Moralės filosofija / Moral Philosophy

Moral Certainty instead of Moral Objectivity

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Abstract. This paper argues that although Dworkin's aim of developing a more practical understanding of moral truth is plausible, his attempt to do that while keeping the concept of moral objectivity remains deeply problematic. Because of its opposition to everything subjective, moral objectivity stands in an inherent conflict with the practical reality that we experience as persons from a first-person perspective; therefore, Dworkin's attempt to reconceptualize moral objectivity from within a first-person perspective is inherently contradictory. The paper suggests that we should go one step further than Dworkin and give up the concept of moral objectivity altogether. A notion of moral certainty instead of moral objectivity would satisfy Dworkin's intention of finding a practical conception of moral truth more adequately. A brief preliminary conception of it is developed while invoking the German philosopher Robert Spaemann's ontology of a person.
Keywords: Moral objectivity, moral certainty, Robert Spaemann, Ronald Dworkin

Moralinis tikrumas vietoje moralinio objektyvumo

Santrauka. Straipsnyje siekiama įrodyti, kad nors Dworkino pastanga rasti labiau praktinę patirtį atliepiantį moralinės tiesos supratimą yra pagrįsta, jo tikslas tokį supratimą plėtoti pasiliekant moralės objektyvumo są-voką yra problemiškas. Straipsnio tikslas – įrodyti, kad reikėtų žengti vienu žingsniu toliau nei Dworkinas ir atsisakyti pačios moralės objektyvumo sąvokos. Kadangi moralės objektyvumas pačia savo samprata oponuoja bet kokiam subjektyvumui, jis yra vidujai nesuderinamas su tokia praktinės tikrovės patirtimi, kokią mes turime kaip asmenys iš pirmojo asmens, subjektiškos, pozicijos. Kitaip tariant, Dworkino siekis peraiškinti moralės objektyvumą kaip kylantį iš pirmojo asmens perspektyvos yra vidujai prieštaringas. Straipsnyje pateikiami argumentai, kodėl ir kaip būtent moralinio tikrumo samprata galėtų žymiai adekvačiau įgyvendinti Dworkino siekį rasti labiau praktinį moralinio sprendinio ir moralinės tiesos supratimą. Ši moralinio tikrumo samprata, kaip alternatyva moraliniam objektyvumui, yra plėtojama remiantis vokiečių filosofo Roberto Spaemanno asmens ontologija.
Pagrindiniai žodžiai: moralės objektyvumas, moralinis tikrumas, Robertas Spaemannas, Ronaldas Dworkinas

Introduction

Ronald Dworkin famously dismissed any metaethical understanding of moral objectivity, but parallelly argued that it "is an obvious, inescapable fact" (Dworkin 2011: 24) that there are truths about value. He attempted to define those truths by using the concept of a non-metaethical moral objectivity. In other words, he attempted to reconceptualize what the objectivity in moral domain is. According to him, we should seek moral objectivity not as a morally external, metaphysical, or scientific criterion about morality as a whole, but as an exceptionally first-person certainty within morality informing us which moral or ethical judgments are true (Dworkin 2011: 25). However, after rejecting metaethical conception of moral objectivity and stressing the need for a more practical conception of it, Dworkin left this alternative undeveloped. He clearly states that moral objectivity is possible and that it should be sought from within morality, hence, from a first-person perspective, however, he does not develop any particular conception of it. Moreover, in the context of his elaborate critique of many metaethical concepts as unreflectively adopted from a scientific field and impaired by scientism, hence, being inadequate for the practical field of morality (Dworkin 2011: 417), his decision to keep the concept of objectivity, as one of such concepts, seems deeply problematic.

I argue that we should go one step further than Dworkin and give up the concept of moral objectivity altogether. The aim of this paper is to argue that Ronald Dworkin's critique and transformation of moral objectivity is not radical enough. My thesis is that moral objectivity, because of its opposition to everything subjective, stands in an inherent conflict with the practical reality that we experience as persons from a first-person perspective; therefore, Dworkin's attempt to reconceptualize moral objectivity from within a first-person perspective is inherently contradictory. I suggest that a notion of moral certainty[1] instead to moral objectivity would satisfy Dworkin's intention of finding a practical conception of moral truth more adequately. I develop a brief preliminary conception of it while invoking the German philosopher Robert Spaemann's ontology of a person. Spaemann's position, being constituted by a more phenomenological approach and concentrating on the concrete experience of moral practice, enables to expose those fundamental presuppositions of moral objectivity that inherently conflict with our moral experience as persons. It also enables us to articulate and develop essential characteristics of moral certainty.

In the first part of the paper, I argue that Dworkin's attempt to dismiss metaethical conception of moral objectivity on behalf of a more practical conception of moral truth is reasonable, yet unfinished and problematic. Then I show how the conception of moral objectivity, being constituted by detaching from everything subjective, disregards the fact

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[1] In recent years there has been some attention devoted to the concept of moral certainty, for instance, C. Eriksen, J. Herman, N. O'Hara, N. Pleasants (2023), J. Hermann (2015). However, these positions develop the conception of moral certainty invoking Wittgenstein's philosophy. In this paper, we shall focus on a more phenomenological approach based on Robert Spaemann's philosophy.

that our moral reality is essentially based on a first-person perspective[2] and is inherently incompatible with the moral reality that we live and act in as persons. Finally, I suggest that Dworkin's search for a more practical conception of moral truth is better satisfied by the conception of moral certainty. I draft a preliminary conception of it and show how it avoids the shortcomings characteristic of moral objectivity.

Unfinished attempt by Dworkin to transform moral objectivity

One of the main aims of Dworkin's moral philosophy is to defend the possibility of a non-metaethical moral objectivity. Dworkin openly and repeatedly states that he believes "that there are objective truths about value" (Dworkin 2011: 7) but rejects any metaethical approach that would "take us outside morality into metaphysics" (Dworkin 2011: 9) and would ground moral claims making them objectively true. According to him, we should seek moral objectivity from within morality. This means that we should approach it as agents from a first-person perspective and justify it by appealing to evaluative moral arguments, not some metaphysical or scientific facts. In his own words, "[t]here are no nonevaluative, second-order, meta-ethical truths about value […]. Value judgments are true, when they are true, not in virtue of any matching but in view of the substantive case that can be made for them. The moral realm is the realm of argument, not brute, raw fact" (Dworkin 2011: 11). In other words, he is trying to transform the conception of moral objectivity from a metaethical, to a more practical one. But what kind of objectivity is that?

Although Dworkin does not give an elaborate definition of his new conception of moral objectivity, it is possible to reconstruct its outline. According to Dworkin, if we approach moral objectivity as agents, from a first-person perspective, we will see that "the truth of any true moral judgment consists in the truth of an indefinite number of other moral judgments" (Dworkin 2011: 117). This means that if I consider some moral judgment to be true, I should be able to justify this judgment by giving arguments *why* it is true. These arguments should also rest on other arguments, and, like that, *ad infinitum*. The whole process of such moral thought seeking moral objectivity might be depicted as a dense and active net of various moral concepts, convictions and arguments that are governed by two main principles – integrity and authenticity. Integrity means that, while deliberating, we always seek to integrate our moral values, convictions, and judgments into a consistent unity where each supports or at least does not contradict the other. Authenticity means that this integrity is not merely a formal or theoretical one, but the one we can practically adopt as our own, and follow it in action. In other words, it means that we must find this integrity convincing and be able to act out of these integrated convictions. Hence, Dworkin's moral objectivity considered from a first-person perspective emerges as an authentic conviction that some judgment is true, justified by the infinite number of arguments integrating this conviction with all the other convictions. According to Dworkin, the way

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[2] Dworkin is not the first to emphasize the importance of the first-person perspective within morality. It has also been stressed out in different contexts by Nagel (1986, 1998), Korsgaard (1996, 2008), and Crone (2018, 2020).

each value enhances our life by supporting each other, by integrating with each other "in the fashion of geodesic dome" (Dworkin 2004: 17), discloses the normative essence of this value, hence, enables to understand it objectively.

However, such conception of moral objectivity, despite its appealing practical character that corresponds to our personal experience of moral reality, remains deeply problematic. It was already noticed by Nagel that such conception of moral objectivity seems too weak (Nagel 2007). When we speak of objectivity, we expect the judgment that we call objective to be robustly and unchangeably correct and true, like an empirical fact or a mathematical proof. In other words, objective knowledge is objective and not probable precisely because it cannot turn out to be wrong – it can be proven without any doubt. However, Dworkin himself admits that what he considers to be morally objective, hence, justified by many convincing arguments, later, based on new arguments, might turn out to be wrong (Dworkin 2011: 39). In other words, even if all the arguments at hand convince one that some moral judgment is objectively true and even if one, after a detailed reflection "can't help believing something, steadily and wholeheartedly" (Dworkin 1996: 118), it still might not be true, and we have no other way to check if it is. This leads us to question Dworkin's position. Does this mean that moral objectivity is somehow less objective than objectivity in any other fields? It seems that the very concept of objectivity implies a much stronger certainty than any set of evaluative arguments could ever guarantee. Can we still call it objectivity?

Also, Dworkin openly claims that, while attempting to understand practical realm on its own terms, we should not adopt concepts inferior to this realm, hence, directly taken from science or metaphysics. According to him, "we must find our conceptions of truth and falsity, responsibility and irresponsibility, facts and realism, within the realms of value itself – on as clean a sheet as possible" (Dworkin 2011: 418). However, the concept of objectivity itself comes from a scientific discourse, so keeping this concept does not seem that 'clean a sheet as possible'. If Dworkin's main aim is to redefine whatever the moral truth is, why keep the concept of moral objectivity for that? Why would we not look for a wholly different way of articulating what this moral truth is, when we approach it from a first-person perspective? In other words, Dworkin's aim to look for a more practical understanding of moral truth that would correspond to our first-person experience of moral reality seems plausible. However, his decision to do it while keeping the concept of moral objectivity seems questionable because the inherent robustness and scientific origin seem to conflict with Dworkin's aim of finding an independent conception of moral truth that would be internal to moral thought and correspond to our first-person experience of moral reality.

Why is moral objectivity a false aim within morality?

These preliminary doubts are deepened by a closer look at the conceptual possibility of such moral objectivity that Dworkin suggests. Dworkin's idea is that we can and should redefine moral objectivity while integrating it with our first-person perspective so that it

would correspond to our concrete and subjectively experienced practical reality. However, it is widely agreed that the notion of objectivity is constituted precisely by our ability to distance oneself from everything subjective, including this first-person perspective and everything that goes with it[3] – the particularity of a person and his or her situation, personal attachments and engagement in the situation. For instance, according to Hopster, "moral objectivity is understood in terms of mind-independence, stance-independence, or […] attitude-independence" (Hopster 2017: 764). In other words, within morality, "an objective standpoint is created by leaving a more subjective, individual, or even just human perspective behind" (Nagel 1986: 7). It is the process of gradual detachment from one's personal point of view, one's subjective particularity and, as Nagel famously states, a continuous search for the view from nowhere. To state it more strongly, "objectivity is the suppression of some aspect of the self, the countering of subjectivity. Objectivity and subjectivity define each other, like left and right or up and down" (Daston, Galison 2007: 36–37). This means that objectivity, by definition, is inherently always contrary to any kind of subjectivity, and it cannot be integrated with it on any level because they are mutually exclusive. Therefore, Dworkin's attempt to construe his conception of moral objectivity – as one emerging from a first-person perspective – is inherently contradictory. There are several aspects as to how and why Dworkin's attempt to redefine moral truth (by integrating it with a more practical view, but still keeping the notion of objectivity) is contradictory or at least problematic.

Particularity vs. objectivity

First, the notion of moral objectivity and its inherent detachment from the 'self' disregards the essential particularity of moral reality and the role that such particularity plays in moral judgment. Dworkin rightly notices that our practical experience of moral reality discloses that its complexity and relationality are its essential, not additional, or merely secondary, features. The particularity of our relations to others, the variety of our own personalities, circumstances, and details are those aspects that have an essential inherent role in deciding what would be the truly good and moral decision in any particular moral situation. This means that we can evaluate the rightness of the action only by leaning on and drawing information from the particular relation between the people involved, their personalities, and the circumstances they are in. The importance of such particularity is also reflected in Dworkin's conception of authenticity, which requires that we break out of abstract impersonal "considerations to ask what form of moral integrity fits best with how we want to conceive our personality and our life" (Dworkin 2011: 192). According to him, in every situation, we need to find "a way of being that you find suited to your situation, not one drawn mindlessly from convention or the expectations or demands of others" (Dworkin 2011: 210), because "[l]iving well means not just designing a life, as if any design would do, but designing it in response to a judgment of ethical value" (Dwor-

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[3] Among others, such a position is supported by Nagel (1986), Hopster (2017), Daston and Galison (2007), and Hanna (2004).

kin 2011: 212). In other words, our particular personalities, circumstances and relations are the essential constituents in our moral judgments of what is right or wrong. Without them, if leaning only on pure impersonal norms or concepts, it is impossible to evaluate a situation adequately and to judge it appropriately.

This can be illustrated with an example. In any friendship, a friend of mine is not some abstract objective idea of a friend, but a very concrete person with whom I am morally tied up in various specific ways that cannot be deduced from an abstract concept of a 'friend'. We have our own personal history and specific connection which, alone, enables me to decide what would be the right thing to do in a particular situation concerning this particular friend. No objective norm of how we should treat friends can account for the particularity of my friendship and sufficiently inform me about what I should do in a concrete situation with a concrete friend. It is possible that, in two analogous situations with two different friends, two very different actions would be considered to be good. In other words, the normativity of moral situations arises specifically from our personal relationship and in accordance with it, not despite or independently of it. Any attempt to distance myself from this personal particularity will leave me without a proper moral guidance. As Spaemann noticed, "[o]ne can only have such a small number of real friends that our dealing with them never become the subject of considerations of justice. The place where 'normative' ethics, the obligation to justify, begins is on the other side of friendship" (Spaemann 2000: 109). This means that it is impossible to do justice to an authentic ethical relationship, such as friendship, if we distance from its thick and multi-layered personal content, in other words, it is impossible to do that from a non-subjective point of view. One takes part in practical situations as a concrete and wholesome person, not as an abstract subject swept of everything that is subjective about him or her, and, precisely because of that, one is able to function as a moral subject in those situations.

However, objectivity, by definition, requires the opposite. It requires detaching oneself from being a concrete, multi-layered person in order to guarantee impartiality. It draws its normative authority by being a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel 1986), or the 'view of no one in particular' (Hopster 2017: 765), and requires finding a norm that would apply to anyone that is a rational agent. In other words, objectivity can be assumed to be morally right precisely because it is not subjective. Hence, Dworkin's conception of objectivity attempts to integrate two contradictory aspects. To reach authenticity, it must embrace our subjectivity and construct moral judgments taking into account the particularity of various details, circumstances and relationships that this subjectivity is constituted from. But, in order to stay objective, it must detach itself from all these particularities and seek for as pure and non-subjective a viewpoint as possible. On the one hand, Dworkin is defending the position that our view is precisely *someone's in particular*, and, just because of that, we are able to act well as persons, doing justice to all our relationships with others. On the other hand, he insists on keeping the notion of objectivity that is inherently constituted as negation of that subjectivity. Therefore, it seems that Dworkin's conception of moral objectivity that presumably should be achieved from a first-person perspective and account for our practical experience of moral reality is oxymoronic – it is impossible to achieve

such a thing. It is impossible to give an abstract objective answer on how one should act in one situation or another, because the answer itself is constituted by the person one is, and the relationship one has with others involved in the situation – it is constituted by particularities that one should leave behind while seeking for objectivity.

Moral engagement vs. objectivity

Second, moral objectivity, with its inherent detachment from everything subjective, disregards moral engagement as an essential part of our practical experience of morality that Dworkin defends. Dworkin himself openly argues that authenticity requires that we "find convictions that grip us strongly enough" (Dworkin 2011: 108) to act according to them as they would express who we really are. According to him, we need to "live in response to, rather than against the grain of, [our] situation and the values [we] find appropriate" (Dworkin 2011: 210), and any coherence that we might find through deliberation must be "endorsed by judgment, not just a coin flip" (Dworkin 2011: 213) in order to be an adequate criterion for moral judgment. In other words, as moral agents, approaching the world from a first-person perspective, we experience our decisions and actions as expressions of our own will[4] and character. During the process of deliberation or action, we are personally and directly engaged in decisions or actions we make – that is why one is able to consider those decisions and actions to be one's own. Even if we act by being guided by some more general principle or norm, as agents, we must first *acknowledge* them as true or good (not only as factually correct), and only then are we able to act out of them. Hence, one needs to regard any norm or decision as true for oneself, not only as true in general, before one acts according to it.

However, it is only possible to reach such engagement through embracing one's subjectivity: an objective principle must first become at least in some part subjective – it must be internalized, acknowledged, engaged in and willed, before it becomes a source for one's action. This means that moral engagement, being an essential part of our practical morality, is essentially subjective – it is an internal act of our moral 'self'. But that is exactly what objectivity inherently stands in contradiction to. To be objective moral judgment must stay mind-independent, stance-independent, and attitude-independent (Hopster 2017: 764), hence, it cannot be directly engaged with our subjectivity. Therefore, insisting on both, keeping the notion of moral objectivity and defending moral engagement, Dworkin once again is trying to combine two contradictory things. On the one hand, he is defending subjective moral engagement as an essential part of authentic moral judgment and experience. On the other hand, he demands to keep the notion of objectivity that

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4   This aspect has already been noted by St. Augustine when he said that "no one does well against his will, even though what he does is good" (St. Augustine 1953: 20). This means that even if the results of some actions might be considered to be good, we cannot regard an action or the agent good if the agent was not willing that good (hence, if he, as a particular 'self', was not engaged in willing that decision and action). The goodness of the result might only be an accident, not an expression of a benevolent will. The inclination of our will or, in other words, our own engagement and acknowledgment of what we do, our conscious personal participation in our decisions and actions is the decisive aspect while evaluating the goodness of those decisions and actions.

can stay objective only if it detaches itself from such subjective moral engagement that authenticity and our practical experience of morality requires.

This might also be illustrated with an example. For instance, there might be substantive scientific evidence that the majority of people consider lying to be a bad thing, but this objective knowledge does not by itself provide me with a reason not to lie, despite its objectivity. First, one, as a person, must see this (or any other for that matter) knowledge as an indispensable reason not to lie if one wants to consider it as some kind of moral truth. Dworkin himself presents a similar example (see Dworkin 2011: 77–79). He suggests imagining that you took some brain scan, and your moral judgment on some controversial matter changes after that. For instance, before the scan, you thought that it is immoral to eat meat, however, after the scan, you changed your mind. What is more, scientists have proven that such a change in judgment about vegetarianism is one of the objective outcomes of the scan – "the evidence is vast and conclusive: there is no possibility of coincidence" (Dworkin 2011: 77). However, despite knowing the objective fact, why you have one conviction instead of another, on a practical level of morality – in deliberation and action – you will nevertheless be looking for arguments that support this conviction. In other words, you will be looking for moral engagement in the objective knowledge, trying to see it not just as some objective value, but as a value for you that can guide your decisions and actions.

The problem is that, while defending the importance of moral engagement as an essential part of moral judgment, Dworkin refuses to accept that detaching from such subjective engagement is an intrinsic part of objectivity. According to Cushman, "the possibility of so-called 'objectivity' in knowledge is given in the fact that there may be cognition without *agnitio*, acknowledgement" (Cushman 1979: 289–290). However, this objective cognition without acknowledgment, or without personal engagement, as was shown by both examples, is of no use in moral situations, because it cannot move us to action – it does not give us any motive to act according to this knowledge. This means that Dworkin's position again ends up with the same oxymoronic situation – moral judgement about what is good or bad must be at least in part subjective (it must be a reason for me, it must engage my will and my 'self', it must be acknowledged), but objectivity, as such, requires to distance oneself from such subjectivity.

Responsibility vs. objectivity

Finally, moral objectivity with its detachment from everything personal stands in conflict with our personal responsibility which is defended by Dworkin as one of the main principles constituting our moral reality. Dworkin takes responsibility to be one of the main pillars of our moral personality, and also as one of the main criteria for the adequacy of moral judgment. According to him, responsibility is the inner principle of our moral thought that stimulates us to seek integrity and authenticity in our moral judgments. We can hold ourselves responsible if we have reflected on our convictions and found integral and convincing arguments that would support those convictions. Therefore, responsibility

is a personal reflective exercise enabling us to see our moral actions and judgments as an integral part of our moral personality, therefore, to be responsible for them. Dworkin even goes that far as to state that "[w]e might call a theory of moral responsibility by a grander name: we might call it a moral epistemology" (Dworkin 2011: 12). Hence, where the aim of moral epistemology once was objective knowledge, now the aim is responsibility.

However, despite the fact that responsibility at times seems to be taking the place of objective knowledge, Dworkin warns to respect the distance between accuracy and responsibility (Dworkin 2011: 100), or between truth and responsibility (Dworkin 2011: 39). According to him, responsibility "does not guarantee moral truth. But when we find our arguments adequate, after that kind of comprehensive reflection, we have earned the right to live by them" (Dworkin 2011: 39). Such ambiguity concerning the relation between responsibility and objectivity is problematic. On the one hand, it seems that responsibility fulfils Dworkin's quest for a more practical understanding of moral judgment and the possibility of having some kind of moral certainty that corresponds to our experience of practical reality. Being a personal reflective exercise, it guarantees moral engagement and regard towards particularity of moral reality, but, at the same time, by virtue of being part of practical rationality, it is able to filter out purely biased or partial interests. It also corresponds to and does not deny our experience of uncertainty or alteration of previous convictions based on new arguments. Basically, Dworkin himself admits that it is the most we can have as moral agents approaching the world from a first-person perspective from which we deliberate and act. It is the moral responsibility what enables us to act with the only kind of certainty that is possible from this perspective (Dworkin 2011: 100). On the other hand, Dworkin insists on keeping the notion of objectivity, which, in such a context, seems not only redundant, but also demeaning responsibility as still insufficient and inadequate.

There is also an even deeper conflict between responsibility and objectivity. By distancing from everything subjective, objectivity is incompatible with responsibility because this subjectivity is an integral part of responsibility and makes responsibility what it is. According to Dworkin, "I do not treat an act as my own, as issuing from my personality and character, unless I regard myself as judgmentally responsible for it" (Dworkin 2011: 210). Hence, responsibility as such is constituted by one's ability to engage with one's own moral character. It is an intimate relation to one's own subjectivity – an ability to recognize and admit that the judgment or an action stems from one's self. Therefore, objectivity and responsibility appear to be pointing towards different directions – one tries to dissociate from subjectivity in order to remain objective, whereas the other integrates it as an indispensable part of moral judgment. In any concrete moral situation, the pressing question is not what the others or some imagined objective subject would do, but what *I*, a very concrete person under these concrete circumstances and relations should do. My concrete 'self' is the one who must make the decision, and this 'self' is the one who will have to live with it. In other words, my responsible moral deliberation does not seek to distance itself from my personal involvement in the situation, as moral objectivity requires. On the contrary, it examines it very carefully to estimate what I am obliged to do – without this personal involvement, I cannot evaluate what I am responsible for and to what extent.

According to Spaemann, responsibility might even be called a kind of self-expression of a person (Spaemann 2017: 166). That is because "[t]he person realises his or her uniqueness precisely in being a 'rational nature' in his or her own personal, irreplaceable way" (Spaemann 2017: 172). In moral decisions and actions, we are not simply implementing one and the same objective rule, we are not depersonalized instances of such a rule. Even if we are guided by some more general moral principle, the thing that really counts is the fact that we commit ourselves to that principle, we engage ourselves in it, we take responsibility for that it would be implemented in a concrete situation, and we realize that principle in a unique, personal way. One's personal involvement, engagement and commitment are what really counts, but what is left aside by moral objectivity when it leaves behind everything that stems from a personal 'self'.

The conception of moral certainty

However, if objectivity indeed is a false aim in morality, is there anything that we could call the right aim? Or does the renouncement of moral objectivity mean that everything remains purely subjective within morality, and that there might be no common standards for judging what is good and evil, right and wrong? Dworkin himself probably insisted on keeping the concept of objectivity because of the threat of relativism and subjectivism. He noticed that, within our moral reality, "[w]e want to live well because we recognize that we should live well, rather than the other way around" (Dworkin 2011: 13). In other words, he recognized and accepted that the value of values does not depend on our fiat or will. We discover values as normative obligations for us independent from purely subjective, partial and biased, desires or interests. But maybe the notion of objectivity is not the only one that can account for such impartiality of values? Maybe it is possible to find another way of articulating such experience of moral values, without pigeonholing it as objectivity? Especially, after noticing all the shortcomings that the concept of objectivity has regarding a more practical understanding of moral judgment that corresponds to our experience of moral reality as persons.

Spaemann's position enables us to argue that what we truly need and seek in moral situations is not moral objectivity, but moral certainty. What is more, the conception of moral certainty that we can reconstruct from Spaemann's position goes hand in hand with Dworkin's aim of finding a more practical understanding of moral truth that corresponds to our first-person perspective and moral reality that we experience from it as agents. In other words, Spaemann's conception of moral certainty allows to renounce moral objectivity due to its inadequacy to practical experience of morality but retains an impartial and normative understanding of moral value.

Moral certainty vs. moral objectivity

Moral certainty is a first-person experience of certitude about moral decisions. One has moral certainty when one, as an agent, is certain how one should act in a particular moral situation or how one should evaluate some moral action, and this works as a motive to

act. So, when one wants to know which decision would be the moral one or which action would be good, one is looking for moral certainty, not moral objectivity. According to Holger Zaborowski, "the epistemological status of this kind of simple, elementary, and immediate knowledge differs significantly from philosophical, scientific, and technological knowledge" (Zaborowski 2010: 69). It gives us the very thing that we expect from objectivity – sureness about what we should do – but which is something fundamentally different from it and much more adequate to the practical reality that we live in. But where does this certainty come from, and why should we trust it?

Moral certainty stems from the recognition of subjectivity as the ground for our moral reality. According to Spaemann, the reality that we experience as persons, from a first-person perspective, cannot be defined by objectivity, because within it 'being' precisely does not mean objectivity, "but rather means being-a-self" (Spaemann 2000: 84, 95–96). Spaemann argues that "subjectivity is an objective reality – and this is what we mean by 'persons': an objective reality that represents a standard by which to measure every true judgment" (Spaemann 2015: 81). In other words, "approaching reality as persons, from a first-person perspective, we recognize the others as real precisely by recognizing their subjectivity. The other is an independent center of being precisely because he is someone who has his own 'self', he is a subject, and not an object for me. Hence, as the other is recognized to be something more than an object, rather an independent 'self', therefore he or she becomes a normative restriction for me on treating him or her as merely an object. To recognize a person means pre-eminently to restrain my own potentially unlimited urge for self-expansion. It means to resist the inclination to see the other only as a factor in my own life-project" (Spaemann 2017: 186). In other words, the recognition of other's subjectivity as recognition of independent reality has a normative force – it restricts my actions against this subject (what I must not and should not do) and instructs my actions towards him or her (what I must or should do). Therefore, this recognition is the source and the center of moral certainty.

This means that, in contrast to moral objectivity, which seeks to distance itself from everything subjective and to reach a view from no one in particular, the most general and the most abstract point of view, moral certainty goes in a different direction. According to Spaemann, recognition of other's subjectivity is an "entry into the sphere of the personal" (Spaemann 2017: 186). Hence, moral certainty seeks to connect with the other as precisely someone in particular, as a concrete and wholesome person. Moral certainty is based not on cognition of some objective value fleeting somewhere outside of us as a neutral and impersonal reality, but on recognition of the unconditional value of other's subjectivity, which can be reached only through personal relation. It is an ability to recognize that our own subjectivity is only one among others, that reality is plural, and, based on that – the capacity to relativize oneself regarding others. But this can never be reached from an objective position, only from a personal one, through admitting one's own subjectivity and recognizing the others'.

However, here we can still ask: how can we trust such moral certainty to be something more than self-centered criterion? If it stems from a personal point of view, how can it guarantee impartiality?

Moral certainty: personal but impartial

Although it can only be achieved from a personal position and is defined by taking into account subjectivity, moral certainty can guarantee impartiality because it is essentially constituted by transcending purely partial or self-centered interests. Personal relation, within which moral certainty arises, is itself defined by transcendence of purely egocentric or self-centered interests, but, contrary to objectivity, doing it not from a detached no one's in a particular position, but a personal one. According to Spaemann, any truly personal relation "essentially consists in […] a refusal to obey the innate tendency of all living things to overpower others. Positively expressed, we may call it 'letting-be'. Letting be is the act of transcendence, the distinctive hallmark of personality" (Spaemann 2017: 77). In other words, I am capable of getting into personal relation only because I am capable of restricting my self-centered urge to treat others as merely objects and to recognize them as independent from me and my life project, hence, as real. Therefore, 'personal' does not mean subjectivistic or partial, or biased, or related to purely self-centered interests. On the contrary, it means distancing oneself from the purely egocentric nature, where the others remain only objects or means for me, in order to disclose one's personal nature and realize personal relations, where the other is *a priori* a normative boundary mark and guideline for me. According to Spaemann, "for human beings there is no pure subject-object relation, and a situation *vis-à-vis* reality is always and at the same time a relation of 'coexistence'" (Spaemann 2017: 79). Hence, once we talk about personal relation, we are already talking about persons that have transcended purely self-centered, objectifying relation to others and stepped into a different kind of relation – an equal personal one.

Therefore, moral certainty, which arises within such personal moral relation and judgment, can be personal and impartial at the same time. It refers not to some biased partial interest or desire, but to that judgment or action that one perceives as right from a personal position, hence, from a position where I already find and consider myself as one among many other persons, within a plurality of other persons. Such conception of moral certainty corresponds to Dworkin's idea of moral truth that would be internal to morality, found within first-person perspective and adequate to moral reality that we experience as persons but does that without any appeal to the problematic notion of moral objectivity.

How does moral certainty avoid the shortcomings of moral objectivity?

Finally, moral certainty avoids the above-mentioned shortcomings and problems that arise if we try, as Dworkin does, to integrate moral objectivity with a more practical approach to moral reality. For instance, moral certainty embraces the particularity, which is essential for constituting our moral reality, but stands in conflict with objectivity, and therefore becomes problematic in Dworkin's account. While moral objectivity seeks to distance itself from such particularity as being too subjective, moral certainty, on the other hand, is grounded in the exact opposite – in the recognition and acknowledgment of such particularity. That is because the very recognition of another person, hence an entry into a personal relation, is constituted by recognition of the particularity and uniqueness of this

other. According to Spaemann, a person is "defined by a 'place' in the universe which it alone occupies" (Spaemann 2017: 37). " [A] 'person' means the occupant of a unique position in the relational field of persons; […] [t]o take note of a human being as a person is precisely this: to take note of the a priori relational field that personality constitutes" (Spaemann 2017: 185). In other words, to recognize the person means to recognize his or her particular place – the totality of various relations that one was born into, created and nurtured. So moral certainty, being a first-person experience of practical sureness within personal relations, considers all the significant particularities that play part in a concrete situation. Moral certainty discloses normativity that might be absolute and unconditional, but nevertheless local, particular, directed to one concrete person, not general and universal.

Also, moral certainty, contrary to moral objectivity, embraces moral engagement that enables us to perceive moral decisions and actions as our own, and take responsibility for them. Moral certainty is not some sort of detached knowledge, but, as Zaborowski specifies (see Zaborowski 2010: 69), is an immediate and simple insight that constitutes a personal state of sureness, and it is always action-oriented. By stressing its exceptionally practical, action-oriented character, Spaemann states that this moral certainty is a "certainty we all sense, so long as we do not start specifically to reflect on it" (Spaemann 1989: 4). It is the end of all possible reflection and deliberation, however, not as a theoretical conclusion or scientific proof, but as a practical conviction. Hence, such conception of moral certainty corresponds to Dworkin's account on first-person authentic moral judgment that "grips you as right for you and your circumstances" (Dworkin 2010: 209). It enables to filter out purely self-centered and partial interests, because it is based on self-transcendence, but, contrary to objectivity, it preserves personal engagement that is essential for moral judgment.

Finally, moral certainty is also closely linked to moral responsibility. Being based on our self-transcendence as purely egocentric beings, moral certainty enables us to perceive our actions and decisions as expressions of our own moral personality and, therefore, bounds us with responsibility for those decisions and actions. While moral objectivity can only impersonally declare that some decision or action is objectively good without assigning any precise responsibility for any 'self' concerning this decision or action, moral certainty tends to a wholly different direction. With moral certainty it is precisely my 'self' that is certain that some decision or action is good and, hence, personally responsible for anything that comes from that certainty. According to Spaemann, being guided by such moral certainty is the way that we disclose ourselves as unique and irreplaceable persons. According to him, "[t]aken simply as rational entities, human beings are interchangeable. It makes no difference to the reason behind a judgement whose reason it is that reaches it" (Spaemann 2017: 170), but, as a person who freely chooses to go with one decision or the other, who responds to something that one perceives as morally certain and who takes responsibility for committing to a decision, one is unique and incommensurable. Hence, moral certainty, unlike moral objectivity, embraces the particularities that constitute our moral reality, and therefore can guide us more adequately through it and help us realize ourselves as persons.

Conclusion

One of the main aims of Dworkin is to defend the possibility of a non-metaethical moral objectivity that corresponds to our first-person experience of moral reality. According to him, we should develop a conception of moral truth that is internal to moral thought. However, while his aim of developing such a more practical conception of moral truth is justified and relevant, his attempt to do it while keeping the concept of moral objectivity remains deeply problematic.

Objectivity, by definition, seeks detachment from everything subjective; it is oriented towards mind-independent, abstract, universal judgment that is no one's in particular. However, Dworkin's conception of moral judgment that is based on such ethical principles as authenticity and responsibility is precisely someone's in particular, because it is constituted by engaging and taking regard of particular personalities, circumstances and relations that play part in a moral situation. Therefore, Dworkin's attempt to keep the notion of moral objectivity and reconceptualize it from within first-person perspective stands in conflict with his own main ethical principles and the conception of moral judgment that he is trying to develop. In other words, Dworkin's case shows that an attempt to develop a conception of moral truth that would be based on a practical first-person perspective and still articulated within the framework of objectivity is inherently contradictory.

The aim of reconceptualizing the conception of moral truth, so it would be more adequate to our experience of moral reality, is better fulfilled by renouncing the concept of moral objectivity and embracing the one of moral certainty instead. This conception of moral certainty was briefly introduced by Robert Spaemann, and the analysis of the main principles of his philosophy of a person enables us to reconstruct and develop this conception.

Moral certainty is a first-person experience of sureness about a moral judgment that is grounded in recognition of other's subjectivity as real and normativity that stems from this recognition. Through such recognition, one transcends purely self-centered interests and perceives the other as an autonomous person that one is connected with by personal relation. As a person, the other becomes a normative boundary and guideline for any moral decisions that involve that person. Hence, moral certainty, contrary to moral objectivity, is able to guarantee impartiality at the same time keeping the personal character of moral judgment. To state it even stronger – moral certainty is able to guarantee impartiality precisely because it keeps the personal character of moral judgment.

A more continental background of Spaemann's philosophy enables to develop the conception of moral certainty as a promising alternative to the more analytical conception of moral objectivity. It avoids the shortcomings that are shown to persist in moral objectivity and is able to offer a more adequate approach to moral reality that we experience from a first-person perspective as persons.

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