

present in all of these states of affairs (p. 143): Principle Φ is avoided. Now there are of course many criss-crossing similarities in the world (pp. 44, 49). The complex states of affairs that are truthmakers for '... is pungent' may individually be similar to other states of affairs that are not truthmakers for that predicate. But the brute similarity which joins together the truthmaker states of affairs is salient for us (pp. 44, 49, 167).

I take this salient similarity to amount to the fact that all these states of affairs cause (or are disposed to cause) us to utter the predicate '... is pungent'. But *causes utterance of* is not the relation Heil needs to capture; he needs *makes true*.

I am not persuaded, then, by Heil's advocacy of one-level ontology. But I admire this book. It deals with a broad range of currently contested issues, consistently making thorough and clear contact with the literature, both contemporary and historical. Yet it is unusually accessible and sparing of technical jargon. Even advocates of a 'many-levels ontology' who are as resistant to change as I am will find reading this book rewarding.

Philosophy Department
Unit 2054
University of Connecticut
344 Mansfield Road
Storrs, CT 06269-2054
USA

CRAWFORD L. ELDER

The Myth of Morality, by Richard Joyce. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. xiii + 249. H/b £40.00, \$60.00.

The late David Lewis is quoted on the cover of this book as saying that moral fictionalism is an idea whose time has come. He could be right. In recent years, fictionalism has become a mainstream position in a number of areas where the philosophical tradition is riddled with metaphysical and epistemological doubt. Modality, abstract objects, unobservables, and the supernatural have provided rich pickings for anti-realist accounts on which serious commitment to the existence of the relevant entities is withdrawn, but the needs and pressures of the relevant portion of human activity is thought to provide a rationale for going on regardless by thinking, talking, and arguing *as if* the entities in question exist. In the present work, Richard Joyce applies this strategy to ethics. Joyce argues that whereas moral judgements are strictly speaking false or lacking in determinate truth-value, the sensible attitude for us to take towards this fact is to continue making moral claims as a form of make-believe, and thus without their normal assertoric force. This revisionary attitude towards morality Joyce recommends under the label 'moral fictionalism'.

Joyce's book is the most comprehensive error-theoretical treatment of ethics in recent years, and confidently picks up the pieces where John Mackie left them in his seminal *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Pelican, 1977). A fre-

quently asked question about the latter work is how Mackie could argue for the error-theoretical position he called moral scepticism in the first chapter of his book, and then go on to seriously discuss the respective merits of consequentialism and deontology for several chapters thereafter. Moral fictionalism provides one answer to that question, and the detail and creativity with which Joyce pursues his fictionalist programme should ensure that his work becomes a lasting contribution in the field. Reading this book should certainly provide food for thought for those who are tempted to dismiss any form of moral error theory as obviously wrongheaded or in poor taste. For the elements from which Joyce builds his fictionalism are not in themselves obviously unacceptable. It is only when combined in the way that Joyce combines them that they produce a view which mainstream moral philosophy has generally considered too marginal to be granted more than passing notice.

Joyce's moral fictionalism is based on four claims. The first claim is that moral judgements aim to be true in virtue of the existence of normative reasons that apply to agents independently of their desires and interests. Morality is a system of categorical imperatives (Chs 1–2). The second claim is that all normative reasons depend on the desires and interests of the agents to whom they apply. All genuine reason-giving imperatives are hypothetical (Chs 3–5). So the Kantians are right about the correct interpretation of morality, but the Humeans (among whom I would include a professed 'non-Humean instrumentalist' like Joyce) are right about the metaphysics of normative reasons. Together, these two claims entail a moral error theory.

Joyce's third claim is a story about natural selection (Ch. 6). Literally erroneous modes of thought like morality can develop as a result of the selective advantages of social cooperation. The myth of morality exists because it has tended to serve our reproductive interests. This is sociobiology in its least offensive guise: not in itself either debunking moral discourse as redundant or absurdly putting forward reproductive interests as a moral ideal, but rather giving an account of how it could be the case that belief in moral reasons could come about in a morally indifferent world. Joyce's fourth claim is that his moral error theory does not rule out continued endorsement of moral claims in some form (Chs 7–8). The pragmatic advantages of being a moral reasoner in a morally indifferent world outweigh the fact that morality is a well-entrenched bluff. Our Humean metaphysics can make us fictionalists about Kantian morality. At this point, Joyce is understandably content to leave matters indeterminate. After all, whether you have normative reasons to become a moral fictionalist is supposed to depend on what your desires and interests are. And people are not all the same. If they were, their normative reasons would converge, and Joyce's fictionalism would be much less interesting than it actually is.

The accusation that morality is a bluff, illusion, or myth (Joyce uses the terms interchangeably) is a serious business. If philosophy is anything like criminal law, we should regard the accused as innocent until proven guilty. On these terms, Joyce's error theory will struggle to win over many opponents. There are too many minimally plausible interpretations of morality that grant

most of Joyce's premisses but deny his error-theoretical conclusion. Constraints on space permit the mention of only two.

First, expressivists like Simon Blackburn have taken the persistent difficulty in giving coherent truth-conditions to moral judgements as evidence that morality is not fundamentally in the fact-stating business to start with. Joyce says that morality revised the fictionalist way *is* a form of non-cognitivism, indeed a close relative of Blackburn's quasi-realism (p. 201). How do we decide whether metaethical enlightenment amounts to a fictionalist revision of a massive cognitive error as opposed to a realization that the cognitive surface of moral discourse disguises its underlying expressive function? Do we need to choose? The matter is unclear. Joyce appeals to the notorious Frege-Geach problem to dismiss expressivism early in the book (pp. 9–16). That case has yet to be fully heard. While we wait for the verdict we may reflect that the dispute between fictionalist and expressivist has to be located with respect to a naturalistic theory of representation for the mental states which moral claims express. Here, Joyce's evolutionary naturalism will favour the expressivist if non-moral nature could have done its co-ordinating work on our attitudes just as well without putting extra, illusory, representations in our heads as intermediate stops on the way to action. Joyce disagrees, but admits that his remarks on the issue are speculative. On this basis, we are not yet in a position to draw any firm conclusions about the relative merits of expressivism and error theory.

Second, some cognitivists will accept Joyce's naturalist metaphysics but deny that morality is irredeemably bound up with the Kantian reason attribution racket. It would be surprising if the whole of morality were interestingly accountable for in terms of categorically imperative normative reasons. A great deal of moral philosophy refuses to take the concept of normative reasons as fundamental, focusing instead on concepts such as virtue or value as alternative or complementary moral primitives. It might be true to say, as does Thomas Scanlon, that 'reason' can play the role of normative catch-all by picking out the 'speaking in favour of' relation. But this is too thin a foundation on which to conjure up the Kantian ingredients of a moral error theory. Historically speaking, this should be unsurprising. As critics of morality from Nietzsche onwards have taught us, moral terms are cultural products, and the attribution to morality of a Kantian core of categorical imperatives is bound to make more sense in some historical contexts than others. If so, the claim that morality *as such* is an illusion is not beyond reasonable doubt. In fact, the prosecution could be losing sight of the motive for the crime. If the illusion of morality is a culturally conditioned and historically local phenomenon, then it is unclear how the appeal to natural selection can explain either the appearance of the illusion or its place in our complex and often contradictory cultural heritage. The prosecution would have to look elsewhere for its motive. Historically specific commitments to categorical imperatives, contra-causal free will, divine commands, enlightened convergence, and the rest, have all provided rich pickings for critics of morality in the past. But these have tended

to be critics of morality in the narrow sense that the late Bernard Williams identified as ‘the morality system’, not morality *as such* (or Williams’s ‘ethics’). On reflection, this might be the position Joyce wants to occupy. If so, there could be more to Joyce’s view than the title of his book suggests.

King’s College
Cambridge
CB2 1ST, UK
hallvard.lillehammer@kings.cam.ac.uk

HALLVARD LILLEHAMMER

The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding, by Jonathan L. Kvanvig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xvi + 216. H/b £45.00, \$60.00.

Most of contemporary epistemology is dedicated to such things as the analysis of ‘knows’ and the formulation of principles of epistemic justification. But surprisingly little is said about the *value* of knowledge, nor about other cognitive achievements such as understanding or wisdom. Jonathan Kvanvig’s book is a welcome step towards remedying these oversights. The bulk of the book searches for the reasons why knowledge is good, ultimately concluding that knowledge lacks the distinctive kind of value that some have supposed—specifically, that knowledge has no more value than a certain proper subset of its constituents. In the final two chapters, Kvanvig proceeds to discuss the nature of understanding, as opposed to knowledge, which he finds to have a value greater than that of any proper subset of its constituents.

The stage is set with an argument from Plato’s *Meno*: seeking the explanation for the value of knowledge, Socrates and Meno hit upon the idea that knowledge is valuable for its practical benefits—if I know where the final exam is to be given, I am more likely to succeed in taking it. But Socrates observes that for practical purposes, mere true belief suffices—if I have a true belief, but not knowledge, about the location of the exam, I am just as likely to make it there. So why should one care specifically about *knowing* things?

This form of argument recurs throughout the book, though its import is not always clear. At times, Kvanvig seems mistakenly to view it as showing that knowledge is not truly valuable in the way suggested (see for example p. 3, suggesting that a diamond ring is not really valuable if the diamond by itself would be just as valuable), but his considered view seems to be that the issue is not whether knowledge is valuable, but whether it is *uniquely valuable* (my term), that is, whether it has some value that cannot be obtained through anything logically weaker than it, such as true belief, or justified true belief. Kvanvig takes the intuitive view to be that knowledge is uniquely good in this sense, and the bulk of the book is devoted to investigating whether and why this is true.

Kvanvig allows that several (alleged) components of knowledge are good. Belief is *prima facie* instrumentally good, even without specifying whether the