

STRENGTHENING THE PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY
RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMIC CHALLENGE OF EVOLUTION
IN NON-NATURALIST METAETHICAL REALISM.

A Master's Thesis

by

SEYED ZACHARUS GUDMUNSEN

Department of Philosophy
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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SEYED ZACHARUS GUDMUNSEN

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May 2018

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

SWW

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simon Wigley (Bilkent University)

Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

W. G. Wringe

Asst. Prof. Dr. William G. Wringe (Bilkent University)

Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

L. Thorpe

Asst. Prof. Dr. Lucas Thorpe (Boğaziçi University)

Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences.

Halime

Prof. Dr. Halime Demirkan

Director

ABSTRACT

STRENGTHENING THE PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY RESPONSE TO THE EPISTEMIC CHALLENGE OF EVOLUTION IN NON-NATURALIST METAETHICAL REALISM

Seyed Zacharus Gudmunsen

M.A., Department of Philosophy

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simon Wigley

May 2018

This thesis outlines a popular non-naturalist response to evolutionary debunking arguments against metaethical realism: the pre-established harmony response. I argue that the pre-established harmony response is unsuccessful on two grounds: it is anthropocentric and it is question-begging. I suggest that we can overcome both problems and leave the essential features of pre-established harmony responses intact by substituting a proxy function for the question-begging assumption. I suggest one such proxy function: The *Combined Evolutionary Aim*; use of which brings the added benefit of being less anthropocentric than earlier pre-established harmony responses.

Key-words: Evolutionary Debunking, Metaethics, Moral Realism, Non-Naturalism

ÖZET

NON-NATURALIST METAETHICAL REALISM'DEKİ EVRİMİN EPİSTEMİK ZORLUKLARINA KARŞI PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY YANITINI GÜÇLENDİRMEK

Seyyed Zacharus Gudmunsen

Yüksek lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simon Wigley

Mayıs 2018

Bu tez, metaethical realism'e karşı olan evrimsel “debunking” argümanlarına popüler non-naturalist bir yanıtı olan, “pre-established harmony” yanıtını özetlemektedir. “Pre-established harmony” yanıtının iki esasta başarısız olduğunu ileri sürüyorum: antroposentrik ve “question-begging” (varsayılan iddiayı ispatlanmış gibi kabul ederek çıkarımlarda bulunmak). Her iki problemin üstesinden gelebileceğimizi ve “pre-established harmony” yanıtlarının değiştirilmemiş temel özelliklerinden ayrılıp yerine “question-begging” varsayımı için bir proxy fonksiyonu varsayımı koyabileceğimizi iddia ediyorum. Kullanımı önceki “pre-established harmony” yanıtlarından daha az antroposentrik olduğu için, “The *Combined Evolutionary Aim*” olarak adlandırdığım bu tür bir proxy fonksiyonunu öneriyorum.

Key-words: Evolutionary Debunking, Metaethics, Moral Realism, Non-Naturalism

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Moral realism is a metaethical position that claims normative facts are, roughly, independent of people's attitudes about and responses to them. Realism is typically under threat, both in ethics and elsewhere, by sceptical arguments. Recent sceptical arguments have been based on the influence of evolution in forming our cognitive faculties: Evolutionary Debunking Arguments (EDAs). In section 2, I analyse EDAs, focusing on Street's (2006) version and then outline various potential responses. In section 3, I explore one realist response in particular: the pre-established harmony (PEH) response. The PEH response is a strong response to EDAs, but is subject to a question-begging critique. I explain that critique and outline an approach that the realist could take to strengthen the pre-established harmony response from it.

Moral realist views, and metaethics generally, are concerned with moral facts. There are various terminological standards when discussing moral facts – we can say that we have *evaluative* beliefs about them, that there is *normative truth* behind them which we aim for with *normative judgements*, that moral facts tell us what we *ought* to do, or what ought to be the case, are part of the reasons why things are *right* and *wrong*, and, I'm sure, much more. I'm going to use 'normative truth' and 'normative judgement' as unifying terms, and broad ones – here I'm following the usage of Enoch which he explains (2011, ch.1) in detail. As such, 'normative' will refer to almost all the terminology just mentioned – and, crucially, the normative is what is *doing the work* in moral claims; i.e. normativity is the *sine qua non* for moral judgements.

While precursors to evolutionary arguments against normative realism have been put forward in the 20th century, evolutionary arguments have been the subject of increased attention since the recent publication of targeted evolutionary arguments for normative scepticism, EDAs. Debunking arguments in general work by undermining our confidence in the justifications for our beliefs. If, the debunker says, we have reason to doubt the justification of our judgements, then we have reason to doubt the judgements themselves.

EDAs aim to debunk normative judgements by claiming that they are likely to have been influenced by evolutionary forces, which would undermine our justification in them. Since evolutionary forces are not required to be true (and instead required to provide reproductive success), then moral realism needs to explain how normative judgements can be reliably informed by normative facts.

I'm going to discuss the pre-established harmony (PEH) or 'third-factor' response. Since I'm dealing with a response to the evolutionary debunking argument that is designed to work against non-evolutionary epistemological concerns (e.g. Enoch, 2011, ch.7), and since the viability of the evolutionary aspect of evolutionary debunking arguments has already been discussed at length (e.g. Deem, 2016), I'm not going to discuss the scientific backing for EDAs. I'll assume (as many others do) that there is some force behind EDAs that's supported by our best science.

I'm also not going to discuss the responses available to naturalist realism, which (usually) claims that we can reduce normative facts to non-normative facts, nor will I discuss anti-realist responses. Instead, I'm going to give an overview of the non-naturalist responses to debunking arguments and then narrow my focus down to the one I believe is most promising: the PEH response. The PEH response argues that there is a third-factor that links normative truth to evolutionary forces, making our normative judgements likely to be accurate and reliable.

The pre-established harmony response that has been developed so far is little more than the structure of an argument that could provide a response to evolutionary debunking. After exploring the contemporary status of the argument in section 3, I'm going to outline how I think we can begin developing a pre-established harmony hypothesis that is more robust, explanatorily effective and non-anthropocentric than previous iterations.

The key tool that I use to create this strengthened version of the pre-established harmony hypothesis is the positive possibility of non-human moral species. The evolutionary debunking argument is couched in negative terms: we are influenced by evolutionary forces, and there is no reason for them to 'track' (i.e. accurately and reliably be sensitive to the truth of) non-natural truths. The implication of this is that there can be other evolutionary species that are either entirely non-moral or moral in a different way to humans. Normative truths, if they exist and the pre-established

harmony hypothesis is true, ought to be consistent across all evolutionary species. I use this to suggest a strengthened candidate for the third-factor in PEH responses.



CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTIONARY DEBUNKING CHALLENGE

2.1. Sharon Street's dilemma

The most influential formulation of the evolutionary debunking challenge is Street's (2006) 'A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value'. Street claims that our cognitive faculties are indirectly (and partially) determined by evolutionary forces.

Since realists claim that we can access normative facts through these processes, then they are faced with a dilemma, this formulation of it is taken from Skarsaune (2011):

First Horn: evolutionary forces do not have a relationship with our normative judgements.

Second Horn: they do.

If there is no relationship, the realists are in trouble because evolutionary forces may have led us astray from normative facts. If there is a relationship, the realists remain in trouble because their explanation of that relationship is less parsimonious than an adaptive, non-realist (or at least sceptical) account.

In slightly more detail, the argument goes like this:

1. Evolutionary forces have affected our normative judgements, via the evolutionary determination of our cognitive faculties.
2. Evolutionary forces are not bound to be true, only successful in passing down genes.
3. Evolutionary forces are a distorting influence on our access to normative truths.
4. We have reason to doubt our access to normative truths.
5. Realism depends on access to normative truths.
6. We have reason to doubt realism.

Street (2006, 111-112) is specific with her targets:

According to what I will call non-naturalist versions of value realism, evaluative facts or truths are ... irreducibly normative facts or truths. This brand of realism ... lies squarely within the target of the Darwinian Dilemma.

Non-naturalists are particularly vulnerable to Street's dilemma because, unlike naturalists, they cannot reduce normative facts to natural phenomena and with that reduce normative facts to facts that are clearly bound up with evolutionary forces. That is not an explanation alone, and naturalists (especially non-reductive naturalists) may also have difficulty with Street's dilemma and evolutionary debunking in general (See Barkhausen, 2016), but I will focus on non-naturalist responses. As such, 'realism' and 'realists' hereafter refer to non-naturalist versions unless otherwise specified.

As I've mentioned, I'm not going to discuss certain arguments about the workings of this argument here. Two examples of these arguments are: that we don't have a complete explanation of how evolution affects our judgements, and that there are examples of judgements that seem to be contrary to evolutionary principles (most prominent of these types of argument are by Fitzpatrick (2015, 2017), though they also come in a more biological vein, for example, in Leibowitz and Sinclair (2017)). I assume that evolutionary theory can provide an explanation for normative judgements, even if it has not done so yet.

Realists have questioned 1, 2, 3, and 5, in their responses to the dilemma. Those taking on the First horn tend to deny 1 or 5, and those tackling the second horn deal with 3 and, relatedly, 2. PEH responses opt for the second horn.

2.2. Replies to the first horn of the Darwinian dilemma

For a realist response to the first horn, they can make two moves to deny 1: either a non-evolutionary force allows us to make normative judgements that are reliably true *despite* evolutionary processes, or our normative judgements are coincidentally true; or one move to deny 5: we do not make normative judgements that are reliably true (or perhaps ever true), and that's not a problem.

Shafer-Landau calls the first response the ‘Natural Reply’ (2012: 6). It does indeed seem most intuitive for the realist to deny any relationship between evolutionary forces and normative judgements. If they are unrelated, then our normative judgements are undistorted by evolutionary forces, so they remain as justified as they were before. However, the problem for this approach is the sheer pervasiveness of evolutionary processes, it is difficult to demarcate a non-evolutionary area to stand our normative judgements in. Nevertheless, this is the approach that Huemer (2008) takes.

Huemer suggests a small number of abstract moral claims that he thinks are unusually independent of biases, including evolutionary biases. He calls these ‘formal intuitions’. Formal intuitions are *a priori* claims, as normative judgements are under Huemer’s type of rationalistic intuitionism. Here are some of Huemer’s (2008: 386) examples:

- (i) “If x is better than y and y is better than z , then x is better than z . ”
- (ii) “If it is permissible to do x , and it is permissible to do y given that one does x , then it is permissible to do both x and y . ”
- (iii) “If it is wrong to do x , and it is wrong to do y , then it is wrong to do both x and y . ”

Huemer seems to think that one could sidestep the Darwinian dilemma by claiming that true normative judgements were grounded purely in formal intuitions. That, in itself, would be a limiting factor in the produced realism (as Shafer Landau (2012: 6) notes), because we would be forced to restrict our normative judgement to those normative facts that could be shown to rest on formal intuitions, which is likely to exclude some facts that we want to call normative. Huemer admits this much, as he says: “I leave it open that only a small minority of moral beliefs might constitute genuine knowledge of objective moral facts.” (2016: 1987). This, alone, is enough to show the difficulty of Huemer’s specific account compared to what we ordinarily want to believe about our normative judgements.

Huemer has other arguments (2016) for moral progression converging onto normative facts, but his account of formal intuitions as without evolutionary bias is the most influential and potentially the strongest of his defences against EDAs. The

downside is that we could only have a limited and bare ethical system if we relied solely on formal intuitions.

But there is further cause for concern. Street seems to have a pre-emptive defence of this issue. The relevant passage:

[I]f the fund of evaluative judgements with which human reflection began was thoroughly contaminated with illegitimate influence -- and the objector has offered no reason to doubt this part of the argument -- then the tools of rational reflection were equally contaminated, Street (2006: 124) in Huemer (2008: 375, 379)

Huemer either needs to explain why formal intuitions aren't a product of rational reflection, or why rational reflection is not affected by evolutionary forces.

These kinds of intuitions are particularly plausible candidates for *being products of rational reflection*. They are not plausibly regarded as products of emotional bias, cultural or biological programming, or self-interested bias. (Huemer, 2008: 386. My emphasis.)

His choice is made, then.

Huemer can defend formal intuitions from the charge that they are tainted by evolutionarily influenced tools of rational reflection in two ways: firstly, formal intuitions are *a priori*: they are known to be true through the intellect alone, the working of which is independent of evolution. In this context, Huemer helps himself to the independent truth of the *a priori* as an assumption. Secondly, only very few of our normative judgements need to accurately grasp normative truths, because the truth in their judgements would be identifiable by their judgements coherency with one another. The problem for Huemer here is that this coherence requirement cannot be part of our contaminated 'tools of rational reflection' either. The coherence requirement is not a formal intuition, and might undermine our belief that we can go any further than formal intuitions themselves.

Hayward (2016, 10) expands on the problem of using rational reflection as a tool to measure the truth of our judgements. Particularly on the criterion of coherence. There is no reason to think that, even if realism is true, normative facts cannot conflict with one another. It can be a fact that I have a reason to lie and a reason not to lie, even if it is also a fact that, all things considered, I should not lie. Instead, Hayward suggests that coherency is part of a social function of ethics (un-noticed by realists), and that, historically, ethics could have aimed to eliminate conflict without

this representing the normative facts. Coherency, then is under threat. If we cannot use formal intuitions in tandem with a coherency requirement, are they useless? No. We can use formal intuitions as restrictions on what types of claims there can be. Although we cannot build up an entire ethics from formal intuitions, we can use them to restrict the domain of what normative claims are possible. (And if we turn out to be wrong about any formal intuition, then the domain of possible normative claims will change accordingly.)

Formal intuitions themselves aren't a convincing answer to the Darwinian Dilemma. Nor, in fact, is any *Natural Reply*, though I'm sure there remain capable defenders. The PEH hypothesis I'm supporting should be able to support defectors from the *Natural Reply*. One issue that will return is the viability of coherency for sorting truth from falsity.

Of the three moves to tackle the first horn, the coincidental response is not seriously defended. Though plenty of EDA critics refer to 'minimising the coincidence' or re-working the probability of the coincidence (e.g. Bedke, 2014; Enoch, 2010; Shafer-Landau, 2012), these responses utilise either a response to the second horn or the dilemma or an appeal to normative judgements that are independent of evolutionary forces. Admitting a brute coincidence between normative facts and evolutionary forces would be entirely problematic – foremost among the problems being that our knowledge would not have the relevant sensitivity to normative facts.

The last response is that we do not access normative facts reliably, or, as in Street (2006: 122) "many or most of our evaluative judgements are off track". As realists, we could accept that most of our normative judgements are 'off track', that doesn't seem to have a bearing on the actual truth of normative facts. However, if we have no means of accessing those normative facts reliably then our normative theory suffers both in terms of grounding the inescapable authority of normative facts (Joyce, 2006, 2016) and in explaining normative language and behaviour. Despite this, Skarsaune (2011) defends this position, and his approach will be explored in section 3 with the pre-established harmony response.

2.3. Replies to the second horn of the Darwinian dilemma

If our normative judgements are determined by evolutionary forces then, since evolutionary forces only work towards reproductive success and not non-natural facts, normative judgements are unlikely to track realist normative facts. As such, the challenge of the second horn for the realist is to explain how normative judgements can track normative facts, without having normative judgements cause normative facts (which would not be realist) or having normative facts cause normative judgements (although some non-naturalists would accept causally efficacious normative facts, they are generally not thought of as so). There needs to be an explanation of the *correlation* between normative facts and normative judgements without having a *causal connection*.

Street's (2006: 125-6) discussion of the second horn of the dilemma revolves around two competing accounts for the correlation between normative judgements and normative facts. The suggestion Street makes for the realist is that it is beneficial for our reproductive success for normative judgements to 'track' normative facts. However, this is a poor account, and not least of the reasons is, as Street explains, that we can explain evolutionary processes as only bringing reproductive success because of their consequences (the 'adaptive link' account) rather than because of their correlation with normative facts. The explanation that non-normative facts is required for reproductive success becomes redundant.

The realist has two tools to defend against the second horn. The first is the 'quasi-tracking' account and the second is the 'pre-established harmony' account. These accounts can work together (and some form of 'quasi-tracking' is almost ubiquitous in realist responses). Quasi-tracking is a re-interpretation of the concept of 'tracking' whereby the normative judgements do not need to *completely* accurately 'track' normative facts but only 'quasi-track' them by having only *some* degree of accuracy in accessing normative facts – this should be intuitive for the realist, since we are not impeccable normative judges; for example, we can be mistaken in or disagree about our normative judgements.

The second tool is the ‘pre-established harmony’ or ‘third-factor’ idea. This is a third-factor that correlates our evolutionary-forces influenced normative judgements with the normative truth. This does not have to be a normative truth itself, but the evolutionary forces our normative judgements are influenced by must ‘track’ (in some way) normative facts. It does not need to be a process that can go awry in the process of evolution either, if an essential part of evolutionary forces has a close relationship with normative truth then evolutionary forces will *always* ‘track’ (or ‘quasi-track’) normative facts. This is the strongest response for the non-naturalist, and the one that I will go into further detail on and then offer a development for.

2.4. Richard Joyce’s EDA: A sceptical approach

Joyce (2006) also offers an evolutionary debunking argument. Joyce argues in a similar fashion to Street, but for the conclusion that we have less justification in our normative judgements than we thought (Joyce, 2006: ch.6, 2016: 5). Unlike Street, who aims to discredit realist theories of value to give greater strength to her favoured constructivist position; Joyce sees the evolutionary debunking challenge as something that can challenges metaethics more widely, and that realist responses can be made for. As such, the challenge as developed by Joyce is more traditionally sceptical. The idea is that without a clear picture of the genealogy of our normative judgements, there is the strong possibility that they are informed by non-truth tracking evolutionary forces, and that therefore they ought to have less justification until we can account for this possibility.

The sceptical challenge presented by evolutionary debunking can be replied to using the same strategies as above – however, while evading Street’s argument requires little more than the possibility of a competing realist account, to evade the Joycian charge involves some story of how we can *actually* justify our normative judgements. The challenge, then, is not necessarily partisan, and while some theorists, for example cultural relativists, can provide a response easily, this is not true for the majority of metaethical positions.

Some have claimed that the scepticism involved is too strong, and that we can widen it to give sceptical arguments against epistemic access that we do not want to

undermine. Karhane (2011) develops this line of thinking¹. He says that we ought to understand EDAs as a broader sceptical argument rather than a specifically anti-realist one. Since EDAs undermine our justification for *all* normative beliefs, then they should go beyond merely debunking moral realism. Karhane thinks that if we accept EDAs, we need to understand that this will be a radical overhaul of our normative judgements in general, and that we cannot use it in a targeted way, since it is little more than a global normative sceptical argument.

For what it's worth, I don't think expansion into global normative scepticism is a very concerning problem. We can derive *some* normative truths from evolutionary premises without difficulty. Some normative value is instrumental, and seems to exist simply as a relation between (evolutionary) desires and the means to achieve those desires. A good way of getting to my workplace is walking, a better way is driving by car. These are certainly types of normative judgements that don't seem to be under threat by EDAs. EDAs are restricted to a subset of the normative domain which is not directly inferable from a combination of our perception and concepts of normative value themselves². However, there is value in Karhane's approach, which builds on Joyce more than other debunkers, in that perhaps we have to re-evaluate our concept of normative value. Since this concept itself must have been developed under the influence of evolutionary forces, it might itself be removed from normative truth (assuming it exists).

For my purposes, the Joycian picture is more amenable than Street's. We can admit to some facets of Joyce's argument while making a realist reply to Street. By admitting that we are perhaps less justified (although still justified) in our normative judgements because of EDAs, we can make a more diplomatic defence. The truth is that EDAs are strong arguments, and that their mitigation involves realist concessions.

¹ See Clarke-Doane (2017) and Vavova (2014) for two further examples of this.

² For an attempt at building a normative theory based on facts outside of this domain, see Cuneo and Shafer-Landau's 'The moral fixed points: new directions for moral nonnaturalism.' (2014).

2.5. Philip Kitcher and proto-EDAs

Kitcher (2006) has also presented types of EDAs, and his are more in line with previous EDA-like arguments presented by Ruse (1998; Ruse & Wilson, 1986) and Gibbard (2003) and foreshadowed in evolutionary epistemology and Harman (1977) before that.

Like Joyce and Street, Kitcher (2006) sets out the possibility of an explanation for our normative judgements using evolution. Kitcher argues that this leads us towards non-cognitivism and anti-realism because we can now set out a convincing explanation for moral progress. Moral progress is, according to Kitcher, one of the driving motivations behind realism. Kitcher undermines this by firstly claiming that if there is moral progress at all is questionable and secondly by claiming that (if it exists at all) we can understand moral progress as the development of ‘normative governance’ (cf. Gibbard 1990, ch.4) that came into existence as an evolutionary response to our ancestors need for social co-operation.

While Kitcher doesn’t set out an explicit EDA, he discusses how evolutionary explanations for our normative behaviour can undermine realist ethical theories. Kitcher seems to think that if we can provide a complete explanation for normative behaviour using evolution then we will have no need to be cognitivists. The PEH response has no problem with such a complete explanation, but argues that the evolutionary explanation for normative behaviour can peacefully co-exist with (and in fact be strengthened by) realism about normative facts. Kitcher does not present as much of a problem for PEH responses as Joyce and Street do. However, ‘normative governance’ comes up again in PEH responses to EDAs and the more biology-centric approach of Kitcher is the latest in an older line of argumentation than EDAs themselves.

Ruse’s *Taking Darwin Seriously* (1998) and Ruse & Wilson (1986) is often cited as a proto-EDA. Ruse takes evolution more generally as the focus of his book, and explores how it has been used as an analogy for scientific and ethical progress. Ruse is sceptical about the applications of analogies like these, and this comes to a head in his metaethical position against realism:

The objectivist [realist] must agree that his/her ultimate principles are (given Darwinism) redundant. You would believe what you do about right and wrong, irrespective of whether or not a 'true' right or wrong existed! The Darwinian claims that his/her theory gives an entire analysis of our moral sentiments. Nothing more is needed. Given two worlds identical except that one has an objective morality and the other does not, the humans therein would think and act in exactly the same ways. (Ruse, 1998, 254)

This EDA sounding conclusion comes after a damning exploration of evolutionary epistemologists', like those of Toulmin and Campbell, theories. While the argument is distilled in future EDAs³, it's worth looking at Ruse's inspiration in the first place. Evolutionary epistemologists have tried to use evolution as an analogy for the progress of thought. It is in rejecting this analogy that Ruse finds his version of an EDA. However, the roots of the PEH defence are in Evolutionary Epistemology too – and, furthermore, in *its* roots: Pragmatism. We can see this even further in Kitcher's (2011) 'The Ethical Project', which argues for a 'pragmatist naturalism' and in which Kitcher claims that we need to return to pragmatism to account for evolutionary forces within metaethics.

³ Ruse since has expressed his support of current EDAs and their claims (for example, Ruse, 2017)

CHAPTER 3

THE PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY RESPONSE

I've given a brief survey of types of EDA and the kinds of realist responses that are most commonly made. I'll now focus on explaining how the PEH response works and then where it could be improved and how to go about doing that. But first, I'll explain one feature common to almost all PEH responses: quasi tracking.

3.1. David Copp and quasi-tracking

Copp suggests a response to EDAs in his 2008 paper. I am not interested specifically in the content of his response, which is naturalist, but rather in the quasi-tracking concept which originates from his paper and is used more or less throughout realist responses to EDAs. Copp considers a flaw in both Joyce and Street's arguments as the requirement for tracking. Copp says that we do not need to be able to *directly* track normative truths, but only track them to a level that allows us to refine our judgements further using rational reflection.

There are similarities with Huemer's *Natural Reply* approach discussed above. The strength that the quasi-tracking thesis has over the natural reply is that it does not require normative truths to be accessible by rational reflection *alone*. Despite this, there is still some kind of coherency requirement – we need to be able to use rational reflection to discern true normative judgements, and this is likely to be because they cohere with our other judgements. But, leaving this aside, then instead of there being no relation between evolutionary forces and normative truth, we can allow that we are affected by evolution so long as our distorted normative judgements are in the right area. In Copp's (2008) terms, they need to be, all influences considered, epistemically sufficient for further rational analysis. If our evolutionary force influenced normative judgements are epistemically sufficient for us to move from them to accurate normative judgements then they 'quasi-track' the normative truth.

Quasi-tracking is the only degree of tracking required for a realist response to EDAs. This is very useful for realists, because they no longer need to defend a direct correlation between normative truth and our evolved normative judgements, there needs only to be a looser correlation that is ‘epistemically sufficient’. Quasi-tracking is an important concept for PEH responses because it reduces the burden on the third-factor. The third-factor that links normative truth with evolutionary forces does not need to ensure that our evolved judgements directly track normative truth, they only need a sufficient correlation. Furthermore, because the relationship is not direct, our normative judgements do not need to have been specifically evolved *for* accessing normative truth. The quasi-tracking involved could be a by-product of more directly evolutionarily beneficial abilities. This is a much more plausible account than direct tracking being a by-product of evolved abilities.

Copp goes on to elaborate the problem remaining; a problem that the PEH response attempts to solve. This is the explanation of why our evolved judgements quasi-track normative truth in the first place. If there is no reason, then the realist fails to explain the dilemma at hand, and has only given a slightly wider scope for their explanation. The question, and the remaining question even when considering PEH responses that include quasi-tracking, is how normative truth can be (quasi) tracked by evolved judgements.

3.2. Pre-established harmony responses

Four well-known non-naturalist PEH respondents are Enoch (2010), Weilenberg (2010), Brosnan (2011) and Skarsuane (2011). Enoch’s approach is the least problematic (though not the least simple), and I will come to it last. PEH responses depend on a third-factor linking normative truths to evolutionary forces. This means that evolutionary forces have a relationship with normative truths, and that normative judgements derived from evolutionary forces therefore (quasi-)track normative truths.

3.2.1. Kevin Brosnan's PEH response

Brosnan (2011) presents three related arguments in his paper – he argues first that tracking isn't necessary for knowledge, secondly, that the role of rational reflection in forming normative judgements means that true normative judgements only require quasi-tracking, and thirdly that evolutionary forces can track normative truths through a type of PEH account.

Brosnan argues that, though our normative judgements may not track normative truths, they can still be reliably true. If this is so, then Street's claim that we must choose between either a tracking account or an independent account for our access to normative truth is false. We can have a non-tracking account that gives us access to normative truth. The question, Brosnan goes on to ask, is if this access justifies our normative judgements. Joyce (2006: 216 in Brosnan, 2011: 55) says that it doesn't – without judgements being sensitive to the truth of their content, they are not justified even if they happen to be reliable. To reply to this, Brosnan advocates quasi-tracking.

Brosnan then argues that our normative judgements *can* track moral truths. Brosnan says that we can accept that there was no direct relationship between evolutionary success and normative truth, but that there may have been an indirect relationship that allowed evolutionary success to be sensitive to normative truth. EDAs must not allow this sensitivity to normative truth, and therefore hold that: "Given that x occurs, we'll believe that p [, a moral proposition,] whether or not p is true. Therefore, our believing that p does not track whether p is true." (Brosnan, 2011: 59)

This means that x screens off p from our belief. However, screening off does not mean that p and our belief about p can't be correlated. And meaningfully so, according to Brosnan.

Reichenbach (1956, pp. 158–160) has shown that if A raises the probability of B and of C, and if A screens-off B from C, then B and C will be correlated. This means that we can derive a tracking success from the screening-off thesis as follows. Consider the belief that cooperation with others is morally good. Suppose that this belief was favored by natural selection because it enhanced our capacity for helping behavior; individuals

who believe that cooperation is morally good are more likely to help others than are individuals who lack this belief. The helping behavior that this belief generates has two effects: it promotes fitness, and it promotes wellbeing. The former effect is what explains why it might evolve by natural selection. The latter effect is part of what may explain why it is that cooperation in fact is morally good. If what's morally good has to do with behaviors that promote rather than hinder wellbeing, then part of what makes cooperation good is that it typically has this effect. (Brosnan, 2011: 60)

Brosnan claims that A – in this case, co-operation with others – raises the probability of both B (reproductive success) and C (promoting wellbeing). Promoting wellbeing is morally good, Brosnan says, and reproductive success is evolutionarily valuable – so evolution selects co-operation with others for increased chances of reproductive success, despite being screened off from promoting wellbeing, and promoting wellbeing comes along for the ride, providing the normative value. So, co-operation with others tracks promoting wellbeing, even though promoting wellbeing doesn't have anything to do with evolutionary success.

Brosnan explains the relationship between the third-factor that links together normative truth and evolutionary forces appropriately. The relationship is that of joint causation (or, per Brosnan, joint *probability raising* without direct causation). This is, as Brosnan notes, an explanation in the same vein as PEH responses.

The question to ask here is: why does C need to be morally good? Evolutionary forces might select any number of screened off factors, there is no guarantee that any of them are morally good.

Brosnan's answer:

[T]he example I used to illustrate how natural selection tracks moral facts won't work unless I assume the truth of some moral principle. I don't see this as a problem, however. It may appear to beg important questions in the context of the evolutionary debunking arguments of Street and Joyce, but it does not. Joyce and Street both assume for the sake of argument that moral facts exist. If moral facts exist, then the inductive version of Hume's rule [which says it is impossible to derive moral value from descriptive premises] presents no obstacle to my argument. Moreover, it's as reasonable an assumption as any that among these facts is this one: what's morally good has to do with actions that promote rather than hinder wellbeing. (Brosnan, 2011: 62)

Brosnan effectively claims that he can simply assume moral principles to discredit EDAs. Indeed, this is a common method – because EDA proponents are often held to assume the truth of realism (this is mentioned in Vavova (2014: 7-8) and Karhane

(2011), among many others), then, realists (and disgruntled anti-realists) think that responses can help themselves to assuming that we have access to *some* normative truths. This has been the subject of some discussion – is assuming moral principles, like Brosnan does, begging the question or not? Vavova (2015: section 4) calls this the ‘heart of the debate’ around EDAs; Shafer Landau (2017: 176) says “The hardest question in knowing how to proceed is whether the realist is entitled to rely on any substantive moral claims in evaluating an EDA”. How, we ought to ask ourselves, are EDAs meant to proceed if they are to assume that the epistemic process that are attempting to undermine is successful at the outset of their critique? Truly, debunkers of debunking would be correct, but this seems a weak reading of EDAs.

It is worth mentioning here the difference between Brosnan’s supposed defence of his question-begging assumption and his actual question-begging assumption. It may be acceptable to assume that realism is true the context of EDAs, but Brosnan goes further, he makes a substantive normative claim: that promotion of wellbeing is good. Despite his saying that this is ‘as reasonable an assumption as any’, it is a markedly different assumption than merely assuming that realist normative facts exist. As assumptions go, it certainly seems to be the type of assumption targeted by EDAs, rather than *a priori* truths or other more resilient candidates for justified status. But before going into the question-begging critique in more detail, I’ll discuss how the other PEH responses are also vulnerable to it.

So far, the PEH approach, is still valuable for the realist, not least (and as Brosnan (2011: 63) mentions) because quasi-tracking means that we only need one (or very few) instances of C being true (assuming the coherency requirement is defensible after all) to be able to defend realism.

3.2.2. Knut Skarsaune’s PEH response

Skarsaune published his 2011 paper – “Darwin and Realism: Survival of the fittest” – as a response to Street’s dilemma. Interestingly, Skarsaune attempts to grapple both horns of Street’s dilemma at once – either the first horn’s sceptical conclusion is unproblematic or one can support a PEH response.

As is essential to PEH responses, Skarsaune suggests a ‘third-factor’ that links evolutionary forces and normative truths such that our evolved normative judgement tracks normative truth. While Brosnan suggested the factor being the ‘promotion of wellbeing’, Skarsaune takes a more direct response to Street’s (2006, 144) discussion of pain and suggests *P*: ‘pleasure is usually good and pain is usually bad.’ (Skarsaune, 2011: 232).

Skarsaune’s approach is in his subtitle: Survival of the iffiest. He can attack both horns of the dilemma because his argument is conditional – if *P* is true, then it ensures a PEH response, if *P* is false, then we can accept that most of our other beliefs are false too. Skarsaune thinks that conditionals like these are the best way to get out of sceptical worries like those presented in EDAs. To use the third-factor in a conditional whereby if the third-factor is true, then we have PEH and if it is false, then we are happy to be sceptics, is powerful for PEH responses just because it takes some of the pressure off proving the third-factor has normative value.

As we will see in both Weilenberg and Enoch, and already have seen to some extent in Brosnan’s struggles to prove that ‘promoting wellbeing’ is morally good, proving the normative value within the third-factor of PEH responses is the key sticking point for the viability of these responses. Let’s have a look at how pleasure/pain stack up as normative value source in a PEH response.

It’s clear how pleasure/pain can link evolutionary forces and normativity. Evolutionary forces can use (for example) pleasure to reward organisms for reproductively beneficial behaviour. So, we seek out pleasurable activities and avoid painful activities *because* that corresponds with reproductive success. That, when combined with the assumption of *P*, means that evolution causes us to behave in accordance with what is *good*. So, because we assume that one of the primary tools of evolution (pleasure/pain responses) brings normativity into the picture, evolution can’t help but track normative truth, since it’s true that pleasure is usually good and pain is usually bad.

The other side of the conditional is that if *P* is not true then most of our other moral beliefs are unlikely to be true either. For example, beliefs about torture being bad, or helping people in need being good are based on societal aversions to pain and valuations of pleasure. If it is not the case that *P*, then many of our other

consequential moral beliefs would also be false. As such, it would be correct to be sceptical about a vast majority of our moral beliefs.

This is all well and good. But it is still vulnerable to the question-begging critique. How are we meant to discover if *P* is true? If we can't, then is that because normative facts like *P* are obscured from us in some way? I would say that something like that must be true, but aside from that, without any positive explanation of how we *can* discover facts like *P*, then we have no way out of the conditional. We can solve Street's dilemma *in theory* with Skarsaune's conditional, but it's circular in the sense that in order to solve Street's dilemma we posit a conditional, but in order to resolve the conditional we need to solve Street's dilemma without assuming that conditional.

It seems like we still have a problem: how do we show that pain is usually bad and pleasure is usually good? Just like Brosnan, we have a problem in showing just *how* the third-factor can have normative value outside of it being assumed for the sake of it. Weilenberg and Enoch also have this problem, as I will now show.

3.2.3. Erik Weilenberg's PEH response

Weilenberg (2010) also presents a type of PEH response. Weilenberg's response uses certain cognitive faculties as the third-factor within the structure of the PEH argument. Incidentally, Weilenberg and Brosnan produced their PEH responses independently, Skarsaune credits the PEH strategy to Enoch, but not his strategy of using conditionals. (On a similar note, Joyce and Street published independently, though most EDAs have common roots.)

Weilenberg's basic strategy is this: if we have the cognitive capacity to conceive of moral rights, then we possess moral rights. He does not, crucially, suggest just how we come to know what our moral rights are, only that they are enabled by certain cognitive capacities. Weilenberg (2010) suggests a model of knowledge whereby we could have warranted knowledge without knowing whether it's content is true. This is because:

(i) being produced by a sufficiently reliable process can bestow warrant on a belief sufficient for knowledge and (ii) a belief that P can be produced by a sufficiently reliable process even when the belief can be explained without appealing to the truth of P. (Weilenberg, 2010: 253)

So, as long as our cognitive capacities reliably give us knowledge of our rights, then they don't need to be justified by the normative facts of those rights. Where exactly is the source of normative value in the cognitive capacities that Weilenberg proposes as his third-factor? In one sense, Weilenberg is very clear about his assumption here:

That we have such rights is an assumption; I offer no argument for the existence of such rights here. The reason I take this approach is that I am concerned here exclusively with rebutting epistemological debunking arguments. Such arguments are not aimed at showing that there are no moral truths. Rather, such arguments are aimed at showing that even if there are moral truths, human beings lack knowledge of such truths. In arguing against this conditional claim, it is not question-begging to assume the truth of its antecedent (that there are moral truths). (Weilenberg, 2010: 447).

However, in another sense Weilenberg implies that we have the rights involved purely by virtue of having the cognitive faculties.

In order to form the belief that one has certain rights, one must be able to have some grasp of the concept of rights. While there are various theories about the foundation of rights, it is widely agreed that if rights exist at all, *their presence is guaranteed by the presence of certain cognitive faculties*. (Weilenberg, 2010: 449, my emphasis)

How can something exist in a realist sense, but only be present under certain conditions? Furthermore, conditions of capability on the part of the rights bearer? By presence, Weilenberg surely means 'knowledge of' – which would fit with his overall approach. But Weilenberg's wording is a little careless, and to me at least, implies something greater than mere 'knowledge of'. For example:

The connection between the cognitive faculties and beliefs about moral rights is causal. In this way, the relevant cognitive faculties are responsible for both moral rights and beliefs about those rights, and so the cognitive faculties explain the correlation between moral rights and beliefs about those rights. (Weilenberg, 2010: 450)

Here, Weilenberg even omits the 'presence of' and simply says that 'relevant cognitive faculties are responsible for both moral rights and beliefs about those rights'. The relevant cognitive faculties are, according to Weilenberg, in fact only responsible for the 'presence' of (under my reading: the knowledge of) those rights – not their existence. By claiming that they are responsible for those rights without any

qualification, Weilenberg gives the impression that they are responsible for the rights' existence. But this is not something Weilenberg wants to defend.

According to Weilenberg, if the rights exist, then certain cognitive faculties entail the knowledge of and belief in those rights. We don't have any explanation of the existence of those rights. Weilenberg *suggests* an intuitionist explanation, and an emotivist one, but settles for claiming that either approach requires certain cognitive faculties for us to form beliefs in the rights concerned.

Can either explanation ground the normative value of the rights themselves? I doubt that they can, and I feel that the question-begging critique is applicable here. Despite Weilenberg claiming not to be question-begging because he assumes the antecedent. Like in Brosnan's case, it is beyond the antecedent of 'there are moral truths' to claim that 'this is a moral truth' as Weilenberg does for moral rights. We come to the same impasse as before: how are we to know the nature of the normative truths that we have knowledge of? We have a model suggesting that we have knowledge of our rights, but we are in the dark about their relationship to normative truth.

Isn't this just the same realist situation that non-naturalists have been attempting to solve before EDAs? I don't think so. Because the evolutionary argument remains essentially unchallenged. Weilenberg doesn't agree. He applies his model to Street's dilemma and believes it comes out ahead.

In my model, certain nonmoral features of the world both entail certain moral facts and causally contribute to the presence of moral beliefs that correspond to those moral facts. On this model, it is not at all unlikely that moral beliefs and moral facts will correspond. (Weilenberg, 2010: 459)

The cognitive capacities give us knowledge of our rights and lead us to having belief in them. The cognitive capacities themselves are developed under the influence of evolutionary forces. *If* the rights exist, then we have knowledge of them, but we have no way of justifying this knowledge outside of the assumption that the rights exist.

It seems plausible for us to ground normative beliefs in our rights to moral barriers. But our cognitive capacities only guarantee the presence of those moral barriers if they exist in the first place. Is there any way we can discover if they exist? Not without having normative knowledge that is independent from the assumption of the moral rights proposed.

As Weilenberg stresses, his argument is a defence against the debunking argument, and aims to show that we *can* have knowledge of our rights even if we don't know if they are true. But the warrant involved only works so far, and sceptics are unconvinced by the reliabilist approach (e.g. Joyce, 2017: 110; Schafer, 2010). The question-begging critique is unchallenged.

3.2.4. David Enoch's PEH response

Enoch's approach is the origin of the term PEH (which he takes from Leibniz). He argues that by taking the 'aim' of evolution as having normative value, then we have a third-factor which can give evolutionary forces and their products normative value too. Enoch sees defence of non-naturalism generally as a matter of 'scoring points in an explanatory game' and as such wants to, on one hand, minimise the concessions of the realist, while on the other giving an account of how realism can remain intact in the face of EDAs. Enoch's paper (2010) and the relevant chapter of his book (2011: ch.7) (between which there is little variation on this issue) are concerned with what he calls 'the epistemic challenge'. However, since he says that Street's dilemma is 'very close' to the strongest version of this challenge, I'll take him as replying to EDAs.

Enoch attempts to minimise the concessions of the realist by using something like the 'quasi-tracking' approach. He argues that we do not need a particularly strong explanation of the correlation between normative truths and normative judgements, because we can use the tools of rationality to discern the true normative judgements from the false ones – specifically, he refers to Gibbard's (1990: ch.4; also see Gibbard, 2003) idea of 'normative governance'⁴. Furthermore, we are not all *that* good at making normative judgements, so we do not need to expect our normative judgements to be *especially* reliable, or even as reliable as perceptive judgements. Finally, he also points out that realists do not need to make an absolutely convincing case, they only need a case that is at least as good as our next best explanation.

⁴ The value of 'normative governance' (or other tools of rationality) in both fitting into the evolutionary genealogical picture of our beliefs and helping realist responses to EDAs, is beyond my scope here. Instead I'll speak more generally of 'rational reflection' working towards coherency in our disparate normative judgements.

His account of how realism can defend against EDAs uses a PEH hypothesis. In fact, he manoeuvres to gain more ‘points’ by using Skarsaune’s conditional approach. However, the downsides of taking the ‘falsity’ side of the conditional that Skarsaune suggests is quite likely to be problematic for Enoch’s work as a whole. Enoch may think that he is scoring points here, but I think it is quite clear that he puts himself firmly in the camp of PEH responses rather than accepting a *prima facie* sceptical situation. This is clear, interpretatively speaking, due to the 2010 paper having no mention of Skarsaune’s conditionalizing approach, whereas in the 2011 book we find a passing mention. Not to say that Enoch couldn’t have changed his mind, but the thrust of his argument was always towards defending a PEH approach.

Enoch claims that ‘survival’ is the third-factor. He thinks that survival is ‘by and large better than the alternative’, which is all he needs (he claims). It is comparatively simple to see how survival can be both an evolutionary and normative force as opposed to the ‘moral rights entailed by certain cognitive capacities’ or ‘promoting wellbeing’. Survival is a necessary part of evolution; evolutionary adaptation will never succeed unless it maintains likelihood of survival of the organism. It remains, however, a question for Enoch how survival being good is not, as in previous PEH responses, a problematic assumption. Rather than turning his head to the question-begging charge as Weilenberg and Brosnan do, Enoch elects to meet it head on.

Enoch says that the first reason we can think survival is good is because survival only needs to be good *for us*. Since we are only concerned with the reliability and accuracy of human normative judgements, and since there may be creatures with no interests whatsoever (for whom, Enoch presumes, nothing would be *good for*), then we only have to defend value for human normative judgements. Another thing to point out here is how loosely Enoch conceives of normative value in survival; he defines it in terms of the evolutionary ‘aim’, whether that is survival or not. However, as Enoch realises, the restrictions in place are not enough to evade the question-begging accusation. He presents it in a counterfactual way:

On the story just told, had evolution “aimed” at something else, something that is not of value or perhaps is even of negative value, our normative beliefs would have been systematically mistaken. So doesn’t it follow that the story just told, far from showing how the realist can avoid commitment to miraculous correlations, relies on a miracle? (Enoch, 2010: 433)

Enoch works to minimise the miracle that evolution ‘aims’ at something which has normative value. Firstly, he questions the very possibility of evolution being able to have an ‘aim’ that didn’t have normative value. Claiming that the counterfactually robust ‘aim’ of evolution has normative value is much less of a coincidence than claiming that one evolutionary aim of many (ours) has normative value. As such, Enoch questions: is it contingent that evolution has nothing to do with survival? My answer to this, as I’ll go into, is yes (Enoch’s is ‘probably not’). However, the merit of the approach is not undermined, only Enoch’s specific application. A robust aim of evolution has definitive advantages over a contingent one, and in the following section I’ll set out what I see as the beginnings of a more robust conception of the aim of evolution.

Assuming that the evolutionary aim is contingent, Enoch’s secondary attempt to minimise the miracle is to accept it. Enoch says that the miracle is not a heavy burden for the realist. We have still made explanatory progress with the PEH response because we now only need account for the one-time (weak) correlation of the third-factor (evolutionary ‘aim’) and normative truth rather than a continuous and distorting-force-surviving correlation between our normative judgements and normative facts. It just happens to be that normative judgements line up (in a vague way) with normative facts, because they are both guided by the evolutionary ‘aim’ – which itself is guided (in some way) by normative facts. This miracle, Enoch claims, is only as lucky as our epistemic reliability in other areas of the intellect (for example mathematics). But, essentially, Enoch bites the bullet here: there is some factor of brute luck. So, to avoid this concession, a genuinely robust evolutionary ‘aim’ is needed.

If we have a robust evolutionary ‘aim’ then the miracle of the coincidence of that ‘aim’ and normative value is reduced. Furthermore, if a different evolutionary ‘aim’ can provide us with a more detailed and effective explanation of the relationship between the evolutionary aim and normative facts then the PEH response is further strengthened. Enoch is vague about the relationship in question – he stresses that it is not causal: the evolutionary aim does not cause what it aims at to be good; and suggests that it is *constitutive*.

While Enoch attempts to minimise the question-begging critique of PEH responses, he ultimately accepts it. However, he thinks that it is not particularly damning because there is *some* factor of brute luck in almost all our judgements – normative judgements are not alone in this case. This does not seem altogether convincing. Judgements based on perception do not need to have a ‘luck’ factor involved. It is apparent how their reliability in accurately representing natural properties is evolutionarily beneficial (As Street, 2008, also argues), it is unlikely that we would be systematically ‘wrong’ in our perceptual judgements. Furthermore, we can construct anti-realist or structuralist conceptions of reality without losing force in our scientific theories (for example) – but this is just the kind of move that realists want to rule out for our normative theories. If we think that the brute luck involved in accepting the miracle of the correlation between the evolutionary ‘aim’ and normative facts is a special case, then the PEH response is significantly weakened. There is still a realist-specific criticism to be made: the miracle is not so small after all.

CHAPTER 4

AVOIDING QUESTION-BEGGING WITH THE COMBINED EVOLUTIONARY AIM

4.1. The question-begging critique

All the PEH responses considered struggle to justify the normative value in their third-factors. Their third-factors are: promoting wellbeing, pleasure and pain, certain cognitive capacities (entailing the existence of certain rights) and survival. In the case of Brosnan (2011) and Weilenberg (2010), the third-factors are assumed to be good on the basis that EDAs assume moral realism. I'm against this move, it feels unfulfilling and can be accused of begging the question (despite protestation): as Horn (2017) says: "[I]t simply will not do to invoke substantive normative judgements at this point". Enoch (2010, 2011) and Skarsaune (2011) fare better, because they both advocate some form of the conditional response. However, while it's a clever move, it feels equally unfulfilling to think that most of our normative judgements are false. Enoch especially seems to use the 'falsity' side of the conditional as a back-up, and wants to put more emphasis on the PEH response. Considering this, he does make some moves to mitigate questions about the normative value of survival, but ultimately accepts that it rests on a (small) 'miracle'. Skarsaune is more open to falling on either side of the conditional, but if we wanted to be realists that say something meaningful about normative judgements (and I wonder if the 'falsity' side of the conditional leads to an implicit anti-realist explanation for judgements that we would want to claim as still realist – becoming a type of error-theory) we would struggle.

There has been discussion of the question-begging critique, which applies to all the PEH approaches considered here. Several commentators (e.g. Crow 2015, Moon 2016, Weilenberg 2016 section 3, and Klenk 2017) refer to Plantinga's debunking argument for naturalism. Plantinga has been faced with accusations of the same type of question-begging as PEH responses have.

Moon (2016) develops the structure of a response for realists. Although it is little more than a suggestion, and Moon feels that realist responses are unlikely to fit into that structure.

Debunking arguments, like Plantinga's and EDAs, use *defeaters* for our belief. They work by *defeating* a belief that we would, *ceteris parabus*, otherwise hold. In EDAs the *defeater* is the (partial and indirect) determination of our normative faculties by evolution. This defeats our belief that normative faculties are likely to track realist normative truths. There are two ways of undermining debunking arguments: we can have a *defeater-deflector* or a *defeater-defeater*. The problem for the realist is that our *defeater-deflectors* or our *defeater-defeaters* are circular – the belief defeated is that our normative faculties are likely to track realist normative truths, but if we assume a normative principle, like that pain is bad or that survival is good, to undermine EDAs, then we are assuming that our normative faculties are likely to track normative truths in this case. It seems, then, that the belief defeated is being used to justify our argument against the debunking argument. This is how the realist begs the question.

A *defeater-defeater* is an argument whereby we have the debunked belief defeated, and then come into new evidence that reverses that defeat. For example, if a trustworthy friend tells me that whales are fish, when I previously believed that they were mammals, then I would have a *defeater* for my belief that whales are mammals. However, if I then read a definition of whales and see that they are mammals, then I have a *defeater-defeater* for my friend's testimony. While my belief was initially defeated (I don't know much about animals), the defeater itself was defeated by evidence that countermanded the defeater. As Moon (2016: 216-217) points out, PEH responses cannot be *defeater-defeaters*. If they did they would be subject to the question-begging critique.

However, there are also *defeater-deflectors*. This works by stopping the defeater ever being effective. Say that I knew quite well that whales are mammals from numerous very credible sources, if my reliable friend told me that, in fact, whales were fish, I would not believe him because his *defeater* would be *deflected* by my well-supported belief that whales were mammals. In this case, I would *never* believe that whales were fish. Whereas in the defeater-defeater case, I believe that whales are fish, and

then reverse that belief to my former belief once the defeater is defeated. Defeater-deflectors were seen as the best way to argue against Plantinga's debunking argument for naturalism. Here the PEH respondent has more chance against the question-begging charge. If our belief in normative judgements reliably tracking normative truths was never undermined in the first place, then it would not be circular to assume that they could act as *defeater-deflectors*.

However, isn't assuming a normative principle in order to deflect debunking arguments for the reliability of our normative judgements still circular anyway? Moon sums up this worry as: "The Anti-Circularity Deflector Principle: *S's belief DD is a defeater-deflector for S's belief that source X is reliable, from the potential defeater PD, only if DD is neither produced by X nor evidentially dependent on a belief produced by X.*" (Moon, 2016: 218)

According to this principle, because our belief in the normative principle that works as the third-factor in PEH responses is meant to be our defeater-deflector, and because it is derived from the reliability of our normative judgements, then it cannot deflect a defeater for the belief that our normative judgements are reliably true.

Moon then argues that this principle is false. His example is the XX defeater-deflector case:

XX pill case: There is the XX pill, which destroys the cognitive reliability of ninety-five percent of those who ingest it. You take the pill and come to believe both that *I've ingested XX* and that the probability that you're cognitively reliable given that you've ingested XX is low.

XX deflector case: All is as in the original pill case, except before you took the pill, a scientist that you know to be trustworthy had informed you that you are one of the 5% that are immune to the drug. You then take the pill while believing that *You are one of the immune 5% and the probability that you're cognitively reliable given that you've ingested XX and are one of the immune 5% is high.* (Moon 2016: 220⁵)

In this case, since your defeater-deflector, that a scientist you know to be trustworthy had informed you that you were immune, is evidentially dependent on the belief

⁵ This example was taken almost verbatim.

being defeated (that you're cognitively reliable) the defeater-deflector should fail if the Anti-Circularity deflector principle is true.

It doesn't seem like the defeater-deflector does fail. If you later came into reasons to doubt your cognitive reliability then you may change your belief that you are one of the immune 5%, but until that point, it doesn't seem as if your belief in your cognitive reliability would be defeated. As such, Moon argues that the Anti-Circularity deflector principle is false.

Does this help the PEH response? Moon speculates that it doesn't, even if the Anti-Circularity Deflector Principle is false, there are still cases where circularity can undermine defeater-deflectors. It might not be necessarily true that the circularity involved undermines the defeater-deflector in the PEH response, but it is still possible.

Klenk (2017) argues that the PEH case specifically is problematically circular. The strongest reason that Klenk (2017: 237-238) gives for this is that in Moon's example we have a temporal element. At first, we have a belief, and then the belief is defeated or the belief's defeat is deflected. However, this is clearly not analogous to the PEH case – we cannot have deflecting information prior to our normative reliability being undermined. The application of this difference to Moon's example should be clear:

XX deflector case 2: All is the same as the original XX pill case, except *after* you took the pill, a scientist that you know to be trustworthy tells you that you are one of the 5% that is immune to the effects of the XX pill.

This is clearly a defeater-defeater case. If we cannot have deflecting information prior to the impact of EDAs, then the only recourse is to appeal to defeater-defeaters, which, as mentioned, are ineffective in supporting PEH hypotheses. Locke (2014: 18-19), for one, has also expressed this worry. If our normative faculties are undermined from the outset, then we cannot have a defeater-deflector. This means the realist response is restricted to defeater-defeaters, which are malignantly circular.

Berker (2014) picks up on the question-begging critique in Street's (2008) response to Copp (2008). Although I only discussed Copp's 'quasi-tracking' in relation to the Darwinian dilemma, his response is a naturalist PEH one. Street holds that we can't

assume normative truths as our third-factor, but that we can assume our general epistemic reliability concerning natural objects.

There is a worry, that I briefly covered with respect to Karhane (2011), that discounting realist responses to the Darwinian dilemma leads to normative scepticism generally rather than an anti-realist conclusion. Berker agrees with this, thinking that there is no reason for us to justify our judgements about natural properties either, since we are using debunkable assumptions to begin with (and perhaps normative ones too). If the question-begging critique degenerates into normative scepticism then it becomes a more general problem, but not a new one.

The way out of this, that Street (2008) attempts (and, according to Berker, fails) to put forward, is that the grounding of our normative truths must be non-normative and it cannot *trivially* beg the question (as a defeater-defeater does). If we assume that we don't degenerate into normative scepticism (i.e. *ultimately* beg the question) then a non-normative fact can be the third-factor between normative judgements and normative truths. This might seem to just move the problem up one level: how do we derive normativity from non-normativity? We seem to fall foul of Moore's open question argument. The PEH respondent (or even Street herself, if Berker is correct about the normativity in her assumptions) can claim that the non-normative third-factor is itself grounded in another factor that has a normative by-product. A so-called fourth factor response. This is essentially regressive without a change in dialectic: how do we justify the normativity in the fourth factor? By suggesting a fifth factor...

Question-begging critiques are important to respond to. There are two routes, either making a non-normative assumption, which seems to fall into a regress, or making a normative assumption without that being dependent on our normative reliability. There are few candidates for this, two are Huemer's (2008) 'formal intuitions' and Shafer-Landau and Cuneo's (2014) 'conceptual moral truths' – normative facts that are true in virtue of the normative concepts themselves.

To make a convincing answer to the question-begging critique levelled at PEH responses, the normative value of the third-factor should be knowable independent of our normative reliability. The third-factors that have been suggested so far: survival, pain, promotion of wellbeing, etc. do not have such value. In the next section I

suggest a way that we *could* have a realist third-factor that has normative value that is knowable independent of our normative reliability. It is not particularly satisfying, but I think it gestures towards the type of move that realists need to make to defend against the question-begging critique.

4.2. Opening up the evolutionary ‘aim’

How can we strengthen PEH responses so that they give a non-question-begging account of how our normative judgements can correlate with normative truth despite the influence of evolutionary forces? I think the best method is to use evolution itself as a conceptual starting point. As Enoch does, I’ll consider what the ‘aim’ of evolution might be. As Enoch mentions (Enoch, 2010: 430 fn41) it is not quite right to talk about the ‘aim’ of evolution. Enoch means it “as a shorthand for the usual respectable, non-teleological evolutionary way of putting things”. I have tried to take the ‘aim’ of evolution in that sense here.

Because of the question-begging-critique, we need to redefine the ‘aim’ of evolution, or any other third-factor we have, to be resistant to accusations of question-begging. To do this we need to have a third-factor that is independent of the truth-tracking of our normative judgements. In practice, this means we need to have a third-factor that is necessarily true. Huemer’s (2008) formal intuitions are *a priori* true, which is good enough, but the formal intuitions don’t provide enough normative content to ground an ethical system. Shafer-Landau and Cuneo’s (2014) ‘conceptual truths’ – normative truths that are true in virtue of normative concepts, do better (though they are not obviously sufficient to ground a system either). I think we can get a powerful third-factor by looking at what is essential to evolution – to do this we need a conceptual analysis of the evolutionary ‘aim’. If we can find a necessary part of the concept of evolution, then we’ll know it to be true regardless of our normativity. If that necessary part has normative value (or implies normative value) itself, then we have an effective third-factor that can avoid the question-begging critique.

Enoch’s evolutionary ‘aim’ is survival. But, Enoch only considers justifying human normative judgements as his aim, and discounts judgements by other species. This seems to be a mistake in the context of looking at evolution as a concept. If the

evolutionary ‘aim’ is the third-factor, then surely all species subject to evolution would be potentially, if not actually, able to form correct normative judgements? A criterion for the ability to make judgements themselves should be in place, but beyond that, there is no need for an evolutionary ‘aim’ – if it is to be defined as a necessary part of evolution itself - to justify human normative judgements over any other species judgements. This constitutes a criticism of the PEH responses covered: that they are anthropocentric. We could also apply this criticism to other discussions of EDAs, and discussion of normativity and evolution generally (though I won’t here).

It is true that human normative judgements are the ones under trial, so to speak, by EDAs; but if realists use the evolutionary ‘aim’ as a witness for their response, they broaden the scope. When abstracting out an ‘aim’ for evolution, we cannot simply abstract out a *human* ‘aim’ for evolution. Humans are not the only evolutionary species. So, the first charge to make against the idea that the ‘aim’ of evolution is *survival* is that that is specific to the human species and not necessarily conceptually contained in evolution.

Survival isn’t exactly estranged from conceptual necessity within evolution. Evolution definitely requires survival. But this can work in different ways: it can work, for example, on either a group or individual level. (There is disagreement about which one is truly fundamental, (see Joyce 2017: 104), but this only strengthens my case.) Species A, that has greater fitness compared to Species B, will survive at the expense of the survival of Species B – this would be perhaps considered in accordance with Enoch’s evolutionary ‘aim’ of survival. But, survival at the expense of other members of one’s own species might not be in accordance with that ‘aim’, humans, for example, normally take altruism and non-murder to be good. There is an evolutionary explanation here: evolutionary processes adapt to further the transmission of the relevant evolutionary unit of information rather than specifically the survival of the individual. The species level is privileged by evolution, but it is applied, for humans, to the level of the individual within a species. The human conception of evolution means that we take survival of the individual to be good.

If evolutionary forces put a species in a situation where survival of the individual *wasn't* good for them, then they would think differently about the 'aim' of evolution. Here's an example.

Deadly Scarcity Case: There is a world in which there is no difference in cost for a *Species X* between producing one and five children. Evolutionary forces would dictate that five were produced every time. However, in 20% of reproductive situations, the environmental conditions are such that only one child can survive. If the five children shared the resources available, they would all die, but if only one survives, it will live. In this situation, it would be evolutionarily beneficial for *Species X* to have environmentally cued disposition toward suicide.

The evolutionary 'aim' as conceived by the *Species X* wouldn't be survival of each individual member of our species, it would be survival of at least one relevant unit of information – in this case, one of many genetically identical individuals. Because individuals would be disposed to suicide in certain conditions and this would benefit the survival of the species, the survival of the individual would not be good as it would not match the evolutionary 'aim' they were exposed to. Under *Species X's* conception of the evolutionary 'aim', removing superfluous information carriers might be thought of as *good*, given the survival of a single information carrier.

I'm not intending to strawman Enoch here. He uses 'survival' as an example of what the evolutionary 'aim' could be, but doesn't restrict himself to it. My point is more that *whatever* our conception of the evolutionary 'aim' is, there could be viable alternatives. The point is against Enoch's argument that the evolutionary 'aim' as he thinks of it is necessary. It is worth keeping in mind, too, that different conceptions of evolutionary 'aims' are likely to be influenced by evolutionary forces themselves.

Within our example, we have two conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim': humanity's (possibly) is survival, and *Species X's* is efficient transmission of information. In this case, one can be reduced into another – however, the normative judgements based on these types cannot be reduced into one another. We cannot accept, on normative grounds, the murder of one of every two genetically identical twins. However, under the way *Species X's* conception of the evolutionary 'aim', this might be a normatively justified thing to do. Even if we accepted that our conception of the evolutionary 'aim' can be reduced to an alternative conception of that 'aim'

then we would be unlikely to accept the reduction of our normative judgements (murder is wrong) into their alternative (murder is justified when faced with redundant information carriers).

Different conceptions of 'aims' of evolution are likely to be non-normatively reducible to one another. Epistemic access to different properties, having different ways of reasoning about things, having different types of languages, and being in different environments would all contribute to one's conception of the evolutionary 'aim'. We might think that variations in conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim' would not reduce to one another non-normatively. It is incompatible, for example, for the evolutionary 'aim' of survival to involve a post-death dimension, whereas it is possible that a species has an integrative evolutionary explanation that involves the death of the individual. Imagine, for example, that there is a world in which intelligent caterpillars go through all of what we usually associate with death at the end of each stage of their life cycle, they would consider it in accordance with the evolutionary 'aim' to die in non-reproductive life-cycles. However, I think we could still argue for a non-normative reduction. The reduction applied to the *Deadly Scarcity Case* would also be applicable here: evolution is more about the transmission of information than survival of the individual. Despite any non-normative reduction, the normative judgements involved would be unlikely to reduce into one another. We would have different normative systems according to our difference in conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim'.

The fact that different conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim' are likely to non-normatively reduce into one another does not mean that it is possible for a species to recognise that fact. There could be conceptions of evolution that are drastically different from our own, and we may *consider* it non-normatively irreducible (and vice-versa). But the process of evolution (if it exists) necessitates a non-normative reduction of evolutionary 'aims', since they are all conceptions derived from the same process. We might think that the non-normative reduction of evolution was its 'conceptual truth'. However, this non-normative reduction of the evolutionary 'aim' is unlikely to be survival.

Either our normative judgements have been codified in such a way that they are resistant to alternative normative judgements that derive their normative force from

the evolutionary ‘aim’, or both types of normative judgement are equally justified under the evolutionary ‘aim’, (or both). In the second option, it seems as if we have a sort of species-relativism – different conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’ give different sets of normative judgements which are both equally justified. In the first option, it seems that our normative judgements can be justified, but are dogmatic. If normativity is grounded in the evolutionary ‘aim’, then this dogma is in effect a moral limit for the human species.

Opening up the evolutionary ‘aim’ to different conceptions of it seems to have made more problems for the pre-established harmony response than solutions. However, I think the response can still come good. We should come up with a robust evolutionary ‘aim’ that can work for different possible ways of conceiving it.

4.3. How to know the evolutionary ‘aim’: The *Combined Evolutionary Aim*

In terms of more robust evolutionary ‘aims’, we can’t simply think of survival. Nor can we think of efficient genetic or informational transmission. There could be non-genetic evolutionary species, for example. If we go as broad and as abstract as possible to define an evolutionary ‘aim’ we might suggest ‘persistence of information’ – but this is far too broad to be useful for the normative case, and includes non-evolutionary processes. We cannot come up with the correct evolutionary ‘aim’, because there may be other conceptions of evolution that could undermine our conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’. Since we have opened the door to alternative conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’, then a substantive definition of the robust ‘aim’ of evolution might be beyond us. But this is not the end of the pursuit; we just need to be inventive when thinking of an evolutionary ‘aim’.

The question to ask is: what conditions would allow us to know what the genuine evolutionary ‘aim’ is? Hypothetically speaking, if we could take all possible conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’ and have them cohere, then we would have a single conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’. Call this hypothetical coherent conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’ the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would be on one hand, robust, since it would be true no

matter what conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’ was had, and on the other hand, objective, since this conception would be true independent of any individual species’ (or individual individual’s) attitudes towards it.

We can draw parallels here back to the roots of the EDA debate in evolutionary epistemology and further back than that, to pragmatism. Specifically, Campbell’s hypothetical realism and Popper’s critical realism on the evolutionary epistemology side (Bradie 1986: 405); and Pierce’s (1960) ‘limit concept’ on the pragmatism side⁶. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is a hypothetical synthesis of different conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’; and the result of a process of amalgamating different species’ conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’. The reality of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is as a hypothetical end-point essential to the *concept* of evolution. If a concept is determined by the sum of particulars that make up the set of that concept, then the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is the product of the complete set of possible species reflecting in a coherent way on the ‘aim’ of evolution, it would therefore be the most accurate conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’ possible.

The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is my suggested third-factor, as noted before, it is not particularly satisfying, partly because it has no substantive normative assumptions. However, the benefit of this is that it is not vulnerable to the question-begging critique. It may bring further dissatisfaction through noting that it is only a proxy for the ‘genuine’ evolutionary ‘aim’; I am not describing the (normative or otherwise) content of the ‘aim’, but rather the conditions under which we can know the content of it. Since the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would derive any normative value that it had from the ‘genuine’ evolutionary ‘aim’ then this is something like a fourth factor account⁷.

It may be that there can be no *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. There could be two avenues here: firstly, the combination of all possible conceptualisations of evolutionary ‘aims’ is not practically possible. Secondly: it may be impossible – that is, all possible conceptualisations could not cohere.

⁶ Slater (2014) discusses a ‘Peircian solution to EDAs’ too, although my reliance on Pierce is less substantial and the specifics of my argument are different.

⁷ Although the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* can be thought of as a proxy function that is distinct from what it proxies, it is essentially a different way of conceiving of the evolutionary ‘aim’ that is identical to the evolutionary ‘aim’ and, thus, while this account might appear epistemically as a fourth-factor account, metaphysically it is a third-factor one.

To respond to that, firstly, it is not necessary for there to be an *actual* coalescence into a single perspective in one individual. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* can be derived from sum of many individuals. While this does not make it practical, the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is only to be used as a hypothetical tool – it doesn't matter if it will actually come to pass.

The second avenue would claim that the combination of possible conceptions would never form a coherent perspective. There are parallels with Pierce's 'limit concept', which was criticised by Quine along these lines. Pierce's 'limit concept', or 'ideal result' was directed towards scientific inquiry, Pierce thought that scientific inquiry would, 'in the long run' cohere into a single, true, and objective perspective.

"Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a fore-ordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. This great hope is embodied in the conception of truth and reality. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality." (Peirce, 1960: 5.407)

The parallels with the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* should be clear. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would be necessarily agreed on by all conceivers of the 'aim' of evolution, it would, as such, be necessarily true. There could be no conception of the evolutionary 'aim' that didn't conform to it. Quine's criticism, which runs parallel to the second objection to the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*:

[E]ven if we by-pass such troubles by identifying truth somewhat fancifully with the ideal result of applying scientific method outright to the whole future totality of surface irritations, still there is trouble in the imputation of uniqueness ("the ideal result"). For, as urged two pages back, we have no reason to suppose that man's surface irritations even unto eternity admit of any one systematization that is scientifically better or simpler than all possible others. It seems likelier, if only on account of symmetries or dualities, that countless alternative theories would be tied for first place. (Quine, 1960: 23)

Although we could perhaps work with an intersubjective coherency that doesn't hit our current criteria of logical consistency, this doesn't seem to me to be a particularly strong response. However, the 'ideal result' in the analogy to the

Combined Evolutionary Aim is the synthesis of the thought of all possible *species* rather than a synthesis of all possible *human thought*. As such, it would be more likely to be coherent in a single perspective, because the cognitive limitations of a single species would not be involved. Furthermore, the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is a conceptual necessity as the non-normative reduction of conceptions of evolutionary ‘aims’ – if we undermine the coherence of this, we undermine the coherence of evolution as a concept. Though there may be some willing to do this.

Although it is weak to argue against the non-normative reduction of conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’, it is stronger to argue against the normative reduction of them. For the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* to be coherent, the normative facts need to reduce to one another too. We can turn back to Hayward (2016) here, and use his analysis to argue that this is *less* of a problem than we might originally think. The coherence isn’t serving to identify truth here, as in Huemer (2008), but rather serving as a difficulty – so we can reply that we don’t need *complete* normative reduction for coherence; we can admit that normative reasons will go for and against the same thing sometimes. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* will need *some* normative reduction, but not a great deal.

Whether the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* can be normatively coherent or not is a problem. I’ll leave this matter aside, and assume that it can be; though the truth of this depends on some yet untold results of philosophy of language and metaphysics. The reason for positing the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* in the first place is to give a hypothetical answer to how the evolutionary aim can be known. I consider that hypothetical answer given. I do not see another way of conceiving of the evolutionary ‘aim’ without descending into relative accounts of it.

4.4. How can the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* help us with normative value?

4.4.1. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* improves PEH responses.

Let us take PEH responses' question-begging assumption for granted for the moment. The evolutionary 'aim', which we can only think of as the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* rather than in substantively definitive terms, has normative value. We've solved the first of Enoch's problems: that his evolutionary aim isn't as robust as it ought to be and privileges humans unnecessarily. This may be enough if we are willing to accept his explanation for the 'small' miracle that allows the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* to have normative value. However, in strengthening the concept of the evolutionary 'aim' we may well have undermined Enoch's arguments (which weren't all that convincing anyway) for the miracle of the truth of the question-begging assumption.

What's more, by allowing different conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim' by different species, we may undermine any justification for *our* normative judgements. Our evolutionary path might just not sync up with the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*; it could be redundant in the bigger evolutionary picture. This is not a problem, because the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is not exclusionary. It may be that the *content* of conceptions of normative value do not cohere with the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. But, the evolutionary processes that informed our normative judgements are essentially of the same *type* of process as the processes which inform the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. They can still derive normative value from the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* even if they aren't spot on with their conception of the content of it. It is overwhelmingly likely that each individual conception of the evolutionary 'aim' is lacking in some way, and therefore may miss some of the normative facts, but that does not undermine the normative facts that they *do* grasp. If, as Enoch suggests, the normative value in the evolutionary 'aim' is constitutive, then it would be unlikely that there would be a conception that *didn't* grasp *some* normative facts. So, we do not have to be *epistemically lucky* to derive normative value from the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*, if we take for granted that it has

normative value in the first place. Again, there are notes of pragmatism here, it may be that our normative judgements, as a whole, are off, but they retain a *sense* of normative value through instrumentally *working towards* the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*.

The *Combined Evolutionary Aim*, then, serves as an improvement on the evolutionary ‘aim’ of survival, or third-factors like certain cognitive faculties, promotion of wellbeing or the badness of pain and the goodness of pleasure; since all of those are relative to the human conception of normative value – a human conception which is unlikely to mirror the facts of evolution, which it needs to do if it is to be a third-factor linking normative judgements with evolutionary forces. In contrast, the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is more robust and less anthropocentric. If nothing else, we should replace talk of the evolutionary ‘aim’ (or other third-factors) with the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. This alone wouldn’t save us from the question-begging critique, but would just be the strongest candidate for a third-factor if we assume that question-begging isn’t a problem (as Weilenberg and Brosnan do).

4.4.2. The *Combined Evolutionary Aim* as a source of normative value.

But there is another way that the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* can help us as a third-factor that brings normativity into the evolutionary picture. Let us go back on our assumption of the small miracle and try to explain how there is normative value in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. To do this, I will make one explicit assumption: normative value exists. I do not have to assume any question-begging normative principle or substantive normative claim, but if normative value does not exist, then the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* will not have normative value. I do not see this as question-begging.

The perspective that would know the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would necessarily know normative facts. This could happen in three ways:

(A1) *The Combined Evolutionary Aim* requires knowledge of normative facts to be conceived. If knowledge of normative facts is good, then a conceiver of the

Combined Evolutionary Aim is good and the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* has normative value.

(B1) If the normative facts that the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* knows are not grounded in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* itself than EDAs are limited and realism can still be true.

(B2) If the normative facts that the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* knows are grounded in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* then it has intrinsic normative value.

I will discuss A first. The hypothetical conceiver⁸ of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would be able to know all the (non-redundant) properties available to evolutionary species, since any relevant difference in epistemic access would make for a different conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’. If normative properties exist, then they would be known by the perspective that would know the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. Since the hypothetical perspective would have full access to normative facts (assuming a sufficient degree of rationality) then it would be able to know the entirety of what is *good*.

If knowing what is good has normative value, then the conceiver of *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would have normative value. Furthermore, since all evolutionary species’ conceptions of the evolutionary ‘aim’ contribute to the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*, then each constitutes some part of the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. As such, there is also normative value in *our* conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’; in so far as it contributes to the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*.

If knowing normative facts is good, then there is normative value in the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* that is instantiated in each species’ conception of the evolutionary ‘aim’. As such, the normative value of the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* serves as the fourth-factor that has necessary normative value, and as such can be known independent of our normative reliability, and allows

⁸ As discussed, this needn’t be an actual individual, but I use ‘conceiver’ as a term for the hypothetical perspective that would conceive of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*.

the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* to serve as an effective third-factor in PEH responses.

For discussion of (B) I will assume that knowledge of normative facts is not (necessarily) good. When looking at the normative facts the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would know, we can point out that although they may necessarily know normative facts, that does not mean that any of those normative facts are grounded in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* itself. It could be that knowing the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* requires conditions of knowledge of normative facts without grounding those facts itself. In the same way that knowledge of economics requires knowledge of mathematics, but that does not mean that mathematics grounds economic systems.

But, if EDAs are right, then evolution has a ‘tremendous influence’ (Street, 2006) on normative judgements. In PEH responses, realists accept that influence. This is because of a third-factor that aligns evolutionary forces and normative truth. If we take the argument of the previous paragraph, and claim that the perspective that knows the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would know normative properties that are *not* grounded in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*, then those normative properties would be independent of evolution, since the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is conceptually essential to all evolutionary processes. If normative facts are independent of evolution, then we can adopt another metaethical approach, and justify realist normative facts without having to compensate for the influence of evolutionary forces. If normative properties are dependent (in some way) on evolution, then we can ground normative value in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*.

However, the EDA theorist might respond to this with the idea that perhaps normative facts are independent of evolution, and perhaps the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* justifies belief in the existence of those normative facts, but the human species could still be cut-off from ever knowing the content of those normative facts. If we deny any normative value in knowing what is good then we have no reason to pursue the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*, since the normative value attained by the perspective that would know the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would not ground any normative value in human normative judgements. This, unfortunately, is not something that I have a response to. It may be, under this

situation, that we have to accept the other side of Skarsaune's (2011) conditional (previously maligned) and believe that most of our normative judgements are likely to be false. However, at the very least, we would retain a defence of metaethical realism in this case; albeit an impractical version of it. And within this version of realism, we could defend, I believe, the *instrumental* normative value of our normative judgements in light of their normativity being at the very least correlated with *Combined Evolutionary Aim*. What's more, EDAs would only apply to humans, and be false outside of this application. So, even in this case, I consider progress to have been made in the realist defence.

Accepting (A) seems the best way for a realist to proceed. But (B) is not a lost cause by any means, depending on the position one took and further exploration of the issues raised here.

4.5. Non-Naturalist Regrets?

Is the account of normative value given by the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* a realist account? A concern might be that we cannot claim for sure that knowledge of normative facts is a good thing. This could be one additional assumption. Perhaps we could appeal to an *a priori* truth like Huemer's (2008) formal intuitions to hold that knowledge of normative facts is good. Something like:

- (iv) It is good to know normative facts.

It seems to me intuitive and as an approach I think could be defended. If something like (iv) turns out to justify (A), then the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* can work as a stand in for the evolutionary 'aim' in Enoch's argument, meaning that the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* would derive normative value from the fourth-factor: the conceiver of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim*.

But on the occasion that we do not defend this, we would have to adopt the (B) approach. In the case that (B2) is true, we have a straightforward third-factor account that can strengthen PEH responses – the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* has intrinsic value. In the case that (B1) is true, we have more difficulty. We can still defend a realist account – the argument for EDAs against realism, in particular Street's, fails; but we are moved to accept a vague sort of realism that is decidedly more sceptical.

It is more prone to Joyce's concerns about normative judgements requiring authority, and ends up like Skarsaune's sceptical side of his conditional. All the possible scenarios end with a realist interpretation, although clearly (B1) is the weakest, and ought to be avoided by the realist if possible, although it could possibly be defended with a more instrumental and pragmatic account of normative value in humanity's normative judgements. I think there is enough room to develop (B2) and (A) and discount (B1) in the future – although I haven't done that here.

There could be further reluctance, however, on the part of the realist. Since the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is the synthesis of all possible conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim', then it could imply different first order normative facts. This could be seen as relativist and against realism. I don't think it is, since it is just a cross-evolutionary species instance of the problem of disagreement, and standard realist replies to that problem can be invoked. While we may be limited, perhaps cognitively limited, to having only certain conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim' and therefore certain content in our normative judgements – content that doesn't necessarily represent normative truth – that doesn't mean that the normativity grounded in the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* needs to be relativist. The normativity can be the same throughout different conceptions of the evolutionary 'aim'; it can remain effective and undistorted while being the subject of conflict and disagreement between conceptions that could be motivated by either interpretative differences (i.e. differences in first order normative theories) or evolutionary differentials in the structure and style of normative judgements. Again, this may pose more problems if we accepted (B1) than if we accepted (B2) or (A), and in the end, relativist interpretations of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* could still be effective. However, if we are at the point of debating whether or not an anti-realist or realist understanding of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is most appropriate, we have accepted its efficacy in avoiding EDAs and instead turned to relativist problems of translation and metaphysical coherency.

If it turns out that an anti-realist understanding of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is more appropriate, then that is a new argument in turn. If we accept the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* as a viable third-factor for PEH responses, then EDAs fail, and further discussion is on more neutral and conceptual ground.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I've given a review of the strongest type of non-naturalist realist response to EDAs: PEH responses. The ongoing problem for PEH responses is the question-begging critique. PEH hypotheses cannot assume substantive normative facts as part of their argument, since that presupposes that our normative faculties are reliable. I have tried to build on PEH responses, particularly the furthest developed one, Enoch's, and to develop a PEH hypothesis that does not assume substantive normative facts. Although the supposition that knowledge of normative facts has normative value would strengthen the argument, and seems to me to be something like a formal intuition or conceptual truth, we do not *need* to make this supposition for my argument to be successful.

The use of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* as a proxy function for the evolutionary 'aim' is more explanatorily effective, robust and less prone to anthropocentrism than Enoch's evolutionary 'aim' or other third-factors. Whether the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* is practically possible is not a factor in its usage as a conceptual tool for metaphysically grounding our normative judgements. One particularly concerning aspect, however, is that if we accept (B2) we can have a defence of realism while still admitting to the force of EDAs when applied to humans specifically. Though it is no threat to realism itself, we end up with the alarming consequence that most of our normative judgements can still be false. If this, and other problems, such as the possibility of the *Combined Evolutionary Aim* being necessarily incoherent as a single perspective, can be solved, then I think we have a good basis for developing a more substantial account of how PEH responses can work. A response, what's more, that doesn't beg the question against EDAs.

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