**What's So Hermeneutic About**

**Hermeneutic Moral Fictionalism?**

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**Introduction**

The intent of this paper is to propose a significant change to hermeneutic moral fictionalism.

The impetus of this intent stems from the author's piqued interest in the novel conceptual connection between the words 'hermeneutic' and 'fictionalism.' The question that came to mind was "What's so hermeneutic about hermeneutic moral fictionalism?"

To that end, the initial claim of this paper is that the descriptive form of moral fictionalism as proposed by M.E. Kalderon suffers from debilitating weaknesses. So significant are these weaknesses that several critics have recommended it be thrown into the dustbin. Therein lies our opportunity for experiment. The intention of this paper is to abscond with the phase 'hermeneutic moral fictionalism' and show how it might better be applied to a moral discourse understood as a type of 'shorthand' for a historical dialectic.

Let's first be clear, though, on the way 'hermeneutic' has been used in the existing hermeneutic moral fictionalism. This is simple. Kalderon's theory maintains two metaethical positions: non-cognitivism and factualism. But 'hermeneutic' is not used in any appropriately meaningful way to describe either of these terms. Neither is the term 'hermeneutic' used is a meaningful way to describe how his theory is purported to work. Kalderon even admits this by simply saying, "…hermeneutic fictionalism is a description of some actual discourse."(2005,p.136) He just uses it because Burgess (1983) used it and Burgess used it only in place of the term

'descriptive.' So, there is actually nothing hermeneutic about hermeneutic moral fictionalism. But what if there were?

The paper will proceed in three main sections. The first section will present moral fictionalism as a response to arguments made against the realist position. It will present both a prescriptive and a descriptive response. The prescriptive response is called revolutionary moral fictionalism while the descriptive one is referred to as hermeneutic moral fictionalism. The second part will list and explain arguments that show the weaknesses of the hermeneutic position. These arguments will come from four sources. The third section will formulate a rough conception of hermeneutic as per Hans-Georg Gadamer, apply it to moral fictionalism using the important concept of metaphor, and attempt to examine the result using, not only the critiques of part two, but especially six overarching weaknesses of moral fictionalism as laid out by Nolan, Restall, and West. (2005) This last procedure will be taken on account of an anticipated suspicion that the critiques aimed at Kalderon's proposal will not be general enough to be appropriate to this paper's proposal.

**Part I: Moral fictionalism**

**Mackie's Position**

In his book "Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong" J.L. Mackie argues that "There are no objective values". (1977) He begins the defence of this statement by specifying that he is concerned about a metaethical issue, not simply skepticism at the normative level. He does not deny that there are utilitarian value claims and he

admits to rule based claims too. But his concern is not whether any moral statement is right or wrong. It is about whether or not a morally objective thing or characteristic exists at all. His claim questions the ontological status of moral value statements and, by extension, moral discourse as a whole. In short, he says that these sorts of things do not exist.

Mackie begins his defense with an argument from relativity. The observation that there is not just one but many moral discourses, each with its own grounds, each with its own history and cultural context, and each with its fervent devotees. It is very difficult, then, if not impossible, to tell which of these discourses is the one that is objectively true. Of course, this observation does not prove that a moral discourse of objective values does not exist but it certainly does put great strain on the claim that it does.

Mackie's second argument is what he calls the argument from queerness. He argues that if objective values do exist they must awfully odd. They would be queer. To describe them as indescribable would hardly be helpful but this, essentially, is his position. The question of how we would ever come to know these entities, if they were to exist, is equally difficult. We don't know what we're looking for nor would we know what they were if we were to encounter them. This is intractable both ontologically and epistemologically. But again, although this difficulty still does not prove that a moral discourse of objective values does not exist, it puts further great strain on the claim that it does.

Whatever miniscule leftover likelihood there is of being able to claim the existence of a moral discourse of objective values after being subjected to the argument from relativity and further diminished by the argument from queerness, it is mighty small. But still, even though the idea that value is objective still has breath, the evidence is overwhelming. Indeed, Mackie's three further arguments against the existence of objective value carry his agenda forward even further. His final claim is that all statements implying the existence of objective values are false. Even though the coup de grace never comes the inductive argument is pretty convincing.

**The Revolutionary Moral Fictionalist Response**

So if, for the sake of argument, Mackie is right, how should one treat the activity one so regularly takes part in? "What, then, ought we to do?" asks Richard Joyce in his book "The Myth of Morality" (2001) What should we do about moral value statements that lack objective value? Throw them out? Join the ranks of eliminativism? Joyce's alternative is to keep them and to keep using them in spite of being false. He recommends that we pretend they were true. At first glance, this seems somewhat silly but his description of how most of us understand statements about colour can direct his idea towards plausibility.

We speak of objects as having colour but we know from science that this manner of speaking is left over from a pre-scientific era. We know now that the colour that we see is really a wavelength of light reflected by an object, yet we continue to pretend otherwise by continuing to use the terminology of the debunked system of colour conception. Joyce recommends that we should continue using moral discourse in

the same way. While acknowledging that, according to Mackie's arguments, moral discourse cannot justifiably mean moral discourse as the realist would have it, we still can and should use it in exactly the same way because of the benefits that doing so would bring. We wouldn't mean or intend what we say in moral discourse any more than we would in colour discourse.

The upshot here is that we retain the practical benefits of moral discourse without having to commit to an ontologically problematic position.

So goes the argument for revolutionary moral fictionalism.

**The Hermeneutic Moral Fictionalist Response**

Mark Eli Kalderon presents an alternative in his book "Moral Fictionalism" (2005) He approaches Mackie's conclusion from a non-cognitivist perspective. Chrisman sums up the position well. (Chrisman; 2008) In recognizing the issues involved in maintaining a realist position, the non-cognitivist steers away from asserting that moral discourse makes claims of belief about the world and that these claims are propositions. Instead, the non-cognitivist begins with a stance that the value statements within moral discourse are social coordination techniques and that moral discourse as a whole is something that we have bought into. (Kalderon, 137) By using moral discourse we do not assert belief regarding moral statements. Rather, we assent to, or express approval of, a system of governance over our actions. This position entails not only non-cognitivism in the sense that moral discourse is not about cognitive belief but also entails non-factualism in the sense that moral discourse is not about describing the world. It is this non-factualist entailment that

does not fit with the phenomenology of moral discourse. This is the problem to which Kalderon proposes fictionalism as a solution.

Unlike Joyce's, Kalderon's approach is epistemological. He shows, by way of two concepts he calls "lax responsibility" and "intransigence", that moral discourse is non-cognitive. He applies reductio ad absurdum. By suggesting that if moral discourse were cognitive, we would have a 'lax' responsibility to resolve moral disagreements. Because in the cognitive spirit there are rights and wrongs to be sought, there must also, in cases of moral disagreement, be a responsibility, however 'lax' it might be, to get to the bottom of it, so to speak.

But Kalderon provides examples of moral disagreement where this 'lax' responsibility does not exist, namely where a position of stalemate he calls 'intransigence' is reasonable, instead. Therefore, he concludes that non-cognitivism is the case and cognitivism is not. Let's be clear here. This is not yet an argument that supports fictionalism. As the argument stands, it simply means that if fictionalism can be argued for it must definitely be non-cognitivist and not ambiguously so as in the case of Joyce's prescriptivist theory. It is necessary for Kalderon to take this step. Because, unlike Joyce who can merrily pretend cognitivism to be fictional along with moral discourse, Kalderon is burdened with having to prove cognitivism to be false

He does not necessarily set out to prove that moral fictionalism is true. Instead, he proposes that fictionalism is the best way to avoid the issues raised by Mackie and, at the same time, use moral statements in a phenomenologically coherent realist

way. Kalderon's main challenge is to give a plausible account of how we normally view and use moral speech within a non-cognitive scheme. He is not ready to accept a non-factualist (expressivist or state-of-mind) semantics. Instead his claim is that we subconsciously pretend that moral statements are true when we use them. Moral discourse only has the appearance of realism. He claims that if moral statements were actually fictional we would circumvent an intractable dilemma. The oft-quoted piece is as follows: "…we appeared to be in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between a plausible semantics wedded to an implausible cognitivism and an implausible semantics wedded to a plausible non-cognitivism." (Kalderon, 146) Translated, we are assumed to have to choose between, on the one hand, the phenomenologically sensible speech of the realist combined with a false cognitivism. The other alternative is a non-cognitivism combined with a manner of speaking that denies the assertion of belief, one that instead, with great complexity, claims to be an expression of, or fitting attitude toward, a certain moral statement. Kalderon's fictionalism dodges this dilemma by rejecting the weak cognitivism and rejecting the problematically complicated 'fitting attitude' theories. It remains non-cognitivist and it retains realist speech. In his view, we accept moral discourse without necessarily believing it to be true and use moral discourse without there being anything for it to refer to. This is fictional both epistemologically and ontologically.

This is a delicately plausible position.

**Part II: The arguments against Kalderon's fictionalism**

The following is a selection of criticisms by several philosophers who take malevolent aim at Kalderon's proposal.

Stacie Friend (2008) offers four. The first targets the argument from intransigence. Remember, this argument establishes Kalderon's theory as being non-cognitive. Without it, 'lax' responsibility would require the contestants in a moral disagreement to continue reviewing their positions until a result was determined, ad infinitum. In some cases (Kalderon quotes Putnam vs. Nozick) this is not feasible and, since it is not feasible, intransigence must be the case. Intransigence, therefore, is a way out of a very unfruitful duty. This, in itself, is dubiously logical. But, more germane to the issue, Friend pinpoints, is that Kalderon maintains that both contestants must assume the best in the other. Friend applies Hitchens' razor. She denies this argument and claims instead that we actually do "…suspect that our interlocutors to be either not fully informed of are not fully rational."(17) So, without intransigence, Kalderon's theory loses its foothold on non-cognitivism and, by extension, also loses its claim to 'make-belief', rather than belief, as the appropriate attitudinal operator toward moral discourse.

Friend's second criticism has to do with the "…the fictional content of our utterances…" as opposed to "…what we are doing in quasi-asserting that content…"(18) She draws attention to the realist's ability to distinguish between the 'content' and the 'force' of a moral statement. This is something that the non-cognitivist cannot do since translating the two senses into non-cognitive

terminology would produce two different statements. But, according to Friend, Kalderon says we should just "…accept that propositions expressed by our moral utterances are fully representational; they should be taken at face value." (Eklund, 2009) supports this saying "…Kalderon says that moral sentences have a perfectly standard semantics…"(707) These two claims imply that the fictionalist can use moral discourse in the same way that a realist can without admitting that the claim of force is based on the content's truth. But if the contents are fictional, the force deflates. So, it seems that Kalderon is doing an end-run around the Frege-Geach embedding problem while at the same time avoiding "the complicated apparatuses proposed by…" Blackburn and Gibbard. Both Friend and Eklund say this does not work. Friend says that this is only true as far as the content of an utterance goes. It does not extend to the intent underlying the utterance of the content. Eklund says, "…a speakers ordinary use of the sentences used… does not serve to assert the propositions semantically expressed by these sentences."

Therefore, doubt is cast on Kalderon's alternative method of addressing the Frege-Geach problem. Kalderon is still in need of a way to account for force, that is, a way to account for why we ever say moral statements to each other.

Third, Friend questions the disjunction of non-cognitivism from non-factualism. This criticism harks back to Kalderon's theory being descriptive, that is, descriptive of existing moral discourse practice. The acknowledged assumption is that we partake in moral fictionalism without knowing that we do. This is in stark contrast to our knowledge and behaviour in other fictional contexts. Factualism, in

Kalderon's theory then, seems to be an add-on that simply tags along with the arbitrary decision to use realist speech. Friend implies that this would make moral fictionalism less of a fiction and more of a contrivance.

Friend's fourth observation is that Kalderon's theory is not only delicate. It is unstable. It is unstable partly because of the weakness of Kalderon's argument for non-cognitivism (intransigence) but mostly because moral discourse is so "…suited to… expressing beliefs and assertions…" but doing something else, "… the expression of non-cognitivist attitudes."(Friend, 2008, 21) Friend observes that in presuming that Kalderon's theory is a cognitive fiction representing a non-cognitive state of affairs, Kalderon's theory requires both 'x' and 'not x'. "…Hermeneutical moral fictionalism requires that our moral practices be suited to the expression of non-cognitive attitudes: else why think that they are non-cognitivist?" But also "…hermeneutical moral fictionalism requires that they must be unsuited to this expression: else why think there is a cognitivist fiction?" (Friend, 2008, 21) In other words, Kalderon's hermeneutic moral fictionalism contains the seeds of a dilemma that pushes one either toward a fictionalist account similar to that of Joyce or toward a more standard form of non-factualist non-cognitivism.

Matthew Chrisman (2008) takes issue with Kalderon's theory in a couple more ways. The first way is by noticing that when we engage in other types of fiction we are ordinarily quite aware of the fact that it is a fiction we are engaged in. This does not seem to be the case for the discourse of morality. This is similar to Friend's third point. But Chrisman goes further. "Moreover, there seems to be a diagnosable

reason for this: morality is an important institution for cooperating and living together; if morality was actually taken to be a sort of pretence by its practitioners, it may very well lose its effectiveness for this function."(Chrisman, 2008, 7) Further to this reasoning, Chrisman questions whether 'fiction' ought to be the right metaphor for what Kalderon's theory describes.

Chrisman's other argument is that "… if moral fictionalism is, in essence, the combination of non-cognitivism and factualism, and this combination is neutral on the metaphysics of morals, then why should we think of the fictionalist position as a view that has the same ontological advantages as expressivism yet avoids its perceived problems."(Chrisman, 2008, 12) What Chrisman argues is that fictionalism, as a form of non-cognitivism, is an epistemological scheme and, from this perspective, is not an answer to metaphysical issues. But, as a form of factualism, fictionalism cannot be committed to a metaphysical position because its position is that there is nothing to have a metaphysical position on.

James Lenman (2008) also criticizes Kalderon's theory in a couple of still different ways. The cognitivist will claim that she asserts that she believes a moral statement x is true. For example, "It is wrong for Lenman to tell lies." means A(Lenman tell lies.) where 'A' is the assertion operator that indicates that the cognitivist believes that it is wrong for Lenman to tell lies. The expressivist (non-cognitivist), in comparison, quasi-asserts B!(Lenman lies.) where B! stands for displeasure, i.e. Lenman lies. Booooo. Clearly, the expressivist would experience some difficulty if she were to be pressed to explain the logical behaviour of B!

By analogy, the fictionalist operator 'MB' is equally problematic. With MB(Lenman tell lies.), the fictionalist is said to make-believe that it is wrong for Lenman to tell lies. The MB operator doe not resolve any issues that the B! operator doesn't. "So, the… advantage over expressivism here is itself beginning to look decidedly fictitious."(26)

Another issue he raises has to do with "pretence-worthiness." Given that there are many sets of moral statements that might make up a moral discourse, Kalderon faces the difficulty of having to choose one. Lenman challenges Kalderon to decide upon the criteria on which to base a decision without thereby obliquely describing the very metaethical position he should have adopted in the first place. This secondary kind of relativism precludes choosing a fictionalist set of criteria for "…if its pretending all the way down, then fictionalism is just nihilism."(29)

R.M. Sainsbury (2010) adds one more complaint. In light of the point of moral discourse in the first place, namely, that it is to get the right reaction and to expect others to do the same, then "How would outrage be relevant to a claim that something is evil, given that nothing is evil?"(201)

Friend's summary: "…moral realism should be all the more attractive." (22)

Chrisman's summary: "I think either way he goes… is problematic."(13)

Lenman's summary: "Kalderon's discussion seems rather to leave his fictionalism behind. That, I contend, would be a good place to leave it." (32)

Sainsbury's summary: "This makes… fictionalism just a sham."(204)

**Part IIIa  Description of new hermeneutic moral fictionalism**

Thus, we have two conclusions. First, from the opening paragraphs of this paper: 'hermeneutic' is inappropriately applied to the descriptive form of moral fictionalism. And from the argument above: the title 'hermeneutic moral fictionalism' can easily be peeled from Kalderon's ailing theory and reapplied to a theory more worthy of its name.

So, if hermeneutic moral fictionalism were actually hermeneutic, what would look like if it?

At the outset, it would imply two aspects of a distinction that is absent from Kalderon's theory. The first is that fiction does not necessarily imply pretence in anything more than in a simplistic sense, but this is what Kalderon implies that it does. He conflates the simple and active senses of pretence. He takes pretence as positing and confers upon it the heightened status of pretence as working assumption. Fiction and this latter form of pretence are distinct concepts. Certainly pretence, in this sense, implies a fiction but the implication is not reciprocal. This sense of pretence does not necessarily follow from fiction. It may be absent. Indeed, we do not pretend unless we are specifically asked to do so. Only when we are asked to, do we suspend judgement and actually pretend. And we do this only for substantial reasons.

Second, fiction can imply a comparison, that is, it implies a comparison between what is with what is not. We do not pretend when we compare fictional entities in, say, allegories with entities in the real world. For to do so would make it seem that

to pretend implies that one already knows what the pretended entity pretends to be. But if an entity has no pretence to be anything other than what it is then no pretence is happening. Only after the reader wishes to illustrate comparison does pretence become useful or even appropriate. Hamlet, for example, is fictional but there is no pretence associated with him until an actor pretends to be him (or, for that matter, when a philosopher personifies him in an example.) On the pages, however, he remains only fictional.

This aspect of substantialization rejects a simplistic pretence in fictionalism and upholds, instead, a pretence of intentionality. The aspect of contextualization states that a fictional statement is rendered meaningful in more and greater ways than in its simple denotative semantics. These aspects can be illustrated by the following two considerations. The first consideration shows that fictionalism as mere simplistic pretence fails to adequately show the complexity of ethics. The second one shows that the truth of some statements within moral discourse may have variable truth-values depending on the situational context. It implies that classical logic may not always be the most appropriate with respect to moral statements.

In the first consideration, a sense of frivolousness comes to mind when we say something is fictional. To label something as fictional is to contrast it with non-fictional, something that is factual, something that's true…as opposed to something that is not. A story that is factual has an air of seriousness that fiction can't seem to manage. Can anyone take Dumbo The Elephant seriously? This is the impression one gets: that to speak of moral discourse as if its member statements were

insubstantial concoctions is a bit an affront. To be sure, Kalderon and the others do not intend this but the point to be made here is that the concept of moral fictionalism seems oxymoronic and inappropriate. Because one intuitively views Hamlet or Sherlock Holmes as more substantial than Dumbo or SpongeBob, there's more to look into with fictionalism than just a quick way to get out of error theory. This comparison between the modern cartoon characters and the cultural icons illustrates a huge range of depth and cultural significance that fictional entities can take on. If moral statements are viewed as substantialized fiction and not just simplistic pretence, we can get a lot closer to what they intuitively feel like when making them. Conceiving hermeneutical moral fictionalism as actually hermeneutic would go a long way toward accomplishing this.

The second consideration is the moral dilemma problem. This problem shows that moral rightness or wrongness may not lie with the statement alone but can also lie in the moral claim's context. Let's pose two examples.

> The first is: If you have begged for three days, have nothing to show for it, have four hungry children, and have a chance to take some food, is it wrong to take the food?
>
> The second is the "Nazi at the door" scenario. The Nazi knocks on your door and asks if you have Jews hiding in your house. In this situation, is it wrong to utter a false statement denying that you have Jews in your attic?

Certainly, it is understandable to steal or lie in the above cases, but that is not the issue. Rather, is it wrong? Now, we are not concerned about the normative aspect of

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this question. We are only concerned about the question's debatability because if we take these two situations to their logical extents we will see that, in each scenario, one moral claim is pitted against another. To take an action in cases like these would be to relegate one moral responsibility below the other one. Therefore, to take any action would be to assign truth to the action taken and falsity to the action not taken, that is, falsity to the action that would otherwise be true absent the choice taken. In summation, since the situation demands a hierarchy that obfuscates the truth-value of the action not taken, the situation itself is not morally neutral. This alone cries out for a truly hermeneutic response.

Although the administrative decision of choosing a hermeneutic model is bit arbitrary, a good fit seems to be the one defined by Hans-Georg Gadamer for central to Gadamer's hermeneutic approach is the concept of metaphor. There is a "...fundamental metaphoricity of language." (Gadamer, 407) This is supported by Lakoff and Johnson when they say that most of "...our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature." (L&J, 3) The importance of metaphor for our purposes cannot be overstated for it is this concept which, at once, addresses the dual issue of substantialization and contextualization and is, at the same time, denotatively false. It is what allows our new hermeneutic moral fictionalism to be regarded as fictional and at the same time hermeneutic. The intention, then, is to show how moral discourse can be understood as a type of 'Gadamerian shorthand' for a historical moral dialogue.

Maybe a couple of simple examples might shed some light here. Say we have two well used, if not dead, metaphors**:** "kick the bucket" and "give up the ghost" (in keeping with the theme). Both are stand-ins for the verb 'to die' but they are not equivalent. It would be sufficient to imply their equivalence when translating quickly for a foreign audience but to say the Jesus kicked the bucket is a bit Monty Pythonesque. The two idioms have histories that are decidedly different from one another: one is of an unknown origin; the other has its source in one of the West's most culturally sublime moments. The real point is not that they are metaphorically true but that they convey meaning over and above even their ostensibly metaphorical intentions, that they have layers of metaphoricity and meaning that stem from their historical place. In both cases someone died but with 'giving up the ghost' a reverence is implied that does not exist in 'kicking the bucket'. Conversely, "kicking the bucket" implies an accidental event whereas "giving up the ghost" has a hint of intention. In the same fashion 'Lying is wrong.' has additional implications and reflections on a person's character that a law against perjury lacks. Each metaphor carries a history that can be excavated in a Foucauldian archaeological kind of way. Moral discourse would not be excluded from this observation for it too is subject to the same metaphoricity of language.

To illustrate this, Gadamer uses Heidegger's idea of the hermeneutic circle where the interpreter of a text raises a question about a part of that text. But in order to understand the part, the whole must be understood thus implying a vicious circularity. But in asking about the part, the questioner asks for an explanation of

the whole from a specific perspective. The question places the questioner in a different position than when she first began. Therefore the circularity is not vicious but is, instead, virtuous. The movement from part to whole and back to part repeatedly inches toward understanding. This is the progress that the hermeneutic circle facilitates. This is also the process that is implied by the utterance of a moral statement. In other words, Gadamer's general concept of hermeneutics is such that what a text says to the reader is as much of a result of the text's influence on the reader's cultural history as the meaning of the words that constitute the text itself. Similarly, the meaning of moral statement is as much a result of the hearer's moral understanding as it is the meaning of the content of the statement. Moreover, as much as the reader's own disposition at the time of reading a text prejudices her understanding of it so does the context of a moral statement prejudice the hearer's understanding of the moral statement. Following from this, moral statements can be viewed as metaphoric texts to be explicated hermeneutically. Moral statements as metaphoric texts carry forward an accumulation of dialogical understanding gathered over time. "What Gadamer is saying is that history and language function as conditions of our knowledge..." (Wachterhauser, 2002, 57) In other words, metaphor (in our case, a moral statement) requires a pre-existing context well known to the hearers of the metaphorical statement. There must be a "...connection of metaphor to... tradition."(Vedder, 2002, 205) There must be a meeting of well-known and familiar horizons of understanding uniting the present with the past.

**Part IIIb   Analysis of new hermeneutic moral fictionalism**

An important part of understanding our new hermeneutic moral fictionalism is to look into how it fits into the metaethical taxonomy. To do so, we will rely on an influential paper by Nolan, Restall, and West (NRW) (2005). Aside from the fact that they offer another version of fictionalism the most helpful aspect of the paper is the concise presentation of fictionalism's faults. The present paper will rely on these as a basis to re-examine the modified fictionalism proposed. Moral fictionalism does have some weak points. NRW speak of six of them.

"The first [is]… is moral fictionalism to be construed as a descriptive claim… [o]r is it prescriptive?" (322) These two options have been exemplified by Joyce and Kalderon. It is interesting that NRW offers the option of a mixture. If, they say, one's understanding of moral statements is that they are variable in some way, then one may need recourse to a both alternatives. The position outlined in this paper is that metaphorically fictional moral discourse certainly can vary over time. Since it is, by definition, a dialectic, one's understanding of a given moral statement could change. This position can rightly be deemed descriptive in that it posits the origins of the moral statement to be the historical-hermeneutical discussion of it to the present. As such, though, it lacks force. The force comes from the knowledge of the same historic discussion. Given that the best efforts of the best minds have been applied to the debate, it is the voice of wisdom to expect compliance. So, we don't merely assent to a given moral statement. We demand it.

If our hypothesis is descriptive, then there are two issues of believability. The first is the same as with Kalderon's conception, that it is not readily apparent that moral discourse is fictional. Our hypothesis has less of a problem with this since people easily recognise the subtle debatability of moral statements as compared with statements of fact. Mostly, people see moral statements as susceptible to opinion. Opposed to this, the second issue of believability has to do with the temporariness implied by the historically based conclusions that moral statements are summations of. People will have a hard time conceiving of moral statements as being in a constant epistemological flux. Since moral statements are the temporary conclusions of an ongoing social contract negotiation, they are epistemically wobbly. Not that they do change but that they can change is what makes this both problematic and, at the same time, closer to the mark.

If our hypothesis is prescriptive, though, the proposal would still entail using moral discourse as before but, significantly, it would also entail an attitude shift regarding what moral statements are, not simply what they do. Because moral statements would be fictional signifiers of a historically based agreement they become less than the factual that the realist would have them to be but more than the non-factual that the non-cognitivist is burdened with. Suggesting our hypothesis as a prescriptive remedy to error theory, therefore, evolves into a non-cognitive descriptivism. The biggest difference is that our hypothesis is upfront about its fictionalism. It is assumed to be known and acknowledged. Phenomenology supports this. Whereas Kalderon's formulation would lose its authority if it were

discovered to be pretence, our hypothesis is immune to this. Our hypothesis'

authority rests in the moral tradition it encapsulates. The only pretence it must yet

maintain is a weak nod to the realist camp in order to acknowledge the

phenomenological component of expectation, that is, motivational force. "What

[Kalderon] doesn't ever argue is that fictionalism is the only possible view that

commits to non-cognitivism and yet rejects non-factualism." (Chrisman, 2008, 11)

In support, then, of our new fictionalism, if quasi-factualism doesn't exist maybe we

should invent it. In our hypothesis, the acceptance of a moral statement is a belief.

But it is not a belief that the content of the statement is necessarily true. It is,

instead, a belief that the content is widely accepted.

"The second worry is whether a moral fictionalism… will be a conservative

extension of our non-moral talk." (322) That is, will the truth of our non-moral

arenas of speech remain intact if our moral speech is considered to be false? It

might seem that accepting "…a large and complicated falsehood…"(322) might

jeopardize our confidence in, say, psychology or politics and the like. The

implication is that if we believe that moral statements are false we must also

question any non-moral theories that may be implicitly based upon them. This is

clearly a concern that the moral fictionalist must take seriously. She can respond in

a number of ways. She can, of course, produce "…a comprehensive theory for

inspection."(322) But that would be a large project indeed. Alternatively, the moral

fictionalist can simply agree that "… the fiction will fail to preserve non-moral truth

only when a falsehood can be derived from the moral theory together with some

non-moral truth…" In other words, it is up to those who claim that fictionalism is not a conservative extension to produce a sample of a falsehood derived from a false moral discourse and a true non-moral one. If such an example cannot be produced, the false moral discourse remains standing.

The third option is similar to van Fraassen's (1980) acceptability argument: the fictionalist claims that moral discourse is functionally adequate. "Since a realist must take those claims he holds to be true to be at least acceptable as well, the realist cannot object to a fictionalist making the inference to acceptability, even if she declines the further inference to the truth of those claims." (322)

And what of our new moral discourse: the one that claims to be false and, at the same time, brings the authoritative weight of history to bear? Certainly, it would be immensely difficult to produce a "comprehensive theory" of this position making this option out the question. Regarding the second option, one would fairly easily, be able to produce a sample from the many contradictory statements that come with a long history of discussion and compromise. The third option, although ontologically different, is pragmatically the same. The agreement implied by a hermeneutically circular historical discussion also implies an acceptability at the root of an acceptable compromise.

The third matter that NRW brings up comes in two parts. The first part is an accusation that the fictionalist splits the world in two. On the one hand, she uses language to describe the world just as it is and, on the other hand, she uses it to pretend how the world is. It is a bit difficult to see where NRW is going with this

line of thought except that they talk of intentions and purposes when they refer to linguistic boundaries. This would make sense if we view the language of the non-moral type as bounded by theories intended to convince an agent to believe and that the moral type as bounded by theories intended to provoke that agent to action. Thus, it would make little difference whether moral talk were fictional or not. Therefore, the bifurcation would be perfectly acceptable but only insofar as the intent of the statement is concerned. Where it becomes problematic is with respect to the meaning of the pretended statement. In this case, since moral terminology, being fictional lacks meaningfulness so too do moral statements in general lack meaningfulness. NRW seem to be criticizing fictionalism for assuming that meaningless statements can convey intent. If this is so, then their second issue, namely that the boundary between the two categories, would be very difficult to nail down. Indeed, a clear bifurcation between meaning and intent would in no way be as straightforward as it seems to be between non-moral talk and moral talk. And how would our hypothesis fair in this regard? Since the fictionalism of our hypothesis exhibits some characteristics of realism, NRW's third criticism has less power. That is, in that the moral statements in our hypothesis do not have necessary truth since they are figurative stand-ins for an undefined hermeneutic dialogue, they nevertheless do have some truth since they do reference something even though that that something is nebulous and therefore somewhat fictional as well. Plainly though, our fictionalism does not suffer from blurred boundaries between meaning

and intent but it most definitely does in terms of the ontological status of its statements. Herein lies our fictionalism's most likely source of conceptual trouble. The Fourth concern has to with the coherency of the moral fictionalism project as a whole, revolutionary or hermeneutical. The issue goes as follows: if morally fictional statements, whether intentionally presumed as Joyce suggests or functionally implied as in Kalderon's formulation, - if they can accomplish useful things, then morally fictional statements imply non-moral truths. So then, morally fictional statements plus non-moral truths can imply further non-moral truths. To avoid the ultimate derivation of all non-moral truths in this way "…there must be limits to what can be inferred from moral fiction plus non-moral truths." (325) There are two difficulties here. First, if all non-moral truths can be derived from fictional statements, these fictional statements would be trivial. But since fictional statements lack non-arbitrary truth-values, their triviality is unavoidable. The second difficulty follows. If fictional statements were ever to gain non-arbitrary truth-values, some objective criteria would be required in order to determine them. Thus, once again we run into the relativity issue.

Therefore, since the triviality problem translates into the relativity problem, both issues can be ameliorated by our new hermeneutic fictionalism's claim of substantiality: ameliorated, not satisfied, because the historical hermeneutic basis of our moral statements provides only for confidence, not certainty, in the truth value of those statements. So, our new fictionalism offers only a partial solution and only offers limited munitions to undermine the accusations of incoherency.

The fifth challenge that NRW identifies is what might be termed the moral fictionalism relativism accusation. This is similar to Lenman's criticism of Kalderon and is different from the issue immediately above. The above issue concerns criteria to establish truth conditions for fictional moral statements. This fifth concern is one that worries about which moral fictionalism should be selected no matter what fictional statements exist within it. Since there is more than one moral discourse one can very well see a problem in determining which, in the case of the prescriptive form recommended by Joyce, would count as the most useful one. Or, in the case of descriptive fictionalism, we can see a problem in figuring out which form is actually being used.

It is difficult to describe our new hypothesis as either prescriptive or descriptive in its entirety. It can be said to be descriptive because the debate is alive and well within philosophical circles and because of some hotly debated issues in the public arena. Also, because of extenuating circumstances, there may be some ambivalence about the applicability of a particular moral statement. Our hypothesis does not seem to suffer greatly from this criticism on account that its premise is already in full admission of a degree of ambiguity based on a dynamic and fluid historical discussion. As such, the fictionalism shifts from a pretense in terms of a moral system to a presumption that a fictionally constructed dialogue through history has occurred.

The sixth observation is the common issue of phenomenology. This issue was raised earlier. Everyday experience just does not wash with the idea that our moral

talk is all smoke and mirrors. Given that the phenomenology of moral discourse is so realist in appearance the moral fictionalist must give an account of why this is so. Fictionalism just does not sit well with the importance many people place on moral values and to their emotional attachment to those values, not to mention their strong connection to motivation and conduct. Therefore, the very dilemma that fictionalism was originally proposed to resolve is brought up again (remember Mackie's arguments). That NRW raise the issue again shows that fictionalism does not adequately do the job of addressing it. They do, however, point out the most fruitful ways for fictionalists to respond. For the prescriptive moral fictionalist this is not so much of an issue since such a phenomenology is just a "...product of a pre-theoretic temptation towards moral realism." (328) that would be replaced by the fictionalism anyway. The descriptive fictionalist does not have this convenience but she can take a different tack; "... by taking moral deliberation to be deliberation about the content of a story."

It would seem that NRW would endorse our new hermeneutic moral fictionalism. Perhaps the next step for our next paper would be to begin the process of comparing our new moral hermeneutic normal fictionalism with other metaethical positions. Sufficient for our purposes now, though, would be to point out the most significant weakness of our present proposal, namely that our new hermeneutic moral fictionalism isn't a fictionalism at all.

One of the main criticisms of our new hermeneutic moral fictionalism is its relatively weak explanation of motivational force. The outlined metaphorical/

hermeneutic dialogue presented on this paper lacks a mechanism by which a contemporary normative position might be reached. Street (2008, 2010) offers such a mechanism. When we speak of a historical dialogue as the methodological basis to formulate statements of value one would assume that there would be some sort of orderly process involved, lest why call it methodological. Street says that "…that by judging yourself to have reason to Y, you're thereby…also judging yourself to have reason to take the means to Y, whatever those might be." (2008)

The "… metaethical constructivist views seek to give an account of what it is for any normative claim to [be] true." Although this author is inclined to concede the methodological approach of constructivism as a constructivist underpinning of the hermeneutic process with regards to formulating fictional moral statements, what will not be conceded is the claim that the objective truth for any statement of value so constructed is possible. What is more, this author will not concede even Street's Humean version of constructivism with the claim that "…to get substance out, we need to put substance in." Whereas our new fictionalism claims, as one of its raisons d'etre, its substantialization, no amount of this substantialization can change the objective truth-value of a moral statement. It can only change the motivational force of the statement.

Another challenge of this type is to suggest that our new fictionalism cannot be based on conclusions arrived at rationally from a historical hermeneutic dialogue. Admittedly, this dialogue concept is not thoroughly worked out in this paper but the challenge goes further. Haidt (2001) has proposed that sentiments of value, moral or

otherwise, are arrived at intuitively and are only justified rationally afterward, ex post facto. In other words, he reverses the process. While he agrees that "[m]oral discussions can… be modelled as a repeated cycle…", in his mind this is done to justify backwards, so to speak, an already held moral position. In our formulation, the position is selected because it is already justified by way of the repeated hermeneutic cycle.

It is interesting to note that Haidt also uses the idea of metaphor as well. "Metaphors have entailments…" he says "…and much of moral argument and persuasion involves trying to get the other to apply the right metaphor." The difference between his use of the term and ours is that he uses as a tool to arrive at a moral position whereas we use to as a description of the moral statement itself, as an encapsulation of the hermeneutic discussion that has preceded it. Perhaps he uses in its truer sense.

In summary, our new fictionalism stands up rather well against the criticisms of Nolan, Restall, and West but are also quite susceptible to broadside lobs aimed at questioning the very definition of fictionalism. Although, at first glance, it may appear that the potential objections raised by constructivists and intuitionalists might be absorbed. Really, they are punches rolled with and some very accurate defense would be required to maintain our system's entitlement as a form of fictionalism. It seems that the middle game is afoot.

**Conclusion**

The intent of this paper was to propose and examine a significant change to hermeneutic moral fictionalism. This was done for two reasons. First, the term 'hermeneutic' has been used gratuitously. The term does not describe the theory in any philosophically relevant way. Second, the theory, which purports to be a hermeneutic moral fictionalism contains serious difficulties and, so, is ripe for change.

This paper has described moral fictionalism's relevance as a valiant alternative to eliminativism. But its subsequent goals have been much more difficult to attain. The formulation of a truly competitive hermeneutic moral fictionalism within the constraints set for this paper, not to mention the constraints of time and ability of the paper's author, is dubiously realistic. It seems that too big a fish was caught with the weight of tackle used. However, what has been accomplished in no small thing. The wrestling of what has been traditionally a continental concept into an analytical arena has been somewhat successful. Also, the use of Nolan, Restall, and West's list of fictionalism's weaknesses has helped clarify what would otherwise have remained a purely speculative enterprise. This thought experiment has been successful if, for no other reason, than that it has been expressed in words on paper.

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