Penultimate Draft, contents and introduction; please ask before citing

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Introduction

C1

C1.P1 We can begin to get a handle on meta-ethical quietism by contrasting it with some more familiar ways of thinking about the status of ethics. Consider a few responses to the suggestion that there are *truths* about what's right and wrong.

> Some people will be sceptical. They might ask:
> "But can you *prove* any of these alleged truths?"

I can certainly give arguments for them, I'd want to reply. Now if you scan these arguments, you'll see that they all contain at least one other ethical premise—although, hopefully, a premise less controversial than the conclusion. But none of them have an ethical conclusion with *no* ethical premises.

> "So no, then", they will say. "You can't really *prove* them."
> Or they might ask of any purported moral truth:
> "Who says?" "According to whom?"
> From sceptics with more philosophical training, we may hear:

C1.P2 "Properties like rightness and wrongness would be 'mysterious' or 'queer', and so it is implausible that such properties exist. But they'd need to exist in order for anything to be right or wrong".

C1.P3 Or else:

C1.P4 "Moral terms or concepts don't *refer* in the way terms or concepts like 'cat' or 'deciduous' do. There's not the right kind of semantic 'link' between word/concept and world. No reference, no truth."

C1.P5 "Moral terms or concepts don't have enough 'sense' or 'cognitive significance'; there's not the right kind of semantic 'link' between them and non-moral terms like 'cat' or 'leg', and so there's no rational way to move from claims involving the latter to claims involving the former—no way to go from an 'is' to an 'ought', in other words."

C1.P6 Of course, not everyone is a sceptic. There's no shortage of philosophers willing to step in to rescue moral truth from the sceptics' doubts, through moves like the following:

C1.P7 "Some say that moral properties are mysterious or spooky...but they're not at all. They're identical to natural properties. Or at least *reducible* to them. Being right is *nothing over and above* these natural properties or clusters thereof. I can

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tell as similar story about being wrong. So there: the world has what it needs for moral truth after all."

C1.P8   "Moral terms and concepts *do* refer; here is the theory of reference according to which that's true . . . ";

C1.P9   "Moral terms and concepts *do* have the right sort of sense, the right sort of semantic link with non-moral expressions; we *can* derive an 'ought' from an 'is' . . . "

C1.P10   Or even:

C1.P11   "I can show you that just being an agent [or just engaging in discourse, or just using this or that concept, or any concept . . .] rationally commits you to accepting certain moral conclusions!"

C1.P12   We'll get more precise about quietism later on, but for right now, the most illuminating thing to say is that all of these characters—both those trained in philosophy and those not, both the sceptics and the anti-sceptics—are revealing philosophical proclivities that would seem to be at odds with it. Our imagined sceptics purport to undermine ethics from a standpoint in metaphysics (when talking about moral properties) or semantics (when talking about sense and reference), or just generally, from some neutral, external point of view. Our anti-sceptics purport to vindicate ethics from a similar, external standpoint— either in metaphysics, semantics, or the theory of rational commitment.

C1.P13   I, on the other hand, don't believe that ethics can be either undermined or vindicated from the outside like this, from fields like metaphysics, or semantics, or the theory of rationality. I think these fields are wholly irrelevant to fundamental ethics, and so while there are moral truths that can be argued for, even ingeniously, there are none that can be given a 'foundation', or 'proven' in the sense that the first of our imagined doubters seems to have had in mind. This is because the metaphysics of moral properties, the semantics of moral expressions, and so on, are not of first-order ethical significance. They don't matter in quite the same way that, at least on the reasonable moral theories, pleasure, pain, autonomy, equality, freedom, dignity, and so forth may matter—and so it's my position that they don't matter at all. This is what it is to be what I'm calling a 'quietist'—to think that nothing is relevant to ethics unless it is of first-order ethical significance.

C1.P14   I think it's fair to say that quietism comes off as appealing, but at the same time a bit mysterious. To see the appeal, think a little bit about how you would make a difficult and important moral decision—about the kinds of reasoning you would employ, the kinds of considerations you would adduce. I think that most of us would not find these other areas of philosophy to be all that relevant; our decision would at no point hinge on theories of reference, or on whether there are indeed any rational commitments of our participation in discourse, or on which

naturalistic reductions look the best by the metaphysicians' lights. These things don't seem to matter ethically. To see the mystery, think: how could these things—at least some of them—*not* matter? How could what's right and wrong really be totally independent of what right and wrong *mean*? How could the existence or non-existence of goodness in the world be irrelevant to whether anything's good? More abstractly still, how could ethics be this radically autonomous, isolated domain of inquiry, separate and apart from our understandings of mind, word, and world? Assuming that other domains of inquiry are not isolated like this, we might reasonably ask: What makes ethics so *special*?

C1.P15   Now, I am far from the only meta-ethical quietist. Very many eminent philosophers have endorsed the view that right and wrong are isolated from other domains of inquiry in the manner just described. They include Ronald Dworkin (1996), Richard Rorty (1990, 1998), Thomas Nagel (1997), John McDowell (1979), Sabina Lovibond (1983), Derek Parfit (2011), Tim Scanlon (2014), Alice Crary (2016), Stanley Cavell (1979), and Matthew Kramer (2009).

C1.P16   If I had to offer one wholesale criticism of my fellow quietists, it would be that none of them have—to my satisfaction, and I can report, to the satisfaction of many others—dispelled the aforementioned sorts of mysteries. They give us a meta-ethical outlook that many of us may *want* to accept, but never to my mind satisfactorily explain *how* we can accept it. They leave us short of full understanding, and leave ethics looking uncanny. If they're not promising the impossible, it's not easy to see *how* they're not.

C1.P17   It's striking, too, that some of them barely *try* to dispel such mysteries. Parfit purports to sidestep the metaphysical worries by telling us that, on his version of moral realism, moral features exist only in a 'non-ontological' sense, which they do just in case: (a) there are moral truths, but (b) they are 'are not made to be true by there being some part of reality to which [they] correspond' (2011, p. 747). He gives us examples of other things that exist in this sense, as well as of things that exist in the ontological sense. And he tells us that existing in the non-ontological sense precludes existing in the spatio-temporal order. But that's it. We're given no answer to apparently legitimate questions like: if these truths are not made true by corresponding with reality, are they made true at all? How can there be truths without truthmakers? What about morality makes it different from certain other fields in this respect? And this is to say nothing of epistemology, semantics, and so on.

C1.P18   Scanlon holds that facts within a 'domain'—e.g., physics, ethics, math—are 'properly settled by the standards of the domain that they are about', at least 'insofar as they do not conflict with statements of some other domain' (2014, p. 19). By the standards of ethics, he thinks, there are plenty of objective ethical truths. This proposal gives rise to many objections,[1] but more to the present point,

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[1] See especially McPherson and Enoch (2017) and Wodak (2017).

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Scanlon does not offer anything like an explanation of why the criteria for truth
are domain-specific like this, and like Parfit, he says nothing to explain how it's
possible for there to be truths in ethics that are not secured by the deliverances of
metaphysics. David Enoch and Tristram McPherson thus characterize Scanlon
and others like him as offering up a purely 'negative program', on which
'[normative] commitments like those just mentioned do not saddle one with
ontological commitments that require special defence'. But they note that he
neglects to offer much in the way of a '*positive . . . program* that is supposed to
provide the underlying interpretive alternative to these putative ontological com-
mitments' (2017, p. 821).

C1.P19   Well, my aim in this book is to provide just such a 'positive program'—one
that offers an alternative not only to taking on board ontological commitments
that 'require special defence', but semantic, epistemological, rationality-theoretic
ones, too. It is a defence of quietism that bottoms out in a general story about
how, in Wilfrid Sellars' words, 'things in the broadest sense of the term hang
together in the broadest sense of the term' (1962, p. 35). It is 'big picture', but
hopefully filled in with enough detail to instil confidence that I'm not promising
the impossible.

C1.P20   While of course I hope everybody and their dog reads this book, the readers
I have in mind are those in the same position I was in some years ago—turned off
by many of the standard meta-ethical debates and 'problems', attracted to some-
thing like what I'm calling 'quietism', but unable, even after reading the work of
the august thinkers named above, to see how exactly such a view might work. The
book is addressed, then, to those have not yet identified as quietists more for want
of an 'explanation how' than for want of an 'argument that'.

1. An Outline of My View

C1.S1

C1.P21   We imagined someone asking what makes ethics 'special', such that it is radically
autonomous from these other domains of inquiry. To a *first approximation*, what
makes it special is that ethical debate and inquiry are *non-substantive*. For reasons
that will soon become clear, it won't be worth our while to try to define 'non-
substantive', but we can say that substantivity has to do with representing the
world, with saying how things are in it, with committing oneself to layouts of, well,
substance or something akin to substance within it, etc. Here are two examples of
seemingly non-substantive debates to which I will return often:

C1.P22   (1)   the dispute William James describes about whether a man who is chasing a
squirrel around a tree is thereby also going 'round the squirrel' (1907, p. 505)
(hereafter: Squirrel), and:

(2)   the dispute Karen Bennett imagines regarding whether 'some nonsense made of sour green apple liqueur' in a martini glass is truly a martini (2009, p. 50) (hereafter: Martini).

C1.P23   There is, however, a crucial difference between ethical disputes and other non-substantive disputes like Squirrel and Martini. The latter strike most of us as insignificant; nothing of appreciable value seems to hinge on which conclusions we accept. Hence their tendency to spark reactions like: 'Who cares?'; 'What difference does it make?'; 'You could go either way'; 'What's the point?'. Ethical debates, while not substantive, are nonetheless significant. The positions we take within them seem to matter. I claim that this is largely because these positions influence action and affect in a way that the conclusions to other non-substantive inquiry do not.

C1.P24   This unique combination of non-substantivity, on one hand, and a special kind of influence on action and affect, on the other, explains how there can be right answers in ethics that do not depend on the metaphysics of moral properties, the semantics of moral expressions, and other pillars of meta-ethics that do not seem to be of first-order ethical significance in the way that happiness, equality, and freedom are.

C1.P25   That ethical disputes are non-substantive explains why the metaphysics of moral properties, the semantics of moral expressions, and the like, do not bear on normative ethics. The argument is roughly as follows: moral metaphysics, moral semantics, and the like could generally bear on normative ethics only by bearing upon whether ethical beliefs get the world right or wrong. Since ethical disputes are non-substantive, though, the beliefs we form pursuant to them do not represent the world at all, and so it's impossible for anything to bear on whether they get the world right or wrong. 'Mirroring nature', if you will, is simply not up for grabs, in virtue of the kind of debates that ethical debates are. Therefore, these traditional pillars of meta-ethics are irrelevant to normative ethics. Normative ethics neither admits of nor requires vindication from these other fields of inquiry; it is immune to sceptical challenges emanating from them; it requires no extra-ethical foundation; it is a radically *autonomous* domain.

C1.P26   That beliefs formed pursuant to ethical disputes, unlike those formed pursuant to other non-substantive disputes, have the potential to influence action and affect in certain ways explains why reactions like "What difference does it make?" and "You could go either way" would be inappropriate—why there is often a 'right way to go' in ethical disputes. While these debates do not matter in all the ways that substantive debates do, they matter in another way; they matter *ethically*. Because the positions we take influence what we do and why we do it, they bear on whether we do the right things and act for the right reasons.

C1.P27   I claim that this specifically ethical way of mattering explains our reasons for engaging in ethical debates at all—and our reasons for doing so rigorously rather

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than sloppily; open- rather than closed-mindedly, and so on. It explains our reasons for opting for ethical views that counsel kindness over those that counsel cruelty. And it explains why giving up all of our ethical beliefs wholesale—i.e., becoming *nihilists*—is an unwise thing to do.

C1.P28   Additionally, the features that make these disputes non-substantive and ethic-ally significant, respectively, go toward explaining why ethics seems *not* to admit of right answers—of why there seems to be, as Gilbert Harman (1977) put it, a 'problem with ethics'. Basically, the story is that, even though ethical disputes are non-substantive, their influence on action and affect causes them to show up for us as significant, which fools us into lumping them in with ordinary substantive disputes. The features that make them non-substantive explain why they lack the ordinary marks of having right answers—even though, as you now know, I think they do, in the end, admit of right answers. This combination of seeming sub-stantive but also seeming to lack objectively right answers may tempt us to conclude that ethics, as a field, is in some deep way 'problematic' in the way that phrenology or alchemy is.

C1.P29   This will be useful in our battle against more sceptical views of ethics. For it seems to me that such views get much of their appeal from the easy explanation they can offer of why there seems to be 'problem with ethics'. Their explanation is roughly that reality matches appearance—ethics looks to be a realm of opinion or illusion because it *is*, in some way or other, a realm of opinion or illusion. But if the account I offer in this book is successful, we will have taken the wind out of the sceptics' sails. We'll not only have an argument that ethics admits of right answers; we'll also have an explanation of why it can sometimes seem not to.

C1.P30   Note, by the way, that all of the foregoing depends upon sharply distinguishing between substantivity and significance/mattering, and between their respective grounds. If we had instead tried to gloss the notion of substantivity in terms of significance/mattering, or supposed that a dispute that mattered in the way that ethical disputes do must thereby be substantive, then the view about the nature of ethical inquiry and debate that I take to be deeply and importantly correct would not even show up as an option.

C1.P31   But as I said, that was all just a *first approximation* of my view. Let me now take you through a *second* approximation. A major problem with the story above is that some ethical inquiry *does* seem to have the sort of functional profile that we associate with substantivity. I'm thinking in particular of the kind of inquiry suggested by the examples from Nicholas Sturgeon's classic paper 'Moral Explanations' (1984). Sturgeon, recall, was replying to Harman's (1977) sugges-tion that we can't confirm the existence of moral facts because such facts don't help to explain why we hold the moral views we do; this is because they don't help to explain *anything*. As one element in his reply, Sturgeon adduces some examples of plausible moral explanations. The most notable one is drawn from the work of historian Bernard DeVoto, who attributes the failure to save the Donner Party in

1847 partly to the fact that the leader of one of the rescue teams, Selim Woodworth, was 'no damned good' (1984, p. 244). Of course, if indeed Woodworth was a bad guy, that was in virtue of subvening facts about his psychology, behaviour, and so on. But it is implausible, Sturgeon argues, not to mention inconsistent with the practices of most of the successful sciences, to deny the explanatory significance of facts or entities solely on the grounds that they are supervenient.

C1.P32   The question of Woodworth's character, posed in the context that Sturgeon is imagining, looks substantive, then—just like questions about Woodworth's bone density or military service record. And so rather than say that *all* ethical debate and inquiry is non-substantive, I would rather say that some is and some isn't. The kind of ethical inquiry to which Sturgeon was adverting is substantive, but the kind of inquiry that we generally tend to call 'moral philosophy' or 'pure ethical inquiry'—and I'd say, the kind to which *Harman* was adverting—is importantly different, and non-substantive.

C1.P33   But what exactly is the difference between inquiry in 'Sturgeon cases' and paradigmatic 'moral philosophy' that explains why the former is substantive but the latter is not? I claim it's that former is 'deep', while the latter is 'superficial'. The deep/superficial distinction is not a metaphysical, semantic, or otherwise philosophical one. It is a *psychological* distinction. Specifically: The conclusions we form pursuant to inquiry that counts as deep have downstream effects on some of our other representational states and on our actions that those we form pursuant to superficial inquiry do not. Much of the first half of the book will be devoted to unpacking this distinction and then using it to explain how—again, to a *second approximation*—the kind of inquiry we tend to call 'moral philosophy' is non-substantive, and for this reason, resistant to incursions from the realms of metaphysics, semantics, and so on. I will also have something to say about the bearing of *deep* ethical debates on the fortunes of quietism.

C1.P34   While I've been couching my view so far in terms of this notion of 'substantivity', keep in mind that the foregoing were simply first and second approximations. The story I *really* want to tell dispenses with this idea, and focuses instead on the *values* that are often taken to be bound up with substantivity and related notions like truth. These are the kinds of values the conspicuous absence of which we're noting when we say of non-ethical debates like Squirrel and Martini that "they don't matter" and "you could go either way", or ask of them "Who cares?" or "What difference does it make?" They are what I call 'predictive value', 'general-practical value', and 'representational value'. I apply to all of these the label of 'truthy' values (not to be confused with *truth* values!).

C1.P35   I will argue that the sorts of ethical debates I'm concerned with—the 'superficial' ones—afford none of these 'truthy' values. I'll further argue that metaphysical, semantic, and other considerations that don't seem to matter by first-order ethical lights can bear on whether to adopt a view only if they bear on the predictive,

general-practical, or representational value that one stands to gain or lose by adopting that view. But since none of these values can be gained or lost in superficial debates, these extra-ethical considerations have no implications for which ethical views would be good to adopt. The only values that these superficial ethical debates afford are what I'll call 'specifically ethical' ones—values associated with right action, acting for the right reasons, and so forth. And these would seem to depend only on things like happiness, equality, freedom, and the like.

C1.P36   It will take some work to lay bare all of the advantages of focusing on truthy values rather than on substantivity, but two of these advantages can be clearly seen even now. First, going the 'substantivity' route seems to spell trouble for the possibility of right answers in ethics, while going the 'value' route does not. For one thing, if the ethical debates in question are non-substantive, then it seems that they cannot, after all, have right answers—more or less by virtue of the meaning of 'non-substantive'. Second, there lurks a 'self-underminingness' worry of the sort that may be familiar from the debates about the 'verification criterion of meaning' and such[2]: debates *about substantivity itself* are, on my accounting, superficial. But this would seem to make *them* non-substantive, and for that reason, incapable of having either correct or incorrect answers, which would put our entire theoretical apparatus at risk.

C1.P37   By contrast, proceeding primarily in terms of values, rather than substantivity, helps us to get the conclusions we want. It allows us to explain how ethical disputes admit of right answers in a way that that Squirrel and Martini do not, while at the same time capturing a respect in which they are importantly similar to these debates. After all, things can be good in some ways without being good in others. A basketball player can be a terrific passer but a terrible shooter. A civilization may grow progressively fairer, but less and less conducive to great achievements. And a belief can be good in its office as a guide to action without serving as a 'mirror of nature' (Rorty 1979). That is, there can be specifically ethical value in forming some ethical belief pursuant to superficial inquiry, I claim, even if there is no representational value, or general-practical value, or predictive value, in doing so.

C1.P38   Even if we assume for argument's sake that the non-substantivity of ethical disputes is consistent with right answers in ethics, there is a second stumbling block: it is not consistent with the complete *autonomy* of the evaluative. For the question of whether a dispute is substantive is not an evaluative question; it is a question in metaphysics, perhaps, or the philosophy of language. So if metaphysics and semantics and so forth are irrelevant to normative ethics because normative ethical disputes are non-substantive, then they are irrelevant only by courtesy of some further metaphysical or semantic fact—which means that ethics is not

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[2] For this worry, see Ewing (1937).

entirely free of the need for metaphysical or semantic vindication. By contrast, if we say that metaphysics and semantics are irrelevant to ethics because ethical disputes fail to afford truthy values, then we have stayed within the autonomous realm of the evaluative, and avoided granting metaphysics and the philosophy of language any 'say' over first-order ethics, even an indirect say.

C1.P39 But this is where things might start to look dodgy. My task was to explain the status of values in the world. Specifically, I aimed to explain how there could be correct ways to go in ethics that did not generally depend on the metaphysics of moral properties, the sense or reference of moral terms, and other things that seem not to matter by the lights of our best normative ethical theories. But as you've just seen, my explanation bottoms out in claims *about values*. I'm getting the general irrelevance of these other domains *via* the claim that superficial ethical disputes afford no truthy values. And I'm getting the existence of correct 'ways to go' in such disputes by adverting to specifically ethical values. But this just prompts the same old questions all over again. Do I now say that *these* evaluative debates are non-substantive? We've just seen the problem with that. Do we tell some other story—one that invites metaphysics, referential semantics, and the like *back in*? Well, no, I wouldn't want to go that route either.

C1.P40 Rather, I will say this: everyone's explanations have to give out *somewhere*; everyone is saddled with some degree of bruteness in their theory. The explanatory task is to try to reduce bruteness as much as possible. I do this by turning what may seem like a dangling *explanandum* into the universal *explanans*. Rather than offer a general, fundamental view about what there is, or what's true, that makes room for values and wrongness and obligations amongst tables, interest rates, and feelings, I instead 'start' (in some sense) with a general theory of value that explains the goodness associated with accepting various beliefs across the board—about values, interest rates, feelings, tables, you name it—and thereby fundamentally vindicates those beliefs. In other words, I treat considerations of value as methodologically prior to considerations of fact—vindicating all beliefs and domains worthy of it fundamentally by the former rather than the latter. The name of this approach was once famously called 'new'[3] but is by now old: pragmatism. (Of course I recognize that people use 'pragmatism' to mean lots of different things. I think mine is the most interesting of these, but it's not worth fighting over terminology.) Pragmatism is to be contrasted with representationalism, which is the dominant theoretical approach throughout meta-ethics and the rest of philosophy, hewed to by everyone from the naturalist realist to the expressivist to the error theorist.

C1.P41 The pragmatist vs. representationalist split is not fundamentally a disagreement over which propositions are true, or even, indeed, about which propositions we

[3] By James (1907).

ought to accept. It's a difference in methodological orientation, or practice. Whereas the pragmatist fundamentally endeavours to guide her inquiry and her belief-forming practices by evaluative considerations, the representationalist fundamentally endeavours to guide the same by considerations thought to bear on whether those beliefs are true.

C1.P42   It is pragmatism which forms the 'positive program' within which I aim to ensconce my quietist meta-ethics. The pragmatist purports to make sense of how there can be right answers in normative ethics that do not admit of vindication from the metaphysics of moral properties or the reference of moral terms *in just the same general way* in which she purports to make sense of how there can be a right way to go in science, or math, or sports prognostication. Pragmatism explains ethics by *unifying* it in this way with other domains of inquiry. It renders it less uncanny through *assimilation*.

C1.S2

2. A Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

C1.P43   While pragmatism lies at the philosophical core of my argument, it will not emerge until later in the book. We will work our way up to it. In Chapter 2, I begin my inquiry by explaining what I take to be the 'raw materials' for meta-ethics—those theoretically significant features of ethical inquiry and debate that we may apprehend without the aid of philosophical theory, using only our ordinary, well-focused powers of observation, bolstered or disciplined where appropriate by the empirical sciences. This is where I think *every* meta-ethicist must start who wishes to advance a 'positive program' rather than to maintain a principled silence or simply fend off objections. But I would suggest that at least some others have trained their focus in the wrong places—started with the wrong raw materials—and so have lacked the resources from the outset to craft a meta-ethical theory that explains all that we should want to explain. I take as my raw materials the aforementioned 'depth/superficiality' of a debate or inquiry, and the special motivational and affective roles of ethical thought. Again, a debate or inquiry is deep if the conclusions one forms pursuant to that inquiry have the right sort of influence on certain of one's other representational states and on one's actions. A debate is superficial if its conclusions do not.

C1.P44   I will then 'process', if you will, these raw materials to produce two explanations—one of why ethical inquiry admits of objectively right answers, and another of why it can sometimes seem not to.

C1.P45   Chapter 3 contains the latter explanation. It seems very difficult to deny that ethics exhibits signs and symptoms of *not* having objectively right answers, which incline many reasonable people to think or at least worry that it does not. One might fairly ask the ethical objectivist:

C1.P46   Why does ethics display so many indications of being a realm of illusion or mere opinion, if indeed it admits of objectively right answers? After all, other objective domains—microbiology, say, or math—*look* objective pretty much through-and-through.

C1.P47   It seems to me that an objectivist account of ethics is incomplete unless it offers us a satisfactory answer to this question, but I have not seen any other objectivist provide one. And so that is what I will try to do in this chapter. Along the way, I will explain why we are fooled into assimilating ethical disputes to paradigmatically substantive disputes—e.g., about phlogiston, the existence of God, and so on.

C1.P48   Chapter 4 is the centrepiece of the book, in which I lay out the details of my objectivist quietism and provide the arguments that directly support this view. First, I show that the relevant sorts of ethical debates, on account of being superficial, can afford nothing in the way of either predictive, general-practical, or representational value—i.e., the 'truthy' values. But again, metaphysics, semantics, the theory of rationality, and so on can be relevant to which ethical views we ought to accept only if they bear on how truthily valuable such acceptance would be. And so metaphysics, semantics, and the rest are irrelevant to which ethical views to accept—or whether to accept any ethical views at all. Those pondering matters of fundamental ethics, then, can 'go either way' in the way that participants in James's Squirrel debate can, but for one not so little thing—the specifically *ethical* value, as distinguished from all three of the aforementioned truthy values, of going one way or the other.

C1.P49   I then sketch a metaphysically and semantically lightweight conception of truth that is proprietary to ethics, which (some) ethical beliefs possess in virtue of the specifically ethical values associated with holding them, and explain why truth of this sort is important. After that, I argue that some such ethical beliefs are not only true (in this sense), but objectively so, where objectivity is understood, at least provisionally, as mind-independence of the relevant sort. In Chapter 5 , I address some objections to the view I laid out in Chapter 4, including the charge that these arguments are question-begging or something close to it.

C1.P50   In Chapter 6, I ensconce this value-theoretic vindication of ethics within a broader methodology in which *all* vindications—whether of particular claims, or of general domains ranging from molecular biology to math to sports prognostication—are ultimately evaluative. This is the methodology for which I reserve the label 'pragmatism'. My hope is that by unifying the explanation from the previous chapter with the sorts of explanations the pragmatist wants to give of why all other legitimate claims or domains are in good order, we can fully dispel the lingering mystery of how there can be objective ethical values without extra-ethical 'foundations' in metaphysics, semantics, the theory of practical rationality, or what have you. I begin the chapter by explaining more

carefully what pragmatism amounts to, and by showing how it plays the powerful explanatory, mystery-dispelling role I claim for it. I then offer several arguments for why we ought to theorize in accordance with pragmatism rather than in accordance with its competitor, representationalism. After that, I respond to the objection that, by ensconcing everything within a global, autonomous evaluative 'sphere', pragmatism—far from dispelling the mystery of the evaluative—makes seemingly unproblematic domains as mysterious as the evaluative one.

C1.P51   By this point, the main components of my meta-ethical worldview will be on the table. This will put us in a good position to dig a bit deeper, and explore some of the mechanics of this worldview, and some of the assumptions that underlie it. This is what I'll do in Chapter 7. Recall that my plan is to assimilate superficial ethical disputes to Squirrel and Martini in terms of the 'truthy' values, rather than in terms of non-substantivity, and that I believe that by going this route, I will be able to make room for the possibility of right answers in ethics. But one might wonder whether there is some other way to assimilate these ethical disputes to Squirrel and Martini that likewise makes room for this possibility. In this chapter, I'll consider one such alternative way. I'll wind up rejecting it, largely on the grounds of explanatory unity. This gives me a chance to explain why I take explanatory unity to be such an important thing. Then I will ask what would follow were I *mistaken* in my claim that superficial ethical disputes fail to afford truthy values—and representational value, specifically. The main purpose of doing this is to illuminate for the reader the interplay between the truthy values and the specifically ethical values.

C1.P52   In Chapter 8, I draw out the implications of my meta-ethical view for moral epistemology. My view, again, is that ethics is an autonomous domain of inquiry; fundamental ethical claims neither admit of nor require vindication from extra-ethical domains like metaphysics, semantics, and so on. But many philosophers working in meta-ethics and the foundations of normative ethics—from Wittgenstein-inspired 'use' theorists, to Canberra-planners, to reductionist Humeans, to neo-Aristotelian naturalists, to contractarians, to Kantian constitutivists—offer up arguments or methodologies which would be sound only if ethics were not autonomous in this way. I will name the guilty parties, of whom there are surprisingly many, and explain where they go wrong. I will also have something to say about the quietist attitude towards moral epistemology more generally.

C1.P53   Then I will explain the implications of my view for the question of how we ought to respond to disagreement on ethical matters, and for the related question of how much toleration we ought to extend to those whom we judge are ethically misguided. Finally, I will show how the pragmatist quietist is in a particularly good position, as compared with other moral objectivists, to respond to so-called 'debunking' arguments.

C1.P54   In Chapter 9, I explain how my meta-ethical view differs from a prominent and in some ways similar approach—sophisticated quasi-realism/expressivism of the sorts defended by Simon Blackburn, Allan Gibbard, and Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons. And then, finally, in Chapter 10, I tackle what many have considered the most lethal objection to quietist objectivism—the 'counter-normativity' or 'schmeasons' argument pressed, separately, by Tristram McPherson and David Enoch.

C1.P55   I should say that about two-thirds of Chapter 8, one-third of Chapter 9, and almost all of Chapter 10, are intelligible for anyone who basically understands what the claim of meta-ethical quietism amounts to—so, e.g., anyone who's read Scanlon's recent book, or the work of aforementioned writers like Dworkin, Parfit, McDowell, Cavell, and so on. So if you're interested less in the particular theoretical apparatus within which I ensconce my quietism, and more in the quietist take on moral epistemology, the contrast between quietism and expressivism, and especially in how quietism might address the daunting 'schmeasons' challenge, you may want to peruse the later chapters before circling back—I hope!—to the earlier ones.

C1.P56   I suspect that we first grasp meta-ethical theories, and subsequently store them in our working memory, less by thinking in terms of their explicit tenets, and more by thinking about how they assimilate ethics to the familiar. We ask: "What is this theory basically saying that ethics is *like?*" Some meta-ethicists seem to want to assimilate ethical disputes to straightforward, uncontroversially substantive disputes of the sorts that you would see in the sciences; of these meta-ethicists, some go on to say that these are akin to disputes in the respectable sciences, which afford correct theories, while some go on to say that these are akin to disputes in the bunk sciences, which do not. Some meta-ethicists want to assimilate ethical knowledge to knowledge of mathematics, or grammar; others to so-called 'knowledge-how', or to perception. Still other meta-ethicists assimilate ethical thought to approval or disapproval, or to desire, or to planning.

C1.P57   There will be a lot of argumentative twists and turns in this book, but you may find it easier to keep your bearings by reminding yourself of the assimilation that I favour. I say that the relevant part of ethics is akin to disputes that many call 'non-substantive' or 'merely verbal'—Squirrel and Martini, and so on—although we are fooled into thinking otherwise. But there is a big difference between ethical disputes and Squirrel and Martini: it's that ethics seems to matter—and matter *ethically*—in a way that its close cousins do not. This is because ethical disputes mediate action and affect in ways that these others do not.

C1.P58   While I don't want to downplay the difficulty of other meta-ethicists' theoretical work, I do think it's fairly clear what the implications would be for traditional questions of truth, objectivity, semantics, epistemology, and so forth, of the assimilation of ethics to disputes in the natural sciences, for instance. It is rather less clear what implications my own assimilation has for these questions.

This is largely because there are two appearances that are hard to reconcile and that push us in different directions. That the relevant ethical disputes are assimilable to Squirrel and Martini inclines us to say "Oh, so they must not have right answers!—after all, they're not even substantive questions!" That they, apparently, matter ethically inclines us to say "Oh, so they must have right answers!—after all, if they matter ethically (or if anything does), then it follows that some ethical disputes have got to have right answers!"

C1.P59   Because the implications of my assimilation are less clear, it will take more of a theoretical apparatus—more novel distinctions, more hedging and provisos and caveats, more theory-construction—to draw them out. As you know, I draw the conclusion that these ethical disputes do, in fact, have right answers, and that these answers are independent of considerations from metaphysics, the philosophy of language, and so on, such that ethics could rightly be said to be 'radically autonomous'. I get these results because I opt for a pragmatist, 'value-first' order of inquiry/explanation rather than a representationalist one, and because of my general theory of value, which adverts to the three truthy values, the various sorts of specifically ethical values, and their interaction. I believe that my theory of value will eventually strike the reader as natural and intuitive, and that despite being philosophically heterodox, the pragmatist approach to inquiry will reveal itself to be closer indeed to common sense than the representationalist one is. But it will take some work to make all of this apparent.