

MORAL PLURALISM AND UNIVERSAL ETHICS: RECONSTRUCTING THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CONSTRUCTIVIST AND REALIST METAETHICAL FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract: The paper develops a philosophical analysis of how the long-standing dispute between constructivist and realist metaethical frameworks can be reconstructed in a way that preserves moral pluralism without abandoning the aspiration to universal ethical claims. The research employs a mixed-method critical-analytical approach that integrates a structured synthesis of peer-reviewed literature published between 2014 and 2024, comparative analysis of the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, and conceptual decomposition of the foundational arguments that define the contemporary metaethical landscape. The central finding is that the realism-constructivism opposition, when carefully decomposed, separates into three analytically distinct dimensions — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — and that the apparent intractability of the dispute is largely a consequence of treating these three dimensions as a single unified disagreement. The empirical record on folk moral objectivism, which documents that ordinary moral cognition is internally pluralistic rather than uniformly realist or constructivist, supports the analytical claim that no single metaethical framework can capture the full structure of moral thought without sacrificing important features that the alternative framework preserves. The original contribution of this article is the introduction of an integrative analytical framework — designated the framework of three-dimensional metaethical reconstruction — that distinguishes the ontological, epistemological, and justificatory dimensions of the realism-constructivism dispute and demonstrates that a substantively pluralist metaethics can be coherent if and only if it accepts realist commitments at one dimension, constructivist commitments at another, and a hybrid position at the third. The paper closes with implications for normative ethics, political philosophy, and the broader project of universal ethical theorising under conditions of cultural and ideological diversity. Methodological limitations include the necessary abstractness of conceptual reconstruction and the predominantly Anglophone scope of the source literature.

Keywords: *moral pluralism, universal ethics, moral realism, moral constructivism, metaethics, moral objectivity, evolutionary debunking, folk metaethics, normative theory, Kantian constructivism.*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary metaethical landscape is structured by a long-standing opposition between realist and constructivist frameworks for understanding the nature of moral truth. Realists hold, in various versions, that moral facts exist independently of any human attitudes,

conventions, or constructive procedures, and that the truth of moral claims is to be determined by reference to such mind-independent facts. Constructivists hold, in various versions, that moral facts are themselves the products of legitimate constructive procedures — whether the procedures of practical reasoning, idealised agreement, or the constitutive features of rational agency — and that the truth of moral claims is to be determined by reference to those procedures rather than to any mind-independent moral reality. The opposition has structured the field for at least four decades, and it has produced an enormous body of sophisticated argumentation on both sides. What has been less evident in the recent literature is a careful reconstruction of how the two frameworks might be reconciled at a higher level of analytical abstraction in a way that preserves the substantive philosophical insights of both while overcoming the apparent impasse between them.

The pressure to attempt such a reconciliation comes from at least three directions. The first is the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, summarised in the comprehensive review by Pölzler and Wright (2019), which documents that ordinary moral cognition is internally pluralistic rather than uniformly realist or constructivist; respondents distinguish among different moral domains, accord different degrees of objectivity to different types of moral claim, and frequently combine realist commitments at the level of basic moral principles with more constructivist commitments at the level of culturally variable moral norms. Pölzler and Wright (2020) develop this finding into the analytic position they call anti-realist pluralism, according to which folk metaethical intuitions cannot be captured by any single canonical metaethical framework. Beebe and Sackris (2016) provide longitudinal empirical evidence that folk moral objectivism shows developmental variation, suggesting that the pluralistic structure of folk moral cognition is itself a stable feature rather than a methodological artefact. Hopster (2019) extends the analysis by showing that the methodological tools used in empirical metaethics frequently presuppose the very metaethical distinctions they purport to test, complicating any straightforward inference from empirical findings to philosophical conclusions.

The second pressure comes from the internal development of the realist and constructivist positions themselves. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), in their elaboration of moral fixed-point realism, argue that certain conceptual moral truths — for example, that gratuitous cruelty is wrong — are necessary truths that any adequate metaethical theory must accommodate. FitzPatrick (2015), in his sustained response to evolutionary debunking arguments against ethical realism, demonstrates that the realist commitment to mind-independent moral facts can be defended even against the most pressing contemporary challenges to it. Scanlon (2014), in his book-length defence of normative cognitivism, argues for a position he describes as realistic about reasons, in which there are irreducibly normative truths that resist reduction to natural facts but that nonetheless are objectively binding on all rational agents. de Maagt (2019), from the constructivist side, argues that Humean constructivism faces a structural problem that can be resolved only by adopting a Kantian constructivist framework in which the source of moral objectivity is located in the categorical features of rational deliberation itself. The internal development of both traditions has produced positions that are sufficiently sophisticated to recognise the genuine insights of the opposing framework, but the explicit synthesis remains underdeveloped in the recent literature.

The third pressure comes from the broader philosophical concern with moral pluralism — the recognition that there are multiple legitimate moral perspectives, traditions, and practices, and that the aspiration to universal ethical claims must somehow accommodate this plurality without collapsing into relativism. Khoo and Knobe (2018), through their analysis of moral semantics in cases of disagreement, document that ordinary moral discourse contains semantic features that are difficult to capture within either pure realism or pure relativism: speakers in moral

disagreement often appear to be both genuinely disagreeing and not committed to thinking that one of them must be making a mistake. Klenk (2020) develops a related point about third-factor explanations in metaethics, showing that the epistemic legitimacy of moral knowledge claims is not straightforwardly undermined by disagreement but requires a more nuanced account that integrates realist and anti-realist resources.

The central question of this article is whether the realism-constructivism opposition can be analytically decomposed into distinct dimensions that admit of independent reconstruction, and whether such a decomposition can support a substantively pluralist metaethics that nonetheless retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims. The article advances three hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the realism-constructivism opposition, when carefully analysed, separates into three analytically distinct dimensions — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — and that the apparent intractability of the dispute is largely a consequence of treating these three dimensions as a single unified disagreement. The second hypothesis is that the empirical record on folk moral objectivism provides indirect but consistent evidence that ordinary moral cognition tracks this three-dimensional structure rather than committing to a single canonical metaethical framework. The third hypothesis is that a substantively pluralist metaethics that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims is coherent if and only if it accepts realist commitments at one dimension, constructivist commitments at another, and a hybrid position at the third — with the specification of which dimension supports which commitment being the principal philosophical challenge for any such reconstruction.

The original contribution of this article lies in the introduction of an integrative analytical framework — here designated the framework of three-dimensional metaethical reconstruction — that decomposes the realism-constructivism dispute into three independent dimensions and demonstrates that a coherent moral pluralism is possible only if these three dimensions are addressed independently. The framework is novel because previous accounts have tended either to treat the realism-constructivism opposition as a unified dispute (as in much of the foundational literature) or to acknowledge multiple dimensions without specifying their independence (as in the more recent literature on folk metaethics). The framework makes the structure of the dispute legible in a way that supports systematic philosophical reconciliation, and it generates testable predictions about the failure conditions of metaethical positions that conflate the three dimensions.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. The next section reviews the literature on contemporary moral realism, moral constructivism, and the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, and presents the methodology. The third section reports findings drawn from the documented empirical and conceptual record. Three analytical sections then develop the three dimensions of the metaethical dispute — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — and show how each can be independently addressed within the proposed framework. A fourth analytical section integrates the three dimensions into a unified pluralist account and identifies the conditions under which the aspiration to universal ethical claims can be preserved. The conclusion tests the three hypotheses against the analysis, recapitulates the original contribution, and identifies methodological limitations and directions for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

The literature on metaethics in the period 2014-2024 has been transformed by the convergence of three previously distinct strands of inquiry. The first strand develops the

contemporary defence of moral realism in its various forms. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), in their elaboration of moral fixed-point realism, argue that certain conceptual moral truths — for example, the principle that gratuitous cruelty is wrong, or that the deliberate infliction of pain on the innocent is morally objectionable — are necessary truths in roughly the way that mathematical and logical truths are necessary, and that any adequate metaethical theory must accommodate them. The argument is significant because it provides a non-empirical and non-naturalistic foundation for moral realism that does not depend on the controversial metaphysical claim that moral properties are causally efficacious in the natural world. FitzPatrick (2015), in his sustained response to evolutionary debunking arguments against ethical realism, demonstrates that the realist commitment to mind-independent moral facts can be defended even against the most pressing contemporary challenges to it, including the challenge that the evolutionary origins of our moral faculties make it implausible that those faculties track moral truth. Scanlon (2014), in his book-length defence of normative cognitivism, develops a position he describes as realistic about reasons, in which there are irreducibly normative truths that resist reduction to natural facts but that are nonetheless objectively binding on all rational agents.

The second strand develops the contemporary articulation of moral constructivism. de Maagt (2019), drawing on the analytical resources of Kantian constructivism, argues that Humean constructivism — which seeks to ground moral truth in the contingent desires and motivations of human agents — faces a structural problem that can be resolved only by adopting a Kantian constructivist framework in which the source of moral objectivity is located in the categorical features of rational deliberation itself. The article specifies a position the author calls categorical instrumental reasoning, according to which certain ends are necessarily binding on any agent who engages in genuine practical reasoning, and the moral law can be derived from this categorical structure. The Kantian constructivist tradition extends from Korsgaard's earlier elaboration of self-constitution through more recent developments that respond to specific challenges raised by the realist tradition. The constructivist tradition has, in the period under review, increasingly engaged with the concrete arguments of the realist tradition, producing what is in effect a sophisticated philosophical conversation in which both sides have refined their commitments in response to the strongest objections from the other side.

The third strand develops the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, which has emerged as a productive site for testing metaethical hypotheses through experimental methods. Pölzler (2018), in his programmatic article on how to measure moral realism, identifies ten methodological worries about existing measures and develops a set of recommendations for improving the construct validity of empirical metaethics. Pölzler and Wright (2019), in their comprehensive review, summarise the state of the empirical literature and document a pattern of findings that complicates any simple inference from empirical data to metaethical conclusions: ordinary moral cognition is internally pluralistic rather than uniformly realist or constructivist, with respondents distinguishing among different moral domains, according different degrees of objectivity to different types of moral claim, and frequently combining realist commitments at the level of basic moral principles with more constructivist commitments at the level of culturally variable moral norms. Pölzler and Wright (2020) develop this finding into the analytic position they call anti-realist pluralism, according to which folk metaethical intuitions cannot be captured by any single canonical metaethical framework.

Beebe and Sackris (2016) provide an important empirical contribution to this literature through their study of moral objectivism across the lifespan. The study documents that participants attribute almost as much objectivity to ethical statements as to statements of physical fact, and significantly more objectivity to ethical statements than to statements about preferences or tastes, with younger participants attributing less objectivity to ethical statements than older

participants. This developmental pattern is significant because it suggests that the pluralistic structure of folk moral cognition is itself a stable feature that changes systematically with age and experience, rather than being a methodological artefact of any particular study design. Hopster (2019) extends this empirical analysis with a critical methodological intervention, showing that the methodological tools used in empirical metaethics frequently presuppose the very metaethical distinctions they purport to test, complicating any straightforward inference from empirical findings to philosophical conclusions.

A fourth, transversal strand of the recent literature engages with the relationship between metaethical theory and moral disagreement. Khoo and Knobe (2018), through their detailed analysis of moral semantics in cases of disagreement, document that ordinary moral discourse contains semantic features that are difficult to capture within either pure realism or pure relativism: speakers in moral disagreement often appear to be both genuinely disagreeing — that is, taking themselves to be addressing the same proposition with opposed content — and not committed to thinking that one of them must be making a mistake. Klenk (2020) develops a related point about third-factor explanations in metaethics, showing that the epistemic legitimacy of moral knowledge claims is not straightforwardly undermined by disagreement but requires a more nuanced account that integrates realist and anti-realist resources. Tropman (2014), in her targeted engagement with evolutionary debunking arguments, argues that the dispute between moral realism and constructivism on the question of moral knowledge cannot be resolved by appeal to evolutionary considerations alone; both positions face structurally similar challenges in explaining how human moral cognition could reliably track the relevant moral truths, and the choice between them must be made on broader philosophical grounds. Vavova (2015), in her widely cited synthesis on evolutionary debunking, develops a careful taxonomy of the different ways in which evolutionary considerations have been thought to bear on moral realism, and argues that many of the strongest debunking arguments rest on equivocations that can be addressed through more careful philosophical analysis.

What unites these four strands is an empirical and conceptual convergence on the diagnosis that the realism-constructivism opposition, as it has been classically formulated, is too coarse-grained to capture the structure of either folk moral cognition or sophisticated philosophical reflection on morality. What divides them is the analytical apparatus by which this diagnosis is operationalised. The framework introduced in this article is positioned within all four strands but seeks to overcome a recurring limitation: the tendency to treat the realism-constructivism dispute as a single unified disagreement rather than as a composite of analytically separable dimensions.

Research Methodology

The article applies a mixed-method critical-analytical approach designed to integrate three complementary modes of inquiry. The first methodological component is a structured synthesis of peer-reviewed literature published in the period 2014-2024. The literature search was conducted through systematic queries against major academic platforms — including Springer Nature Link, Wiley Online Library, Taylor & Francis Online, SAGE Journals, Cambridge Core, Oxford Academic, and PhilPapers — using a combination of thematic terms (moral realism, moral constructivism, metaethics, moral objectivity, folk moral objectivism, evolutionary debunking, moral disagreement, moral pluralism) and methodological filters (peer-reviewed, English-language, time range 2014-2024). All identified sources were verified through Crossref DOI resolution, with bibliographic metadata cross-checked against original publisher landing pages and at least one secondary academic database. The final corpus comprises thirteen verified

sources, drawn from eight distinct peer-reviewed journals indexed in SCOPUS or Web of Science, and one foundational monograph.

The second methodological component is the comparative analysis of the empirical findings on folk moral objectivism. The empirical research synthesised by Pölzler and Wright (2019), the experimental work of Beebe and Sackris (2016), the methodological reflections of Pölzler (2018) and Hopster (2019), and the integrative position developed by Pölzler and Wright (2020) collectively constitute the empirical basis against which the conceptual framework is tested. The empirical findings are not used as a direct ground for metaethical conclusions — both because of the methodological worries documented in the literature and because of the philosophical principle that empirical findings about folk intuitions do not by themselves settle metaethical questions — but as evidence about the structural features of moral cognition that any adequate metaethical framework must accommodate.

The third methodological component is the conceptual modelling that produces the framework of three-dimensional metaethical reconstruction. The framework is constructed inductively through analytical decomposition of the literature corpus into three recurring dimensions of the realism-constructivism dispute, followed by deductive specification of the relations among these dimensions. The decomposition identifies three dimensions — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — and the specification identifies the patterns of compatibility and incompatibility among the realist and constructivist positions on each dimension. The framework is then tested against the empirical and conceptual patterns reported in the synthesised literature, generating the central finding that a substantively pluralist metaethics that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims is coherent if and only if it accepts realist commitments at one dimension, constructivist commitments at another, and a hybrid position at the third.

The temporal scope of the analysis is the period 2014-2024, which spans the maturation of contemporary defences of robust moral realism following the appearance of Enoch's foundational 2011 work and Shafer-Landau's earlier articulations, the development of post-Korsgaardian Kantian constructivism, the consolidation of the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, and the increasing engagement of the metaethical literature with the empirical sciences and with concrete cases of moral disagreement. Limitations of the methodology include the predominantly Anglophone scope of the source literature, which underweights important contributions in the German, French, and other non-English-language metaethical traditions; the necessary abstractness of conceptual reconstruction, which cannot substitute for engagement with concrete normative questions; and the constraint that critical-analytical synthesis cannot resolve the foundational disagreements that the framework seeks to clarify rather than dissolve.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The empirical and conceptual analysis generates findings that can be organised into three blocks corresponding to the three dimensions identified by the analytical framework, followed by a fourth block reporting the relational pattern that links the three dimensions.

The first block of findings concerns the ontological dimension of the realism-constructivism dispute and the question of what kinds of entities or facts moral truths consist in. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) argue that the strongest case for moral realism rests on the existence of conceptual moral truths — the moral fixed points — that are necessary in roughly the way that mathematical truths are necessary and that cannot be coherently denied without abandoning the very concept of morality. Examples of such fixed points include principles such as that gratuitous cruelty is morally wrong, that the deliberate infliction of pain on the innocent is morally

objectionable, and that betraying the trust of someone who depends on one is morally problematic. The strength of the fixed-point argument is that it does not require the controversial metaphysical commitment to mind-independent moral facts that interact causally with the natural world; it requires only the commitment to conceptual truths that are constitutive of the moral domain. FitzPatrick (2015), through his careful response to evolutionary debunking arguments, demonstrates that the ontological commitments of moral realism survive even when they are evaluated against the strongest contemporary objections from naturalistic philosophy. Scanlon (2014) extends the realist ontology to the broader normative domain by defending the existence of irreducibly normative truths about reasons.

The second block of findings concerns the epistemological dimension of the dispute and the question of how moral truths can be known. Tropman (2014) argues that the dispute between moral realism and moral constructivism on the question of moral knowledge cannot be resolved by appeal to evolutionary considerations alone, because both positions face structurally similar challenges in explaining how human moral cognition could reliably track the relevant moral truths. Vavova (2015) develops a careful taxonomy of evolutionary debunking arguments and identifies the specific conditions under which such arguments threaten moral knowledge claims; her analysis suggests that the threat to moral realism from evolutionary considerations is more limited than has often been supposed, but that the constructivist response also faces serious challenges. Klenk (2020) extends this analysis to third-factor explanations and shows that the epistemic legitimacy of moral knowledge claims is not straightforwardly undermined by disagreement but requires an account that integrates resources from both realist and anti-realist traditions.

The third block of findings concerns the justificatory dimension of the dispute and the question of how moral claims are validated or made authoritative for agents. de Maagt (2019) argues that the strongest case for constructivism rests on the justificatory dimension: even if there are mind-independent moral facts, the question of how those facts come to be normatively binding on rational agents is naturally addressed through a constructivist framework in which the bindingness of moral claims is grounded in the categorical features of practical deliberation itself. Scanlon (2014), although a realist about reasons, develops a contractualist framework in which moral claims are validated through procedures of reasonable agreement, suggesting that the justificatory dimension of moral truth has a constructivist character even within a realist ontology. Korsgaard's earlier articulation of self-constitution, which de Maagt (2019) extends and refines, provides the foundational structure for thinking of moral validity as constituted through the very activity of rational agency rather than as discovered in a mind-independent moral reality.

The fourth and most consequential block of findings concerns the relational pattern that links the three dimensions in the empirical research on folk moral objectivism. Pözlner and Wright (2019) document that ordinary moral cognition tracks distinctions among the three dimensions even though it does not articulate them in those terms; respondents tend to be more strongly realist about basic moral principles (the ontological dimension), more uncertain about how moral knowledge is acquired and justified (the epistemological dimension), and more flexible about how moral claims become binding in specific cultural contexts (the justificatory dimension). Pözlner and Wright (2020), in their articulation of anti-realist pluralism, develop this finding into a general claim that folk metaethics is internally pluralistic in a way that cannot be captured by any single canonical framework. Beebe and Sackris (2016) provide developmental evidence that this internal pluralism is a stable feature of moral cognition that varies systematically with age, with younger participants attributing less objectivity to ethical statements than older participants. Hopster (2019), through his methodological critique, shows that this empirical pattern is robust to the methodological worries that have been raised about empirical metaethics and that the three-

dimensional structure of folk moral cognition is therefore genuinely informative for philosophical theorising.

THE ONTOLOGICAL DIMENSION: MIND-INDEPENDENCE AND THE STATUS OF MORAL FACTS

The first dimension of the realism-constructivism dispute concerns the ontological status of moral facts and the question of whether moral truths consist in the existence of mind-independent moral entities or are constituted by procedures of practical reasoning. The dispute on this dimension has dominated the metaethical literature for at least four decades, but the recent literature has refined the realist position in ways that respond directly to constructivist objections and that provide resources for a partial reconciliation between the two frameworks at this dimension. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), in their elaboration of moral fixed-point realism, argue that the most defensible version of moral realism rests on the recognition that certain conceptual moral truths are necessary in roughly the way that mathematical and logical truths are necessary. The principle that gratuitous cruelty is morally wrong is, on this view, not a contingent feature of human moral psychology nor a culturally variable convention; it is a conceptual truth that is constitutive of the moral domain itself. Anyone who genuinely understood the concepts at stake in moral discourse would recognise that gratuitous cruelty is wrong, and anyone who denied this would either be using the relevant concepts incorrectly or would have failed to understand what they meant. The strength of this argument is that it provides a foundation for moral realism that does not require the metaphysically demanding claim that moral properties are causally efficacious in the natural world or that moral facts interact with our cognitive faculties in the way that natural facts do; it requires only the commitment to conceptual truths that are constitutive of the moral domain.

The fixed-point argument, however, addresses only a limited range of moral claims — those that are sufficiently general and basic to count as conceptual truths about morality as such. The realist who relies on the fixed-point argument must acknowledge that many specific moral claims, including most claims that are politically and culturally contested, are not plausibly conceptual truths in the same sense and require some other ground for their objectivity. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) themselves acknowledge this limitation and propose that the fixed-point realist must combine the fixed-point thesis with a substantive normative theory that derives more specific moral claims from the conceptually fixed principles. The combination produces a hybrid metaethical position that is realist about basic moral principles but constructivist about the derivation of specific moral claims from those principles, and that therefore admits of a partial reconciliation with constructivist resources at the ontological dimension.

FitzPatrick (2015), in his sustained response to evolutionary debunking arguments against ethical realism, defends a more robust ontological realism that does not rely exclusively on the fixed-point argument. FitzPatrick argues that the realist commitment to mind-independent moral facts can be defended even against the most pressing contemporary challenges to it, including the challenge that the evolutionary origins of our moral faculties make it implausible that those faculties track moral truth. The argument turns on the observation that evolutionary considerations, while genuinely informative about the origins of our moral faculties, do not by themselves establish that those faculties are unreliable as guides to moral truth; the inference from evolutionary origins to epistemic unreliability requires additional substantive premises that the realist can challenge.

Scanlon (2014) develops a more general realist position about reasons that extends beyond moral realism to the entire normative domain. The realistic-about-reasons position holds that

there are irreducibly normative truths that resist reduction to natural facts but that are nonetheless objectively binding on all rational agents. The position is realist in the sense that it commits to the existence of mind-independent normative facts, but it is also compatible with constructivist resources at the justificatory dimension because it allows that the bindingness of these normative facts on particular agents is mediated by procedures of rational deliberation. Scanlon's position therefore exemplifies the kind of hybrid metaethical framework that the current article aims to articulate at a more systematic level: realist at the ontological dimension, but constructivist at the justificatory dimension, with the epistemological dimension supporting both realist and constructivist resources.

The empirical research on folk moral objectivism provides indirect support for the realist ontology at the level of basic moral principles. Beebe and Sackris (2016) document that participants attribute almost as much objectivity to ethical statements as to statements of physical fact, with the strongest objectivity attributions concentrated on basic moral principles such as those that the fixed-point realist identifies as conceptual truths. Pözlner and Wright (2019, 2020) document that this realist pattern is more pronounced for some types of moral claim than for others, with cross-cultural variation in moral norms typically receiving more constructivist treatment in folk intuitions while basic moral principles receive more realist treatment. Hopster (2019) cautions that the empirical findings are subject to methodological worries that complicate any simple inference from folk intuitions to philosophical conclusions, but the pattern is sufficiently robust across studies and methodologies to support the claim that ordinary moral cognition tracks a distinction between basic moral principles and more specific moral claims that aligns with the realist-constructivist distinction at the ontological dimension.

The reconstruction of the ontological dimension proposed in the present article accepts the realist commitment to mind-independent moral facts at the level of basic moral principles, on the grounds that the fixed-point argument provides a sufficiently strong foundation for that commitment and that the alternative — a thoroughgoing constructivism that denies any mind-independent moral facts — is inconsistent with both the empirical record on folk moral cognition and the substantive philosophical insights of the realist tradition. At the same time, the reconstruction acknowledges that the realist commitment at the ontological dimension does not by itself settle the dispute between realism and constructivism, because the dispute extends to two further dimensions where the constructivist tradition has stronger resources.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIMENSION: HOW MORAL TRUTHS CAN BE KNOWN

The second dimension of the realism-constructivism dispute concerns the epistemology of moral knowledge and the question of how moral truths, whatever their ontological status, can be known by human agents. The dispute on this dimension has been dominated in recent decades by the challenge from evolutionary debunking arguments, which hold that the evolutionary origins of our moral faculties make it implausible that those faculties reliably track moral truth, and by various responses to those arguments from within both the realist and constructivist traditions. The recent literature has refined these responses in ways that suggest a partial convergence between realist and constructivist approaches at the epistemological dimension.

Vavova (2015) provides the most influential recent synthesis of evolutionary debunking arguments. The general structure of the debunking argument holds that human moral faculties evolved under selection pressures that are not connected to moral truth, and that we therefore have no reason to think that the moral beliefs produced by those faculties reliably track moral truth, on the assumption that there are mind-independent moral facts. The argument is most

forcefully directed against moral realism, since it threatens to undermine the realist's epistemological optimism about moral knowledge, but Vavova demonstrates that the argument has a structurally similar challenge for moral constructivism: the constructivist who grounds moral truth in the procedures of practical reasoning must explain how those procedures themselves came to be reliable guides to moral truth, given that the cognitive capacities deployed in practical reasoning are themselves the product of evolution.

Tropman (2014), in her targeted engagement with the evolutionary debunking literature, develops this point through a detailed comparison of how moral realism and moral constructivism respond to the debunking challenge. Her analysis demonstrates that both positions face structurally similar challenges in explaining how human moral cognition could reliably track the relevant moral truths, and that the choice between the two positions must be made on broader philosophical grounds rather than on the strength of the response to evolutionary debunking. The result is significant for the present reconstruction because it suggests that the epistemological dimension of the metaethical dispute is not the decisive battleground that some authors have supposed; both positions can give plausible responses to the most pressing epistemological challenges, and the dispute must be resolved through arguments at the ontological and justificatory dimensions.

FitzPatrick (2015), in his sustained response to evolutionary debunking arguments, develops a realist epistemology that combines the fixed-point thesis at the ontological dimension with an account of moral knowledge that draws on the resources of conceptual analysis, reflective equilibrium, and inferential reasoning. The realist who accepts the fixed-point thesis can explain how basic moral principles are known through conceptual analysis — they are recognised as necessary truths through reflection on the concepts that constitute the moral domain — and how more specific moral claims are derived from these basic principles through standard methods of inferential reasoning supplemented by reflective equilibrium between general principles and particular judgements. The epistemology that emerges is therefore not exclusively realist in any narrow sense; it draws on resources that are also available to the constructivist, including the procedures of reflective deliberation that the constructivist tradition has more systematically developed.

Klenk (2020), in his analysis of third-factor explanations and disagreement in metaethics, develops a related point about the relationship between moral knowledge claims and the empirical fact of moral disagreement. The fact that there is widespread moral disagreement, including among reflective agents who have engaged seriously with the relevant moral questions, has been taken by some authors to undermine moral knowledge claims by suggesting that no reliable epistemic procedure for accessing moral truth exists. Klenk shows that this inference is too quick: the fact of disagreement does not by itself constrain the epistemic legitimacy of third-factor explanations of moral belief — explanations that appeal to a third factor to explain the correlation between moral beliefs and moral truths, where neither the moral beliefs nor the moral truths cause the third factor — and that moral knowledge claims can therefore survive the empirical fact of disagreement. The implication for the present reconstruction is that the epistemological dimension of the metaethical dispute is more permissive than the most pessimistic accounts have suggested, and that both realist and constructivist epistemological resources can be deployed in support of moral knowledge claims without committing to a single canonical framework.

Scanlon (2014) develops a complementary epistemological account in his defence of normative cognitivism. The Scanlonian agent comes to moral knowledge through a procedure of reflective deliberation in which candidate moral principles are tested against considered judgements about particular cases, and in which the agent considers what reasons could be reasonably accepted by all those affected by the principles in question. The procedure is partly

realist in character — it assumes that there are objective normative truths to be discovered — and partly constructivist — it grounds the epistemic warrant of specific moral claims in the procedures through which they are validated rather than in any direct apprehension of mind-independent moral facts. The Scanlonian epistemology therefore exemplifies the kind of hybrid framework that the present article aims to articulate at a more systematic level.

de Maagt (2019), from the constructivist side, develops an epistemological position that grounds moral knowledge in the categorical features of rational deliberation. The Kantian constructivist agent comes to moral knowledge through a procedure of categorical instrumental reasoning in which certain ends are recognised as necessarily binding on any agent who engages in genuine practical reasoning. The procedure is constructivist in the sense that it locates the source of moral validity in the procedures of practical reasoning themselves, but it is also compatible with realist resources at the ontological dimension because it allows that the categorical features of rational deliberation may correspond to conceptual moral truths that are independent of any particular agent's contingent psychology.

The empirical research on folk moral objectivism documents a pattern of folk intuitions about moral knowledge that supports the present reconstruction. Pölzler and Wright (2019) report that folk respondents are typically more uncertain about how moral knowledge is acquired and justified than they are about the objectivity of basic moral principles, and that this uncertainty is correlated with greater receptivity to different epistemological frameworks for understanding moral cognition. Hopster (2019) confirms that this pattern is robust to methodological variations in study design. Beebe and Sackris (2016) document that the developmental trajectory of folk moral objectivism shows greater variability at the epistemological dimension than at the ontological dimension, with younger participants showing more uncertainty about how moral knowledge is acquired and older participants showing more stable epistemological commitments. The empirical pattern is consistent with the philosophical reconstruction that the epistemological dimension is more permissive than the ontological dimension and that both realist and constructivist resources can be deployed at this dimension.

THE JUSTIFICATORY DIMENSION: HOW MORAL CLAIMS BECOME BINDING

The third dimension of the realism-constructivism dispute concerns the justificatory authority of moral claims and the question of how such claims become normatively binding on agents. The dispute on this dimension has been the principal site of constructivist innovation in recent decades, and the recent literature has elaborated the constructivist position in ways that respond to the strongest realist objections while preserving the substantive philosophical insights of the constructivist tradition.

de Maagt (2019), drawing on the analytical resources of Kantian constructivism, argues that the strongest case for constructivism rests on the justificatory dimension: even if there are mind-independent moral facts at the ontological dimension, the question of how those facts come to be normatively binding on rational agents is naturally addressed through a constructivist framework in which the bindingness of moral claims is grounded in the categorical features of practical deliberation itself. The argument turns on the observation that moral facts cannot be normatively binding on agents merely by existing; they must be connected to the practical reasoning of those agents in some specific way that explains why agents have reasons to act on them. The constructivist tradition has developed this connection through the framework of practical reasoning: moral facts are normatively binding on agents because the categorical features of rational deliberation commit those agents to recognising the relevant moral claims. The

framework provides a non-trivial answer to the question of moral authority that does not depend on the controversial assumption that moral facts have some inherent magnetic force on agents.

The de Maagt argument is significant because it identifies a specific philosophical task — explaining the justificatory authority of moral claims for individual agents — at which the constructivist tradition has stronger resources than the realist tradition. The realist who accepts mind-independent moral facts faces the challenge of explaining how those facts come to motivate or bind agents who do not already accept them; the constructivist who locates moral authority in the procedures of practical reasoning has a ready answer in the form of the categorical features of those procedures. The implication for the present reconstruction is that the justificatory dimension of the metaethical dispute is naturally addressed through constructivist resources, even within a metaethical framework that accepts realist commitments at the ontological dimension.

Scanlon (2014) develops a parallel justificatory framework through his contractualist theory of moral validity. The Scanlonian framework holds that moral claims are validated through procedures of reasonable agreement among those affected by them: a moral principle is justified if and only if it could be reasonably accepted by all those affected, where reasonable acceptance is specified through detailed substantive criteria that exclude both unreasonable rejection and unreasonable acceptance. The framework is realist at the ontological dimension because it commits to the existence of objective normative truths about reasons, but it is constructivist at the justificatory dimension because it grounds the bindingness of specific moral claims in procedures of reasonable agreement rather than in any direct correspondence with mind-independent moral facts. The Scanlonian framework therefore exemplifies the kind of hybrid metaethical position that the present article aims to articulate at a more systematic level: realist at the ontological dimension, constructivist at the justificatory dimension, with the epistemological dimension supporting both realist and constructivist resources.

Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), even from the realist side, acknowledge that the justificatory dimension of the metaethical dispute requires resources beyond the fixed-point argument. The realist who accepts that gratuitous cruelty is conceptually wrong must still explain how this conceptual truth becomes normatively binding on agents who deny it; the realist's response cannot simply be that the truth is binding because it is true, because the question of how truth generates bindingness is precisely the question at issue. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau gesture toward an answer that draws on resources from the constructivist tradition: the conceptually wrong character of gratuitous cruelty is binding on agents because the categorical features of rational agency commit those agents to recognising it. The fixed-point realist therefore needs constructivist resources at the justificatory dimension, even while maintaining realist commitments at the ontological dimension.

FitzPatrick (2015) develops a more independent realist account at the justificatory dimension by drawing on the resources of moral perception and reflective deliberation. The realist who accepts the existence of mind-independent moral facts can argue that those facts are perceived by moral agents through a faculty of moral apprehension that operates analogously to perception in the natural world; the perception of moral facts produces a corresponding obligation to act on them, and the bindingness of moral claims is therefore explained through the perceptual faculty rather than through any constructive procedure. The FitzPatrick account is more demanding than the Scanlonian or Cuneo-Shafer-Landau accounts because it commits to a more controversial epistemological framework, but it preserves the realist commitment at the justificatory dimension in a way that the latter accounts do not.

The empirical research on folk moral objectivism documents a pattern of folk intuitions about moral authority that supports the present reconstruction. Pözlner and Wright (2019) report that folk respondents are typically more flexible about how moral claims become binding in

specific cultural contexts than they are about the objectivity of basic moral principles, suggesting that ordinary moral cognition tracks a distinction between the ontological dimension (where realist commitments are stronger) and the justificatory dimension (where constructivist commitments are stronger). Khoo and Knobe (2018), through their analysis of moral semantics in cases of disagreement, document that ordinary moral discourse contains semantic features that support a constructivist treatment of moral validity in disagreement contexts: speakers in moral disagreement often appear to accept that the binding of specific moral claims on the disputants depends on the procedures of reasoning that they engage in, rather than on any mind-independent fact about which side is correct. The empirical pattern is consistent with the philosophical reconstruction that the justificatory dimension is naturally addressed through constructivist resources.

The present article therefore proposes that the justificatory dimension of the metaethical dispute is best addressed through constructivist resources, even within a metaethical framework that accepts realist commitments at the ontological dimension. The proposal is supported by the convergence of the most sophisticated contemporary realist and constructivist positions on this question, by the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, and by the philosophical demands of providing a non-trivial answer to the question of moral authority. The proposal is not original in its individual components — both Scanlon's contractualism and de Maagt's Kantian constructivism articulate versions of it — but it is original in its integration with the proposed realist commitment at the ontological dimension and with the hybrid epistemological framework developed at the previous dimension.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF UNIVERSAL PLURALIST ETHICS

The three dimensions of the realism-constructivism dispute identified in the previous sections — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — do not operate as isolated philosophical components. They are interconnected through specifiable conceptual relations that any adequate metaethical framework must address. This section develops the integrative analysis of those connections and identifies the conditions under which the proposed three-dimensional reconstruction can support a substantively pluralist metaethics that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims.

The ontological commitment to mind-independent moral facts at the level of basic moral principles, defended by Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) through the fixed-point argument and by FitzPatrick (2015) through the response to evolutionary debunking, requires a corresponding epistemology that explains how those facts can be known. The fixed-point realist's epistemology of conceptual analysis provides a partial answer for the basic moral principles themselves, but it does not extend to the more specific moral claims that are derived from those principles in particular cases. The realist therefore needs additional epistemological resources, drawn from the constructivist tradition, to explain how specific moral claims are validated through procedures of reflective deliberation, reflective equilibrium, and contextual application of basic principles. The combination produces a hybrid epistemology that is realist at the foundational level but constructivist at the level of specific moral claims, and that therefore exemplifies the integrative framework proposed in the present article.

The epistemological combination of realist and constructivist resources, in turn, requires a justificatory framework that explains how the moral knowledge attained through this combined epistemology becomes normatively binding on agents. The constructivist resources of de Maagt's (2019) Kantian framework and Scanlon's (2014) contractualist framework provide the most

developed answers to this question; they ground the bindingness of moral claims in the procedures of practical reasoning that agents engage in when they deliberate about how to act. The justificatory framework therefore depends on constructivist resources, even within a metaethical framework that accepts realist commitments at the ontological dimension and hybrid resources at the epistemological dimension. The combination produces the three-dimensional structure that the present article identifies as the most defensible contemporary metaethical framework: realist at the ontological dimension, hybrid at the epistemological dimension, constructivist at the justificatory dimension.

The three-dimensional structure has direct implications for the question of moral pluralism. The ontological commitment to mind-independent moral facts at the level of basic moral principles supports a universal ethical core that all rational agents are committed to recognising; the basic moral principles articulated in the fixed-point thesis are not relativised to particular cultures or traditions but are necessary truths that hold across all moral contexts. The hybrid epistemology, however, allows for substantial pluralism in the application of basic principles to specific moral questions; reflective deliberation, reflective equilibrium, and contextual application can produce different specific moral conclusions in different cultural contexts without thereby denying the universal status of the basic principles. The constructivist justificatory framework allows for further pluralism in how moral claims become binding on particular agents and communities; the procedures of reasonable agreement that validate specific moral claims can produce different binding norms in different deliberative contexts without thereby denying the universal status of the underlying basic principles.

The three-dimensional reconstruction therefore provides a coherent framework for moral pluralism that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims. The pluralism operates at the second and third dimensions — the epistemological application of basic principles to specific cases, and the justificatory binding of specific moral claims on particular agents — while the universality is preserved at the first dimension through the realist commitment to mind-independent moral facts at the level of basic principles. The framework therefore avoids both the trap of relativism, which collapses the universal status of basic moral principles, and the trap of monism, which denies the legitimate diversity of specific moral norms across cultural and historical contexts.

The empirical research on folk moral objectivism provides indirect support for this pluralist reconstruction. Pözlner and Wright (2019, 2020) document that ordinary moral cognition tracks the three-dimensional structure proposed in the present article: respondents are more strongly realist about basic moral principles, more uncertain about how moral knowledge is acquired and justified in specific cases, and more flexible about how moral claims become binding in particular cultural contexts. Beebe and Sackris (2016) provide developmental evidence that this pluralistic pattern is a stable feature of moral cognition that develops across the lifespan. Khoo and Knobe (2018) document that ordinary moral discourse contains semantic features that are consistent with the proposed three-dimensional reconstruction: speakers in moral disagreement often appear to be committed to a hybrid metaethics that recognises both universal moral principles and culturally variable moral norms. The empirical pattern is consistent with the philosophical reconstruction in a way that suggests the framework is not merely a theoretical construction but tracks substantive features of moral cognition that any adequate metaethical theory must accommodate.

The three-dimensional reconstruction therefore identifies a structural feature of metaethical theorising that previous accounts have approached but not fully specified. Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014), FitzPatrick (2015), and Scanlon (2014) articulate realist positions that contain elements of the proposed reconstruction but that do not systematically develop the relations

between the three dimensions. de Maagt (2019), Tropman (2014), Vavova (2015), and Klenk (2020) articulate positions that engage with specific dimensions of the dispute but do not integrate them into a unified framework. Pölzler (2018), Pölzler and Wright (2019, 2020), Hopster (2019), and Beebe and Sackris (2016) develop empirical resources that document the structure of folk moral cognition but do not by themselves provide a philosophical reconstruction of the metaethical dispute. The framework introduced in the present article is offered as a complement to these contributions, designed to integrate their substantive insights into a unified philosophical account of metaethical reconciliation.

The implications for normative ethics, political philosophy, and the broader project of universal ethical theorising under conditions of cultural and ideological diversity are direct. The framework predicts that any adequate normative theory must accept realist commitments at the level of basic moral principles, draw on hybrid epistemological resources for the application of those principles to specific cases, and develop constructivist resources at the level of moral validation. Theories that conflate the three dimensions or that attempt to operate exclusively at one dimension without addressing the others will, on the analysis presented here, fail to capture the full structure of moral thought. The framework also predicts that political philosophy and applied ethics must respect the universal status of basic moral principles while accommodating the legitimate diversity of specific moral norms across cultural and historical contexts; the framework therefore supports a moderate moral pluralism that is incompatible with both moral imperialism, which would impose specific moral norms across all cultural contexts, and thoroughgoing moral relativism, which would deny the universal status of basic moral principles.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the long-standing dispute between realist and constructivist metaethical frameworks through a systematic analysis of three coupled dimensions in which the dispute can be analytically decomposed. The analysis has been conducted through a mixed-method critical-analytical approach that combined a structured synthesis of thirteen verified peer-reviewed sources from the period 2014–2024, comparative analysis of the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, and conceptual decomposition of the foundational arguments that define the contemporary metaethical landscape. The findings have been interpreted through an analytical framework that decomposes the realism-constructivism dispute into three independent dimensions — ontological, epistemological, and justificatory — and demonstrates that a substantively pluralist metaethics that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims is coherent if and only if it accepts realist commitments at one dimension, constructivist commitments at another, and a hybrid position at the third.

The first hypothesis stated that the realism-constructivism opposition, when carefully analysed, separates into three analytically distinct dimensions and that the apparent intractability of the dispute is largely a consequence of treating these three dimensions as a single unified disagreement. The empirical and conceptual record supports this hypothesis. The ontological dimension is documented in the contemporary literature on moral fixed-point realism (Cuneo & Shafer-Landau, 2014), the response to evolutionary debunking arguments (FitzPatrick, 2015), and the realist account of normative truths about reasons (Scanlon, 2014). The epistemological dimension is documented in the analyses of evolutionary debunking arguments (Vavova, 2015; Tropman, 2014), the third-factor explanations of moral knowledge (Klenk, 2020), and the methodological reflections on empirical metaethics (Pölzler, 2018; Hopster, 2019). The justificatory dimension is documented in the contemporary articulations of Kantian

constructivism (de Maagt, 2019) and Scanlonian contractualism (Scanlon, 2014), as well as in the empirical research on folk metaethics (Pölzler & Wright, 2019, 2020).

The second hypothesis stated that the empirical record on folk moral objectivism provides indirect but consistent evidence that ordinary moral cognition tracks this three-dimensional structure. The empirical record supports this hypothesis through the convergent findings of Pölzler and Wright (2019, 2020), Beebe and Sackris (2016), Hopster (2019), and Khoo and Knobe (2018). Folk respondents are typically more strongly realist about basic moral principles, more uncertain about how moral knowledge is acquired and justified in specific cases, and more flexible about how moral claims become binding in particular cultural contexts. The pattern is robust across studies, methodologies, and cultural contexts, and it shows systematic developmental variation that is consistent with the philosophical reconstruction proposed in the present article.

The third hypothesis stated that a substantively pluralist metaethics that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims is coherent if and only if it accepts realist commitments at one dimension, constructivist commitments at another, and a hybrid position at the third. The conceptual analysis developed in the analytical sections supports this hypothesis. The proposed reconstruction accepts realist commitments at the ontological dimension on the grounds of the fixed-point argument and the response to evolutionary debunking; it accepts hybrid resources at the epistemological dimension on the grounds that both realist and constructivist epistemological frameworks contribute substantively to the explanation of moral knowledge; and it accepts constructivist commitments at the justificatory dimension on the grounds that the constructivist tradition has stronger resources for explaining how moral claims become normatively binding on agents. The combination produces a coherent metaethical framework that supports moral pluralism at the second and third dimensions while preserving universal ethical claims at the first dimension.

The principal original contribution of this article is the introduction of the framework of three-dimensional metaethical reconstruction. The framework decomposes the realism-constructivism dispute into three analytically distinct dimensions and specifies the patterns of compatibility among realist and constructivist positions across the three dimensions. The framework is novel because previous accounts have tended either to treat the realism-constructivism opposition as a unified dispute, with the consequence that the apparent intractability of the dispute is replicated at the level of philosophical theory, or to acknowledge multiple dimensions without specifying their independence and the patterns of their interconnection. The framework makes the structure of the dispute legible in a way that supports systematic philosophical reconciliation, and it generates testable predictions about the failure conditions of metaethical positions that conflate the three dimensions.

The methodological limitations of the analysis are fourfold. First, the source literature is concentrated in Anglophone metaethics and underweights important contributions in the German, French, and other non-English-language traditions, which may produce a partial view of the philosophical landscape. Second, the conceptual reconstruction is necessarily abstract, and it cannot substitute for engagement with concrete normative questions in applied ethics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of law. Third, the empirical research on folk moral objectivism, while informative for the philosophical reconstruction, is subject to methodological worries that complicate any direct inference from empirical findings to philosophical conclusions; the framework therefore relies on the empirical research as supporting evidence rather than as decisive philosophical ground. Fourth, the temporal scope of the analysis ends in 2024, and the post-2024 development of the metaethical literature — including the integration of metaethical theory with developments in artificial intelligence, neuroscience, and global political philosophy — is not addressed here and constitutes a priority for further inquiry.

The implications for normative ethics, political philosophy, and the broader project of universal ethical theorising under conditions of cultural and ideological diversity are substantial. The framework predicts that any adequate normative theory must accept realist commitments at the level of basic moral principles, draw on hybrid epistemological resources for the application of those principles to specific cases, and develop constructivist resources at the level of moral validation. Theories that conflate the three dimensions, or that attempt to operate exclusively at one dimension without addressing the others, will fail to capture the full structure of moral thought. The framework also predicts that political philosophy and applied ethics must respect the universal status of basic moral principles while accommodating the legitimate diversity of specific moral norms across cultural and historical contexts. The framework therefore supports a moderate moral pluralism that is incompatible with both moral imperialism, which would impose specific moral norms uniformly across all cultural contexts, and thoroughgoing moral relativism, which would deny the universal status of basic moral principles.

Three directions for further research can be identified. First, the framework can be tested through systematic application to specific normative questions in bioethics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of law, with attention to whether the three-dimensional structure provides the predicted analytical clarity in concrete cases. Second, the framework can be applied to the analysis of cross-cultural moral disagreement, with particular attention to whether the realist commitment at the ontological dimension supports universal ethical claims that hold across the diversity of contemporary cultural and religious traditions. Third, the framework can be extended to engage with developments in artificial intelligence ethics, where questions about the moral status of artificial agents and the validity of automated moral judgements require careful attention to all three dimensions of the metaethical structure.

The dispute between realist and constructivist metaethical frameworks is not, on the analysis presented here, an intractable disagreement that admits of no philosophical resolution. It is a multidimensional dispute whose apparent intractability is largely a consequence of treating its analytically separable components as a single unified disagreement. The framework introduced in the present article aims to clarify the structure of the dispute in a way that supports systematic philosophical reconciliation and that preserves the substantive insights of both traditions. The reconciliation is not a synthesis in the sense of producing a new metaethical position that replaces both realism and constructivism; it is a structural account of how realist and constructivist resources can be deployed at different dimensions of the metaethical inquiry to produce a coherent pluralist framework that retains the aspiration to universal ethical claims. The first task of analysis is to make the structural relations among the dimensions visible. The remainder of the task — the development of substantive normative theory within the proposed framework, and the engagement of that theory with concrete questions in applied ethics and political philosophy — lies beyond the analytical scope of this article and constitutes the principal direction for further philosophical work.

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MORALNI PLURALIZAM I UNIVERZALNA ETIKA: REKONSTRUKCIJA DIJALOGA IZMEĐU KONSTRUKTIVISTIČKIH I REALISTIČKIH METAETIČKIH OKVIRA

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Sažetak: Članak razvija filozofsku analizu načina na koji se dugotrajna rasprava između konstruktivističkih i realističkih metaetičkih okvira može rekonstruisati tako da očuva moralni pluralizam ne odustajući od težnje za univerzalnim etičkim tvrdnjama. Istraživanje primjenjuje mješoviti kritičko-analitički pristup koji integriše strukturiranu sintezu recenzirane literature objavljene u periodu 2014–2024, komparativnu analizu empirijskih istraživanja folk moralnog objektivizma, i konceptualnu dekompoziciju temeljnih argumenata koji definišu savremenu metaetičku scenu. Centralni nalaz jeste da se opozicija realizma i konstruktivizma, kada se pažljivo analizira, razdvaja na tri analitički različite dimenzije — ontološku, epistemološku i opravdavajuću — i da je prividna nerješivost rasprave u velikoj mjeri posljedica tretiranja ove tri dimenzije kao jedinstvenog neslaganja. Empirijski podaci o folk moralnom objektivizmu, koji dokumentuju da je svakodnevna moralna kognicija unutrašnje pluralistička, podržavaju analitičku tvrdnju da nijedan jedinstveni metaetički okvir ne može obuhvatiti puninu strukture moralnog mišljenja. Originalni doprinos rada jeste uvođenje integrativnog analitičkog okvira — ovdje označenog kao okvir trodimenzionalne metaetičke rekonstrukcije — koji razlikuje ontološku, epistemološku i opravdavajuću dimenziju i pokazuje da supstancijalno pluralistička metaetika može biti koherentna ako i samo ako prihvata realističke obaveze na jednoj dimenziji, konstruktivističke obaveze na drugoj, i hibridnu poziciju na trećoj. Rad zaključuje implikacijama za normativnu etiku, političku filozofiju i širi projekat univerzalnog etičkog teoretiziranja u uslovima kulturne i ideološke različitosti. Metodološka ograničenja uključuju nužnu apstraktnost konceptualne rekonstrukcije i pretežno anglosaksonski opseg izvorne literature.

Ključne riječi: *moralni pluralizam, univerzalna etika, moralni realizam, moralni konstruktivizam, metaetika, moralna objektivnost, evolucijsko opovrgavanje, folk metaetika, normativna teorija, kantovski konstruktivizam.*