technique is much more intuitive than the idea of distributive freedom. However, ultimately, Van Parijs and Vanderborght demonstrate in their book that there are numerous ways to argue for Basic Income, and one does not necessarily exclude the other. We can thus combine arguments about maximizing freedom with arguments about the earth as common inheritance of humanity. The most important aspect of *Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy* is that it provides a blueprint on how to discuss the idea of Basic Income with people from different backgrounds, political affiliations and philosophical positions using different perspectives and several types of arguments. The book shows that Basic Income can be defended in multiple ways, from multiple viewpoints, and that the narrative of 'the robots are coming' is not the only Basic Income narrative around.

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Catherine WILSON. *Metaethics from a First Person Standpoint: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge: Open Book, 2016. 122 pp.

In the introduction to *Metaethics from a First Person Standpoint*, Catherine Wilson states that her aim is "[...] to address the central questions of metaethics and to give serious answers to them" (1). Since she does not want to discuss explicitly the many "'isms' of moral theory", however, she prefers "a freer sort of enquiry" (1). This is why she opts for a model of presentation that is original in moral philosophy: the Cartesian model of hyperbolic doubt. Like Descartes in his *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, she writes from a first-person standpoint, and starts with "a radical scepticism" (2).

There are three differences between her Cartesian method and the original employed by Descartes. The first person pronoun 'I' in her book does not refer to herself explicitly, or to each reader, but to an investigator she introduces as 'my Enquirer'. Secondly, the hyperbolic doubt of the Enquirer is less radical or general than Descartes' methodical scepticism in his first *Meditation*. The Enquirer does not doubt the existence of the material world, or the truth of simple mathematical statements. What the Enquirer doubts methodically is merely that there is "[...] moral understanding or moral knowledge" (2). Finally, the ultimate purpose of Wilson's restricted method of hyperbolic doubt is not to find first principles of ethics that are absolutely certain. As she stresses, "[...m]oral confidence, rather than moral certainty, is the epistemological aim" (3).

Given these differences between Descartes' and Wilson's methods of systematic doubt, one may wonder whether Wilson's adoption of this method is epistemologically adequate, as she pretends, or merely a stylistic device. I am inclined to suspect the latter, because Cartesian radical doubt is an appropriate method of investigation only if absolute certainty is the aim. A Euclid-inspired axiomatic model of the sciences, according to which scientific knowledge had to be based upon first principles that are known with certainty, has long been abandoned and Descartes' method of doubt is no longer used in the sciences or in the philosophy of science. Why, then, should we use it in (meta-)

ethics, if our aim in this domain is not moral certainty but merely 'moral confidence', as Catherine Wilson stresses?

Wilson's book contains nine "Enquiries" in lieu of six meditations. In Enquiry I, she formulates the central questions of metaethics she intends to answer in her book (7), including: (i) can normative moral claims be true or false? (ii) Is making them ever fully justified? (iii) Is there such a thing as moral knowledge? (iv) "Is there a set of moral truths or moral facts that is partly known by some people but fully understood by no one?" And (v) "If so, how is it possible to get to know more of them?"

Furthermore, the Enquirer raises four reasons for doubting the existence of moral knowledge (8-14): (i) the "variability and changeableness of moral opinions"; (ii) the "absence of any agreed upon experimental method" for acquiring and justifying them; (iii) the fact that the origins of our moral beliefs, whether divine or evolutionary, do not clearly seem to be truth-conducive; and (iv) the suspicion that "no one ever acts out of motives other than self-interest". On these grounds, the Enquirer concludes that she will "[...] have to cast aside decisively all the moral beliefs that I have ever held and begin my reasonings from scratch" (14). As she stresses, her total suspension of all moral and meta-ethical beliefs is not easy. Considerable mental effort is needed to accomplish it.

Let me briefly summarise Enquiries II-VIII. In the second Enquiry, systematic moral and meta-ethical doubt is staged further by formulating a scientific view of the world, which is free of any values. The Enquirer develops a hypothetical explanation of why she "[...] might experience the world as loaded with evaluative properties and relations when it is not". Two factors play a central role in this account: her personal 'Neurological Constitution' and her society's 'Cultural Transmission' (22). They explain what she calls her 'Normative Kit', that is, her unique collection of evaluative beliefs, emotional dispositions, and behavioural tendencies (24). According to her sceptical hypothesis, these beliefs cannot amount to knowledge since there are no moral truths.

In Enquiry III, the hypothesis of a value-free world is further developed by introducing a species of aliens, called the 'Destroyers of Evaluative Illusion', who acknowledge that there are no real moral properties in the world (cf. Descartes' deceiving God or demon). If we think there are, we are living in a world of illusion on which we project our likes, dislikes, and preferences. However, following the trace of these Destroyers, the Enquirer discovers that there is *one* normative fact that she cannot doubt or deny: "My continued existence, at least right now, is good for me" (37). Let me leave it to the reader to decide whether this first premise of Wilson's meta-ethical meditations has the same type and degree of certainty as Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum*.

Enquiries IV to VIII successively explore three types of 'oughts'. First, the Enquirer investigates 'oughts of self-interest', which are related to her needs, comforts, or ambitions, and informed by the available knowledge about the outcomes of her actions. Second, she explores 'Norms of Civility" that are concerned with relations between distinct persons, and which may vary between societies. Since, typically, observing these norms will make our life more easy and pleasant, there are good reasons to apply them in most cases, so that doubts about their existence evaporate. However, do these reasons also pertain to norms of morality, the third type of oughts?

The Enquirer stresses three differences between moral norms and those of civility (Enquiry V). Whereas the latter are often local, the norms of morality are universal and apply to everyone, "regardless of their culture or region" (61). Or at least, this is what the Enquirer thinks before she dives into her hyperbolic doubt. Secondly, whereas there are experts in manners of a particular culture, there does not seem to be something like moral expertise. Finally, it is much more difficult to find reasons for observing moral norms than concerning norms of civility, since the rewards and satisfactions of observing the latter are often absent with regard to the former. What, then, are good "[...] reasons for observing the Norms of Morality" (62)?

Reviewing actions that she considered morally wrong or morally worthy before she dives into her methodical doubt, the Enquirer explores the topics her moral beliefs were concerned with, and wonders what they have in common. In Enquiry VI she develops an evolutionary explanation of many central moral convictions, which in Enquiry VII gives rise to the question why she ought "[...] to be concerned with the well-being and suffering of Strangers" (80). Weighing her financial situation and the needs of strangers, she is disposed to regard as true statements such as the following: "I ought to give £5 per annum to Doctors Without Borders" (84). However, why should this mean more than it does according to the Destroyers, namely, that "I like the idea of giving £5 to Doctors without borders?" (85). The Enquirer thinks "[...] this question had better be settled before I proceed any further" (85).

Enquiry VIII starts by exploring meta-ethical expressivism without mentioning this technical label, of course. If a moral claim merely expresses someone's attitude, however, ignoring such a claim might not need any justification. Nevertheless, we may wonder whether we *ought* to agree with it. According to the Enquirer, "[...i]f someone's expression of an attitude can prompt this kind of critical reflection and further investigation of the issue [...], then moral utterances [...] seem to lead us into the realm of truth and knowledge" (89).

If readers expect to find here an argument to the effect that this *seeming* really reveals such a realm of moral truth, they will be disappointed. The Enquirer merely argues that "[...] most people will be more successful in achieving their aims and living well if they abide by at least some Norms of Morality" (92), and adds two other reasons that might motivate us to be moral. Since one of these reasons clearly is a moral one ("[...] that by conforming to the norm, I can avoid injuring another person" [93]), it is unclear how the Enquirer overcomes her Cartesian doubt without committing a *petitio principii*. Does she really answer the 'fundamental question' she raises, namely: "[...w]hy make any sacrifices of personal interest at all in the name of morality" (91)? Claiming that "[...] morality essentially involves a sacrifice of one's own interest and advantage in favour of another's", she admits that one "cannot expect to discover a selfish motive for being unselfish" (91-92).

In the final Enquiry IX, the Enquirer argues that "[...] moral knowledge [...] may turn out to be less mysterious than I have hitherto supposed" if it "involves the avoidance or the correction of moral mistakes" (96). She first classifies four categories of prudential mistakes, and provides three explanations thereof, such as evolutionary mistakes. Then

she applies these lessons to moral errors as well. For example, many of our "[...] collective moral failures" are due to "habits and tendencies [...] shared with others of my species" (99). The reader will wonder, of course, to which species 'my species' refers here, because Wilson has not told us to which species the Enquirer belongs.

Another, more crucial question is which criterion of truth the Enquirer is proposing for the moral domain, when she talks about 'moral truths' (100), or 'Moral Reality' (101). One possible option is to adopt a version of one of the main philosophical moral theories, Utilitarianism, Kantianism, or Virtue Theory, and use it as a criterion for moral truth. Having introduced briefly these theories, however, the Enquirer wonders "[...] how could I possibly come to know that one or the other of these procedures [...] is capable of delivering all and only moral truths if I cannot identify the moral truths in the first place?" (100-101). She concludes that "[...] none of the traditional theories can be regarded either as descriptive of Moral Reality [...], nor as offering the correct decision procedure for doing the right thing" (102). Rather, they should be seen merely as heuristic devices, which focus our attention on the effects of our actions on other persons. What, then, should we think about moral truth(s)? How does the Enquirer answer the central questions of meta-ethics she raised in Enquiry I?

At this point, the reader risks disappointment, because the Enquirer tries to answer these questions in the last few pages of Enquiry IX only. According to her, moral realism is "[...] deeply implausible" if it holds "that there is a uniquely correct answer to all moral questions whether or not we will ever come to know it." As she claims, "[...t]here may simply be no fact of the matter, no moral truth to be discovered" in many cases (104). What are we claiming, then, if we claim to know a moral truth? This means, she says, that "[...] no further information [...] that I could gain, nor any correction in the scope and intensity of my caring about things, will cause me to reverse my judgement" (105). If this is the case with regard to a particular issue, one might consider oneself as a moral expert on this issue (cf. 106).

Although the Enquirer is persuaded that there is more moral knowledge today than in 300 BCE, and that there is moral progress in some sense, she does not explain what moral truth or moral knowledge consists in, except by giving examples. Is a moral statement true if it corresponds somehow to something, to some reality? If so, to which kind of reality exactly? If not, what is or should be meant by calling a moral claim 'true'? And how should we measure moral progress? The Enquirer does not even raise such meta-ethical questions.

Is this book a "must-read for philosophers, students and general readers" who want to gain a better understanding of morality, as the back cover proclaims? How should we evaluate its approach to meta-ethics, in which the technical 'isms' terminology of this philosophical discipline is largely avoided?

As I have argued, the Cartesian procedure of systematic doubt adopted in the first three Enquiries cannot be more than a stylistic device. Furthermore, most meta-ethicists will hold that their technical terminology has been introduced for good reasons, and that one cannot even understand their views without having mastered it. Consequently, one cannot recommend this book for introductory university courses in meta-ethics, for

example. If the aim of the book is "[...] to address the central questions of metaethics and to give serious answers to them", as the author claims (1), how can one justify the decision to avoid the relevant technical terminology? Is this not like pretending to give a course in Quantum Mechanics without introducing any of its technical concepts, such as those of state vectors and wave functions?

One possible justification for omitting an explicit discussion of meta-ethical theories such as moral cognitivism or quasi-realism is the following. It might be argued that the family of moral language games and ethical practices is too diverse and too complex to be accounted for in terms of one of these overall meta-ethical theories. Although Catherine Wilson explores in detail many moral values and ethical discussions, the reader does not find such a Wittgenstein-inspired argument in her book. Let me recommend it warmly, nevertheless, because the book is written beautifully, and was a great pleasure to read.

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