Sami Pihlström

Pragmatic Moral Realism

A Transcendental Defense

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A Transcendental Defense

Sami Pihlström

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

To see the term ‘pragmatism’ set alongside ‘realism’ and ‘transcendental’ in the title of this new work by Sami Pihlström should arouse surprise and curiosity. Did not pragmatism set out in its crusade to transform philosophy by offering an alternative to rival movements wearing the labels of ‘realism’ and ‘transcendentalism’? In the twentieth century, realists proclaimed their faith in a mind-independent reality and a correspondence theory of truth, and transcendental idealists countered by holding that mind and thought embrace all reality and truth. The classical pragmatists sought a new perspective, as Pihlström well understands, that challenged the traditional philosophical categories that forged the realism/idealism standoff. One wonders how Charles Peirce, William James, or John Dewey would have reacted to Pihlström’s title; bemusement, perhaps, and maybe some irritation.

But Pihlström stands at the start of the twenty-first century, the beneficiary of the long span of philosophy since the early pragmatists, in its varied analytic, continental, and pragmatic forms. The parameters of more recent philosophical debate have dramatically altered, and the notion of a ‘transcendental’ defense of the sort of moral realism that pragmatism could and should endorse will no longer arouse smiles. Analytic philosophers like John McDowell study Hegel, Kantians and Wittgensteinians fruitfully compare views, Arendt and Levinas are carefully studied everywhere, and pragmatists like Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam are sympathetic with a variety of themes long pursued by analytic or continental philosophers. All these philosophers and many more appear in this book’s pages; Pihlström has carefully analysed and assembled powerful arguments from numerous sources to persuasively support a pragmatic moral realism that, I believe, would have impressed classical pragmatists.

More importantly, Pihlström shows us a viable path for the future, towards a powerful ethical theory that, I believe, accomplishes what pragmatism always attempts: the breaking down of outmoded categories and traditional dichotomies. Pihlström’s pragmatic moral realism challenges adherents of both excessively naturalistic moral realisms and excessively rationalistic moral realisms; and it also challenges the standoff between moral cognitivism and moral non-cognitivism. Not only pragmatists but all moral theorists will benefit from carefully studying Pihlström’s arguments.

John R. Shook
Editor, Studies in Pragmatism and Values

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PREFACE

This book aims at a relatively concise and unified presentation of the issue of moral realism from a pragmatist point of view. No detailed historical discussion of the views held by classical pragmatist philosophers is offered (apart from a few short notes), but the treatment of the problem of realism in (meta)ethics – the problem of whether morality is, or can be, "objective" in any interesting sense – will be thoroughly pragmatist (or pragmatically naturalist), drawing attention to our actual human practices of ethical evaluation and deliberation. Instead of historical explorations, I will critically comment upon some relatively recent views on the nature of values and morality, advanced by both pragmatists and non-pragmatists, in order to illuminate the distinctive kind of pragmatism I favor in this area of philosophical puzzlement. In particular, the book aims to bring to the fore the key idea of the essentially ungrounded, non-foundationalist – and thereby humanly fundamental – place of ethics in our thought and action. This position, or rather, this attitude to the problem of whether morality is objective or genuinely binding, developed in terms of pragmatist anti-foundationalism, is contextualized by comparing it to a number of other formulations of similar ideas, for example, to the so-called Wittgensteinian moral philosophy. It will be argued, above all, that to seek to offer a metaphysical or epistemological grounding or justification of ethics, or to explain the nature of ethics from a philosophical (or scientific) point of view allegedly more fundamental than ethics itself (that is, to try to answer the question, "why be moral?," in non-ethical terms), is to entirely misconceive the characteristic features of ethics as a meaningful mode of human being-in-the-world. Ethics is and must remain *beyond justification*; it is precisely for this reason that it is ubiquitous in our human form(s) of life.

Thus, one of the issues I want to examine in this book is the relation between two apparently different but possibly reconcilable ways of emphasizing moral seriousness (or the absolutely binding nature of our ethical concerns) and what I am calling the ubiquity of the ethical. Both pragmatism, represented today by Hilary Putnam in particular, and "Wittgensteinian" moral philosophy, represented by such figures as D. Z. Phillips, Ilham Dilman, Raimond Gaita, Paul Johnston, and Lars Hertzberg, among others, are diametrically opposed to anti-realist, relativist and skeptical positions in metaethics, insisting that our moral considerations are no less objective or absolute than our factual, empirical, or scientific ones, even though the two can by no means be identified. Somewhat differently formulated, these two attitudes in metaethics urge that ethical considerations, though always inevitably based on what may be called a moral subject – the agent whose life and integrity are at stake or under ethical assessment in a particular problematic situation – are not "merely subjective". Such considerations express, or at least are intended to express, something

more than sheer personal preferences, even though they *are* deeply personal in the sense of being inherently connected with some particular person's way of understanding her or his life. In a word, ethics is something *both* absolute (and thus something much more serious and important than anything else the subject might engage in) *and* irreducibly personal. It is both at the same time, and it is absolute precisely because it is personal (or vice versa).

This book examines how this position might receive a more elaborate philosophical interpretation. We will proceed, in the opening chapter, by first taking a look at how Putnam, a leading neopragmatist, defends moral realism by means of a pragmatic argument. Our discussion of Putnam will lead us to a long and twining road of philosophical (and partly metaphilosophical) inquiry during which we will take up several other central figures of recent moral philosophy as well. We will see, among other things, that there is a common ethical message uniting thinkers as diverse as the pragmatists, the (above-mentioned) Wittgensteinians, and (among more "Continentally" oriented thinkers) Emmanuel Levinas.

The first chapters argue for a distinctively pragmatist form of moral realism, according to which the moral agent's ethical point of view itself is prior to any (misconceived) attempt to justify it metaphysically or epistemologically from an external standpoint, and also tries to render this view acceptable from a number of quite different philosophical perspectives. Chapter four argues further that the kind of moral realism arrived at is compatible with, or even represents, what Stanley Cavell has labeled the "truth in skepticism" (or the "moral of skepticism"), drawn from Wittgenstein's later writings. A connection with David Hume's skeptical conception of philosophy is established as well, while Hume's ethical theory is not embraced. Chapter five brings the discussion onto a more metaphilosophical level by asking whether, and in what sense, the kind of pragmatist moral philosophy developed in the previous chapters might be taken to represent "applied" and/or "therapeutical" philosophizing. A critical discussion of both metaphilosophical notions is provided. Finally, chapter six conceptualizes the humanly central (and ethically profound) attitudes of wonder and trust from a pragmatist point of view. It is argued, against standard (realist or anti-realist) metaethical and metaphysical views, that these notions ought to be invoked in an ethically adequate picture of human beings' place in the world.

No parts of this book have been previously published exactly in their present form. Some background material has, however, been adopted from recent articles. Some fragments of chapters two and three have been drawn from my paper, "Pragmatism and 'Wittgensteinian' Moral Philosophy: Two Faces of Moral Realism," which was published in *Moral Realism*, ed. Jussi Kotkavirta and Michael Quante (Helsinki: The Philosophical Society of Finland, 2004). Upon writing that piece, I decided that a whole book devoted to the topic was needed. Some related themes were already discussed in an

earlier article of mine, "Pragmatic Realism and Ethics," which was first published in *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism*, ed. John R. Shook (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003) and appeared in revised form in my book, *Naturalizing the Transcendental: A Pragmatic View* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003). The chapters written for the present book are not identical to these previous papers; the discussion has been significantly enlarged and revised. Some material in early chapters was also briefly discussed in my paper, "Pragmatic Moral Realism: Education for Ethical Seriousness" (presented at the Third Central European Pragmatist Forum, "Education for a Democratic Society" in Potsdam, Germany, in June 2004; forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference, edited by John Ryder.

Chapter four draws on an article forthcoming in *Humanitas*, a very early version of which was partly presented as a comment on Robert McCarthy's paper at the Hume Society Conference in Helsinki, Finland, in August 2002. Two somewhat earlier, originally separate essays have been heavily revised in order to turn them into parts of chapter five: "Applied Philosophy: Problems and Applications," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1999); and "Thought and Health: On Therapeutical Philosophy and Philosophical Therapy," *Trames*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2000). Chapter six is partly based on a paper published in *Human Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2004). Its themes were also discussed in my presentation, "Trusting Science and Trusting People: A Pragmatist Account," at the 4S/EASST conference in Paris in August 2004.

I want to thank the publishers of *Humanitas*, *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, and *Human Affairs* for permissions to use copyrighted material. I am most grateful to all those who have, at some point or another, commented on the papers or presentations upon which the material that has turned into this book is originally based. These philosophers include Ville Aarnio, Hanne Ahonen, Vincent Colapietro, Michael Eldridge, Leila Haaparanta, Jaana Hallamaa, Peter H. Hare, Larry Hickman, Heikki Ikäheimo, Heikki Kannisto, Heikki J. Koskinen, Jussi Kotkavirta, Arto Laitinen, Maria Lasonen-Aarnio, Irma Levomäki, Robert McCarthy, Cheryl Misak, Don Morse, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Ukri Pulliainen, Michael Quante, Eero Salmenkivi, John R. Shook, Juha Sihvola, Arto Siitonen, Beth Singer, Teemu Toppinen, Emil Visnovsky, Thomas Wallgren, Kenneth R. Westphal, and an anonymous referee of this book series, *Studies in Pragmatism and Values*. I would particularly like to thank John Shook for his editorial skills and for his decision to publish this book. The students who attended my moral realism class at the University of Helsinki in Fall 2001 were also enormously helpful. My wife Marianna and our two daughters Meeri and Katri have, as always, been as supportive as they can be.

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One

INTRODUCTION

An internationally well-known philosopher (whose name I am not going to mention) once argued during a dinner at a conference that if the empirical and in general intellectual "evidence" racists claim to possess in favor of their discriminatory "theory" were in good order, then there would be nothing to say against racism. That is, racism (understood roughly as a view according to which racially discriminatory policies are ethically acceptable, at least in some given situations) would, according to this philosopher, be rationally justified or warranted if the underlying "evidence" were epistemically justified, or strong enough to support the hypothesis that there are genuine differences (relevant to discrimination in human practices) between human "races."

One of the aims of the present undertaking is to show how absurd this position is. The suggestion by the well-known philosopher assumes that racism is a *theory* just like any other, to be evaluated primarily in *epistemic* terms, and that the ethical quality of this theory depends essentially upon its intellectual credentials (judged in terms of empirical evidence). Thus, the view relies on a fundamental fact/value dualism and on the – all too common – idea that factual statements or hypotheses can be objectively assessed on the basis of evidence (or intellectual considerations in general), whereas valuational attitudes, such as the attitudes we may have toward racial discrimination, are not objective at all, or at least not as objective as factual statements. Whatever rationality the latter may have is derived from the epistemic status of the purely factual theory.

A *reductio ad absurdum* of this view can be reached by changing the example from racism to Nazism – without assuming, of course, that these two have nothing to do with each other (on the contrary, racism is a crucial element of Nazism). It seems to me clear that the moral condemnability of Nazism does *not* depend (or even supervene) on its epistemic condemnability, provided that we even understand what the merely epistemic condemnability of Nazism could mean. The conceptual network invoked by Nazism simply evades the dichotomy between epistemic and ethical matters at issue here. It is not enough to say that epistemic evaluation has ethical consequences (which the philosopher I referred to would be happy to endorse); or even that we may have ethical duties regarding the use and maintenance of our epistemic abilities. Whenever we start speaking about Nazism (or, as I also claim, racism), ethical considerations will already be irremovably at work in our discussion. There is no way to consider either doctrine from a purely epistemic point of view, because, given the subject matter at hand, there *is* no such point of view.

Regarding Nazism, in particular, it has even been suggested that it should be analyzed as a "pre-conceptual" or "aconceptual" experience,[1] although this is not a position I want to endorse here.

These examples lead us to the heart of what some philosophers, most notably Hilary Putnam, have labeled the *fact/value entanglement*. (I shall discuss Putnam's views in chapter two.) The condemnability of Nazism (or, *mutatis mutandis*, of racism) is moral condemnability all the way down – containing epistemic elements, of course, but in a form in which those elements are deeply intertwined with the ethical ones, inseparable from them. The fact/value dichotomy itself turns out to be immoral, because it might help people to "accept" at least parts of racist or even Nazi views. This, at least, is what I shall try to argue through a critical reading of a couple of recent pragmatically oriented moral realists (and their opponents).

Accordingly, in this essay, I want to examine (as promised in the preface) the relation between two different but reconcilable ways of emphasizing moral seriousness. Both pragmatism, represented by Putnam in particular,[2] and "Wittgensteinian" moral philosophy oppose anti-realist, relativist and skeptical views in metaethics, insisting that our moral considerations are no less objective or absolute than our factual, empirical or scientific ones. Pragmatists and Wittgensteinian thinkers typically urge that moral considerations, though being inevitably based on what may be called a moral subject – the agent whose life or ethical integrity is at stake in a particular problematic situation – are not "merely subjective" but express, or should express, something more than sheer personal preferences. Yet, ethical thinking *is* deeply personal in the sense of being inherently connected with some particular person's way of understanding her or his life, with her or his "practical identity."[3] In a word, ethics is something that is *both* absolute (and thus, ideally, something much more serious and important than anything else the subject engages in) *and* ineliminably personal. It is both at the same time, and it is absolute precisely because it is personal (or *vice versa*). Furthermore, ethics is, I shall argue, both "natural" for us humans – as natural as anything can be – yet irreducible to any natural-scientific picture of humanity.

The historical background of the positions held by pragmatist and Wittgensteinian philosophers would of course require another, much longer investigation. In the case of pragmatism, Putnam and other neopragmatists primarily appeal to such classics as William James and John Dewey; in the Wittgensteinian tradition, the central insights have naturally been taken from Wittgenstein himself, but they were transmitted to contemporary Wittgensteinians through intermediary figures like Rush Rhees and Peter Winch. I shall not much discuss these historical influences here. We may note, though, that Wittgenstein's own ethical views, because of their "quietist" character, are not as easily comparable to pragmatists' views as some of his followers' positions are.[4] Furthermore, it should be understood that when speaking of pragmatism

or Wittgensteinian moral philosophy in general terms, I have in mind only *ideal types*; the discussion will, however, be concretized and substantiated through more detailed references to the actual views of, for example, Putnam, Phillips, or Dilman.

How could the pragmatist-cum-Wittgensteinian position briefly described here receive a more elaborate philosophical interpretation? Chapter two will look at how Putnam, a leading neopragmatist, defends moral realism by means of a pragmatic argument. In describing Putnam as a "leading neopragmatist," I do not wish to neglect the value of Richard Rorty's work, to whom many would undoubtedly reserve such a title. It seems to me, however, that Putnam is the more important neopragmatist in ethical matters. This book is not concerned with the somewhat debated question of whether there is actually any room for ethics in Rorty's radical neopragmatism, although the generally anti-foundationalist picture of ethics put forward here may be found congenial by some Rortyan pragmatists, too.[5] Our discussion of Putnam will lead us to a possibly somewhat confusing tour that will take up several other central figures of recent moral philosophy. For example, I will have some more or less critical comments to make, though in some cases only briefly, on such thinkers as Iris Murdoch, John McDowell, Axel Honneth, Cheryl Misak, Michael Smith, Peter Winch, D.Z. Phillips, Ilham Dilman, Raimond Gaita, Paul Johnston, Christine Korsgaard, Stephen Mulhall, Stanley Cavell, and others. While Putnam's writings have been a major source of inspiration for my own views on pragmatic moral realism, views which are very close to Putnam's in some central respects, there is much that I find problematic in Putnam's approach. In particular, I think of my own emphasis on the unjustified and unjustifiable status of the ethical as a sharpening of some Putnamean points which, as such, do not go far enough in the pragmatist articulation of moral realism. In any case, as my readers will easily observe, I shall, after having begun from Putnam's arguments, develop my own position in terms sometimes quite distant from Putnam's.

In the remainder of this introduction, I shall explain in broad strokes what the realism discussion in moral philosophy is all about, in order to define the context in which the pragmatic moral realism to be defended in the subsequent chapters emerges as a distinctive position. I cannot here discuss in any great detail the sophisticated differences between various versions of moral realisms and anti-realisms (let alone related realisms and anti-realisms in general metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science).[6] Such a discussion needs a book of its own. These groups of doctrines, which also in the case of ethics have crucial metaphysical, epistemological and semantic components, may for our purposes be loosely characterized as follows. *Moral realists* of various brands share the view that there really are, in some sense, objective moral values (or norms, as the notion of value sounds too metaphysical to

some realists), i.e., some (natural or cultural) structures that are normatively action-guiding, independently of individual interests, beliefs, etc. Ethical statements are about such values, or at least they purport to refer to them, and they are true or false independently of individual opinions (or, according to stronger realists, even independently of any human opinions); moreover, most realists hold that at least some ethical statements are true and that, hence, it is possible to have moral knowledge. Contrary to moral realists, *moral anti-realists* deny the objectivity of action-guiding values and thereby reject the objectivity of issues of moral deliberation. Anti-realists, again, may disagree over whether moral discourse is strictly non-cognitive and lacks truth-value, merely expressing emotions or other attitudes (emotivism, prescriptivism, and other forms of *expressivism*) or whether it is cognitive but contains only false statements purportedly referring to actually non-existent objective values ("error theory"); or, in a relativist formulation, statements whose truth-values are relativized to a cultural framework, paradigm, tradition, or perspective.[7] More detailed differentiations between different realisms and anti-realisms will be introduced later only insofar as they illuminate the particular issues to be discussed.

Putnam, well known because of his recent pragmatist sympathies, has argued for a moderate moral realism and against sharp fact/value and science/ethics dichotomies in numerous writings since the early 1980s.[8] This project has been an element of his on-going struggle with the realism issue in general metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science. It seems to me that this broader discussion of realism, crucially influenced by Putnam's contributions in the 1980s and 1990s (see Pihlström 1996), has gradually largely exhausted its resources. It is hard to find any novel perspective on that discussion any longer. Moral realism, however, is still an interesting issue about which something significant can even today be said. The basic positions have not been explored as thoroughly as the general options regarding realism and anti-realism. Therefore, we may still learn something new by turning to Putnam's pragmatist writings on ethics and metaethics, and by further developing some of his insights, as well as those of his critics (such as Dilman 2002).

Despite Putnam's original work, unfortunately pragmatism is usually ignored in recent defenses of either naturalistically or non-naturalistically oriented moral realism (such as Schaber 1997). Even when pragmatism is considered in discussions of moral realism, it is often (as in Tännsjö 1990) construed narrowly as a theory of the justification of moral principles. It will be one of my chief claims in the present undertaking that pragmatism ought to be seen more widely as a comprehensive framework for a successful defense of moral realism.

The same applies to what I am calling "Wittgensteinianism," which has been at least as neglected as pragmatism in the realism debate. Philosophers

influenced by Wittgenstein often regard the disputes between realism and its alternatives as so deeply misguided (or nonsensical) that they seldom even use these notions in their writings, whether ethical or non-ethical. However, a recent book by Ilham Dilman, a well-known Wittgenstein-inspired thinker, goes some way toward changing this situation, as it focuses on the problem of realism vs. idealism and includes a chapter on ethics. It will be particularly useful for me to base my introductory remarks on moral realism and its alternatives on Dilman's work, which comes close to Putnam's internal or pragmatic realism but maintains a critical distance to Putnam's position, as will become clear in chapter two. Unlike Dilman, I make no claims about interpreting Wittgenstein, and again unlike him, I find it plausible to speak about a pragmatic form of realism (both in the case of ethics and elsewhere), meaning by it (in the ethical case) a pragmatic commitment to the reality of moral values, a commitment made through and based on our evolving practices.

Dilman wants to steer the middle course between realism and (linguistic) idealism, avoiding both alternatives; thus, he prefers to call his own view "anti-realism," which I find misleading. While certain traditional metaphysical underpinnings of the realism debate surely ought to be got rid of, the issue as a whole can hardly be avoided in the manner Dilman believes. Be that as it may, Dilman characterizes realism (or "Realism," or "linguistic realism," or "philosophical realism") as the view that reality is mirrored in our thought and language and that reality itself, with its own fundamental, language- and discourse-independent aspects or categories, justifies our forms of speech and reasoning (see Dilman 2002, p. 2). This view can be applied to various philosophically puzzling topics, such as the existence of physical objects, mathematical entities, objective similarities and differences between objects, or – most relevantly from our perspective – moral values. More precisely, according to realism, the "ultimate basis" of our discourse on these things is supposed to lie "in something *external to* and *independent of* our language," that is, the relation between language and reality is external, in the sense that both terms of this relation can be identified independently of one another (ibid., p. 24). The view opposite to realism, as Dilman conceives it, is linguistic idealism, according to which language does not reflect reality but reality reflects the structure of language and is constituted by that structure (ibid., p. 4). The idealist, too, sees the language–reality relation as an external one, simply reversing the order of priority by arguing that it is language, not language-independent reality, that is the basis of whatever form reality takes.

Dilman sees both alternatives as deeply misguided, following Wittgenstein (and what he calls Wittgenstein's "Copernican Revolution") in thinking that (and trying to show how) "language is intertwined with action" and "embedded in our life," in our "life with language." Accordingly, he says,

language and reality are intertwined because of the inseparable tie between language and life (ibid., p. 8).[9] Through the joint development of language and life,

> [w]e come to have things to speak about and things to say. We thus acquire a life, a world, and a mode of being – the kind that is characteristic of human beings – all at one go in the course of time. So ... language gives us things to speak about and engage with, thus expanding our world, and at the same time itself grows out of those engagements. I take this to be one of Wittgenstein's main contributions to philosophy. (ibid.)

The Wittgensteinian philosopher thinks, *contra* standard forms of realism *and* idealism, that the relation between language and reality is an "internal" one: "our conception of reality in different areas of discourse, how we distinguish what is real from what is not in different areas of inquiry, is *internal* to the grammar of those forms of discourse and enquiry" (ibid., p. 28; see also pp. 54–55). Thus, the Wittgensteinian philosopher, according to Dilman, should avoid the temptation to place either reality itself or language as the ultimate basis of the other. The "world" we inhabit is, then, language-constituted, yes, but our use of language does not simply create that world *ex nihilo*. Both emerge together. The world is not simply a product of what we do; it is not a human construct (see ibid., p. 20). But it is not simply "given" or pre-structured, either, because we grow into the specifically human world through our evolving language-use. As Dilman also puts it, our language forms a single whole with the life and culture to which it belongs; and these are, together, the source for the possibility of truth, of saying something true in language; moreover, it is these possibilities that constitute "our world" (ibid., p. 115). While these ideas can, I think, be fruitfully compared to Kantian transcendental idealism, in which the empirical world gets constituted through the operations of the human cognitive faculty (and in which, as one might say, the relation between the empirical world and the human cognitive structure is "internal," too, as neither can be identified in the absence of the other), Dilman wants to emphasize that he does not accept a transcendentally idealistic reading of Wittgenstein (although he does not abandon the notion of the transcendental as such).[10] In addition to Kant and Wittgenstein, Dilman sees Putnam – especially the "internal realist" Putnam of the 1980s – as an ally in the campaign against "metaphysical realism" and in favor of the view that reality is internally related to language (see ibid., chap. 8).

How should all this be applied to our chief concern, ethical discourse? Dilman gives us a hint in a chapter in which he criticizes Elizabeth Anscombe's well-known reading of Wittgenstein as a linguistic idealist. He argues that "what Wittgenstein had to say about the complex interdependence

between human life and language and the realities which human beings engage with in the life they live with language, as well as between such a life and the mode of existence in which alone they are human beings, applies *without distinctions* to all forms of realities, moral as well as physical" (ibid., p. 118; emphasis in the original). Moral reality is no more or no less independently pre-existing and pre-structured than physical reality. Both belong to "the human world," which, "with its different dimensions of reality, has developed hand-in-glove with our life and language" (ibid., p. 128).

This is a view on "moral reality" that I want to accept, and to some extent defend, in this book. Dilman's formulations guide our inquiry in a significant way (see especially the discussion of his criticism of Putnam in chapter two). The purpose of this brief introductory exposition of Dilman's views on realism, idealism, and (allegedly Wittgensteinian) "anti-realism" has been to suggest that the problem of realism can be approached in a manner quite different from the traditional arguments *pro* and *contra* various forms of technically formulated realisms. The Wittgensteinian approach, just like the pragmatist one, overcomes standard realisms and idealisms precisely by emphasizing the complex interdependence of the ways we speak and act, on the one hand, and the way(s) the world for us is, on the other. Dilman is, I am convinced, absolutely right in describing the language–world relation as an "internal" one. I do not want to follow him into a wholesale repudiation of the realism issue in philosophy and of the transcendentally idealist options that have been familiar in treatments of this issue since Kant, but fortunately such a repudiation is not required, if I merely use his "internalist" picture of the relation between moral language and moral reality for my own purposes in defending a pragmatic moral realism.

More precisely, the basic claim of moral realists, i.e., that there are objective moral values that (may and should) guide our actions, can be reinterpreted in a Wittgensteinian (and/or pragmatist) manner, if we take into account Dilman's suggestion that the human world, including the "moral world," or the moral values we find ourselves committed to, is internally related to the ways we speak and act within our lives. The objectivity of moral values need not, then, be thought of as something supernatural or transcendent; they do not exist anywhere beyond the perfectly normal human world we live in; nor are they an unrevisable or incorrigible basis upon which everything else lies. They are, rather, parts of our human reality – crucial elements of our evolving practices, as a pragmatist might put it. We live in an ethically structured universe, and this is reflected in our language-use (which, indeed, emerges together with that universe itself).

This is the picture of the objectivity of moral values (or moral realism) that I want to develop in the following chapters. While I shall depart from typical ways of understanding "moral realism," I shall argue for a pragmatic

commitment to the reality of moral values within what Dilman calls the "human world." Thus, I am (like Dilman) willing to stick to the label "realism" here, although I can of course understand the critic's potential charge that I am sacrificing significant aspects of what is customarily meant by realism. However, I hope my divergences from the more usual versions of moral realism will become clear as my inquiry progresses, and even some pragmatic forms of moral realism (such as Cheryl Misak's, and even Putnam's moral realism) will be to some extent criticized in what follows. My explorations of pragmatic moral realism should, accordingly, be read as suggestions for revising the very meaning of "moral realism." I believe this suggestion for revision is quite original, even though I must, of course, rely on a number of other authors, including Putnam and Dilman, in developing my points.

Two

THE MANY FACES OF MORAL REALISM

1. Putnam's moral realism: appreciating our actual practices of ethical evaluation

This chapter is largely devoted to Hilary Putnam's pragmatic form of moral realism, but I will have something to say about a number of philosophers standing close to Putnam in significant ways, including Iris Murdoch and John McDowell. We may first note that Putnam's basic argument for the kind of moral realism or moral objectivity he favors seems to be the one labeled "companions in the guilt argument" (see Putnam 1990), which is in effect a kind of "indispensability argument" (to borrow a Quinean label). Putnam points out that objective, action-guiding moral values should not – *pace* moral skeptics, radical relativists, and "error theorists" like John Mackie (1977) – be regarded as "queer" objects that are hard to locate in the natural-scientific picture of the universe (a picture which most contemporary philosophers, especially analytically oriented ones, assume to be roughly correct, only in need of some fine tuning). Were values queer in this sense, then *all* normative notions, including the ones we need to rely on in defending the very scientific conception of the world that Mackie and other critics of objective values regard as superior to ethics, would be equally suspect. We would have no "empirical world" at all as the object of our (scientific and non-scientific) descriptions, if we did not subscribe to the objectivity of at least some values. In order to have a coherent concept of a fact, Putnam believes, one must invoke values. The ways in which we discuss factual matters reveal and presuppose our system of value commitments; values are, in this sense, indispensable in our dealings with the world. There is, in particular, no easy way to deny the normatively action-guiding role of the notions of rational evaluation, acceptability, warrant, justification, and so forth, and if these notions are allowed in our scientific conceptual scheme, then there is no motivation for excluding moral values – which, in any case, are not situated in any transcendent realm higher than the natural (and social) reality familiar to us but are entangled with the quite ordinary facts that we find surrounding us.[1]

Putnam is not the only neopragmatist whose views we may find helpful here. A related consideration, which is equally pragmatic and, presumably, equally transcendental (if that kind of a reinterpretation of pragmatism is allowed) in favor of a realistic picture of normativity can be found in Frederick L. Will's (1997) insightful though not widely known essays on this topic. Will seems to be saying that norms (or values, if we prefer that term) are psycho-

social formations whose normative force does not lie in their "manifest" aspects (i.e., explicitly formulated rules) but in their "latent" ones: in the deep and rich ways in which they are entangled with the ways of life of the people of the community whose normative structure they constitute. There is no reason to expect, as moral skeptics seem to do, such norms to appear in any natural-scientific or materialistic ontology of the physical universe, and there is equally little reason to judge norms as "queer" because such an expectation is not satisfied.[2] An alternative would be to admit boldly that there are indeed entities upon which norms are based, i.e., that "it is the most familiar fact of human life that the world contains entities that can tell us what to do and make us do it," namely, "people, and the other animals" (Korsgaard 1996b, p. 166). This is a way of putting the pragmatist point that we cannot get rid of our human practices within which we live, move, and have our being, even if those practices involve contacts with entities (such as people) that are "queer" in comparison to entities that appear in our most advanced scientific conceptualizations. Ultimately, the pragmatist thus questions the error theorist's tendency to regard virtually anything *non-scientific* as "queer."

The classics of pragmatism, we may note, did not produce any specific ethical treatise that could be referred to as the *magnum opus* of pragmatist moral philosophy, although John Dewey, in particular, did explicitly touch ethical and political issues in several writings throughout his career.[3] It seems to me that a pragmatically realist view of values and the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy runs through virtually all of the central pragmatists' work. It is one of the defining features of the pragmatist tradition, from William James to Putnam, that ethical issues are no less "cognitive" or rationally negotiable than scientific or everyday ones (see especially Putnam 1994, 2002a),[4] though it may, admittedly, be more difficult to find support for this view in the work of the father of pragmatism, Charles Peirce (but see Misak 2000, 2004a, 2004b). Similar positions can also be developed quite independently of pragmatism, as in Renford Bambrough's (1979) work. Bambrough defends moral knowledge as a part of our common-sense knowledge, comparable to our knowledge about the external world that anti-skeptics and commonsense realists like G. E. Moore have tried to defend (see ibid., chap. 2). He also rejects "purely moral" (non-factual) disputes (ibid., pp. 24–25), thereby in a sense rejecting the fact/value gap in a manner resembling Putnam's.[5]

Independently of Will, Bambrough, or other recent writers, Putnam (1987, 1994, 1995) also supports his case by going back to the idea of the primacy of practical reason and of our moral "image" of the world (as compared to other, including scientific, images of reality), an idea to be found, in different ways, in such classics of ethical thought as Kant and James.[6] The idea that ethics is a matter of viewing the world in a certain way, of having a

certain kind of attitude to the world and to one's life, rather than of being in touch with specific "moral facts" (or any other admittedly queer objects), is also, clearly, a Wittgensteinian idea,[7] later developed further by many of his followers. In late-Wittgensteinian terms, ethics should not be compared to a specific language-game, since it penetrates virtually any language-games that we, as human beings, play with each other; it is perhaps more like a group of "hinge propositions" in the sense of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (1969), i.e., basic assumptions that ground our entire world-picture and are required in any language-game that we can meaningfully play. It is precisely hinge propositions like "Human beings are inherently valuable in themselves and should not be regarded as mere means" that enable us to view the world in an ethical way, even though we may debate over the exact meaning of such assumptions (e.g., over the definition of the notion of a human being).[8]

In developing his view on the significance of the moral image of the world, Putnam hardly ever refers to the "Wittgensteinian" ethical thinkers I mentioned in the introduction,[9] but (in addition to Wittgenstein and the pragmatists) he does refer quite often to Iris Murdoch, whose moral realism is obviously close to the Wittgensteinian point of view. These references seem to be crucial in Putnam's repudiation of the fact/value dichotomy:

> The use of the word 'inconsiderate' seems to me a very fine example of the way in which the fact/value distinction is hopelessly fuzzy in the real world and in the real language. The importance of terms like 'inconsiderate', 'pert', 'stubborn', 'pesky', etc., in actual moral evaluation, has been emphasized by Iris Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of 'Good'*. ... When we think of facts and values as independent we typically think of 'facts' as stated in some physicalistic or bureaucratic jargon, and the 'values' as being stated in the most abstract value terms, e.g. 'good', 'bad'. The independence of value from fact is harder to maintain when the facts themselves are of the order of 'inconsiderate', 'thinks only about himself', 'would do anything for money'. (Putnam 1981, p. 139)

Elsewhere, he reflects further:

> Our life-world, Murdoch is telling us, does not factor neatly into "facts" and "values"; we live in a messy human world in which seeing reality with all its nuances, seeing it as George Eliot, or Flaubert, or Henry James, or Murdoch herself can, to some extent, teach us to see it, and making appropriate "value judgments" are simply not separable abilities.
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> ... It is all well and good to describe hypothetical cases in which two people "agree on the facts and disagree about values," but in the world in which I grew up such cases are unreal. When and where did a Nazi and

> an anti-Nazi, a communist and a social democrat, a fundamentalist and a liberal, or even a Republican and a Democrat, agree on the facts? Even when it comes to one specific policy question ... every argument I have ever heard has exemplified the entanglement of the ethical and the factual. There is a weird discrepancy between the way philosophers who subscribe to a sharp fact/value distinction *make* ethical arguments sound and the way ethical arguments *actually* sound. (Putnam 1990, pp. 166–7)[10]

Putnam's general pragmatist approach is reflected in his choice of expressions: he speaks about "the real world" (or "life-world") we live in and "the real language" we use, about "the way ethical arguments *actually* sound." Thus, he draws attention to the actualities defining our practices of ethical evaluation and argues that as soon as that practical context is fully taken into account, there is no room for an artificial philosophical distinction between factual and evaluative discourse – nor, consequently, for a physicalist picture of reality that takes only scientifically established facts seriously and disregards values as "queer." The human world is "messy," Putnam says.[11] This, apparently, is something that pragmatists have argued since James and Dewey, while the fact/value dichotomy which denies this messiness contains to be presupposed by leading analytic philosophers (e.g., Hare 1993, von Wright 2000).

The "messiness" pragmatists talk about helps us to distinguish pragmatist forms of moral realism from other perhaps seemingly pragmatic but not really pragmatist positions. For instance, Tapio Puolimatka (1989) also grounds moral realism in our ordinary practical experience (instead of any fully conclusive theoretical proof), but his position is not a pragmatist one, as it remains a species of metaphysical realism about morality and about the world in general. Puolimatka tries to argue that moral facts are parts of the independent structure of reality. Instead, Putnam recommends the idea of defending moral realism or the objectivity of moral value judgments as a part of "commonsense realism," analogously to the objectivity of mathematical judgments (Putnam 2001, pp. 143, 185–6). According to such a commonsense view, there is no need to postulate "moral facts" in any metaphysical-realist sense in order to account for the objectivity of morality (or of mathematics) (see ibid., pp. 182–3). What is essential, in Putnam's view, is understanding "the life we lead with our concepts in each of these distinct areas" (ibid., p. 186). Putnam, thus, talks about "objectivity without objects" (applying this, e.g., to values, mathematics, and other areas of discourse and practice): there is no need to postulate abstract entities as "really existing" in such areas of reflection (see Putnam 2002a, p. 33). This, as is well known at least among philosophers of mathematics, has been his line of thought in that area for a

long time; he has argued since the 1960s that mathematical truth requires no ontological postulation of abstract entities in the manner of Quine.

In *Ethics Without Ontology*, Putnam goes on to defend "ethics without ontology," going as far as to write an "obituary" for ontology (Putnam 2004; see especially Part I, lecture four). His aim is to avoid both inflationary and deflationary (eliminativist, reductionist) forms of ontology (or metaphysics), and to replace such confusions by a "pragmatic pluralism," noting (again) that our everyday language consists of different discourses or "language games" and that it is therefore an illusion to think that there is a privileged language-game sufficient for describing reality as a totality (ibid., pp. 21–22). Mathematics, of course, is one such language-game, or a philosophical problem area, that we may see as parallel to morality. Another, as Barry Stroud (2000) points out, is our discourse on color (and on the so-called secondary qualities in general).[12] One of the basic points defended in Putnam's recent works is that we should, at least in the ethical case, reject the "metaphysical quest" (as Stroud calls it), because ethics, and hence "the reality of values," is *prior* to any metaphysical inquiry into the relation between our conceptions and the independently existing world. An ethical orientation is, I shall argue in subsequent chapters, *presupposed* by anyone's genuinely engaging in such an inquiry. This is what it means to begin from our practices rather than from any supposedly prior metaphysical project. Here, I think, we can also locate Puolimatka's (1989) metaphysical error. On the other hand, I shall not follow Putnam to a wholesale rejection of ontology. A pragmatic middle ground is needed here, as it so often is.

Putnam's book *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy* (2002a) is his most detailed treatment of the issue of moral realism, and I shall add a few thoughts invoked by it in order to paint a more nuanced picture of pragmatic moral realism. Indeed, that book is (as I see it, at least) not as strongly committed to the anti-ontological perspective as *Ethics Without Ontology*; at least this is not its main theme. The campaign against the fact/value dichotomy (or dualism) that Putnam launches in the *Collapse* is largely familiar from his earlier writings. The main novelty (which, however, is not particularly relevant to my present discussion) is his engagement with economics, especially with Amartya Sen's views, which he finds congenial to his purposes of attacking the fact/value dualism. Putnam also deals with the Humean and positivist background of the dualism (especially Putnam 2002a, chap. 1). Sen's "capabilities approach," he argues, beautifully demonstrates the fact/value entanglement (ibid., chap. 3).

As Putnam perceptively reminds us, a Deweyan or in general pragmatist attack on a dualism (such as the fact/value dualism) is *not* an attack on a corresponding distinction; the distinction between facts and values may be useful in various contexts, but an essential dichotomy or dualism is pernicious

(see ibid., pp. 9–10). Hence, we must note the important distinction between a philosophical dualism and a philosophical distinction (ibid., p. 10). Moreover, Putnam seems to think that while "valuings" (a Deweyan term) are not simply to be contrasted with (factual) descriptions, these are not the same either, because there are (ethical) valuings that are descriptions and valuings that are not (Putnam 2004, p. 74), and even the latter are not beyond the notions of truth and falsity, or good and bad argument (ibid., p. 76–77). As he reflects:

> If we *disinflate* the fact/value dichotomy, what we get is this: there is a distinction to be drawn (one that is useful in some contexts) between ethical judgments and other sorts of judgments. This is undoubtedly the case, just as it is undoubtedly the case that there is a distinction to be drawn (and one that is useful in some contexts) between *chemical* judgments and judgments that do not belong to the field of chemistry. *But nothing metaphysical follows from the existence of a fact/value distinction in this (modest) sense.* (Putnam 2002a, p. 19; emphasis in the original)

We might, of course, ask whether the distinction between a dualism and a (mere) distinction is itself a dualism (or a dichotomy) or a distinction. As a dualism-debunking pragmatist, Putnam should perhaps opt for the latter alternative. As this meta-level issue is not central to our concerns, I simply leave it open. Another worry that a critic might raise is that if some valuings are not descriptions but can nonetheless be called true or false, then we must be able to apply the notion of truth to something that is not a (mere) statement of facts. But here Putnam's pragmatism comes to the rescue. On a pragmatist conception of truth (as distinguished from a standard correspondence conception), it is possible to say that an evaluative statement whose aim is not just to "copy" the facts can be (or fail to be) satisfactory, rewarding, etc., and (hence) pragmatically true; still, such pragmatic truth need not be subjective or idiosyncratic, as it can be based on our social interests and criteria of satisfaction.[13]

In short, we should not expect the truth of ethical evaluations to be grounded in the purely factual (correspondence) truth of the factual elements of such evaluative statements. There is, for Putnam and other pragmatists, no such purely factual truth anywhere in human affairs. The pragmatist conception of truth – irrespective of how, in the end, it should be technically formulated – is a more proper perspective on the "truth-aptness" of our irreducibly normative ordinary language, in which ethical statements are phrased. It is hopeless to try to find a more fundamental language from which ethical elements would have been eliminated. In *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, Putnam repeats his earlier statement about "the

impossibility of saying what the 'descriptive meaning' of, say, 'cruel' is without using the word 'cruel' or a synonym" (ibid., p. 38), with references to McDowell and Murdoch. As in his earlier writings (see Putnam 1990, 1992), he also criticizes Bernard Williams's notion of "absoluteness," arguing that the dream of an absolute (scientific) conception of the world fails to make sense (Putnam 2002a, pp. 40–42).[14] Putnam ends up with the ungrounded, non-foundationalist (and therefore fundamental) status of the ethical:

> The language of *coming to see* what [the ethical] standpoint requires of one is internal to that standpoint and not a piece of transcendental machinery that is required to provide a foundation for it. ... Ethical talk needs no metaphysical story to support it (or, in a postmodernist version of the metaphysical temptation, to "deconstruct" it); it only needs what ethical talk – both in the narrower senses of "ethical," and in the wide sense of talk about the good life – has always needed: good will, intelligence, and respect for what can be seen as grounds and difficulties from within the ethical standpoint itself. (ibid., pp. 94–95)

This is pretty close to the view I argue for in this book, although I try to formulate my position somewhat differently in the subsequent chapters, also specifying in what sense the view is "realist."

Again, Putnam often appeals to the classical pragmatists (especially Dewey), for example, when he reminds us that experience isn't value-neutral but "comes to us screaming with values" (ibid., p. 103); value is something that "has to do with all of experience" (ibid., p. 135). He approves of Dewey's notion of philosophy as criticism and the importance of the criticism of valuation, yielding a vital distinction between the valued and the valuable (ibid., p. 103). On a Deweyan basis, it is possible to hold that the (pragmatic, changeable) principles that govern inquiry in general also hold for value inquiry (ibid., p. 104). Putnam also praises Dewey for holding, like Aristotle, that from a non- or pre-ethical standpoint the reasons for being ethical are "not apparent," i.e., that "one must be *educated* into the ethical life" through a "transformation of one's interests"; there is, thus, no way of justifying ethical life from an outside perspective or on the basis of non-ethical reasons (see Putnam 2004, pp. 3, 29, 102). What the Deweyan approach usefully reminds us of is that it by no means follows from this that reason and argument – epistemic concerns – would have nothing to do with ethics. People who are seriously committed to ethical life tend to disagree about how to live, and therefore reason, argumentation, and justification do have a significant role to play within the ethical standpoint itself, although argumentation can rarely settle ethical questions. The ethical and the epistemic are entangled, mixed up, inseparable.

Epistemic values, in brief, are also values; this is a familiar theme from the above-mentioned "companions in the guilt" argument (Putnam 2002a, pp. 30–31; see further ibid., chap. 8). Yet, there are differences between epistemic and ethical values (ibid., p. 31); and this is not to be denied in the present inquiry, either.[15] But the difference, Putnam points out, is *not* that epistemic values are related to the project of objective description and ethical ones are not. Both types of value open up, for us, a distinctively human world. Even epistemic values admit no "external" justification: "...if these epistemic values [simplicity, coherence, predictive success, etc.] do enable us to correctly describe the world (or to describe it *more* correctly than any alternative set of epistemic values would lead us to do), that is something we see *through the lenses of those very values*." (ibid., pp. 32–33) The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to ethical values. Thus, Putnam approves of Deweyan fallibilism, experimentalism and the democratization of (moral) inquiry (ibid., p. 110). Sure, there is, according to the Deweyan-Putnamean pragmatist, no final set of moral truths (ibid., p. 109), but moral value judgments are not true or "matters of objective fact" in a recognition-transcendent sense: "If something is a good solution to a problematical human situation, then part of the very notion of its being a good solution is that human beings can recognize that it is." (ibid., pp. 108–9.) Still, such judgments do possess a kind of human-world objectivity, objectivity "humanly speaking," *for us*. In Dilman's (2002) terms, these judgments refer to real elements of our "human world," the morally relevant reality we encounter in our actions and language-use.

Most importantly, the ethical is argued to be in no need of external justification: no science can teach us to make the kind of distinctions requiring "moral perception" (which is to be distinguished from any mysterious intuition); making such distinctions (such as between someone's "suffering unnecessarily" and her or his "learning to take it") requires "a skill that, in Iris Murdoch's words, is 'endlessly perfectible,' and that as she also says, is interwoven with our (also endlessly perfectible) mastery of moral vocabulary itself" (Putnam 2002a, p. 128). Evaluative properties, epistemic or ethical, can be perceived only when one has learned to understand and to "imaginatively identify with" the relevant evaluative outlook (Putnam 2004, p. 69). Putnam, together with Murdoch, is thus strictly opposed to the picture in which ethics is treated as something to be justified "from *outside*," be that picture evolutionary, utilitarian, or contractarian (Putnam 2002a, p. 131). All these pictures try to defend ethics in non-ethical terms, relying on an underlying naturalism (a term which Putnam here uses synonymously with "materialism" but which, I think, should not be used in that way; see ibid., pp. 130–1).[16]

These critical points in Putnam's ethical writings, the most recent ones included, remain somewhat sketchy, however. In this volume, I hope to be able to show in some more (pragmatic) detail (albeit still sketchily) what the

impossibility of justifying the ethical "from outside" means, or *should* mean in our lives and thinking.

2. The pointlessness of virtue

Putnam's references to Murdoch, in *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy* and especially in earlier writings, are important for Putnam, as he uses Murdoch's views to support his pragmatist rejection of the fact/value gap, to back up his claim that our ordinary moral language and our practice-laden life-world (which we structure through our use of language) do not obey the fact/value distinction. We cannot analyze what are sometimes called "thick" ethical concepts (like 'inconsiderate' or 'cruel', as distinguished from "thin" ones, such as 'good' and 'bad')[17] in terms of purely factual, non-ethical concepts and mere "thin" ethical concepts; the meaning of the notion of cruelty, for instance, as seen from the point of view of our actual practice of using words like 'cruel', cannot be neatly divided into a "descriptive meaning component" and a "prescriptive meaning component."[18] This is a pragmatic and also, arguably, a Wittgensteinian view: we must, as Wittgenstein (1953) advised us to do, look and see what our life and actions with the language we naturally use are like. We should not dictate ethical or metaethical theories from an external point of view supposedly lying outside our moral life and language-use themselves. Moral norms and ethical considerations are not applied to morally neutral situations; instead, "our understanding of the situations to which we respond is itself morally conditioned."[19] This is something that a Putnamean pragmatist can easily subscribe to. One consequence of Putnam's position seems to be that the widely held doctrine known as the supervenience of ethical concepts on non-ethical or factual ones cannot be accepted (not, at least, in the form in which it is usually put forward). The problem is not that this view is false but that it is not clear what the idea of supervenience could even mean here, if no principled distinction between ethical and factual concepts or realms of discourse can be made in the first place.[20]

Putnam, I think, touches something significant in his appeal to Murdoch. It is easy to observe that Murdoch's conception of moral vision, i.e., of the particularities of morally relevant situations and our need to really look and see carefully what our situation is like (see Murdoch 1997, p. 375),[21] closely resembles Putnam's pragmatic rejection of the fact/value dichotomy. It is not clear, these two moral philosophers are telling us, that we even *could* in moral conflicts agree about what the plain facts of the situation are. It is, on the contrary, only seldom that such agreement takes place. In genuine moral conflicts, both facts and values are in question, inextricably entangled. And this is something that we can learn, according to Putnam, not only from

pragmatists like James and Dewey but also from Murdoch's "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts."

The denial of the fact/value dualism leads us to what may be called the "ubiquity of morals" (see Mulhall 2000, pp. 257f), a doctrine of enormous importance for Murdoch in particular (and for many Wittgensteinians, to be returned to in chapter three). Just like facts, values can be found *everywhere* in our human world; they permeate our existence – including, as Putnam repeatedly reminds us, our fact- or truth-seeking (scientific) activities themselves. If this idea is taken seriously, we will have to give up the picture of ethics as a special discipline or language-game, having a special subject-matter (ibid., pp. 264–5; see also Diamond 1992, 1996). Ethical issues arise everywhere and anywhere, also in situations (both real-life and imagined, or literary ones) in which no specifically moral words are used. Hence, it is, with moral realists like Sabina Lovibond (1983) and Cheryl Misak (2000), misguided to argue for realism simply by examining the applicability of the truth-predicate in moral discourse, if that discourse is understood as something specific and clearly distinct from factual discourse(s). (I shall return to a comparison with these quite different moral realists in due course.) It should be noted already here, however, as Mulhall (2000, p. 264) does with reference to Cora Diamond's Wittgensteinian views, that if moral values are "ubiquitously present to consciousness," they *are* (on a meta-level, so to say) "distinct from factual matters," since no factual matter is ubiquitously present in such a way. Morality is special precisely because it is *not* some special part of our world or thought clearly distinguishable from all others. This qualification regarding the ubiquity of morality and moral practices should be kept in mind throughout the following discussions. Still, the phrase, "the ubiquity of the ethical," does, I think, describe the pragmatic moral realist's position with considerable accuracy.

The interpenetration of fact and value should not lead us to conclude that the value "aspects" of a given situation are as directly perceivable as its factual aspects (though they may be). For example, in the New Testament parable of the good Samaritan, to which Wittgensteinian philosophers like Winch (1987) and Phillips (1992) have occasionally drawn our attention, the characters in a sense perceive the "same" reality, the same factual situation (as someone committed to the fact/value dichotomy might put it), but they do not perceive its moral dimensions in a similar manner, and as a result they in a way perceive something entirely different, not the same reality or situation, after all. For the good Samaritan, the perception of the facts of the situation contains the moral requirement that the wounded man must be helped. It is quite impossible to determine on a non-ethical level what this kind of perceiving of "moral facts" would be like, in contrast to perceiving ordinary non-moral facts; morality, if Murdoch and others get it right, is present in our conceptualizing the very facts

present to us in any given situation. One of the practical implications of this view for the ethics of science is that scientists themselves do have a responsibility of perceiving the moral dimensions of the pieces of reality (such as atomic phenomena or the structure of the human genome) they study. It is utterly naive to think that science simply investigates the facts and that an entirely different discipline, politics, is about the evaluative application of value-neutral factual knowledge to practical situations.

Even the insistence on the ubiquity of the ethical does not exhaust the importance of Murdoch's position for the present investigation. Another point worth emphasizing is her conviction that *only* the attempt to be virtuous, to pursue goodness, is, in the end, valuable in human life – even though, or perhaps because, it is "pointless," referring to nothing more valuable for which it could be a means (see Murdoch 1997, pp. 371–2). The "genuine mysteriousness" of the idea of goodness is essentially related to this "pointlessness of virtue" (ibid., p. 381). Like art or like life itself, virtue is in a way self-contained and does not have any external "point." Murdoch (ibid., p. 371) says: "The pointlessness of art is not the pointlessness of a game; it is the pointlessness of human life itself." Our "love of the Good" should be "austere and unconsoled" (ibid., p. 376). Thus, there can be no justification for a person's love of the Good, for the attempt to live a life of virtue, or for morality in general, other than goodness or virtuousness itself. Morality does not have any external goal or legitimation. Yet, this, instead of sacrificing the moral seriousness emphasized by the moral realist, is an affirmation of such seriousness. Morality is something serious – indeed, the most serious and most important thing in our life, "overriding," as one often says – precisely because it does not have any external, non-ethical goal or point. It is a pervasive feature of our existence, to be encountered virtually everywhere in human affairs. If Murdoch and Putnam are correct, this is something that we should be able to perceive by turning our attention to the actual use of moral language we engage in our ordinary lives – or, more strongly, to our use of *any* language we do use, since there is no specific moral or evaluative vocabulary to be cut off from the merely factual ones. Similarly, Charles Taylor argues that the "phenomenology" of our ethical lives includes a dimension of "the higher": "Ethics involves a range of 'values' that are essentially understood to be on a different level, to be in some way special, higher, or incommensurable with our other goals and desires" – higher, that is, "in the sense of more worthy" (Taylor 2003, pp. 308–9). Yet, this "higher" aspect of our existence is present wherever and whenever we engage in our human practices. No human activity is mundane enough to remain outside the ethical.

The talk about virtues by Murdoch may lead our thoughts all the way back to Aristotle. There is actually a profound Aristotelean element in Putnam's (as well as in Taylor's) ethical thought. Putnam seems to be telling

us that there is a sense in which we can evaluate the goodness of a human life, considered as a totality, even though the good life has many elements rather than a single essence which would constitute a universal way of life acceptable to all. As his discussion of the possibility of returning to Aristotle "after Wittgenstein" (see Putnam 1994) shows, he has been influenced by neo-Aristotelean ethical thinkers, such as Martha Nussbaum. His position may here also be compared to John McDowell's (1998), and we shall briefly take up this comparison, with the help of a recent set of commentary papers on McDowell.

3. *Bildung* and normativity: McDowell's moral realism

McDowell is, indeed, another highly central point of reference (equalling Murdoch) for the latest Putnam, whose works (including 1994, 1999, 2002a) are filled with discussions of the kind of "direct realism" and the conception of irreducible normativity we find in McDowell's much-debated *Mind and World* (1994). In that book, McDowell develops his views partly in relation to the concept of *Bildung*, drawn from the German philosophical tradition including Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics. The way he employs this concept brings him close to a pragmatic form of moral realism (although that is not the way he puts the matter). While *Mind and World* contains little explicit treatment of moral realism, some of McDowell's earlier essays (collected in McDowell 1998; see also McDowell 1995) are modern classics of the topic. Thus, many of his commentators have also taken up the issues of normativity and morality when assessing his contributions to epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

Bildung is, as every reader of *Mind and World* knows, a key notion in McDowell's thought (see McDowell 1996, especially pp. 87, 123f), central in his formulation of a "naturalism of second nature" (a non-reductive form of naturalism resisting scientistic reductions). Through this notion, the issue of moral education also becomes urgent in the defense of a McDowellian version of moral realism, in terms of the natural development of the human capacity to perceive ethically loaded "facts."[22] In a collection of critical essays on McDowell's philosophy edited by Nicholas H. Smith (2002), the topic of moral realism has been explicitly taken up by Axel Honneth (2002) and by McDowell (2002, pp. 300–303) in his response to Honneth. These are the only explicit discussions of moral realism in the book, which is, like *Mind and World* itself, mainly concerned with epistemology and the philosophy of mind, but the question of normativity is present in virtually all papers. The general view of normativity as a humanly natural feature of our practices of coping with – and conceptualizing – reality is at least potentially relevant to the discourse on moral realism, too. After all, McDowell does say, coming close to what is standardly meant by moral realism, that the ethical is "a domain of rational requirements, which are there in any case, whether or not we are

responsive to them" (1996, p. 82), and that we are "alerted to" them by acquiring appropriate conceptual capacities, through an appropriate upbringing.[23] The "space of reasons" which McDowell hopes to be able to accommodate within his flexible naturalism of second nature contains ethical reasons in addition to epistemic ones. Moreover, the space of reasons is autonomous; like Putnam, McDowell argues that nothing non-normative (particularly, non-ethical) can ground or justify the normative (particularly, ethical) reasons that operate in that space (see de Gaynesford 2004, p. 63). The rationality of such reasons "is not intelligible from a standpoint external to such [ethical] ways of living" (ibid., p. 150). If we are capable of a McDowellian "rethinking" of the concept of nature, we will succeed in "recaptur[ing] the Aristotelian idea that a normal mature human being is a rational animal, but without losing the Kantian idea that rationality operates freely in its own sphere," thus viewing ourselves as "animals whose natural being is permeated with rationality, even though rationality is appropriately conceived in Kantian terms" (ibid., p. 85), that is, in a way which preserves the rational requirements of morality. Moral properties (as well as aesthetic ones) are, in McDowell's view, real and objective (and statements about them can hence be true or false), but their existence requires beings with a characteristic kind of sensitivity (that is, humans); this kind of sensitivity or sensibility, again, depends on a proper education, on the habitualization of tendencies of reacting in certain ways to certain objects or actions, and thus on the exercise of second nature (de Gaynesford 2004, pp. 39, 148–150, 170).

By becoming fully human, members of a human form of life, we learn to perceive ethical facts, or the – fully real – ethical properties of the objects and events surrounding us. The pragmatist may here simply speak about being instantiated into certain human practices and their relevant normative commitments. Some pragmatists, including Putnam, may oppose McDowell's way of treating values as "secondary qualities," on the grounds that the dichotomy between primary and secondary qualities is as ill-conceived as the one between facts and values (see especially Putnam 1987, chaps. 1–2), but a McDowellian conception of the reality of values as dependent on human habitual practices – acquired through *Bildung*, requiring the right kind of sensibility – may nonetheless be accepted even by those who dispense with the concept of a secondary quality. In particular, it is crucial to note, with McDowell, that there is nothing "queer" about our exercising our second nature; the human sensibilities upon which moral (and other) values depend are, for us, as natural parts of reality as anything can be (see de Gaynesford 2004, pp. 174–176).

In a manner resembling McDowell's, Taylor (2003, p. 316) analyzes the tension he observes between "the phenomenology of the incommensurably higher" which reveals our ethical lifeworld (see the previous section), on the one hand, and the naturalist, "post-Galilean" ontology which seems to have no

room for anything "higher" in this sense (see also ibid., p. 309). McDowell's naturalism of second nature is meant to reconcile this tension, through a devastating critique of reductive, or "bald," scientistic naturalism. If we follow this line of thought – without going into any details regarding how McDowellian "rethinking" is supposed to be carried out – we may be led to conclude that our natural being, our "human nature," is "permeated with" ethical considerations as well. We cannot, as the natural creatures we are, get rid of morality, because it is everywhere in our lives, as claimed above.

The intimate connection between epistemic and ethical normativity in McDowell's thought has not gone unnoticed. In his contribution to Smith's volume, Putnam (2002d, pp. 187–8) notes that McDowell's discussions of the need to preserve normativity in the epistemic and the ethical realms are parallel and hopes that McDowell would devote an entire volume to the problem of realism in ethics. Charles Larmore argues in related manner that McDowell should offer a more elaborate ontological account of the nature of reasons. This is something that McDowell resists, though, resisting constructive philosophical theorization in general (see McDowell 2002, pp. 294–6).[24] J. M. Bernstein, in turn, argues that McDowell's view, while correctly emphasizing the way in which engagement in the normative space of reasons is natural for us as humans, should be supplemented by an (ethical) attention drawn to animal life:

> The normativity of conceptuality is not epistemologically free-standing; the idea of a space of reasons that is self-moving or rooted in the spontaneity of the intellect will not do the job. On the contrary. There is normativity in the conceptual sphere only because the conceptual is already practical and ethical. In order to uncover the normative requirement that concepts be dependent on experience we need to re-inscribe the equivalence between the appearing of sensuous particulars and circumambient nature. The wrong of rationalization is cognitively or rationally wrong because it is an ethical wrong; it is the destruction of the living. (J. M. Bernstein 2002, pp. 236–7)[25]

This rearticulation of a McDowellian position may even bring him close to pragmatism. Our conceptual engagement with the world – already operative in perception, as McDowell argues at length in the first half of *Mind and World* – is, we may claim, ethically colored. We simply cannot get rid of the ethical, even when cognizing "mere" worldly facts.

Axel Honneth notes here, among other things, the *circular* structure of moral knowledge: "the ethical significance of a situation can only be grasped if we already have some comprehension of the weight of ethical demands" (Honneth 2002, p. 249). "As moral subjects we always already act against a

horizon of moral knowledge," which makes the (Gadamerian) notion of tradition vital (ibid., p. 251). Yet, our "first" and "second" nature are continuous; there is no ontological gap between them (see also ibid., p. 252); which, by the way, is hardly any big news after, say, Deweyan pragmatism, a position that, one might wish, McDowell could discuss more thoroughly than he has done up to now.[26] For example, virtues refer to "a holistically integrated web of behavior whose moral quality is recognized only from within the perspective of a 'tradition', which itself must be conceived as the result of an intellectual transformation from the 'first' to the 'second' nature of human beings" (ibid., p. 255). Thus, in a hermeneutic sense, our pre-understanding makes the facts we encounter "always already" morally significant.

Moral knowledge, furthermore, can and should (as in Murdoch's moral philosophy already discussed) be modelled as the perceiving of ethically loaded states of affairs, in which perception itself is socially modelled (ibid., p. 254). According to such a model, there is no place for any standard fact/value gap; it is just normativity all the way down – from the space of reasons through which our engagement with any facts of the world takes place down to the facts themselves which we organize through our conceptual activities. Our practice of conceptual-cum-ethical engagement is always already there, functioning as a background which enables the process of *Bildung* and as a goal of that process, a goal perhaps never fully reached but always to be pursued, hopefully reached better than previously. Moreover, in a Wittgensteinian manner, as Honneth puts it, "we are only able to recognize moral rules by familiarizing ourselves with a corresponding practice" (ibid., p. 255). There is, for us, nothing prior to this practice (or group of practices). The rational requirements of morality are not written in a Platonic heaven of eternal Forms; they are elements of our practice or form of life, habits of action rooted in the ways we live.

Through these reflections on moral knowledge, tradition, and other matters, Honneth arrives at a discussion of McDowell's notion of moral education (*moralische Bildung*) and the settling of moral disagreements (ibid., pp. 258–63).[27] In cases of discrepancy, he suggests, "we reach agreement only to the extent to which we succeed in advancing that level of our ethical tradition at which evaluative agreements still exist" (ibid., p. 259). What we need, then, is a shared moral life praxis (ibid., p. 260). But here the perceptual model, by itself, is insufficient:

> The opponents in a moral disagreement will ... realize straightaway that at the center of their debate stands the question of which starting point is "normal" or appropriate because it allows for the correct perception of the disputed matter. To that extent the moral facts, disagreement about which sparks the controversy, have already lost their justifying power by the

> first stage of the dispute. The participants must abstract from that which they see "there" qualitatively before themselves: they must describe the situation with different evaluative concepts and collectively adopt a reflexive standpoint from which they are reciprocally able to judge the appropriateness of their abandoned points of view. (ibid., p. 260)

Moral perception is disanalogous to, say, color perception, because there is no norm-free way to determine the "normal" conditions in which perceiving takes place; normative criteria are always at work (ibid.) – though one might claim that color perception is not *essentially* different, because it also requires, implicitly at least, normativity. Our second nature (or *Bildung*) can, particularly in the realm of ethical normativity, be seen as a "learning process," a Hegelian "successive realization of practical reason" (ibid., p. 263).

McDowell's responses to his critics, including Honneth, are helpful in many ways. He notes, in his response to Robert Pippin, that (*contra* Mackie's error theory) "there is nothing 'queer' ... about the idea of a capacity to know what there is reason for one to do, if the capacity is understood as the result of being initiated into an ethical community. Talk of proper upbringing makes sense only within a formed ethical outlook, which would be needed to give determinate content to that use of 'proper'." (McDowell 2002, p. 275) This is very close to what Putnam has argued (as should be clear by now). McDowell also emphasizes that norms do not just spring into existence; there must be a "moment of receptivity," "responsiveness to experientially available facts" in our finding ourselves subject to norms (ibid., p. 276). This formulation, reminding us of the need for something like the "perceptual model" (which may not be sufficient, as Honneth argues), might be compared to, e.g., Jonathan Glover's (1999) impressive way of emphasizing the priority of our immediate responsiveness to human suffering – as something more fundamental than any ethical principle or rule, and as a pragmatic test on the grounds of which any ethical principles or rules ought to be evaluated. Thus, while it may be a bit unclear what exactly is "realistic" about this position, the idea that morality, while rooted in our practices and traditions and thus, in a sense, "in us," requires a *response* from our part to something that lies outside us (at least in typical cases of moral motivation and deliberation) justifies, I think, my use of the label "moral realism."

Still, the resulting realism, both in Putnam and in McDowell, is far from a metaphysical commitment to transcendent (Platonic) values. It might, as suggested in the "Introduction," be usefully compared to what Kant called empirical realism (though not in relation to morality). I have, however, chosen the concept of pragmatic realism as the description of my favorite view. McDowell might, I submit, have done the same. In his response to Honneth, he points out that his defense of moral realism has always been modest, with the

aim merely "to counter bad reasons for supposing that the idea of attaining truth – getting things right – is unavailable in the context of ethical thinking. That constitutes a limited and piecemeal defense of the thesis that truth is indeed achievable in ethics." (McDowell 2002, p. 300) As related to this essentially pragmatic project, the view (whether it is intended as a reading of Aristotle or as an independent, systematic thesis) that ethical truth should be "founded in prior extra-ethical truth" ought to be resisted (ibid., p. 301; see also McDowell 1995).[28] Moreover, McDowell (2002, p. 302) suggests, people who care about morality "do not have a problem distinguishing 'moral' facts from other states of affairs in the world." He concludes that the tension between Gadamerian and Hegelian notions of tradition (and *Bildung*) which Honneth raises need not be a real tension at all (ibid., p. 303).

These and several other points in McDowell's and Honneth's exchange are related to my aims but do not require any further attention in this study. In any case, it seems clear that we can view McDowell as an ally in our attempt to save the distinctive – ubiquitous – nature of ethics in comparison to other (more restricted, less ubiquitous) human rational practices. The general issue of normativity is a central framework for the problem of ethical normativity. In any case, McDowell is perhaps better in illuminating this general framework – in "rethinking" what naturalism might or should mean for us – rather than the peculiarities of ethical thought. I also believe that an explicitly pragmatist and/or Wittgensteinian articulation of pragmatic moral realism yields a stronger position than the one that McDowell's occasionally rather cryptic reflections on moral perception, "answerability," etc., can lead us to.

4. Murdoch's "pragmatism" revisited

At this point, we may return for a moment to Murdoch's views which, as we saw, play a highly significant role in Putnam's elaboration on pragmatic moral realism. True, Murdoch's position may appear to be utterly unpragmatic because of her emphasis on the pursuit of an indefinable Good. But it is precisely this emphasis that in fact turns it into a most pragmatic position. Murdoch is, as James and Dewey were, a *meliorist*, encouraging us to try to make our world and lives better even though absolute goodness itself can never be reached: "Ethics should not be merely an analysis of ordinary mediocre conduct, it should be a hypothesis about good conduct and about how this can be achieved. How can we make ourselves better? is a question moral philosophers should attempt to answer." (Murdoch 1997, p. 364) As a good pragmatist, Murdoch advises us to turn our gaze from philosophical abstractions – or, in other words, from analytic metaethics – to the endless varieties of moral (forms of) life we engage in. It is here that her (and, insofar as he follows her, Putnam's) Wittgensteinianism also becomes visible:

> Philosophers have been misled, not only by a rationalistic desire for unity, but also by certain simplified and generalised moral attitudes current in our society, into seeking a single philosophical definition of morality. If, however, we go back again to the data we see that there are fundamentally different moral pictures which different individuals use or which the same individual may use at different times. Why should philosophy be less various, where the differences in what it attempts to analyse are so important? Wittgenstein says that 'What has to be accepted, the given, is – so one could say – *forms of life*.' For purposes of analysis moral philosophy should remain at the level of the differences, taking the moral forms of life as given, and not try to *get behind them* to a single form. (ibid., p. 97)

In the same essay, Murdoch argues – employing the "perceptual model" that has later become familiar from McDowell's writings (see the previous section) – that moral differences often look more like "differences of vision," where people "see different worlds," than like "differences of choice," where facts are agreed upon (ibid., p. 82).[29] Now, does this lead to a *relativistic* picture of the incomparability of the conceptions or visions of the good operative in different forms of life? Does it make morality a mere matter of subjective, unconstrained choice? Hardly so, because the normative structuredness of the forms of life within which our pursuit of virtue is possible should be taken seriously:

> The ordinary person does not, unless corrupted by philosophy, believe that he creates values by his choices. He thinks that some things really are better than others and that he is capable of getting it wrong. We are not usually in doubt about the direction in which Good lies. Equally we recognise the real existence of evil: cynicism, cruelty, indifference to suffering. (ibid., p. 380)

This is, again, a useful reminder that realism must not be completely given up. A similar picture seems to be endorsed by Putnam and by McDowell, who, as we have seen, views the ethical as a realm of "rational requirements." He appears to think that we do know, although we cannot give any philosophical justification for how we know, that things like cruelty or indifference to suffering *are* wrong. That we know that such things are wrong is just a feature of our moral practices that cannot be given any more fundamental justification than the fact that we actually engage in those practices, that our very engagement lies at the center of our lives. Putnam (1990, pp. 176–7) admits that he will simply have to say, "I know this, but I don't know how I know it," when confronted by the question of whether he knows that human

dignity and freedom of speech are better than their alternatives. A Wittgensteinian thinker might, however, here distinguish between knowledge and certainty (cf. Wittgenstein 1969), arguing that the assumption that human dignity and freedom of speech are better than their alternatives is a basic conviction or certainty involved in our practices of living together, not a substantial ethical principle to be "known" or not known. Putnam might have said, instead of claiming to possess knowledge about these matters, that he *trusts* human dignity and freedom of speech (see chapter six).

Given his way of expressing himself, Putnam might, perhaps legitimately, be accused of maintaining something like ethical intuitionism. Indeed, Simon Blackburn (1993, pp. 158f) dismisses Putnam's views, along with David Wiggins's, Thomas Nagel's, and McDowell's, as belonging to the "perceptual" direction of moral thought. But, quite independently of the plausibility of the perceptual model of ethical knowledge, the main point appears to be that there is no further, more absolute argument in favor of certain basic ethical convictions than our ordinary life itself (at least if we give up the problematic talk about our being able to "know" these things in some unknown manner). Similarly, there is no further, more absolute justification for the idea that ethical convictions can be normatively evaluated: "The fundamental reason that I myself stick to the idea that there are right and wrong moral judgments and better and worse moral outlooks ... is simply that that is the way that we – and I include myself in this 'we' – talk and think, and also the way that we are going to go on talking and thinking" (Putnam 1992, p. 135). Perhaps a sophisticated expressivist like Blackburn is able to maintain a (partly) similar distinction between better and worse moral judgments or outlooks, but even so Blackburn's (2005) basic dualism between representations and evaluations (attitudes) is, from a Putnamean perspective, only a developed version of the fact/value dualism. In his recent criticism of Putnam, Blackburn (ibid.) characteristically ignores Putnam's crucial indebtedness to pragmatism and to the Wittgensteinian tradition, while constructing a charge of relativism which must indeed be taken seriously by anyone working within a pragmatist or a Wittgensteinian framework of "thick" moral concepts. The fact that the thickness of moral concepts *may* discourage critique, as Blackburn claims (ibid., p. 3), is unavoidable, but we are hardly doomed into an uncritical acceptance of the moral life we actually lead. Rather, the pragmatist may urge, joining Putnam and others, that it is a part of how we "talk and think" to question and criticize our inherited (thick) moral commitments.

We have seen that Murdoch's moral philosophy, as well as Putnam's reading of it, highlights the project of combining pragmatism (more specifically, pragmatic moral realism and the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy) with a Wittgensteinian focus on "ordinary language," on the actual *use* of moral concepts within human life as we know it and on the ubiquity of moral

thought and evaluation even where no specifically moral concepts, or "thin" ethical concepts, are used. Murdoch, in fact, can be interpreted as an interesting intermediary figure between the two traditions I discuss in this work (particularly in the present chapter and in the next one). For someone like Putnam, she seems to be a crucial link between pragmatist and Wittgensteinian ideas pointing to the same direction – to the preservation of our moral seriousness within the practices or forms of life on the basis of which we are contingently involved in actual moral evaluation in our specific socio-historical contexts.

5. Ethical inquiry?

We should note that the kind of pragmatism (or pragmatic realism) sketched here on the basis of Murdoch's, McDowell's, and Putnam's writings is quite different from, say, Cheryl Misak's (2000, 2004a, 2004b) conception of pragmatic moral realism. In Misak's work, a Peircean notion of truth as the final opinion upon which inquiry could not improve is employed in order to make sense of the idea that moral discourse, not unlike its scientific cousin, aims at truth or is "truth-apt," capable of accommodating a robust truth predicate (though not the strongly non-epistemic notion of truth assumed by correspondence theorists and other non-pragmatists).[30] We may say, with Misak and other Peircean moral realists (such as Bakhurst 1999), that moral judgments can at least in some cases be true or false independently of individual preferences and opinions. To that extent, we should definitely be moral realists, also if we follow thinkers like Murdoch and Putnam. The alternative would, after all, be something like emotivism or expressivism, in which the truth-aptness of moral discourse is simply (unjustifiably) denied, contrary to our established practices of ethical evaluation. Ethics, Misak (2004a, pp. 170–171) argues, is a project in which we "try to get things right" and in which we should be responsive to experience and argument; hence, moral beliefs do fall under the scope of "truth, knowledge, and inquiry." There is a place for debate, criticism, and improvement in ethical inquiry, in a fallibilistic spirit, of course (ibid., pp. 173, 182).

But even if we wish to employ the truth-predicate here, it may be misleading to characterize moral thought as a kind of "inquiry" into the way the world (the moral world) is. Contrary to Misak and Bakhurst (and their pragmatist forefathers, especially Peirce and Dewey, and Putnam 2002a, pp. 103–10), I suggest that we should either remove the word "inquiry," or at least be very careful about its interpretation in ethical contexts. In this sense, the pragmatism we may see as emerging out of Murdoch's and Putnam's (and possibly even McDowell's) above-cited remarks is of a more Jamesian variety. Regarding moral theory as a "code for problem-solving" (Misak 2000, p. 54),

and in this sense as something that resembles scientific inquiry, amounts, from a Jamesian or Wittgensteinian point of view, to a banalization of morality. This is somewhat ironic, because such characterizations of ethics or moral theory are clearly not meant to banalize the ethical. On the contrary, they are intended to "save" ethics from the anti-realistic threats of non-cognitivism, error theory, relativism, etc. In this case, the cure may be worse than the disease.

What I have in mind can be explicated through an analysis of our ordinary notion of inquiry. I believe the pragmatist ought to admit that, while in any normal inquiry the right answers to the questions asked are in some sense supposed to lie "out there," waiting for being discovered by the inquirers (us), this is not the case with moral questions or "moral inquiry" (if Putnam's, Murdoch's or the Wittgensteinians' views are on the right track). There can be no moral knowledge resembling scientific knowledge in the sense of a correct answer to some definite question whose definite answer is supposed to be given in advance, independently of the procedures by means of which we arrive at our answers (it is only that we are not aware of the right answer). This is *not* what morality is like, if we take a look at our ordinary moral practices (see also Korsgaard 1996b, pp. 35–37). Rather, moral inquiry – if we are willing to use this term – is an investigation of one's own life, "work on oneself," and there usually are no pre-given answers to the questions that arise in the course of such an investigation prior to the actions that constitute one's living of that life itself. Moral answers, and presumably even the questions to which they are answers, are, literally, constructed by us through our life (instead of being discovered by inquirers in the way scientific facts are discovered), even though there is a sense in which we can and do end up with wrong ethical answers and wrong ways of living. Otherwise morality as *we* know it would hardly make sense at all. Perhaps we can keep the word "inquiry" to remind us that ethics is not beyond intelligent discussion and – in Deweyan terms – experimental, active thought, conducted in a fallibilist spirit. But, as Putnam correctly believes, it is central to Dewey's ethics that the application of intelligence to moral problems is itself a moral obligation. Hence, there is no question of a reduction of ethical thought to non-ethical, purely epistemic inquiry.[31] Nor is there any hope (nor, indeed, motivation) for reducing ethics to one single over-arching aim or interest; following Dewey, Putnam (2004a, p. 5; see also p. 10) says that ethics "ultimately rests on *every* human interest" – and is thus, in my favorite term, ubiquitous. The human interests of inquiry and problem-solving are only parts of what the ethical amounts to in our lives.

Thus, when Misak (2000, p. 86) tells us that morality "aspires to truth," because when debating over moral choices we try to find "the right answer" and act "as if there really is a truth of the matter at stake, something that we are trying to discover," we may charitably read her statement as referring to the

seriousness that moral disputes have in our lives but nevertheless insist on giving up the words "something" and "discover." There is no "something" there, awaiting discovery, in advance of our engaging in our moral considerations in the first place. There is no definite "right answer" to be discovered (or a definite right answer that we might fail to discover) independently of our working our way to, or toward, that answer in the context in which the worry arises, in the context where we are able to see it as an ethical worry of our own – a context, that is, which already reveals our being committed to moral seriousness.

Acknowledging this feature of our practice of ethical consideration hardly makes us moral anti-realists, even though it does commit us to the view that morality is "in us," our (or my) business. We can still speak of the pursuit of truth in moral affairs – at least if we are willing to connect the notion of truth more closely with individual people's lives and their personal problems (perhaps, again, in a manner reminiscent of James's rather than Peirce's or Dewey's pragmatism),[32] or to follow Murdoch in acknowledging a connection between the pursuits of truth and truthfulness (see Mulhall 2000, p. 258). Misak (2000, p. 98) herself maintains that "[s]ensitivity to context and situations will be a primary feature of moral inquiry" and that the pragmatist should build "the full complexity or the full richness of our moral lives into the position at the outset" (ibid., p. 129). My reservations with the notion of inquiry notwithstanding, there is a great deal to learn from Misak's metaethical pragmatism, although its Peircean orientation is quite different from the one developed here on a Putnamean and Wittgensteinian basis. In particular, Misak perceptively refers to the "tragic choices" one sometimes faces in moral deliberation, situations in which there is no right answer to be found (ibid., pp. 136f). "We do not want to eliminate the morally puzzling," she reminds us, for to do so "would be untrue to the phenomenology or practice of morals" (ibid., p. 143; see also Misak 2004a, pp. 185–9). This is something that even we non-Peircean pragmatists should whole-heartedly agree with.[33] Similarly, to be fair to Dewey's pragmatism and *its* concept of inquiry, one might argue that inquiry is a matter of transformation, change, and growth – of resolving a problematic situation – instead of discovering ready-made answers that somehow already exist prior to the inquiring process (as conceptualized in standard scientific realism, for instance). If so, inquiry might even be seen as a special version of moral deliberation; science would be modeled on the basis of ethics, rather than *vice versa* (as suggested, in conversation, by Vincent Colapietro, Michael Eldridge, and Larry Hickman; see also Welchman 1995; Fesmire 2003).

Even Putnam may not be completely safe from the kind of criticism I have presented against Misak. That is, even Putnam, one might argue, preserves too strong an analogy between ethics and scientific inquiry. (This is

perhaps reflected in his choice of the word "know"; see the discussion in the previous section.) A Wittgensteinian critic, Ilham Dilman, brings these worries out perceptively; indeed, Dilman is one of the few recent commentators of Putnam who have directly taken up his ethical views – and one of the few Wittgensteinian moral philosophers to explicitly address the realism issue.[34] After arguing that Putnam correctly connects Kant and Wittgenstein in attacking transcendental realism, or metaphysical realism, which erroneously pictures the language–reality relation as an external one (Dilman 2002, pp. 152–3, 165; see also the "Introduction" above), Dilman goes on to deplore Putnam's new direction of thought, his adoption of something like "common-sense realism" as a replacement for internal realism (ibid., pp. 165f). Dilman seems to think that Putnam has been too eager to give up his early (or, rather, middle) position of the 1980s because of some realist critics' charges of idealism. According to Dilman (as we already saw in the "Introduction"), no commitment to (linguistic) idealism is necessary, if one defends the internal relation between language and reality in Wittgensteinian terms, thus preserving Wittgenstein's "Copernican Revolution." Now, Putnam's new engagement with the reality of moral values might seem to be close to Dilman's own concerns – but it is right here, in fact, that these two thinkers diverge, precisely because Dilman (ibid., chap. 9) refuses to see ethics as an "inquiry" in the Putnamean (pragmatist) way.

We should be careful in these matters, however. Dilman contrasts Putnam's inquiry-oriented view with Wittgenstein's, as presented in the "Lecture on Ethics" (see ibid., pp. 176f), but one of the Wittgensteinian themes that emerges in his discussion is something we have found in Putnam, too: as Dilman tells us, if someone does not understand the moral (or, analogously, religious) obligation "thou shalt ..." except in prudential terms, there is nothing we can say to her or him – except in moral (or religious) language itself (which, *ex hypothesi*, she or he does not understand). That is, there is nothing further, more basic, that we can say, nothing pre- or non-ethical that could persuade her or him to adopt the moral point of view (ibid., p. 181). Dilman writes:

> [Wittgenstein] certainly rejected the kind of 'objectivism' which Putnam embraces: ethical beliefs are not arrived at by objective assessment; they are held by personal commitment. Objectivity means neutrality and detachment. An objective person is committed to truth, certainly, and to doing justice to what he is considering. But for this very reason he has to keep detached from what he is considering. What he considers and judges, namely the object of his considerations, exists or holds independently of him, of where he stands as a person. This is not so in the case of ethics for Wittgenstein. (ibid., p. 186; see also pp. 189f)

We may learn a great deal from Dilman's careful juxtaposition of Putnam's views and his own, but I am not sure that his criticism is entirely fair to Putnam (even though I do agree that Putnam at least occasionally too strongly likens ethical thought to objective, knowledge-seeking inquiry resembling science). I doubt that Putnam would ever deny the need to commit oneself, personally, to whatever one finds among one's ethical beliefs. Realism in ethics, in the pragmatist sense which Putnam has tried to articulate (not unproblematically) and which I have tried to explicate in this chapter, is not, or at least should not be, incompatible with personal sincerity. Moral values, or whatever one is ethically (personally) committed to, can be thought of as "real" within the human world (Dilman's words), but because of the distinctive character of this ethical dimension of reality, no metaphysically-realist "independence" need or even can be invoked here. The pragmatic moral realist can hold that moral values and duties are personally real, objective to some extent (that is, not subjective or "relative" in any easy way), though of course not objective in the sense in which sticks and stones and electrons are "objective." Rather, through this kind of examples, we may end up viewing the notion of objectivity itself as a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" notion. There is no essence of objectivity uniting the objectivity of electrons and the objectivity of values. The pragmatist can easily accommodate such a pragmatic pluralism about the ways in which things are "real" or "objective" in her or his anti-reductionist world-picture, and it seems to me that Putnam has, *pace* Dilman, done us a service in articulating such a form of pragmatism in a penetrating manner. The same can be said in defense of Misak, who *denies* that a cognitivist view of moral deliberation as an experience- and reason-driven inquiry blurs the distinction between ethics and science, or their distinctive aims (see Misak 2004a, especially p. 191).

Dilman is right to point out that mere objective existence in the sense of existence "independently of the individual" is not enough for the reality of moral values *qua* moral (see Dilman 2002, pp. 193, 218): such values must be experienced as personally demanding, as real for the person in question (*for me*), in order for them to be genuinely moral. Moral reality is, in this sense, personal and absolute (as we will further see in the next chapter). For these reasons, Dilman opposes Putnam's "ethical realism" or "moral objectivism," as well as Putnam's conception of the entanglement of fact and value, or science and ethics (see ibid., pp. 199f). However, entanglement is not identity. If one claims, with Putnam, that ethical evaluation is entangled with or inseparable from (scientific, objective) description of facts, one is not thereby committed to the absurd claim that there is no difference whatsoever between evaluating things morally and describing (scientifically) what is and what is not the case.[35] As we have seen in this chapter, Putnam himself stresses that rejecting the fact/value dichotomy is not the same thing as rejecting the corresponding

distinction. While Putnam may at least occasionally go too far in his comparison of ethics and science, the pragmatic moral realist need not do so. The "personal dimension of morality," as emphasized by Dilman (ibid., p. 202), must be maintained, however realistic one wants to be about "moral reality."

Dilman's way of speaking about realism and its alternatives is somewhat idiosyncratic. As I promised in my introductory remarks, I have, contra Dilman, retained the label "moral realism." This label stands for a view which, like Kant's empirical realism, should be understood as compatible with the ethical analogy of transcendental idealism, i.e., the idea that morality is a human phenomenon, something that emerges from human life in a human world, instead of being anything pre-existent "in itself" or handed down to us from above, as it were. Still, my use of "realism" may sound puzzling. The pragmatic realist's approach differs from Misak's above-described position, because the view of ethics as an inquiry is given up, but it is, as should be obvious by now, even more different from the mainstream discussions of moral realism and moral objectivity in contemporary analytic philosophy. Murdoch's and Putnam's pragmatic moral realisms (just like Dilman's position) are opposed not only to moral anti-realisms and skepticisms like Mackie's and to moral relativisms like Gilbert Harman's,[36] but also, within the realists' own camp, to the naturalistic realisms that try to accommodate "moral facts" to the natural-scientific world-view (perhaps through a supervenience relation), emphasizing an analogy between moral and scientific realism and claiming that moral properties can be explanatory roughly in the same way as special-scientific (e.g., biological, psychological, or other non-physical or "higher-level") properties are.[37]

These more mainstream positions can be criticized from the point of view of pragmatic moral realism. For example, Harman and his critic Judith Jarvis Thomson, who in their joint book offer a splendid discussion of the pros and cons of moral objectivity (as opposed to relativism), do not in my view pay due attention to the fact that the relativism vs. objectivity issue arises *within* our moral practices themselves, in a situation in which we already structure our world and lives from an ethical perspective – a perspective that is not called into question in a way that would make full-blown relativism possible. For example, Harman's initial characterization of moral relativism as a position according to which "moral right and wrong ... are always relative to a choice of moral framework" (Harman and Thomson 1996, p. 3) already involves the notion of choice, and the very possibility of choice, we may argue, inevitably commits us to moral considerations. There is, if the Putnamean arguments exposed above are correct, no morally neutral point of view for formulating the relativist view that moral right or wrong is relative to a specific moral point of view (ibid., p. 17). The would-be relativist is already embedded in an ethical framework, at least if she or he cares for reasons and arguments (as well as

moral virtues like tolerance for alien moral practices). This embeddedness, forgotten equally by typical relativists or moral skeptics and their realist critics, is taken into account and thematized much more forcefully in the Wittgensteinian tradition to which we will more closely turn in a moment. Thus, in a sense, morality is, in the pragmatist-cum-Wittgensteinian scheme, much more fundamental than the relativism discussion has resources to admit.

The same applies to typical non-pragmatic forms of moral realism prevalent today. One influential author in the currently rather popular realistic framework is Michael Smith (1991, 1994). A brief comparison with his views will conclude this chapter by further illuminating the great differences between the moral realism favored in the present book and the mainstream discussions surrounding these issues in recent analytic literature. From the Wittgensteinian or pragmatist perspective, it is absurd to try (as Smith does) to ensure us, through a theoretical metaethical argument, that we may optimistically "have some confidence in the legitimacy of moral talk" (Smith 1994, p. 187) and may hope to achieve moral progress or agreement (ibid., p. 188) – i.e., that "our moral talk is in fact legitimate" (ibid., p. 202). Philosophers like Smith who see "the justifiability of our commitment to morality" (ibid.) as a theoretical issue are simply putting the cart before the horse. This justifiability can so much as be an issue, a topic of normatively constrained inquiry, only for someone who already adopts a moral perspective, engages in moral discourse and practice. I am tempted to see this as a transcendental argument referring to the constitutive conditions of something's being a possible issue for us. Denying such constitutive conditions is to fall into absurdity. It would be equally absurd to think about someone becoming a genuinely religious person through the (obviously unsound) "proofs" of God's existence, or about someone's losing her or his religious faith through coming to see the unsoundness of those proofs.

Moreover, like religious faith, our faith in morality can be lost, though not in usual cases through skeptical or anti-realist arguments, but rather through real-life events and practical experiences, such as the Holocaust – which, on the other hand, can also strengthen our moral or religious faith, the conviction that morality does matter after all. (We shall return to the possibility of losing faith in morality below, particularly in chapter three, and again by the end of the book.) Accordingly, it seems to me that the kind of theoretical discourse that Smith and others engage in over the viability of moral realism and the legitimacy of moral talk is so much as meaningful, and hence possible, only in a context in which we have already committed ourselves to the requirements of morality – thereby treating them as genuinely binding for us.

This is one way of saying, with Putnam, Murdoch, McDowell, and others, that moral (or more generally normative and/or evaluative) considerations already affect the ways in which we represent "the facts" and hence what

"the facts" for us in any given situation are. Smith and other recent moral realists regard it as good or valuable that morality should have an objective theoretical foundation, argumentatively established and defended. But there can be no such (non-circular) foundation, because morality has already been assumed to be significant here. Norms of inquiry and rationality, including metaethical inquiry and its rationality, involve ethical norms (as elements of one's *Bildung*) and cannot be non-circularly used to legitimize the latter, which, insofar as they are genuinely ethical, simply do not need legitimation from any allegedly more fundamental perspective. There are, in brief, neither norm- or value-independent facts nor value-independent methods for discovering facts. We can, I think, see the pragmatist tradition as constituting a long and multifaceted argument in favor of this view.

Before concluding this chapter, I only want to mention in passing some more specific problems in Smith's project. Like naturalist moral realists more generally, he thinks "everyone" agrees about the supervenience of moral features on natural ones (ibid., pp. 21–22). But I am afraid that he cannot expect agreement from those who, having rejected the fact/value dichotomy and insisting on our need to perceive certain situations as morally significant (see above), regard this idea not as false but as meaningless or at least totally unclear. (It is as if there could, *for us*, be morally neutral "facts" upon which some more problematic moral properties supervene – something that I firmly rejected above.) Similarly, it is quite irrelevant to talk about the "causal role in the production of action" that our beliefs about normative reasons have (ibid., p. 181). This is again to inappropriately subordinate a specifically human phenomenon, acting for normative reasons, to a natural-scientific, causal analysis (see also Pihlström 2002a, 2003b).

In sum, the "moral problem" Smith sees as arising out of the conflicting demands of (1) our confidence in moral objectivity, (2) the practicality of morality, and (3) the Humean motivation theory (Smith 1994, pp. 125–9; also Smith 1991) disappears as soon as we reveal its underlying error, the mistake of construing "moral facts" as analogous to natural-scientific ones that may obtain or fail to obtain "out there" in the causal structure of the universe independently of our practical deliberation and conceptualization. This, as Putnam would put it, amounts to metaphysical realism. Moral facts are, for us, values inherent in (any of) our practices, and *any* facts are loaded with such values.[38]

More extreme examples of a naturalist and reductionist account of moral facts could be drawn from the recent literature linking moral philosophy to cognitive science or even neurophysiology (see for example May et al. 1996, Churchland 1998). After the treatment of less reductionists moral realisms, such as Misak's and Smith's, in this section it would be a waste of time to set out to refute such suggestions. But it is worth noting that even though

pragmatists should reject all reductionist accounts, both realistic and anti-realistic, they are not offering any supernaturalist doctrines instead. The kind of ubiquity of moral features that I have (though only preliminarily) discussed in this chapter is entirely *natural* in human life and culture. This is why I find McDowell's proposal of a naturalism of second nature appealing.

In brief, convinced by the McDowellian appeal to the irreducibility of our "second nature" (which accommodates ineliminable normativity), by the (closely related) Putnamean appeal to our practices of moral evaluation and discourse, and by Dilman's insistence on the internal relation between moral language and moral reality, I reject – and hope to have been able to provide sufficient reasons for rejecting – at least the following types of "ethical naturalism": (1) eliminativism, according to which morality is an illusion ("error theory"); (2) reductionism, in its various forms, according to which morality is ultimately something else (e.g., can be accounted for, or ultimately explained, in terms of cognitive science, evolutionary psychology, or what not); and (3) allegedly non-reductive forms of ethical naturalism, which claim (with Majors 2003) that moral properties can be maintained in a scientific world-view by treating them as causally efficacious "special-scientific" properties, supervening on their physical base, or (more modestly) that ethics is an "inquiry" resembling science (as we have seen thinkers like Misak and even Putnam hold). None of these "naturalisms" can succeed, if we adopt a more fundamental pragmatic naturalism, taking seriously the ubiquity of the ethical that belongs to our natural way of existing as human beings in a human world, transgressing the boundaries of any "inquiry." However, there is much more that remains to be said about this ubiquity.

Three

MORAL PROBLEMS AS PERSONAL PROBLEMS

1. What is "Wittgensteinian" moral philosophy?

The idea that there is nothing non-ethical that could, even in principle, "ground" the ethical, an idea we may find both in Putnam and in Murdoch, has been an important theme in the Wittgensteinian tradition in recent moral philosophy to which we should now turn in some more detail. This view is not foreign to other pragmatists, either. For example, David Bakhurst (1999, p. 234) reminds us that, according to the moral realist (or cognitivist), "the presumption of realism is implicit in the character of moral experience and deliberation." Yet, morality is a human artifact; its very objectivity is a human creation (ibid., p. 237). Moral decisions are typically personal rather than public (ibid., p. 244). Even so, Bakhurst explains, we cannot see moral requirements as "optional" but must see them as inescapable; yet, this is not because of any "formal or foundational reason why moral demands are inescapable" (ibid., p. 241). It is not clear what it would mean to reject morality altogether, and it is not clear what it would mean to support morality by means of some non-moral reasoning. Bakhurst goes on: "From within morality it is hard to imagine moral concerns losing their significance for us, while our lives continue to have some recognizable worth and meaning. It does not follow, of course, that circumstances may not cause an agent to lose faith in the moral life.... [A] normal moral agent ... needs no reason to be moral over and above the reasons revealed by moral inquiry itself." (ibid., pp. 242–3)[1]

Recent Wittgensteinian moral philosophers (Winch 1987, Gaita 1991, Phillips 1992, Hertzberg 1994, Johnston 1999, Dilman 2002) would find this congenial, though they would resist the word "inquiry." These thinkers reject moral skepticism and anti-realism by rejecting *all* reductive theories of ethics; i.e., any theories that would reduce moral values or moral behavior to something allegedly more fundamental (e.g., physical, biological, psychological, or social). They reject all standard subjectivist or skeptical conceptions of value, even though they are not prepared to embrace any objectivist theory according to which values (or moral facts, as it were) "exist" in some objectively structured, independent realm of the (natural or supernatural) world, either. Their approach can perhaps be interpreted as an instance of quasi-Kantian transcendental reflection, with a kind of moral realism as the emerging result (parallel to the empirical realism Kant is able to defend on the grounds of his transcendental idealism): our being able to hold any genuinely ethical views on

anything – or, presumably, *any* views whatsoever – or to make any genuinely moral choices in our lives – or, again, any choices, since all of our choices have an ethical dimension – necessarily requires that certain ethical views are held by us, personally, as absolutely correct, that is, not as mere opinions, subjective attitudes, or beliefs relative to a person or a community. "Realism" here emerges from a full realization of what morality means "from within," as a human creation, in human lives and practices. And while Wittgenstein himself can be argued to have been committed to a fact/value dichotomy, at least in the *Tractatus* (though even this is a debatable issue, as we shall see), the Wittgensteinian move in contemporary moral philosophy is to maintain that "moral viewpoints determine what is and what is not to count as a relevant fact in reaching a moral decision" (Phillips 1992, p. 8). The facts to be taken into account in the evaluation of any given ethically relevant situation are, then, partly constituted by the moral viewpoint we have adopted and by the language we speak (as an expression of that standpoint). The parallel to Putnam's and Murdoch's (and, to some extent, McDowell's) above-cited formulations is obvious.

It is not that Wittgensteinianism is traditionally associated with moral realism; to the contrary. Apart from Putnam, one of the few "Wittgensteinians" explicitly defending moral realism is Sabina Lovibond, whose position we cannot embrace, however. Of course, I agree with her on a number of things: on the rejection of the fact/value distinction (Lovibond 1983, pp. 22–23, 27); on the applicability of the notion of truth in ethics (ibid., p. 42); on the idea that our historical process of using moral language is required for meaningful life of individual persons (ibid., p. 107), culminating in the transcendental-sounding argument that "it is only in so far as he can conceptualize his life in the terms laid down by some real system of moral institutions that the individual will succeed in finding a meaning in life as a whole" (ibid., p. 223); on the interpretation of Wittgenstein's (1969, especially §344) argumentation as transcendental – claiming that we must "accept many things," in order to "be able to *think* at all, or ... to make sense of the world" (Lovibond 1983, p. 121); on what she calls "transcendental parochialism" (ibid., pp. 210f), a refusal to attempt to transcend "the human perspective"; and especially on the pessimistic suggestion that a transcendental condition of meaningful life, of there being (objectively) a "non-hypothetical point in performing some particular action," is in our historical circumstances "threatened with *actual* destruction or abolition" (ibid., pp. 220, 228). But I also disagree with her on central points, e.g., on the reading of Wittgenstein as holding that the notions of objectivity and rationality are "grounded" in social consensus (ibid., p. 40), because we should, instead, see the possibility of consensus or agreement as dependent on our shared form of life itself (see Hertzberg 1994; Putnam 1994, 2001). The conventionalist view that "[t]he possibility of discourse about an objective world is determined by the fact of intersubjective agreement"

(Lovibond 1983, p. 42; see also pp. 95, 172) thus puts the cart before the horse (though in a different way than the naturalistic realism defended by Michael Smith et al.), tracing the thickness of our shared (moral) practices to an abstract agreement on certain particular propositions. It is undoubtedly Lovibond's Dummettian influence that leads her to develop Wittgensteinian moral realism in this conventionalist style.[2] A more thoroughly pragmatic, but equally transcendental, avenue ought to be taken.

Cora Diamond (1996) argues that we should take more seriously than Lovibond does the emphasis on the *use* of language in Wittgenstein: we have to look not just at the content but at the application of a sentence in order to determine whether it is ethical (or mathematical, or whatever) (ibid., pp. 248–9). *Pace* Lovibond, there is, from a Wittgensteinian point of view (as we have already seen), no specific moral vocabulary, discourse, or set of language-games or ways of speaking (ibid., pp. 252–3). The ethical significance of a piece of literature, in particular, may lie hidden behind what the work actually says, or may be found in the use in which the words are put, pretty much in the same way in which the ethical significance of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* does not lie in what is in the text but, on the contrary, in what has been left unsaid, and thus in the way in which the text is used by its author and readers in order to transform our understanding of things (see Diamond 2004). Many "ordinary" things acquire ethical significance, if we follow Diamond (and her sources, including Wittgenstein and Murdoch) in this rejection of any specifically moral discourse or vocabulary that could somehow be strictly separated from our everyday uses of words. Yet, *pace* Diamond (ibid., pp. 255–6), I am not sure that we could simply stick to a non-philosophical, "ordinary," understanding of "realism" (moral realism included), either. To move back to an ordinary realistic account of the objectivity of morality through Wittgensteinian considerations of language-use is to make a substantial philosophical move. This, I take it, is also a problem in Putnam's (1994, 1999, 2002a) frequent appeals to the "ordinary" (see also Pihlström 2004b).

Let us leave Lovibond and focus, for a moment, on the question concerning the objectivity of moral evaluation and of moral decisions in the Wittgensteinian framework. Paul Johnston (1999), in particular, defends the idea that in ethics we do deal with *absolute* right and wrong, as distinguished from both empirical truths and mere personal preferences.[3] This is well in line with Wittgenstein's distinction between absolute (genuinely ethical) and relative (instrumental) values in the 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" (Wittgenstein 1965). Ethics is, Johnston argues, concerned with finding a correct perspective for judging human action. It is, according to Johnston, unclear whether, say, Williams's (1985) and many other "typically modern" moral philosophers' relativist views are ethical at all, because they do not take seriously this absoluteness of ethical evaluation. "The difference between the moralist and

the anti-moralist is not that the former believes reality or rationality somehow compels us to act in certain ways, but that she believes that there are correct judgments on human action (judgments everyone should make), whereas the latter does not believe this," Johnston (1999, p. 29) points out, appealing to the anti-foundationalist Wittgensteinian idea of a "bedrock," of our reasons coming to an end at some point, so that no further argument or legitimation is possible for us. No non-ethical reasoning can, he argues, validate our absolute ethical judgments. In the ethical sphere, if anywhere, there are cases in which "my spade is turned" and my explanations and justifications are exhausted (see Wittgenstein 1953, I, §217). However, this is *not* to say that I then simply make an arbitrary choice, although I do make a choice. What the ethical point of view requires from me is an *ethical choice*, a correct judgment regarding my situation. If I am capable of making a correct judgment, I am also capable of making a moral error – and, should that happen, capable of feeling guilt and remorse (and ethically condemnable, if I don't).[4]

Rejecting ethics is, according to Johnston, "logically possible," but we should observe that the questions of how a value judgment can be correct or how an action can be right are themselves, far from being central to ethics, *rejections* of the ethical approach (Johnston 1999, pp. 30–31). What this means is that there can be no further, more foundational explanation for something's being the right thing to do (ibid., p. 60). While there can, then, be no "proofs" of morality, the anti-moralist fails to accept "something that should be accepted by everyone capable of thinking about the human situation" (ibid., p. 57). Now, *this* is of course an ethical judgment, albeit one *about* ethics itself. The ethical element of human life *should*, we are told, be regarded as "given," not in need of any proof, not as open to the skeptic's or the relativist's doubts. Thus, Johnston rejects, and thinks we ought to reject, the demand, "either proof or arbitrariness" (ibid., p. 58): morality can be a non-arbitrary, even absolute, matter without being based on any proofs or, more generally, on any allegedly neutral, not ethically committed, reasoning. It is equally misleading to require that ethical judgments should either describe the world (as empirical judgments do) or merely express attitudes (ibid., p. 133). In particular, there can be no justification of ethical claims from a perspective lying outside ethics (ibid., p. 90), a theme that was already emphasized in relation to Putnam and Dilman in chapter two. We should reject past metaphysical attempts to find proofs for ethics, as well as modern recognitions, like Mackie's and Williams's, that no proof is possible and the resulting rejection of objective values (ibid., p. 144). If morality, or its objectivity, *could* be grounded in metaphysical or epistemological foundations, we would presumably have to start constructing those foundations by overcoming the threat of solipsism – which, it seems, is theoretically quite impossible to refute and can only be overcome through a *prior* ethical orientation, a Wittgensteinian "attitude towards a soul" in our

encounters with other human beings (see Wittgenstein 1953, II, iv; see also Pihlström 2004a, chap. 5).

The oscillation between the two extremes to be avoided, metaphysical (e.g., Platonic) moral realism and moral skepticism or anti-realism, in effect resembles the one between dogmatism and skepticism in epistemology, from which Kant tried to liberate us. Philosophy cannot yield proofs, as it can, according to Wittgensteinians like Johnston and Phillips, only clarify the logical structure of our concepts and thus elucidate our moral perspective (Johnston 1999, p. 43; Phillips 1992, p. 103); yet, conceptual clarification and analysis cannot be identified with, nor do they entail, individual persons' own conclusions about right and wrong (Johnston 1999, p. 169). Here it seems that Johnston remains a faithful disciple of Wittgenstein and analytic philosophy. Pragmatists may, naturally, have a broader conception of the work philosophy can do for us. Defending a more strongly normative conception of philosophy is not my purpose here (see, however, Pihlström 1996, 1998, 2003a); this, in any case, might turn out to be the crucial difference between the pragmatist and Wittgensteinian faces of moral realism we are concerned with.

In any event, Wittgensteinian ethical thought, precisely like pragmatism, highlights the idea that personally relevant moral conclusions cannot be dictated by general (reductive) ethical theories. Nevertheless, the various theories that have been presented in the history of moral philosophy may constitute a part of the background that plays its role in defining the ethically problematic situations we find ourselves in. The examples that Johnston, Phillips and others give us cannot be discussed here any further. It may be noted, however, that even a philosopher like Charles Taylor (whom few would be prepared to call an anti-moralist or, indeed, anything else than a moral realist), too strongly relativizes ethical judgments to persons (and/or communities), if Johnston is right, and thus slides into a non-ethical point of view, as he mistakenly believes that ethics is about self-identity while in fact it is about the absolutely right and wrong (see Taylor 1989). This critique of Taylor may be implausibly strong,[5] but I am certainly prepared to join Johnston when he declares that anti-realist accounts of ethics, such as Mackie's, fail to be accounts of *ethics* at all (Johnston 1999, p. 114, and chap. 5). All such reductive views mistakenly suppose that there is something to be further explained (non-ethically explained) in the (possibility of the) correctness of ethical judgments. Here Johnston's point clearly resembles the view we saw Putnam and Murdoch as holding.

I believe that pragmatism offers at least as good a mediator as Wittgensteinianism between (1) the view that morality is based on, or can be proved with reference to, a transcendent foundation, on the one side, and (2) the equally problematic idea that morality is merely a matter of arbitrary preferences, on the other. The priority of our ethically loaded practices themselves can be emphasized by clearly distinguishing the pragmatic form of realism

from stronger realisms that postulate, in some metaphysical or quasi-scientific manner, moral facts or explanatorily relevant moral properties in the world.[6] For instance, the account of "moral persons" as complex material intentional systems in Scott (1990) and the defense of a naturalization of ethics *via* the results of cognitive science, as defended in several papers in May et al. (1996), or with an analogy to the "special sciences" (Majors 2003), are paradigm cases of such non-pragmatic, external realisms (see also Churchland 1998).

From the Wittgensteinian perspective, such views are not exactly *wrong*; they are simply *irrelevant*. The problem with a reductive ethical naturalist's view is that it is a systematic metaphysical theory regarded as prior to any ethical conception of personhood. Fortunately, some critics have observed this. May's and others' volume on the relation between ethics and cognitive science also contains critical contributions, such as the one by Virginia Held (1996), who argues that cognitive science is not very helpful in the investigation of moral problems and that morality is, though entirely natural (not supernatural), not a matter of a "scientific theory." One of the naturalists Held attacks (ibid., p. 84) is Dewey. I believe, however, that Deweyan naturalism is not (at least not obviously) anywhere guilty of the kind of reductionism one easily finds in modern moral psychology oriented toward cognitive science, although even Dewey's notion of inquiry may in the end be inappropriate in ethical contexts.[7] While Dewey and other pragmatists insisted on the possibility of moral knowledge and argued that scientific methods should be used in ethical inquiry, their conception of scientific methods and inquiry were essentially anti-reductionistic and pluralistic, especially since they rejected the fact/value gap (see Pihlström 1998, chap. 4). Admitting this is compatible with remaining suspicious of the use of the word "inquiry" in these contexts.

Hence, pragmatic moral realism is much closer to the Wittgensteinian tradition than to the more scientifically-minded mainstream of recent analytically-oriented discussions of moral realism (see again Smith 1991, 1994): ethical judgments, again unlike mere arbitrary preferences or opinions, do claim "absolute" correctness, but their correctness cannot be determined from any imagined God's-Eye-View. Rather, the claim to correctness is made *from within* our actual practice itself, from the agent's point of view, that is, from the point of view of a serious and personal concern with how one should live and how one should think about the question how to live. The claim to correctness, however absolute, is a *human* claim, not a transcendent one. Here, in particular, the pragmatist and Wittgensteinian trends in moral philosophy, with little explicit interaction, closely touch each other. The very idea of right and wrong moral actions is rooted in our acting in the world in a concerned way, not in some specific (queer) moral realm of being. The conceptual point I wish to make here is that this *is* a kind of moral realism, just as Putnam's and Murdoch's views are. It is, we might say, a realism transcendentally grounded in what we, as moral agents, do and think about our lives and practices – not a

transcendent or metaphysical realism postulating otherworldly values (or obscure moral facts in this world, for that matter). This kind of a pragmatic realism is, as I have already indicated, analogous to Kantian empirical realism; or, perhaps more accurately, to the view Putnam called "internal" realism in the 1980s (Putnam 1981, 1987, 1990; see also Dilman 2002). The objectivity or absoluteness at issue is *internal* to our practices, internal to the framework of morality, not externally justifiable to the one who attempts to stand outside, or even intelligible as an external feature of moral language in comparison with an independent reality.

Christine Korsgaard's (1996b) distinction between "substantive" and "procedural" moral realism may also be helpful here. Pragmatism perhaps only gives us the latter, more moderate and less metaphysical realism. Yet, this distinction may in the final analysis need some softening. Even a procedural (epistemic, methodological) account may require some kind of metaphysical commitments, a kind of philosophical anthropology; in Korsgaard's case, a commitment to a Kantian picture of humans as autonomous, self-legislative beings. Substantive realism is, then, given up only in the sense of a commitment to queer metaphysical postulations ("moral facts" or Platonic values), as ridiculed by Mackie. A pragmatic moral realism requires both procedural and substantive components, but both must be pragmatically or "internally" treated.[8]

2. Transcendental reflections of a Wittgensteinian moral philosopher

Part of the moral realism defended here claims that moral duties and values are overriding (categorical); this, once again, is nothing "otherworldly" but something that our practices themselves transcendentally entail (cf. Phillips 1992), as a condition of their very possibility. Thus, again, it is a practice-*internal* feature, hardly justifiable to anyone standing outside those practices (hence the label, "internal realism"). Although I shall avoid loading too much of my message to a transcendental conceptual machinery, we may pause here to note that Phillips sometimes speaks, in a transcendental manner, about, e.g., "caring for moral considerations" as "the condition for the possibility of moral improvement" and as "the condition for the possibility of despair" (ibid., p. xiii). The following also sounds like a transcendental argument:

> To say that there are differing conceptions of right and wrong is to say that people hold different things to be morally important. That being so, how could these people hold that all moral beliefs are equal? ... A man who says all views are equal has no views. ... [A] person who thought all moral views to be morally equal would have no moral views. It would be odd to make something a condition of holding a moral view which would

> in fact be the negation of the very possibility of having such a view. (ibid., p. 107)

Furthermore, equally transcendentally, Phillips argues that "the very possibility of our concept of a human being is formed" in the responses and expectations, some of which are moral, with respect to others that we take for granted (ibid., p. 233). Johnston (1999, p. 92) also produces something like a transcendental argument when he urges that parents must want their children to share their moral views and values, because otherwise those views would not be *moral* views at all. In order to engage in moral education, parents cannot simply leave moral issues for the children to determine (see also Phillips 1992, chap. 8).[9]

Transcendental-sounding reflections have been central in the Wittgensteinian tradition already at an earlier stage: Winch (1972, p. 2) famously investigated "the social conditions which make moral conceptions possible" or "the moral conceptions which make social life possible," viewing other cultures as different possibilities of making sense of human life (ibid., p. 41). His "limiting notions" that "give shape" to human life and are constitutive of morality (i.e., birth, death, and sexuality) also play a transcendental role (cf. ibid., pp. 43–47). Furthermore, the typicality of responses like an "attitude towards a soul" in our lives (cf. Wittgenstein 1953, II, iv) is, Winch (1987, p. 149) argues, a "condition for the applicability" of the concept of a soul. Our shared life does not "justify," he says, our *Einstellungen* toward each other but provides "the conditions under which they can be called intelligible" (ibid., pp. 152–3). Winch also points out that moral "modalities," such as the Good Samaritan's *impossibility* of leaving the wounded man to die, are not based on a divine law, but the concept of such a law "can only develop on the basis of our response to such modalities," which are the "seeds" from which the conception of divinity may grow (ibid., p. 161). Finally, this is how Phillips perceptively describes Winch's clearly transcendental-sounding reasoning: "As Winch says, morality would be a strange guide around obstacles. But for morality there would be no obstacles. Means and ends come under a common moral scrutiny. Moral advice may be given, but only when morality *already* is constitutive of what faces one. It is constitutive of the accounts we give of the situations and actions facing us." (Phillips 2001, p. 352)

Furthermore, Dilman's position, discussed in chapter two as a criticism of Putnam's views, is similarly transcendental (and, as we have seen, Dilman does not even reject the notion of "the transcendental," although he gives up transcendental idealism). Personal commitment to the reality of moral values, he thinks, is constitutive of those values as moral (Dilman 2002, chap. 9). They fail to be genuinely moral values, if their reality merely amounts to their "objective" existence within a human community – however rationally or "scientifically" they might be defended or reasoned about. Therefore, personal

commitment is (though Dilman does not put it precisely in this way) a transcendental condition for the possibility of the reality of moral values *qua* moral; insofar as we do actually experience such values as binding or compelling, as rational requirements, as inescapable, and so on, we must be genuinely personally committed to them. Our learning them, our coming to possess moral knowledge about them, is a personal way of learning, a search for one's soul, and thus something very different from a scientific investigation (see especially Dilman 2002, pp. 196–9). These transcendental-sounding facts about what morality and moral learning necessarily mean for us are, naturally for a Wittgensteinian thinker, reflected in our language-use. In a transcendental sense, our life with language, the way we speak about morality and moral deliberation, constitutes moral reality as it exists for us. Again, as we have seen Dilman urge, the relation between language and reality is "internal": neither the "reality" of moral values nor the ways in which we speak of them in our language is prior to the other; rather, these poles of the internal relation are reciprocally constituted.

I believe these examples show that the Wittgensteinian tradition in moral philosophy is permeated with transcendental considerations, although this term is hardly ever used. We need not explicitly adopt the transcendental vocabulary in describing the moral realism issue, but it may be helpful in some cases. In particular, it helps to cast light on the idea of an empirical realism in ethics, grounded, in a Kantian-like manner, in the structure of our engagement with the world we live in, not in anything non- or super-human.[10]

If we are prepared to view the Wittgensteinian tradition through transcendental spectacles, we can draw a parallel between our concern with the semantic limits of what is meaningful (or makes sense), on the one hand, and with the ethical limits of what is morally right or acceptable, on the other. In both cases, what is right or meaningful or "makes sense" *for me* or *for us* is, from my (or our) point of view, the same thing as what is right or meaningful or makes sense, period.[11] From my (or our) point of view, the limits characterizing the human condition (transcendental limits that can only be seen from within that condition) are *the* (given) limits of intelligibility, whether semantic or ethical; yet, we can constantly remind ourselves, again from within our limits (which, to say it again, are for us *the* limits), that they may not be permanent limits but may undergo historical change, after all. There is no significance – from my or our practice-internal point of view – in the moral skeptic's or relativist's claim that what is morally wrong or forbidden for me (us), or what does not make sense to me (us), might nevertheless "really" be right or meaningful. We are not, thus, speaking about merely contingent limitations of what we can *de facto* make sense of, semantically or ethically; we are drawing transcendental limits – which, as always, can only be drawn from within our limited activities (both linguistic and ethical) themselves. Here

I also agree with Misak's (2000, p. 56) pragmatism: "There is no gap between what we take, after careful consideration, to be rational and what is rational"; though Misak is explicitly anti-Kantian in her defense of moral realism.

Ben Tilghman – another recent representative of the Wittgensteinian tradition in moral philosophy – explicitly takes up the notion of limits when he argues against reductive materialism on the grounds of our ethically loaded task of understanding other human beings: "At the edge of materialism we reach one limit of language. Were we to venture beyond that edge our lives would be unrecognizable." (Tilghman 2001, p. 249.) I would like to see this, again, as a transcendental argument: a neuroscientific redescription of human cognition would make our understanding of and interaction with other human beings impossible; there are, thus, limits to how (scientific) language can be meaningfully used in discussions of what humans are and do. A different but equally relevant engagement with the limits of language in relation to ethical concerns is typical of the work of Raimond Gaita (1991, 2000). Gaita says, for instance, that philosophical argument *cannot*, and *should not*, lead to what is ethically "unthinkable," such as the toleration of eating dead people or (contrary to some arguments by Peter Singer) of killing three-week-old babies (see Gaita 2000, pp. xxviii, 181–183). Cultures, according to Gaita, are defined and distinguished by what is unthinkable in them; a discussion of such unthinkabilities from within a framework in which they are unthinkable is, in my terms though not in Gaita's, a transcendental discussion paralleling the discussion of what is meaningless from the point of view of some actual practice of meaningful language-use. In addition to the treatment of the ethically unthinkable, we may also draw attention to Gaita's remarks on our acknowledging extreme evil-doers as our fellow human beings as something that lies "beyond sense and reason" (ibid., p. 55) – here, again, we are probing the limits of (ethical) language. It seems to me that the kind of importance that Gaita, Tilgham and others attach to the notion of a human being amounts to something like commonsense realism – or, perhaps better, pragmatic realism – about the pervasive ethical characteristics of human life, analogously to the kind of realism Putnam (2001, 2002a, 2004) sees Wittgenstein as embracing with respect to rule-following (and language-use in general). It is part of such a "realism" to inquire into the limits and unthinkabilities that constitute our culturally situated, historically changing human condition, semantic and ethical alike. Such an inquiry is both pragmatic and transcendental and may even lead us, like Gaita, to explore the idea of a "mystery" in relation to our acknowledgment of other language-using humans. It is, in any event, concerned with what is ethically possible, or what makes sense, for us as the kind of ethically oriented creatures we find ourselves to be.

I have spoken about what makes sense ethically. Now, of course, in a certain sense ethics is, for Wittgenstein himself, not something that "makes sense" at all. It is not a realm of meaningful discourse; there are no ethical

propositions; ethics cannot be put to words, as he urges both in the *Tractatus* and in the 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" (Wittgenstein 1965). This issue deserves a somewhat lengthy digression. Cora Diamond (1991) made a proposal, influential though by no means universally accepted in Wittgenstein studies, that the conception of ethics (and of everything else that cannot be said but only "shown," as it were) as "plain nonsense" in the *Tractatus* ought to be taken seriously. If there really are no ethical propositions, then there are no "unspeakable" or "ineffable" truths at which our meaningless ethical utterances somehow "gesture," either; nonsense is nonsense. This "austere" conception of nonsense cannot be generally assessed here.[12] Regardless of its validity as an interpretation of Wittgenstein, Diamond draws some interesting conclusions concerning the conception of ethics at work in the *Tractatus* and in Wittgenstein's thought in general. We should note in particular that Diamond (ibid., p. 164) believes there is no fact/value distinction in the *Tractatus*, since ethical sentences are a "non-category" – there are no such sentences, and remarks that seem to be about ethics have no more meaning than "piggly wiggle tiggle." Wittgenstein's description of ethics as "transcendental" is, according to Diamond, a kind of warning (as it is in Kant): "ethics is destroyed, there is no ethics, if we try as it were to push ethics into the empirical world"; hence, we should reject the empirical psychology of the will, if we are concerned with good and evil (ibid., p. 168). Genuinely ethical issues, such as "the dark and sinister in the human heart," cannot be put into words, not because there is "something" (some kind of queer "it") there, in some transcendent realm of moral values, but because *we* choose to do something in our (ordinary) life with language, that is, "mark our talk about [the dark and sinister in the human heart] through the logical feature of cutting such talk off from ordinary talk about what goes on, not giving it entry there" (ibid., p. 170).[13] There are some affinities between this position and the kind of pragmatism developed in this book, such as the rejection of the standard fact/value dichotomy (which is usually read into the *Tractatus* and has ever since dominated analytic moral philosophy) and the emphasis on *our* activities with language, on the ways in which we organize our lives by giving meaning to certain expressions and by regarding others as nonsensical within our practices. Again, this kind of "pragmatism" is very different from, e.g., Misak's Peircean version that sees morality as a kind of "inquiry."

One of the central points of Wittgenstein's thought on ethical issues is, then, the rejection of any scientific conception of good and evil. As Diamond explains, there is (against most contributors in May et al. 1996) nothing that empirical psychology could do in our attempt to understand goodness or evil; reliance on such a scientific approach, willingness to "move good and evil into the world" is a willingness "not to make certain distinctions in one's talk and thought and life," distinctions that both Kant and Wittgenstein signified by

means of the word "transcendental" (Diamond 1991, p. 171). Furthermore, I think it is an important insight that ethics, in the Wittgensteinian framework, is *transcendental*, not *transcendent* (see also, e.g., Watzka 2000, pp. 100–101; Pihlström 2004a, chap. 5). In the picture offered by the *Tractatus*, there is, as Diamond and others have shown, no transcendent realm of value about which moral truths are somehow true, albeit inexpressible. The word "transcendental" rightly refers to the activity of the subject – of us – although Diamond problematically denies that this has anything to do with the "transcendental subject," either (Diamond 1991, p. 169). I am convinced that this notion can be more pragmatically interpreted than is customarily done, although that would be a much longer story. Wittgenstein himself says, in his pre-Tractarian notebooks, that ethics is a *condition* of the world, like logic (Wittgenstein 1961, 24 July 1916). What this means is that a world without ethics is as unthinkable for us (or for me) as a world without logic, for ethics is, in Watzka's (2000, p. 100) words, "der einzige Hinweis darauf, daß es ein *Subjekt* gibt": a subject for whom the world is meaningful in some way or another. This subject is not external to the world; instead, the account of ethics as transcendental construes "the ethical" as an *inner* feature of the world; or, in more pragmatic terms, of the subject's action in the world. Thus, this view need not be confined to Wittgenstein's solipsistic early philosophy (where, of course, it finds its most sublime, if also incoherent, expression) but can be more broadly interpreted (*pace* Watzka). Far from excluding a pragmatist reconstruction, this Wittgensteinian, transcendental conception of ethics as something that renders the world (as viewed from within it) meaningful for a subject, from her or his agent perspective, quite naturally leads to pragmatism, or "internal realism." These brief remarks should suffice as a general statement of why I do not wish to follow Diamond in her repudiation of the (transcendental) subject, though again I need to remind my reader that it is not necessary to employ the notion of a transcendental subject in order to be able to maintain the pragmatist view I am sketching.

The pragmatic and the transcendental are, I claim, compatible in the following way. If we refuse to subscribe to a pragmatist, dynamical picture of the formation of the transcendental limits of our human condition, we (unless we are willing to end up with moral anti-realism) easily make the Platonist assumption that somehow "there are," in advance of our activities, various (perhaps conflicting) morally right action types or meaningful sentence types, some of which are actually (contingently) right and meaningful for some particular persons or groups of persons in certain contexts while failing to qualify as such in some other contexts, again contingently. Such an assumption requires an external standpoint, a God's-Eye-View, and is thus precluded in the pragmatic and transcendental approach which always begins from questions concerning what is right or makes sense for me or for us within the practice we currently engage in. This is, by the way, one manner of saying that moral

relativism (see Wong 1991, Harman and Thomson 1996) can only be defined and debated from a transcendent metaphysical point of view, though of course saying this is by no means to deny the actual cultural variation of moral opinions.

What perhaps distinguishes my perspective from the more faithfully Wittgensteinian one, which I of course sympathize with, is my unashamed willingness to interpret both pragmatism and the Wittgensteinian commitment to the primacy of personal moral problems in this transcendental manner. This, naturally, introduces something like a "philosophical theory" into our moral discourse, and some more orthodox Wittgensteinians may find it problematic. But it should be clear that for pragmatists theories are practical tools; theories, indeed, can be among the most practical things we have. The kind of transcendentally supported, realistic "theory" about objective moral values that I am defending with the help of Murdoch, Putnam, Dilman, and others leaves room for the heterogeneity of our moral practices (see especially Phillips 1992), and for the contention that values are objective only "humanly speaking" (as Putnam often puts it), not in any transcendent metaphysical sense. Thus, my view crucially differs from all reductive ethical or metaethical theories that Wittgensteinians, with good reason, want to set aside.

In his defense of moral theories that need not, in my view, be threatening to the pragmatist approach, Robert Louden (1992, especially chap. 5) argues that moral "anti-theorists" are right in rejecting universal moral theories as something like deductive decision procedures that are taken to yield a correct answer to any conceivable moral problem, but finds a legitimate use for a more contextualized, less rigorous and less formalistic conception of moral theory on both Aristotelian and Kantian grounds. One need not be a moral anti-theorist in order to admit (together with Wittgensteinians) that morality is, above all, "self-regarding," focuses on oneself and concerns one's status as a moral agent, rather than the evaluation of one's particular actions (Louden 1992, chap. 1). For some reason, Louden does not relate his critique of the anti-theorist movement in moral philosophy to the Wittgensteinian paradigm. In any case, even though "Wittgensteinians" like Winch and Phillips are often regarded as anti-theorists, Winch (1972, especially chaps. 8–11) is close to what Louden says when he insists that the primary ethical significance is to be found in one's own (my) acts. Thus, we may see the Wittgensteinian emphasis on the personal seriousness of moral problems as a "theory" in Louden's sense, a theory according to which morality is fundamentally self-regarding. As I see it, there is, in principle, no reason to oppose the possibility of a theoretical pursuit of coherent, reflexive moral life as one form of practical deliberation, as soon as naive conceptions of moral theories as decision algorithms are given up.[14] The pragmatist's view of moral deliberation ought to be rich enough and empirically informed enough to account for the indefinite multitude of ethi-

cally problematic situations we face in our lives. No brief theoretical slogans can capture such a picture of deliberation (to be discussed in later chapters).

Furthermore, we may note that what I have called Wittgensteinian moral philosophy is related to some recent "particularist" trends in moral thought (in which Winch is a standard reference). But as a recent collection of papers on the issue of moral particularism vs. generalism (Hooker and Little 2000) demonstrates, various middle paths are possible. Again, it is not necessary to give up generalizing theoretical pursuits altogether even if one distrusts ethical generalizations. I would, once more, like to view pragmatism as a compromise, a *via media* between extremes that are both problematic – this time between particularist and generalist tendencies (although pragmatism is not discussed in Hooker's and Little's volume), as a view locating the pragmatic value of general principles in the actual work they (may) do for us in the particular, concrete problematic situations we (may) encounter in our lives. This, roughly, is the way in which William James (1907), as I read him, conceptualized the relation between concrete particularity and abstract ideas or "generals."

So pragmatism is not firmly committed to any specific form of moral theory, nor is it resolutely anti-theoretical. Nor does pragmatism commit us to a shallow picture of "applied ethics" (which is something that Wittgensteinian thinkers, e.g., the Finnish philosopher Lars Hertzberg, have frequently criticized, again with good reason).[15] We may also read Korsgaard (1996b, p. 44) as arguing that applied ethics is based on misconceived "substantive" moral realism, according to which morality is about finding a theoretical solution that can be applied in practice: "According to the substantive realist ... the moral life is the most sublime feat of technical engineering, the application of theoretical knowledge to the solution of human problems." The idea of applied ethics presupposes the above-criticized idea of ethics as a special discipline with a special subject-matter, also attacked by Diamond (1991, 1992, 1996) and Mulhall (2000), among many others. In contrast to such a misconception of the nature of the ethical, pragmatists ought to reject the distinction between moral theories and their practical applications that seems to be presupposed by the very idea of applied ethics. It is, as I shall further try to show in chapter five, hard to find any significance in the idea of "applying" philosophy, if one holds that philosophical questions and positions, insofar as they are genuinely philosophical at all, are always already in touch with human affairs, with our attempt to investigate our place in the world's scheme of things.

Beyond this resistance to any neat theory vs. practice dichotomy, it seems to me that pragmatism and the Wittgensteinian line of ethical thought converge in the question of what it means to be a human being. Thus, the contributions of these traditions to contemporary moral philosophy can be brought to the fore more clearly if we recognize that they are, in the end, attempts to engage in philosophical anthropology rather than "applied philosophy," attempts to inquire into the "human condition" that makes morality inescapable for us.

Such an attempt is made, for example, in Raimond Gaita's (1991) penetrating analysis of how an ethically significant distinction is made, in our ordinary ethical discourse, between human beings and animals – between the preciousness of human life, which has an "inner mystery," and mere animal life, which may be valuable but not in the same sense in which human life is valuable.[16] As usual, this Wittgensteinian analysis focuses on what we typically say, on how we actually use ethical language; a similar approach is adopted by Rhees (1999). Furthermore, Winch (1972, p. 3) is firm in his rejection of certain philosophers' appeal to human nature on the grounds that "ideas of what human nature consists in are themselves expressions of moral ideas." Winch's Wittgensteinian philosophical anthropology does not treat human nature as fixed or given but transcendentally reminds us that "what we can and what we cannot make sense of determines what we can ascribe to human nature," not *vice versa* (ibid., p. 84).[17]

Since human existence is, trivially, culturally situated, the problem of relativism is unavoidable in any pragmatist (or Wittgensteinian) form of philosophical anthropology, or moral realism. We seem to come back to the question of whether our realistic attitude, insofar as it is a reflection of our ordinary practices, is *only* a manifestation of how *we* live here in this particular cultural context at this particular period of time. In order to overcome relativism (or, better, to live with the permanent possibility of relativism without either succumbing to its temptations or imagining that it could be completely overcome), we may need something like the transcendental argument sketched earlier in this section, namely, an argument that proceeds from something's being morally good or evil for us to its being good or evil, period (insofar as it is we who are to make sense of "good" and "evil").

This loose reference to the benefits of transcendental argumentation in moral philosophy should be taken seriously, although this is not the right place to examine such arguments in any detail. At any rate, I believe that critics of transcendental arguments in metaethics, such as Misak (2000), while offering solid critique of infallibilists like Karl-Otto Apel, are wrong to think that such arguments have no place in moral philosophy at all. Misak overhastily supposes that transcendental arguments are in tension with the fallibilist spirit of pragmatism (ibid., p. 45), overlooking the fact that the "necessities" established by such arguments (e.g., the above-discussed necessity of subscribing to moral realism, given the seriousness of moral considerations in our lives) are contextual and can always be reinterpreted in novel historical circumstances. Even Misak herself in fact offers a pragmatic (quasi-) transcendental argument by beginning from the acknowledgment that we have beliefs (also in the ethical realm), by noting that belief is "aimed at truth," and by arguing that therefore, "*qua believers*, we must abide by certain principles" (ibid., p. 46). A touch of the transcendental is also visible in her claim that believing is "a

practice which is, by its very nature, linked to reason-giving or justification-giving" (ibid., p. 74), and in her description of the task of moral philosophy as the investigation of "how it is possible for moral and political judgment to aim at being rational and true" (ibid., p. 156). What seems to be assumed as given here is our ability to hold moral beliefs and to make moral judgments; we may read Misak as showing, quasi-transcendentally, that a pragmatist theory of truth is a necessary condition for the possibility of our using that ability. On the other hand, Misak's version of the pragmatist theory of truth is essentially Peircean; while I have to neglect the issue here, I would also insist that more Jamesian and/or Deweyan versions are available. It seems clear, in any case, that transcendental considerations can be found in surprising places, at least if one studies serious moral thought, or serious forms of pragmatism.

3. Reflexivity and practical identity: Korsgaard's neo-Kantian project

The extent to which both pragmatist and Wittgensteinian forms of moral realism are fundamentally Kantian (transcendental) conceptions of morality, or have one of their key sources in Kant's thought (although they might *prima facie* appear to be quite different from Kant's alleged rationalistic "rigorism"), may be further appreciated through a brief comparison with the more explicitly transcendental reflections on the sources of ethical normativity offered by one of the leading contemporary champions of Kantian ethics, Christine Korsgaard. What I have in mind is the idea, spelled out with admirable clarity and depth by Korsgaard (1996a, 1996b), that the normativity of morality (or of anything else for that matter) is based on our *reflective* ability as autonomous rational beings concerned about the reasons of our actions and ultimately about the value of our humanity, viz., a normativity based on our peculiar double position as inhabitants of the two "kingdoms" or standpoints Kant himself distinguished, the factual-natural one and the normative-ethical one. Arguably, it is the Kantian-cum-pragmatist conception of reflexivity as something pervasive and all-encompassing in human practices that constitutes the background of both pragmatism and Wittgensteinian moral thought and that makes them so similar. Noticing this connection between Kantian ethics and pragmatism – and Wittgensteinian moral philosophy – is significant also historically, because usually it is only Kant's theoretical philosophy, his constructivist and transcendentally idealist picture of the world, instead of his allegedly rigoristic practical philosophy, that has been regarded as a precursor of these modern traditions.[18] The conception of practice-embedded reflexivity is also obviously related to the doctrine of the ubiquity of morality, the heart of this book.

Rejecting both what she calls voluntarism, which grounds normativity in an (external) lawgiver, and also (substantive) realism, which postulates "intrinsically normative entities" in order to account for normativity, Korsgaard (1996b) defends the Kantian, reflective alternative, according to

which normativity and morality are based on our human nature as reflective animals and autonomous self-legislators whose actions are reasoned actions "under the idea of freedom." Although I agree with many of Korsgaard's main points, it might be objected, from a pragmatic point of view, that she draws an unnecessarily sharp opposition between the pursuit of knowledge or truth and what she calls "reflective endorsement" (see ibid., p. 91).[19] In any case, the basic idea is that we do not and cannot receive our moral norms from an extra-human authority but are authorities to ourselves. Nor can this normativity be eliminated from our self-conception as human beings. In particular, the scientific world view, in which there seems to be no place for objective values or normativity (as philosophers like Mackie, Williams, and Blackburn believe), cannot yield any substitute for our natural human condition, since "nothing in human life is more real than the fact that we must make our decisions and choices 'under the idea of freedom'" (ibid., p. 97). As Kant saw, our choices presuppose that we value our very humanity – that we have a *practical identity* (as Korsgaard puts it) which is normative for us. What Korsgaard provides us with is a transcendental argument according to which rational action (action based on reasons) is possible "only if human beings find their own humanity to be valuable" (ibid., p. 124; see also Korsgaard 1996a, p. x, and chap. 4). She further argues, among other things, that practical identity inevitably involves moral identity (Korsgaard 1996b, pp. 125f) and that we must not only value our humanity but also our animality, the condition we naturally share with all living and sensing beings (ibid., p. 152).

The normativity Korsgaard traces back to our human nature is "naturalist" in the sense that no supernatural sources are required, but it is non-naturalist in the sense that no reduction of norms to any causal or factual regularities is attempted (ibid., pp. 160–1). A similar softening of naturalism takes place, in my view, in the pragmatist framework. From the perspective of practical reason, we do not simply find ourselves as objects in the natural world but as self-authoritative valuers whose actions ought to be normatively assessed; but this assessment is as natural for us as anything can be (as we have also seen McDowell argue in his project of rethinking the concept of nature). I think Korsgaard (1996a, p. xiv) makes a good pragmatist point (and shows how Kant makes a similar point) when she urges that "[p]ractical reason is not shaped by the world but rather shapes it, by showing us how we must shape it." Our rational choices have a "value-conferring status": the objects of our rational choices are good or valuable because they are objects of rational choices, choices whose enabling power or necessary condition is, again, our humanity, which must therefore be valued in itself (ibid., pp. 122f). We ourselves are, hence, the source of any value or normativity (or the "space of reasons") that functions in our lives. Paying due attention to this thought enables us to employ, at least selectively, Kant's moral philosophy (as inter-

preted by Korsgaard and others) in supporting the Putnamean-Murdochian-Wittgensteinian conception of the inescapability of the ethical perspective in human life that I have attempted to sketch.

A useful reminder of the fact that we cannot just follow Korsgaard into her celebration of reflectiveness as an inevitable part of our practical identities has been offered by Mark Okrent (1999). Okrent raises the problem of the *arbitrariness* of any choice of a practical identity, a normative problem to which, he argues, only a Heideggerian solution in terms of our always already being committed to some contingent practical identity is forthcoming. There are, thus, problems with Korsgaard's approach (not all of which we can touch here, of course). Furthermore, we should not fail to notice that Putnam also criticizes Korsgaard's rejection of substantive value realism (though he focuses on a version of such a view found in a somewhat different form in Jürgen Habermas's well-known writings). If there is no fact/value dichotomy to be drawn, then the Habermasian or Korsgaardian norm/value dichotomy is also questionable (Putnam 2002a, p. 113 and chap. 7). Putnam's argument against these "minimalist Kantians" is familiar: "The fact that an act is cruel or kind, sensitive or insensitive, pert of refreshingly spontaneous, is available only through the lenses of *value concepts*. ... Without our human manifold of *values*, there is no vocabulary for *norms* (Korsgaard's 'laws') to be stated *in*." (ibid., p. 119; see also Putnam 2003)[20]

These reservations notwithstanding, Putnam's and Korsgaard's projects are to some extent congenial to each other. Both stress, pragmatically I would be prepared to say, the fact that our having, and sharing, a normatively shaped practical identity or identities is unavoidable in our human life. If Putnam's repudiation of the fact/value dichotomy is plausible, Korsgaard's resolutely non-metaphysical position may have to be reformulated in more thoroughly pragmatist terms, which indicate a commitment to values in addition to (mere) norms, but this by no means diminishes the importance of her Kantian vocabulary of reflexivity and autonomy. She does, after all, talk about our choices as "value-conferring" (see above); so, she is perhaps not as skeptical about values as Putnam's critique seems to assume. Nor, of course, is Putnam's own view a "substantive" form of realism in any metaphysical sense; in fact, Putnam (2002a, 2004) himself has, as we saw in chapter two, come to think about ethics and ethical values as something that do not need ontological commitments to any peculiar entities – to the extent that he now speaks about "ethics without ontology."

In conclusion, I am not sure at all where exactly, if anywhere, Putnam's and Korsgaard's essential differences lie. Putnam may be more of a procedural Kantian realist than he admits himself. This adds further support for the suggestion that, if he wants his pragmatic realism to be taken seriously as an alternative not only to the different anti-realisms he insightfully attacks but

also to Korsgaard's and Habermas's views, he should develop it in a more explicitly ontological (though not metaphysically realist) direction.

4. Fragility: Why be moral?

Our analyses and interpretations up to this point have in an important sense been *internal* to what we may call the moral point of view. It is a common virtue of Kantian, Wittgensteinian and pragmatist moral "realisms" to emphasize the inevitability of such a morality-internal viewpoint – which roughly amounts to the idea of the primacy of practical reason, to be found both in Kant and in pragmatism.[21] This is why I have also proposed the label "internal realism" for the position I have defended – with reservations, though, because this expression is standardly attached to the view Putnam held in the 1980s.

Someone might ask, however, why a moral point of view to life and to the world ought to be adopted in the first place. "Why be moral?" is a question we occasionally hear, not only among laymen but also among serious philosophers (see for example Nielsen 1989). Now, this is, of course, precisely the wrong question, according to both pragmatism (such as Bakhurst 1999) and Wittgensteinianism (such as Phillips 1992). And we might go much farther back in history: the standard reference here is the *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates asks whether certain acts are pious because they are loved by the gods or whether they are loved by the gods because they are pious (Plato 1892, 10a). Wittgensteinian moral philosophers typically maintain that it would be a misunderstanding of moral seriousness to claim that the piousness (or goodness, or obligatoriness) of certain actions could be independent of, or prior to, God's will (whether or not one literally believes in God). The mysterious absoluteness of ethical goodness requires that one sees it *as if* it were commanded by God.

This position, according to which we must simply remain within morality in order to genuinely interpret our lives in terms of it, receives a beautiful elaboration in some of Winch's writings, which have of course crucially affected later Wittgensteinians like Phillips and Gaita. According to Winch, we cannot see morality as a "guide to conduct," since asking, for instance, which (contingent) advantages morality would bring to our lives would take us outside morality; moreover, there may not be *the* right thing to do in a given ethically problematic situation, and thus we may have to give up the ideal of moral perfection *for moral reasons*, i.e., within morality itself (Winch 1972, pp. 175–6, 187). This has something to do with "the absolute demand of the moral 'ought'," which is absolute even when it obligates us to do something that is itself evil, such as murder. Such absoluteness is, according to Winch, intimately connected with "the absolute impossibility of harming a good man":

> For to accept the first [the absolute demand of the moral 'ought'] is to think that, compared with the importance of acting honourably and justly (for instance), nothing else matters. And this *is* to bear the afflictions that life brings patiently – i.e., not to be deflected from acting decently even under the pressure of misfortune. A man who has such an attitude to life sees that as long as afflictions do not thus deflect him, they do not harm him – not in relation to what he regards as really important in his life. (ibid., pp. 206–7)

Conversely, feeling remorse "*is* a way of seeing the wrongness" of one's actions (ibid., p. 225); it is not a punishment or sanction external to morality. Gaita's (1991) conception of remorse is essentially similar. It is in this sense, closely related to the ineffable experience of feeling absolutely safe which Wittgenstein (1965) attempts to describe in his "Lecture on Ethics," that we may understand the significance of the idea that our moral point of view cannot be justified in any extra-moral or non-ethical terms. Winch attempts to find an expression for the view that, from the moral perspective, this perspective itself is the only truly important one. What Winch actually says can hardly constitute an argument against someone who does not already share this position. It is an expression of a position that can only be rejected from an imagined point of view which that position declares to be humanly impossible. Hence, again, "internal" realism in ethics.

Let us pursue the issue still further. Genuine questions have answers, or at least we have a vague idea of what an answer to a genuine question would look like. But insofar the moral point of view that we take ourselves to be committed to *is* a genuinely moral one, the question "why be moral?" has for us no significance whatsoever, since the very asking of the question is, as one may argue following Winch et al., already an immoral act. By posing this question a person presupposes that there is something non-ethical that might, and can, function as the motivation, ground, or reason for morality (or that might fail to do so). But the point in morality itself, or the point internal to our self-understanding as moral creatures, is precisely that there is nothing like that, indeed, that there is no "point" for us to occupy outside morality itself. An analogous position may, again, be seen in Frederick Will's (1997) pragmatism (see Pihlström 2003a): it is only *from within* our norms – whose "latent" aspects, as we noted, are entangled with our ways of living in multifarious ways – that we can recognize the existence and normative force of those norms. This can be regarded as a transcendental, though also pragmatist, argument, which is by no means restricted to ethical norms.[22]

It is for these reasons that morality is the most important, and the most "pointless," thing in our lives. One consequence of this importance, already noted, is that the pragmatist or the Wittgensteinian, willing to defend the personal absoluteness of ethical decisions, cannot really *argue* her or his case

against the moral skeptic or relativist who treats moral choices as contingent, culturally contextual preferences. There is no room for further argument in terms that both parties to the debate would accept. The skeptic would require a non-ethical justification of morality, whereas the pragmatist-cum-Wittgensteinian insists that there can be no such justification and that it is already morally suspicious even to require anything like that. We have here a nice example of the way in which argumentative results cannot always be achieved in philosophically important matters. As Korsgaard (1996b, p. 163) also admits, the possibility of "*complete* practical normative scepticism," the denial of all value of humanity and of life in general, cannot be refuted by philosophical arguments alone.

Does this mean that the moral skeptic or the relativist wins on the meta-level and that, given the impossibility of conclusive arguments, morality is after all a matter of arbitrary personal preferences? This is a serious challenge, but not, I think, a damaging one. What we have imagined is a *moral disagreement*, since choosing moral realism (or choosing to remain within a standpoint internal to morality) is itself an ethical choice and rejecting it is, from the realist's point of view, an immoral one. Pragmatic moral realism was never intended to eliminate such moral disagreements but, on the contrary, to make sense of their seriousness, of the fact that in our deliberations we strive after the correct solution. This applies to our meta-level disagreement between moral realism and its opposites as directly as it applies to our "first-order" moral disagreements. The relativist's challenge ought (and this is an ethical "ought") to be faced by means of a serious ethical concern of how to live and think, not by means of any imagined philosophical (neutral, abstract, non-ethical, non-committed) maneuver. Thinking about the issues of moral realism and objectivity is part of this concern, part of our (philosophical) lives.

Such a concern will not, of course, destroy the challenge it responds to. Morality, then, like religious faith, is utterly *fragile* (see Wisdo 1993, chap. 6; see also Stroll 1998). Our life might take such unhappy turns that our moral identity would be torn into pieces – that we would be led to give up moral life altogether and to adopt some sort of total cynicism or nihilism instead.[23] Full recognition of the pragmatist suggestions we have gone through, especially the pointlessness of the virtuous life and the impossibility of justifying morality on non-ethical grounds, requires that we acknowledge this basic fragility that belongs to our human condition. Because of the holistic sense in which moral concerns (like religious ones) are intertwined in the totality of a person's life, the term "fragility" is, as David Wisdo (1993, p. 51) suggests, better than "corrigibility" (or even "falsifiability"). Both morality and religion, and the changes that may happen in our relations to them, outrun mere argument or reasoning and are in this sense not reducible to what we usually mean by "inquiry." *Pace* pragmatists like Dewey and Misak, the fragility of ethics and

religion is, then, something more total, more holistic, than the corrigibility of the results of a scientific inquiry.

It seems to me that Kantian ethical thinkers such as Korsgaard have not drawn due attention to this fact regarding our condition as reflective beings. Recognizing moral fragility is what it means to take seriously the resolute *anti-foundationalism* that belongs to any full-fledged pragmatist conception of human practices. Our identities, or whatever is most precious to us, can, as Wisdo observes, be put at risk by evil and suffering (ibid., p. 8); morality, like religious faith, is a "vulnerable gift" that we cannot take for granted (see ibid., p. 101). A situation in which morality had ceased to be a significant thing for us would, undoubtedly, redefine "us" in such a radical way that it would not be easy *for us*, in the personal, cultural, and historical situation we now contingently find ourselves in, to recognize ourselves (or our possible future selves) in those changed circumstances. Still, our pursuit of moral life, just as our religious sensibilities, may gradually be "eroded" by unexpected external factors (see Phillips 1986, pp. 89f). Our very conception of ourselves as rational, reflective self-legislators may fragment.

The notorious "problem of evil" underlying the possibility of the fragmentation of moral identities does not easily surrender to abstract philosophical analysis, though (see chapter six). Hardly any religious believer has lost her or his faith because of having become convinced by the philosophical argument that theism is incompatible with the existence of evil (see also Pihlström 2002b). A much more rewarding perspective on evil might be gained, say, through a historical examination of the formation of various theological accounts of the origin of evil (see Schwarz 1995). As Mary Midgley (2001) convincingly argues, the phenomenon of moral evil, or wickedness, should make us suspicious about moral skepticism (such as Bernard Williams's).[24] Evil is something to be taken seriously; this requires, instead of repudiating, moral realism. It would be an interesting topic of further investigation to examine whether, and in what sense, paradigmatically evil figures such as Iago, (Milton's) Satan, de Sade, or (Hannah Arendt's) Eichmann can step outside morality. This issue cannot be settled here. Yet, the way in which evil is fundamentally *incomprehensible*, intractable, something that does not fit our scheme of understanding the world we live in, can be emphasized in relation to the incomprehensibility of the ethical itself, or the primacy of ethics in relation to ontology and epistemology – a most Wittgensteinian and, as Richard Bernstein argues, Levinasian theme (see Bernstein 2002). (I shall below say a few words on Levinas's relation to the topics we have discussed.) Any Wittgensteinian moral philosopher would, I think, be happy to join Bernstein (and Levinas) in opposing all theodicies and calling for an ethical response to the evil inflicted on the other human being. But this is also to acknowledge the fragility that *may* destroy ethics as we know it – may, yes, but *ought not to*.

To admit the deep incomprehensibility or intractability of evil (with Bernstein and others) is not to claim that we should not try to understand evil and even to seek reconciliation after something evil has been done (by us or by others, to ourselves or to other people). In our inevitably inconclusive attempts to understand ourselves and the world we inhabit with others, we cannot fail to use the irreducibly value-laden concept of evil; we need this notion in attempting to make sense of certain actions, situations, or people that cannot simply be described as (merely) "bad" or "wrong" (see Morton 2004, chap. 3). Evil is a "thick" ethical notion if anything is. The fact that we cannot fully describe or understand our moral lives (or that we cannot fully acknowledge our profound inability to fully understand our lives) without this concept appears to lead directly to the issue of fragility. Our need to cope with evil, conceptually and practically, is part of our human condition – part of the moral life that *may*, but again *should not*, lead to its own fragmentation.

What we may learn from Winch and other Wittgensteinians, is that morality *is* fragile and we may lose our faith in it partly because there are cases (and they are not rare at all) where morality requires us to do what we consider morally *wrong* to do. For instance, I may be convinced that it is wrong, under any circumstances, to kill another human being, but I may arrive at a situation in which I have a duty to kill someone who, for example, threatens an innocent human being's life. The duty to kill does not remove the wrongness of the killing, if I am genuinely committed to the ethical principle "thou shalt not kill"; I can, and should, feel remorse afterwards, even though I may have done my duty.[25] I cannot think it is "right" to kill someone even if it saved many more lives. Cases where there is no right thing to do but only, tragically, morally wrong alternatives are not unusual in our lives, although some of those cases are of course more significant than others. (Moral seriousness does admit stages.) It is easy to feel that a practice or institution that makes incoherent demands for us, by declaring a certain deed both as a duty and as a terrible thing to do, ought to be abandoned and that we should therefore give up the idea of morality as something binding or normatively action-guiding. But, once again, it is the importance of morality in our lives that leads us to these confusing situations, to our being puzzled about the possibility of having a duty to perform a morally wrong action. The possibility of experiencing something terrible (such as killing) as an obligation, yet as a wrong thing to do, is one of the conditions that characterize our reflective moral experience.

It is hard to criticize someone who gives up morality as a result of such experiences. As Bakhurst (1999, p. 242) puts it, it may be pathological but not incoherent that someone loses her or his interest in the moral life and becomes an indifferent person or even an evil one. Similarly, religious people may and occasionally do lose their religious beliefs in the course of their lives; indeed, the decline of religion and the fragmentation of ethical values are often thought

to take place hand in hand. The central idea here is that the moral as well as the religious identity of any given person is fundamentally vulnerable. This account of the "fragility of faith" plays an important role in Wisdo's (1993) pragmatist theory of the "ethics of belief." Influenced by Wittgenstein, Dostoyevsky, and Simone Weil, among others, Wisdo successfully challenges evidentialist accounts according to which religious beliefs ought to be supported by neutral, objective arguments.[26]

We shall not dwell on the philosophy of religion here, but we may re-emphasize that the reasons for one's losing one's faith may be quite similar in the case of morality, on the one hand, and religion, on the other: the full realization of the evil there is in the world, all the apparently unnecessary suffering that cannot be prevented, mortality as the unavoidable condition of any living creature (see also chapter six). In neither case does the loss of faith normally result from one's becoming convinced by some particular philosophical argument – by the moral skeptic's argument to the effect that objective values are queer and cannot exist in the natural world, in the ethical case, or by the atheist's argument to the effect that there are no good reasons to believe in God or that the problem of evil renders theism incoherent, in the religious case. Instead of theoretical arguments, what is at issue is a profound change in the person's life and in her or his understanding of that life and its basic meanings and possibilities. Philosophical arguments, or intellectual considerations in general, may in some cases be one important factor in the emergence of such a change, but usually their role seems to be relatively limited. And of course there are cases in which a moral (or religious) enthusiast does *not* lose her or his faith, whatever happens. There are cases in which people in desperate circumstances – say, in a concentration camp, awaiting their deaths – act virtuously, without any hope for rewards, without any external goal or purpose, hence "pointlessly," yet justly and honorably.

The fragility of our ethical and religious lives is, if we follow the pragmatist proposals made earlier in this essay, something that we should simply acknowledge and pay respect to. Tragic and evil events and circumstances may affect our lives in unexpected ways. Still, it might be thought that it is not clear how pragmatism can accommodate the notion of tragedy in its generally progressivist and meliorist framework. Several authors have, however, argued that it can, or that it at least should,[27] agreeing that pragmatism, including Dewey's, ought to avoid naive progressivism (although we may and should try to learn from the tragic situations we have encountered). Scholars disagree over the helpfulness of the Deweyan corpus in this respect. Irrespective of how Dewey is to be classified in these terms, it should be clear that James, among the classical pragmatists, was not a naive progressivist. Tragic themes like death and evil were central in his philosophical orientation (see Pihlström 2002b, 2002c). Jamesian pragmatism melioristically celebrates the hope for a "moral salvation" of the universe, but

it surely denies any optimistic theory about the inevitability of such an outcome.

Perhaps a pragmatism sufficiently responsive to the horrors of the twentieth century (and the twenty-first century!) must take a more pessimistic shape than even James, as a nineteenth-century thinker, was capable of living with. Still, meliorism is a thesis weak enough to be maintained, even if one's ethical sensibilities lead one to emphasize the unavoidably tragic character of our ethical situation. One can be a meliorist, believing that the world *can* or *could* be made better and that a disastrous outcome is not inevitable, while also believing that as a matter of fact we (almost inevitably) always fall short of doing our duty, simply because of the tragic conflicts between the moral obligations we have. Thus, the tragic character of our ethical existence can be seen as an empirical or quasi-empirical fact, an actual truth about us, about human lifeworld as we continuously experience it, rather than as an *a priori* truth that would be sufficient for a wholesale rejection of any meliorism (such as James's). Pragmatic meliorism may even be needed as a motivation for the view that we *should* always try to do our duty, however far we are from being able to do so. Accordingly, the only kind of pragmatism definitely ruled out by the insistence on moral dilemmas and tragedies is the naively progressivist kind, which perhaps no serious pragmatist has ever held. Otherwise, the differences between the views of earlier pragmatists and my present views should be seen as differences in emphasis. I am convinced that the ubiquity of the ethical brings with it the ubiquity of the tragic.

This picture of the situation we are in may seem to be deeply unsatisfying for an ethical thinker who hopes to be able to construct a coherent moral theory (see chapter four). But that indeed is my central message: our situation *is* in many ways deeply unsatisfying. Nothing could be farther from my aims than the attempt to paint a neat and tidy – unproblematic – picture of moral life; on the contrary, it is because of the central place of ethical concerns in our lives that life is so difficult, problematic, and even tragic. For this very reason morality is always fragile. Even (or especially) for a pragmatist, there is no guarantee, philosophical or otherwise, that morality (or, analogously, religion), being pointless and self-contained, will forever remain important for us. (Note that I do not mean to say that either morality or religion is "self-contained" in the sense of failing to have any connections with other human institutions, e.g., science. The use of this expression refers to the Murdochian idea that these activities do not have any "point" or goal external to themselves.) Moreover, if morality does not remain important for us, then our lives *should* be judged in moral terms, but should that happen, we would no longer accept those terms as relevant for judging our lives. But, again, this paradoxical impossibility (and the simultaneous necessity) of judging an immoral (or allegedly amoral) life morally highlights rather than diminishes the importance of morality for us, the

"realistic" account of moral values and normativity internal to our practice and experience. One can move outside morality only by being or becoming an *im*moral person, and by thus committing an evil act. There is no logical space for a neutral *a*morality. From this pragmatist perspective, the distinction between *a*moral and *im*moral life is in a sense a distinction without difference. It is not easy to determine, for instance, how de Sade's thought (see Airaksinen 1995) could be classified in terms of this distinction. Amoralism seems to be possible only by stepping outside the moral framework altogether, but that step itself is immoral; and thus presupposes the possibility of moral evaluation, failing to step entirely outside morality, after all.

Let me provide an epistemological analogy in order to illuminate the fragility of morality from a slightly different angle. In a series of studies on Kant's and Hegel's relevance to the contemporary discussion of realism (and its alternatives), Kenneth Westphal has repeatedly appealed to the Kantian transcendental argument *for* realism (more precisely, for an unqualified realism *sans phrase*, not Kant's own "merely empirical" realism) which starts from the undeniable fact that we have self-conscious experiences of worldly objects and from the idea (emphasized by Kant himself) that a necessary condition for our being so much as self-conscious is what Kant calls the "transcendental affinity" of the manifold of sensation, namely, that the objects and events in the environment we actually live in possess a sufficient (and to us recognizable) degree of stability and variety. Remove such stability and variety, and you remove self-conscious experience; in such a world, a "transcendental chaos" would obtain. The possibility of thought itself depends on the stability and variety of our (non-chaotic) worldly circumstances. (See Westphal 2003, 2004; see also Will 1997, especially chap. 1.) In the moral realism case, what corresponds to the crucial notion of self-consciousness is, I submit, moral integrity, the integrity of the ethical subject or the moral self. We – at least the group of "us" to whom this entire argument is directed – seem to be ethically concerned beings; we care about morality. (It is not guaranteed that we will continue doing so; nor is the continuation of self-conscious experience guaranteed – "externally" or metaphysically, from a God's-Eye View.) Transcendental affinity, in turn, corresponds to the stability and variety of our moral actions and reactions, including moral emotions, within our practices and habits of moral deliberation. Transcendental moral chaos would be the status of a world in which no such stability and variety would obtain, a world in which our ethical attitudes and ways of acting would be simply chaotic. In such a world, morality as a meaningful human enterprise would be lost; we would be selves without moral integrity. The upshot of the analogical transcendental argument is that while morality may lose its importance – we obviously are fragile, fallible beings – a conditional or presuppositional necessity for its retaining its importance (for our moral selves to retain their integrity) is moral realism, conceptualized (here) as the relative stability and

variety of the moral world we experience and react to, as seen through our practices. This, however, is precisely "pragmatic moral realism," instead of "realism *sans phrase*."

In sum, one can surely take a step "beyond good and evil," as both pragmatists like Bakhurst and Wittgensteinians like Johnston and Wisdo have acknowledged, but one is in some sense pathological or abnormal if one does this. Indeed, Johnston's (1999) above-discussed point can be expressed by saying that philosophers who hold anti-realist or relativist theories of ethics, doubting the possibility of absolute ethical judgments, *are* in a way abnormal as human beings, and deserve ethical (not just philosophical) critique. This, again, adds a philosophical-anthropological element to our metaethical discussion. It is part of the human condition, normatively rather than purely descriptively viewed, to be interested in and committed to morality – but not for the sake of any non-moral purpose. Philosophizing about ethical issues may occasionally help one in restoring that condition and may, thus, have some therapeutical value (to be discussed further in chapter five).

However, there may not be enough room for a normative evaluation of human life within the Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy as a description of actual language-use. Here the Wittgensteinian framework ought to be reconstructed as a more normatively engaged pragmatism. If, as I have suggested, we see moral realism as an ethical commitment, a commitment that we *should* make in our lives (because rejecting it would amount to a step beyond a serious concern with morality), we cannot stay on the level of mere description but need normative, genuinely ethical intervention. Thus, even though I have noted important parallels between Wittgensteinian moral philosophy and pragmatic moral realism, the purely Wittgensteinian thinker who only describes our actual use of ethical language cannot in the end embrace moral realism in the normative sense in which I am willing to defend it.

Furthermore, one might, in a philosophical-anthropological fashion, go on to argue that it is our human *mortality*, the fact that any human purposes will eventually be frustrated, that life is self-contained and has no external *telos*, that makes our fragile morality so important to us. This suggestion leads us back to Murdoch, who writes (1997, p. 381): "A genuine sense of mortality enables us to see virtue as the only thing of worth; and it is impossible to limit and foresee the ways in which it will be required of us. ... Good is mysterious because of human frailty, because of the immense distance which is involved." We may also invoke here Murdoch's concluding reflections:

> Goodness is connected with the acceptance of real death and real chance and real transience and only against the background of this acceptance, which is psychologically so difficult, can we understand the full extent of what virtue is like. The acceptance of death is an acceptance of our own

> nothingness which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves. The good man is humble.... The humble man, because he sees himself as nothing, can see other things as they are. He sees the pointlessness of virtue and its unique value and the endless extent of its demand. (ibid., p. 385)

This sounds to me like James's (1897) melioristic affirmation of "real death" and "real chance" – of life as an adventure, with real losses and gains – in which the pursuit of a "strenuous mood" is in a sense all that ultimately matters in an individual's moral life. It is not easy, however, for a pragmatistically inclined moral agent to see herself as "nothing" in the way Murdoch suggests. An agent who subscribes to moral realism on the kind of pragmatic grounds that we find (for example in Putnam) is hardly a "nothing," after all.

This problem notwithstanding, strikingly similar accounts of the infinity of the ethical duty, of the impossibility of ever fully doing what one ethically ought to do as faced by the infinitely vulnerable, mortal Other, have over the past few decades been formulated within Continental moral philosophy, in Emmanuel Levinas's work in particular.[28] Many of the themes we find in Wittgenstein (especially in the "Lecture on Ethics") and in the Wittgensteinian moral philosophers I have cited we also find in Levinas: the inexpressibility of the absolutely ethical (Levinas's "saying"), as contrasted to the expressible facts of the ordinary world (the "said"); the infinite responsibility required by the presence of another person, resulting in the "impossibly demanding" nature of the ethical demand (Critchley 2002, p. 28); the suspicion toward any theoretical, universalistically aimed systems of ethics (see also chapter four); the intimate relation between ethical and religious attitudes to life, as having to do with something that is absolutely "high" and sublime; and so forth.

It is interesting that Putnam has recently worked on Levinas. He points out, in one of his critiques of Rorty's neopragmatism which he describes as a view that slides into a (quasi-) solipsistic conception of (epistemic and ethical) justification, the following: "Levinas argues [*contra* Rortyan pragmatism] that a profound sense of *responsibility* to the other (the responsibility which is the theme of all of Levinas' philosophy) is precisely what forces us out of ... a solipsistic conception of other persons" (Putnam 2000, p. 86). This is only a general remark, but in a more recent article, published in the *Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, Putnam offers a close reading of Levinas's compelling conception of ethics as a "first philosophy" in relation to his Jewish background. Putnam's paper brings out several central themes we have already encountered in relation to the Wittgensteinian tradition. Thus, he speaks about the "ungrounded" nature of ethics, i.e., the impossibility of basing ethics upon anything (e.g., sympathy), about the "ethical reasons for refusing to base ethics on either a metaphysical or a psychological 'because'" (Putnam 2002b, p. 35; see also p. 54). Indeed, "the impossibility of a metaphysical grounding for

ethics shows that there is something wrong with metaphysics, and not with ethics" (ibid., p. 36). This is exactly what has been argued above: ethics cannot be justified from a non-ethical (allegedly more basic) point of view; to attempt to do so is to misunderstand the whole issue. If you have to ask why you should be obligated to the other (in Levinasian terms), then, as Putnam puts it, "you are not yet human" (ibid., p. 39), and being (or becoming) human is what ethics is concretely about. The ethical relation to the other, as both Levinas, Putnam and the Wittgensteinians have insisted, is unreserved, asymmetric (I am always responsible to the mortal, vulnerable other, not *vice versa*), and thus primary to any other relation in which human beings may stand; it is *the* relation that makes us human. It is in this sense that one should be somewhat suspicious of cognitivist moral realists' like Misak's (2004a, p. 192) innocent-sounding attempts to defend moral beliefs as truth-apt beliefs requiring reasons, justification, and argument. The danger is that the demand for justification will in the end collapse into a reductive picture of ethics, compromising personal seriousness in the quest for impersonal rational justification.

Before he adds some "Aristotelian" critical remarks on Levinas's asymmetry thesis, Putnam admits: "All of this I find powerful and compelling" (Putnam 2002b, p. 55). We may, then, understand Putnam's own engagement with moral philosophy, including his rejection of the fact/value dichotomy, as profoundly Levinasian, in addition to its undeniably pragmatist and Wittgensteinian flavor. Putnam again (if only in passing) cites Levinas when he says: "As long as one treats [an ethical] obligation as a mere 'feeling,' one will wander in a place (whether it looks like a desert landscape or like a tropical jungle) far outside the ethical world." (Putnam 2002a, p. 132)

Putnam (2002b, p. 50) also connects (though only briefly) his treatment of Levinas with one of his own favorite philosophical topics, the issue of (metaphysical) realism, arguing that "the aspiration of Western thought to include everything in its 'view from nowhere' ... must be resisted on *moral* grounds." It is possible to claim, with Levinas, that there is something wrong with the very ontological pursuit, with the attempt to ground ethics in "being" (see also Putnam 2004, pp. 23–24) because of the inevitably "totalizing" nature of such attempts, but it is also possible to suggest – against Putnam's "ethics without ontology" – that ontology itself can be retained within a more inclusive, and more fundamental, ethical framework, that is, that ontology can be reoriented in a manner that turns it less totalizing, or not totalizing at all. I would be prepared to suggest that resources for such a reorientation in ontology can be found in pragmatism (see Pihlström 1996, 1998), and I think Putnam could and should argue similarly. Rhetorically, of course, it may be all right to maintain the opposition between the mainstream metaphysical and epistemological tradition of Western philosophy, which cannot easily get rid of totalizing pursuits, and the alternative provided by the idea of "ethics as a first

philosophy." It may, in fact, be a matter of one's Jamesian "philosophical temperament" whether one prefers to give up ontology altogether or to reorient it pragmatically, to turn it into a non-totalizing shape.

Levinas is one of the "Continental" ethical thinkers whose thought can be fruitfully compared to the pragmatist and Wittgensteinian approaches that are discussed in this essay. Putnam's specific points about Levinas may of course be contested; this, however, lies beyond the present inquiry. On the other hand, we must admit that the Levinasian face-to-face picture of the ethical relation, despite its "concreteness," implies no specific (concrete) instructions for moral deliberation. Like the Wittgensteinian considerations of the ethical situation of, for example, the Good Samaritan, it solves no problems; it merely points to the ubiquity of ethical problems in our lives with other people. This is, perhaps, what a truly moral *philosophy* (as contrasted with "applied ethics") ought to do. Moreover, in comparisons between Levinasian and Wittgensteinian conceptions of ethics, and in any such comparisons between the unhelpfully dichotomized "analytic" and "Continental" traditions of (moral) philosophy, the philosophical-anthropological topic of human mortality – of the mortality of the other human being, and of the vulnerability of our habit of taking such mortality seriously enough in our ethical lives – should undoubtedly be a central theme. It is, or at least ought to be, equally central in Wittgensteinian, Levinasian and pragmatist frameworks.[29] Our attitude to moral life should be as serious and as far from intellectual play as our attitude to death and mortality is (or ought to be).

A problem related to the coherence of Putnam's position can, however, be taken up against the background of his admiration for Levinas's anti-solipsism. Putnam has on a number of occasions expressed his sympathy with James's and Jean-Paul Sartre's picture of individual existential responsibility, of choices that determine who the person is who makes those choices (see Putnam 1992, chap. 9). His other hero, Murdoch, has famously argued, however, that existentialism, like analytic moral philosophy which assumes the fact/value gap, is indistinguishable from solipsism: in both cases, morality is a matter of arbitrary, non-historical and non-social personal choices; no attention is in the end drawn to anything other than ourselves (see Murdoch 1997, pp. 134, 149, 269). Thus, it is not clear that Putnam's admiration of Sartre can be consistently combined with his admiration of Murdoch's and Levinas's insistence on the idea that morality is *not* just a matter of subjective choices. More generally, this tension between some basic features of Putnam's ethical thought can be observed in Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, too. It is not easy to say, although this is what we *ought to* say, that morality is *both personal and absolute*. I do not imagine to have solved this tension in the present chapter (or in this book as a whole); I am still on my way toward a philosophically workable account of how this tension could be lived with, though never permanently resolved.

Four

THE TRUTH IN SKEPTICISM

1. Introducing Hume after Wittgenstein and pragmatism

It may be surprising to take up David Hume's philosophy at this point, after two chapters focusing on neopragmatist and Wittgensteinian ethical thought. The reason I invoke Hume here is not that I want to endorse his views on ethics but that I believe his conception of philosophy's resources and tasks may help us to more fully appreciate some of the virtues of the pragmatist-cum-Wittgensteinian position I am trying to develop.

The essays by Hume titled "The Epicurean," "The Stoic," "The Platonist," and "The Sceptic"[1] are relatively well known but perhaps have received less philosophical attention than they should receive. Fortunately, Robert McCarthy has recently discussed these writings in an interesting paper on "The Sceptic's Ascent" (2002).[2] It is easy to become convinced that the essay series is by no means a marginal piece of Hume's work; on the contrary, reading these essays may lead us to appreciate some of the most fundamental aspects of Hume's conception of philosophy. Given the importance of the essays from the point of view of Hume's overall philosophical concerns, we should also, if we were providing a historical interpretation of Hume, take a close look at the *Treatise* and, in particular, compare Hume's essays to the views propounded in the *Enquiries*. For instance, "Of the academical or sceptical Philosophy" (Hume 1777, section XII) would be most relevant, although none of its varieties of skepticism seems to correspond exactly to the views presented in "The Sceptic"; similarly, the lengthy discussion of "the sceptical and other systems of philosophy" in the *Treatise* (Hume 1739–40, Book I, Part IV) should receive attention. However, detailed scholarly differentiations between the views Hume developed in various places are irrelevant to my concerns in this chapter. I shall concentrate on the series of four essays I mentioned, using McCarthy's presentation as my guide.

It is not my purpose, either, to question McCarthy's, or anyone else's, interpretation of the essays, since I have little to add to his presentation from a scholarly point of view. Hume is, for me, only a starting point for some further remarks on the idea of "grounding" ethics (or, rather, the lack thereof), already criticized in the two previous chapters. I intend only to offer some interesting comparisons, recontextualizations and further developments that may highlight the relevance of Hume's views (and of McCarthy's interpretation of them) to the more recent discussions of the methodology and overall concerns of moral philosophy, or of the philosophical search for the good life.

Even though my remarks will occasionally take us far away from Hume, they may serve as reminders of how certain Humean themes are well and alive in apparently non-Humean (e.g., pragmatist) contexts. It is the position (or, better, attitude) that we find in "The Sceptic," in particular, that proves valuable in the comparative study I shall engage in; and it is McCarthy's reading of the four essays that brings this out nicely. Moreover, I should add that the present chapter does not, as such, constitute an argument for the (Humean) view that ethics cannot be metaphysically grounded. It is impossible to deal with various realistic construals of morality, or their anti-realistic denials, in the scope of a single chapter. (Fortunately, some of this work has already been done, though inconclusively, in the "Introduction" and the two previous chapters.) What I attempt to do now is to reflect – finding help in Hume and some others – on the question of what kind of an issue the "grounding" or "foundation" of morality is. From the point of view of someone who refuses to share my conclusion, my reflections may seem question-begging. But such a charge would miss my basic point. I do not primarily think of philosophy as a project of demonstrating the truth of certain theses on the basis of indubitable premises. On the contrary, this chapter purports to express a kind of metaphilosophical orientation in which skepticism, albeit in a Humean "mitigated" sense, has a guiding role to play, without any of the catastrophic results that opponents of skepticism (more traditionally conceived) have warned about. Indeed, the "skeptical" metaphilosophical way of looking at moral philosophy and its aims and concerns that I recommend should (I hope) lead us to a more *human* way of engaging in ethical thinking. Thus, the pragmatist project taken up in the previous chapters is here continued from a somewhat different angle, without giving up the view that pragmatists, even when influenced by Humean skepticism, should be "internal" (pragmatic, empirical) moral realists.

McCarthy notes that Hume's series of essays can be read as an "ascent" from "The Epicurean" through "The Stoic" and "The Platonist" up to "The Sceptic," but persuasively argues that the essays do not constitute an ascent in the ordinary sense of the word. The ultimate result is not any positive philosophical wisdom but a skeptical insight which urges us to philosophize not by aiming at rationally established ultimate truths but in a self-critical and reflexive manner, keeping our thought "in service of action" and ordinary life, to which we should return from our trip to philosophical heights in which "air is too thin to breath" and which are, therefore, too much for our merely human understanding.

It is worth noting that I assume here without further argument that "The Sceptic" more or less represents Hume's own orientation, though not perhaps his views in all detail. McCarthy sets out to show that this is in a sense true but that it is also true that none of the essays, as such, contains Hume's own positive position, precisely because the message of "The Sceptic" is that no

such positive philosophical knowledge is to be had. Although one might expect that "The Sceptic" clearly represents Hume's own voice, one might also argue conversely that the message of "The Sceptic" differs significantly from Hume's more official position (to be found in the major works), according to which skepticism (about, say, causality or the self) is a purely philosophical exercise far removed from our ordinary concerns outside the academic life. I shall neither affirm nor deny this reading. It is very much an open question among commentators whether, and to what extent, Hume's views on the natural, instinctive beliefs of ordinary life can be compared to, say, Thomas Reid's commonsense philosophy.

McCarthy carefully explains how Hume first formulates and then criticizes the Epicurean's, the Stoic's, and finally the Platonist's ethical views of life. He shows that the structure of the first three essays is similar: each begins with a problem, proposes a solution ("The Stoic" and "The Platonist" also reject the solutions proposed in the preceding essays), and ends up with the limits of the proposed solution. Thus, we can discern an ascent, a single "story of human development from simple natural pleasures to the rarified pleasures of mind and spirit" in the first three pieces; we are "drawn ever upward, from the base physical desire of the Epicurean through the active virtue of the stoic to the sophisticated wisdom of the Platonist." (McCarthy 2002, p. 9) But the ascent turns into a circle as soon as we realize that the Epicurean rejects the Platonist's ideal of contemplation as "artificial happiness" (ibid.). Thus, we move on to the fourth and final essay, in order to find something quite different.

2. Humean "skepticism" contextualized

McCarthy perceptively summarizes what Hume tries to say in "The Sceptic" as follows:

> The others adhere to specific views of happiness, but the sceptic stands above and questions their approach. ... The sceptic's sentiments do not incline to any particular view of happiness. Instead, they incline away from the philosophical tendency to impose particular sentiments and ideas on the whole of experience. The sceptic distrusts the philosopher's construction of universal ethical systems from her own peculiar sentiments. Unlike the other sects, then, the sceptics share no positive view, but only opposition to the reductive prejudices of other sects. (McCarthy 2002, p. 10)

It is right here that we can take up the comparisons I promised. Upon reading "The Sceptic," and McCarthy's characterization of the Humean "sceptic," one can hardly think of a more accurate description of the kind of

moral philosophy that a number of thinkers have found in the legacy of Wittgenstein. The Wittgensteinian moral philosophers (discussed in some detail in the previous chapter) have strikingly similarly stressed that moral problems are deeply personal problems which cannot be settled by universal philosophical theories of the good life. These philosophers' approach in ethics is as particularist and down-to-earth as the "sceptic's." They are equally skeptical about universal theoretical systems. In particular, there can, they argue, be no firmer ground than morality itself for philosophical solutions of moral dilemmas. An argument for a view like this cannot be based on any general theory of what morality essentially is or how the good life is necessarily constituted; the view may, instead, be successfully propounded (only) within a Humean-like skeptical framework which questions all rationally constructed theories that claim universal validity. Thus, the central "argument" the Wittgensteinians rely on in developing their distinctive view of ethics must be, in a Humean sense, skeptical, though of course *not* skeptical in the sense of denying the subject-transcending validity of ethical statements altogether. This interpretation, accordingly, provides a context for the account of Wittgensteinianism provided in chapter three.

We have seen how the Wittgensteinian philosophers reject moral skepticism,[3] nihilism and anti-realism by rejecting *all* reductive theories of ethics, i.e., any theories that tend to reduce moral values or moral behavior to something allegedly more fundamental (e.g., physical, biological, psychological, or social). We have seen how they reject subjectivist conceptions of value, while refusing to embrace objectivist theories according to which values or "moral facts" exist in some objectively structured, independent realm of the (natural or supernatural) world. In this sense, of course, the analogy to Hume does *not* hold. The Wittgensteinian tradition in ethics by no means endorses Hume's conception of natural passions as "the only possible source of our ends," of the roots of morality lying primarily in the spectator's sentiments.[4]

As was suggested in chapter three, the Wittgensteinian approach may be interpreted (instead of any straightforward Humeanism) as an instance of quasi-Kantian transcendental reflection, with a kind of moral realism as the emerging result: our being able to hold any genuinely ethical views on anything or to make any genuinely moral choices in our lives necessarily requires that certain ethical views are held by us (personally) as absolutely correct, that is, not as mere opinions, subjective attitudes, or beliefs relative to a person or a community.[5] Yet, despite the Kantian-like argumentation structure we find in Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, the most important conclusion to be drawn resembles Hume's because of its skepticism about moral theories with universalist aspirations, including Kant's theory. Indeed, the craving for absolute correctness in one's ethical views is *not* the craving for absoluteness of a philosophical theory. In this sense the analogy to Hume does hold, although surely we have to go beyond Hume's own theory of ethics as ground-

ed in feelings of sympathy in order to arrive at any Wittgensteinian position worthy of the name.

In addition to neo-Wittgensteinian ethical thought, Hume's position in "The Sceptic" may easily be compared to pragmatism. This comparison is readily suggested by the idea that philosophy should be a servant of this-worldly, ordinary human action instead of any other-worldly contemplation. As was also claimed in the preceding chapter, pragmatism offers as good a middle path as Wittgensteinianism between two implausible extremes: the view that morality is based on, or can be justified with reference to, some objective transcendent foundation, on the one side, and the equally questionable (though undeniably more Humean) idea that morality is a matter of arbitrary subjective sentiments or preferences, on the other. We might speculate that it is partly their common Humean background (in addition to the Kantian background) that unites pragmatism and Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, although further historical comparisons are not possible here. We may note, however, that Kantian transcendental argumentation, Humean "naturalism," and the Wittgensteinian emphasis on naturally given human forms of life have been combined by P. F. Strawson in his important little book, *Scepticism and Naturalism* (1985). Here, Hume is presented not as a skeptic in any traditional epistemological sense but as a "naturalist" whose argumentation is similar to Kant's and Wittgenstein's to the extent that it focuses on what is given to us as the kind of beings we are. Recent scientistic forms of naturalism are, Strawson argues, skeptical in the sense of eliminating such natural givens. Again, it remains an open question to what extent Hume's views, as presented in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*, can be seen as giving up the demarcation between philosophy and common life and thus be reconciled with the naturalist-cum-pragmatist celebration of ordinariness we more clearly find in the essays.[6]

The kind of pragmatic moral realism I have been advocating locates ethical evaluation among natural human concerns (hence also the label, "pragmatic naturalism"), instead of locating it in some specific moral realm of being – though nor is moral rightness or wrongness just rooted in unreasoned passions or sentiments. Above all, pragmatists should join both Wittgensteinians and Hume's "sceptic" in thinking that our actual situations of moral deliberation are so irreducibly complex that it is futile to hope they could be neatly covered by an over-arching ethical theory. This complexity can, perhaps, be better described by good literature than by philosophical theorization. Both realist and anti-realist metaethical *theories*, then, ought to be abandoned, sceptically, according to both pragmatists and Wittgensteinians. But also the Humean theory that reason is the slave of passions and that morality must be fully accounted for in terms of sentiments ought to be subjected to such a skeptical critique. Even pragmatism itself, or the basic skepticism about universal theories underlying the pragmatist's attitude, should not turn into a dogmatic sect; it should also be reflexively examined in order to keep it open to revision.

Therefore, we should continue to ask, self-critically, what the pragmatist conception of moral deliberation in effect amounts to; finding no final answer, of course, because of the ineliminable complexity and open-endedness of morally problematic situations.

The skeptical view of general ethical theory should not prevent us from realizing that, on my pragmatist reading at least, even Hume may (albeit quite anachronistically) be seen as a Kantian thinker in an important sense. By referring to the *limits* of universal philosophical systems, Hume's "sceptic" reflexively investigates the *conditions* of morality, though in a manner very different from Kant's ethical rigorism. I shall briefly return to this idea toward the end of this chapter. Again, we should not overlook the fact that the suggestion of interpreting pragmatism, Wittgensteinianism and Humeanism in a quasi-Kantian fashion naturally introduces an "ethical theory" into our moral discourse; yet, it should be clear that for pragmatists theories are practical tools. We just have to avoid turning our practically flexible theories into ossified structures that supposedly cover all instances of our ethical lives. It is, after all, also a theoretical – and in a way universal – claim that "[h]uman life is complex; some people want one thing, others another," although this claim does neatly summarize the critical attitude toward philosophical theory-construction we find in "The Sceptic" (McCarthy 2002, p. 10). We cannot entirely avoid theorization in ethics, if we want to say something substantial, however particularized and contextualized, but we can keep our theorization practice-embedded, if we follow Hume and the pragmatists.

What we can avoid is the simple-minded idea that we could *first* formulate a universal ethical theory and *only then* apply it to particular cases of human life. Neither Hume's skepticism nor pragmatism commits us to "applied ethics." We ought to reject the distinction between moral theories and their practical applications that seems to be presupposed by applied ethics. "The Sceptic" shows us not only how to be skeptical about universalist tendencies in (moral) philosophy; it also shows us how important it is to avoid the misleading idea that ethics would be rendered a more concrete and humanly relevant discipline by "applying" theories to particular cases of moral bewilderment. It is, as I shall go on to argue in the next chapter, hard to find any pragmatic significance in the idea of "applying" philosophy. This is something we might see Hume as reminding us of.

Indeed, it seems to me that Hume's view, pragmatism and the Wittgensteinian line of thought converge in their reactions to the question of what it means to be a human being living in a metaphysically insecure world in which one simply has to go on acting and choosing without any guarantee of success. Thus, the contributions of these traditions to contemporary moral philosophy can be brought to the fore more clearly if we recognize that they are, in the end, attempts to engage in something like philosophical anthropology rather than "applied philosophy," attempts to inquire into the "human condition" that

makes morality inescapable for us, yet something that escapes systematic, universalizing philosophical theorizing and its foundationalist aims (see Pihlström 2003b).

The fragility and contingency of our ethical lives, reflected on at some length in the previous chapter, is something we should acknowledge, as there is no guarantee that morality will forever remain important for us. "The Sceptic" (or the entire series of essays) can, in my view, be included in the works of Western thought that, against mainstream moral philosophy, try to acknowledge this need of acknowledgment without guarantee. It is part of our "human nature" (or our "second nature," in McDowell's neo-Aristotelian jargon) to be committed to morality, not for the sake of any non-moral purpose (or on the grounds of a foundationalist argument allegedly legitimizing moral knowledge), not because of any supposedly more fundamental philosophical theory which justifies morality, but in the framework of a thoroughgoing skepticism directed at all such theories. Such a framework makes our fragile commitment to morality all the more serious, or, better, makes morality itself possible as a serious human enterprise. In a word, a skeptical attitude to ready-made philosophical answers to the deepest questions about the nature of the good life affirms the fundamental importance of one's own personal concern with one's life, in the absence of any metaphysical "foundation" of morality. Postulating such a foundation supposedly more fundamental than morality itself would be truly immoral. Alternatively, we may say that it is only against the background of the fundamental (but not foundationalist) significance of morality that the skeptical attitude to moral theories receives its philosophical relevance.

These conclusions can of course be drawn from *Hume's* essays only with extensive extrapolation, but they may be worthwhile conclusions to draw nevertheless. I have not claimed that Hume's "The Sceptic" has had any direct influence on the development of pragmatist or neo-Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, but I have suggested that these do share important points of contact which are unhappily left out of typical ethical and metaethical discussions today.

3. The ethical relevance of skepticism

As McCarthy (2002, p. 12) puts it, Hume's "ascent" in the four essays "collapses," throwing us "back at the bottom, apparently with the Epicurean insistence that we cannot transcend our nature." "All philosophical views ultimately fail." In this situation, one should, as I suggested in the previous section, approach ethical issues in a pragmatist and/or Wittgensteinian manner, drawing attention to the profound personal relevance of genuine ethical problems and the vulnerability of ethical duty. Now, McCarthy concludes, "[t]his insight" – i.e., that all universalistically aimed philosophical views

concerning true happiness or the value of life, such as Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Platonism, desperately fail – "*is* the sceptic's view" (ibid., p. 13).

So the skeptic does, after all, have a "view." Is this a problem for Hume, or for the philosopher trying to philosophize without any views – for a Wittgensteinian, perhaps? We must leave the question open here, but we must not forget it. It remains to be considered how the (Humean) skepticism we have, with some qualifications, defended, can really work in moral philosophy, helping us to "return to our merely human lives" in such a way that "we are not the same when we return," because our understanding of both ourselves and of the philosophical task we started with has changed (ibid.). Skepticism, in this sense, reminds us of the fact that "reason serves life, life does not serve reason" (ibid., p. 14), and this is almost identical with what is known as "pragmatism." It should be no surprise that classical American pragmatists, particularly James, found Hume (as well as the other British empiricists) among their most important predecessors.

But it should also be kept in mind in contemporary discussions of pragmatism that there is a significant role for skepticism to play within this tradition. It has too often been claimed that pragmatism simply casts skeptical worries aside. This is a line of thought we should resist (although this study is not the right place to venture any far-ranging hypotheses about pragmatism in general). Pragmatism, I insist, is an inherently anti-skeptical form of philosophizing *only* if skepticism is construed in a Cartesian (or traditionally "Humean") manner as a doubting of the reality of, say, the external world, other minds, or causality. It has been clear since antiquity, and should be even clearer since Hume and Wittgenstein, that this is not the only kind of skepticism there can be. Indeed, several scholars of pragmatism, including the present author (see Pihlström 1998), have too strongly emphasized the essentially anti-skeptical nature of pragmatism. The anti-skeptical interpretation has a legitimate application if restricted to epistemology and the philosophy of science; on the other hand, one of the basic points of pragmatism is that philosophical discussions should not be thus restricted but must take ethical issues into account. The skepticism presently at issue should also, above all, be directed to forms of pragmatism which construe ethical thought by analogy to scientific inquiry (cf. Misak 2000, and the critical discussion in chapter two). We ought to remain skeptical about accounts of moral deliberation that tell us that there are moral problems which can be "solved" through some decision procedure (in the sense in which scientific problems can be solved). In this sense, the pragmatic moral realist's conception of our ethical situation is tragic.

Instead of ancient skepticism, which would of course be a natural comparison, too, I shall try to say a few more words about the relation between the views of Hume's "sceptic" and the "truth in skepticism" (or the "moral of skepticism") that some recent philosophers standing close to pragmatism,

particularly Stanley Cavell and (following him) Stephen Mulhall, have found not only in Wittgenstein but also in Heidegger and in the American tradition *before* pragmatism, namely, in the transcendentalism represented by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau (and even to some extent in Kant himself, whose influence on Wittgenstein, Heidegger and the transcendentalists is undeniable). What I have in mind is, essentially, the following: arguing, with Cavell, that our relation to the existence of the world, including other people, is a relation to something "acknowledged," "accepted" or "received" – instead of something justified by a universal philosophical theory refuting skepticism once and for all – enables us to express the *depth* of that relation as compared to (mere) knowledge.[7] Here we arrive at a metaphilosophically skeptical-cum-pragmatist view of the *kind* of issue the "foundation" of morality (or, better, the lack thereof) is, as distinguished from any "first-order" views which attempt to give detailed arguments concerning the possibility of such a foundation.

Regarding pragmatism's alleged inherent anti-skepticism, Cavell points toward a more nuanced account, though he never seems to find pragmatism of much value in his reading of Emerson:

> [A]s my *Claim of Reason* claims, throughout his *Investigations* Wittgenstein is in struggle with the threat of skepticism, as Emerson is... In contrast, neither James nor Dewey seems to take the threat of skepticism seriously. This is hasty. James' treatment of the "sick soul" [in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1902] intersects with something I mean to capture in the concept of skepticism. But on James' account, it does not seem imaginable that *everyone* might be subject to this condition. That is, James perceives the condition as of a particular temperament, not as something coincident with the human as such, as if, as with the skeptical threat that concerns me, it is the necessary consequence of the gift of speech. Or shall we ... lay down definitions that distinguish skeptical pragmatists from nonskeptical pragmatists? To what end? (Cavell 1998, pp. 77–78.)

James's *Varieties*, as is known, significantly influenced Wittgenstein's thought, early and late (see Goodman 2002). It has also been noted that Emerson's doctrine of "self-reliance" is part of the "*Weltbild* of self-concern" that lies behind Wittgenstein's and his followers' views on ethics and religion (see Thomas 2001, pp. 84–85).[8] So, Cavell is certainly touching important issues here.

Regardless of the historical question of whether, say, Emerson or James really influenced Wittgenstein in these respects, the "truth in skepticism" can be appreciated when I realize, in Cavell's (1979, p. 125) words, that I sometimes have to "rest upon myself as my foundation" in my normative life.

There is, ultimately, no firmer ground for giving up moral nihilism or anti-realism (or any other view I *have to* give up in order to continue what I find a decent human life), i.e., for embracing a pragmatic realism about morality along the lines suggested above. I *just* refuse to be an anti-realist (say, a solipsist) and *simply* acknowledge others as my neighbors requiring ethical attention. Here I am "thrown back upon myself," recognizing that there are limits to my understanding, limits that I have to draw on my own grounds (ibid., p. 115). I have neither Epicurean, Stoic, Platonist or any other ready-made ethical systems at my disposal. What we seem to need in moral philosophy, instead of novel theoretical arguments against anti-realism, relativism, nihilism, or solipsism (or further work in "applied ethics"), is precisely Cavellian acknowledgment. Cavell, followed by neopragmatists like Putnam, draws our attention to Wittgenstein's use of such first-person points of view as the one employed in the *Investigations*: "If I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'" (Wittgenstein 1953, I, §217.)[9] There is a sense in which this first-person emphasis is an expression of skepticism, although this is *not* the sense of skepticism that Saul Kripke (1982) and other interpreters of Wittgenstein's rule-following discussions have had in mind. Cavell (1979, pp. 45f, 241) stresses that Wittgenstein takes the skeptical thesis (about the world and other minds) as undeniable and argues that, as our relation to "the world as a whole" and to others is not one of (certain) knowing, we do not *fail* in an attempt to know these things, either. *Contra* Kripke, there is no skeptical failure here requiring a "solution"; the attempt to offer a solution is as misguided as the skeptic who asks for it.

The finiteness, groundlessness and insecurity we again encounter here are key elements of our life, skeptically viewed. The moral point of view, despite or rather because of its precariousness, is irreducible; it is, one might say, too important to be metaphysically or epistemologically accommodated. There is nothing metaphysical to be relied on as a ground of the ethical duty of acknowledging another human soul. What we have to do is to face the others' genuine otherness truly ethically; in Wittgensteinian terms, by engaging in the problematic human form of life they engage in, without *first* trying to build a theory that would establish their reality and our cognitive contact with them. Furthermore, in so doing, I ought to, in Cavell's terms, assume a *responsibility* for my position (ibid., pp. 268, 312), that is, accept my bedrock, the piece of land where my spade is turned and where I stand firm, as *mine*. Refuting moral nihilism or anti-realism, or coming to know that such views are false (whatever that might mean), is not, then, something we are supposed to be able to do but actually fail to do. Once again, this might also be taken to be one of the morals that Hume's "sceptic" draws: we just have to accept our human predicament, the non-foundational and fragile nature of our lives, by what Cavell calls the moral of skepticism. More precisely, this is not something we "have to" do but

something we simply do. This non-foundationality is well captured by Cavell's emphasis on acknowledging, rather than knowing, other people. Anti-realism or nihilism is a very *inhuman* philosophy, but throughout *The Claim of Reason* Cavell tries to remind us that it is a most human effort to try to reject one's humanity. Inhumanity is always a human possibility. And it is a human task to acknowledge, in a way or another, (potential) inhumanity, too, in others and in oneself.

While emphasizing the profundity of the skeptical situation, Cavell by no means entirely rejects the Kantian transcendental approach to Wittgenstein (or to other writers he considers), although such an approach might seem opposed to any endorsement of the "truth in skepticism." Discussing Thoreau but alluding to Wittgenstein, he remarks that "Thoreau had the Kantian idea right": "the objects of our knowledge require a transcendental (or we may say, grammatical or phenomenological) preparation"; moreover, such *a priori* conditions of knowledge are "necessities of human nature," to be discovered experimentally and historically (Cavell 1981, p. 95). He also speaks about "heroic writing" (which he takes Thoreau's *Walden* to exemplify) having to "assume the conditions of language as such" (ibid., p. 33) and about "the creation of a world by a word" (ibid., p. 112), which brings him close to something like linguistified transcendental idealism. His central idea of the truth in skepticism that does not signify any "failure" of our cognitive efforts is also at work in this context, again captured in the slogan that our primary relation to the world is "not one of knowing it" (ibid., pp. 106–107, 133).[10] This kind of skepticism, needless to say, is very different from Cartesian methodological doubt, for instance, as well as from the kind of skepticism Hume has been taken to advance in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry* (and to which Kant, as the traditional story goes, gave a critical response). Note, however, that I am *not* claiming, of course, that Hume did not hold a traditional (Cartesian) form of skepticism in his major works. I have merely been concerned with "The Sceptic" (and not even with that essay in a scholarly historical manner).

"[T]he right ground of the skeptic," as Emerson puts it in his essay on Montaigne (another classical figure one might take up here but whom I must ignore), is "not at all of unbelief; not at all of universal denying, nor of universal doubting, – doubting even that he doubts; least of all of scoffing and profligerate jeering at all that is stable and good."[11] Properly formulated, skepticism remains a part of life, just as it does in "The Sceptic." Exactly as Cavell has emphasized in relation to Wittgenstein (and Emerson), no solution is being offered to the so-called problem of skepticism. On the contrary, skepticism is the background against which alternative philosophical solutions to human (especially ethical) problems are to be evaluated. It is one element of Cavell's work to insist that there is a sense in which this also makes our skeptical predicament *tragic*. (A further task would be to read Hume's writings

on tragedy in the light of this insight, but again that is not anything I can do here.)

At any rate, it is only against the liberating context of "The Sceptic" that Epicurean, Stoic, and Platonist views may function in a healthy way. As there are more important things in human life than knowing, or seeking to know, what good life (or anything else) "really" is, the "sceptic's" point against the "sects" is that such knowledge-seeking is fundamentally (ethically) misguided, though significant ideas may be learned through the "ascent" to its repudiation. This is a way of making the Wittgensteinian point that it is not the actual solutions to philosophical problems that matter, because in a sense there cannot be such solutions, as there is something deeply wrong with the problems themselves; but it is the search for clarity itself, the philosophical activity that amounts to dissolving the ambiguities that result in those problems, that leads us to whatever (skeptical) wisdom philosophizing can produce.

Cavell's account of the truth in skepticism has recently been further developed by Stephen Mulhall through a reading of Heidegger. It might seem problematic to invoke Mulhall here, because both his reading of Cavell and his (Cavellian-inspired) reading of Heidegger have been severely criticized. For example, Edward Witherspoon (2002) argues that Mulhall misrepresents Cavell's central message, i.e., that our relation to the world as a whole "is not that of knowing."[12] According to Witherspoon, we should not, *contra* Mulhall, postulate any "framework propositions" to get rid of (epistemic) skepticism, or any new propositional attitudes distinct from the familiar epistemic ones to account for the "not knowing" relation Cavell speaks about. There is not "something" (in skepticism) that we cannot say. More importantly, it is the notion of the world as an object, "as one thing," that we should give up (see ibid., p. 205).[13] Another critic of Mulhall, Martin Gustafsson (2002), specifically questions Mulhall's view that the notion of skepticism can be used to illuminate Heidegger's views on anxiety, which seem to "go deeper" than skepticism (see pp. 258–60). I shall shortly get back to this reading of Heidegger. In any case, there is no need to rely on Mulhall's understanding of Heidegger (or Cavell); I am just using his work heuristically as a collection of insights that surely deserve critical scrutiny.

While Mulhall is careful to note that Heidegger – as emphatically as the pragmatists – overturns the Cartesian skeptical problematic because it does not respect the essentially worldly existence of *Dasein* and is thus in a sense self-defeating or at least uninteresting (Mulhall 2001, pp. 219f, especially p. 222), he reads Heidegger as leading us to a deeper insight into "the true sceptic" who is "in the grip of anxiety," or angst (ibid., pp. 262–3). According to Mulhall, Heidegger's method in *Sein und Zeit* is "inflected by a specific mood long associated with philosophical scepticism," seeking to realize an "authentically sceptical phenomenology" which overcomes skepticism from within by being skeptical even about its own skepticism (ibid., pp. 264–5). Dasein is both

worldly (its being is being-in-the-world) and disoriented, "always already away from home" (ibid., p. 264). Mulhall notes here the deep similarity between Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's views on ordinariness. It is this realization of our ineliminable insecurity (or fragility, as I called it) that may lead us to authenticity; yet, as every reader of Heidegger knows, achieving authenticity is not an easy task. As Mulhall shows, skepticism has a key role to play in our quest for authenticity, although this role may be compromised by traditional philosophical formulations of skepticism as a view or doctrine:

> [W]e might think of philosophical scepticism as differentiated from itself, as always already split between its doctrinal or systematic realization and the anxious mood of which those doctrines are the intellectual expression; its philosophical authenticity resides in its beyondness to its own self-image, in the uncanniness that speaks silently before and beyond its assertions. ... [W]e might think of scepticism as representing an aspect of ourselves, both in its anxious receptivity to our uncanny individualization and in its intellectualized flight from that apprehension. If so, then authentic, phenomenological philosophizing must mean being prepared to acknowledge the sceptic within us – which means being prepared to give voice to the anxieties that we typically repress by projecting them outside ourselves, to let them find their natural expression, and then of course to find a way beyond those expressions, to find a way of articulating them otherwise. (ibid., p. 279)

These words by Mulhall might serve as a summary of what is going on in "The Sceptic" as much as in *Sein und Zeit*. Yet, this is not enough; there is still an important role to be played by skepticism even if we try to go "beyond Heidegger" – a move that has probably been made by Levinas more forcefully than by anyone else engaged in moral philosophy.[14] One of Levinas's central ideas, or rather *the* central idea of his work, is that the ethical relation to the Other has no theoretical grounding, is not a matter of knowledge (or any epistemic attitude), is "beyond comprehension" (Critchley 2002, p. 11). The Levinasian face-to-face relation to another human being is closely reminiscent of the Wittgensteinian acknowledgment of the "mystery" of another human being's subjectivity, an acknowledgment that can hardly be based on anything else than the pre-cognitive, non-metaphysical "attitude towards a soul" that Wittgenstein famously describes as something that is not based on an "opinion" that the other *has* a soul. The outcome of this "skepticism," shared by Levinas and Wittgenstein, is that ethics is not a subject about which one could theorize from a view from nowhere, universalistically, totalizingly. Ethics, famously, lies beyond ordinary factual discourse and cannot be put to words.[15] Yet, it "is" everywhere: ethics is something "lived," not something abstractly and theoretically universalized (ibid., p. 21). At this point, in our full

recognition of the ubiquity of the ethical, a comparison to Cavell's views is readily available: even though I cannot *know* that the other is in pain, I need to acknowledge her or his pain, her or his genuine alterity: "in our relation to other persons we have to learn to acknowledge what we cannot know.... The end of certainty can be the beginning of trust." (ibid., p. 26)[16] The truth in skepticism is thus also endorsed in a Levinasian setting, within an ethics of otherness conceived of as a "first philosophy," instead of a mere sub-discipline of philosophy in need of a metaphysical foundation.

As we noted in chapter three, Putnam also emphasizes, in relation to Levinas, the "ungrounded" nature of ethics: there can be no "because," neither metaphysical nor psychological, as a grounding of ethics (Putnam 2002b, pp. 35–36). What ethics, for Levinas, is fundamentally about is an unreserved, asymmetrical offering to the other; if one asks, "why?," one is "not yet human" (ibid., p. 39). Not even any personal epiphany can serve as the ground of the ethical (ibid., p. 48); there simply cannot be any ground at all. As I argued toward the end of the previous chapter, one will already have stepped outside the sphere of the ethical, if one believes one must answer the "why be moral?" question. Moreover, this skepticism (though "skepticism" is a term Putnam avoids in this connection) itself is, and can only be, ethically motivated. The totalizing idea of justifying ethics from a "view from nowhere" can eventually only be met with "moral resistance" (ibid., p. 50). To argue that it fails in some other way, in a more fundamental sense than the ethical one, would be to play the immoralist's game.

Because of its absolutely demanding and uncompromising tone, Levinas's moral thought, as well as Putnam's reading of it, takes us to the border line of ethics and religion, which we shall not examine any further. In Putnam's case, it is not only his Jewish identity but also his Cavellian-Wittgensteinian influences that make him responsive to Levinasian ideas. It is another matter whether these somewhat different ways of affirming the truth in skepticism are really compatible. One might argue that, despite the profound parallels between Wittgenstein and Levinas, the former's attachment to "self-concern" (see Thomas 2001, chap. 3) and to the (unsayable) attempt to view the world *sub specie aeternitatis* (ibid., chap. 1) is fundamentally at odds with the latter's celebration of otherness which can never be totalized. Yet, even Levinas seems to be caught in the problem framework of "self-concern" (or even solipsism, in a manner resembling Wittgenstein), because it is always *me* whose responsibility it is to acknowledge, ethically, the other: I am, asymmetrically, responsible for the other, not *vice versa*.[17]

Suffice it to say that the Humean skeptic (just like her or his ancient, particularly Pyrrhonian, tranquillity-seeking ancestor) is perhaps a more easy-going and healthy-minded, less anxiety-driven fellow than her or his Heideggerian or Levinasian (or Wittgensteinian or Emersonian) cousin – or James's (1902) "sick soul," for that matter. Conversely, the Humean skeptic is

less responsive to a religious interpretation of our ethical insecurity and homelessness than these other "skeptics." Indeed, Putnam briefly compares Levinas and Hume: they share the idea that ethics is based on our reactions to people instead of any universal principles, but Hume's way of grounding ethics in sympathy is as far from Levinas's views as anything can be: "you aren't ethical at all," Putnam says, if you only feel ethically obliged to those you sympathize with (Putnam 2002b, p. 54; see also Putnam 2004, Lecture I). An ethics of sympathy, from a Levinasian perspective, prepares the ground for Holocaust, because one can easily treat unethically those one does not sympathize with, conceptualizing them as sub-humans.

The common point of departure of the different skeptical figures I have mentioned is, however, their insistence on placing the acknowledgment of our profoundly skeptical situation at the very center of philosophical methodology. Only thus will we be able to develop a (moral) philosophy sensitive to the ineliminable limits defining our human condition; limits which, however, despite their ineliminability, do not signify any "failure" of ours. None of these skeptics, moreover, should be seen as relying on a distinction between "theoretical" and "practical" skepticism; their skepticism about the possibility of giving theoretical foundations to the pursuit of the good life is, if anything, practically oriented and hence ethical. This, I think, justifies the description of this kind of skepticism as "pragmatist."

A critic might now suggest that I have not been careful enough to keep two quite different forms of skepticism apart. First, one may speak about skepticism regarding the kind of moral philosophy that seeks to offer a justification of ethical beliefs and practices, a justification strong enough to provide an "outsider" (i.e., someone who initially does not care about morality) with reasons to engage in moral thinking and deliberation. The second form of moral philosophy which can be skeptically viewed would be a search for a systematic account of moral thought, leading to a decision procedure which could be applied to the solving of ethical problems. This distinction may be pragmatically helpful in some contexts, but I have proposed, with the help of Hume, the Wittgensteinians, Cavell, and others, that a skeptical attitude should be adopted in both areas. The two concerns to be treated skeptically – metaphysical justification (even for "outsiders") and systematicity – are indeed closely related, though by no means identical. The systematic ethical theorist might appeal to the very systematicity of her or his approach, and to the (alleged) fact that the systematic theory yields a "decision procedure" and thus helps in solving people's problems, in her or his attempt to justify the adoption of a moral perspective. If the somewhat multi-dimensional argumentation sketched in this chapter is on the right track, these two essentially related aims, systematicity and external theoretical justification, should be treated with equal suspicion. It is because there can be no ethical decision procedure that the very

idea of justifying morality from an external perspective becomes suspect, and *vice versa*.

Still, as I explained in the first two chapters, this does not mean that realism would have to be given up. Skepticism destroys alleged metaphysical grounds for morality, and the "decision procedure" conceptions based on such assumptions, not the "internal" objectivity of moral values as seen from within a personal commitment.

4. Some further comparative remarks

I have above occasionally referred to the similarities between the Humean-pragmatist-Wittgensteinian-Cavellian approach to skepticism, on the one side, and Kantian transcendental investigation, on the other. This may have sounded odd. Yet, while transcendental philosophy has, since Kant, primarily focused on the legitimation and restriction of knowledge claims, there is no reason why we cannot reinterpret the transcendental project in a manner which accommodates Cavellian "acknowledgment" of the world (including other human beings) as something more primary, and "closer," than any epistemic relation between the subject and the world she or he inhabits, or Mulhall's related account of the fundamentally skeptical mood of any authentic philosophizing examining our being-in-the-world. Even Levinas can be re-read in these terms: the Other's face is, for him, "the condition of possibility for ethics" (Critchley 2002, p. 16). If this kind of a reinterpretation of the "truth in skepticism" tradition in moral philosophy is possible, then even Hume's "sceptic" will turn out to be a qualified transcendental philosopher examining the (natural, given) limits of the human condition.[18] The Humean condition is the human condition: down-to-earth, varied, particularistic.[19] As Hume concludes in "The Sceptic":

> In a word, human life is more governed by fortune than by reason; it is to be regarded more as a dull pastime than as a serious occupation; and is more influenced by particular humour, than by general principles. Shall we engage ourselves in it with passion and anxiety? It is not worthy of so much concern.[20] Shall we be indifferent about what happens? We lose all the pleasure of the game by our phlegm and carelessness. While we are reasoning concerning life, life is gone; and death, though *perhaps* they receive him differently, yet treats alike the fool and the philosopher. To reduce life to exact rule and method, is commonly a painful, oft a fruitless occupation...." (Hume 1742, p. 231)

Thus, when McCarthy (2002, p. 10) quotes Hume saying, in the opening paragraph of "The Sceptic," that the philosophers' mistake is that they "confine too much their principles, and make no account of that vast variety,

which nature has so much affected in all her operations" (Hume 1742, p. 213), one cannot help being reminded of Wittgenstein quoting Shakespeare: "I'll teach you differences." This line from *King Lear* was once considered by Wittgenstein as a motto for the *Investigations* (see Goodman 2002, pp. 172–3). Hume's and Wittgenstein's warnings about the universalist tendencies of philosophy should be taken to heart even by those who are willing to examine the possibilities of a Kantian-styled response to Hume, that is, of a transcendental investigation of the conditions constitutive of human experience. It is precisely such a transcendental investigation that, far from "refuting" skepticism, may arrive at a form of skepticism (in a Humean, Emersonian, Wittgensteinian, Heideggerian, Levinasian, or Cavellian sense) as the background against which (only) a meaningful, "authentic" relation to the world, including other human beings whom we ought to take into account ethically, is possible – or, if that word is allowed, as a (non-foundationalist) "foundation" upon which any inquiry into the good life must inevitably be built. Skepticism, then, pragmatically serves our purposes of living a morally serious life.

What is more, if the reflections offered in this chapter are plausible, there is little sense in the requirement that this "skepticism" (if that indeed is the right term for the position I have sketched) could be argumentatively secured against actual or conceivable metaphysically-realist criticisms. To be committed to the view that ethics lacks metaphysical foundations is to be committed to an ethical position, or, better, an ethically loaded orientation to philosophical issues in metaethics, which *cannot*, if the commitment is made seriously, be demonstratively established. Such a commitment is, in brief, incompatible with any attempt to argue for one's position on an allegedly neutral ground, persuading someone who does not already share the same conception of the "groundlessness" of ethics, or a (meta-)ethical orientation similar enough to permit mutually enriching dialogue. Yet, this is not to say that criticism is inappropriate in ethical contexts. On the contrary, this entire essay has been and will continue to be highly critical of the foundationalist projects of metaphysical grounding and systematic theorizing; I have in this chapter tried to let the skeptical voice to be heard in order to leave *those* projects aside, although, admittedly, I may not have been able to be fair enough with the skeptic's opponent. In any case, I do not believe that my failure to discuss (here) the twists and turns of various foundationalist metaethical theories in any way harms my comparative and recontextualizing attempt to make the skeptical-cum-pragmatist case from a point of view internal to the skeptical-cum-pragmatist framework. Argumentative criticism, in ethics and elsewhere, has its limits, and there are philosophical points that can only be made by saying that they *cannot* be (neutrally) argued, as the rival position makes the very project of philosophical reflection (in this case, genuine ethical reflection and commitment) impossible. *This*, of course, is a meta-level argument,

ethically structured, though hardly an argument that someone with more metaphysical aims would accept.

At the same time, maintaining a "critical" or even "transcendental" vocabulary within a philosophical framework skeptical of foundationalist theories enables us, if we set out to work in such a framework, to prevent our philosophical investigations of morality from sliding into an "edifying" post-philosophical writing typical of Rorty and his followers. In a word, a transcendental reinterpretation of the fundamentally skeptical framework that, as we have noticed, some of the most profound ethical thinkers of our time have seen as a necessary "foundation" of ethics, is designed to preserve moral seriousness in our affirmation of the humanly valuable truth in skepticism.

Five

METAPHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PRAGMATIST METAETHICS

1. Pragmatism as applied philosophy?

The purpose of this chapter is to examine whether the pragmatist conception of philosophy at work in the analysis of moral realism and the non-foundational status of ethics is close to, or explicable in terms of, the notions of (1) *applied philosophy* or (2) *philosophical therapy*. I shall offer an ethically engaging critical treatment of both notions, which have become popular in recent metaphilosophical discussions. This chapter thus ought to be read as a further development of the demand for the ethical seriousness of one's philosophizing, as already articulated in the previous chapters.

So, first, what is "applied philosophy"? This is a philosophical – or, if you wish, metaphilosophical – question to which, however, a preliminary answer can be given by just looking around in university libraries. There are learned journals dedicated to applied philosophy, such as the *Journal of Applied Philosophy* and the *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*. In addition, there is a continuously increasing number of more specialized journals, focusing on relatively new academic fields such as bioethics, medical ethics, environmental ethics, and so forth. Anthologies in which philosophers apply their doctrines and arguments to various important issues have also been published (e.g., Almond and Hill 1991). Conferences are continuously organized in such fields of inquiry.

Still, some academic philosophers are puzzled about the existence of this area of research. For example, John Passmore (1988), who has himself written on environmental and other issues, is worried about the lack of rigor in much of what is called "applied philosophy," urging that applied philosophy properly so called should not be just "lay sermonizing." On the other hand, a number of writers have questioned the view (a typical dogma among analytic philosophers) that philosophy is, and must remain, practically useless, since it is preoccupied with rather abstract problems of conceptual clarification. These writers remind us that philosophy ought to be reconnected with the practical problems of human life and that philosophers' work should not be detached from urgent issues of wider social concern (see Warren 1992).[1] The need to "apply" philosophy to such concerns has generally been felt to become stronger as the school known as analytic philosophy has lost its integrity, although we may recall that Canadian philosopher Rupert C. Lodge, for one, insisted on the relevance of philosophy to education, business, government,

religion, and everyday living already in his 1951 book *Applied Philosophy*. Nevertheless, even many of the self-proclaimedly applied philosophers do not appear to be entirely certain about the status of their work.

In a way, this is as it should be. Puzzlement need not be anything to complain about. Philosophy should continuously be a problem for itself, and philosophers, moral philosophers in particular, ought to worry about their tasks, possibilities, and cultural role. If some contemporary thinkers claim to be doing "applied philosophy," it is worthwhile for others to investigate what their intellectual activity actually amounts to. We shall soon see that there are rival conceptions of applied philosophy around. I shall argue that the very concept of applied philosophy is inherently problematic, since none of the two rival views I shall distinguish is adequate. But I do not think that the investigations taking place under the rubric of applied philosophy should be abandoned; on the contrary, I regard them as attempts to touch, by intellectual means, some inescapable problems of humankind. Such attempts should, of course, be encouraged. What I am slightly skeptical about is the possibility of literally "applying" a philosophical theory to some practical or concrete subject-matter drawn from ordinary human life. This skepticism parallels, or can even be derived from, the skepticism about ethical theory outlined in chapter four. After giving a few examples, I shall suggest that the difficulties surrounding applied philosophy lie in the unpragmatic dichotomy between theory and practice which most applied philosophers still assume.

The problem of the nature of applied philosophy cannot be solved by simply listing all instances of "philosophy of X," such as "philosophy of art," "philosophy of science," "philosophy of religion," "philosophy of medicine," "philosophy of sport," etc. Some of these realms of philosophical reflection do not count as applied philosophy, simply because they constitute much of what is known as "philosophy" today. In particular, philosophy of science is a key element of twentieth (and twenty-first) century philosophy, at least in English-speaking countries. We have to look for the answer to our problem elsewhere. Although applied philosophy, in the form in which we know it today, is perhaps not a perennial area of philosophical reflection, we may speak about a *traditional concept of applied philosophy*. By this I mean the straightforward view, drawn from Aristotle's and Kant's famous distinctions between theoretical and practical reason and, correspondingly, theoretical and practical philosophy, according to which applied philosophy amounts to an application of *theoria* to *praxis*. That is to say, we first have a (usually highly abstract) philosophical "theory," which in itself, as inherently non-applied, says nothing (directly) about any practical questions, and then we "apply" it to such questions, attempting to find out what we should think about them in the light of that theory (and, more concretely, how we should act after having made our decision of how to think). Philosophical theory, or "pure" philosophy, is thus

applied to certain concrete problem situations of human life, which almost always contain an irreducibly ethical dimension. This totality of theory and practice, united by the activity of application, is then called applied philosophy. The applier of philosophy must be well informed not only about the philosophical theory she or he wishes to apply, but also about the practical problems she or he is interested in settling by means of that theory.

It seems to me that the following standard construal of applied philosophy well agrees with my loose characterization of the concept:

> [T]here is nothing unique about [the] symbiotic relationship between theory and practice, for most disciplines, from physics to psychology, are termed 'applied' when they attempt to use their distinctive body of theory to solve practical problems. It is in this way that 'applied philosophy' is already widely understood as the name for philosophical engagement with the many issues of practical life that hinge upon ethical considerations, and are capable of being illuminated by deeper conceptual understanding and by critical analysis of the arguments they involve. (Almond and Hill 1991, p. 1)

Alternatively, taking the talk about "critical analysis" seriously, we may say that what applied philosophers "apply" is the "philosophical method" they have learned and know how to use (whatever that is), instead of specific philosophical doctrines or theories (Passmore 1988, p. 682). I do not want to lay too much weight on this distinction, however, since I am not sure whether there is any specifically philosophical methodology (apart from reasonable careful argumentation) as distinguished from the doctrines philosophers arrive at by employing their various methods of reflection. Rather, methods seem to be "theory-dependent" or "theory-laden" both in science and in philosophy. For example, the "method" of investigation, transcendental reflection, that Kant uses in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* is hardly separable from the overall theoretical conception of human reason discussed in that work; and so is Peirce's and James's "pragmatic method" at home in the context of their views on purposive human action. Moreover, philosophical methods are as much objects of philosophical or metaphilosophical dispute as they are philosophical doctrines or theories (the conclusions arrived at through the use of such methods) themselves. This obviously also applies to the methods and theories within ethics.

It must be admitted that the process of application in actual cases of applied philosophy may be far more complex than I have described. It has been argued, for example, that applied philosophy should not be conceived as a merely "derivative" activity, i.e., as derived from pure or theoretical philosophy, since the application may alter the principles or theories that are

applied. Those principles or theories may be re-evaluated, specified, challenged, etc., in the course of application. Therefore, applied philosophy cannot be fruitfully compared to, say, applied mathematics, in which, of course, the mathematical theories themselves remain unchanged (see Kopelman 1990).

Still, examples falling under what I call the traditional concept of applied philosophy can easily be found, if we take a closer look at discussions in practical ("applied") ethics, which focus on problems such as euthanasia and abortion as well as on environmental problems and on issues of war and peace. In order to avoid these particular subject matters, which are more familiar than any others in the field of applied philosophy, we shall briefly examine the conception of philosophy at work in Ruth Chadwick's (1989) application of Kantian ethics to the problem of the market for bodily parts. This is a typical case: we first have a philosophical theory, i.e., the Kantian view of morality, which we then apply to a disturbing ethical, social, and political problem, namely, the unfortunate fact that people (mainly in the third world) have to sell parts of their body (such as a kidney) in order to earn enough money for making their unhappy life worth living. Chadwick examines what we should say, from the Kantian point of view, about such a human practice.

Even though Chadwick herself does not seem to be making any explicit distinction between "theoretical" and "practical" (or applied) approaches in philosophy, I think it is reasonable to read her as first dealing with the theoretical problem of whether we can have moral (and not merely prudential) duties to ourselves. This involves an excursion to the mind-body problem. Chadwick arrives at the conclusion that we can reasonably talk about duties toward our own bodies, "if we agree with Kant that morality is concerned with how human beings, including oneself, are to be treated, and that human beings are necessarily embodied" (ibid., pp. 131–2). She then goes on to consider the practice of selling (parts of) one's body, quoting Kant's (1963, p. 124) thesis that "a human being is not entitled to sell his limbs for money, even if he were offered ten thousand thalers for a single finger" (quoted in Chadwick 1989, p. 132). She finds that Kant's argument for this thesis depends on a conception of what is "intrinsically degrading" to human beings, that is, on a sort of philosophical anthropology which says that human beings simply are not "objects" to be bought and sold. This view, of course, can be seen as a corollary of one of the famous formulations of the categorical imperative, i.e., that the humanity of both other people and of oneself ought to be valued as an end in itself, never as a mere means (see also Korsgaard 1996a).

After this reasoning, Chadwick comments upon Rom Harré's revision of Kant's argument and argues that Harré also needs a notion of what is intrinsically degrading. Finally, she investigates some conceptual issues related to the practice of donating (instead of selling) one's bodily parts and to the notion of ownership as related to human bodies. She concludes by turning

Kant's and Harré's talk about what is intrinsically degrading into a more social talk about the "flourishing" of human beings in societies (Chadwick 1989, p. 138). While the conclusion itself may not be surprising or even very interesting – when we are told that the social and economic circumstances of the bodily parts market ought to be taken into consideration, we are only reminded of the quite obvious fact that moral agents live in societies – what we have here is a clear example of an application of a theoretical framework to a socially problematic practice.

Even Kant himself might have been satisfied with what Chadwick and others like her have done. In fact, toward the end of the first *Critique* he does speak about applied ("angewandte") philosophy, for which pure philosophy provides the *a priori* principles (Kant 1781/1787, A848 / B876), even though his example of applied philosophy is empirical psychology rather than applied ethics.

2. Is applied philosophy an applied science?

The conception briefly examined seems to be the standard picture dominating the discussions of various applications of philosophy published in the journals of this growing academic field. In my view, there are still too few relevant metaphilosophical discussions available; critical discussions, that is, of what the proponents of applied philosophy think they are doing. The project of a (meta)philosophical clarification of the activity called applied philosophy is still far from completed.

The traditional picture of applied philosophy can perhaps be compared to the standard account of "applied science," according to which a scientific theory is applied to a humanly important practical problem in order to solve that problem and satisfy some human needs. Such needs may be vital, e.g., nourishment or peace, or they may be related to some less vital concerns or values, e.g., the beauty of human skin. But the problems the applied scientist is interested in are nevertheless practical problems embedded in human practices. It appears that a number of, if not most, applied philosophers have the analogy to applied science in mind, at least implicitly. Ilkka Niiniluoto (1993) has suggested that the results of applied science can usually be regarded as *technical norms* in G. H. von Wright's (1963a) sense, that is, as conditional statements of the form

TN If you want A, and you believe that you are in a situation B, then you ought to do X.

For example, medical scientists tell us that it is advisable to use antibiotics, if we want to cure certain illnesses caused by bacteria. Economists

may urge us to lower interest rates, if we want to avoid unemployment, and so forth. In both cases, we have a scientific (physiological or economical) theory about the ways some elements of reality behave (i.e., the human body and the economic system, respectively), which we apply to the humanly significant problems of curing illnesses and avoiding unemployment, and thus eventually to our fundamental human values of staying alive and experiencing our lives as significant. We might think that the often difficult and technical theories have little value in themselves; they are meant to be applied in order to realize some human values or goals. (However, I am not denying that scientific knowledge may be valuable "in itself," lacking immediate practical applications. Not even committed pragmatists should deny this; pragmatism, after all, is distinct from naive instrumentalism.)

Conditional statements such as TN have truth-values, as their truth or falsity can be seen to be based on causal regularities obtaining in the natural (or, more problematically, social) reality. According to Niiniluoto (1993, pp. 11–13), the results of applied science, and particularly what he calls "design science," are typically technical norms; thus, these fields of research aim at factual statements about causally constrained means-ends relations and at normative recommendations based thereupon. So, is applied philosophy an applied science in this sense? Does applied philosophy aim at similar targets? Are there any means-ends connections which ought to be studied *philosophically*, instead of employing the methods used in specific applied sciences?

These questions seem to depend ultimately on the question of whether philosophy itself is a science. I do not attempt to answer this general question in any conclusive way – though we should recall the critical remarks on moral philosophy as an "inquiry" made in earlier chapters. The question obviously has a lot to do with individual philosophical temperaments, which affect the ways in which we view our own philosophical activities. Some of us think of themselves as scientists; others do not. But let me point out that, on my opinion, there is nothing specific enough to be substituted for A, B, and X in the von Wright–Niiniluoto TN scheme, if that scheme is applied in order to make sense of applied philosophy (rather than, say, medicine). It *might* be tempting to view applied philosophy as a design science, that is to say, as research "aiming at knowledge that is useful for the activity of design that enhances human art and skill (Greek *techne*, Latin *ars*)," provided that "design" is construed broadly enough to cover "all 'artificial' human activities, i.e., the production, preparation, or manipulation of natural systems (e.g., human body, forest) or artefacts (e.g., an aeroplane, city, legal order)" (Niiniluoto 1993, p. 8). Many applied philosophers certainly deal with this type of activities, particularly the ethical features of such activities. But it is extremely doubtful whether there is any proper "art" or respective design science corresponding to the philosopher's profession – as there is, say, the art

of medicine and medical science corresponding to the physician and her or his practice, viz., therapy or healing.[2]

We might try the following modification of TN:

TN2 If you hold the philosophical (ethical) theory A, and you believe that you are in a situation B, then you ought to do X.

Here it must be assumed that A (for example, again, Kant's ethical theory) says something about B-type situations and thus recommends the practical conclusion X. But now the recommended action is not relativized to human values or goals any longer. It is only relativized to the philosophical (ethical) positions the agent happens to hold (for any reason whatsoever). In a sense, of course, we can talk about an application of a theory to a practical situation here. But the real issues lie embedded in the variables A and B. What are the human values the theory in question focuses on? What kind of evaluations are already inherent in the way(s) in which the agent perceives and interprets the situation she or he believes to be in – or in the theory assumed to be true? Most importantly, the values and evaluations at work here are not (usually) even nearly as simple as the one of promoting human health, which we may take to be the goal of medicine and which is not a simple one, either (as disputes over, e.g., euthanasia show).[3] When talking about philosophical or ethical theories and their relevance in practical situations of our lives we have to deal with overarching values such as "good life," "justice," and "humanity," and the innumerable ways in which they can be realized, or fail to be realized, in our practical actions.

Hence, applied philosophy is hardly a design science in the sense of medical science, agricultural science, or engineering science. And it is even less likely that applied philosophy could be taken to belong (along with meteorology, for example) to the other basic category of applied research Niiniluoto mentions, namely, "predictive science" (Niiniluoto 1993, p. 7). I think we should now agree with John Wilson and Barbara Cowell (1985), who suggest that there are cases in which philosophy cannot be applied to problems but must be applied to people. In such cases, there are no simple "right answers" to be found through the application (as, presumably, there are in science); rather, the issue is one of cultivating a right kind of attitude or person. Ethical "solutions" must be sought by individual human beings themselves, by living through the problematic situations they find themselves in – just as the Wittgensteinian moral philosophers discussed in chapter three typically argue. Alternatively, we could say that the applications of philosophy cannot produce results fitting TN. On the other hand, TN2 does not really speak about means-ends connections at all.

We should not, then, think about applied philosophy in terms of the analogy to applied science, any more than we should construe ethical thought in terms of "inquiry." (Indeed, these two negative points are intimately related, as applied philosophy is usually taken to contain crucially ethical elements and is sometimes even spokean about synonymously with "applied ethics.") Moreover, as Robert Fullinwider (1989, especially pp. 227, 233) reasonably warns us, there just may not be any special philosophical subject-matter to be applied in public debates. Although there may be a negative, destructive use for metaphysical, epistemological, and moral theories in such debates, those theories have little positive relevance in practice. I conclude that there seems to be no relevant philosophical investigation available of anything like the means-ends relations assumed in instances of TN. Those relations should be investigated by the various applied sciences.

However, the idea of applied philosophy is not buried as soon as the analogy to applied science collapses. I now turn to an examination of a rival conception of applied philosophy; or, as we might say, a rival way of applying the concept of applied philosophy. Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen argue in their book (or "anti-book," postmodernists as they are) *Imagologies* (1994) that philosophy should turn into a non-academic or post-academic "media philosophy," in which philosophers actively engage in public discussions in the (electric) media instead of writing difficult scholarly papers on how to apply, say, Kant's ethical ideas to some practical problems. In the media, "one-liner's are everything." The job of the applier of philosophy in our postmodern media age is to produce quick comments upon any conceivable cultural issues.[4] Saarinen himself (who used to work at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Helsinki, but is presently a professor at the Helsinki University of Technology) has been an incredibly versatile cultural figure in Finland. He has had his word to say about rock music, sex, fashion, fast food, business, family life, and political elections, among many other things. He seems to think (as he should, according to the doctrines of *Imagologies*) that all of his public engagements are parts of his work *as a philosopher*. The philosopher can comment upon *anything*. Any word or statement thrown into the electric media can be philosophical. Of course, the internet and the accelerating development new hypermedia technologies of communication enable the media philosopher to distribute her or his comments to the public faster and faster.

This postmodernist, relativist conception of media philosophy is radical enough, but I think it still shares the basic idea with its more traditional rival, that is, the application of a more or less philosophical "theory" to some practical problem area. Insofar as the media philosopher steps to the media as a philosopher, it is assumed that she or he shares the philosophical tradition with her or his more academic colleagues who are not equally active in public

discussions. It is this whole body of philosophical tradition that she or he then applies to *any* question whatsoever, however remote from academic philosophical issues. The difference to the traditional concept of applied philosophy is one of scope, thus a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind – and probably also a difference in intellectual standards.

There are several problems in a conception of philosophy of this type. First, the media philosopher's relation to academic philosophy is ambivalent. The whole point of the idea is to criticize academic (especially analytic) philosophers' lack of interest in public problems, but the media philosopher still presents himself as a philosopher, who "comes from" the university and steps down onto the level of ordinary people to talk to them. Somewhat paradoxically, he relies on her or his academic education but attempts to say, or at least imply, that such an education is not what really matters. Secondly, if the tradition of Western philosophy can be applied to any issue whatsoever, even to, say, fast food, we have to ask whether there can be any normative debate over the nature of philosophy any longer. It seems to me that any philosophy worth the name should be able to critically discuss its own standards of excellence, that is, the very standards in terms of which it *is* a serious form of philosophical activity in the first place. This is hardly possible, if "anything goes" in philosophy, i.e., if any discussion, for example a dispute over whether McDonald's hamburgers make us feel good, counts as philosophical. The next step would be Rortyan "edification" in a "post-Philosophical culture" (see Rorty 1980, 1982).[5] Or perhaps Taylor and Saarinen have already taken a step beyond Rorty. There can be no normative conversation about the criteria of edification in their utopia. In other words, if we think about Taylor's and Saarinen's position in terms of the TN scheme introduced above, there are no normative constraints of any kind for variables A and B. Any human goals, or any (philosophical or non-philosophical) views human beings might happen to hold, as well as all kinds of situations they may believe to be in, ought to be philosophically interesting.

For these reasons, I reject the rival of the traditional conception, i.e., the "media philosophy" or "imagological" conception of applied philosophy. It is no improvement of the traditional view. Instead, it is merely a degraded relativistic version of the latter. The partisans of the older, more traditional way of thinking still fight real philosophical fights. They are seriously interested in philosophical doctrines, such as Kant's ethical position, and the implications those doctrines have in our practices. Postmodern media philosophers are hardly interested in philosophy at all. Their practice amounts to – if not pseudo-science, at least pseudo-philosophy. At worst, they just want to say "something clever" on the television. We can let them do that, but we may remind them that loosening the standards of what counts as good or interesting philosophy can in an indirect way even be culturally harmful.

As pragmatists like to put it, we ought to evaluate the "cash value" of philosophical positions in terms of their practical outcome. This terminology is, of course, drawn from James's (1907) pragmatism. This Jamesian evaluation is what should be done to media philosophy, too. Sometimes, to borrow a term from F. Gerald Downing (1996, p. 213), the "cash costs" of certain ways of applying philosophy may be too high, even if there is some positive cash value to be found.[6] This might be the case with Taylor's and Saarinen's program. I am not saying that there is no value in it at all; I am just saying that its practical outcome needs to be more carefully reflected upon than these authors have done themselves, despite their obvious commitment to pragmatism, to the principle of putting thought to action, which in their case sometimes sounds even more radical than Rorty's.

3. Philosophy and human problems

I am thus suspicious of the media philosophers' view of applied philosophy because of its relativist, postmodern lack of academic rigor. But I also reject the traditional conception because of its basic assumption that philosophy is fundamentally like a science and can thus be fruitfully compared to such applied sciences as medicine, agricultural science, and engineering. The kind of pragmatist (and Wittgensteinian) view of ethics developed in the previous chapters is quite different. Needless to say, as a pragmatist, I also reject the contrary view that philosophers should not be interested in human problems (Deweyan "problems of men") at all but should concentrate on mere academic theory-construction in their "ivory tower."

We may at this point ask the question that has been implicit in my discussion from the beginning of this chapter: why do we even need the "pure" vs. "applied" dichotomy in philosophy? If human life or human existence as such already *is* the key problem of philosophical reflection, we do not, I am inclined to think, need it at all. The "practical" problems of our life and practices are then always already at the center of good philosophical work. This seems to be a metaphilosophical perspective common to the traditions of, existentialism and pragmatism, for example, which have in different though perhaps overlapping ways been preoccupied with the human worth of philosophical positions and arguments. In order to connect my discussion with what was said in the previous chapters, I shall add a few thoughts on pragmatism as a philosophical orientation eroding the very idea of "application."

For pragmatists, theory and practice have always been intrinsically connected. Here pragmatism merely systematizes something that was already present in ancient Greek conceptions of philosophy, viz., that philosophical problems naturally arise from our natural human life in the natural world (cf. Santas 1991).[7] In my view, instead of applying some initially non-applied

philosophy – philosophical theories or methods – to practice, good pragmatists are simply *philosophers within human practices*. They have not even made any strict theory vs. practice distinction in the first place, but keep all such distinctions always contextualized, i.e., relativized to the relevant practices within which they may have some "cash value." The version of pragmatism I particularly have in mind here is primarily (though not exclusively) based on Dewey's.[8] In the Deweyan scheme, there is no place for the theoretical vs. practical distinction presupposed in both the traditional conception of applied philosophy and its postmodern rival. Instead, philosophical problems are always already humanly significant problems, "problems of men," if they are problems worth considering at all. Dewey, with all his social and educational concerns, was an "applied philosopher" in a pragmatic sense of the term, in which no fundamental distinction between "pure" philosophy and applied philosophy is made. But we have to be careful in making statements like this. For example, to claim that Wittgenstein leads us toward what we today know as applied philosophy, as Gay (1994) does, can only be based on a profound misunderstanding of the role played by notions such as "concreteness" or "practice" in Wittgenstein's work.

This is not to say that our human problems, the Deweyan problems of men, or the kind of personally agonizing ethical issues that Wittgensteinian thinkers often consider, must be popular or easily understandable. They may be, so to speak, "theoretically" difficult problems. Their adequate treatment may require deep theoretical understanding of philosophical and scientific traditions. The idea that anyone ("the man from the street") could, without proper education, thoroughly understand the "problems of men" she or he shares with her or his fellow human beings is by no means a part of my reconstrual of Deweyan or Wittgensteinian pragmatism.

To return briefly to an example introduced earlier in this chapter (Chadwick's discussion of the market of bodily parts), it should be noted that the pragmatist's conclusions about such a morally problematic practice need not be different from Chadwick's. Instead, the overall attitude is where the difference lies. What the (Deweyan or Wittgensteinian) pragmatist questions is the supposition that we could "first" have a theory (Kantian ethics), developed quite independently of its applications to *any* concrete issues, that we could then, "secondly," apply. Even the most abstract ethical theories are based upon, and continuous with, natural human life structured by various natural needs and practical concerns, fully embedded in a naturally developing environment. The "application" of philosophy to life is there right from the beginning. To be a philosopher is to be a human being concretely engaged in the "problematic situations" of life. Such situations lead us to philosophical theories rather than being mere "test cases" to which theories are applied.

Hence, instead of asking how the three rival conceptions of applied philosophy – traditional, postmodern, and pragmatist – distinguished in this chapter would treat a given example (such as the one discussed by Chadwick), we should inquire into the wider contextual differences in the underlying philosophical attitudes those treatments would be based on. All the three conceptions might arrive at similar answers to a given concrete example. Still, their pictures of the nature of human philosophical activity as it is manifested in their arriving at those answers would differ considerably. To assume that our three rivals would have to deal differently with a given test case, establishing different conclusions, is to be in the grip of the "applied science" model of applied philosophy. Pragmatism, which I have recommended, is superior to the traditional conception and its postmodern variant precisely because of the pragmatic reason that it makes philosophizing practically relevant in human affairs without assuming any artificial theory-application relationship, without stopping the vitally important normative debate over the criteria of practical relevance.

It ought to be kept in mind that considerations of the practical relevance of certain theoretical standpoints often easily climb onto a *metatheoretical* level, even if we wish to follow the pragmatists in casting doubt on the theory vs. practice dichotomy. This appears to be a fundamental difficulty in, for instance, some recent debates in "environmental pragmatism" (see Light and Katz 1996; see also Pihlström 1998, chap. 9). But it is a problem in the approach of the present essay as well, I am afraid. The danger that our metatheoretical reflections on the relevance of our theoretical reflections to some practical problems (as well as on the entanglement of theory and practice I have emphasized) are even more irrelevant than the theoretical reflections themselves must always, continuously, be faced. The philosopher who feels that it is her or his duty to say something about the "practical," "applied," issues must again and again carefully ask the question of whether she or he is doing the right thing. Mightn't some "real" social or political action be more advisable for such a thinker than philosophizing, let alone academic "applied philosophy"? The important, though difficult, thing is to keep our abstractly philosophical and more concretely social or political aspirations (which need not be incompatible) in some balance.

Here, I think, we might have something to learn from Rupert Lodge's simple but quite forgotten idea of a "balanced philosophy": "What we *apply* is ... not the three academic theories [i.e., realism, idealism, and pragmatism] in their 'pure' form, but a *balanced philosophy*: a sophisticated reflection which retains the divergent characteristics of all three philosophic attitudes, but holds them in balance against one another." (Lodge 1951, p. 19.) According to Lodge, "the balancer of philosophies feels genuinely convinced that each school really has something of positive value to contribute toward solving the

problems of life" (ibid., p. 105). Where I do not agree with Lodge is in his way of treating pragmatism as just another "school" of academic philosophy which ought to be kept in balance with rival schools, such as realism and idealism. I would rather insist that the very activity of balancing philosophical motives is itself pragmatic. Thus, Lodge's position as a whole can be seen as a species of pragmatism.

If we are prepared to self-critically face the difficult task of exploring humanly relevant but theoretically challenging and philosophically deep problems, we may then "look to a time when philosophy is not 'applied', but rather grows naturally out of our encounters with the world, a time when we all think philosophically – that is to say, *critically* – about our individual and species conditions" and ask not whether philosophy should be "applied" or not but "why we find this question arising at all" (Warren 1992, p. 18). Unfortunately, such a time may be far from our sight, and it may never come. The hope is vague and insecure, though it may be worth maintaining. Even if it always remains a mere hope, it may turn out to possess some cash value, after all. The only way we can "apply" (moral) philosophy here and now is to insist – as I have done in this book and will continue to do – on the seriousness of the ethical, cautioning our audience to beware of such "applications" that might compromise this seriousness by distorting our understanding of what it is to be an ethically committed person in the first place.

4. Pragmatism as a philosophical therapy?

The foregoing discussion of the concept of applied philosophy, which hopefully in some measure clarifies our concept of philosophical activity itself, may be taken to possess some therapeutic value. I have tried to develop a *healthier* view of what philosophy amounts to in relation to genuine human problems than the apologists of applied philosophy have done. As it happens, the concept of therapy (and the one of health) has also been discussed from a metaphilosophical point of view. The rest of this chapter will be preoccupied with the problem of the (potential) therapeutic role of philosophical (particularly ethical) thought.

As we know, ancient Greek sculptors represented their human models as beautifully harmonious, idealized bodies. A similar ideal of a perfectly *healthy* and therefore beautiful human being can be found in Greek philosophy. The classical philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, thought that the human being, like everything else, had her or his own normatively determined place in a morally ordered *kosmos*. The harmony of nature was taken to be analogous to bodily health, to the perfect harmonious functionality of a human being. Socrates in effect combines mental and bodily superiority in the way in which he is presented as a heroically strong and healthy person in some of Plato's

dialogues, although his character is somewhat ambivalent: he is traditionally taken to have been rather ugly and yet sexually appealing to young men. It may be argued that the Greek "philosophy of health" found its culmination in Plato, who regarded the True, the Good, and the Beautiful as identical, united in the Form of the Good. A spiritually and bodily healthy life, in which harmony with the cosmic order is realized in a perfect way, was, according to Plato, not only the highest good in human life but also the true essence of humanity, something that might be labeled the "Form of Man." It was natural to think, normatively, that such health should always be our aim. Although none of us earthly creatures can perfectly match the eternal Form of (a healthy) Man, such a normative ideal does exist in a higher transcendent reality; in the Platonic heaven, as it were. It is the task of us mortals to reflect and approximate it, though always imperfectly. Plato's philosophy is, of course, fundamentally humanistic, for human beings' relation to the cosmic order of Forms is the core of his thought. The analogy between health and thought (or philosophical wisdom) is famously presented in *The Republic*, in which Plato argues that the highest part of the soul, *logistikon*, guides the life of a healthy person. If the lowest, animal, part takes over, life turns unhealthy. The harmonious soul (like the harmonious *polis*), in which each and every part plays its own specific role, is a healthy soul. The overall health of the soul as a totality is equal to its principal virtue, justice, and is to be compared to the just functioning of the republic. Health and ethical goodness hence coincide.

Aristotle's thought, too, can be described by means of a medical analogy. Although he repudiated Plato's theory of the Forms, he followed his teacher in regarding humans as beings with a normatively determined place in the cosmic system. As such beings, humans are, for Aristotle, entirely natural, however. We might say that, in his view, the one who does what is natural for her or him as a human being to do is a healthy person. And what could be a healthier human purpose than life according to reason? Although Aristotle did draw attention to the bodily aspects of our existence, the ability to use reason is, in his view, the specific characteristic of humanity. It is, one might argue, almost the same thing as one's overall health; moreover, it constitutes our greatest happiness, or *eudaimonia*.

Even though we are often said to live in an increasingly "medicalized" society, we have, of course, come quite far from our Greek ancestors. Some modern philosophers do, however, sympathize with the Platonic-Aristotelian way of viewing ethical (as well as political) goodness as a species of health. In his now classical work, *The Varieties of Goodness*, Georg Henrik von Wright writes:

> The concept of health may be considered a model on a smaller scale of the more comprehensive notion of the good of a being. That is: it may be

> suggested that one should try to understand this good (welfare) in all its various aspects on the pattern of the notion of health. On such a view, the good of man would be a *medical* notion by analogy, as are the good of the body and of the mind literally.
>
> The conception of the good of man on the basis of medical analogies is characteristic of the ethics and political philosophy of Plato. The idea is profound and, I think, basically sound. (von Wright 1963b, p. 61)

It is not, however, easy for us to view nature's cosmic order as a macro-level picture of good and healthy human life or, conversely, to view our lives as micro-level images of the functionality of the cosmos. The objective normativity embedded in the Greek cosmos is something quite foreign to modern thinkers. Some people might, indeed, claim that this is so because humanity has lost its healthy relation to nature, or to something superhuman – that is, because we in a sense are, as human beings, ill. This illness is manifested in the *hubris* we fall into by believing that we can rationally govern nature; for such an illness there may be no cure but only the *nemesis* of the natural world.[9]

It is not my purpose to try to revive the Greek conception of the relation between health and cosmos. It is still less my purpose to defend the medicalization of human life (and death) in modern societies. What I have said so far will only serve as a reminder for the reader that the theme I shall briefly discuss in the rest of this chapter – the relation between philosophy and therapy, or between (philosophical) thought and health, normatively understood – has a long history. Contemporary philosophers who insist that philosophy ought to be relevant in our pursuit of good, both physically and mentally healthy life are working within a respectable tradition. What is more, in addition to the Platonic and Aristotelian ideas described above, such philosophers may easily find, say, Stoicism among their historical sources. It was, after all, the Stoic school that formulated a well known therapeutical doctrine whose purpose was to liberate us, philosophically, from the unnecessary and irrational emotions that are harmful to our lives.

More than two thousand years after the flourishing of the classical Greek philosophy of health, Wittgenstein famously thought that there was something seriously wrong with the views philosophers had held on various matters before him. He did not think that their answers to traditional philosophical questions, originated in antiquity, were false. Instead, he thought that the theories traditionally developed by philosophers from Plato to Russell were something much worse: meaningless. In a word, philosophical theorizing was not, in Wittgenstein's view, a healthy project at all. He regarded himself, in a notebook entry in 1931, as the "Terminus ad quem" of Western philosophy,

comparable to whoever burnt the Alexandrian library (Wittgenstein 1997, p. 64).

Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy can be illuminated by considering his strictly anti-theoretical attitude to philosophical problems – an attitude we have already encountered by studying some of his followers' ethical views (met in chapters three and four). In a well-known passage in the *Investigations* (1953, I, §133), Wittgenstein declares that a "real discovery" in philosophy "gives philosophy peace." Philosophizing is, then, some kind of a cure.[10] It uncovers "bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language" (ibid., §119). There is an illness or disease in our lives and language-use – something has gone wrong – and we can be cured, if we are able to look and see how language is actually used in the natural circumstances in which it has developed, that is, in the various language-games embedded in human form(s) of life. "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (ibid., §255).[11] Wittgenstein's conception of "philosophy as grammar" is comparable to therapy or perhaps to pedagogy, but not to science (Garver 1996, pp. 151, 154). The philosophical "discovery" is not, for him, a new theory which would solve some of the problems older theories left unsolved. It is, on the contrary, the end of all futile philosophical theorizing which, in an unhealthy way, takes science as its model.

Sören Stenlund (1999) has, probably correctly, emphasized the need to distinguish the special features of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy from the typical standards of intelligibility assumed in most of the commentary literature on Wittgenstein. According to Stenlund, Wittgenstein's place in the philosophical tradition is unique in the sense that his work cannot be made intelligible in the general philosophical terms that are part of the tradition and its conception of philosophy. When interpreting Wittgenstein, we should not seek to formulate our "results" in the form of a general philosophical theory.[12] Still, I do not think that it is illegitimate to employ certain traditional ideas, drawn, for instance, from Kantianism or pragmatism, in order to reinterpret Wittgenstein's therapeutically intended views in a fruitful way (see Pihlström 2003a, chap. 2); though this is something that cannot be undertaken in this work.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein already took an essentially therapeutical attitude to metaphysics and to what he cryptically called the "problem of life." This problem, which cannot be solved by scientific means (that is, by describing the way the world is, or which states of affairs obtain), can only be settled when it ceases to be a problem (Wittgenstein 1921, §6.521–2). There is no (theoretical) solution to such a problem; there can only be a (therapeutical) dissolution. Wittgenstein was critical of Freud's psychoanalytic conception of therapy, and it has been suggested that he saw his own therapeutical account of

philosophical activity as an alternative to Freudianism (see Sluga 1996, pp. 32–33).[13] Be that as it may, following Wittgenstein, several more recent thinkers have made use of the idea of philosophy as therapy; not only analytic philosophers who, drawing inspiration from the *Tractatus* and logical positivism, have always been eager to dissolve pseudo-problems resulting from linguistic confusions,[14] but also neopragmatists influenced by late-Wittgensteinian ideas. Rorty has tried to help the entire Western metaphysico-epistemological tradition, replacing systematic efforts at philosophical problem-solving by edifying cultural discussion,[15] while McDowell (1996) proposes a more realistically (and systematically) inclined "return to sanity" in philosophy in his attempt to "rethink" our notions of nature and naturalism in order to avoid a scientistically naturalistic picture of human cognition and rationality (see Pihlström 2003a, chap. 4).

It should be particularly clear that the tradition of pragmatism, early and late, takes the medical analogy seriously: the image of a healthy human being is a fair picture of the pragmatists' ideal of an active, functional person who assesses her or his theoretical and even philosophical concepts and conceptions by turning toward the future and by facing their actual or potential practical consequences. When those consequences are different from what was expected, what we need is "inquiry"; not, however, inquiry as a strictly scientific enterprise (at least not in ethics, as argued in chapters two and three), but rather a therapeutical reinterpretation of the problematic situation, with the aim of accommodating ourselves to the new circumstances. A position of this kind is implicit both in classical pragmatists (for example, James and Dewey) and in post-Wittgensteinian neopragmatism (in addition to Rorty and McDowell, in Putnam's work, in particular). Rorty's self-proclaimed "pragmatism," however, leads to a euthanasia of philosophy rather than to anything that might be regarded as truly therapeutical – or so, at least, many of his critics seem to argue.

Despite its therapeutical character and hostility to theoretical system-building, Wittgenstein's philosophy – both his early and late thought – has often been compared to Kant's. In my view, these comparisons are fairly reasonable. Though I cannot demonstrate it here, it may be suggested that the Wittgensteinian therapeutical view of the tasks of philosophy, far from being a rejection of the Kantian critical approach, is in fact based on a crucial element of Kantian thought. The key idea here is the critique of reason: human reason turns toward itself, to a philosophical investigation of its own limits and capacities. This cannot simply be done "theoretically" but must be done therapeutically. The purpose is to liberate reason from illusions which trouble its responsible use. Indeed, what Kant in the *Methodenlehre* part of the first *Critique* (Kant 1781/1787, Part II) calls the "discipline of reason" (see O'Neill 1989, 1992; Pihlström 2003a, chap. 1) can be regarded as profoundly

therapeutical in nature, and it seems to me that this idea of disciplined thought as healthy thought is inherited in Wittgensteinian therapeuticism.[16] What is important here is that the therapy can only be based on the subject's (thinker's) own authority, her or his own autonomous, ethically concerned use of reason. It is not given from anywhere outside. There can, in the end, be no external therapist, no external "physician" of thought. Each person must be responsible for setting a discipline to her or his thought and language-use and thus for becoming a healthy thinker.

However, it should also be pointed out that an interpretation emphasizing Wittgenstein's relation to Kant cannot be "purely therapeutic." In their comparison of Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, John Lippitt and Daniel Hutto (1998) seek to avoid precisely this kind of an interpretation (represented by James Conant's and Cora Diamond's writings on Wittgenstein). Conant (2002) has recently proposed a radical interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* which takes seriously the therapeutic demand to "throw away the ladder," that is, to drop the seemingly metaphysical doctrines developed in the book and to come to see the sheer nonsensicality of all such metaphysics (see also Diamond 1991, and the essays in Crary and Read 2000). His own lengthy discussions of Putnam's Wittgensteinianism (see Conant 1990, 1994) seem to show, however, that even a strongly therapeutical reading of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy need not conflict with the contention that Wittgenstein (even in his later thought) can be seen as arguing, in a basically Kantian manner, that something (such as forms of life) should be seen as a necessary (transcendental) condition for the possibility of something else that is given in our life (e.g., agreement and disagreement). As was observed in chapter three, transcendental reflections seem to be actually rather usual in Wittgensteinian moral philosophy, and they serve important purposes.

Lippitt and Hutto (1998) argue that in order to understand Wittgenstein's "grammatical" investigations as aiming at clarification in thought and language use, "one does not have to treat the metaphysical and semantical aspects of the Tractatus as ironic attempts at therapy" (p. 272). Hence, Wittgenstein does not just ironically produce nonsensical (but therapeutical) statements about metaphysical, semantic, ethical, and religious matters (as Conant, Diamond, and their followers claim), but (following Kierkegaard) is concerned with studying "the particular forms of life which give ethical and religious language games their sense" (ibid., p. 275). Wittgenstein is trying to understand the ways in which people do make sense of certain apparently nonsensical uses of language. According to Lippitt and Hutto, the purely therapeutical reading makes it difficult to understand the development of Wittgenstein's thought.

We cannot engage in historical disputes over the status of Wittgenstein's views here. I do not want to take sides in the debate between Conant, on the one side, and Lippitt and Hutto, on the other. Nor can the thesis about the

Kantian roots of Wittgenstein's therapeuticism be established with any scholarly rigor. What I have suggested is merely that the therapeutical conception of philosophy which we undeniably encounter in Wittgenstein's texts and which constitutes a key element of the self-understanding of later Wittgensteinians need not be completely hostile to rational philosophical thought concerning, say, the conditions (and limits) of meaningfulness, if we (re)interpret it as a way of carrying out a Kantian task, viz., the construction of a (self-)discipline of reason which is a prerequisite of healthy reason-use. Wittgensteinian therapy may be anti-theoretical, but it should not take away our need to establish, and critically revise, normative criteria of reasonableness. These criteria should not be regarded as fixed in advance; on the contrary, our therapeutical self-discipline should continuously struggle to modify and reinterpret them. To articulate this view more comprehensively would require an explicitly pragmatist treatment of Wittgenstein (see Goodman 2002). While nothing like that is pursued here in terms of historical interpretation, the synthesizing of pragmatist and Wittgensteinian approaches to the issue of moral realism in this book goes some way toward such an articulation. In short, a "pragmatically realist" account of Wittgensteinian moral philosophy can hardly be based on a purely therapeutical reading of what "Wittgensteinian" as an attitude to philosophical problems eventually comes down to.

5. Two perspectives on "discipline"

In spite of the affinity noticed between Kant and Wittgenstein, there are interesting differences. We might draw a crucial distinction between two rival perspectives on disciplined thought and thus on philosophizing as a way of living healthily and responsibly. On the one hand, some of the therapeutical philosophers mentioned suggest, in their various ways, that it is our challenge to lead an active, productive human life and take full responsibility for our free, self-determined thought and action. This is an Aristotelian, Kantian, pragmatist, and existentialist view (if we ignore all the great differences between these schools of thought). On the other hand, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the way we should, therapeutically, liberate ourselves from the problem of life points toward another perspective, one closer to the Stoics than to Aristotle, or perhaps closer to Schopenhauer (who influenced Wittgenstein) than to Kant. This is the perspective of Stoic calm acceptance, of humbly "taking what comes," of viewing one's life *sub specie aeternitatis*, of joining Christians in attaching the words "thy will be done" to one's prayers (whether or not one is a believer). Thus there is, in my view, a tension between existentialism and Stoicism, the two philosophies often taken to be applicable as therapeutical instruments in social medicine and care (see Melley 1998).

However, these two approaches to experiencing life as meaningful *may* be reconcilable.

The emphasis on happiness, *eudaimonia*, connects the latter view with Aristotle, too: Wittgenstein famously thought that the world of "the happy man" is a different world from that of the unhappy one (Wittgenstein 1921, §6.43). Yet, this mystical eudaimonism is fundamentally different from Aristotelian teleological ethics. According to Wittgenstein, one should, in a way resembling what the Stoics proposed, be satisfied with one's destiny (or God's will) and not attempt to fight against it. Indeed, in his diary (in 1937), Wittgenstein reflects: "Wenn Du mit Gott rechten willst, so heißt das, Du hast einen falschen Begriff von Gott.... Du bist in einem Aberglauben. Du hast einen unrichtigen Begriff, wenn Du auf das Schicksal erzürnt bist. Du sollst Deine Begriffe umstellen. Zufriedenheit mit Deinem Schicksal muß das erste Gebot der Weisheit sein." (Wittgenstein 1997, pp. 217–8)

This double perspective on healthy thought poses a serious problem. Can we *really* see our lives from both perspectives? And, more profoundly, is it a necessary condition of full health in thought to be able to do so? Should a healthy person be able to take responsibility for her or his free actions while at least occasionally detaching oneself from the contingent matters of one's particular life in order to view the world under the aspect of eternity? It seems to me that we ought to accept this challenge; accepting it goes well together with the somewhat sublime conception of the absoluteness of ethical duty explored in the earlier chapters. So, we ought to see the development of a double-faced attitude to life as a key to healthy thought about matters which are of vital importance to us. But it is by no means easy to reconcile the two attitudes: to actively engage in various humanly important projects and to accept, at the same time, that any merely human project is transitory and vulnerable to bad luck, unfavorable circumstances, or, lacking a better word, the necessities of one's "destiny," one's life considered as a totality. (Compare this to the remarks on the fragility of our moral identities and on the hopelessness of any "decision procedure" in ethics in chapters three and four.)

Switching perspectives once in a while may, in any event, be necessary for us, if we wish to stay healthy in our philosophical and *weltanschaulich* thought. This, in turn, is possible only on the basis of an active, pragmatic attitude to what is important to us as human beings. We have to be able to *will* to view our lives from a particular perspective, and then actively – for therapeutical purposes – adopt another one, if necessary.[17] An asymmetry results. The detached perspective, the Stoic "acceptance" of the events of one's life, can only be chosen from within a more inclusive perspective, which enables us to actively choose the ways in which we view our world and life (and to assess the purposes, therapeutical and non-therapeutical, that our perspectives may serve). This wider framework is, again, the undetached

perspective provided by practical human action in a practice-laden world, a framework perhaps most fruitfully provided by pragmatism. It is questionable, then, whether Wittgenstein's eudaimonist, Stoically inspired view of life can provide a genuinely independent account of what it is to be a healthy thinker. Even though it aspires to be a view of life "under the aspect of eternity," it seems to be inevitably subordinated to the more practically therapeutical perspective that pictures us as free and responsible agents, choosing between rival options aiming at rival goals. Otherwise, it could not really be *our* perspective on the world, or *my* perspective on my life. This is why pragmatism is needed to support Wittgensteinian moral philosophy.

I have described the therapeutical conception of philosophy in a sympathetic (though not uncritical) way. It should be added, however, that nothing I have said lends any support to the plethora of dubious pseudo-therapies sold and bought *ad nauseam* in our (post)modern society. The success of such therapies may be an interesting phenomenon requiring a social-scientific explanation, but there is hardly anything philosophically interesting in it.

What is somewhat more interesting and problematic is the movement (or, rather, the new profession) known as "philosophical counseling," which seems close to (though not to be identified with) "applied philosophy." Philosophical counselors – or, as some of them also call themselves, therapists – have begun private practices in the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and elsewhere since the 1980s. What they offer their customers is something like "philosophical therapy" or "therapeutical philosophy." They may not explicitly discuss Wittgenstein's views (or the views of any other classical figure of the history of philosophy), but they often try to use philosophical means in order to see what the customer's "problem of life" is like and, perhaps, to settle it. This may not be an unwelcome phenomenon, but I think philosophical counselors ought to be extremely careful in order to avoid turning into pseudo-philosophical pseudo-therapists. Fortunately, there has been some critical discussion among philosophical counselors themselves of how accurate the notion of therapy is in this context. There is no consensus regarding the "therapeuticity" of the philosophical activity such counselors engage in, but perhaps the idea that philosophical counseling may have therapeutic effects need not be entirely abandoned.

What should be remembered in such ethically loaded "applications" of philosophy is that philosophy does not and cannot offer any ready-made solutions to any problems people might have – least of all to the "problem of life." Even more importantly, solutions to that problem, or "solutions" that make the problem disappear, should originate from within the subject, not from any ready-made ideas already thought through by an external therapist. Unless this requirement is taken seriously, no disciplined (and thus healthy) thought is encouraged. This is not to say that philosophical therapy in its practical form

would inevitably be useless or harmful. On the contrary, philosophical ideas may prove extremely valuable when combined with medical and social care (see Melley 1998), and philosophical counselors may be able to resist the increasing natural-scientific (physiological, biological) medicalization of health care. There is no doubt that philosophy can be consoling and therapeutical, at least if it is understood broadly as "a cognitive instrument (means) for living well – and dying – well" (ibid., p. 38).[18] Therapeutical philosophy should aim at nothing less than a genuine "Socratic dialogue" between the philosopher and her or his "patient" (or client, or perhaps ideally a group of clients), rather than pseudo-philosophically giving the illusion that the problem of life has been cured by means of some simple doctrine or a switch of perspective.[19] It should be noted, though, that the philosophical counselors' frequent insistence on the "Socratic" nature of their work is by no means unproblematic: Socrates himself, as is well known, attacked the Sophists because they took money for their teachings. On the other hand, this hardly makes the philosophical counselor any more "sophistic" than the typical university professor of philosophy.

The deepest service the therapist can do to people who experience the problem of life philosophically is perhaps *not* to cure them (so that the problem would disappear) but to encourage them to find ways to live with the fact that the problem cannot be resolved. Perhaps health, both physically and mentally (or philosophically) considered, should *not* be our ultimate aim, after all. People who declare that (medical) health is the most important thing in their lives are, it seems to me, usually relatively superficial people. We should be able to value human life even in the absence of health: life in its insecurity, lack of foundations, and uncanniness (see chapter four). Even here we can learn something from Wittgenstein, who wrote in his *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (*Culture and Value*), in 1937, that the one who lives rightly does not necessarily experience the problem of life as something desperate or problematic but rather as a joy – as a corona, or a circle of light, around her or his life (Wittgenstein 1980). In a diary entry in the same year, Wittgenstein also remarked that one should live in such a way that one can bear madness, if required, rather than running away from it. Madness is, he thought, the most powerful judge of whether one's (i.e., my) life is righteous or not:

> Du sollst so leben, daß Du vor dem Wahnsinn bestehen kannst, wenn er kommt. ... Es ist ein Glück, wenn er nicht da ist, aber ... *fliehen* sollst Du ihn *nicht*, so glaube ich mir sagen zu müssen. Denn er ist der strengste Richter (das strengste Gericht) darüber ob mein Leben recht oder unrecht ist; er ist fürchterlich, aber Du sollst ihn dennoch nicht fliehen. Denn Du weißt ja doch nicht, wie Du ihm entkommen kannst; & während Du vor

> ihm fliehst, benimmst Du Dich ja unwürdig. (Wittgenstein 1997, pp. 185–6; entry of February 1937)

A crucial part of healthy thought, I conclude, is to understand that there are more important and valuable things among the objects of our thoughts than mere health (or even healthy thought) itself. Medically conceived health, physical or mental, is only a part of healthy – that is, full, harmonious, "examined" – human life.[20] Philosophy can, hopefully, retain its rational, disciplined, and argumentative rigor while preserving its ancient role as a reflective way of leading such life. If the relation between the Wittgensteinian idea of philosophy as therapy and the Kantian idea of the discipline of reason is clearly understood (and especially if both are connected with a pragmatist awareness of the relevance of philosophical thought in human practices), we need not regard rationally pursued philosophical thought and philosophizing as a guide to healthy life as rivals. At its best, philosophical reflection, prepared to self-critically modify its own standards of reasonableness, may provide us with a responsible way of living and thinking today and of reflecting on how to live and think tomorrow. Such a therapeutically achieved responsibility (part of which may be a skeptical attitude to universal theorizing and/or to attempts to apply philosophical theories) need not be regarded as a "result" of philosophical problem-solving – not, at least, a result resembling scientific results. It may, rather, be something we grow into as we philosophize within our (natural) human form of life. Yet, this may be a rationally adopted pragmatic perspective on what one takes to be crucially important in one's life.

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Six

WONDER AND TRUST

1. The philosophy of childhood

The previous chapter was, somewhat metaphilosophically, concerned with the notions of applied philosophy and therapeutical philosophy, both of which seem to have something to do with pragmatism but were found problematic, though not entirely abandoned. The present and final chapter will focus on another pair of concepts, those of wonder and trust. I shall also heuristically speak about the "philosophy of childhood" in order to illuminate some of the features that in my view define ethically structured human existence in the sense in which it has been characterized in the earlier chapters. The purpose of my reflections is *not*, of course, to naively imagine that *we* (adults) could adopt the child's innocent perspective of wonder and trust in our relations to other people and to the world we live in. Instead, I hope, through the childhood analogy, to be able to shed some light on the distinctiveness of certain concepts, such as the ones in the title of the chapter, that I find central in responsible (adult) human life, ethical and intellectual alike. Ultimately, the idea is to argue for a particular view on "human nature," or, rather, on the possibility of philosophical views on human nature, namely, that our relation to the world is *more fundamental* than a relation of (theoretical) knowing; it is, to a significant degree, a relation of experiencing the world, including other human beings, as both fascinating and mysterious, as something to be both wondered at and trusted on, or acknowledged.

In adopting this terminology, I am again indebted to Cavell's (1979) treatment of these notions in Kant, Emerson, Heidegger, and (especially) Wittgenstein. From a slightly different philosophical perspective, Levinas's conception of ethics can be seen as a somewhat similar response to the traditional other minds problem: we cannot theoretically know that the other person exists (or that she or he is not an automaton); the ethical relation to the other is *prior to* such a cognitive relation. Indeed, one of Levinas's central ideas, or rather *the* central idea of his work, is that the ethical relation to the other has no theoretical grounding, is not a matter of knowledge (or any epistemic attitude), is beyond comprehension – although this is by no means any failure of our epistemic capacities and must be clearly distinguished from shallow non-cognitivist metaethical theories.[1]

Let me also briefly indicate what I do *not* have in mind in speaking about the "philosophy of childhood." The child's perspective in philosophy has recently come under discussion relating to interest in the "philosophy for

children" program, to which an academic journal, *Thinking*, has been dedicated. In these discussions, theoretical treatments of various conceptual problems surrounding the notions of the child and childhood, including the so-called "end" of childhood (i.e., the end of childhood as a period of innocence, as compared to the adults' world of politics, violence, sex, etc.), have played an important role (see for example Kennedy 1998). Another important topic to which serious philosophical attention has recently been directed is the role and rights of the child in moral education. As was already indicated in chapter three, it has been argued by a number of Wittgensteinian moral philosophers – contrary to the idea that it is simply up to the child to freely choose her or his moral values when reaching maturity – that parents not only may but *ought to* educate their children ethically by truly committing themselves, and thereby the children, too, firmly in the ethical orientation they believe to be the correct one; otherwise, the seriousness of the ethical is not transmitted to the children at all. This view is related to my concerns in the present chapter through its link to Wittgensteinian moral philosophy. Once again, in this picture, ethical commitment is not seen to require a metaphysical or epistemological (theoretical) grounding; on the contrary, it is only through coming to share, first, the parents' ethical orientation that the child learns the very meaning of ethical seriousness. That is, the child learns (ideally, at least) that it is impossible to just give a list of all the relevant ethical alternatives and then, "neutrally," choose among them, insofar as moral choices are to have any sincerity at all. Moral theories that conceptualize ethics as a matter of allegedly neutral and/or rational choices are not really theories about morality at all, because, on this understanding, morality means absolute personal commitment to what is taken to be good or right, period. By integrating their child to a seriously held framework of ethical commitments, the parents bring the child into a human form of life, turn her or him into one of "us"; and this cannot be done within the supposedly neutral and democratic ideal of free individual choice of ethical orientation.[2]

These issues, in which the children's perspective to the world and life is strongly present (and which partly concern the very meaning of such a perspective), must remain side issues here, despite their enormous cultural significance. My problems in this final chapter are more intimately philosophical, perhaps properly classified as belonging to "philosophical anthropology." I shall, however, indicate some connections to Wittgensteinian (meta)ethical themes as my inquiry progresses. While no historical treatment of Wittgenstein's thought about ethics, trust, wonder, or anything else can be provided here, it will be obvious throughout these last pages of my book that Wittgenstein (along with the pragmatists) is the most important background figure of my reflections. Although one can hardly find explicit philosophical discussions of childhood in Wittgenstein's works, we should remember that his

emphasis on the teaching and learning of language (especially in connection with the problem of rule-following) is highly relevant to this topic. As Cavell (1979, pp. 124–5) reminds us, the child is a central character in Wittgenstein's discussions of the instruction of rules. It is, therefore, legitimate to take the child's perspective seriously in philosophical-anthropological reflection, which may, eventually, lead to a reconstructed conception of both childhood and adulthood (see Kennedy 1998).

It should also be clear that I shall not discuss the notions of wonder and trust (nor childhood) from a psychological perspective. That is, empirical facts about these features of our mental lives are only marginally relevant to my concerns. My examination will be carried out on a normative philosophical level, although I do not want to build any irremovable walls between philosophical and empirical investigations.

2. Childish wonder: why is there a world?

I shall try to open up what I have called "the child's perspective" from a somewhat metaphysical angle. Let us consider the kind of questions that young children typically ask their parents or some other usually informative adults – in particular, the "why" questions of increasing generality and philosophical character. Many of such questions can be answered, but at some point the adult's authority is lost:

> But if the child, little or big, asks me: Why do we eat animals? or Why are some people poor and others rich? or What is God? or Why do I have to go to school? or Do you love black people as much as white people? or Who owns the land? or Why is there anything at all? or How did God get there? I may find my answers thin, I may feel run out of reasons without being willing to say "This is what I do"[3] (what I say, what I sense, what I know), and honor that. (Cavell 1979, p. 125)

Philosophy, focusing on these questions or some equally intractable ones, is, in Cavell's memorable formulation, an "education of grown-ups" (ibid.). As Conant (1990, p. lxxii) remarks, Cavell's questions show that I, too, am a child; "a child in a world without grown-ups to educate me," forced to act both as a teacher and as a pupil. While the children's questions lose their sense at some limit point, and while we adults, at that point, "help to teach the child the sense of those questions that can be asked about us and about what we do in the world and why we do it," helping the child to learn "who we are and what a world is," the questions that demonstrate our own childhood show us that "[t]here comes a point at which *we* bear the responsibility for initiating ourselves into our world" (ibid., pp. lxxii–lxxiii). We are, Conant explains,

"left wondering whether our questions even make sense," and we should (he argues) follow Cavell in understanding philosophy as "the task of living with these questions" (ibid., p. lxxiii).[4]

According to many (if not all) philosophers, past and present, the deepest and most elusive question we may think of – and about whose sense we may be puzzled like an adult teaching a child – is this: *why is there a (non-empty) world at all*, that is, why isn't it the case that there is nothing, or that nothing whatsoever exists? This question, posed by such classical thinkers as Leibniz, Schopenhauer (1844), and Heidegger, as well as James (1911, chap. 3), who calls it the "darkest" question in philosophy, has often been approached in a theoretical and/or explanatory manner. In this tradition (*not* shared by the just mentioned thinkers), it is inquired whether an explanatory answer – though not surely a causal explanation, or any other standard scientific explanation – could be arrived at regarding this issue. (It is obvious that causal explanations must be excluded here, because there can be no cause prior to the beginning of the world, e.g., the Big Bang. *Nothing* could cause the beginning of the universe, since there was, *ex hypothesi*, nothing before that beginning. This argument holds at least insofar as we construe causation as a temporal relation.) Such discussions are often connected with cosmological and/or theological speculations about the concepts of a "necessary being," ultimate explanation, the "fine-tuning" of cosmological parameters, the "anthropic principle," etc.[5]

E. J. Lowe's (1998, chap. 12) discussion of what he labels the puzzle of existence is instructive here, partly because it is clearly separated from any implausible theological speculations. Lowe argues, on the grounds of Aristotelian realism of universals *in rebus*, that there must be something concrete (spatio-temporally realized) in the world, i.e., that it is necessary that *something* concrete exists, or that some concrete, identifiable and persisting object(s) exist in every possible world. It is not, however, necessary that any particular object exists; hence, there is no "necessary being," no single object that exists in all possible worlds. All concrete objects exist contingently. It is just not possible that *mere* abstract entities could exist, without anything concrete existing, insofar as Aristotelian realism is on the right track. *Abstracta* (universals, kinds, and the like) require a world of concrete individuals in which they are instantiated.

Similarly, David Armstrong (1986), probably the most famous neo-Aristotelian metaphysical realist writing today, has suggested, as a corollary of his well-known combinatorial theory of modality, that an empty world is impossible, even though the actual (and the one and only real) world is a totality of contingent spatio-temporal states of affairs. There are (fictional) "possible worlds" that can be constructed as rearrangements or recombinations of the elements of the actual world. Some of these recombinations are what

Armstrong calls "contractions" of the actual world, but an empty world would be no contraction. Hence, again, given that there is something actual, it is impossible that nothing should exist, although no specific object(s) exist(s) necessarily, as whatever there concretely is exists contingently. The modal truth about the impossibility of an empty world supervenes on the contingent fact that there are concrete, actual objects.[6]

However, this argument presented by leading analytic metaphysicians hardly removes our wonder about the question *why*, on what kind of grounds, the very actual world upon which possibilities and necessities depend *is* actual, or why *any* such world should be. Let us, thus, pause for a moment to give a diagnosis of the situation. The theoretical approaches I have briefly referred to suffer from a signalling weakness, which, I think, becomes evident if we sincerely try to adopt "the child's perspective." In short, attempts to answer the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" in a theoretical manner fail to preserve an element of wonder in our relation to the world and its contingency. We may even accept Lowe's or Armstrong's demonstrations, only to find out that our metaphysical wonder and unanswered questions remain intact. Given *any* explanation, we can always repeat the question, "why?" Why, in brief, should the world be such that Lowe's or Armstrong's reasonings apply to it? Is *this* a mere unexplained, brute fact?[7]

In contrast to the explanation-seeking treatments of our question, to which we ought to adopt a healthy skeptical attitude (whether or not they refer to supernatural assumptions), we may find a quite different way of looking at the matter in the last pages of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. *That* the world is ("*dass* die Welt ist") is taken to be "mystical," part of "das Mystische" which cannot be put to words (see Wittgenstein 1921, §6.44). Elsewhere, especially in *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein also spoke about seeing something (such as the opening of a flower, or in principle any worldly fact or natural event) "as a miracle," as something quite different from seeing it as a scientific fact to be explained (Wittgenstein 1980, entry written in 1947). From Wittgenstein's point of view, it seems that there are cases in which we may or even ought to awaken our childish ability to wonder – and to trust our being in the world without any explanation. The "Lecture on Ethics" (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 8), cited earlier in this volume, also mentions such cases – and even declares that the existence of the world, which may be compared to the existence of language, can be seen as a miracle.[8]

There is a parallel to some key issues in the philosophy of religion to be found here, particularly regarding the notion of trust, which for Wittgenstein and many of his followers, including Putnam (1992, p. 177), serves as the (quite non-foundational) "foundation" of our language-games and/or forms of life, something that (in Putnam's words) our language "rests on," instead of resting on any metaphysical foundation. (This can be compared to Putnam's

refusal to give any non-ethical justification or foundation for ethics, as discussed in chapter two.) What the notion of trust should signify in this context is that, for a truly religious person, there *is* no foundation of religion at all, any more than there is a foundation of ethics, at least if the concept of a foundation is understood in traditional metaphysico-epistemological terms. Religious faith fails to qualify as a genuine faith, if it is based on a prior, religiously neutral metaphysical or epistemological theory which allegedly justifies it. The religious person trusts God rather than believing some metaphysical theory to be true. Note that this is to adopt a form of "fideism" as contrasted to "evidentialism," given the parlance of current philosophy of religion. However, while fideists seldom think of themselves as "skeptics" about religion (on the contrary, they try to defend religious faith), a skeptical reconstrual of the anti-foundationalist idea will make the sound core of at least some Wittgensteinians' views clear enough. The basic point is that the religious person's attitude to God and to the world she or he believes to be God's creation is an attitude describable as trust.[9] It is, then, something comparable to the child's unconditonal trust to her or his parents. This, we may claim, is a basic relation underlying both ethical and religious attitudes to the world – and, hence, *any* humanly possible attitudes, given that ethics is something basic to our existence. It is more fundamental than knowledge or justified belief.

Now, the problem of the existence of the world, it seems to me, is deeply analogous to religious problems. It is, in Willem Drees's (2002) terms, a "limit question" to which wonder is, indeed, an appropriate attitude. It may be evoked by science – or by philosophical thoughts about the scientific world-view – but it can hardly be scientifically settled. It is not a problem that we can hope to "solve" by rational theoretical or explanatory means. But this does not make it philosophically insignificant, because it is a problem that encourages us to open our horizons of wonder and trust. Like little children, we may wonder why the world actually is, contingently but really, and we may trust that it exists (and continues to do so), just as the religious person may trust that God exists – and just as the child trusts that her or his parents will continue to nourish and console her or him, without seeking any theoretical guarantees that they will continue to do so, without formulating arguments demonstrating that they should, and possibly even without being able to conceptually express the proposition that they will. These conceptual dimensions of the problem, dimensions that define it as the kind of problem it is, are insufficiently explored by theoreticians who too tightly connect the issue with technical ontological, epistemological, or theological matters. Schopenhauer's, James's, or Wittgenstein's approaches are quite different, closer to the attitude I have recommended (despite the major differences between these philosophers' overall views). It is, indeed, in childhood that our "metaphysical need" (to use

Schopenhauer's expression) arises. This need, a key element of human nature as we know it, might be reconceptualized as the "child within us," at least if the misleading popular overtones of this phrase are abandoned.

As we noted, the notion of trust is central in late-Wittgensteinian philosophy of language (quite independently of religious or ethical concerns), and this fact may bring to the fore the importance of trust in more general philosophical issues as well. Wittgenstein examines (in *On Certainty* and, arguably, elsewhere, too) the "conditions of thought" (see Moyal-Sharrock 2003, p. 133) and the conditions of sense; in this investigation, it turns out that a highly central condition enabling thought and meaningful language-use is trust, understood as an instinctive, primitive, unreasoned, immediate reaction embedded in our practical certainties that are simply not doubted in the course of our habitual actions. "Without this unflinching trust, there is no making sense" (ibid.), because, according to Wittgenstein's (1969, §509) famous statement, "a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say 'can trust something')" (see also ibid., §§150, 283, 508). That such an attitude of trust is required for any meaningful being-in-the-world to be possible may itself be something we should be astonished about and may thus trigger our metaphysical wonder. Our ability to trust should not, then, be explained. More precisely, on an empirical level, there is of course much to be explained in the natural human habit of trusting other people and the relative permanency of one's natural circumstances, etc. Such explanations can be formulated, in terms of evolutionary psychology. Such an explanatory project is not what I have in mind here. The kind of trust I am talking about is more metaphysically or transcendentally loaded, such as a trust on there being a world or other human beings.

The Wittgensteinian argument here seems to be transcendental: our linguistic expressions do make sense; a necessary condition for this to be possible is our trust on other people; hence, such a trust functions as the ground of our language-game(s); although it is, of course, by no means a surrogate for a foundationalist "ground" upon which a system of knowledge could be built in a Cartesian fashion.[10] The early and the later Wittgenstein's ways of speaking about our fundamental relation to the world sound quite different, since the former (1921) holds that that the world is mystical, while the latter (1969) speaks rather about trust and certainty. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein seems to have held, early and late, that the existence of the world on this ultimate level of philosophical reflection is not something to be decided (for or against) on the basis of theoretical arguments or evidence. Hence, it is not anything to be questioned because of the lack of knowledge or explanations, either. It is also worth noting that William James, in his famous discussion of "philosophical temperaments" as defining factors in the history of philosophy (James 1907, chap. 1; see also Pihlström 1998, chap. 10), noted that the

philosopher, while trying to "sink the fact of his temperament" (whether that temperament is, say, "tough-minded" or "tender-minded") and to find impersonal reasons for her or his conclusions, nevertheless "*trusts* his temperament," finding in it "a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises" (James 1907, p. 11).

A "childish" – instinctive, immediate, etc. – trust in some very basic regularities in our relations to the world we live in, particularly to the other people surrounding us, is therefore required for us to be able to develop a normal "adult" intellectual (and ethical) life. Childhood is a pre-condition of adulthood not only in the trivial causal, factual, developmental sense but also in a more profoundly philosophical, conceptual, sense. Just as doubt, according to Wittgenstein (1969), is possible only in the (transcendental) context of basic trust (certainty), so adult-like inquiries and explanations that are supposed to yield a deeper understanding of the world are possible only in a more fundamental context defined by the attitudes of trust and wonder more typical of children's lives than of adults'. Moreover, wonder, as the (arguably) most fundamental attitude that we may develop to the contingent existence of the world (as I just suggested), seems to require the even more fundamental attitude of trust. The hierarchy of these "childish" notions seems to be clear. The child can safely wonder only within a context defined by trust, trusting that the world will largely behave in expected ways, controlled by the elders. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of us adults. Our metaphysical or existential wonder requires a trust in the (relative) permanency of the world which is the object of our wonder, the world in which we live, wonder, investigate, and doubt various things. Yet, as we noted, our ability to build sense out of trust may itself become an object of wonder, of unanswerable (childish) questions.

The picture I have drawn is "skeptical" in a peculiar way: it is skeptical about general metaphysical theories of the world and of human nature that are claimed to be more basic in our web of belief than our action-embedded attitudes of wonder and trust. On the other hand, this view renounces ordinary skeptical doubts, urging, with Wittgenstein, that specific doubts are so much as possible only in the context of a basic trust, or, with Peirce, that we should not pretend to doubt as philosophers what we do not doubt as human beings.[11] Accordingly, the skeptical challenge inherent in the philosophy of childhood I am developing is directed at what seem to be rather immature "adult" positions, our all too easy suppositions that we know (or are forced to, or even entitled to, doubt) some of the basic features that enable our being-in-the-world to make sense. In a similar manner, a child asking the kind of questions Cavell and Conant draw our attention to (see above) may sometimes shake both the beliefs and the doubts entertained by the adult members of her or his community. The interplay of wonder and trust is, then, skeptical largely in the

sense in which children can lead us to a skeptical attitude toward some of our routinely held assumptions, leading us to view the world with new eyes, with genuine astonishment.

Furthermore, the position I am proposing is skeptical also about the dogmatic claim that philosophical problems such as the riddle of existence I briefly presented *cannot* (ever) be solved in theoretical, argumentative, or explanatory ways. Wonder and trust enable us to live with these problems, turn them into elements of our lives, leaving their possible solution open. We may safely admit that we have no idea of what a final solution to such a problem would even look like, while also admitting that we have no proof that solutions will never turn up. We should, here and elsewhere, remain pragmatic fallibilists. Thus, the basic motivation for employing the notions of wonder and trust in the way I have done is pragmatic: these notions are *needed* to make sense of our world, of the words and life we (phenomenologically) recognize as our own, and especially of the inability of baldly naturalized, "post-Galilean" science to account for each and every feature of our ethically situated existence.

3. Transcendental childhood: birth, life, and death

The perhaps slightly mysterious-sounding view I have sketched might be unpacked by referring to childhood as an explicitly "transcendental" notion. Phenomenologists following Edmund Husserl's method of transcendental reduction sometimes metaphorically speak about a return to childhood (and, again, wonder), about beginning one's philosophical reflections from the absolute beginning, without making any naive commitments to the reality of worldly objects – commitments that only belong to the "natural attitude" – in one's critical philosophizing. Such a method of describing the primary experience of, for example, moral obligation (as in chapters two and three above) could be taken to be close to pragmatism, too (though by no means identical to the pragmatic method). At any rate, childhood seems to be a recurring theme in phenomenological investigations of the way in which one should begin one's philosophical thinking, as well as in deconstructive criticisms of the very possibility of such a presuppositionless beginning (see Himanka 2000, Kauppinen 2000). Commentators like Himanka (2000) speak about "transcendental childhood" as a description of the true phenomenological state of the mind, in contrast to the uncritical, naive attitude that we rely on in our mundane, non-philosophical (including scientific) lives. Thus, Himanka writes: "In order to achieve the phenomenological attitude we now need to accomplish reduction, return to the child's perspective and replace our mundane childhood with a transcendental one. ... When I was a child and saw a thing for first time, that thing began to be a thing and a part of the world.

According to Husserl we should return to that perspective, to the child's viewpoint. In other words we should gain a beginner's perspective." (ibid., p. 38; see also p. 169.) It is in this way, then, that a phenomenologically oriented philosopher is "always a beginner" (ibid., pp. 38, 178); from the phenomenological point of view, "a child is essentially someone who finds something as a novelty that has never been confronted before" (ibid., p. 170).

Again, my purpose here is not to evaluate the adequacy of the readings of Husserl (or other phenomenologists) in terms of the notion of childhood. This notion, in any case, seems to serve as an excellent metaphor of the phenomenologist's method.[12] It is right here, in the heart of the phenomenological method, that the true transcendental meaning of the notion of the child's perspective may be found (even by the pragmatist who should take phenomenology seriously). The child's perspective, as our discussion up to now already indicates, is constitutive of our experience of the world. Without it, we would not, and could not, so much as *have* a world, as the kind of contingent reality we do have as the object of our wonder. It is a perspective that turns the world into a totality, enabling us to adopt an ethically loaded view on it. The "childish" wonder directed at the sheer existence of the world (or any particular thing within it), and at the world's being experienceable and cognizable, may be directed at various features of the world conceived as a totality (in a Wittgensteinian way, *sub specie aeternitatis*[13]): extreme experiences of good or evil, beauty or ugliness, meaningfulness or meaninglessness, etc. These are features that cannot, according to Wittgenstein's early view at least, be described in language at all but must remain beyond the limits of sense. They are, in any case, features that resist scientific theorization and explanation; evil, for instance, is in a way "intractable" (see Bernstein 2002 and chapter three's discussion), and it would be ethically intolerable to claim to have found a scientific solution to the problem(s) of evil. Again, I would like to claim that these elements of our human world require, for any adequate treatment, the abilities of wonder and trust.

The significance of the child's perspective can be further highlighted by taking up a couple of other notions intimately related to the ones I have discussed. Insofar as *birth* and *death*, in particular, constitute our world as a totality, given that the world *is* a world only for a (child-like?) transcendental subject who in a way structures it (a subject *whose* world it is), the subject's wonder may be directed at birth and death themselves as limits that, respectively, open up or close down the world.[14] These notions, which are of course central in any conception of "human nature," provide analogies to the mystery of existence as such; accordingly, they may and often do receive a foundational ethical and/or religious interpretation. We may appreciate Wittgenstein's (1961) notebook formulation (in 1916) that "the I, the I, is deeply mysterious" – a view that provides an important background for the

position later put forward in the *Tractatus*. If the "I" is mysterious, then the world is, too (or *vice versa*). A wonder directed at the I, its appearance (birth), or its disappearance (death), is *ipso facto* a wonder directed at the fact that something (this very world, which is mine), rather than nothing, *is*. These experiences of wonder, yielding problems ineliminable from our self-understanding as limited, world-inhabiting, ethically anxious creatures, are intertwined, insofar as we follow the early Wittgenstein in entertaining the idea that I am identical not only with my life but with the world itself (which I, transcendentally speaking, constitute). "I am my world," as Wittgenstein puts it in the *Tractatus* (§5.63).

From this perspective, the proper transcendental philosophical attitude to questions of ultimate human importance is precisely the "childish" wonder I have spoken about, a fundamental puzzlement which arises, or *should* arise, when I am faced by the existence of something (*this* very world) instead of nothing, a wonder that no philosophical (even transcendental), let alone scientific or explanatory, argumentation can remove. Insofar as pseudo-explanations are abandoned (following, say, Kant's strategy in destroying the transcendental illusions of reason as manifested in the paralogisms and the antinomies), a wonder or appreciation of what is truly miraculous remains.[15] "The miraculous" must here be construed broadly: it covers the absoluteness of personal ethical duty we have discussed earlier, precisely because such a duty cannot be reduced to or explained by anything more fundamental than ethical duty itself (as I have repeatedly insisted).

Yet, even the astonishing, miraculous world is a world constituted by our humanity, transcendentally speaking. In particular, it is a world constituted by our habits of questioning, "sceptically," apparent certainties, by the wonder that arises – not only causally or factually but conceptually – in our (transcendental) childhood. Only a "human world," a humanly structured world, can be inexhaustibly problematic, something that may truly become an object of our wonder. It is right here, again, that the human being, the subject – *qua* transcendental subject, a structuring principle of the world – emerges as the most profoundly problematic mystery there is.[16] This mystery is not to be settled in terms of a metaphysical theory of the essential features of human nature but, as I have proposed, through a child-like return to the roots of our existential experiences, which are never separated from ethical problems.

It should be re-emphasized that, if death and the world (or life) are deep mysteries, then birth also is, even though birth has been a philosophically neglected concept in contrast to the concept of death. It is in birth that the child opens up a world, a life. It is, of course, impossible for me to take an authentic look at my own birth and to re-experience the basic wonder it awakened in me. Here, then, we may add up one fundamental theme that any "philosophy of childhood" ought to take seriously: it is only the birth of another human being

– in particular, my own child – that may open, *for me*, the kind of an experience of wonder whose philosophical significance I have tried to defend. The event of the birth of a novel perspective on the world, possibly a perspective closely related to and partly inherited from mine, may strikingly bring about the foundational foundationlessness of my irreducibly ethically structured existence. This insight leads us to appreciate what Cavell (1979) labels the "truth in skepticism" (or the "moral of skepticism"), as well as the surprisingly closely related Levinasian view that the relation to the other is, as an ethical relation, more fundamental than any relation of knowing the world.[17] As I already indicated, a truly transcendental philosophy of childhood leads, then, to a form of "skepticism" about philosophical claims to know the world and other human beings, although it is of course very far from skepticism as this doctrine is usually defined in post-Cartesian philosophy (just as any truly transcendental philosophy, or any form of pragmatism, undoubtedly is). I believe this profoundly non-Cartesian (and non-Humean) skepticism is a fair description of the newly born child's absolutely open state of mind. Children know little, but they do experience a great deal, and they mysteriously do become world-inhabiting agents as they grow up.

The issue of birth in effect unites a number of equally intractable problems: those of the existence of the world (the "puzzle of existence" analyzed above), of other minds, of evil, and of death. First, birth leads us to the concept of *novelty* which is comparable to the novelty of being in contrast to nothingness. As a child is born, something essentially new is brought to the world.[18] Secondly, in the terms familiar from the other minds problem, do I *know* that a child – my child, in particular – has a mind, or a soul? Hardly! I *simply* treat her or him as someone who (at least potentially) "is minded," especially as a person who needs care and affection. This attitude, close to trust, is again more fundamental than any attitude of theoretical knowledge. We thus return to the realization that our relation to the world is not primarily a relation of knowing, at least if "knowing" is construed in a propositional (let alone theoretical and explanatory) sense. I need not, and cannot, first theoretically argue that the child is a person and only then begin to take care of her or him; on the contrary, my already taking care of the child is fundamental to, or a necessary presupposition of, my being able to develop an attitude toward her or him as an attitude toward a soul.[19] Arguably, this attitude of ethically (but not metaphysically) grounded care ought to be extended from my own children to all humans, and possibly to non-human beings as well, as difficult as it is to carry out such an extension.

Thirdly, the concept of birth (especially of my own child) ought to be related to the philosophically demanding topics of evil and death. I fear, more than anything else in the world, that something evil could happen to my child, or that she or he might die. I will do whatever I can to prevent things like this

from happening; yet, I will never be sure that everything has been done. This is a test case of Levinasian "infinite responsibility" for another human being[20] – again a case that calls for extension from the people closest to me to *anyone* who potentially faces me. The fact that not only I but my children as well *will* eventually die makes me think about the precariousness and contingency of all human existence. The world we live in is indeed a limited one. It is, moreover, a world in which no "justification" of all the evil there is can ever be hoped for. We twenty-first century humans live in a world after the end of theodicy, in a world in which no justification or redemption of the unspeakable evils of Auschwitz and of the innumerable places whose names are not as universally known can meaningfully be brought about – in a world, in short, in which it is itself evil or even "obscene" to seek such a redemption.[21] I am, when encountering the spectre of evil that goes to the heart of our humanity wounded by all the horrors of the twentieth century, as puzzled and confused as a child. Or, if I am not – if I fail to awaken my sense of wonder – I should be morally condemned as firmly as the person who (as was imagined in chapter three) attempts to step beyond morality altogether.

To highlight the connections between these issues, it is to be noted that Levinas (1982) urges us to replace the Heideggerian question ("Warum eigentlich gibt es Seiendes, warum nicht das Nichts?" – or, "Why is there something rather than nothing?") with the genuinely ethical question, "Am I not in fact killing another [person] simply by existing?" with a question, that is, that questions my existence as legitimate or justified, as compared to the others' (potential) existence. As Levinas occasionally puts it, I should be worried about taking, by the simple *Da* of my *Dasein*, someone else's place (e.g., Levinas 1989, p. 82). Someone else, another human being, might have existed instead of me, and hence my responsibility arises in my (pre-)original way of being called into question by and in the face of the Other. These worries can be rephrased as a question about the (lack of) justification of being or having been born. I can then question my own right to have been born; perhaps not in a way that could meaningfully be put to words but in a more implicit way, in a way that may "show itself" in all of my life. This questioning seems to, and indeed should, arise whenever I set out to consider, *via* the kind of wonder I have tried to describe, issues like the riddle of existence (or evil). Yet, there are others (in particular, my own children) who are "others" to me but would never have been born and would not exist without me. Insofar as I am worried about the possible lack of justification of my own birth, I should also be worried about the lack of justification of that worry, given the dependence of the existence of some particular others on my (possibly in itself unjustified) existence. I cannot, given such thoughts, find any peaceful way to rest in my existence; *qua* an ethically structured human perspective on the world, I must be worried about it, wondering why it is me who has to face this

infinite responsibility, yet accepting such a responsibility, acknowledging the insecure place where I stand firm as *mine*.

This, we might say, is an insight into the ethical structure of human nature that (perhaps only) the child-like attitudes of wonder and trust can ultimately bring about. Yet, it is clear that we are able to develop such an attitude in a conceptually rich form only when we are adults instead of children; in this sense, phenomenologists are right in distinguishing between transcendental and empirical (factual) childhood. Our "childish" wonder and trust are expressions of what is sometimes labeled a "second naiveté,"[22] a return to something that was literally given to us in a state of innocence to which we cannot quite return. Because *we* – the philosophers for whom the problems I have discussed are problems – *are* adults, not children, our return to this "naiveté," or our attempt to let the child within us to be heard, must always remain incomplete. We are constantly on our way. *This*, we might conclude, is a philosophical-anthropological (and even transcendental) truth about us, about our human predicament. The argument by which we have arrived at this result has been complex and inconclusive (and I am not sure whether we should even speak about "arguments" or "results" here at all), but I trust that some ineliminable features of a couple of humanly fundamental concepts have been taken up. Insofar as we have been able to describe certain conceptual relations defining our relation to the world, the conclusions we have drawn deserve to be called "transcendental" – a label which, however, by no means diminishes their pragmatic status.

Accordingly, I have, I hope, been able to illuminate a number of fundamental philosophical concepts through the metaphorical suggestion that we might "return to childhood" in our philosophizing. Several central issues, including the problem of why there is a world instead of nothingness and the problem of other minds, might receive a fruitful reinterpretation through this vocabulary of "transcendental childhood." No detailed scholarly treatment of the views of any particular philosopher (such as Husserl, Wittgenstein, Cavell, or Levinas, all of whom we have found highly central to our concerns) has been possible in this essay, though. The brief comparisons I have provided in this chapter should, however, encourage scholars to take a further look at how the theme of childhood emerges from, or can be reread into, these thinkers' writings, and into other philosophical-anthropological discussions.

Among the things I hope to have been able to illuminate at least a little bit are, in particular, the profound interconnections between the kinds of problems we have briefly studied, i.e., the "puzzle of existence," the question of other minds, and the problems of evil and death. All of these problems can be seen to require, instead of theoretical quasi-solutions, a child-like attitude of wonder and trust, when seen as the truly deep problems they (at their ethical deepest) are, defining our humanity. We cannot "solve" these problems, but we can

cherish them in our lives, seeking to let this attitude show itself in the way we act and think. We should remain critical – and, indeed, skeptical – about any proposed theoretical solutions to the ultimate questions of our existence (including scientific-like explanations of why, say, there is something rather than nothing), but we should, on the other hand, maintain tolerance toward the variety of ways in which people actually succeed in living through their lives of ethical (re-)orientation and self-education.[23] This "skepticism" is thus directed against the metaphysical picture that makes traditional Cartesian-Humean epistemological skepticism so much as possible.

The existential questions we have taken up inevitably contain an ethical dimension insofar as they are questions about how we should view our lives in the contingent surroundings we happen to find ourselves in. As Schopenhauer (1844/1969, vol. 2, p. 171) says, "our astonishment at [the world] easily passes into a brooding over that *fatality* which could ... bring about its existence," viz., the existence of the world which, according to him, should *not* exist; thus, our philosophical astonishment (or, in my terms, wonder) is at bottom "dismayed and distressed," starting with a minor chord. The fundamental philosophical urge then "springs from the sight of the *evil and wickedness* in the world" (ibid.). And further: "Not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a miserable and melancholy world, is the *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics [tormenting problem] not to be cured" (ibid., p. 172). We may not want to join Schopenhauer's deep pessimism but we may grant him and his followers (among them, in different ways, both James and Wittgenstein) that there is a profound, constitutive connection between metaphysical and ethical wonder, or, more precisely, wonder about the being of the world and about the evil inherent in that very being. In our existential agony, these are inseparably united. The ethical is indeed ubiquitous.

What this means is that in ethics – the field of philosophy which is, after all, chiefly concerned with the good and evil of human life – there can be no appeal to a metaphysically structured world-in-itself, or even human nature, prior to, or more fundamental than, ethics itself. In other words, whatever it is that we may call our "human nature" is ethically structured through and through. Ethics *is* our human nature, or, human nature is constituted through the ethical point of view, instead of being any kind of metaphysical basis of ethics, or something ethically neutral to which ethical conceptions might just be "applied."

4. Some final remarks on "mystery"

The position I have arrived at, through the idea of the child's perspective defined by wonder and trust, may be termed a transcendental theory of the fundamental (though by no means "foundationalist") ethical or existential con-

ditions of human experience, epitomized in these two notions. The notion of the mysterious, alluded to a number of times in connection with Wittgenstein (and phenomenology), invites some final comments. In this respect, a recent book by David Cooper, *The Measure of Things* (2002), is a valuable guide. I opened this volume with a discussion of some of Putnam's recent views on pragmatism and moral realism (especially as formulated in Putnam 2002a), and I shall conclude my survey by a few remarks on Cooper's argument, which is in a way sharply critical of pragmatism but connects with my own line of thought in a way that deserves scrutiny.

Cooper analyzes the impasse he finds as the result of a complex argument, yielding the conclusion that both what he calls "absolutism" and "humanism" – or, alternatively, realism vs. anti-realism, objectivism vs. relativism, and so forth – are hubristic stances, the former one that cannot be believed and the latter one that cannot be lived. Humanists (among them, pragmatists),[24] maintain that "the concepts we apply to the world necessarily reflect human values and interests; concepts cannot be extricated from the traditions and ways of life in which they are embedded; the things concepts apply to are intelligible only in relation to our purposive practices; the holistic character of possible descriptions of the world is due, not to the world, but to the human life they register; no sense can be made of what it is for something to exist except as 'concerning us'" (Cooper 2002, p. 100). Things are meaningful like words are meaningful in a language: they are "encountered or experienced, within our practices, as items which refer, point or direct us towards further things, situations, people, or whatever" (ibid., 113). In other words: "It is in virtue of the significance an item has – the way it figures for and matters to us – in relation to our purposeful practices that it is identifiable, and reidentifiable, as *an* item of experience." (ibid., 114) The philosophical position emerging from these ideas – or from the "human world" thesis, in short – is closely related to the kind of pragmatist position I have defended (and partly assumed) here, but it is a position that Cooper finds unable to live with. Humanism or pragmatism destroys human "answerability" to something that is independent of the merely human. Therefore, he thinks, humanism lacks humility. But so does absolutism, with its belief in the absolute structure of the world as it is in itself, independently of human conceptualization and practices.[25]

There is a way out, however, because absolutism is, Cooper reminds us, the thesis that "there is a *discursable* way the world anyway is independent of 'the human contribution'," and humanism is its denial. These two theses are contraries, and not contradictories, so both can be false. (I am not completely sure what "true" and "false" can mean here, though, at least if these notions are not used in a pragmatist sense.) An alternative to both is the view that "there is a way the world independently is, but this way is not discursable." (ibid., p.

279) This view, avoiding the oscillation between humanism and absolutism, leads to a doctrine of "mystery." The world is ineffable, a mystery. This world is something "beyond the human," something to which we are answerable, something against which our lives and projects can be "measured" – but it is not anything discursable.

In this connection, Cooper refers to Wittgenstein (1980, p. 16): "Perhaps what is inexpressible ... mysterious ... is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (see Cooper 2002, pp. 286–7). The doctrine of mystery *à la* Cooper thus says that "whatever we can meaningfully express requires an inexpressible, mysterious 'background' as the 'measure' of what we say and believe. There is no discursable way things stand independently of 'the human contribution' to provide this measure, and the thought that 'the human world' may provide it is unlivable." (ibid., p. 287) We are led to pursue meaning and measure from something that in no normal sense "is" in the world:

> The thought indicated by [the] metaphors of emptiness[26] is that of something (not 'some *thing*') which enables there to be a world for us, a totality of objects that figure for us, but which, precisely as enabling this, cannot be something that either is or is *like* any entity within the world. That which allows anything to stand out for us, as something to which we can refer, cannot itself be such a thing. (ibid., p. 311)

As we have seen, Wittgenstein (1961, 1965) also speaks about the existence of the world as a miracle and about the experience of a "wonder at the existence of the world." Thus we are led back to the conceptual machinery at work in this chapter. Wonder, Cooper says, is different from the mere acknowledgment of a brute fact, though both absolutists and humanists have their own version of the brute fact of the world (for the humanist, of the human world) not to be further explained (Cooper 2002, pp. 328–9). But it is, he argues, possible to experience things as *both* belonging to a human world (dependent on us) *and* as being "as they are"; here, "[t]he object of wonder ... combines, seemingly paradoxically, the respective truths in humanism and absolutism. The world is a human one, yet our disclosure of it is answerable, and may measure up, to what is 'beyond the human'. ... More fully, if more tortuously, to experience things as wondrous is to experience them 'transparently', as belonging in a world, to whose very existence as a world we ourselves are essential, that is a grace-given epiphany – a showing up of things 'just as they are'." (ibid., p. 330)

By 'epiphany' Cooper means an experience of the world "as a 'gift' of – something come 'out of' – an ineffable, inexplicable 'presencing' or 'self-emptying' that is nothing 'hidden' behind what is present" (ibid., p. 350). But a

culture which celebrates theoretical explanation, particularly natural science, as ours does, may occlude such experiences. Whether or not we are willing to subscribe to Cooper's admittedly puzzling formulations, let alone his talk about epiphany, gift, and emptiness, we should join him and thinkers like Taylor (2003) in being constantly worried about the ontology of the natural-scientific world-picture constituting a threat to our full realization of the ethical values that constitute our human reality. As I have argued in this chapter, we need to employ our horizons of wonder and trust in order to live fully human lives – lives whose basic structure is ethical and, *qua* ethical, in no need of either scientific or metaphysical grounding.

Cooper's magnificent, and deeply problematic, book ends with final words on the notion of humility, with (interestingly from our point of view) some references to Iris Murdoch (see Cooper 2002, pp. 360–64). Humility, we are told, is "a virtue distinctive ... of those who do not prejudge which comportments, which 'spontaneous restraints', are intimated by attunement to mystery" (ibid., pp. 363–4). We should thus remember that no simple appeal to mystery, wonder, or related notions – e.g., along the lines suggested in this chapter – is, as such, sufficient. We should be constantly (pragmatically, I would add) alerted to the normative problem of how to use these concepts adequately and responsibly in our reflective practices. While the world and our ethically embedded existence in it may be mysteries that evade rational theorization, we cannot give up rational philosophical discourse in thinking about *this* position itself. We are, in brief, responsible for our ethical lives, including our way(s) of viewing the world as ultimately mysterious. No ethically adequate doctrine of "the mystery" can remove such a fundamental and ubiquitous responsibility.

I do not know whether this concluding discussion inspired by Cooper's dealings with the concept of mystery helps us in the project of formulating a pragmatic form of moral realism. In some ways, Cooper's project is distant from mine; not least because of his rather straightforward (and too easy) repudiation of pragmatism as a form of humanism relying on the hubristic idea that humans make up or "sculpt" the world. But I do share his belief that a notion of mystery rich enough is required to maintain some features that pragmatic moral realism, too, finds ineliminable, particularly the idea that morality is something that cannot be scientifically grounded (or explained away from the allegedly absolute scientific conception of the world). Furthermore, Cooper shows us how some Wittgensteinian themes and the wonder at the existence of the world, in particular, can be combined with a philosophical concern about the dialectics of humanism and absolutism. Therefore, we may conclude this chapter by agreeing with Cooper on the need to recover the sense of mystery too often forgotten in recent scientistically oriented (moral) philosophy, even in pragmatism. For a pragmatist who believes in, and

celebrates, the richness and variety of human practices, maintaining the horizon of wonder should not be impossible, even if it requires cultivating attitudes different from the scientific one.

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Seven

CONCLUSION

We have come through a jungle of ethical and more generally philosophical literature, at least some of which, I hope, has been illuminating to the one searching a pragmatically workable but existentially adequate understanding of the seriousness of ethical life. It is time to pull some of the threads together through a couple of brief general concluding remarks.

One of the Wittgensteinian thinkers cited in the previous chapters, Paul Johnston (1999, p. 169), ends his volume on the absoluteness of moral right and wrong by reminding us that a book entitled, "Why I believe [or do not believe] in right and wrong," ought to be the most important book an individual could write. I am not sure about this. If someone really believes in right and wrong, as we all *should* (this is, in fact, one of the few directly ethical statements that I am willing to make in this book), she or he in a sense *cannot* write a book about the reasons for such a belief – precisely because the reasons will inevitably lie *within* the moral framework adopted through that belief. I have argued that the "why be moral?" question, externally understood, lacks meaning because there would be no answer that we could recognize as an answer *in moral terms*. (Obviously, Johnston, given his general approach, ought to have seen this.) This amounts to saying that metaethics has no identity independently of ethical (normative) considerations. Metaethical disputes, such as the one between realism and anti-realism, are in the end ethical ones and cannot be settled on a neutral, non-ethical ground; the distinction between metaethics and normative ethics is as blurred as the one between facts and values (see Pihlström 2003a, chap. 7).

Thus, engaging in the moral realism dispute is itself an ethical project, which aims at making sense of some of the most important dimensions of human life, thereby serving a pragmatic purpose – ultimately the purpose of living well, of being able to actually perceive the "moral reality" whose existence and objectivity are at issue in moral realists' and their opponents' work. As Thomas Nagel (1997, chap. 6) has also argued, though within an overall metaphysics (strong realism) different from my pragmatism, moral reasoning cannot be reduced to anything more basic. Moral objectivity is grounded in "first-order" normative moral judgments and reasons themselves. Moral realism, though "second-order" because of its generality, is also a "first-order" issue in this sense.

This way of understanding the moral realist's task may lead to a difficulty, however. As several moral realists – even quite different ones, such as Sabina Lovibond (1983) and Iris Murdoch (1997) – have noted, one of the

assumptions in traditional moral anti-realism and non-cognitivism (such as emotivism or prescriptivism) that we should give up is the picture of the ethically evaluating subject as unconstrainedly free, simply imposing her or his evaluative perspective on a supposedly morally neutral factual reality. What makes such an assumption implausible is, as has been argued, the fact that it does not fit our moral practices themselves. Both pragmatism and Wittgensteinianism try to make us see that we are seriously committed to the demands of morality within those practices. But now, within any moral practice – that is, within any human practice – it is in the end the subject, me, for whom morality is an issue, a disturbing challenge setting one's life in question. This is also a feature of our moral practices themselves. A return to something like non-cognitivism or moral anti-realism threatens as soon as we realize that morality is about *my* (absolute) duties, about what I ought to do in the contingent situations I arrive at in the course of my life.

Yet, at this point of puzzlement and hesitation, we should once more see how our argument for pragmatic moral realism turns transcendental: it is the puzzling tension between the personality and the absoluteness (or objectivity) of our ethical concerns itself that gives our moral practices their distinctive seriousness; moreover, such tensions can only be significant for those for whom morality is already significant. It is only in the context of commitment, within our engagement in any human practice in an ethically concerned way (in a way preserving our basic wonder and trust in the sense explicated in chapter six), that our worries about the apparent incoherence of moral realism (or morality itself) become meaningful. Similarly, as we saw, the relativism issue is urgent only for the one who worries about the possibility that moral requirements might not be absolutely binding, and the one who worries about that matter and *cares* about this problem is not a relativist, after all. A thoroughgoing relativist could hardly care about this, or any, issue. The formulation of relativism, just like the non-cognitivist challenge we saw arising out of the personal character of our engagement in morality, itself presupposes a moral framework. There is, to repeat it again, no standpoint to adopt outside ethical issues; not, at least, for us humans.

This is again closely related to the collapse of the fact/value dichotomy discussed in the early chapters of this work, particularly in the light of Putnam's pragmatist arguments. As Stephen Mulhall (2000, p. 261) puts it in his analysis of Murdoch, "our very characterisation of the realm of the factual is itself open to evaluative contestation – that how we think of the factual in relation to the evaluative is not itself value-neutral, and so that supposedly non-committal talk of a 'common factual world' upon which we project our differing evaluative attitudes is in reality the expression of a specific evaluative perspective." Thus, it is possible to argue against projectivists, error theorists, and other anti-realists in an ethical manner, criticizing their evaluative attitude

to the fact/value distinction they believe in. Consequently, we must resist Torbjörn Tännsjö's (1990, chap. 5) thesis that moral realism has no moral implications, although even Tännsjö admits that moral realism may have practical consequences in the sense of making us concerned, for instance, about moral argumentation. In any case, Tännsjö, like most moral realists, overlooks the possibility of construing moral realism itself as an ethical view. Isn't it, after all, a *moral demand* to *care* for moral arguments?

One of the interpretive points of this essay has been that both pragmatism and Wittgensteinianism, two important though perhaps somewhat neglected trends in recent moral philosophy, may help us see that no non-ethical answer to the "why be moral?" question can be given. This, I believe, justifies the classification of these two trends as varieties of "moral realism." I have, however, offered no exhaustive characterization of the varieties moral realism, except for a few general remarks in the first two chapters. What I hope to have achieved is a glimpse of the great differences between these two closely related forms of realism, on the one hand, and the more scientifically and naturalistically oriented moral realisms that seek to accommodate values in the natural world, on the other (let alone anti-realisms that regard values as queer). Perhaps we would do better if we abandoned the potentially misleading label "moral realism" altogether, speaking instead about "moral seriousness" or about the binding nature of ethical considerations.[1] We might also use more perceptual terms, such as Murdoch's notion of "moral vision," or McDowell's "answerability" to rational demands, or we might prefer the Levinasian way of speaking about our responsibility to the Other as the primary source of ethical duty, prior to any epistemic relations we may have to the world. In the midst of such vocabularies, we may, and should, retain Charles Taylor's image of moral values as something "higher" – an image closely resembling, and presumably to some extent drawn from, Wittgenstein's views on the absoluteness of the ethical. But even when speaking about the ethical as "higher," we should not forget its ubiquitous character. It is higher, yes, but it can be seen to throw light on each and every "lower," worldly fact or event we encounter throughout our merely human lives. Admittedly, the way this happens may evoke our sense of wonder, open us to the mysterious.

In any event, if we wish to go on using the label "realism," we should not be led to think that (pragmatic) moral realism commits us to a picture of morality resembling a scientific theory. Morality is *not* a special section of our lives; it is not a particular language-game. Its significance cannot be captured in any explanatory theory, precisely because it is ubiquitous, constitutive of our theoretical pursuits as well. It extends everywhere, to each and every corner of our self-understanding and use of language, and it is this ubiquity that also makes our ethical situation tragic: our ethical obligations often conflict with one another, and we can never escape the charge that we have not done and will never be able to do what ought to be done. Our experience, as we noted

with the help of Dewey and Putnam, comes to us "screaming with values," and there are potentially infinitely many voices to be heard at the same time. In this "maelstrom of conflicting responsibilities," we can perhaps in the end only self-reflectively meditate on the infinity of our ethical duty, finding the situation we are in deeply unsatisfying (to say the least), never to be fully settled.[2] But that is what our life is like. We must be committed to the moral life; this is a moral "must." There is nothing beyond it, nothing more fundamental. If this commitment makes us ineliminably guilty, to the extent that this guilt defines or constitutes our moral seriousness, so be it.

In this way, from within the ethical sphere itself, moral values are "objective" and binding for us. If the label "moral realism" is inappropriate for this position (as it may be, according to some critics), I hope that "pragmatism" or "internal realism" are more fitting ones. Moreover, "skepticism," as argued in chapter four, is also a useful term, denoting the suspicion this kind of pragmatic moral realism entertains toward theoretical, metaphysical, and/or foundationalist ethical or metaethical projects. What is ubiquitous and to some extent mysterious cannot be captured in any neat theoretical formulation – or in any formulation that seeks to get rid of the profoundly problematic character of morality. But the skeptical suspicion is not directed to the seriousness of morality itself. Only a thoroughgoing nihilist would be able to throw into doubt the constitutive context within which we, insofar as we are human, live.

NOTES

Chapter One

1. Pylkkö (1998) employs this idea in his attempt to understand the Heidegger and Nazism controvery.

2. For my earlier expositions of Putnam's moral realism, see Pihlström (1996) and (2003c).

3. I have adopted the notion of practical identity from Korsgaard (1996b), whose views will be discussed in chapter two.

4. See, however, Diamond's (1991) important essay (to which we shall briefly return); for a useful introduction to Wittgenstein's ethical and religious thought, see Phillips (2001). See also Goodman (2002) for a highly informative comparison of William James's and Wittgenstein's philosophical projects, that also offers a documentation of James's influence on Wittgenstein.

5. For critical comparisons between Putnam and Rorty, see Pihlström (1996), (1998), and (2004b), as well as the literature cited therein (see also Putnam 1994, 2000).

6. For distinctions between various versions of realism, see Niiniluoto (1999) and Pihlström (1996).

7. For more details, see the essays in Sayre-McCord (1988), especially the editor's useful introduction, and in Kotkavirta and Quante (2004); also see Smith (1991, 1994), Harman and Thomson (1996), and Korsgaard (1996b).

8. See Putnam (1981), (1990), (1994), (1995), (2002a), and (2004).

9. Dilman develops this reading of Wittgenstein at length in Dilman (2002), chaps. 1–3.

10. See Dilman (2002), pp. 13–14, and also chaps. 4–5. The transcendentally idealist reading of Wittgenstein, early and late, which Dilman criticizes in these chapters, has been put forward by Bernard Williams and is also discussed in Pihlström (2004a), chaps. 3–4. The fact that Dilman does not entirely reject Kantian treatments of Wittgenstein is reflected in his title, "Wittgenstein's Copernican Revolution." I am more happy than Dilman with the label "transcendental idealism," because the kind of Wittgensteinian pragmatism that sees the relation between language (or human practices in general) and reality as an internal one can be given a transcendentally idealist rearticulation (see Pihlström 2003a), but this is not the right place to quarrel about this description of Wittgenstein's philosophy. In any event, I doubt that it is possible to step beyond the realism–idealism tension in the way Dilman suggests, although we can learn a great deal from his careful Wittgensteinian maneuvers. Another important criticism of Dilman is that he almost entirely neglects pragmatism (like many other Wittgensteinians do), failing to see the close similarity between his own position and those of many pragmatists.

Chapter Two

1. Elsewhere (Pihlström 2003a, chap. 7), I reconstruct Putnam's reasoning as a pragmatic transcendental argument. In this book, I try avoid the transcendental vocabulary, though not entirely, because sticking to such a way of formulating my argument might be unwelcome to some otherwise interested and possibly sympathetic readers. Nothing in the pragmatist line of thought I develop crucially depends on the possibility of interpreting pragmatism as a (naturalized) form of transcendental philosophy, as I propose in my other writings (especially Pihlström 2003a). However, such a rearticulation of pragmatism does strengthen the case for pragmatic moral realism.

2. The importance of Will's work in this respect has been demonstrated to me by Ken Westphal; see also my discussion of Will in Pihlström (2003a), chap. 5.

3. For a basic exposition of the place of morality in human conduct, see Dewey (1922); for Dewey's rejection of the fact/value dichotomy and the corresponding distinction between scientific and "emotive" language, see his (1939), pp. 64–6; for his views on the possibility of "moral knowledge," see Dewey and Tufts (1932), chap. 14. For recent studies on Dewey's ethical thought, see Welchman (1995) and Fesmire (2003). For a more general historical discussion of the classical pragmatists' ethical and political ideas and ideals, and for the social and political relevance of pragmatism, see Menand (2001). For a defense of pragmatist meta-ethics, rejecting the theory vs. practice dichotomy and developing (a largely Deweyan) "reconstructive revisionism" of moral beliefs, see Lekan (2003).

4. On James's and Dewey's ways of rejecting the fact/value distinction, see also Ruth Anna Putnam (1998) and (2002). For another sympathetic discussion of pragmatist moral philosophy, largely based on Putnam, see Tiercelin (2002). Otherwise, few among Putnam's commentators discuss his contributions to ethics; the debates on Putnam's philosophy tend to focus on other issues, including realism, truth, reference, and the philosophy of mind. Dilman (2002) is an exception, as already noted; I shall return to his views.

5. For yet another and quite different way of rejecting the fact/value dualism, based on a phenomenological and existentialist (rather than pragmatist) orientation, see Gelven (1990). An essentially pragmatist defense of the fact/value entanglement can also be found in Morton White's (1986, 2002) numerous writings on the topic (see also Pihlström 2003d). Furthermore, for arguments emphasizing the analogy between scientific and ethical "inquiries" in a manner resembling Putnam's repudiation of the fact/value dualism, see McDowell (1995), Anagnostopoulos (1998), and Tasioulas (1998); see also Pihlström (2003a), chap. 7.

6. Admittedly, the profoundly human-centered nature of Kantian ethics might justify the claim that Kant is, after all, a moral anti-realist (see Rauscher

2002), but I trust that in the pragmatic sense of moral realism developed and defended in this work, both Kant and James would be classifiable as "realists" – though empirical or internal realists instead of metaphysical or external ones.

7. See especially the remarks on ethics and aesthetics in the closing pages of the *Tractatus* (1921), as well as the famous "Lecture on Ethics" from 1929 (Wittgenstein 1965).

8. See Goodman's (2002, chap. 1) discussion of Wittgenstein's "certainties" and "hinge propositions" as amounting to a form of holistic pragmatism. See also Moyal-Sharrock (2003) for an argument to the effect that Wittgensteinian "hinges" are, in their most mature form in *On Certainty* (1969), not propositional at all but embedded in our practical actions.

9. Putnam does cite Winch, only in passing but sympathetically, referring to his view on Wittgenstein, according to which "the use of the words in a language game cannot be described without using concepts which are related to the concepts employed in the game" (Putnam 1995, p. 46; see also p. 56). He also acknowledges Rush Rhees (Putnam 2004, p. 144).

10. For similar references to Murdoch, see Putnam (1990), p. 150, and (1992), pp. 85–88. Murdoch's central piece, "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts" (first delivered as a lecture in 1967 and published in 1970), is in Murdoch (1997), pp. 363–85.

11. For a comparison on the ways in which this "messiness" and concreteness of the human world is a common theme in James and Wittgenstein, see Goodman (2002). See also Putnam (2004), p. 28.

12. See McDowell's seminal 1985 paper, "Values as Secondary Qualities," in McDowell (1998).

13. I must leave the much debated pragmatist theory of truth aside here. For Putnam's own reflections on it, see Putnam (1995); for comparisons between James and Putnam, see Pihlström (1996) and (1998).

14. I have written on this aspect of Putnam's thought at some length elsewhere (Pihlström 1996; also 2003a, chap. 5), so I shall not dwell on the topic here. See also Dilman (2002), chaps. 4–5, for a lucid treatment of Williams.

15. I also acknowledge this in Pihlström (2003a), p. 307.

16. For Putnam's most recent attack on materialist reductions of ethical values, see his brief but lucid treatment of deflationary metaphysics in Putnam (2004), Part I, lecture 1.

17. The distinction between "thick" and "thin" ethical concepts is emphasized by Williams (1985).

18. It is arguable that Putnam (2002a) presents the matter somewhat too simply and that the expressivist can, for instance, accommodate criticism and rational discussion in her or his view of ethics without accepting the "thickness" of ethical concepts – or without sacrificing the distinction between representation and attitude (see Blackburn 2004). Nevertheless, the rejection of

this very distinction emphasized by Blackburn is one of the key points in (Putnamean) pragmatism.

19. See Hertzberg (2002). He discusses Winch's rejection of "moral optimism," one form of which is the view that (theoretical) reasoning leads us to the good. See also Winch (1987), especially p. 172.

20. See Putnam's (1999) recent critique of the use of the notion of supervenience in the philosophy of mind, focusing particularly on Jaegwon Kim's views. For a critical discussion of Putnam's opposition to supervenience and emergence theorists, see Pihlström (2002a).

21. See also her paper, "Vision and Choice in Morality" (first published in 1956), in Murdoch (1997), pp. 76–98.

22. I discuss McDowell's project in relation to pragmatism and transcendental arguments in Pihlström (2003a), chap. 4. This is not the right place for any general assessment of McDowell's complex argument. For recent overviews which devote a lot of space to McDowell's moral realism, se de Gaynesford (2004) and Thornton (2004).

23. This passage is also discussed by Honneth (2002), pp. 253–4.

24. Larmore is critical of that feature of McDowell's project, as am I; see Pihlström (2003a), chap. 4. Thornton (2004) also doubts that McDowell's rejection of constructive philosophy can ultimately be maintained.

25. See, however, McDowell's response (2002, pp. 297–300).

26. For some remarks on the relation between Dewey's naturalism and McDowell's naturalism of second nature, see Pihlström (2003a), chap. 4.

27. For related (brief) remarks on moral education, see also Dilman (2002), chap. 9, as well as chap. 5 below.

28. McDowell (2002, p. 301) also says that Honneth's dualism between "pragmatism" and "representationalism" is ill-conceived – but fortunately we need not stick to such a dualism in any case. This way of speaking about pragmatism is, clearly, too Rortyan for our purposes (see for example Rorty 1991; for comparison, see Pihlström 1998).

29. See also the paper, "Metaphysics and Ethics" (first published in 1957), in the same volume (especially p. 73).

30. Putnam is much better known for his critique of the correspondence theory of truth than for his moral realism. For his discussions of truth, see especially Putnam (1981), (1990), and (1995); see also Pihlström (1998), chap. 3. For various perspectives to the applicability of the notion of truth in ethics, see the essays collected in Hooker (1996).

31. See also Putnam (2004), p. 14, where he admits that there is usually no scientific solution to the kind of practical problems ethics is concerned with.

32. For the significance of James's theory of truth in ethics and the philosophy of religion, see Pihlström (1998).

33. Bernard Williams is largely responsible for bringing the ineliminability of moral conflicts or dilemmas into analytic metaethics: see his "Ethical

Consistency" (1965), "Consistency and Realism" (1966), and "Morality and Emotions" (1965), in Williams (1973). Williams's anti-realist metaethics is not inevitable, however, even if we endorse his views on moral dilemmas. I am here indebted to an unpublished Finnish paper by Niko Noponen.

34. See the discussion of Dilman's characterizations of realism, idealism, and their Wittgensteinian alternatives in the "Introduction" above, as well as the discussion of his and other Wittgensteinians' more positive metaethical views in chapter three. Here I am concerned with how he criticizes Putnam.

35. Compare here Dilman's (2002, p. 203) admission that science and ethics cannot be "compartmentalized" or "isolated" – conjoined, however, with his claim that there is a "radical difference" between them.

36. See Harman (1977) and Harman and Thomson (1996). For the advantages of a moderate moral relativism, see also Wong (1991).

37. In addition to several papers to be found in Sayre-McCord (1988), see also Railton (1985) and Brink (1989). Majors (2003) argues that instead of moral explanation, one should focus on the causal efficacy of moral properties (again analogously to the causal efficacy of other "special-scientific" properties). For an argument to the effect that naturalist versions of moral realism cannot offer support for moral objectivity, see Horgan and Timmons (1996).

38. See also Dilman's (2002) already-cited discussion of the reality of moral values.

Chapter Three

1. I shall return to the question of the possibility of "losing faith" in morality shortly.

2. For further critical discussions of Lovibond's moral realism, see Margolis (1990), Werhane (1992), and especially Diamond (1996).

3. See also Gaita's (1991) analogous discussion of absolute goodness and evil, and compare Phillips's (1992, p. 100) remark: "Expressing a moral conviction is not like expressing a personal preference or a sudden feeling."

4. See Gaita's (1991) account of remorse as a basic ethical experience.

5. For recent perspectives on Taylor, including his moral realism, see Laitinen and Smith (2002), especially Laitinen's (2002) article; see also Laitinen (2004) and Pihlström (2003a), chap. 6.

6. See the essays in Sayre-McCord (1988), especially Boyd (1988).

7. See Putnam's (2002a) favorable treatment of Dewey, discussed in chapter two.

8. I am grateful to my student Ville Aarnio for discussions of this point. See Pihlström (2004c) for a more general critique of "merely methodological" (allegedly non-metaphysical) views in various fields of philosophy.

9. For some related reflections on the "philosophy of childhood," see chapter six.

10. For a more general treatment of the place of transcendental investigations in pragmatism (and Wittgensteinianism), see Pihlström (2003a).

11. For comparison, see Lear's (1998) discussion of the notion of a form of life in Wittgenstein (see also Pihlström 2003a, chap. 2).

12. In addition to Diamond's (1991) paper, see also the other essays collected in Crary and Read (2000), especially James Conant's and P. M. S. Hacker's contributions, the latter of which is critical of the Diamond/Conant interpretation. Conant's most comprehensive discussion of the matter is his (2002).

13. For the rejection of the idea that ethics is a special subject-matter or discourse of its own, see also Diamond (1992) and (1996).

14. On such a pragmatically enriched conception of moral theory, see also Jamieson (1991). See also Anagnostopoulos (1998). Pappas (2003) provides an account (or a reconstruction) of Deweyan ethics in which ethical theory finds its place within practice, as a study of the conditions of moral experience and as meaningful only to those who have had such experiences (see especially pp. 52–53).

15. Hertzberg has touched this topic mainly in his Swedish and Finnish papers. See, however, his collection of essays on Wittgensteinian philosophy of language, focusing, among other things, on the ethically relevant problem of understanding other cultures or forms of life (Hertzberg 1994).

16. See, however, J. M. Bernstein's (2002) conflicting view, referred to in passing in chapter two.

17. For a more detailed examination of the relation between Wittgensteinian philosophy of language and philosophical anthropology, see Pihlström (2003b).

18. See, however, Putnam's engagement with Kant's moral thought in Putnam (1987) and (1995).

19. Korsgaard's commentators, in the same volume (1996b), raise several important historical and systematic problems, which we cannot touch here. I am not going to examine how Korsgaard's Kantian views are expressed in Kant's own writings; the interpretive question concerning the historical accuracy of her position must be left for another occasion.

20. Unsurprisingly, despite his sympathies for Kantian projects in philosophy generally, Putnam questions Apel's project of "transcendental justification" (Putnam 2002a, pp. 125–6). Apel's approach is also criticized in Pihlström (2003a), chap. 7, although I am more happy with the vocabulary of the "transcendental" than Putnam. Among more recent transcendentalists in ethics, Illies (2003) offers a system critical of Apel's in some crucial respects but equally infallibilist and foundationalist, thus very different from my transcendental pragmatism.

21. For a brief comparison between Kant and pragmatism in this regard, see Putnam (1995), chap. 2. Louden (1992, chap. 4) also refers to the "primacy

of the practical" as a combining feature of Kant and the pragmatists – and as one of the reasons why morality ought to be seen as pervasive in human life. For some remarks on James's debt to Kant in ethical matters, see Pihlström (1998), chap. 5, and (2002c).

22. I am again grateful to Ken Westphal for his comments on this point.

23. I am not saying that nihilism, for instance, could not be an interesting ethical stance. For a sophisticated investigation of the (meta)philosophical role that nihilism plays in Nietzsche's thought, see Tuusvuori (2000).

24. On our need to understand evil ethically, see also Gaita's (1991, 2000) penetrating discussions. For various recent, both historical and systematic, attempts to illuminate the notion, see the papers collected in Lara (2001) and B. Smith (2002), as well as Bernstein (2002), Neiman (2002), and Morton (2004).

25. See again Gaita's (1991) and Phillips's (1992) discussions of remorse.

26. For similar themes in pragmatism, especially in William James's philosophy, see Pihlström (1998). For an argument against ethical naturalism, drawing on a notion of "moral faith" analogous to religious faith, see Hare (2000).

27. For a sustained discussion of pragmatism's ability to deal with tragic moral dilemmas, see Hook (1974); for a more recent debate over whether Dewey's pragmatism, in particular, is able to account for tragedy as a feature of human life, see the exchange between Boisvert (1999, 2001) and Morse (2001).

28. See the writings collected in Levinas (1989) and the extremely helpful interpretive essays recently published in Critchley and Bernasconi (2002), especially Critchley's (2002) introduction, which emphasizes Levinas's connections with more analytically oriented moral thought, including Wittgenstein (see p. 19). I cannot here make any claims to interpret Levinas accurately.

29. For the philosophical – both pragmatic and transcendental – relevance of mortality, see also Pihlström (2001) and (2002c).

Chapter Four

1. These essays can be found in Hume (1742), chaps. 15–18.

2. I am grateful to Bob McCarthy for the permission to quote from his unpublished paper.

3. Insofar as the expression "moral skepticism" is used in these discussions, it does not mean the same as Hume's skepticism. Like McCarthy, I shall try to avoid the expression in what follows to avoid misunderstandings.

4. See McCarthy (2002), p. 11; see further *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (in Hume 1777), section I.

5. See Johnston (1999), discussed at length in chapter three. For a discussion of Kant's "self-centered" ethics as one of the backgrounds of the world-view shared by Wittgenstein, some of his contemporaries and many of his followers, see Thomas (2001), pp. 76, 86–87.

6. For a different but equally relevant reading of Hume as a philosopher emphasizing the natural, ordinary human predicament, see Taylor (1989), pp. 346–7. For an argument to the effect that one can, within a Humean skeptical metaphilosophical framework, both maintain caution in one's philosophical endeavors and engage in a "constructive" philosophical inquiry, see McCormick (2002). This reading does not deny that Hume is a skeptic (as more strongly naturalistic readings, such as Strawson's, are supposed to do), but nor does it embrace a skepticism destructive of philosophical knowledge claims.

7. See Cavell (1981), p. 133; also pp. 106–107. See also Cavell (1979), pp. 84, 241, 329f. Among Emerson's essays, particularly relevant here are "Experience" (1844) and "Montaigne; or, the Skeptic" (1850), in Ralph Waldo Emerson (1903–04), vol. 3 (*Essays: Second Series*, pp. 43–86) and vol. 4 (*Representative Men*, pp. 147–86), respectively; among Thoreau's writings, *Walden* is of course the major work. (A detailed comparison of Hume's "The Sceptic" with these classical pieces of American literature, or with the slightly more recent classics of pragmatism, lies beyond this discussion.)

8. Regarding Emerson's relevance to the topic of skepticism (and to contemporary philosophy more generally), I am indebted, in addition to Cavell's writings, to the insightful (unpublished) bachelors and masters theses by one of my students, Heikki Kovalainen (Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki, 2002, 2004). Up to now, Kovalainen's work on Emerson is available only in Finnish. One of the important issues he addresses is whether pragmatism should play a more important role in our reading of Emerson than Cavell acknowledges.

9. See Putnam's discussion in Putnam (1987), pp. 85f.

10. The distinction between knowing and something deeper (acknowledgment, trust, certainty) may be helpfully backed up with references to Wittgenstein's project in *On Certainty* (1969); further discussion is in chapter six.

11. Emerson, "Montaigne; or, the Skeptic" (1903–04), vol. 4, p. 159.

12. Witherspoon's criticism is directed at the treatment of Cavell in Mulhall (1994b).

13. At this point, there is an obvious connection to the on-going debate on whether Wittgenstein (early or late) attempted to draw limits to language, to argue that there is something we cannot do or say; see Crary and Read (2000).

14. Some of Levinas's basic writings can easily be found in his (1989). It is, however, more convenient to raise the skepticism issue through secondary literature, as this is not a scholarly study of Levinas.

15. Critchley (2002, p. 19) compares Levinas's "saying" vs. "said" distinction to Wittgenstein's distinction (drawn in his 1929 "Lecture on Ethics"; see Wittgenstein 1965) between the (seriously) nonsensical ethical discourse and ordinary factual discourse. See also Diamond (1991) and (1992).

16. Critchley specifically refers to Cavell (1979), p. 89. I will return to the concept of trust in chapter six.

17. For some remarks on this issue in relation to the topic of mortality which is highly central in both Wittgenstein and Levinas, see Pihlström (2001); for a more comprehensive treatment of the problem of solipsism in relation to ethical and existential matters, see Pihlström (2004a), chap. 5.

18. For a quite different way of arguing for Hume's qualified Kantianism, ascribing the faculty of imagination a creative role in structuring perceptions, albeit in a naturalistic framework not fully available to Kant himself, see Johansson (2002).

19. This, of course, is an allusion to Quine (also sometimes read as a skeptic), whom I do not, however, regard as an ally in my qualified defense of Humean-Wittgensteinian-Cavellian pragmatic skepticism.

20. It is, of course, right here that the Heideggerian or Levinasian "skeptic" would protest. But obviously I have not claimed Hume's and Heidegger's (or Levinas's, or Wittgenstein's) views to be identical; I have only drawn attention to their metaphilosophical analogies.

Chapter Five

1. Recent book-length studies proposing a pragmatic transformation of philosophy from useless metaphysical aspirations for eternal truths to socially concerned critique include Nielsen (1995) and Wallgren (1996).

2. See Niiniluoto's (1993, p. 9) table of professions, practices, arts, and sciences.

3. See Nordenfelt (1997) on the concept of health. We will return to this concept toward the end of the chapter.

4. For a more detailed critical discussion of these suggestions, see Pihlström (1998), chap. 9.

5. I shall not deal with Rorty's version of pragmatism in this book, having little to add to my earlier critical explorations in Pihlström (1996) and (1998).

6. See also Haldane's (1996) worries about the potential negative effects of the present situation in applied ethics on people's views about the chances of rationally discussing value questions; according to Haldane, intellectually shallow work in applied ethics may be a moral danger for the whole discipline of "practical philosophy."

7. On the interactive relation between the applied theory and the practical problem to which it may be applied, see also Kasachkoff (1992).

8. Among Dewey's numerous works, the most relevant from this point of view are Dewey (1929), (1931), (1946), and (1948). This is not the right place to offer any historical interpretation of Dewey's conception of philosophy.

9. See von Wright (1993). For a critical discussion of the various metaphorical meanings attached to certain illnesses, such as tuberculosis, cancer, and aids, see Sontag (1978) and (1989).

10. See also Wittgenstein (1997), p. 65: "Die Aufgabe der Philosophie ist, den Geist über bedeutungslosen Fragen zu beruhigen. Wer nicht zu solchen Fragen neigt der braucht die Philosophie nicht."

11. See also §254 for the concept of "philosophical treatment" and §593 for the famous statement about "one-sided diet" being a "main cause of philosophical disease."

12. See Crary and Read (2000).

13. See however Lear (1998) for analogies between Wittgenstein's and Freud's therapeutic concerns.

14. For example, Sorensen (1993). On the metaphors of "disease," "therapy," "cure," and "health," see especially pp. 13–14, 62.

15. See Rorty (1980) and virtually all of his subsequent writings.

16. I am not, however, presenting any strong historical thesis regarding the influence of Kant's *Methodenlehre* on Wittgenstein. What I am presenting is, rather, an analogy.

17. Viktor Frankl (1969), whose philosophical and psychological views have been widely applied in therapeutical care (see again Melley 1998), echoes William James's (1897) pragmatist doctrine of the "will to believe" in his theory of the "will to meaning." For a discussion of James's position, see Pihlström (1998).

18. See also Bica (1999) for an interesting therapeutical application of philosophy in curing "the moral casualties of war."

19. On Socratic dialogues as a method in practical philosophical training of groups of people interested in improving their personal and professional lives, see for example Boele (1997). Among many recent contributions arguing that philosophy, even in universities, should become more relevant to people's lives, see Solomon (1997).

20. This observation might lead us to distinguish between different "levels" of health. On problems related to defining the notion of health see Nordenfelt (1997).

Chapter Six

1. For an illuminating comparison between Cavell and Levinas, see Critchley (2002), p. 11. I shall return to some Levinasian themes in due course.

2. For variations of this line of thought, see Gaita (1991), Phillips (1992), and Johnston (1999).

3. The reference here is to the famous passage in Wittgenstein (1953, I, §217) about my reasons – the project of justifying one's practice – coming to an end and my spade being turned.

4. Conant's (1990) chief task in the paper from which I am quoting is to analyze Putnam's (1990) way of endorsing Cavell's definition of philosophy as an education of grown-ups. I shall not deal with Putnam's interpretation of Cavell or with Conant's interpretation of Putnam (or of Cavell) or with any of these thinkers' interpretations of Wittgenstein here. Kennedy (1998, p. 34) also speaks about "the adult awaken[ing] to the voice of the child."

5. See writers as diverse as Nozick (1981), chap. 2; Post (1987), chap. 2; Parfit (1992); Swinburne (1998); and Lowe (1998), chap. 12.

6. See Armstrong (1997) for his notion of supervenience and for further discussions of the combinatorial theory of modality.

7. See Parfit's (1992) discussion of the role of inexplainable "brute facts" in the "riddle of existence."

8. Regarding this experience of "wonder at the existence of the world," see also Wittgenstein (1961), p. 86. Also see Dilman (2002), pp. 179–180, and the discussion of this topic, in comparison to James's (1902) religious mysticism, in Goodman (2002), pp. 46–48, as well as the related remarks in Cooper (2002), p. 311. I shall return to Cooper's central notion of "mystery" in the final section of this chapter.

9. Among a number of relevant contributions, see for example Mulhall (1994) and Tilghman (1994).

10. The purpose here is not to examine whether Wittgenstein offers us transcendental arguments. For some remarks on this debate, see Pihlström (2003a), chap. 2. See also Hertzberg (1994), chap. 5, for a Wittgenstein-styled analysis of trust as a basic element of human linguistic practices, as a condition for the possibility of applying the concepts of truth and falsehood; also see Lagerspetz (1998) for a more general study on the notion of trust.

11. For a more comprehensive treatment of the notion of skepticism at work here, see chapter four. For a discussion of the relation between Wittgenstein and the pragmatists, see Pihlström (2003a), chap. 2.

12. Himanka's specific reference regarding the notion of "transcendental childhood" is to the second part of Husserl's *Erste Philosophie* lectures from 1923–24, published as vol. 8 of *Husserliana*.

13. See Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914–16* (Wittgenstein 1961) and the final pages of the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 1921).

14. See also Winch's (1972) discussion of birth, death and sexuality as human "limit experiences" with a quasi-transcendental significance. Compare further the discussions of Wittgenstein's (1921) solipsism, amounting to the unspeakable thesis that the world is "mine," in Pihlström (2004a) and in the bunch of literature cited therein.

15. Good examples of pseudo-explanatory strategies can be found in some of the references cited earlier in this chapter.

16. Compare, again, Wittgenstein's (1921, 1961) above-cited remarks on the "I"; see also Pihlström (2004a).

17. For Levinas's conception of ethics as a "first philosophy," see (1982) and (1989). For a discussion of the "truth in skepticism," see chapter four.

18. See Arendt's (1958) discussion of the concept of natality.

19. See again Wittgenstein's (1953, II, iv) famous note on the "attitude towards a soul" which need not (and cannot) be based on an "opinion" of the other's "having" a soul; see further Gaita's (1991, 2000) elaborations on this central Wittgensteinian theme, also discussed in chapter three.

20. For critical discussions, see Critchley and Bernasconi (2002); see also Levinas's (1982) remarks (sometimes regarded as sexist) on the special relation of responsibility to be found between father and son.

21. See especially Bernstein (2002), who draws inspiration from various writers, including Kant, Levinas, and Arendt. Kant's 1791 essay on the unsuccessfulness of any philosophical (theoretical) theodicy is an important classic here; see Brachtendorf (2002) for a recent detailed commentary. Neiman's (2002) book is one of the best recent historical accounts of the problem of evil.

22. See Putnam (1994), McDowell (1996), and several essays in N. H. Smith (2002).

23. For a (Wittgensteinian) defense of the view that moral learning is above all personal learning to know oneself, through "soul-searching" and reflecting one's mistakes, instead of any theoretical learning or intellectual comprehension, see Dilman (2002), pp. 196–9. Dilman formulates his view as a critical response to what he sees as Putnam's overly intellectualized conception of moral objectivity – already discussed in chapter two.

24. See Cooper's discussion of pragmatism (especially James) in his (2002), chap. 4. In chap. 5 Cooper explains what he takes to be the most elaborated version of humanism, the "existential humanism" inspired by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

25. See Cooper's detailed analysis of the hubris of both absolutism and humanism in his (2002), chaps. 8–10.

26. Cooper (2002, chap. 12) finds some Eastern (e.g. Buddhist) discussions of emptiness pertinent here.

Chapter Seven

1. Compare this to the suggestion that we might simply drop the talk about "applying" philosophy (in chapter five).

2. I am here quoting the words of an anonymous referee of my manuscript. It is obvious that I cannot fully satisfactorily answer to this referee's worries regarding my position.

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