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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Moral Realism: A Defence by Russ Shafer-Landau

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SHAFFER-LANDAU, Russ. *Moral Realism: A Defence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. vii + 322 pp. Cloth, \$76.50; paper, \$32.50—Shafer-Landau's *Moral Realism* provides a carefully developed defense of a nonnaturalistic moral realism. Shafer-Landau covers a wide range of material, presenting an impressive array of arguments (many original, others important contributions drawn from contemporary discussion) both in providing positive support for his position and in undermining opposing views. In particular, he draws upon influential recent work in analytic philosophy of mind and epistemology to develop a nonnaturalistic moral realism that can avoid or respond to various charges of mysteriousness that have plagued such approaches in the past.

The book is divided into five parts. In the first, Realism and its Critics, Shafer-Landau considers rival, nonrealist metaethics. He discusses familiar worries with various forms of noncognitivism. In his second chapter he presents a powerful dilemma—a variation of the *Euthyphro* dilemma—for constructivist theories (which he construes as cognitivist, but nonrealist): either the initial conditions under which the construction takes place are moralized or they are not. For example, consider an ideal observer theory. If ideal observers are taken to have traits like benevolence, honesty and so on, then we seem to be appealing to prior (realist?) moral standards in choosing such traits. On the other hand, if ideal observers lack such traits, then their attitudes seem arbitrary and inadequate as a foundation for morality.

Part two, Moral Metaphysics, is devoted to defending moral properties as nonnatural and supervenient upon natural properties. Shafer-Landau argues that such a position should be seen as akin to nonreductivist theories in philosophy of mind, where mental properties are realized by physical properties but are not identical to them. Such a view captures our belief that like situations will possess like moral properties, while allowing that moral properties seem to be of a different kind than physical properties. That moral properties cannot be reduced to physical properties should not strike us as any more troubling than similar claims about the properties of various special sciences (economics, biology, and so on), though Shafer-Landau adds that morality is unlike the special sciences in that it is in part a domain knowable a priori and, as such, it is not entirely naturalistic.

In Moral Motivation Shafer-Landau argues against both motivational Humeanism (that is, the claim that beliefs alone—without desires—are insufficient to motivate action) and various forms of internalism with respect to motivation and sincere moral judgment. In particular, with respect to Humeanism, Shafer-Landau presents several cases in which it appears that evaluative beliefs are sufficient to motivate, and he responds to a set of five arguments that he believes might undermine such claims (and lead us to Humeanism). With respect to motivational internalism, Shafer-Landau presents cases of amoralists (or at least agents who make a genuine moral judgment, but who

are not motivated to act on it), and he responds to common worries about externalism (noting, for example, that several stories are available to externalists to explain the widespread connection between moral judgments and being motivated to act).

Moral Reasons, the fourth section of the book, includes three chapters in which Shafer-Landau argues that moral obligations entail genuine reasons for action, even if such reasons are quite unrelated to a given agent's actual commitments. Also in this section, Shafer-Landau responds to the argument from disagreement that is often raised against moral realism; here he makes familiar realist moves but also suggests that arguments from disagreement, if correct, would undermine realism in most all areas of philosophy (given the wide range of disagreement). Shafer-Landau finds this result implausible and, thus, he views it as providing additional reason to reject the argument from disagreement. Finally, Shafer-Landau argues that moral facts are intrinsically reason-giving. While this might seem mysterious, he notes that we seem to find such brute normativity elsewhere; for example, he argues that we have reason to form true beliefs beyond any pragmatic concerns. The very fact that two and two equal four gives us a reason to believe it.

The final part, Moral Knowledge, provides Shafer-Landau's moral epistemology. He argues that there are certain self-evident moral principles—for example, it is wrong to cause another pain simply for one's own pleasure. Not all agents will recognize such self-evident propositions, and we can also mistakenly take propositions to be self-evident when they are not; thus, Shafer-Landau allows for moral disagreement, even regarding self-evident moral principles. With respect to particular, verdictive moral judgments (that a particular action is wrong, for example), he turns to a broadly reliabilist account of justification and knowledge.

Shafer-Landau does much to motivate and to defend a moral realism that is importantly different from familiar Cornell (Boyd, Brink, and so on) and British (Dancy, McNaughton, and so on) forms; it seems likely that this book will be the focus of much attention in metaethical discussion. More broadly, *Moral Realism* is a lucid work covering a great deal of terrain in contemporary metaethics and could—perhaps in conjunction with recent primary source papers—be used very effectively in an advanced undergraduate or graduate-level course.—Jason Kawall, *Colgate University*.

VAUGHT, Carl. *Encounters with God in Augustine's Confessions: Books VII–IX*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. xii + 175 pp. Cloth, \$35.00—This volume picks up where Vaught's *Journey toward God in Augustine's Confessions: Books I–VI* (2003)