to do.
3. **Conclusion:** There are no all-things-considered ought facts.

The theory of motivationally grasped oughts sketched in this paper suggests that we should reject this argument, by rejecting the second premise above. For, it maintains that linguistic competence with ‘ought’ requires trying to avoid simultaneously accepting ‘I ought to  $\phi$ ’ while regarding it as a practical question

whether to  $\phi$ <sup>35</sup>. In this case, examples of people knowing that they ought to  $\phi$  while non-conflictedly lacking any intention to  $\phi$  should be exceptional and rare (contra premise two) <sup>36</sup>.

I would suggest that Clarke-Doane's defense of premise two gains illusory appeal from its similarity to a different type of case. When we've resolved to take some action, learning that some alien moral-assessment-like practice we're attracted to advises a different action (and so, in a sense, that we ought\* act differently<sup>37</sup>) can cause us to reopen deliberation. And it might seem that this is an example of deliberation about whether to do what one ought to do or what one ought\* to do. But surely this is actually a case of *reconsidering whether  $\phi$  is really what one ought to do* – not wondering whether to do what knows one ought to do as opposed to something else.

Admittedly, Clarke-Doane is right to say that one can't *resolve* practical dilemmas by saying, 'switching the trolley is what I ought to do but not what I ought\* to do and that's all'. But the theory developed in this paper suggests the following explanation. I can only linguistically competently and stably accept switching the trolley is what I ought to do, if I've already settled the practical question by forming an intention<sup>†</sup> to switch the trolley.

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<sup>35</sup>Clarke-Doane helpfully attacks some strategies truth-value realists like myself could use to reject this second premise. For example, one might claim that merely saying our ought concepts are uniquely metaphysically fundamental or unique in reflecting reasons facts (as opposed to reasons\* facts), won't block his argument. He replies that allowing this poses no problem, as admitting the superiority of ought over ought\* in these ways doesn't seem to settle the question of what to do. But none of these block the reply I'm now considering. In particular, I take it this appeal to the practical attitude of having a settled intention for the moment (as when one has closed deliberation) rather than merely believing some proposition about what to do, prevents Clarke-Doane from playing the same game he does with appeal to reasons and reasons\* facts above.

<sup>36</sup>Compare the way we'd expect cases of people grasping the meaning of and, and knowing that  $\phi$  and  $\psi$  but briefly and confusedly wondering whether ' $\phi$  and  $\psi$ ' holds to be rare.

<sup>37</sup>c.f. the points about the privacy of motivationally grasped ought notions in §4.

## A.2 Remaining Practical Access Problem?

Clarke-Doane also discusses a second objection to the kind of metaethical deflationist project defended in this paper (i.e., giving a metasemantic pluralist response to moral access worries). Clarke-Doane allows that metasemantic pluralism can (technically) answer access worries raised by our knowledge of ought facts (if such facts existed, pace his first argument!). However, he argues that such a response would merely push the bump in the rug – leaving a serious unsolved access problem about our ability to decide *practical questions* by making choices. He writes that

Practical questions are highly objective in a sense in which the Parallel Postulate question is not. We cannot resolve them by saying “killing the one would be good<sub>1</sub> but bad<sub>2</sub>, and that is all there is to it” or “you take good<sub>1</sub> and I will take good<sub>2</sub>.” In the practical realm, we have to take a stand. (pg 174-175)

However, I’d like to question whether the need to practically take a stand commits one to anything incompatible with the metaethical deflationist answer to access worries about our moral practices. I agree that giving a serious metasemantic pluralist response to moral access worries (rather than just pushing the bump in the rug in the way Clarke-Doane mentions) requires *something* more than saying all logically coherent variants on one’s current practices would be truth conducive. However, I take the further requirement to be something like a philosophical stance of **not** taking our moral/all things considered ought application to be ‘specially fitting’ external reality in a way that creates an appearance of spooky coincidence (c.f. coincidence reduction based analyses of access worries like [6]).

And I don’t see any way that practically choosing one option when faced with a moral dilemma commits one to such a special fittingness claims. It

doesn't seem to follow merely from choosing a certain way (e.g., a way involving paramount care for the flourishing of all sentient beings), that I must regard my ways of choosing as specially fitting some other aspect of reality, in a way cries out for explanation so as to generate an access worry (any more than, e.g., the match between our dispositions to apply the word 'crimson' and mind-independent facts about which things are crimson does).

### **A.3 Enoch's Dread**

A different worry for my proposal is suggested by David Enoch's [11] point that the phenomenology of serious deliberation (e.g., deliberating about whether to study to become lawyer or a philosopher) is very different from that of 'mere plumping' for one of two nearly identical-looking cereal boxes. In the former case, one has (something like) a feeling of seriousness, that one could make a mistake.

Enoch uses this contrast in phenomenology to argue that the experience of first person deliberation somehow commits one to acknowledging all things considered ought facts (which our current decision could get right or wrong). Since my story already allows such facts, it faces no direct challenge from Enoch's argument.

However, one might worry that the distinctive phenomenology (of seriousness and apparent risk of making a mistake) Enoch points out fits poorly with my story. But I claim advocates of my proposal are entirely free to say that when deliberating there's something you're trying to do (achieve The Good or fulfill Your Ultimate End) and might fail to do in any specific case – given two caveats.

First, of course, we must not assume that this way of fixing a reference for 'The Good' secures reference to the same thing in all peoples' mouths.

Second, we shouldn't think about beliefs about The Good as producing

actions/intentions as per standard belief-desire psychology (where a desire for The Good combines with recognition that some action would best promote The Good, to produce an intention to  $\phi$ ). Instead, a way of caring about the world (including dispositions to deliberate, decide and delay) comes first. This way of caring about the world directly involves being disposed to form certain intentions in response to descriptive information – and being disposed to pause for further information gathering and/or reflection in some cases. And it gives us a grip on some all-things-considered ought concept (via corresponding assertion and retraction dispositions for relevant “ought” talk in obedience to the Ought rule above). Compare this proposal to Aristotle’s appeal to ordinary practices of deliberation and means-ends reasoning to introduce/motivate a concept of the Chief Good in the *Ethics*, “[O]f all things which may be done there is some one End which we desire for its own sake, and with a view to which we desire everything else; and since we do not choose in all instances with a further End in view (for then men would go on without limit, and so the desire would be unsatisfied and fruitless), this plainly must be the Chief Good, i.e. the best thing of all” [1].

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