

Morality in a Natural World

The central philosophical challenge of metaethics is to account for the normativity of moral judgment without abandoning or seriously compromising moral realism. In *Morality in a Natural World*, David Copp defends a version of naturalistic moral realism and argues that it can accommodate the normativity of morality. Largely because of the difficulty in accounting for normativity, naturalistic moral realism is often thought to face special metaphysical, epistemological, and semantic problems. In the ten essays included in this volume, Copp defends solutions to these problems. Three of the essays are new, while seven have previously been published. All of them are concerned with the viability of naturalistic and realistic accounts of the nature of morality or, more generally, with the viability of naturalistic and realistic accounts of reasons.

David Copp is professor of philosophy at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Morality, Normativity and Society* and has edited and co-edited several volumes, including *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. He served for many years as an editor of the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* and is currently an associate editor of *Ethics* and the subject editor for metaethics of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

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SELECTED ESSAYS IN METAETHICS

DAVID COPP

University of Florida



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For Marina

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Preface

This volume brings together ten essays in metaethics that I have written over the past decade. Three are previously unpublished. All of them aim in one way or another to defend the viability of a naturalistic and realistic account of the nature of morality. They discuss problems for naturalism, chiefly the problem of explaining the normativity of moral judgment, and they suggest or defend solutions to the problems.

The point of reprinting the articles is that, taken together, and with the addition of the three new essays, they develop a systematic defense of moral naturalism. Moreover, some of them initially appeared in out-of-the-way places. I see difficulties in each of them, certainly in the previously published essays, difficulties that I wish I had noticed much earlier. I have largely resisted the temptation to make substantive changes, however, because some people will have read the original versions of the essays and I did not want to cause confusion about my views. For this reason, the seven previously published essays in the book are reproduced largely without alteration, except for minor changes. I have changed the style of the notes, and I have added a few substantive notes. Because of this, the notes have been renumbered in some cases. When I wrote the essays, I intended them to be read individually, which means that some points are repeated in more than one, but the result is that each of the chapters in the book can be understood without reading any of the others. The introduction aims to put the chapters into context and to explain some ideas that lie in the background of my arguments.

During the past ten years, I have been fortunate in being a member of the philosophy departments at the University of California, Davis; Bowling Green State University; and the University of Florida. Each of these universities generously gave me time for research. I also enjoyed

very welcome fellowships with the Philosophy Program at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University; the Center for Applied Ethics, University of British Columbia; and the Social Philosophy and Policy Center, Bowling Green State University. I would like to thank each of these institutions, and especially, of course, the people who work in them, for their valuable assistance.

So many people have given me help in developing my ideas that I cannot hope to remember them all. In each of the essays I thank by name the people I can remember who gave me comments and suggestions, and I thank the audiences that heard me lecture on the topics of the essays. I am enormously grateful for the time and effort that all of these people invested in helping me.

There are some colleagues and friends to whom I owe special thanks, both for their stimulation and intellectual help and for their friendly encouragement. I would especially like to mention a few colleagues at Davis, Bowling Green, and Florida who have had an especially important impact on my thinking, namely, Jerry Dworkin, Michael Jubien, Jeff King, David Sobel, and Jon Tresan. I was very lucky to have them as colleagues. For delightful collegial discussions of issues in moral philosophy, I would like to thank the Davis Ethics Discussion Group, the Ohio Reading Group in Ethics, and the Gator Philosophy and Ethics Discussion Group at the University of Florida. Michael Ridge gave me extensive comments on several of the essays included in this book as well as on my proposal to Cambridge University Press. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong invited me to put together this collection for Cambridge, and he gave me valuable feedback on many of the chapters, including the introduction. He has encouraged me in the development of my views ever since we first talked about them. I owe him and the others I have mentioned a very large debt of gratitude.

Marina Oshana has made life easy and pleasant for me and has helped me on many occasions to clarify my thinking with her comments on essays included here. Five cats have shared our home over the years and they have kept me awake to the rhythm of life outside my study. Without such good fortune at home, I could not have written these essays.

Acknowledgments

The essays published here as chapters 3, 4, and 7 have not previously been published. The remaining seven essays originally appeared in the journals and volumes listed here below. I am very grateful to the publishers for giving their permission for this reprinting. Chapter 1, “Why Naturalism?” originally appeared in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6 (2003): 179–200, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Springer Science and Business Media. Chapter 2, “Four Epistemological Challenges to Ethical Naturalism: Naturalized Epistemology and the First-Person Perspective,” originally appeared in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* supp. vol. 26 (2001): 31–74. Chapter 5, “Realist-Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism,” originally appeared in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 18 (2001): 1–43. Chapter 6, “Milk, Honey, and the Good Life on Moral Twin Earth,” originally appeared in *Synthèse* 124 (2000): 113–137, and is reprinted with the kind permission of Springer Science and Business Media. Chapter 8, “Moral Naturalism and Three Grades of Normativity,” originally appeared in Peter Schaber, ed., *Normativity and Naturalism* (Frankfurt: Ontos-Verlag, 2004), pp. 7–45. Chapter 9, “The Ring of Gyges: Overridingness and the Unity of Reason,” originally appeared in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 14 (1997): 86–106. Finally, chapter 10, “The Normativity of Self-Grounded Reason,” originally appeared in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22 (2005): 165–203.