

Two important themes underlie these convictions: first, values, though perhaps not reducible to facts, must be “consistent” with them in that objects that are indiscernible in regard to fact must be indiscernible in regard to value; second, there must be nonvaluational “reasons” or “grounds” for the attribution of values, and these “reasons” or “grounds” must be *generalizable*—that is, they are covered by *rules* or *norms*. These two ideas correspond to “weak supervenience” and “strong supervenience” that I have discussed elsewhere.³⁶ Belief in the supervenience of value upon fact, arguably, is fundamental to the very concepts of value and valuation.³⁷ Any valuational concept, to be significant, must be governed by a set of criteria, and these criteria must ultimately rest on factual characteristics and relationships of objects and events being evaluated. There is something deeply incoherent about the idea of an infinitely descending series of valuational concepts, each depending on the one below it as its criterion of application.³⁸

It seems to me, therefore, that epistemological supervenience is what underlies our belief in the possibility of normative epistemology, and that we do not need new inspirations from the sciences to acknowledge the existence of naturalistic criteria for epistemic and other valuational concepts. The case of normative ethics is entirely parallel: belief in the possibility of normative ethics is rooted in the belief that moral properties and relations are supervenient upon non-moral ones. Unless we are prepared to disown normative ethics as a viable philosophical inquiry, we had better recognize normative epistemology as one, too.³⁹ We should note, too, that epistemology is likely to parallel normative ethics in regard to the degree to which scientific results are relevant or useful to its development.⁴⁰ Saying this of course leaves large room for disagreement concerning how relevant and useful, if at all, empirical psychology of human motivation and action can be to the development and confirmation of normative ethical theories.⁴¹ In any event, once the normativity of epistemology is clearly taken note of, it is no surprise that epistemology and normative ethics share the same metaphilosophical fate. Naturalized epistemology makes no more, and no less, sense than naturalized normative ethics.⁴²

Notes

1. In making these remarks I am only repeating the familiar textbook