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PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Value pluralism, moral diversity, moral reasoning, and the foundations of bioethics

Pluralisme des valeurs, diversité morale, réflexion morale et fondations de la bioéthique

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Summary This paper considers how matters concerning value pluralism and moral diversity bear on issues in bioethics, with particular attention to methodology, moral reasoning, and the possibility of intractable disagreements. Drawing on work in my recent book Moral Reasoning in a Pluralistic World, I examine what methodological implications value pluralism has for coherence reasoning, then articulate some practical implications. On the theoretical side, I argue that in contexts of value pluralism, a norm of ''systematicity,'' which says that the principles of a theory should be as few and as simple as possible, is epistemologically unsupported. Instead, coherence should be understood as ''case consistency'': finding a principled way of prioritizing conflicting considerations from one case to another. On the practical side, adopting case consistency means that multiple internally coherent sets of moral beliefs are possible. So sometimes deep value-based disagreements cannot be resolved by reasoning alone. There are also implications for pedagogy: if moral reasoning accommodates various values and requires principled compromises that can take various forms, teaching about moral issues by first introducing a range of unified theories would not be the right approach. Instead, students ought to be encouraged to bring coherence to their own, possibly pluralistic, ways of valuing.

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Résumé Cet article étudie comment le pluralisme des valeurs et la diversité morale exercent une influence sur la bioéthique, avec une attention particulière sur la méthodologie, le raisonnement moral et la possibilité de désaccords fondamentaux. M'appuyant sur mon livre récent *Le raisonnement moral dans un monde pluriel*, j'examine les implications méthodologiques du pluralisme sur la cohérence du raisonnement, et j'énonce quelques implications pratiques. D'un point de vue théorique, j'explique que dans un contexte de pluralisme des valeurs, une norme de « systématicité » qui dit que les principes d'une théorie devraient être aussi peu nombreux et simples que possible, est épistologiquement infondée. Au contraire, la cohérence devrait être comprise comme un exemple d'homogénéité : trouver une façon d'organiser des considérations contradictoires. Dans une perspective pratique, adopter une approche cohérente signifie que plusieurs sous-ensembles cohérents de croyances morales peuvent co-exister. Parfois, des désaccords profonds ne peuvent pas être résolus par un simple raisonnement. Finalement, il y a des implications pédagogiques, si le raisonnement moral s'accorde de valeurs plurielles et requiert des compromis de principes qui peuvent prendre plusieurs formes, faire réfléchir sur des valeurs morales en introduisant d'abord un ensemble de théories unifiées comme l'utilitarisme n'est pas une bonne approche. Au contraire, les étudiants devraient être encouragés à établir une cohérence dans leur propre façon de hiérarchiser leurs valeurs, souvent plurielles.

This paper considers how matters concerning value pluralism and moral diversity bear on issues in bioethics, with particular attention to methodology, moral reasoning, and the possibility of intractable disagreements. By ''value pluralism,'' I mean the idea that there are various distinct values, such as benevolence, justice, honesty, liberty, and fidelity; ''moral diversity'' refers to the fact that, especially in modern liberal societies, people often disagree about moral matters. I focus here on the form of moral reasoning that begins with moral judgments — or ''considered convictions'' — and aims to bring them into coherence. Drawing on work in my recent book *Moral Reasoning in a Pluralistic World* [1], I examine what methodological implications value pluralism has for coherence reasoning, then articulate some practical implications.

On the theoretical side, I argue that in contexts of value pluralism, a norm of ''systematicity,'' which says that the principles of a theory should be as few and as simple as possible, is epistemologically unsupported. Instead, coherence should be understood as ''case consistency'': finding a principled way of prioritizing conflicting considerations from one case to another. It is sometimes said that theories with multiple principles have a problem with ''arbitrariness,'' but I argue against this: at least in the context of reasoning with convictions, these theories have no more problem with arbitrariness than seemingly more unified theories like utilitarianism. On the practical side, adopting case consistency means that multiple internally coherent sets of moral beliefs are possible. So, in some cases, deep value-based disagreements cannot be resolved by reasoning alone. As I explain below, however, in these cases the proposed conceptualization of disagreement can lead to constructive framings, showing how people with serious moral disagreements can sometimes share underlying values. Finally, there are implications for pedagogy: if moral reasoning accommodates various values and requires principled compromises that can take various forms, teaching about moral issues by first introducing a range of unified theories like utilitarianism would not be the right approach. Instead, students ought to be encouraged to bring coherence to their own, possibly pluralistic, ways of valuing.

Value pluralism and moral diversity

I use ''moral disagreement'' and ''moral diversity'' interchangeably to refer to situations in which people make different and incompatible moral judgments — not because they disagree about the underlying facts, but because they have a deeper, value-based disagreement.

For an example of public moral disagreement, consider the controversy that emerged in the 1990s over medical testing in developing countries. The question was whether allowing for more flexibility in testing standards should be allowed in such cases. Would this be appropriate if there were potential benefits for people in those communities? Or would this reflect an unethical and unfair ''double-standard,'' thus mistreating subjects [for discussion, see 2, 3, and 4]? For a simpler example, imagine Marie is a discreet aunt, the sometime confidant of her seventeen-year-old niece, who promises to keep some information confidential from the girl's strict father. The father then demands to be told the truth. Some people may judge that if a lie is necessary to keep the secret, it is permissible, on grounds that fidelity and promise-keeping are most important. Others might judge a lie immoral, on grounds that honesty is

most important. These are cases of genuine and basic moral disagreement. Anyone witnessing the intense recent public debates over issues like abortion, sex work, and medical aid in dying has a vivid sense of how intense public debate can be in cases where moral disagreement manifests itself.

While J.L. Mackie famously thought that the best explanation of moral diversity was that moral beliefs just aren't true or factual at all, some recent empirical research suggests a more nuanced explanation, based on the fact that the way people value is ''pluralistic'' in two senses. The first sense has to do with the value pluralism mentioned above: there are various, genuinely distinct values, and these are not reducible to one another or to some ''super-value'' [5]. It is often noted that the way we value in ordinary life seems ''pluralistic'' in this sense. Familiar values like benevolence, fairness, honesty, and loyalty seem to exemplify multiplicity and resist unification.

The descriptive thesis that this is how we value in practice is, of course, distinct from the more contentious normative thesis that value pluralism is in some sense correct, that we are right to value pluralistically. Descriptively, philosophical support for the claim that we do, in practice, value pluralistically in this way is found in arguments like that of Thomas Nagel [6], and also in the fact that canonical attempts in bioethics to articulate a ''common morality'' — like that of Tom Beauchamp and James Childress — appeal to multiple basic values [7]. In addition to philosophical arguments that the way we value is pluralistic in practice, there is empirical evidence as well. For example, some recent research from anthropology and sociology supports the idea that for people around the world there are a number of common but distinct moral cares. In their explanation of this research, Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph [8] argue that there are roughly five basic items:

- harm/care (helping others and not hurting them);
- fairness/reciprocity (treating others with justice, not cheating them, honesty);
- in-group/loyalty (commitment to protecting one's community);
- authority/respect (respect for, and obedience to, those in positions of authority);
- purity/sanctity (cleanliness, chastity, temperance in desires) [9–11].

A second sense of pluralism relevant to explaining diversity is that people direct and prioritize these values in different ways. For example, in sexual ethics, it used to be common in Western societies to think in terms of appropriateness, or as it used to be called, ''chastity.'' In one traditional interpretation, appropriate sex would be between heterosexually married couples and not on any other occasions. A very different way of thinking about sexuality has to do with autonomy: what determines the morality of a sexual act is whether the participants are consenting to it of their own free will, with no coercion, force, or deception. These values are directed differently. And with respect to prioritization, one group of people may prize justice and fairness above all—with less regard for the collective good. Others may prioritize differently, allowing that in extreme or even moderate cases, the collective good is most important. People in the United States are famous for valuing and prioritizing autonomy, even when the demands of autonomy seem to conflict with other values such as beneficence.

These forms of pluralism can generate moral diversity, and variation in prioritization does so in particularly interesting ways. In Marie's case, we might agree that the values of honesty and promise-keeping are both in play, but disagree over which, in this case, ought to be prioritized; this would lead to conflicting conclusions about whether Marie ought to lie. The medical testing case is more complicated, potentially involving respect for individual persons, fairness and justice, benevolence, and appreciation for liberty. There are also many complex factors such as the availability of follow-up care, different interpretations of autonomy and consent, and greater possibility of risks [12]. Again, even where we agree about these facts and background complexities involved, we might disagree over what to do, while still sharing these values, because we disagree of which of the multiple and conflicting values is most important to honor in the situation. Especially where the aim is to mitigate the impact of serious diseases like HIV/AIDS, those who see harm prevention as an overriding may judge the tests to be appropriate, while those who value respect for individuals or justice above all may say that double-standards are never acceptable. Of course, differences in how values are directed also generate disagreements: for example, those who value sexuality in terms of chastity and those who value it through personal autonomy will disagree on sexual ethics. I say more about these forms of disagreement below.

Moral reasoning in pluralist contexts and the problem of arbitrariness

How should we reason morally in contexts of these forms of pluralism? To focus my discussion, I address this question from within the context of what Geoffrey Sayre-McCord [13] calls ''conviction ethics,'' using methods based on coherence. This means that we begin with our considered convictions and work back and forth between the particular judgments we endorse — such as ''you ought to keep this particular promise'' — and the general principles we endorse — such as, ''promise-keeping is generally required,'' seeking an acceptable fit among these. Because of the way conviction ethics works, the question of coherence is addressed in the first instance to an individual reasoner: the pursuit of coherence is one way that an individual person, starting from an initial set of moral convictions, can improve that set. Conviction ethics with coherence is common both to Rawlsian reflective equilibrium [14,15] in the theoretical domain and Beauchamp and Childress's [7] principlism in bioethics, and it is typical in everyday public debate, as for instance when people debate whether abortion is more like other forms of killing or more analogous to other cases of exercising rights to personal or bodily autonomy.

First, let's consider what follows if we assume the normative thesis: that we are right, in some sense, to value pluralistically. On the face of it, applying these methods in a context of value pluralism, we should expect to end up with a theory with multiple general principles - principles like ''keep your promises,'' ''don't lie,'' and ''don't harm

others.'' This is because if values are plural, then plausibly we need a range of principles reflecting these plural values. As I explain in more detail below, such multiplicity is necessary, because the reasons we give for the moral judgements and principles we endorse will not ultimately be reducible to a single kind of consideration. When various considerations apply in a given case, the principles we endorse will potentially conflict; if values are plural, the proper activity in such a case is weighing considerations against one another rather than seeking out a more general point of view from which our principles can be seen to follow. That is, we have to prioritize our values, rather than unifying them.[1]

I'll call theories with multiple principles ''pluralist deontological'' theories. In ethical theory, the best-known example of pluralist deontological moral theory is that of the early twentieth-century ethicist W.D. Ross [17], who famously proposed a range of principles grounded in seven or so different kinds of obligations: there are duties of fidelity, such as promise-keeping; of reparation, as when one has done something wrong; of gratitude; of justice; of beneficence; of self-improvement; and of not inflicting harm. In bioethics, a prominent example is the principlism of Beauchamp and Childress [7], who argue for a multiplicity of principles grounded in four distinct values: respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice. These are contrasted to monistic theories like utilitarianism, in which there is a single principle reflecting a single value.

In ethical theory, pluralist deontological theories are often criticized for being deficient with respect to justification and for being arbitrary. For example, Ross's theory has been charged with giving us with an ''unconnected heap of duties,'' with no unifying principle to explain and support them [18]. In a similar way, Shelly Kagan [19] talks about the importance of finding moral explanations — knowing not only that something is so but why it is so. We need understanding, and this means having explanations: with respect to a set of multiple principles that are not themselves justified by a more unified and fundamental principle, Kagan says that even though explanations may ''have to come to an end somewhere,'' there is ''no license to cut off explanation at a superficial level'' [19, p. 14]. Without an explanation of why these ''goals, restrictions, and so on should be given weight, and not others,'' a set of multiple principles ''will not be free of the taint of arbitrariness which led us to move beyond our original *ad hoc* shopping lists [19, p. 13].'' Even committed pluralists like Beauchamp and Childress [7] suggest that multiplicity is non-ideal. In a list of ''problems'' for their approach, they include a discussion of ''coherence,'' asking, ''[i]f one argues, as we do, that a heap of obligations and values unconnected by a first principle comprises the common morality, is there any hope of coherence, short of so radically reconstructing norms that they only vaguely resemble the norms in the common morality?'' [7, p. 396]. The implication is that full and proper coherence would be involve further unification.

There is also the problem of explaining how, in cases of moral conflict, we determine which moral obligations or consideration override others. Ross's appeal to ''judgement,'' it is said, is arbitrary: what is needed is not simply judgment but rather an account of how judgments about relative weight can be made appropriately and justified [20]. Likewise, principlism's reliance on ''balancing'' — using moral judgment to determine relative weights — has been criticized as *ad hoc* and unjustifying [21,22]. To give an appropriate justification of relative weights, it is sometimes suggested, we would need a more systematized or monistic theory in the background — so our theory would not be pluralist deontology after all [13, p. 171; 23].

In recent work on moral reasoning, I have tried to address the issues of coherence, justification, and conflict. First, I have argued that the criticism that pluralist deontological theories are arbitrary in virtue of being pluralist is mistaken, because it rests on incorrect ideas about the nature of coherence and how moral reasoning should work in pluralist contexts. These conclusions follow not only from the more contentious claim that values are, indeed, plural, but even from the uncontroversial descriptive claim that the way we value in practice is pluralistic.

Traditional conceptions of coherence from moral theory are, I claim, inappropriate for pluralist contexts: if the normative thesis of value pluralism is true, they lead us astray; if we are agnostic about the normative thesis, they are unjustified and question-begging. Typical conceptions of coherence offer various desiderata, such as consistency, unity, simplicity, connectedness, comprehensiveness, and generality. Setting aside here some of the complexities of these, let me focus on the issue I take to be at the heart of the matter, which can be represented through a norm of ''systematicity'' — that we should pursue unified overarching values and pursue moral belief systems with as few, simple principles as possible. Utilitarianism is an example of a unified and systematized theory, since it offers the single monistic principle that the right action is the one that maximizes happiness, well-being, or pleasure overall. Utilitarianism offers a unified view of value, a single principle to follow, and a single metric for making decisions about what to do.

Notice that if values are plural — if the normative thesis is true — then there is no reason to prefer more systematized and unified theories; monistic theories would be less justified than pluralist ones. Let's take a moment to look briefly at the reasoning behind this claim. The preference for unified theories is usually justified epistemologically by appeal to the fact that the beliefs in more unified sets support and explain one another better than those in less unified, more pluralistic ones. For example, David Brink says that ''[i]nsofar as a moral theory explains the connections among moral considerations and arranges them in a systematic fashion, as unified theories do, it makes our beliefs more coherent and better justified'' [24, p. 250] and that because it ''places a premium on systematic

[1] Against this, it might be said that we can represent multiple values with a single principle. G. E. Moore [16] is often interpreted as proposing that we should maximize the ''good'' while acknowledging that what is good might have multiple aspects. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, but as I see it, as long as we are weighing values against one another it is better to do so explicitly through multiple principles. See also the arguments below, against reducing the number of principles simply for the sake of systematicity, simplicity or unity.

explanation,'' ''coherentism... favors unified over nonunified or fragmented theories moral theories'' [24, p. 250]. And in his defense of a single principle rule consequentialism, Brad Hooker says that, compared to a pluralist theory, a unified theory contains ''information that moral pluralism does not'' and ''would be able to explain more on the basis of fewer assumptions'' [25, p. 21].

But I claim that in the context of value pluralism, this way of supporting systematicity relies on claims that are question-begging or worse. The problem is that the relevant claims about understanding and justification are true only if we have independent reason to believe that the more systematized a theory is, the more likely it is to be correct or on the right track. Notice that an explanation doesn't provide epistemological support unless it is a good explanation. And to know whether an explanation is a good one, you need more than a general explanatory principle that entails it: you need a reason to think the explanation in question is a good one. Even when we have a generality that seems to explain something more specific, knowing whether we have a good explanation can be complex. For example, if I were to propose to explain why my cat is black by saying that all cats are black, then I obviously have neither increased justification nor improved understanding, because the ''explanation'' appealed to is false. If I were to propose to explain why the economy was failing in 2009 by appealing to the general principle that the economy generally fails when the AFC wins the Superbowl (and the Steelers won that year), then I also have neither increased justification nor improved understanding — even though the correlation in question is real. Though there is a correlation between the economy and the Superbowl, that correlation it doesn't depend on any actual causal regularity. The causal mechanism it proposes isn't one after all; the generalization is ''accidental.'' To know ''why'' something is so, it's not enough to have a general principle that explains it; we have to have some reason to think the explanation is a good one.

To say that the explanations in more systematized theories are better epistemologically, we would need independent reason to think they are good explanations — improvements on the explanations in more pluralistic theories. Consider, for example, the obligations of truth-telling and harm-prevention. In a pluralist deontological theory, we might explain these obligations by appealing to two principles grounded in the distinct values of honesty and non-maleficience. These values represent different kinds of considerations, and they might conflict, as when we know that telling the truth will cause harm. In a more systematized theory like utilitarianism, we would explain both in terms of a single value, such as the promotion of the most overall well-being. To say that the beliefs in systematized theories better support and explain one another, we need reasons to believe that the explanations in the latter, more systematized, theories are better. But what reason could this be? If values are plural — if the normative thesis of value pluralism is true — then sometimes the explanations in more systematic theories will be worse. If we are agnostic about the normative thesis, we don't know when the explanations in more systematic theories are better and when they are not. If the considered convictions we hold and the reasons we think they are true reflect multiple values, then to have positive reason to believe that more systematized theories are better justified, we would need independent reason to believe that the true nature of values is more unified than our practices suggest. Absent such independent reasons, we have no reason to think the explanations in more systematic theories are better, and thus no reason to prefer theories with fewer, simpler principles. This applies even when systematicity is used as a tie-breaker to choose between theories that fit our considered convictions equally well: absent some reason to think values are unified, there is no reason to prefer the more systematized theory.

As an alternative to understanding coherence as systematicity, I have proposed an approach I call ''pluralist coherence'' [1]. Instead of unifying and systematizing, what we need is a way of applying multiple values to different kinds of cases in a principled way. To do this, I propose a norm of ''case consistency.'' Case consistency means judging in accordance with morally significant similarities and differences: judging similar cases similarly unless there are significant differences between them. Case consistency reflects some ordinary common practices in everyday moral reasoning, as when interlocutors in the abortion debate accuse one another of being ''inconsistent'' — that is, of not treating similarly cases that are like one another in morally relevant features.

Case consistency is obviously complex in various ways, but a paradigmatic example to illustrate the concept is found in framing effects, where people judge situations differently, but only because of the words used to describe the situation. For example, studies show that people judge tax policies differently depending on how their description is framed [26] and judge risk differently when presented in positive terms like survival rate rather than negative terms like death rate [27]. Juries famously judge similar legal cases differently depending on the emotion of the language used [26]. One way for a set of beliefs to be case inconsistent is that the principles can be structured so that they apply in different ways to cases that have no morally significant difference between them. ''Telling a lie at home is wrong'' and ''telling a lie outside is permissible'' are case inconsistent principles, as long as one regards ''being at home'' versus ''being outside'' as a morally insignificant difference, as I take it most of us would.

As we've seen, when it comes to the difficult question of how to judge one's overall obligation in cases of conflict, both Ross [17] and Beauchamp and Childress [7] say we must use our judgment to ''balance'' competing considerations. In the approach of pluralist coherence, we also must use our judgment, to determine relative weights of various obligations and considerations, but the crucial difference is that these judgments are then subject to consistency demands and are not made on a case-by-case basis. When principles conflict, our judgments about overall obligations are subject to the same demands of judging in accordance with what we take to be morally significant similarities and differences. So, a second way a set of principles can be case inconsistent is that judgments about one's overall obligation can be inconsistent. If I judge that I ought to stop and help a person in need instead of keeping a promised appointment when I dislike the person I am meeting with, but ought to keep my appointment instead of helping when I like the person I am meeting with, then I have a set of principles and judgments that is case inconsistent from any point of

view which takes the ''liking'' clause to introduce a morally insignificant difference[2].

How do we determine what is, and is not, a morally significant similarity or difference? How can we determine the weights of various obligations and considerations? In the pluralist coherence approach, judgments about these matters are understood along the same lines as other moral judgments: they are based on considered convictions and subject to demands for case consistency, and are thus revisable in the back-and-forth method of reflective equilibrium. This is because judgments about how stringent or weighty an obligation is and judgments about moral significance are essentially moral judgments: they are judgments about what matters, how important it is, and why.

Crucially, because people value direct and prioritize values differently in fundamental ways, and because they endorse different judgments about what is, and is not, a morally significant difference, it follows from this framing that there can be multiple internally coherent moral systems that do not agree with one another. A person who believes that lying is always wrong, even to keep a promised secret, is case consistent as long as they apply this criterion across the board. A person who believes that duties of fidelity can override the obligation to honesty can also be case consistent, as long as they judge in accordance with judgments about moral significance they are willing to stand behind. For example, if what matters is the consequences of breaking the promise, this may be a judgment about moral significance the person is willing to stand behind. But someone who simply chooses lying when it's most convenient is likely case inconsistent [1]. In the medical testing debate, a person who says the standards must always be universal is case consistent. But the person who adopts a set of beliefs about context or risk being morally significant can also be case consistent, while allowing that standards are not universal. As in casuistry, case consistency asks us to look at other cases and consider morally relevant similarities and differences. But framing the process in terms of coherence focuses attention on the role of judgments about moral significance, illuminating the mechanisms of moral disagreement among people who are reasoning well.[3]

As we saw in section 1, one of the main criticisms of principle pluralism is that there is unavoidable arbitrariness. And the possibility of multiple belief systems that are internally coherent but incompatible with one another might seem to add to this worry. But I claim that, at least in the context of conviction ethics, pluralist deontological sets of beliefs that are case consistent have no more problem with arbitrariness than systematized and unified theories do.

In response to the complaint that appealing to judgment is not enough, because what's needed is justification, notice that in the context of conviction ethics, using judgments — and trying to bring them into coherence — is how all moral beliefs are evaluated and justified. So, there is no special problem with arbitrariness just because judgement comes into play. Analogous remarks apply to the concern over judgments in determining what overrides what. But again, in the context of conviction ethics, the method is entirely appropriate. If there is a problem with arbitrariness, it affects equally all moral systems justified on the basis of conviction ethics and has nothing to do with pluralism per se.[4]

Relatedly, it might be objected that this approach provides too much leeway for individual reasoners to judge what is, and is not, morally significant: even morally abhorrent systems can be internally coherent, and we might have hoped that coherence can help explain what is wrong with them. For example, introducing citizenship as a morally significant difference might allow someone to conclude we have no real obligations to those in other countries, as one *New York Times* letter writer argued with respect to the global AIDS crisis [29]. And introducing race as a morally significant difference might allow someone to conclude that racism is justifiable. I address these matters in more depth in [1], but let me note briefly here that from the point of view of pluralist coherence, while we cannot criticize such views on the basis of ''incoherence'' or ''irrationality,'' we can criticize them on moral grounds. From within a way of valuing, one can say that those conclusions are based on moral mistakes, for example, because they fail to acknowledge that all people have equal moral worth. One advantage of this way of seeing things is that distinctions like those related to race can coherently function as morally significant in other contexts, say, in support of affirmative action.

Implications

Let's consider some implications of adopting the outlook and framework described. First and most obviously, notice that it follows that pluralist theories are not suboptimal relative to more systematized theories. The methods associated with pluralist coherence — comparing cases, finding principled compromises, talking about morally significant differences and similarities — are familiar in work in applied ethics. For example, in the abortion debate, Judith Jarvis Thomson's [30] violinist argument asks us to draw a similarity relationship between the pregnant woman and the person hooked up to the violinist; responses to her argument often take the form of either challenging or supporting the claim of similarity. Several commenters on the medical testing controversy have explored the problem using analogies to morally similar cases. Ruth Macklin, for example, asks whether we would

[2] The possibility of conflict raises complex issues about the reality of dilemmas and their associated ''remainders'' or ''residue.'' For a discussion linking the remainder to Joseph DeMarco's ''mutuality principle'' [28] in bioethics, see my [1].

[3] The use of principles also allows for a practical articulation of the role of moral ''remainder'' in cases of moral conflict and the ''mutuality principle''; see note [2] above.

[4] It might be thought that systematized theories are better because they at least reduce the need for judgment, allowing for more answers that can be calculated. But an answer one can calculate is no better than an answer that requires judgment unless we have some reason to believe that the calculated answer is the right one. Using numerology on the letters in a moral question involves calculation rather than judgment, and yields an objective answer based on this calculation. But any answers derived this way would be wrong, because they aren't based on the right kinds of moral considerations.

consider appropriate the same flexibility in testing standards if applied to underinsured Americans rather than people in another country, inviting us to see these cases as moral similar in significant ways, and possibly challenging interlocutors who disagree to say what, exactly, the morally significant difference is [4].

We've seen how work in theoretical ethics has tended to treat such forms of reasoning as subpar or non-ideal, with pluralist theories considered an ''unconnected heap of duties'' and how even Beauchamp and Childress suggest that a more systematized theory would be an improvement — if only such a theory could be made to sufficiently fit with our considered convictions. Along the same lines, one of the criticisms that Bernard Gert, Charles Culver, and K. Danner Clouser make against principlism involves its lack of ''systematicity,'' especially with regard to figuring out what to do when principle conflict; in their approach, which they call a ''systematic'' one, conflicts are resolved by appeal to a single criterion based on harm prevention [22].[5] Leaving aside other potential merits of their approach, the argument here would suggest that in the absence of independent reasons to think that systematized theories are better, we have no reason to think less systematized theories are somehow deficient.

A second implication has to do with the nature of moral disagreement and potential uses and limitations of moral reasoning. From the framing above, it follows that disagreements can arise in two different ways. Sometimes interlocutors roughly share values and prioritizations, but one person is failing to be case consistent — that is, to judge similarly cases that they themselves would see as similar in significant ways. Where our judgments are distorted by emotions, self-interest, and contextual influences, we fail to judge cases consistently; this can lead to the kinds of disagreements that pluralist coherence reasoning can resolve. In these cases, coherence can show how genuinely consistent moral theorizing would support some particular conclusion.

But in my view, disagreement can also arise for more fundamental reasons, arising from the way people direct and prioritize values differently. This kind of situation leads to entrenched disagreement. We saw above the example of moralizing sex through the value of chastity versus moralizing sex through the value of personal autonomy. We also saw how prioritizing honesty or fidelity can lead to differing conclusions about whether to lie. In these cases, if people value in these different ways, then each may be reasoning well, but reasoning will not produce consensus.

This framing might help explain some of the entrenched disagreement in the abortion debate. Pro-life proponents say that abortion is murder, murder is wrong, so abortion is wrong. We can interpret them as saying that there is a relevant moral similarity, and no morally relevant differences, between unborn fetuses and ordinary persons who must not be killed. Pro-choice opponents typically respond to this argument by citing what they take to be morally significant differences between abortion and murder, sometimes based on the status of the fetus, but also by appeal to autonomy rights. They may say, for example, that people have rights to bodily autonomy, and abortion is an exercise of that right, so abortion is permissible and worth protecting as a right. Pro-life opponents to this view often say that this exercise of autonomy is not like others, but rather impermissible because the moral status of the fetus creates a morally significant difference. Some participants in this debate may have a disagreement we can interpret as one of values and prioritization: they may value the fetus for its status as current or potential human life, and value the protection of bodily autonomy, and disagree over which has priority in the relevant situation. In the former prioritization, abortion is wrong; in the latter, it is permissible.

Taking case consistency as the core of moral reasoning suggests that people who disagree in this way will, if coherent, either change their views about abortion or come to disagree about other moral issues as well. It also suggests that for even roughly coherent people, beliefs about abortion would correlate with other things about them. In fact, there is evidence for both of these phenomena. People unwilling to change their minds about abortion do change other beliefs to fit. Bioethicist Chris Kaposy points out how in the abortion debate ''analogical'' arguments are both frequently used and ineffective at creating consensus — because people can and do revise other judgments, such as their judgments about euthanasia, in order to be more coherent [31]. Again, even if everyone is reasoning well, we may encounter entrenched disagreement.

When disagreements are due to deep differences in values and priorities, I think that arguments and reasoning run out: in these cases, moral change happens through social and cultural changes. These can happen because people talk with one another in other ways, or through means like personal activism, art, and literature. One approach for changing people's minds might be standing as a representative of the values one endorses. Proponents of LGBTQ+ rights, same-sex marriage, and queer activism in general have recently used such techniques to great effect: alongside a coherent argumentative position, activists offer themselves as examples of how living a certain kind of life is living a good life. From the point of view being developed here, the fact that people are moved by means other than rational arguments does not mean they are ''irrational'' or failing to reason morally. It doesn't matter so much where new moral beliefs come from; the moral reasoning task is seeing how they fit with other moral beliefs, and possible adjusting others as well. Often, experience leads to moral growth and change: when we have certain experiences firsthand, this affects how we interpret and prioritize the values relevant to ethical evaluation of the factors involved. Moral ''coherence'' should be compatible with moral change, and from the point of view of case consistency, there is nothing wrong with changing one's mind. Our obligation is then to try to bring other beliefs into coherence with the new belief.

A third interesting practical implication of this framework has to do with seeing the possibility of shared values beneath seemingly intractable differences. On the face of it, Marie and her brother might see themselves as having moral outlooks deeply opposed to one another. Marie, thinking she ought to lie to protect her promise, may well regard the opposite conclusion as unfeeling, inflexible, and overly

[5] While they use the term ''systematicity'' somewhat differently from the way it is used here, their proposal in contexts of conflict reflects a similar concern with avoiding the potential arbitrariness of balancing from case to case.

harsh. Marie's brother, believing she ought to always tell the truth, may well regard Marie's point of view as sentimental and unprincipled. If Marie and her brother were encouraged to see their difference as one of prioritization, they may see one another more sympathetically and may be able to construct a more constructive conversation about difficult issues in their relationship in general.

This is, of course, of particular interest in the clinical bioethics context, where differences of opinion among family members and health care professionals can get in the way of constructive communication. While the method of pluralist coherence may not help guide a conversation toward thinking there is a ''right answer'' or knowing what it is, it can be constructive for those who disagree to see one another in this light, as having overlapping and shared values which are directed and prioritized differently. In his *Foundations of Bioethics*, Thomas Engelhardt says that in a context where people value differently in deep ways, we can distinguish between ''moral friends'' and ''moral strangers'' — where the former share our values and outlook and the latter do not [32, p. 9]. In the proposal here, however, we see how even moral strangers are not always so strange to us: there can sometimes be roughly shared values underlying our disagreement.

While the abortion issue is too complex to discuss in depth here, it's worth noting the possibility that some cases of abortion might be understood to involve competing values generating conflicting moral considerations — for example, between the value of a developing fetus and the duties we owe to it, and the values of autonomy and the rights we have to pursue and direct our lives as we think best, protecting our health and well-being. Advantages to pro-life views of such a framing are evident: it will be more plausible to more people to say that the rights of a pregnant person are overridden than to say that they do not exist. But I think there are also advantages to this framing for pro-choice views. Primary among these is that it entails a plausible to way to consistently say both that the decision to have an abortion might be an agonizing one, along a moral dimension, and also to say that the decision is the right one. This helps explain the widely shared feeling that even if abortion is clearly permissible, it would be wrong for another person to pressure someone to choose it. It also allows for an expansive understanding of the way a miscarriage can feel like a tragedy.

A fourth and final implication has to do with education and methodology. In some courses on moral issues, where students are exposed to moral reasoning about practical problems, the structure is to introduce students to a range of theories, like utilitarianism and Kantianism, and then to refer to those theories in discussing the applied issues. But this way of proceeding raises some difficult questions. If there are many moral theories that seem plausible, what does this mean? How can various theories be used — on what grounds would you use one or another? In controversial cases like abortion, we are likely to disagree about which unified or systematized theory fits best with our considered convictions, since our considered convictions vary and are strongly felt. Gert, Culver, and Clouser call this way of using theories the ''anthology'' approach, saying it comes to the same thing as being an ''anti-moral theory'' altogether [22]. One way of responding to the problem is to say that different theories are useful for different purposes, perhaps because they illuminate different aspects of a problem. For example, in the ''moral theory primer'' section of his moral issues textbook, Mark Timmons says we can see moral theories ''as providing different ways of diagnosing and thinking about a moral problem'' [33]. For ''ticking bomb'' cases, we might find the counting-up of utilitarianism useful, while for other issues like environmentalism, or where rights are most salient, we might find some other approach most useful.

From the point of view of case consistency, this approach to using theories would be misguided, because it ignores the importance of finding a principled way of prioritization, one that we can apply to a range of different kinds of cases. The idea is to judge cases similarly unless we can cite morally significant differences between them means aiming to apply the same range of prioritized values to a range of different problems, rather than applying a different theory to illuminate each problem. For example, if respect for individual autonomy seems like an important value when we are explaining our rights to bodily autonomy and our rights to make decisions about our lives and our well-being, then coherence requires we take respect for individual autonomy to be important in other contexts as well, including cases like ''ticking bomb'' cases — unless, of course, we can cite a relevant morally significant difference. From this point of view, students in moral issues might be encouraged to begin with their own considered convictions, then challenged on whether those convictions are case consistent, with encouragement to articulate a coherent moral point of view of their own. In this approach, different frameworks can encourage attention to various aspects of a situation that might have been previously overlooked, but with the aim of integration replacing the suggestion that there are competing unified theories.

In this paper, I've addressed coherence primarily from an individualistic perspective arguing for a range of theoretical conclusions and some practical implications that follow. Many of the latter reflect the possibility of multiple internally coherent systems that disagree with one another. Of course, in the face of this possibility, the difficult question will be what to do in the face of persistent disagreement. How can we reason together? The matter is beyond the scope of this paper, but I take my analysis to contribute to the larger project in several ways. First, I've articulated a sense in which people can each be reasoning well despite persistent disagreement; we see at least a context in which entrenched moral disagreement does not mean someone is being ''irrational'' or failing to see the evidence. Second, I've suggested that in such cases, other kinds of changes are meaningful. When social interaction, narrative, or art changes minds, the process is no less ''rational'' then changes that are the results of arguments: as long as the person changing their mind aims to bring other beliefs into coherence with the new ones, they are reasoning as well as anyone else. Third, as we saw in the discussion of shared values underlying disagreement, constructive dialogue might be furthered by seeing commonality even among difference.

Finally, if multiple belief systems can be equally well-justified, this at least tells us that the process for decision-making is not going to be merely epistemological or based on evidence and reasoning; instead, we should expect it to involve compromise and collaboration, requiring

sensitivity, open-mindedness, a tolerance for complex processes and imperfect outcomes, and sometimes accepting that our preferred answer isn't the one that wins the day.

Disclosure of interest

The author declares that she has no competing interest.

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