

Introduction

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Sceptics claim that moral beliefs are unjustified or fail to constitute knowledge. Relativists claim that moral facts are contingent on time and place. Error theorists claim that moral judgments are systematically mistaken. Each undermines the credentials of morality in its own distinctive way. This volume is about an argumentative strategy that can be used to respond to any such view. We refer to it as the *companions in guilt strategy*. It works by showing that the arguments given for these views – scepticism, relativism, error theory or other views that undermine morality's good-standing – fail. They fail because they *over-generalise*. They *generalise* in that if they were sound, they would also undermine the credentials of some *non-moral* domain of thought or enquiry. And this is an *over-generalisation* because undermining the credentials of this non-moral domain is independently costly or implausible. So morality lives to fight another day.

Consider a very simple example of an argument of this form. Suppose that someone were to argue that there are no moral facts because of the widespread and pervasive nature of moral disagreement. This is an obvious target of a companions in guilt response. There is widespread and pervasive disagreement about the age of the earth. Best estimates put its age at approximately 4.5 billion years. Young-earthers, by contrast, estimate that it is closer to 6000 years old. There is little sign of this disagreement coming to an end at any point soon. But surely this does not entail that there is no fact of the matter about how old the earth is. Indeed, neither side would claim otherwise. So neither should the existence of widespread and pervasive disagreement about moral matters entail that there are no moral facts. The argument for moral scepticism has been shown to over-generalise. So it should be rejected. The above is only a toy example (but for discussion of an argument along these lines see chapter 5). However, it illustrates the basic companions in guilt strategy. The use of this strategy is widespread in contemporary Moral Philosophy. In this collection we bring together thirteen purpose-written articles on its use by leading figures in the field. Each either reflects on or utilises the companions in guilt strategy.

1. The Companions in Guilt Strategy: Its Use and Structure

Contemporary use of the companions in guilt strategy is typically focused on a number of specific candidate companions. These include epistemology, aesthetics, prudence and mathematics. We will sketch some of these when summarising our contributor's articles below. But before doing this it is worth thinking briefly about some of the recent precursors of these contemporary arguments. We focus on just two recent historical trends. These should help to situate the companions in guilt strategy in its contemporary context, as well as to provide materials for subsequent reflection on its methodology.

1.1 Responding to Error: From Colour to Contemporary Metanormativity

In *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* J.L. Mackie presented a view that has become known as the moral error theory. This is the view that although moral judgments attempt to state moral facts there are no such facts to be stated. As such moral judgments – and those of us who make them – are systematically mistaken. Mackie suggested that opponents of his theory respond by making use of a 'companions in guilt' strategy. In an important passage he wrote:

[T]he best move for the moral objectivist is not to evade this issue, but to look for companions in guilt. (Mackie 1977: 39).

The challenge that Mackie set was to find an appropriate companion: a companion that could negate the threat posed by the error theory. In the 80's and 90's several candidate companions came to prominence. Perhaps the most influential took traditional 'secondary qualities' – most notably colour – as a companion. Colour properties, it was claimed, are 'response dependent': they are constitutively dependent on the interaction of our 'sensibilities' with the world. In this regard they are unlike, for example, physical or biological properties. Yet despite this, judgments about colour are able to sustain a degree of objectivity. There are standards of correctness and incorrectness for them. Roses are not blue just because someone thinks they are.

This provides the basis for a companions in guilt argument against Mackie's error theory. It shows that the constitutive dependence of a property on our sensibilities is, in principle, compatible with the objectivity of judgments about that property. Perhaps this can be used to

subvert the moral error theory. Moral properties can be dependent on our sensibilities without a loss of moral objectivity. This point was given a particularly clear expression by John McDowell in his classic paper ‘Values and Secondary Qualities’:

Values are not brutally there – not there independently of our sensibility – any more than colours are: though, as with colours this does not prevent us from supposing that they are there independently of any particular apparent experience of them. (McDowell 1998: 146).ⁱ

But as critics of the morality-colour analogy – notably Simon Blackburn and Crispin Wright - noted, the analogy between colour and morality is strained. One of the obvious issues is that whereas moral properties are normative or evaluative, colour properties or not. Perhaps an adequate companion for morality – at least against the error theory - must itself be itself in part normative or evaluative. This is very much the direction in which recent work on companions in guilt arguments has gone. This trend was arguably pre-figured by important work on the normativity of *meaning* stemming from Kripke’s rule-following puzzles.ⁱⁱ But the recent focus has been on non-moral domains of normative judgment such as prudence, aesthetics and epistemology. The latter has been a subject of particular focus.

Much recent work in epistemology has been largely characterised by its focus on the sense in which epistemic judgments are normative or evaluative. It concerns how we *should* believe, or what *good* belief-forming strategies are. The point is nicely put by Kim in a fashion that clearly invites the use of a companions in guilt strategy:

It is probably only a historical accident that we speak of ‘normative ethics’ but not ‘normative epistemology’. Epistemology is a normative discipline as much as, and in the same sense as, ethics. (Kim 1988: 3).

This is sometimes referred to as ‘the evaluative turn’ in epistemology. If it is correct, then epistemic judgments appear to share morality’s key troublesome property; the property that marks it out from colour. And, in addition to this, epistemic judgments also seem to share morality’s pretensions to objectivity. Suppose that one were to claim that a belief formed via ordinary perception is epistemically justified. This is a normative judgment. And furthermore it is normative in the same ‘objective’ spirit as moral judgment: a belief’s status as

epistemically justified or unjustified is not dependent on either the desires of judges or on mere social convention. So epistemic judgments are very much like moral judgments. This provides the basis for a powerful response to the moral error theory. It shows that a moral error theory would over-generalise. It would entail an epistemic error theory. And this would be an *over*-generalisation because the epistemic error theory is clearly implausible. It is clearly implausible in part because if it were true there could be no reason to believe it (or anything else). This point received a particularly influential development – as part of a larger argument for moral realism – by Terence Cuneo in *The Normative Web*:

J.L. Mackie was a moral nihilist... But he expressed no sympathy for epistemic nihilism... I doubt that he would've had much sympathy with it. For Mackie believed in the power of argument and reason. (Cuneo 2007: 122).ⁱⁱⁱ

Much recent work on companions in guilt arguments has been a response to this, targeting or defending either the method or substance of the epistemology-morality analogy.

Whatever the fate of the morality-epistemology analogy in response to the error theory – a question discussed by a number of our contributors – the strategy of taking a normative yet non-moral domain as a companion for morality is increasingly popular. The status of both prudence and aesthetics are particularly interesting in this regard. There is, it seems, growing momentum behind a unified picture of the nature of the normative – moral, prudential, epistemic and aesthetic – that would seem to make arguments for the moral error theory generalise to normative judgment as a whole. For some this is a reason – based in the companions in guilt strategy - to reject the moral error theory. For others, it is a reason to accept a much more far-reaching error theory, though this obviously requires defence.^v Many of the essays in this volume work against this background: the background of appealing to non-moral normative judgments as a companion to combat the error theory or related views.

1.2 Worries with Abstractness and Epistemology: Companions in Guilt Arguments in Science and Mathematics

Moral knowledge seems unlike the ordinary empirical knowledge that we gain from the interaction of our senses with the world. This gives rise to sceptical challenges. How, if at all, do we gain moral knowledge? Is it even possible? The use of a companions-in-guilt style

analogy with *mathematics* to respond to this sceptical worry is one of the oldest recurring tropes in Philosophy. This is to the fore in the classic early-modern rationalists. Consider, for example, Samuel Clarke:

[T]is without dispute more fit and reasonable in itself, that I should preserve the Life of an innocent Man, that happens at any time to be in my Power... than that I should suffer him to perish... For a Man endued with Reason, to deny the Truth of these Things; is the very same thing as if a Man that understands Geometry or Arithmetick, should deny the most obvious and known Proportions of Lines or Numbers, and perversely contend that... a Square is not double to a triangle of equal base and height. (Clarke 1738: 609).^{vi}

Although the terms in which the sceptical challenge are given have changed since Clarke's day, the basic worry - and companions in guilt response - is still very much in-play. The traditional sceptical argument is now probably most commonly framed as an 'access' problem. Moral properties are plausibly 'abstract': they are neither located in space and time nor are they causally efficacious with respect to ordinary natural phenomena. How, given this, can we have the epistemological access to them that we would need in order for our beliefs about them to be justified or constitute knowledge? Absent a persuasive answer, moral scepticism threatens.

At this point the analogy with mathematics becomes relevant. Mathematical objects are also abstract. This could provide the basis for a companions in guilt argument. If the access challenge entails moral scepticism, then it entails mathematical scepticism too. So the argument for moral scepticism is an over-generalisation. So it fails.

There are a number of very different ways of running this argument. Consider for example T.M. Scanlon's recent response to the access challenge for morality. Scanlon's concern is with how, given their abstract nature, we could reason about, and come to have knowledge of, moral – and more generally normative – matters. His solution is to present a simple, independently plausible picture of how we can reason about mathematics. The basic model is then applied to morality. He writes:

[W]e ... discover normative truths and mathematical truths simply by thinking about these subjects in the right way. (Scanlon 2014: 70).

Quite aside from the details of Scanlon's proposal – which we do not discuss here - there are several obvious objections to the use of an analogy with mathematics to undermine moral scepticism.

One line of objection is that scepticism about access to abstract mathematical objects is not as implausible as one might think. This is evidenced by the fact that the access challenge has been independently developed in the Philosophy of Mathematics under the label the 'Field-Bencaerff Challenge'.^{vii} A second line of objection is that the simple companions in guilt response fails to address a significant disanalogy between the epistemologies of morality and mathematics respectively. Mathematical facts, unlike moral facts, appear to figure indispensably in the best (scientific) explanation of ordinary phenomena. This means that mathematical judgments receive indirect justification that moral judgments do not.^{viii} As such, the companionship between moral and mathematical is undermined.^{ix} This point in particular – and whether it is relevant to the resolution of the access challenge - has been much-discussed in the recent literature.

However this argument resolves, the use of the companions in guilt strategy in morality and mathematics has proved – and will not doubt continue to prove – fruitful on all sides.

2. Structure, Strengths and Weaknesses

The above examples illustrate some of the most compelling and influential uses of the companions in guilt strategy in the recent literature. They also serve as a useful departure point from which to think about the methodology of companions in guilt argumentation itself. What, more precisely, is the structure of companions in guilt arguments? Why are they of particular interest? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Structurally, companions in guilt arguments – at least of the most straightforward sort - make two claims.^x The first we can call *the companionship claim*. It is that the candidate companion really is a companion in the relevant way. This will be the case if and only if the argument for moral scepticism, relativism, error theory – or whatever other view of morality is at issue – would generalise here too. So, for example, I argued above that perhaps colour judgments are not a good companion for moral judgment. This is because the argument for

moral error theory would not generalise to an argument for an error theory of colour judgments. By contrast, it is much more plausible that epistemic judgments really are a good companion for moral judgment. The argument for a moral error theory really does look like it might generalise to an epistemic error theory.

The second claim we can call *the costliness claim*. It is that the generalisation of the argument in the moral domain is an *over-generalisation*: sufficiently so to count against the soundness of that argument. Here again, epistemic judgments fare well. If the argument for a moral error theory does generalise to an epistemic error theory, this is potentially extremely costly. The mathematical case also fares well here. Suppose that the argument for moral scepticism entailed mathematical scepticism. This would be a high price to pay. Mathematical scepticism is deeply unattractive.

What, then, are the strengths and weaknesses of arguing via a companions in guilt strategy? One obvious strength is *dialectical*. A defender of the companions in guilt strategy doesn't outright deny any of the premises of her interlocutor's argument. Rather, she shows that if that argument were sound it would generalise in an implausible fashion. And crucially the implausibility of this generalisation is, ideally at least, something that her interlocutor can accept quite independently of her existing commitments. Another obvious strength is that companions in guilt arguments can help us to see the woods for the trees in the many twists and turns of metaethical argumentation. A nice illustration of this comes in the context of using mathematical judgment as a companion against sceptical arguments. Sceptical arguments in moral philosophy are extremely complex and the rules for how to assess them are often unclear. As such, it can be hard to know which way to go. It can be easy to lose one's sense of direction. But consider, if the sceptical argument at issue does generalise to the mathematical domain, then scepticism about mathematical judgment is true. This is a drastic result. It may provide exactly the kind of bigger picture perspective needed.

Despite these strengths, the companions in guilt strategy also has obvious weaknesses or drawbacks. One obvious weakness concerns what companions in guilt arguments don't tell us. Firstly, they don't tell us *where* the argument against which they are targeted fails. To see this suppose that a companions in guilt strategy succeeds in showing that the argument for the moral error theory generalises to an error theory of epistemic judgment, and suppose furthermore that this is an over-generalisation. We can conclude that the argument for moral

error theory is unsound. But we don't know where its unsoundness lies. We don't know which premise of the argument is false. We only know that one of the premises is false. In this respect companions in guilt arguments give us only limited information. Secondly, companions in guilt arguments – at least as I have characterised them – only make a *negative* claim. They tell us that arguments for (e.g.) moral scepticism or moral error theory are unsound. But they don't tell us anything about what the correct view is. This is another respect in which the information that they provide is limited.

The third and final drawback of companions in guilt arguments – and perhaps the most interesting – is dialectical. Companions in guilt arguments can be read either as a modus ponens or a modus tollens. Consider, for example, the use of the companions in guilt argument to show that arguments for moral scepticism fail because they generalise to the mathematical domain. This is a modus ponens reading. Simply put:

1. If moral scepticism, then mathematical scepticism.
2. Not mathematical scepticism.
3. (1, 2) Not moral scepticism.

Consider, however, a different way of interpreting the first premise of the argument. Perhaps it shows that mathematical scepticism is in fact – surprisingly – true after all. So interpreted, we really have the following modus tollens:

1. If moral scepticism, then mathematical scepticism.
2. Moral scepticism.
3. (1, 2) Mathematical scepticism.

So rather than showing that scepticism is false across the board, it actually shows that scepticism is true across the board. This is exactly the opposite of the intended conclusion of companions in guilt reasoning. On a dialectical level, which of these readings one chooses will depend on how one assesses the relative strengths of the case for moral scepticism and against mathematical scepticism respectively. This is an interesting feature of companions in guilt arguments that has been exploited by opponents.

So arguing via a companions in guilt strategy has both strengths and weaknesses. But there is little doubt that it can be hugely informative and illuminating. The use of a companions in guilt strategy—successful or unsuccessful—can help to clarify the (supposedly) problematic nature of morality, the companion domain itself, and the relation between them. There is much to learn. Each of the essays collected in this volume illustrate this point in their own way. It is to these that we now turn.

3. The Volume

The articles are divided into five parts: Methodology; Normativity and Error Theory; Moral Epistemology; Alternative Companions: Morality, Mathematics and Aesthetics.

3.1 Methodology

The first section addresses methodological questions. What exactly are the methodological commitments of the companions in guilt strategy? Is it a unified strategy, or are there properly distinct argument-types that fall under this label? These – and other methodological questions - have been prominent in recent critical examinations of the companions in guilt strategy. In the first section, Hallvard Lillehammer and Louise Hanson present fresh perspectives on them.

In *Companions in Guilt: Argument for Ethical Objectivity* Lillehammer distinguished between two kinds of companions in guilt strategy: by analogy, and by entailment. Arguments by analogy work by showing that morality and some non-moral companion domain share a relevant ‘problematic feature’. For example, both moral judgment and aesthetic judgment share the feature of being subject to widespread disagreement. Arguments by entailment work by showing that there is some non-analogical entailment relation between morality and its companion. For example, perhaps scientific theorising *presupposes* the truth of some moral judgment. This non-analogical relation—presupposition—could vindicate a body of moral judgment in companions in guilt fashion. In his contribution to this volume, Lillehammer identifies a new kind of companions in guilt argument: argument by *absorption*. Companions in guilt arguments by absorption work by showing that morality is *part of* some non-moral domain. Lillehammer identifies two

examples of this kind of companions in guilt argument. The first is from Renford Bambrough's neglected *Moral Skepticism and Moral Knowledge*. The second is from Russ Shafer-Landau's 'Ethics as Philosophy A Defense of Ethical Nonnaturalism'. Lillehammer clearly articulates this argumentative strategy as a third type of companions in guilt argument and assesses its strengths and weaknesses using the above examples. He concludes that the strategy of arguing 'by absorption inherits the weaknesses of both analogy-based and entailment-based strategies.

Louise Hanson's contribution also concerns the methodology of companions in guilt arguments. She takes as her departure point a recent source of scepticism about the companions in guilt strategy: Christopher Cowie's 'Why Companions in Guilt Arguments Won't Work.' Cowie argued that companions in guilt arguments couldn't succeed. They couldn't succeed, he claimed, because they faced a dilemma: they are either unsound or dialectically redundant. Hanson takes issue with this argument. She claims that companions in guilt arguments can succeed and that Cowie's dilemma is unsuccessful. She does so by distinguishing between two different ways in which companions in guilt arguments can be understood. One is metaphysical, the other is dialectical. By distinguishing between these two varieties of companions in guilt strategy, she claims, Cowie's dilemma can be rebutted. Hanson demonstrates this distinction – between metaphysical and dialectical readings of the companions in guilt argument – by presenting her own example of a companions in guilt argument: an example that concerns the problem that moral deference causes for moral realists.

3.2 Normativity and Error Theory

Many companions in guilt arguments focus on the normativity of morality. They argue that other domains share a similar essential normativity. For instance, according to the epistemic companions in guilt argument, if there are any instances of knowledge or justified belief, there are epistemic reasons, and epistemic reasons have the categorical or irreducible normativity that gives rise to error theorists' scepticism about morality. In the second section Richard Joyce, Jonas Olson, and Wouter Kalf, who have all written books defending the error theory, respond to such normative companions in guilt arguments.

In his contribution, Richard Joyce responds to the epistemic companions in guilt argument. Joyce argues that proponents of this argument assume that the error theory is comprised of a single argument, which he calls the argument from reasons. According to this argument, there are no categorical or irreducibly normative reasons. There are moral properties only if there are such reasons. So, there are no moral properties. But according to Joyce, the case for the error theory is made up of a complex web of interlocking arguments. Once we see this and that the argument from reasons is insufficient to establish an error theory about morality, we can see a route to a dis-analogy between moral and epistemic normativity. This breaks the epistemic companions in guilt argument.

According to Joyce, arguments from moral disagreement and evolutionary debunking form part of error theorists' more complex argument against morality. But disagreement-based and evolutionary debunking arguments cannot be levelled against epistemic normativity. Furthermore, Joyce argues that instrumentalism is plausible about epistemic normativity but not about moral normativity. And Joyce argues that an analogue of error theorists' Humean objectification thesis about moral psychology cannot be told regarding epistemic normativity. Joyce finishes his piece by articulating a list of disanalogies between the moral and epistemic domains including the connection of the former domain to free will and desert and problems with moral deference that he claims are not mirrored by problems with epistemic deference.

Joyce's argument presents an interesting challenge for moral error theorists going forward: can they provide a detailed defence of the moral error theory on the grounds of one of the many disanalogies between morality and epistemology that Joyce identifies, rather than resting their case on the 'argument from reasons'? One issue concerns the need to show that the properties of morality that Joyce identifies in his list of disanalogies are *essential* to it. For example, moral error theorists may wish to follow Joyce and rest part of their case for the error theory on the claim that free will and desert are tied to moral but not epistemic normativity. But if they wish to do this, they must do something that they have yet done: show that morality is *essentially* connected to free will and/or desert and that epistemic normativity is not. ‘

Terence Cuneo was one of the first philosophers to fully develop the epistemic companions in guilt argument against the error theory. In *Speech and Morality* Cuneo makes a different companions in guilt argument against the error theory. According to this argument, the best

explanation of what makes a speech act an assertion, a promise, or a command, involves the existence of moral properties. But we do sometimes assert things, promise that we'll do things, and command others to do things. So, there are moral properties. The companions here are illocutionary speech acts: assertions, commands, and promises. In his contribution, Jonas Olson provides one of the first sustained discussions and critiques of Cuneo's illocutionary companions in guilt argument. Olson argues that this argument fails because Cuneo's normative/moral theory of speech faces a problematic dilemma. Depending on how it is interpreted it is either viciously circular or extensionally inadequate. And without this normative/moral theory of speech, Cuneo's companions in guilt argument fails.

Recently Guy Fletcher has articulated a new companions in guilt argument against the error theory from prudential normativity (Fletcher 2018, 2019). Fletcher argues that if the arguments for the moral error theory succeed, then analogous arguments will favour an error theory about prudential normativity. According to a prudential error theory nothing is ever good *for* us and we never have prudential reasons to do things (such as to take steps to ensure that we are happy and well in the future). But it is implausible to hold that there is nothing that is good *for* us and that we have no prudential reasons to do things. So, we should reject the moral error theory. Fletcher argues that this prudential companions in guilt argument is superior to the recently popular epistemic companions in guilt argument because prudential normativity cannot be reduced to unproblematic natural facts but epistemic normativity can be.^{xi} In his contribution to this volume Wouter Kalf responds to Fletcher's prudential companions in guilt argument. Fletcher argues that epistemic normativity can be reductively analysed in terms of truth but prudential normativity cannot be reductively analysed in terms of another property. Kalf argues that if epistemic normativity can be analysed in terms of truth, then prudential normativity can be analysed in terms of pleasure. He also argues that a moral and prudential error theory is plausible. One key problem with adopting an epistemic error theory is that it seems to leave one unable to make any arguments. But there are no similar problems with adopting a prudential error theory.

3.3 Alternative Companions: Mathematics and Aesthetics

The third section focuses on companions in guilt arguments that draw on *mathematics* and *aesthetics* as companions. In this section, arguments of this kind are discussed by Justin Clarke-Doane, Ramon Das, Christopher Cowie and Daan Evers

Justin Clarke-Doane has written a series of important articles that draw comparisons between metaethics and the philosophy of mathematics.^{xvii} In his contribution to this volume Clarke-Doane motivates a *pluralist* view of mathematical ontology and asks whether this is applicable in the moral domain. Pluralism about an area is the view that there are a plurality of different concepts within that area, all of which can be satisfied and none of which is *really* true at the exclusion of the other. Such a view might be plausible in mathematics. The theorems of seemingly incompatible mathematical systems – most obviously, systems formulated with differing axioms – may both be true. There is nothing more to be said about which theory is *really* true. Might pluralism be true of the moral domain? If so, competing moral theories – such as utilitarianism and contractualism – could both be true. Clarke-Doane argues that, unlike the mathematical domain, pluralism could not be the whole story in the moral domain. It would still leave an important question unanswered: the question of *what to do*. This has important ramifications. For one, the interesting questions of moral philosophy are not fully settled by the kind of abstract ontological considerations that could settle interesting questions in mathematics (and other abstract domains of inquiry).

Ramon Das – who has used the companions in guilt strategy against moral error theorists on several occasions – replies to Clarke-Doane’s argument directly. He rejects the disanalogy that Clarke-Doane claims to have established between the prospects for pluralism in the moral and the mathematical domains respectively. He does so by using a companions in guilt strategy. He argues that questions of *what to do* arise no more or no less for moral pluralists than questions of *what to believe* arise for mathematical pluralists. Das divides his argument for this into two sections: a ‘companions in guilt’ section and a ‘companions in innocence’ section. In the first section – the companions in guilt section – Das argues that if moral pluralism problematically leaves open a question of what to do, then mathematical pluralism problematically leaves open a question of what to believe. In the course of establishing this Das makes the case for thinking that Clarke-Doane’s ‘residual’ question of what to do should in fact be read as a straightforward normative question about what one ought to do, where the ‘ought’ is an ‘all things considered ought’. In the second section – the companions in innocence section – Das argues that if mathematical pluralism does *not* problematically leave open the question of what to believe, then moral pluralism does not problematically leave open the question of what to do either.

Like Das, Christopher Cowie responds to Clarke-Doane's work on the morality-mathematics analogy. In earlier work Clarke-Doane has defended moral judgment against debunking arguments by appealing to a modal reading of those arguments. Moral debunking arguments work, he has argued, only if they undermine the 'modal security' of our moral beliefs. And, he has argued, they fail to do so. Specifically, he has argued that moral beliefs are just as modally secure as mathematical beliefs. Cowie focuses on an emerging line of response to this view. According to this emerging line of response it is mistaken to understand debunking challenges in terms of modal security. Rather, we should understand them in *explanatory* terms. Cowie sets out the basic case for this. He asks whether, if we do understand debunking arguments in this way, they are still equally (in)effective when applied to the moral and mathematical domains respectively. He concludes that, perhaps surprisingly, they are.

Daan Evers discusses the prospects for companions in guilt arguments that take aesthetic judgments or properties as a companion for their moral counterparts. Evers starts from an assumption about the nature of moral judgments. The assumption is that moral judgments concern mind-independent, non-natural entities. With this assumption in place, he asks whether aesthetic judgments could serve as a companion. If they are to do so, Evers argues, it would be necessary to show – at a minimum - that 'dispositional' accounts of aesthetic judgment according to which aesthetic judgments report the dispositions of suitably characterised observers – are false. This would open up the space for companionship between moral and aesthetic judgment. Showing that this space should be occupied, however, Evers argues, requires a close examination of the phenomenology of aesthetic judgment. It would be necessary to show that the phenomenology of aesthetic judgment supports the view that aesthetic judgments do not merely report the dispositions of suitable observers and instead concern mind-independent, non-natural entities. While Evers is somewhat sympathetic to this view, he concludes that the case for it is insufficient. As a result, companions in guilt arguments that take aesthetic judgments as a companion for moral judgment fail. Evers concludes by considering two example instances of arguments of this kind.

3.4 Moral Epistemology

The fourth section focusses on companions in guilt arguments in moral epistemology. These arguments target the position that we cannot have moral knowledge or that a particular story about moral knowledge is implausible. They use our perceptual or other knowledge of the

external world, our knowledge of facts about history, or other non-moral knowledge as a companion for moral knowledge. In this section James Lenman and Richard Rowland discuss two such companions in guilt arguments and Anna Bergqvist makes her own..

Michael Huemer is one of the major contemporary defenders of intuitionistic moral realism. He argues that we can know moral truths by direct intuition.^{xviii} The idea that we have access to moral truths via a faculty of intuition can seem implausible or extremely weird (‘queer’, Mackie called it).^{xix} Huemer argues that scepticism about access to moral facts via moral intuition generalizes to scepticism about access to the physical world via perception. In his contribution to this volume James Lenman takes on Huemer’s perceptual companions in guilt argument. He argues that we can tell a naturalistic story about perceptual processes. And that such a naturalistic story provides a better explanation of our experiences than alternative skeptical and idealist stories. But there is no such parallel plausible account of the nature of a supposed faculty of moral intuition to be given. Lenman also argues that middle-ground positions that steer a course between the Scylla of ‘stark raving realism’ and the Charybdis of all-out scepticism are more plausible in the case of morality than they are regarding the external world. He argues that constructivist positions about the external world, such as Berkeleyan idealism, face problems that are not faced by Rawlsian constructivist positions about morality. This contrast also undermines a companions in guilt argument that takes realism about the external world as a companion in guilt for robust moral realism.

Henry Sidgwick and Derek Parfit both acknowledged that disagreements with our epistemic equals about morality may seem to lead to moral scepticism: the view that we have little or no moral knowledge.^{xx} Sarah McGrath has argued that moral disagreement does in fact lead to such moral scepticism.^{xxi} In his contribution, Richard Rowland discusses companions in guilt arguments against such scepticism made by Jason Decker and Daniel Groll.^{xxii} Decker and Groll take our knowledge that the world is millions of years old and Marilyn vos Savant’s knowledge of probabilities as companions for moral knowledge. Rowland argues that the disagreement-based case for moral scepticism can be revised in a way that evades Decker and Groll’s arguments. This can be done, he argues, once we realize that we can have knowledge in the face of disagreement when our view is: more qualitatively parsimonious than the view of those with whom we disagree; or we have certain kinds of unanswered arguments and objections for our view and an error theory of the views of those with whom we disagree.

In her contribution, Anna Bergqvist makes a Murdochian companions in guilt argument. She first criticises a companions in guilt argument from thick evaluative concepts. According to this argument, the core or most important moral and evaluative concepts are thick evaluative concepts. These are concepts such as ‘cruel’, ‘kind’, ‘lewd’, and ‘promise’. Thick evaluative concepts are sometimes understood as involving both a descriptive and a normative aspect: to say that an act was cruel is not just to say that the act was bad or wrong but is also to say something descriptive about the kind of act that it was. Thin evaluative concepts, such as ‘good’, on the other hand have no descriptive aspect: to say that something is good is not to describe it in any way but merely to evaluate it. But if thick concepts are the core of the moral and the evaluative, then adopting a scepticism about moral properties will overgeneralize and entail that quite ordinary claims about the world, such as that an act was a promise, cannot legitimately be made.

Bergqvist argues that a version of this argument based on the metaphysics of the thick evaluative or one what it is to understand thick evaluative concepts fails. But she then develops a somewhat similar argument of her own based on the work of Iris Murdoch, which she argues succeeds where the argument from thick concepts fails. This argument grounds moral and evaluative concepts and properties in moral vision. Simplistically put, according to this argument, morality and evaluation are the product of moral experience and moral vision, which is the product of a particular socio-historical framework. But this vision and experience extends to our whole mode of living including our shared concepts and public language. So, if we attempt to undermine the metaphysical status of moral properties that are the mirror of our moral concepts, then such a view would undermine the metaphysical status of all properties that are the mirror of our shared concepts, public language, and mode of living. But this would undermine far too many properties (e.g. the property of being a person, perhaps the property of being a member of a family, etc.).

4. Conclusion

Our aim in bringing this volume together is to stimulate further interest in the use of the companions in guilt strategy in Moral Philosophy and beyond. We are confident that the excellent articles that our contributors have provided will do just that.

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ⁱ See also Wiggins (1987).

ⁱⁱ See Kripke (1982). For further discussion of the normativity of meaning and content see e.g. Boghossian (2003), Hattiangadi (2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ See also Stratton-Lake (2002), Bedke (2010), Rowland (2013) (2016), Das (2016) (2017).

^v This strategy is defended in Olson (2014) – though not in some of Olson’s more recent work (e.g. Olson 2019) and Streumer (2017).

^{vi} Quotation taken from Gill (2007, fn. 5).

^{vii} As developed in e.g. Benacerraff (1973), Field (1989).

^{viii} Quine (1969), Putnam (2002).

^{ix} The fact that moral properties do not figure in best explanation but mathematical properties do is sometimes used to argue that ‘debunking’ arguments such as those developed by e.g. Harman (1977), Joyce (2006) and Street (2006) work in the moral domain but not the mathematical. See e.g. Joyce (2006) and Ruse (1986) and Clarke-Doane (2012), (2014), (2015) for discussion.

^{xx} See e.g. Fletcher (2018), Cowie (2018).

^{xi} cf. Cuneo (2007), Rowland (2013) (2016), and Das (2016) (2017).

^{xvii} See e.g. Clarke-Doane (2012), (2014), (2015).

^{xviii} Huemer (2005)

^{xix} Mackie (1977: 41)

^{xx} Sidgwick (1907/1981: 342), Parfit (2011: §30, §34)

^{xxi} McGrath (2008)

^{xxii} Decker and Groll (2013)