Conflict Resolution and Radical Political Disagreement:

A philosophy of radical political disagreement

Is radical political disagreement the new radical moral disagreement?

Name: Isi Madojemu

Student Number: S1986171

Institute for Philosophy

Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. Wouter Kalf

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Introduction

Disagreement is common and often a sign that one of the claims is false. On this view, propositions about an object have truth conditions because they refer to something "that is in the object" (Huemer, 2005, p. 2). A classic example is when two people disagree about the number of chairs in the room and whether the answer is three or four chairs. When asked how many chairs are in the room? Person A says there are three and person B suggests there are four because person B believes one more chair is hidden in the corner. In the chair example, the disagreement is about the number of chairs, the object is the room, and the statements offered by Person A and B refer to the number of things that are in the object.

The chair example is a disagreement about something that is objectively true because it is a struggle between two people to describe a fact about the world. The correct number of chairs in the room is a fact about the world because the number of chairs in the room would remain the same even if no one was there to perceive them. The disagreement is about something objectively true because the correct answer to the chair question is independent of person A or B's perceptions of the object and ideas about the things their statements are about.[1]

The statements in the chair example are truth-apt for two reasons. First, the two statements are about the same thing which is the number of chairs in the room. Second, the statements refer to a number of things contained within an object. Since there are only three chairs in the room person A's claim is objectively true and B's claim is not because further investigation reveals there is not a chair hidden in the corner. As Michael Huemer (2005) explains "a statement is objectively true if and only if: it is true and what makes it true is not even partly the attitudes or

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[1] Huemer, (2005 p. 5)

psychological reactions of observers towards the thing a statement is about" (Huemer, 2005, p. 5). In the chair example, person A's statement is true because her statement refers to the actual number of things in the object and is a fact because the statement is true independent of person A or B's ability to count chairs or ideas about the room. The purpose of the chair example is to show that some disagreements are resolved by showing which proposition about an object is objectively true. However, in a society where people discuss political matters there are some disagreements where conflict parties are unable to resolve their disagreement by showing which claim is objectively true.

In conflict resolution studies these difficult to resolve disagreements about political matters are also known as radical political disagreements. A radical political disagreement is between members of a community and sometimes about the rules which govern society and how they should be enforced. For example members of a community might radically disagree on how they should be governed, how to organise the rights of the citizens, or how to distribute the benefits of social cooperation between members of the community. A radical disagreement is of particular concern because they have the potential to destabilise a political community and lead to the catastrophic loss of life or the mass displacement of people.

In meta-ethics and conflict resolution studies scholars explain what makes a radical disagreement special, why they are difficult to resolve, and what it would take to resolve a radical disagreement. In both subjects, scholars focus on the verbal exchanges between disputants and explain what is happening when they are engaged in a radical disagreement. The reason I focus on meta-ethical theories and not conflict theories in the social sciences is because Oliver Ramsbotham (2010 and 2011) claims there is no adequate description of radical disagreements in

the social sciences. He is a conflict resolution expert who focuses on radical disagreements and argues that conflict studies lacks an adequate theory which explains the verbal exchanges at the heart of a radical political disagreement.[2]

The aim of this thesis is to show that meta-ethical theories could fill the gap that is identified by Ramsbotham (2011). More importantly, I demonstrate how a discussion about the nature of moral properties shapes the way think about resolving radical political disagreements. This is important because an adequate theoretical explanation of a radical political disagreement would open up new lines of enquiry that are not yet integrated into conflict studies and the development of conflict resolution strategies.[3] The idea is to see what happens to our thinking about resolving radical political disagreements if it is assumed that there are facts in a radical political disagreement like there are scientific and mathematical facts or what happens if we assume the opposite. To start addressing the inadequate theoretical foundation that Ramsbotham (2013) identifies I turn to meta-ethics and the debate about radical moral disagreements, which is a debate about the significance of radical disagreements and if they are proof that moral properties are undetectable and moral facts unknowable. I focus on meta-ethics because an adequate explanation of a radical political disagreement starts with a theory that describes the nature of the properties statements refer to in political disagreement and if these properties are knowable by rational and empirical investigation.

Meta-ethics is the study of moral discourse and philosophers like J.L. Mackie (1977), Michael Huemer (2005), and David Enoch (2009) discuss "the nature of values and evaluative statements" (Huemer, 2005, p. 1). In meta-ethics how a radical disagreement is resolved partially

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[2] Ramsbotham (2013 p. 56)
[3] Ramsbotham (2013 p. 78)

depends on whether you think "moral statements assert the existence of objective values and whether these statements are sometimes true" (Huemer, 2005, p. 9). To figure out if there are objective moral truths meta-ethicists often ask epistemological questions: how do we know an action is wrong and whether moral judgments are capable of being true or false? Or they ask metaphysical questions: do moral properties exist and are they like other properties found in physical sciences? The kind of questions meta-ethicists ask are important because they shape the way we think about resolving a radical political disagreement in conflict resolution studies.

Conflict resolution studies is a field of International Relations that analyses disagreements embedded within armed conflicts. Oliver Ramsbotham (2010) explains that conflict resolution is the study of human conflict and the aim is to transform "actual or potential violent conflict into non-violent forms of social struggle" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 53). To explain why a radical political disagreement is difficult to resolve conflict scholars often use political theories, psychological experiments, and observations by anthropologists to highlight what is special about a radical disagreement and why they are difficult to resolve.[4] Oliver Ramsbotham (2010) is no different and his explanation of radical political disagreements is based on 20 years of data he collected from his simulations of radical disagreements.[5] His main idea was to "slow down the lightning speed of raw political dialogue and enable what would otherwise move too quickly to be examined" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 110).

Based on his notes and observations Ramsbotham (2010 and 2017) describes a radical political disagreement as a "struggle to identify and eliminate mistaken beliefs, perceptions, truths, and versions of reality" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 199). According to Ramsbotham (2010 and 2017) his

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[4] Ramsbotham (2013, p. 60)
[5] Ramsbotham (2010, p. 110)

description captures the kind of verbal exchange conflict parties are engaged in and reveals the nature of a radical disagreement.[6] From his description as a starting point I argue that his description raises epistemological and metaphysical questions about the nature of the properties statements refer to in a radical political disagreement.

A radical political disagreement has a meta-ethical dimension because the recommendations in a radical political disagreement are similar if not the same as the description of a moral proposition in a radical moral disagreement. They are the same because the reasons disputants use to justify recommendations in a radical political disagreement (do this because) are like moral propositions in the sense that both statements describes something that fits the description of a moral property. In other words, moral claims and political recommendations are prescriptive and supposed to identify a property or feature in an object, event, or action that would make a particular claim objectively true and a fact about the world.

Meta-ethics is a good place to start when thinking about resolving radical political disagreements because Ramsbotham's (2010) explanation of political recommendations in a radical political disagreement indicates that they have a moral dimension. I also think this is the case because a radical political disagreement and radical moral disagreement are both a struggle to identify the moral properties of an object, action, or event and objectively true statements about that thing. The disagreement is considered radical because no party is guilty of a relevant epistemological defect and the disputants have reached a point where appeal to further rational insight or empirical evidence will not settle the dispute. What is special about a radical disagreement is that parties remain convinced there is an argument or piece of evidence that will settle the

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[6] Ramsbotham (2010, p, 110 and p. 132)

disagreement in their favour even if there is no evidence to support the claim that moral facts exist about that matter. A radical political disagreement has an ethical dimension because how you think about resolving it depends on two things.

1) Whether you think moral properties exist and are part of some actions and objects.

2) If you think individuals can accurately perceiving moral properties in an object or action.

Ramsbotham (2010 and 2017) offers his breakdown of a radical disagreement as a response to inadequate descriptions of radical political disagreements in conflict studies. He does this because "the phenomenon of radical disagreement is neglected in conflict resolution studies and not studied in its own right" (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 57). From his point of view radical disagreement is a feature of conflict that is not investigated and considered important by influential conflict scholars. He arrives at this conclusion because he finds that most conflict theories describe radical disagreements as a dead-end and as something to be avoided. [7]At the end of his search for a theory of radical political disagreement Ramsbotham (2013) concludes that "there is no philosophy of radical disagreement" (Ramsbotham, 2013, p. 76). To support his claim Ramsbotham (2013) argues that there is a discrepancy between conflict theories and their description of radical political disagreements.[8] From his perspective, the lack of an adequate theory that explains the verbal exchange at the heart of a violent conflict has "led to a damaging gap in systemic thinking about peacebuilding" (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 57), which has resulted in

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[7] For how radical disagreement is overlooked in Conflict analysis see Ramsbotham (2010, pp. 17-33 and 2017, pp. 30-44). For radical disagreement is neglected in conflict resolution studies see Ramsbotham (2010, pp. 52-93 and 2013, p. 56).
[8] Ramsbotham (2013 p. 76)

a situation where conflict resolutions strategies are based on "inadequate theoretical foundations" (Ramsbotham, 2013, p. 77).

Ramsbotham (2013 and 2017) provides evidence for his claim by reviewing 12 conflict theories that influential conflict resolution scholars have used to explain why radical political disagreements persist. After reviewing these conflict theories he finds that most conflict theories "underrate the significance of a radical disagreement" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 190). In the 12 conflict theories Ramsbotham (2013) examined the common assumption was that political relations are based on a competition over scarce resources rather than a desire for cooperation. From this assumption he argues the standard aim of conflict resolution is to transform competition over a scarce resource in some kind of joint venture where all disputants' needs and interests are met. According to Ramsbotham's (2017) all 12 theories are inadequate because they treat "radical disagreement as a superficial feature of conflict generated by deeper causes and resolved only when these deeper causes are directly addressed" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 35).[9] Ramsbotham's (2010) central argument is that in conflict studies "radical disagreement is usually identified with destructive conflict and seen as the terminus of genuine dialogue" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 91). According to him it is treated as the "antithesis of a dialogue for mutual understanding" (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 60) and not worth investigating.[10]

From his findings about theories used by influential conflict scholars to explain a radical political disagreement. Ramsbotham (2011 and 2013) identifies a gap in the literature and uses this gap to explain why we do not have effective intervention strategies for resolving radical political

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[9] In a radical political disagreement a deeper cause could be the material inequalities that influence social relations or cultural differences that lead to radically different social practices.
[10] Ramsbotham (2011 p. 60)

disagreements.[11] To start addressing the gap that is identified by Ramsbotham (2011) I will show that there is overlap between Ramsbotham's (2010 and 2017) description of a radical political disagreement and explanations in meta-ethics of radical moral disagreements. To do this, I compare a description of a radical moral disagreement in meta-ethics to an example of a radical political disagreement in conflict resolution studies. I use the description of a radical moral disagreement by Folke Tersman (2006, 2013, and 2015) to see if people engaged in a radical political disagreement are involved in a radical moral disagreement. If they are, I then consider how this might impact the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements.

My aim is to show that meta-ethical theories shape the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements. To convince the reader that meta-ethics has serious implications for the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements, I argue in the first chapter that a radical political disagreement is a type of radical moral disagreement. Then I show what happens to our thinking about radical political disagreements if we consider two meta-ethical theories: moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism.[12] I consider two meta-ethical theories because there is not yet a definitive argument that settles the debate between moral sceptics and moral realists concerning the existence of objective moral truths and our ability to perceive them. Since both positions are possible I explore how meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism effects the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements. In chapter two I look at why philosophers have held these two positions and consider what radical political disagreements mean for the sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism. In the final chapter I discuss the

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[11] Ramsbotham (2013)

[12] The type of moral scepticism I discuss in this thesis is one based on moral-error theory

implication that meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism has on our thinking of how to resolve radical political disagreements.

My reason for forging a link between meta-ethics and conflict resolution studies is in part because Oliver Ramsbotham (2010, 2013 and 2017) believes that there is "no adequate philosophy of radical disagreement" (Ramsbotham, 2013, p. 76). The main reason however is because the development of a strategy to resolve a radical political disagreement depends on whether moral scepticism or meta-ethical realism is true. By the end of the thesis it will be evident that there is a philosophy of radical political disagreement and that it is found in meta-ethics. More importantly, I reveal specific conclusions for the debate about radical political disagreements and how to resolve them if we assume meta-ethical realism or moral scepticism as the foundation for a philosophy of radical political disagreement.

In this thesis, I discuss the following questions:

(1)   Can radical political disagreement be considered as a type of radical moral disagreement?

(2)   Are radical moral disagreements evidence that meta-ethical realism is false?

(3)   What are the implications for a philosophy of radical political disagreement if it is based on moral scepticism or meta-ethical realism?

To answer the three questions I split the thesis in to three chapters. In chapter one, I argue that a radical political disagreement is a type of radical moral disagreement. To defend this claim, I examine the radical disagreement at the heart of the Kashmir conflict and then compare it to a description of a radical moral disagreement by Folke Tersman (2006, 2013, and 2015). I use the comparison to argue that a radical political disagreement is a radical moral disagreement because

disputants in a radical political disagreement describing the moral properties of an event, action, or object and are in a struggle to identify moral facts about the thing in question. The disagreement is radical because it cannot be explained away by referring to "some cognitive shortcoming, fallacious reasoning, or lack of imagination" (Tersman, 2015, p. 16) and would "survive even if parties were to gather more empirical evidence, enhance reasoning skills, reflect more deeply on each other's arguments, or rid themselves of unconscious biases" (Tersman, 2013, p. 59). In chapter one I use the Kashmir conflict to illustrate that disputant's statements in a radical political disagreement match the descriptions of moral claims in a radical moral disagreement. I end the chapter by explaining that how you think about resolving a radical political disagreement starts with a metaphysical and epistemological question about the nature of moral properties.

The second chapter looks at two meta-ethical theories that discusses the nature of moral properties and our ability to identify them. In chapter two, I focus on the argument from disagreement and a form of moral scepticism based on arguments made by moral error-theorists. In this chapter I address the second research question: is a radical moral disagreement evidence that meta-ethical realism is false? To answer this question I outline arguments for and against meta-ethical realism and conclude there is no convincing argument that explains why we should be sceptics or realists when faced with a radical moral disagreement.

Chapter two focuses on the arguments of moral error-theorists like J.L Mackie (1977) and considers the counter-arguments from moral realists such as David Enoch (2009). Just like William Tolhurst (1987) I think that "the argument from disagreement is useful because it focuses attention on a number of important questions but it does not settle the issue" (Tolhurst,

1987, p. 621). The issue in this case is whether we should be moral sceptics or moral realists in light of what we know about radical political disagreements. I limit myself to discussing the argument from disagreement because it is enough to show that meta-ethical theories have serious implication for the way you think about resolving radical political disagreement.

Since I do not find an argument that settles the debate between sceptics and realists. The third and final chapter explores the implication moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism has for a philosophy of radical political disagreement. I consider what it means for a philosophy of radical political disagreement and the intervention strategies we create if we assume there are moral facts and what happens if we assume they do not exist and are unknowable.

The thesis contributes to conflict studies literature by providing two theories that explain what is happening in the verbal exchange between conflict parties during a radical political disagreement. I also consider the implications that meta-ethical theories have for a philosophy of radical political disagreement and how we think about resolving them. From a conflict resolution stand point I look at what happens to our thinking about radical political disagreements if we assume there are moral facts or what is entailed if we assume the opposite. From a philosophical standpoint the thesis is interesting because it is an example of how meta-ethics can be applied to practical issues in International Relations. I use meta-ethical theories to demonstrate how an assumption about the nature of facts in a radical disagreement has serious implications for how we think about resolving radical political disagreements and preventing violence in armed conflicts.

Chapter 1

In this chapter I give an example of a radical political disagreement in conflict studies and explain why it is a radical moral disagreement. The Kashmir conflict is an example of a radical political disagreement because the conflict parties think they have a special right to govern the disputed territory and there is no further evidence or argument available that is able to settle the dispute. The radical political disagreement is between the Indian government, Kashmiri people, and Pakistan's government and is about who should govern Jammu and Kashmir. The radical disagreement concerns the1947 accession agreement between Maharaja Singh in Kashmir and the Indian Union and whether it was a good or bad agreement. I argue it is a radical moral disagreement because a closer inspection of the conflict groups claims reveals they are trying to describe the moral properties of an event that took place in 1947.

I chose the Kashmir conflict as a case study because Oliver Ramsbotham (2017) uses the same conflict to outline the characteristics of a radical political disagreement.[13] In section 1.1 I turn to meta-ethics because a good understanding of a radical moral disagreement should reveal if people involved in a radical political disagreement are engaged in a radical moral disagreement. By outlining what a radical moral disagreement is in meta-ethics I should be able to determine if a radical political disagreement is anything like what philosophers describe when talking about radical moral disagreements in meta-ethics.

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[13] Ramsbotham (2017, p. 191)

1.0   An Example of a Radical Political Disagreement in Conflict Resolution studies

The Kashmir conflict is a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan over the Jammu and Kashmir State that has lasted for over 70 year. Jammu and Kashmir is a landlocked territory that lies in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent (see figure 1). The Jammu and Kashmir state is still considered disputed territory and has been since 1947 when the state was divided between China, Pakistan, and India.

The radical political disagreement is between the Indian government and Pakistan's government. Although, the conflict is a between India, Pakistan, and the indigenous Kashmiri population that is dispersed across the state and it is a struggle for political control. Victoria Schofield (2003) who is an expert on the region describes the conflict as "a struggle for land and the rights of people to determine their future" (Schofield, 2003, p. xv).

Figure 1: Kashmir country profile and status quo - BBC News (2019)[14]

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[14] See Kashmir Territories profile, BBC, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11693674

Over the last seven decades India and Pakistan have failed to reach an agreement on what to do with the region. Since partition in 1947 India and Pakistan have fought four armed conflicts to try and gain control of Jammu Kashmir. In the media, reporters consider this failure as one of the main reasons for political instability in Kashmir. BBC news (2016) for example suggests it is a failure to "agree on the status of the territory by diplomatic means" (2016, BBC) that drives the on-going conflict and disagreement between the two nations. At the moment, India and Pakistan have political control over separate areas of Jammu and Kashmir (See figure 1) but the disagreement continues and at times is violent.

Since partition in 1947 the Indian government has governed two thirds of the territory known as the Ladakh, Jammu and the valley of Kashmir. The Indian government's claim to the Jammu and Kashmir state is based on the 1947 accession agreement between Maharaja Hari Singh and the Indian Union. From the Indian perspective, Jammu and Kashmir is a part of India because Maharaja Hari Singh decided to join the Indian Union after he was given a choice between India and Pakistan.[15] From the Indian government's perspective "Pakistan has no locus standi in Kashmir and believes India is responsible for the security of the state" (Schofield, 2003, p. 71). According to the Indian government, the assistance provided to armed groups in the region by Pakistan's government is a hostile act and invasion of Indian Territory. In response to these hostile acts the Indian government believes they have the right to use their military and defend their interests in the region.

The Indian government thinks military action is permissible because the 1947 ascension agreement gives India the right to use her military and defend her interest in the region of

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[15] See Resolving the Kashmir Dispute: Blending realism with Justice by Syed Rifaat Hussain (2009) for a more detailed description of the historical background and different positions at play in this conflict.

Kashmir. Moreover, India believes they have the right to govern and are responsible for the security of Jammu and Kashmir because the accession agreement in 1947 was good and it gives them a special right to govern.
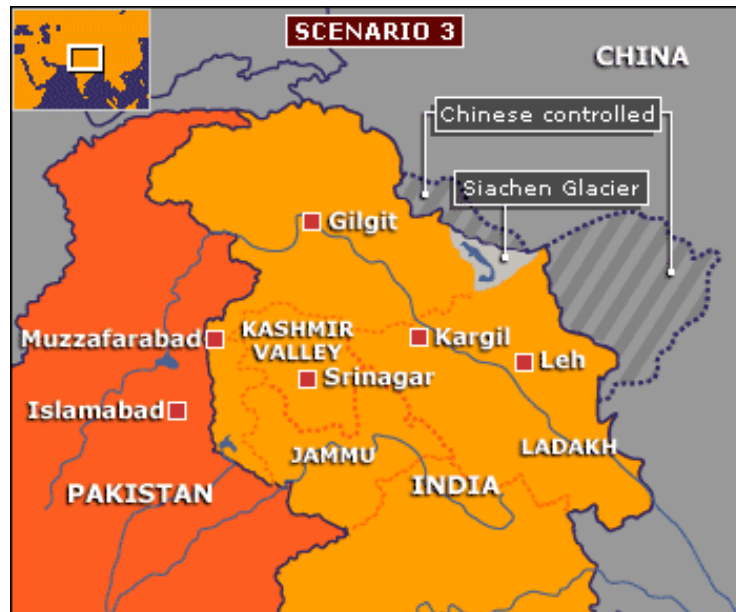
Figure 2: India's original claim (in orange) – BBC (2019)

In response, Pakistan's government offers an alternative interpretation of the 1947 accession agreement between the Indian government and the Maharaja. The view of Pakistan's government is that India violated international law and that the Jammu and Kashmir state is still disputed territory. From Pakistan's perspective, the Indian government's claim is invalid because the agreement was the result of coercion, fraud, and violence.[16] In short, Pakistan's claim is that "the accession of the Jammu and Kashmir state to India was illegal" (Schofield, 2003, .p. 71). In response to India's claim Pakistan's government argues that Jammu and Kashmir is disputed territory because there is something bad about the 1947 accession agreement which makes

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[16] See Ahad Bhat (2019) p. 78

India's claims about the region false. Moreover, Pakistan's government thinks Jammu Kashmir should be governed by Pakistan because there is a majority Muslim population that lives in Jammu and Kashmir (see figure 3). However, Pakistan's government is also open to the idea of an independent Kashmir (figure 4) if that is what the Kashmiri people decided in a plebiscite. Currently, Pakistan's government controls one third of the region which is named the Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir and the Northern Areas (See figure 1). They continue to describe the 1947 ascension agreement as "provisional and executed under the coercive pressure of the Indian military" (Hussain, 2009, p1010). Over the last 70 years, Pakistan's government has argued that Kashmir is disputed territory and continues to claim the Kashmiri people should have the right to choose and join Pakistan. [17]

The radical political disagreement between Pakistan and India is about the 1947 accession agreement and whether there is a moral fact about this agreement which would give India or Pakistan the right to govern Jammu and Kashmir. The Kashmir conflict contains a radical moral disagreement because Pakistan's claims about the accession agreement in 1947 contradicts India's claims about the same agreement. It is a contradiction because the accession agreement in 1947 is considered by India as good but Pakistan believes the opposite and thinks it was bad. The radical disagreement in the Kashmir conflict is a type of radical moral disagreement because disputant's statements refer to the moral properties of an event that took place in 1947. The disagreement between them is radical because even those who might be considered free from epistemological defects have failed to come to some sort of agreement. A claim that is supported by idea that even diplomats have failed to come to an agreement on what to do with the region and whether the 1947 accession agreement was good or bad.

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[17] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/south_asia/03/kashmir_future/html/2.stm
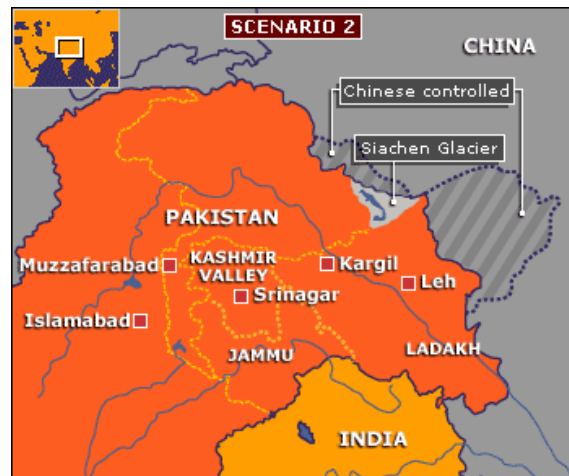
Figure 3: Kashmir Joins Pakistan (in red) - BBC (2019)[18]

The third and final position of the conflict is the Kashmiri people (see figure 4). This is the indigenous population who seek autonomy, independence, and an end to the presence of India's and Pakistan's military in the region. However, as Victoria Schofield (2003) explains, "there is no obvious collective will amongst the inhabitants of the state, Jammu and Kashmir" (Schofield, 2003, p. xv). In the absence of a clear Kashmiri collective the Kashmiri people could be split into three groups; those who support the call for independence, those who want to ally with Pakistan, and those who want to ally with India. What is key for the Kashmiri position in the radical disagreement are the people of Kashmir who believe they have a special right to choose how they should be governed.

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[18] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/south_asia/03/kashmir_future/html/2.stm

Figure 4: Independent Kashmir (in yellow) - BBC (2019)[19]

The radical political disagreement over Jammu and Kashmir is a type of radical moral disagreement because there are two moral questions at the heart of this political disagreement: was the 1947 accession agreement good or bad and who should govern the Jammu and Kashmir state? From the description of the Kashmir conflict above there are at least three conflict groups engaged in the radical political disagreement that accompanies the Kashmir conflict.

1. India – who claim legal ownership because of the Maharaja's ascension in 1947, which would give them a right to govern and to use their military

2. Pakistan – who makes a counter claim and denies the legitimacy of the ascension and continue to contest for the right to govern the state. They also make a claim that the region should come under the rule of Pakistan as most of the inhabitants practice Islam

3. Kashmiris – express a desire for autonomy and believe they have they have the right to self-determination and govern their own lives

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[19] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/south_asia/03/kashmir_future/html/4.stm

The radical political disagreement in the Kashmir conflict is a type of radical moral disagreement because each group makes a moral claim about the 1947 accession agreement. When the radical disagreement is stripped down to its core elements it appears that the radical disagreement is made up of contradictory statements about the goodness or badness of the 1947 accession agreement. The radical disagreement in the Kashmir conflict is similar if not the same as a radical moral disagreement for two reasons. 1) Each group is making a statement about the same thing and 2) they offer contradictory claims about the moral status of the 1947 accession agreement. The conflict groups offer moral claims because they offer a claim that is supposed be action guiding and based on something that is objectively true about the 1947 agreement between the Maharaja and the Indian Union. The radical political disagreement persists and resolution appears unlikely because it is difficult to show which of the claims about the 1947 agreement is objectively true.

Next, I turn to meta-ethics to show that conflict parties engaged in a radical political disagreement are also involved in a radical moral disagreement. I think they are the same because a description of what happens between conflict parties in a radical moral disagreement is similar if not the same as the description of a radical political disagreement given by Ramsbotham (2010 and 2017). In the next subsection I describe radical disagreement from a meta-ethical perspective and then explain why meta-ethics is important for the way we think about resolving radical political disagreement.

1.1   Radical Moral Disagreement in Meta-ethics

Michael Huemer (2005) reports that there are three kinds of moral disagreement usually discussed in the social sciences and moral philosophy.[20] First, there are disagreements between cultures which are about the moral codes and belief systems we should live by. Second, there are popular disagreements among members of community and this includes things like capital punishment and affirmative action. Third and finally there are theoretical disagreements among philosophers. For example, is an action morally permissible because it saves more lives or safeguards the most vulnerable? Folke Tersman (1998) explains that a moral disagreement is "whenever a moral judgement is accepted by the first person and rejected by the second" (Tersman, 1998, p. 359). A moral disagreement is considered radical when the disputants reach a point where it the disagreement cannot be resolved "by appeal to further rational insights" (Bonjour, 2002, p. 139). According to Tersman (2013) A radical disagreement is "rooted in fundamental differences in moral outlook and would survive even if parties were to gather more empirical evidence, enhance reasoning skills, reflect more deeply on each other's arguments, or rid themselves of unconscious biases" (Tersman, 2013, p. 59). This means that disputants are unable to convince the other party they have made a mistake in their reasoning with further arguments or well-established empirical facts.

In a radical moral disagreement a moral statement is objectively true and self-evident to person 1 but is not self-evident to person 2. The disagreement is radical because the statement given by person 1 is objectively true to person 1 but person 2 who is just as knowledgeable and mentally capable thinks the statement is not objectively true. In response to person 1's claim person 2

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[20] Huemer (2005, p. 129)

could deny person 1's claim (not-P), offer a contradiction (P is wrong), or provide a weaker thesis (not-p is possible). Tersman (2019) explains that a radical moral disagreement raises two questions about the nature of moral facts which I also think are important for how we think about resolving radical political disagreements.[21] The first question is about the existence of objective moral truths and the second is if they do exist are these truths epistemically accessible. These are important questions for resolving a radical disagreement because strategies to resolve a radical disagreement partly depends on what the disputants are disagreeing about.

Take for example the debate between moral sceptics and moral realists and how they answer an important question in meta-ethics: are objective moral truths are epistemically accessible? On a realist view, moral properties exist and are found within some objects and actions. Moral propositions are true or false because the truth of a moral claim is independent of the observer ability to perceive moral properties. From a realist perspective the resolution of a radical disagreement is possible if you eliminate the relevant epistemological defects by doing that you would then be able to identify the moral properties in the object and objectively true statements about that thing.

From the sceptic's position the denial of meta-ethical realism starts with radical disagreement and it is used to show "we cannot gain knowledge of the moral facts realists posit even when we are in ideal circumstances" (Tersman, 2019, p. 411). Moral sceptics argue that our "evaluative statements assert that things have objective value properties, but in reality there are no such properties" (Huemer, 2005, p. 4). Sceptics like Thomas Bennigson (1996) arrive at this conclusion because he thinks "to hold there are objective facts about moral questions but that they are in general unknowable would be at odds with just about any seriously defended position

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[21] Tersman (2019, p. 414)

in meta-ethics" (Bennigson, 1996, p. 420). Bennigson (1996) abandons meta-ethical realism because he argues objective moral facts are epistemically inaccessible. For him, moral facts are in general unknowable and that moral discourse is actually about something else and not about objective truths. For sceptics, a radical disagreement is not a dispute about facts so how we form emotions and attitudes toward an object, event, or action becomes the focus of conflict resolution strategies. Since the disagreement is not about facts the aim of conflict resolution shifts from fact finding measures to strategies that manage the attitudes and emotions which effect relationships between conflict groups. This is not a common reading of moral error-theory but is a good example of how a moral sceptic can move from the idea of radical disagreement to the denial of meta-ethical realism. In chapter two I return to the sceptic's argument in more detail and why they think radical moral disagreements are a sign that meta-ethical realism is false.

Meta-ethics is important for how you think about resolving a radical political disagreement because any recommendation partially depends on what you think is at the center of the disagreement. For example, if you think there are objective truths the idea of how to resolve a radical disagreement is very different to ideas on how to resolve disagreements where the claims are not true or false. A description of the moral properties and their relation to moral statements is important because how we think about resolving radical political disagreement is closely tied to two meta-ethical questions: 1) do objective properties exist and 2) are these properties detectable?

Take the Kashmir conflict case study as an example, if meta-ethical realism is true then resolving the radical disagreement depends on eliminating epistemological defects and identifying the moral fact about the 1947 accession agreement. Whereas if we assume moral scepticism then

resolution of the disagreement between India and Pakistan requires conflict groups address hostile emotions and attitudes that effect on going relationships rather than search for a moral fact about the matter. The shift arises because the sceptic assumes that there is no fact about the matter and that no statement or proposition is objectively true. Next, I explain how a description of a radical moral disagreement from meta-ethics helps us understand what is happening between conflict parties in a radical political disagreement.

1.2   The ethical dimension of a radical political disagreement

The Kashmir conflict is an example of a radical political disagreement that contains a radical moral disagreement. The Kashmir conflict is a radical political disagreement because each group makes a claim about who should govern the Jammu and Kashmir state. The conflict has a moral dimension because the disputant's claims about who should govern are based on a moral claim about the accession agreement in 1947. India thinks the agreement was morally good and Pakistan argues it was morally bad because it committed through other bad acts like coercion and violence. The radical political disagreement over Kashmir is a radical moral disagreement because the disputant's claims about the agreement refer to moral properties of the 1947 accession agreement.. The radical disagreement in the Kashmir conflict has an ethical dimension because it contains contradictory moral claims about the 1947 accession agreement.

The description of a radical moral disagreement in section 1.1 reveals that the verbal exchange in the Kashmir conflict is either about something that is objectively true or something that is not objectively true. The conflict contains a radical moral disagreement because the conflict groups are trying to describe a moral fact, something that is action guiding and true independent of how we feel about it, think about it, or perceive it. [22] I argue that the radical disagreement in the Kashmir conflict is a radical moral disagreement because conflict groups are in a struggle to identify a moral fact about Jammu and Kashmir and objectively true statement about it.

Meta-ethical theories are important because the strategy to resolve a radical political disagreement partly depends on what the analyst thinks the verbal exchange is about. I argued in the introduction that Ramsbotham's (2010 and 2017) description of a radical disagreement raises

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[22] Hare (1999 p. 1)

metaphysical and epistemological questions about the nature of facts and evaluative statements in a radical political disagreement. In this chapter, I have argued that the evaluative statements in a radical political disagreement which come in the form of a political recommendation (do this because) are an attempt by an individual to describe a moral fact and identify the moral properties in an action, event, or object. Since a radical political disagreement concerns things like good and bad, just or unjust, right or wrong, and true or false I argue that meta-ethics can improve our understanding of the facts disputants disagree about in a radical political disagreement. I use meta-ethical theories because moral realists provide well-thought out arguments for why we should think there are moral facts that are knowable by rational and empirical investigations and moral sceptics for why we should think the opposite.

Chapter Two

In Chapter one I argued that a radical political disagreement is a type of radical moral disagreement. I reached this conclusion because they are both a struggle to identify moral properties in an object, event, or action and objectively true statements about the thing in question. In this chapter I look at two meta-ethical theories that discuss the relevance of radical disagreements: meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism. Chapter two focuses on the second research question I mentioned in the introduction: are radical moral disagreements evidence that meta-ethical realism is false? I use arguments from the debate between moral sceptics and moral realists to show that our thinking about radical disagreements and how we resolve them is influenced by how you describe the nature of moral properties and the evaluative statements about them. In what follows, I outline two positions in the debate about rationally irresolvable disagreements and give reasons for why some think moral facts are knowable and why others think these facts are unknowable. In the final chapter I will explain why a debate about the nature of moral properties in meta-ethics has serious implications for a philosophy of radical political disagreement in conflict studies and the strategies we develop to resolve them.

Meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism best serve the purpose of this thesis as moral scepticism reflects the position that radical political disagreements have no objectively true claims. A conclusion that moral sceptics reach because they argue the properties that moral statements refer to are undetectable. Whereas meta-ethical realism represents the position it is possible to find objectively true statements in a radical political disagreement because objects, events, and actions contain the type of properties that disputants political claims assert.

I acknowledge there are other positions that could be considered such as quasi-realism, relativism, emotivism, and subjectivism. However, I focus on the arguments given by moral realists and moral-error theorists who reject or defend meta-ethical realism. I limit myself to these two theories because my goal is to show meta-ethical theories shape our thinking about radical political disagreements and how to resolve them, it is not to argue in favour of a particular meta-ethical theory. The purpose of chapter two is to show that our thinking about resolving radical political disagreements in conflict studies starts with a metaphysical question about the nature of the properties that political statements refer to in a radical disagreement.

Meta-ethical realism (Moral Realism)

Geoffrey Sayre Mccord (2006) describes meta-ethical realism as the view that moral statements "express beliefs about the world, about how it is and should be. Moreover, the beliefs we express are either true or false (depending on how things really are and should be), and when they are true it is not simply because we think they are true" (Sayre Mccord, 2006, p. 40). David Brink (1984) explains that meta-ethical realism is built on a part metaphysical and part epistemological thesis that concerns the nature of moral properties and the epistemic status of moral claims. Brink (1984) explains that a realistic view about ethics is likely to assert "there are objective moral facts which implies that there are true moral propositions" (Brink, 1984, p. 111). For a realist some "moral propositions are true because actions and objects of moral assessment have the relevant moral properties" (Vayrynen, 2005, p. 380). From a moral realist's perspective moral properties exist and they are knowable by rational or empirical investigation.

Moral realists like David Brink (1984), Geoffry Sayre Mccord (2006), David Enoch (2009) and Thomas Nagel (2012) defend meta-ethical realism and argue there are objective moral truths and that moral propositions are sometimes objectively true. Moral realists like them argue that "moral predicates (like right and wrong) refer to moral properties (such as rightness and wrongness), and that moral statements purport to represent moral facts and express propositions that are true or false" (Vayrynen, 2005, p. 379). From a realist's perspective there are objective moral truths and they often argue that moral claims are truth-apt because our claims refer to the relevant moral feature or property of an action or object. A standard account of meta-ethical realism is outlined below.

1. Moral predicates like right and wrong refer to moral properties such as rightness and wrongness

2. Moral statements are made up of moral predicates that express propositions which are true or false

3. Some objects, events, and actions contain moral properties

4. Therefore some propositions are truth-apt and sometimes objectively true. They are true because what makes them true is independent of any persons beliefs, attitudes, or ability to perceive moral properties

According to a moral realist there are objective moral truths and meta-ethical realism is a reflection of what people do when they make a moral claim. From a realist point of view, a radical moral disagreement is a sign that one of the conflict groups has made an error. David Brink (2000) for example attributes radical disagreements to an error that is caused by one of the party's failing "to be sufficiently imaginative" (Brink, 2000, p. 161). He argues that a radical disagreement arises because something causes at least one of the disputants to err when describing the moral properties that correspond to the object that statement is about.

In section 2.3 I outline some arguments provided by realists like David Enoch (2009) to explain why radical moral disagreements are not a problem for a moral realist's metaphysical and epistemological claims about moral properties. For now I will say this, Enoch (2009) and other moral realists defend meta-ethical realism on the grounds that the existence of radical moral disagreements is compatible with meta-ethical realism. To support this compatibility claim realists argue that the existence of radical moral disagreements does not exclude the possibility of there being objective moral truths as some sceptics propose. To show that radical moral

disagreement is not proof that meta-ethical realism is false realists attribute the radical disagreement to something the disputants are doing rather than something unknowable. The idea behind a realist's defence of meta-ethical realism is that a radical disagreement is caused by something that effects at least one of the disputants which then causes them to err when describing the moral properties of an object.

To defend meta-ethical realism against the sceptics challenge realists attribute the radical disagreement to some kind of epistemological defect that inhibits an individual's ability to identify the moral properties in an object. From a moral realist's perspective radical moral disagreements persist because of an error which is caused by some epistemological defect and are resolved by identifying as well as eliminating the source of that error.[23]Realists respond to the sceptic's challenge by showing it is possible to explain why radical moral disagreements persist in a realist-friendly way that does not collapse into a form of moral scepticism.[24]

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[23] From a realist's perspective resolving a radical disagreement does not require that everyone agrees to the truth just those who are able and free from epistemological defects. Realist's still expect that there will be some radical disagreement among people because some might not be willing to change their point of view. For example there might be a person who refuses to take new evidence into account, refuses to eliminate inconsistencies in his beliefs, or subject to a distorting effect. Since a realist assumes that these types of people exist they also argue that some radical disagreement is not proof meta-ethical realism is false and offer alternative explanations. See also (Enoch, 2009, p. 37 and 39) for a similar description of why some radical disagreement would remain if meta-ethical realism is true.

[24] Enoch (2005 pp. 28 and 35)

2.1 Moral-Error Theory (moral scepticism)

Moral scepticism like meta-ethical realism is a theory that describes the nature of moral properties and how they fit into this world.[25] Moral sceptics challenge a moral realist's epistemological claim about moral properties by arguing moral properties are peculiar and therefore undetectable. Alexander Miller (2013) describes moral error-theory as a theory about moral discourse that reveals why "ascriptions of moral qualities to acts, objects, and events is systematically and uniformly false" (Miller, 2013). From a moral-error theorists perspective Wouter Kalf (2019) explains "all basic moral beliefs and all atomic moral judgements are truth-apt but never true" (Kalf, 2019, p. 2). Moral sceptics doubt there are objective moral truths because claims about moral facts assert that things have moral properties, but in reality they are no such properties.[26] In contrast to a moral realist, a moral sceptic argues that moral properties like good or bad, "are not objective and part of the fabric of the world" (Mackie, 1977, p. 15). As Wouter Kalf (2017) explains "error theorists think that no moral judgement is true because the truth-makers they require do not exist" (Kalf, 2017, p.106).

To prove that moral truth-makers do not exist some moral sceptics argue radical moral disagreements are proof that moral properties are undetectable. Truth-maker, in this context are moral properties and what David Armstrong (1989) describes as "something in the world that makes it true" (Armstrong, 1989, p. 88). The moral sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism starts with the claim that a radical moral disagreement would persist even if parties were free from all relevant epistemological defects. To reach the conclusion that meta-ethical realism is false moral sceptic's argue that the moral properties a realist describes are undetectable and from

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[25] J.L. Mackie (1977 pp. 15-17)
[26] Huemer (2005 p. 4))

this claim that moral facts are unknowable. Since sceptics think that moral properties cannot be unknowable if meta-ethical realism is true they conclude that meta-ethical realism is probably false because the statements refer to nothing or properties that are undetectable and unknowable.

Moral sceptics move from their observation of radical moral disagreement to the denial of meta-ethical realism because they make two claims about meta-ethical realism. 1) Radical moral disagreements should not occur if meta-ethical realism is true and 2) a moral realist is unable to explain why radical moral disagreements persist without invoking something dubious or incompatible with meta-ethical realism. A moral-error theory based moral scepticism is summarized as follows:

Sceptic argument

1. Some moral claims are truth-apt, but none are objectively true because moral properties are peculiar and undetectable or do not exist
2. It is impossible for a moral statement to express a view of truth if it fails to correspond with a plausible metaphysical thesis about objective moral truths or properties
3. All moral claims are erroneous because meta-ethical realism is probably false

To support the argument from disagreement sceptics compare radical moral disagreements to disagreements in subjects where it is possible to settle disagreements between people who are free from epistemological defects. From their comparison sceptics find there is wide-spread disagreement on elementary moral matters between people who are free from relevant epistemological defects, which is not the case when you look at disagreements in subjects like mathematics and the natural sciences where there is agreement on elementary matters. From their findings sceptics describe moral properties as peculiar and argue because of this that objective

moral truths are epistemically inaccessible.[27] Sceptics move from radical moral disagreements to the denial of meta-ethical realism because they argue the existence of radical moral disagreements between equally knowledgeable and well-informed persons is enough to show that meta-ethical realism is false. This becomes the best available explanation because a sceptic argues a moral realist is unable to explain radical moral disagreement without invoking something dubious or incompatible with meta-ethical realism.

The comparison of a realist and sceptic's description of the nature of moral properties reveals to us that our thinking about resolving radical moral disagreements is influenced by whether you think moral properties exist and are detectable. With this as a starting point, I use meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism to show that our thinking about resolving radical political disagreements is shaped by whether you think moral facts are knowable and epistemically accessible. The rest of the chapter takes a closer look at some of the arguments used to defend or attack meta-ethical realism.

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[27] Mackie (1977) and Tolhurst (1987), Lillehammer (2004)

2.2   The argument from disagreement and the denial of meta-ethical realism

The argument from disagreement starts with the observation there is "widespread and deep moral disagreement that appears persistently resistant to rational resolution" (Gowans, 2000, p. 15). [28] From this finding sceptics argue that the existence of objective moral truths is hard to reconcile with meta-ethical realism and because of this claim conclude meta-ethical realism is probably false. Moral sceptic's like William Tolhurst (1987) reach this conclusion by arguing meta-ethical realism should be "rejected on the grounds that objective moral facts are epistemically inaccessible" (Tolhurst, 1987, p. 612). Shafer-Landau (2019) explains that sceptics reject meta-ethical realism because they believe that moral realists fail to provide a plausible metaphysical and epistemological thesis about the nature of moral properties.[29] From a sceptic's point of view moral properties are undetectable and they prove this by arguing that a "careful inventory of the world's content will reveal all sorts of scientific qualities but the list will not contain moral features" (Shafer-Landau, 2019, p. 30). Moral sceptic's point to radical moral disagreements and argue they are proof that "morality is nothing but fiction" (Shafer-Landau, 2019, p.30) because they claim a closer inspection of moral statements reveals that moral properties refer to nothing or something that is undetectable.

J.L. Mackie (1977) is an example of a moral-error theorist who challenges a moral realist's metaphysical and epistemological claims about the nature of moral properties and our ability to identify them. Mackie (1977) is well-known for providing two arguments, the argument from relativity and the argument from queerness which explains why all moral views are bankrupt and

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[28] See Tolhurst (1987), Gowans (2004) and Shafer-Landau (2019) p. 31 for a description of the argument from disagreements.

[29] Shafter-Landau (2019 p. 30)

why we should be moral sceptics.[30] The first argument is the argument from relativity and it draws from the fact that there is a wide variation of moral codes between and within societies with complex communities.[31] According to Mackie (1977), "the actual variations in moral codes are more readily explained by the hypothesis that they reflect ways of life than they express perceptions (most of them seriously inadequate and badly distorted) of objective [moral] truths" (Mackie, 1977, p. 37). To support his claim, Mackie (1977) compares moral disagreements to disagreements in the natural sciences and finds that "scientific disagreement is usually the result of "speculative inferences or explanatory hypotheses based on inadequate evidence" (Mackie, 1977, p.36). The comparison is important because he argues the same cannot be said about moral disagreements and why they seem to persist.[32]

Mackie's (1977) supports his initial observation with a second argument and this is known as the argument from queerness. The second argument is where Mackie (1977) introduces his metaphysical and epistemological claims about the nature of moral properties.[33] Mackie (1977) thinks that "if there were objective values, then they would be entities of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything [known] in the universe" (Mackie, 1977, p. 38). He illustrates this case by asking what it is that makes moral actions wrong and how we know that something contains the property of wrongness. In response to his own question, Mackie (1977) argues there is no connection between what we describe as bad and what makes something bad.[34] From the idea that it is impossible to identify moral properties in things we already think are good or bad

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[30] For the argument from relativity see Mackie (1977, pp. 36–38); For the argument from queerness see Mackie (1977 pp. 38-42)
[31] Mackie (1977, pp. 36–38)
[32] Mackie (1977 p. 36
[33] Mackie (1977, pp. 38-42)
[34] Mackie (1977, p. 41)

Mackie (1977) argues that if moral properties existed they must be peculiar and are therefore unknowable.

Moral-error theorists who use Mackie's (1977) argument to support their case against meta-ethical realism argue that disagreement in ethics is more fundamental than in other disciplines like the natural sciences and often a sign of two things. 1) Moral properties are undetectable which means 2) moral facts are epistemically inaccessible and unknowable. Sceptics reach this conclusion because they think "our sincere moral judgements try and always fail to describe the moral features of things" (Shafer-Landau, 2019, p. 30). In other words, we are always in error when making moral propositions because we are trying to describe the moral qualities of an object, event, or action but "since none of these have moral qualities, all of our claims are mistaken hence the error" (Shafer-Landau, 2019, p. 30) in moral error theory.

In the discussion about radical moral disagreements there are several versions of the argument from disagreement. What is common between them is that they start with an example of a radical moral disagreement and then identify something about radical disagreements that is incompatible with meta-ethical realism. From their findings sceptics tend to argue two things. 1) A radical moral disagreement between people who are free from epistemological defects is proof that moral properties are undetectable. 2) A moral realist is unable to explain radical moral disagreements without offering something implausible or incompatible with meta-ethical realism. To challenge a moral realist's epistemological and metaphysical claims about morality moral sceptics use the argument from disagreement to attribute an error to a moral realist's understanding of moral properties and how they fit into the natural world.

Since Mackie (1977) there have been different formulation of the argument from disagreement and Michael Huemer (2005) points to three important versions.[35] One that suggests radical disagreements entail that morality is not objective because moral properties are undetectable. Another that argues a moral realist is unable to plausibly explain radical disagreement and error in a way that is consistent with their realism. The third is that a realists has no method of resolving radical disagreements between people free from epistemological defects.[36] The general idea and starting point for the argument from disagreement can be summarized as follows[37]

1. If well-informed, open-minded, rational people persistently disagree about some claim, then that claim is not objectively true

2. Well-informed, open-minded, rational people persistently disagree about all (or nearly all) moral claims

3. Therefore, no moral claim is objectively true

For this investigation I focus on three aspects of the error-theorist's argument from disagreement.

1) Radical moral disagreement is incompatible with morality being objective[38] (2.2.1)

2) The argument from epistemic inaccessibility[39] (2.2.2)

3) The absence of a method argument[40] (2.2.3)

I focus on these three arguments because they are enough to show that our thinking about resolving radical disagreements in meta-ethics and conflict studies is influenced by how we

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[35] Huemer (2005, p. 128)
[36] Huemer (2005 p.128)
[37] Shafer- Landau (2019 p. 31) and Huemer (2005, p. 133)
[38] Huemer (2005 p. 31)
[39] Tersman (2006)
[40] Enoch (2009)

answer the metaphysical and epistemological questions raised by moral sceptics about moral properties and moral facts.

2.2.1   The argument from disagreement to the denial of meta-ethical realism[41]

In the previous section I explained that moral sceptics start the argument from disagreement with the observation that well-suited and knowledgeable people disagree about moral issues. Sceptics identify radical moral disagreements in philosophy, within societies, and between cultures then conclude radical moral disagreements are proof that moral properties are undetectable and that there are no objective true moral statements. Sceptics reach this conclusion because they argue if meta-ethical realism is true we should be able to identify some elementary moral facts. Since sceptics think it is not possible to identify an elementary moral fact they argue that meta-ethical realism is probably false. The reason sceptics reject meta-ethical realism is because they think the existence of a radical moral disagreement is "incompatible with morality's being objective" (Huemer, 2005, p. 131). To move from their findings about radical moral disagreements to the denial of meta-ethical realism some moral sceptics use moral error-theory to provide an anti-realist thesis that we lack moral knowledge because there is nothing objective about morality.[42] Folke Tersman (2006) explains this argument as the position which makes an "assumption about the existing moral diversity and posits that the mere possibility of radical moral disagreement is enough to refute moral realism" (Tersman, 2006, xiii).

The argument from disagreement is used by moral sceptics to raise metaphysical and epistemological questions that concerns a moral realist's theory about moral properties and moral facts. To raise these questions about meta-ethical realism a sceptic like J.L.Mackie (1977) point out that radical disagreements do not occur in other subject like maths or physics and argue that they are a unique feature of moral discourse. From their findings, sceptics argue that radical

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[41] David Enoch (2009, p. 19)
[42] Shafer – landau (2019 p. 30)

disagreements are proof that moral properties are undetectable and that no moral statement is objectively true. The first argument to consider that ends with the denial of meta-ethical realism is summarized below.

1) There is widespread disagreement over basic objective moral truths, like stealing is wrong

2) If meta-ethical realism were true, there (probably) would not be wide-spread disagreements on basic moral truths

3) Therefore (probably) meta-ethical realism is false

A moral sceptic takes the persistent disagreements about moral matters and infers from it that radical disagreements are a sign moral properties are undetectable.[43] The basic idea behind the argument from disagreement is what Michael Huemer (2005) describes as the idiot's veto.[44] Huemer (2005) explains the idiot's veto introduces a principle or requirement that a statement must satisfy if it is to be considered objectively true.[45] The idea behind the idiot's veto is that "a claim is disqualified from counting as objective by the mere fact some people's disagree with it" (Huemer, 2005, p. xiv).[46] Moral sceptics use the idiot's veto to show it is impossible to find a moral claim about an object that would satisfy the idiot's veto.[47]

The denial of meta-ethical realism is reached because a moral sceptic argues that a moral realist is unable to explain radical moral disagreements without invoking something that is incompatible with meta-ethical realism. The issue of incompatibility arises for a moral realist because the

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[43] Enoch (2009, pp. 21-29)
[44] Huemer (2005 pp. 131-2)
[45] Huemer (2005 pp. 131-2)
[46] The idiot's veto does not require everyone to be objective moral truths just those who are able and free from epistemological defects.
[47] Huemer (2005, p. 133)

idiot's veto reveals that something exists which should be impossible if meta-ethical realism is true. Sceptics argue they have a good reason to reject meta-ethical realism because they think radical disagreements are a sign moral truth-makers do not exist and that moral properties are undetectable.

At this stage in the argument a sceptic points to radical moral disagreements in philosophy and politics and compares them scientific and mathematical disagreements. Sceptics use their comparison of radical moral disagreements and disagreements in mathematics or the natural science to raise metaphysical and epistemological questions about a moral realist's description moral properties and moral facts.

2.2.2 The argument from epistemic inaccessibility[48]

From a moral sceptic's perspective radical moral disagreement persists because moral properties are undetectable and they cannot be attributed to some kind of epistemological defect as some realists claim.[49]Sceptics draw this conclusion because they think radical disagreements between parties who are equally rational and not guilty of a relevant epistemological defect is a sign that moral properties are undetectable. According to Bennigson (1996) the problem for a moral realist arises because elementary moral questions should have facts "which we would expect even a novice to ethical thinking to know, just as we would expect mathematical novices to know that 2+2=4" (Bennigson, 1996, p. 434). Since there is wide-spread disagreement among people who are free from the relevant epistemological defects to elementary moral questions sceptics conclude moral facts are epistemically inaccessible because the properties they describe are undetectable.

From the perspective of a moral sceptic like Mackie (1977) radical disagreement is consistent with the existence of objective facts only if it derives from speculative inferences, inadequate evidence, or some other epistemological defect.[50] Since Mackie (1977) argues moral disagreements between cultures are not attributable to epistemological defects he thinks there is good reason to consider the absence of convergence on elementary moral facts important and a sign that meta-ethical realism is probably false.[51] To support his claim that radical disagreements are not the result of an epistemological defect Mackie (1977) uses moral-error theory to explain radical moral disagreement persist because moral statements fail to correspond to the properties

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[48] Tersman (2006 pp. 69-71) and Enoch (2009 p. 45)
[49] Tersman, (2006 p. xiv)
[50] Mackie uses the terms speculative inferences and inadequate evidence (1997 pp.36-8) and Lillehammer uses the term epistemological defect to describe errors that arise from faulty reasoning or ignorance of relevant evidence (2004 p. 97)
[51] Lilliehammer (2004 p. 97)

of the object the statement is about. He uses the argument from queerness to explain that moral disagreement persist because moral statements fail to identify moral properties in an object that would make that statement or claim objectively true.

William Tolhurst (1987) takes Mackie's (1977) argument further by looking at what we know about how people form their moral beliefs. According to him there is "good reason to believe that whenever a person believes a moral proposition, there could have been another person, similar in every relevant respect, who was equally justified in believing its negation" (Tolhurst, 1987, p. 613). From what we know according to Tolhurst (1987) there is not a good reason to think some are morally sighted and some morally blind. Since a Tolhurst (1987) finds no evidence to support the moral realist's claim that some peoples belief-forming processes are superior or that some have privileged access to objective moral truths through a special moral sense. He argues that a realist is unable to defend meta-ethical realism without invoking something dubious or incompatible with meta-ethical realism.

From Tolhurst's (1987) perspective the problem for a realist is that a defence of meta-ethical realism requires a realist to defend the claim that there are some who are morally sighted and some morally blind.[52] Moral sceptics moves from the observation of radical moral disagreements to the denial of meta-ethical realism because they think a realist's idea of morality is defeasible and unlikely to be true, given what we know about the cognitive ability of people in a radical moral disagreement.[53]

Moral sceptics use the argument from epistemic inaccessibility to show radical moral disagreements are sign that the moral properties our moral statements refer to are undetectable.

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[52] Tolhurst (1987 p. 617)
[53] Tolhurst (1987 p. 615)

To support their claim about moral properties sceptics argue there is no evidence to support the realist's claim that some have a special ability to identify moral properties and others lack this skill. The argument to show there is no special ability for some to access moral facts is summarized below.[54]

1. If there is a special ability to ascertain the objective truth of moral propositions, then processes of moral belief formation which utilize it are more reliable than those which do not

2. The best available evidence of how people come to hold their moral beliefs does not suggest or imply a special ability where some people appear morally sighted and some morally blind

3. none of the processes or methods by which people come to form an opinion about a moral claim is more reliable than any other

4. (probably) no one has a special ability to ascertain the objective truth of moral propositions

The argument against a special ability is used by sceptics to show that a moral realist often present a defeasible thesis when defending meta-ethical realism from a sceptic's concerns. For example, moral sceptics like Thomas Bennigson (1996) and William Tolhurst (1987) challenge a moral realist's epistemological claim by arguing a realist is unable to prove there is a correlation between moral statements and the properties in the object a statement is about.[55] To reach the conclusion that meta-ethical realism is false Benningson (1996) argues that a defence of meta-ethical realism which ends by saying there are objective facts but holds they are unknowable is

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[54] This summary draws on Tolhurst description of the sceptics argument (1987 p. 618)
[55] Enoch (2009 p. 45)

bizarre and at odds with just about any seriously defended form of meta-ethical realism.[56] From Bennigson's (1996) point of view, "to hold there is an objective fact to whether wife-shooting is wrong, but that we do not know – and indeed cannot come to know – whether it is wrong is even more counterintuitive than to hold that there is no objective fact of the matter" (Bennigson, 1996, p. 413). He thinks that meta-ethical realism should be rejected because rationally irresolvable disagreements are a sign that "we have no way of knowing or of finding out who is right and who wrong" (Enoch, 2009, p. 45), something that should be impossible if meta-ethical realism is true.

The sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism starts with an observation about radical moral disagreements among people who are free from epistemological defects. Sceptics use the argument from epistemic inaccessibility to make a claim about the nature of moral properties and the ability of people to identify moral properties. Sceptics support their argument and conclude meta-ethical realism is probably false because they argue realists lack the evidence to support their claims about moral properties or that some people's moral belief forming processes are superior or that moral properties are detectable.

In contrast to a moral realist a moral sceptic argues that moral properties are undetectable because they are peculiar and that radical disagreements are not the result of an error caused by an epistemological defect.

This argument from epistemic inaccessibility can be summarized as follows.[57]

1. There are possible cases of rationally irresolvable moral disagreement, where both parties are equally rational, guilty of no flaw of reasoning or epistemological defect

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[56] Bennigson (1996 p. 420)
[57] Enoch (2009)

2. The best available evidence of how people come to hold their moral beliefs does not suggest or imply a special ability where some people appear morally sighted and some morally blind. Moreover the best available evidence indicates that (probably) no one has a special ability to ascertain the objective truth of moral propositions

3. Therefore, at least in cases where such disagreement is possible there is no objective fact of the matter because moral properties are undetectable and objective moral truths are epistemically inaccessible.

2.2.3 The absence of a justified or widely accepted method argument to the denial of meta-ethical realism[58]

The final argument in the case against meta-ethical realism is the absence of method argument. Nicholas Sturgeon (2006) explains that the problem for moral realists "is not that there is lots of disagreements in ethics; it is rather that in ethics the disagreement just continues, whereas in science the disagreements get settled" (Sturgeon, 2006, p. 107). For this thesis, settled means an agreement is possible on a particular mater between competent investigators who are free from relevant epistemological defects.[59] The problem for the realist is that moral disagreement cannot be resolved "in anything like the ways scientific or other disagreement often is" (Enoch, 2009, p. 34).

Moral sceptics take radical moral disagreements and the absence of a method argument as good reason to think that a radical moral disagreement "entails or is best explained by the denial of meta-ethical realism" (Enoch, 2006, p. 36 and 37). Sceptics use the absence of a method argument to show there is no way to resolve a radical moral disagreement between people who are free from epistemological defects. For the sceptic, the problem with radical moral disagreements is that they are not like scientific or mathematical disagreements and cannot be resolved in the same way. [60] Sceptics claim they have the best explanation because the absence of a method to settle a radical moral disagreement is a feature of moral discourse a moral realist is unable to explain in a way that is consistent with meta-ethical realism.

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[58] Enoch (2009 pp. 34-39) see also Huemer (2005 pp. 128-155)
[59] Sturgeon (2006 p. 108)
[60] Enoch (2009, p. 34)

The general form of the argument can be summarized as follows[61]:

1. There is no justified method for deciding cases of moral disagreement between people who are free from epistemological defects and cognitive shortcomings

2. Therefore at least in cases of moral disagreement there is no objective moral truth

Sceptics use the absence of method argument to argue radical disagreements are a sign there is not a justified method that is guaranteed to settle a moral disagreement and convince one party that they are wrong.[62] From their comparison to disagreements about elementary mathematical and scientific questions sceptics argue there is no way to figure out who is right and who is wrong when it concerns moral disagreement. From this finding some sceptics argue that the absence of a method to settle a radical moral disagreement is a feature that is unique to morality and good reason to think moral properties are undetectable and that meta-ethical realism is false.[63]

The moral sceptic's position I have described throughout section 2.2 can be summarized as follows.

1. Radical moral disagreements are a sign that there is no objective moral truth

2. If meta-ethical realism were true, then probably there would be less widespread radical moral disagreement and convergence on basic objective moral truths, such as stealing is wrong and charity is good

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[61] Enoch (2009, p.34)
[62] Enoch (2009 p. 36)
[63] Enoch (2009 p. 38).

3. The best evidence of how we know people come to hold their moral beliefs does not suggest or imply some people have a special ability to ascertain objective moral truths, or show objective moral truths are epistemically inaccessible

4. If no one has a special ability to ascertain objective moral truths then objective moral truths are epistemically inaccessible. No moral claim is able to justify its epistemic status as something reflective of an objective moral reality

5. Also, there is no agreed method of settling radical moral disagreements. No way of finding out who is right or wrong and there seems to be no further argument or piece of evidence that could convince one party they are wrong.

6. Therefore, the best explanation of radical moral disagreements is that objective moral truths do not exist or are epistemically inaccessible, which also means that (probably) meta-ethical realism is false

I have focused on the argument from disagreement to show how a moral sceptic uses moral-error theory and examples of radical moral disagreement to make a case against meta-ethical realism. I explained that a moral sceptic starts by identifying examples of radical moral disagreement between people free from epistemological defects and then raises questions about a moral realist metaphysical and epistemological claims about moral properties. A moral sceptic concludes that meta-ethical realism is probably false because they argue a realist is unable to explain why radical moral disagreements persist without invoking something that is dubious or incompatible with meta-ethical realism.

2.3   A defence of meta-ethical realism

Next, I look at the responses a moral realist could use to refute the sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism. From a realist point of view the argument from disagreement does not automatically lead to the denial of meta-ethical realism.[64] A good example of a moral realist who thinks meta-ethical realism can be defended against moral scepticism is David Enoch (2009). He explains that "moral disagreement is widely held in philosophical literature to pose a threat for meta-ethical realism and objectivity, yet it is surprisingly hard to find careful statements of arguments that start with moral disagreement and end with a conclusion that is in tension with realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 15). The realist's counter-arguments in this section show it is possible for a moral realist to defend meta-ethical realism and argue that radical disagreement is not incompatible with a realist metaphysics or moral epistemology.

From a realist's point of view, "[radical moral] disagreement can make matters harder for the realist, not because disagreement itself is grounds for an argument against realism but because disagreement sets adequacy constraints on possible ways of addressing the general epistemological challenge to realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 46). According to Enoch (2009) the argument from disagreement sets adequacy constraints on the possible ways of addressing the epistemological challenge from the moral sceptic.[65] Realists argue they can defend meta-ethical realism because the sceptic has not shown with the argument from disagreement that meta-ethical realism is false. At best Enoch (2009) suggests the argument from disagreement limits or excludes certain types of responses a realist could offer in defence of meta-ethical realism.

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[64] David Enoch (2009) and Folke Tersman (2013)
[65] Enoch (2009, p. 46)

In Section 2.3 I focus on a realists reasoning and explain why a realist thinks that radical moral disagreements are not a sign meta-ethical realism is false. In what follows, I respond to each of the sceptic's arguments that I outlined in section 2.2 and each counterargument starts with idea that radical moral disagreements occur between people who are equally knowledge, well-informed and sensible but offers an realist-friendly explanation of why they persist and appear to resist rational resolution. I am not arguing in favour of meta-ethical realism, I am just showing why moral realists think the argument from disagreement is not enough to show that meta-ethical realism is false.

Realists like David Enoch (2009) take the sceptic's challenge as "an explanatory challenge" (Enoch, 2009, p. 21). They see the argument from disagreement as a challenge for the moral realist to explain why objective moral truths remain hidden from people who are free from relevant epistemological defects.[66] As David Enoch (2009) explains, the appeal of the sceptic's argument comes from the idea that "it is harder for the realist to explain moral disagreement than it is for those rejecting realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 21). By the end of the section, I will show how Enoch (2009) argues that radical moral disagreement presents a *prima facie* challenge but is not enough to prove meta-ethical realism is false.

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[66] Enoch (2009, p. 21)

2.3.1   Radical moral disagreements is not a sign meta-ethical realism is false

In section 2.2.1, I showed that a sceptic argues they have a case against meta-ethical realism because the "existence of a radical moral disagreement is incompatible with morality being objective" (Huemer, 2005, p. 131). To avoid meta-ethical realism collapsing into moral scepticism a realist must explain radical moral disagreements without resorting to something undetectable. Otherwise, a realist seems to defend meta-ethical realism "at the price of the most radical of scepticisms" (Enoch, 2009, p. 22). As shown in section 2.2.2, if a realist argues objective moral truths are undetectable but claims they still exist a sceptic argues in return they have provided a defeasible thesis and one that is incompatible with meta-ethical realism.   In response to the moral sceptic's challenge David Enoch (2009) explains there is one method that fails to address the sceptics concerns which is to deny the need to explain the phenomenon and two others; deny its relevance or come up with an alternative explanation.[67] Let us consider the possible explanations a realist could provide.

The first option is to deny the relevance of a radical moral disagreement and a realist must show there is "less moral disagreement than may otherwise be thought" (Enoch, 2009, p. 24). According to Enoch (2009) a moral realist is able to show there is less radical moral disagreement if they attribute them to the "application of presumably agreed-upon moral principles" (Enoch, 2009, p. 24). In essence, a realist might argue that in a radical moral disagreement disputants refer to the same property such as good but for disputants these properties do not lead to the same action. For example; A and B believes that good means an particular action is morally permissible but A believes good should lead to action X while B believes good should lead to action Y. In such a case, the disagreement about a specific moral

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[67] Enoch (2009 p. 22)

claim "is not a [radical] moral disagreement that stems from a disagreement about moral fundamentals but to different factual beliefs that are relevant for the application of the agreed upon moral principle" (Enoch, 2009, p. 24). If they agree on what good is but differ on what actions should follow it turns out the parties are not in a radical moral disagreement but a disagreement about non-moral facts, which from a realist perspective does not support an anti-realist thesis that moral properties are undetectable and objective moral truths unknowable.[68]

The second option for the realist is to explain the phenomenon and in this position a realist assumes radical moral disagreements should be explained because meta-ethical realism might be false if there is not a way to explain why radical moral disagreements persist in a realist friendly way. To defend meta-ethical realism against a moral sceptic's challenge a realist must offer a better or at least as plausible explanation of radical moral disagreements and why they persist between people who are knowledgeable, rational, and free from relevant epistemological defects.[69] For a successful defence of meta-ethical realism a moral realist must attribute radical moral disagreements to something that the disputants are doing rather than the nature of a moral property being undetectable. On this view, a realist provides arguments and evidence to support the claim that objective moral truths and the moral properties of an object are elusive because one of the disputants suffers from an epistemological defect, which is some kind of the distorting effect or cognitive shortcoming that effects their ability to identify moral properties.

The distorting effect is something a realist could consider because it provides a realist-friendly explanation of why radical moral disagreements persist and why there are radically different opinions about moral matters. David Enoch (2009) explains that the distorting effect is in line

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[68] Enoch (2009, p. 24)
[69] Enoch (2009, p. 25)

with meta-ethical realism because it describes how and why people develop different moral views about a controversial moral matters without collapsing into scepticism.[70] From Enoch's (2009) point of view, distorting effects are important because people can be victims to any number of distorting effects that influences our ability to perceive moral properties and make accurate moral statements about properties in an object, action, or event. [71]

Enoch's (2009) provides an example of a distorting effect to show how they can prevent an individual from recognizing a moral fact. His example of a distorting effect is a psychological payoff and this is where acknowledging the truth would exert a high price. It is considered a high price because acknowledging the truth has drastic implications for how you view yourself, you friends, and it would also drastically impact the way you live your life.[72] To support his claim that psychological payoffs prevent someone from identifying moral properties in an object. Enoch (2009) explains that refusing to acknowledge the truth of a particular claim can have tremendous psychological payoff for an individual.[73] Take for example the statement that giving to charity is good. According to Enoch (2009) if this statement is objectively true it should lead to either a situation where we give up all our possessions or the acknowledgement that we are horrendous people.[74] Given there is a psychological payoff in not considering your loved ones or yourself as horrendous people this or another kinds of distorting effect can explain why people fail to identify that moral fact. From Enoch's (2009) point of view there are non-moral factors that explain why radical disagreements persist and remain resistant to rational resolution. According to Enoch (2009) a radical "moral disagreement or much of it can be explained by

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[70] Enoch (2009 p. 26)
[71] Enoch (2009 p. 25)
[72] Enoch (2009 p. 26)
[73] Enoch(2009 p. 26)
[74] Enoch (2009 p. 26)

doing psychology, sociology, politics, and not meta-ethics" (Enoch, 2009, p. 37). From his perspective, "false moral beliefs can easily be explained in terms of the psychological payoffs and where mistakes can easily be explained, [moral] disagreement can be explained without resort to anti-realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 26).

Enoch (2009) defends meta-ethical realism by arguing there is less radical disagreement than initially thought and because the radical disagreements that remain are the result of an error made by a disputant and not because the facts are undetectable. According to Enoch (2009) this is the most promising route for the defence of meta-ethical realism because a realist can show what prevents convergence on objective moral truths and it can explain why moral disagreements remain resistant to rational resolution.[75] For these two reasons a moral realist has no good reason to accept a moral sceptic's conclusion that meta-ethical is false if they can attribute radical moral disagreements to a distorting effect that causes someone to err when describing a moral fact about an object, action, or event.

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[75] Enoch (2009) p. 29

2.3.2 Radical moral disagreements and cognitive shortcomings

Next, I look at responses to the argument from epistemic inaccessibility. In the argument covered in section 2.2.2 I explained that moral sceptics use examples of radical moral disagreement to show moral properties are undetectable and that objective moral truths are epistemically inaccessible and unknowable. From a realist's perspective the argument is thought of as a "challenge to account for moral knowledge" (Enoch, 2009, p. 45). As both Enoch (2009) and Tersman (2013) explain the argument from epistemic inaccessibility poses a threat only if a sceptic can show most radical moral disagreements are the result of a no-fault disagreement.[76] This would require the sceptic to show most if not a significant number of radical moral disagreements cannot be attributed to an epistemological defect or cognitive shortcoming.

To demonstrate that radical moral disagreements are not evidence for the sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism a moral realist has two options: (1) come up with an adequate moral epistemology and what counts as objective moral knowledge given the known obstacles. (2) Show the sceptic's argument has merits but fails to show meta-ethical realism is false. Within the limits of this thesis I would like to focus on (2) and show that a sceptic's argument fails.

In response to the argument from epistemic inaccessibility a moral realist might ask two questions. 1) What proof is there to support the claim that radical moral disagreements exist where no party is guilty of an epistemological defect? 2) Can we use the existence of radical moral disagreement as evidence that at least one of the disputants suffers an epistemological defect?

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[76] Enoch (2009 p. 44) and Tersman (2006 p. 30)

A realist might raise question one because they doubt there are moral disagreement where disputants are free from epistemological defects. More importantly and as signalled in 2.3.1 they might claim people can be victims of any number of distorting effect which is a realist-friendly way of explaining why radical moral disagreements persist. For this reason a realist might respond to question one by arguing radical moral disagreements are a sign someone suffers from an epistemological defect.[77] According to Enoch (2009) a realist is "perfectly entitled to take this very disagreement as a reason to think at least one disputant is guilty of a cognitive shortcoming" (Enoch, 2009, p. 43). For Enoch (2009) the argument from epistemic inaccessibility only presents a problem if you already reject realism before considering the arguments carefully. According to him a moral sceptic's conclusion is true only if you presuppose or assume radical disagreements are inconsistent with objective truths.

From a realist's perspective an epistemological defect or cognitive shortcoming is something that explains in a realist-friendly way why it possible for conflict groups to form radically different ideas about the same object and why the disagreement persists. The shortcomings and defects are considered important by the realist because they "diminish one's chances of reaching a correct or justified conclusions in moral matters" (Tersman, 2006, p. 34). On this view, the defence of meta-ethical realism is grounded on the idea that radical moral disagreement can be attributed to a cognitive shortcoming and not to something that is unknowable. To provide a full response to the moral sceptic's argument a moral realist would have to provide an appropriate moral epistemology. They would have to show that there is a correlation between moral claims and objective moral truths and how we know moral claims track moral truths. In this subsection I have shown that the sceptic's argument has merits and that it limits the types of responses a

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[77] Enoch (2009 p. 25)

realist can give but ultimately it fails as a standalone argument to shows meta-ethical realism is false.

2.3.3. Absence of a method argument is not grounds for denying meta-ethical realism

In the final section of 2.2 I outlined the sceptic's argument from disagreement which shows there is no accepted method that could settle a radical moral disagreement.

The general form of the argument is:[78]

1. There is no method for deciding cases of moral disagreement

2. Therefore, at least in cases of moral disagreement, there is no objective moral truth

In response to the sceptic's absence of method argument David Enoch (2009) argues it is unclear what premise one means and it is unclear why the conclusion (2) follows from premise one.[79] However, one might think it is possible to move from premise 1 to its conclusion if they think they have proof that would show objective moral truths are epistemically inaccessible. If we put aside this lack of clarity and assume premise 1 to be true Enoch (2009) argues that "depending on how premise one is understood, it can either be safely denied or satisfactorily explained in a realist-friendly way" (Enoch, 2009, p. 35).

The focus of this section is to clarify what premise one entails and why David Enoch (2009) does not consider the absence of method argument as a problem for meta-ethical realism. From a realist's perspective, Enoch (2009) explains that premise one can be interpreted as the claim there is no method to show one party to the disagreement is in error.[80] Alternatively the same premise could be interpreted as the claim that there is no agreed method to settle a radical moral

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[78] Enoch (2009 p .34)
[79] Enoch (2009 p. 35)
[80] Enoch (2009 p. 37)

disagreement. [81] First, I will address the idea that there is no way to figure out which of moral statements about a thing is objectively true. Then, I address the concern that there is no method to settle the disagreement that would be accepted by all disputants free from relevant epistemological defects.

The first interpretation of premise one can be responded to in the same way a realists responds to the argument from epistemic inaccessibility. On this interpretation of premise one the absence of method argument only raises concerns if considered with the argument from epistemic inaccessibility. The main argument behind this understanding of premise one is that there is no method to show which of the contradictory claims in a radical moral disagreement is objectively true. The strength of the first interpretation comes from the thought that a realist is only able to maintain meta-ethical realism at the price of something unknowable and undetectable. The reason a realist does not think this argument leads to the rejection of meta-ethical realism is because to move from premise one to the conclusion, another premise needs to be considered. This additional premise according to Enoch (2009) is something like, "people cannot be too mistaken and resistant to the truth when presented to them via a justified method" (Enoch, 2009, p. 37). From his point of view there is no good reason why a realist would have to accept the additional premise. Enoch (2009) arrives at this conclusion because he argues "the morally mistaken may be continue to unconvinced by justified methods for any number of reasons. [For example] they may not be willing to listen-open mindedly or they may be subject to a distorting effect" (Enoch, 2009, p. 37).

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[81] Enoch (2009 p. 38)

If we turn to the second interpretation and the claim there is no agreed method or way to settle a radical moral disagreement among the perfectly rational people. The idea is that an irresolvable disagreements about one thing supports a sceptic's anti-realist conclusions.[82] According to Enoch (2009) sceptics arrive at this conclusion because they "presuppose that disagreement about a justified method counts heavily against realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 38). From his point of view the sceptics support for their case against meta-ethical realism comes from an "inference to the best explanation from actual disagreements that do not appear depend on a cognitive shortcoming of (at least) one party" (Enoch, 2009, p. 42). In response to the sceptic's argument Enoch (2009) explains that a realist is entitled to take radical disagreement as evidence that at least one of the disputants is subject to a distorting effect or guilty of a cognitive shortcoming, "even if at the this point we have no further story to tell" (Enoch, 2009, p. 43). According to him the second interpretation fails to show meta-ethical realism is false because the absence of a method argument only shows that certain methods fail to qualify as justified not that all methods fail. According to Enoch (2009) "there is no reason to expect that a realist is going to have a hard time explaining such disagreement in alternative ways that are perfectly consistent with realism" (Enoch, 2009, p. 28). From Enoch's (2009) perspective, a realist may conclude that the absence of method argument bears no real threat to meta-ethical realism because a realist can do three things. 1) Show there is less radical moral disagreement than there is assumed to be because in most radical disagreement at least one of the party is subject to an epistemological defect. 2) That much of what is left can be explained consistently with realism by referring to a relevant epistemological defect or cognitive shortcoming and 3) a realist can argue that some radical disagreement is to be expected.

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[82] Enoch (2009 p. 38

To defend meta-ethical realism against the second interpretation of premise one a realist has two options.1) Reject the characterisation of radical disagreement as rationally irresolvable by explaining that a radical moral disagreement is actually a radical non-moral disagreement.[83] 2) Explain what the relevant distorting effects and cognitive shortcoming are and how they cause smart, sensitive, well-reasoning, sober persons to disagree on the answer to the moral question.[84] In other words, the defence meta-ethical realism against a sceptics concerns requires a realist to show that radical disagreements are a sign that at least one of the disputants is subject to a distorting effect, guilty of a cognitive shortcoming, or that disputants are engaged in a radical non-moral disagreement.

In response to the moral sceptic's argument from absence method Enoch (2009) argues that it is not possible for the sceptic to move from premise one to its conclusion. From his perspective, both interpretations fail to show that radical disagreement is incompatible with meta-ethical realism, as the absence of a method argument only shows that certain methods fail not that all methods fail.

From a realist's perspective the argument from the absence of method and epistemic inaccessibility fail for two important reasons. 1) Both arguments only show that certain methods are not justified and that some description are inadequate not that certain types of facts do not exist. [85] 2) Despite what the sceptic says, a realist is able to explain radical disagreement without falling into scepticism and positing something dubious or describing something undetectable.

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[83] Enoch (2009 p. 44)
[84] Enoch (2009 p. 44)
[85] Enoch (2009 p.38)

2.4   Two meta-ethical theories that focus on radical disagreement

Moral sceptics and moral realists describe the nature of the moral properties at the heart of a radical moral disagreement. At the centre of this meta-ethical investigation are the disputant's evaluative statements like stealing is wrong and the moral properties that moral statements assert. Moral sceptics argue the best explanation of morality in the face of radical moral disagreement is that there are no objective moral truths. They argue this because the idea of a "mind-independent moral reality is incoherent and therefore evidence that some relevant form of error theory is true" (Lillehammer, 2004, p. 96). For example, Lillehammer (2004) argues that a radical moral disagreement presents a problem "for those who think moral thoughts represent worldly facts" (Lillehammer, 2004, p. 97). They present a problem for a realist because radical moral disagreements cannot be attributed to epistemological defect and if this is not possible, a sceptic thinks moral properties must be peculiar and therefore undetectable. In presenting the sceptics case against meta-ethical realism I have shown that a moral sceptic argues radical moral disagreements are incompatible or at least not plausibly explained by a moral realist with meta-ethical realism.

In defence of meta-ethical realism Enoch (2009) points out that it must be shown by the sceptic that "rationally irresolvable disagreement is possible with regard to every moral judgement, or at least with regard to sufficiently many, sufficiently important cases" (Enoch, 2009, p. 40). According to him the support for the moral sceptic's position comes from an "inference of the best explanation from actual radical moral disagreements that do not appear to depend on cognitive shortcoming of the parties" (Enoch, 2009, p. 42). In response to the sceptic's case against meta-ethical realism, I demonstrated how realists like David Enoch (2009) and Folke Tersman (2006) defend meta-ethical realism against the argument from disagreement. I

explained why a realist thinks the moral sceptic has not done enough to show meta-ethical realism is false. To determine whether moral sceptics or moral realists offer the best explanation of morality given the facts about radical moral disagreements, a wider review of a realist's metaphysics and epistemology is needed which is beyond the scope of this thesis. So I will end the discussion between moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism on the idea that both theories offer a plausible account of radical moral disagreements. The next chapter explain how a discussion about the nature of moral properties in meta-ethics has serious implications for conflict resolution strategies and how they resolve radical political disagreements. The final sub-sections describes how meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism influence the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements.

Chapter 3

3.0   Analysing Radical Political Disagreements with meta-ethics

I argued in chapter one that radical political disagreements raise epistemological and metaphysical questions that concern the nature of facts. To support this claim I compared a radical political disagreement to a description of a radical moral disagreement by Folke Tersman (2006). After the comparison, I concluded that a radical political disagreement is a type of radical moral disagreement because a radical political disagreement is a struggle to identify moral properties and objectively true statements about an object, action, or event. As an example of a radical political disagreement that fits the description of a radical moral disagreement I reviewed three positions in the Kashmir conflict. I choose this conflict because a breakdown of the conflict groups claims reveals that each group is trying to identify the moral properties of an event that took place in 1947 and objectively true statements that concern the issue of governing the Jammu and Kashmir state. I ended the chapter by introducing the second research question and started to explain how the discussion about the nature of facts in meta-ethics shapes the way we think about resolving a radical political disagreement.

In the first half chapter two I looked the argument from disagreement and sceptics who have used it to reject meta-ethical realism. In the second half of the chapter I looked at those who have defended a moral realist's claims about the nature of moral properties against the argument from disagreement. The arguments I considered revealed why some might argue there are facts which could settle a radical disagreement and why others think the opposite. Now, I look at how a discussion about the nature of moral properties shapes the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements. Chapter three provides an answer to the final question proposed in the

introduction of this thesis: How do meta-ethical theories effect the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements?

As mentioned in the introduction Oliver Ramsbotham (2010, 2011, 2013, and 2017) believes that conflict theories lack an adequate description of the verbal exchange in a radical political disagreement. An oversight by conflict scholars which he argues had led to a "damaging gap in systemic thinking about conflict transformation" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 52). From his point of view radical disagreements are a phenomenon that is normally overlooked in conflict resolution theories and "not studied in its own right, as if we already know all that there is to know about radical disagreements" (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 57).[86] By the end of the chapter, I will have shown that meta-ethics can start to fill the gap in the literature identified by Ramsbotham (2011).[87] More importantly, this chapter outlines some of the implications that meta-ethical theories have on the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements at the heart of violent political conflicts.

In this chapter, I explain why being a realist gives us certain avenues to explore when thinking about resolving radical political disagreement and what avenues are suggested by moral scepticism. If moral scepticism is our starting point then resolving a radical political disagreements requires a method that would convince the disputants there is no moral fact about the matter. More importantly the focus shifts from assessing an individual's cognitive capacity and ability to perceive moral properties to managing the hostile emotions and attitudes of the disputants. The shift occurs because moral-error theory tells us that disputant's moral statement

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[86] Systemic thinking is "the theoretical and practical ability to observe, think, model, simulate, analyse, and synthesize components, functions, connections, structures, interrelationships, and dynamics across disciplines, functions, organisations, people, trends, and cultures in a ways that leads to an insightful problem solving intervention" (Gallon 2019).
[87] Ramsbotham (2011, p. 52)

are never objectively true as the properties their statements are trying to describe are undetectable. In contrast to a realist, a moral sceptic argues the cognitive ability of the disputant or the objective truth of the matter is not important when it comes to resolving a radical disagreement because moral facts are unknowable.

If moral scepticism underpins a philosophy of radical political disagreement then the key to resolving a radical political disagreement does not depend on identifying moral facts and objectively true statements about the matter. From a sceptic's point of view, the idea is not to seek out objectively true moral statements but to "lift conflict parties out of the mire of antagonism and into wider relations that can accommodate paradox, antagonism, and diversity" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 213). Since moral facts are unknowable sceptics argue that conflict resolution requires a method that is able to transforms incompatible narratives into some kind of narrative equilibrium where differences of opinion are respected and disagreement does not polarize and lead to violence.[88] From a sceptic's perspective the aim of conflict resolution is to "move beyond the mere statement of agreed-upon facts about who did what to whom, and towards a mutually acceptable interpretation of those event in question" (Dwyer, 1999, p. 90).

Alternatively, if you think meta-ethical realism is true then radical political disagreements do contain objective moral facts and moral claims are truth-apt and sometime objectively true. Moreover, the underlying belief is that an objectively true claim should settle a dispute between conflict parties who are free from epistemological defects. If meta-ethical realism is the foundation of a philosophy of radical political disagreement then a realist must identify the relevant distorting effects or cognitive shortcomings that effect our ability to accurately perceive moral properties in objects and actions. From a realist's perspective the settling of a radical

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[88] Dwyer (1999 p. 89)

political disagreement depends on finding moral facts which requires a method that could eliminate errors made by a disputant who suffers from some sort of epistemological defect. From a realist's perspective the aim of conflict resolution is to identify moral facts and objectively true statements about the object disputants contradictory statements are about.

In what follows, the Kashmir conflict is revisited and the idea is to see how moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism shape our thinking about the radical political disagreement in the Kashmir conflict and how to resolve the radical disagreement. In this chapter, I argue that meta-ethical theories have serious implications for our thinking about resolving radical political disagreements. This is the case because a radical disagreement is a "clash of claims and counter-claims in the crucible of a dynamic conflict" (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 254). From Ramsbotham's (2010) description it seems the first step to developing a strategy that could settle a radical political disagreement is to answer some metaphysical and epistemological questions about the nature of moral properties and status of our moral statements.

3.1 Moral sceptics and a philosophy of radical political disagreement

If moral scepticism is chosen to underpin a philosophy of radical political disagreement then radical political disagreements do not contain statements that are objectively true. In essence political claims are like moral claims and truth-apt but never true. Sceptics arrive at this conclusion because a "moral-error theorist thinks that moral judgements can only be true if they correctly describe irreducibly normative reasons, and because they think such reasons do not exist, they conclude that no moral judgement is true" (Kalf, 2019, p.2). If no political claim is ever objectively true because the properties that statement refers to are undetectable it seems pointless to search for an objectively true statements when faced with a radical political disagreement. From a sceptic's point of view the search for moral facts becomes pointless because there is no evidence to support the idea that one claim is closer to an objective truth than the other.

From a moral sceptic's point of view conflict resolution strategies should consider three things. First is the risk of politics and this is what Andrew Schaap (2005) describes as the risk that "community is not inevitable and that conflict may turn out to be irreconcilable" (Schaap, 2005, p. 19). Second the idea behind conflict resolution is to "open up a space between enemies rather than cover over the conflict that threaten their political association" (Schaap, 2005, p. 20). Third and finally that conflict resolution is an "aspiration that sustains politics by framing an encounter between enemies in which they might debate the possibility and terms of their association" (Schaap, 2005, p. 71). Take the Kashmir conflict from chapter 1 and assume that there is no objective truth to the question; who should govern Jammu and Kashmir? Possibly, the first step to resolving this disagreement is to illustrate that the disagreement is rationally irresolvable and

that no one has a special right to govern the region and its people. How that is implemented in practice is outside the scope of the thesis, but there is a line of thought to explore.

To achieve this first step a moral sceptic's aim is to establish lines of communication between conflict groups and to create a space for political interactions between enemies instead of seeking out a moral fact.[89] This means a moral sceptic inspired conflict resolution strategies focuses on generating understanding, intelligibility, and coherence rather than the objective truth and logical consistency of each claim.[90] From a sceptic's point of view this is important because "the desire for intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding underpins the construction of a coherent and stable life narrative which is something that is fundamental to human welfare." (Dwyer, 1999, p. 86). A desire that Susan Dwyer (1999) argues is important when there has been a disruptive event such as a war and a person has reason to engage in a wholesale revaluation of their identity, life, values, and priorities.[91]

According to Dwyer (1999), "we can never undo such disruptions they are literally facts of life but when they are severe our continued well-being – perhaps our very existence – depends on being able to incorporate them into our personal narrative" (Dwyer, 1999, p. 86). From a sceptic's perspective resolving a radical disagreement requires conflict parties find a way to establish harmony, consensus or closure rather than a fact which proves who is right or wrong. As Dwyer (1999) explains this does not imply that conflict resolution aims to eliminate hostilities or erase tensions it is instead she argues finding a way to live non-violently with people who hold radically different opinions about something.

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[89] Schaap (2005 p. 20)
[90] Dwyer (1999 p. 85)
[91] Dwyer (1999 p. 86

Since sceptics argue moral facts are undetectable how they settle a disagreement does not depend on finding a method which could identify which claim is objectively true. Instead, Dwyer (1999) suggests conflict resolution is about de-escalating tensions by "bringing apparently incompatible descriptions of events into a narrative equilibrium" (Dwyer, 1999, p. 89). That means conflict groups in the face of a radical disagreement should consider a range of interpretations and record a range of narratives that acknowledges different perspectives of a disruptive events.[92] As Dwyer (1999) explains "it is not required that all parties settle on a single interpretation, only that they create a limited subset of mutually tolerant interpretations" (Dwyer, 1999, p. 89). From her perspective the aim of conflict resolution is to de-escalate tensions by making sense of disruptive events like a war and finding a way to live as a community afterwards rather than to establish the moral facts about the disruptive event.[93] In the Kashmir conflict this means that the Indian government, the Kashmiri people, and Pakistan government should abandon their desires and claims to govern and they should look for a way to live alongside each other.[94]

If moral facts are undetectable as some moral sceptics assumes then a sceptic's conflict relation strategy abandons the search for a method that could identify objective truths and objectively true statements. As Ramsbotham (2010) suggests it starts by setting out what each party wants and what it would take to transform the antagonistic nature of the interactions. Ramsbotham (2010, 2016 and 2017) names this process that puts to one side the search for moral facts as strategic thinking. According to Ramsbotham (2017) strategic thinking is a "theory of change "that promotes social change for the collective good by defining goals and mapping back the requirements for getting there" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 50) The strategic function of this shift is

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[92] Dwyer (1999 p. 89)
[93] Dwyer (1999p. 96)
[94] However, the author notes this is much easier said than done.

that it allows the analyst or disputants to set out a template of what is required to change the nature of the on-going interaction. Strategic thinking entails that an analyst abandons the search for moral facts and instead identifies possible futures which are assessed in terms of desirability, attainability and likelihood.[95] The process forces the conflict parties to assess the situation and make comparative determinations between different possible futures that may be more desirable but less attainable and scenarios that are less desirable but more attainable.[96] After considering various options the idea is to "find the best way to reach the chosen destination" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 56) of each group.

From a moral sceptic's point of view, the idea is that strategic thinking can be used if conflict resolution scholars think there are no moral facts.[97] The main difference between conflict resolution strategies that assume it is possible to identify moral facts and strategic thinking is roughly that the former is limited to developing methods that could identify and eliminate cognitive shortcomings while the latter is focused on methods that ensure the disputants are in some kind of communication. From a sceptic's point of view, the aim conflict resolution when faced with a radical political disagreement is to find out what it would take to carry on as a community given there is wide-spread disagreement about the facts which surround a disruptive event that threatened the continued existence and survival of that community. Strategic thinking is considered a pre-requisite or extension of conflict resolution rather than a replacement and the process is expected to prevent the return or continuation of violence "when traditional conflict resolution is premature" (Ramsbotham et al, 2016, p. 448).

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[95] Ramsbotham (2017 p 55)
[96] Ramsbotham (2017 p. 56)
[97] Ramsbotham et all (2016 p. 448)

A conflict resolution strategy based on a moral sceptic's philosophy of radical disagreement focuses on the nature of the interactions rather than seeking out a moral fact. A philosophy of radical political disagreement based on moral scepticism provides conflict resolution scholars with a way to break down a radical political disagreement while assuming there is no moral fact about the object, event, or action the disagreement is about. If a moral sceptic inspired philosophy of radical political disagreement is applied to the Kashmir conflict then the starting assumption is that there is no moral fact or objectively true statement about the 1947 accession agreement. Since a moral sceptic thinks none of the claims in the Kashmir conflict can be objectively true settling the radical disagreement requires parties to find a way to work with enemies in a non-violent manner. For a sceptic settling a radical disagreement does not require a method that can find out the truth but a method that is able to transform a radical political disagreement that is sometimes violent into a non-violent political struggle.

3.2   Meta-ethical realism and a philosophy of radical political disagreement

If, however, a conflict scholar chooses meta-ethical realism as the foundation of a philosophy of radical political disagreement. They argue that the disagreement about who should rule persists because some of the disputants suffer from a distorting effect, cognitive shortcoming, or some other epistemological defect. From this claim about the cognitive ability of the disputants a realist argues that resolution is not likely until all sources of error are accounted for and eliminated. The idea is that the disagreement persists because one of the parties has failed to see the truth of the matter. Since a realists assumes there are moral facts and that moral properties are detectable they argue the disagreement will persist until the sources of error are identified and eliminated. From a realist point of view, settling a radical political disagreement requires the identification of a moral fact and the aim of conflict resolution is to identify objectively true moral statement about an action, object, or event in question.

Since a realist thinks there are moral facts resolving the disagreement requires parties to find a method that is able to show which party is right and wrong to hold their beliefs. For a realist the right method is not expected to eliminate all disagreements as they think there may be some people that it is impossible to convince of the truth. This is not a problem for the realist because a radical disagreement may persist if someone refuses to take new evidence into account, refuses to eliminate inconsistencies in his beliefs, or refuses to take analogies seriously and offer relevant disanalogies, "after all what reason do we have to expect this person to see the moral truth" (Enoch, 2009, p. 39).

For a realist, resolving a radical political disagreement requires a method that is able to identify and eliminate the epistemological defects that inhibit an individual's ability to identify the moral

properties of an action or event. From a realist's perspective, how you resolve a radical disagreement is shaped by the initial idea that moral properties are detectable and moral facts knowable by rational and empirical investigation. From this idea, a realist's conflict resolution strategy is to identify a moral fact because they believe by showing which group is right to hold their beliefs groups will stop fighting because there is nothing left to disagree about. When applied to the Kashmir conflict this means a realist thinks resolving the radical disagreement about who should govern Jammu and Kashmir depends on finding a method that could identify the moral facts and objectively true statement about the 1947 accession agreement.

Conclusion

In this thesis I argued that developing a strategy to resolve a radical political disagreement starts with a metaphysical and epistemological question about the nature of moral properties. To show this is the case I compared a radical political disagreement in conflict studies to a description of radical moral disagreement in meta-ethics. I used meta-ethical realism and moral scepticism (moral-error theory) to show how meta-ethics shapes the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements.

To answer each research question in the introduction the thesis was split in to three chapters. In chapter one, I compared an example of a radical political disagreement in conflict resolution studies to a description of radical moral disagreement in meta-ethics. I started with the Kashmir conflict and explained it contained a radical political disagreement because the main parties are engaged in "a struggle to identify and eliminate mistaken beliefs, perceptions, and truths" (Ramsbotham, 2017, p. 198) about the state of Jammu and Kashmir and who should govern the territory. I then argued that the radical political disagreement in the Kashmir conflict is a type of radical moral disagreement because the conflict groups are engaged in a struggle to identify the moral properties of the accession agreement in 1947. After I outlined the ethical dimension of the Kashmir conflict I ended the chapter by arguing a radical political disagreement is also a type of radical moral disagreement because they both are struggle to identify the moral properties of a thing, action, or event.

In chapter two I reviewed two meta-ethical theories: moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism. I did this for two reasons. 1) To show that our thinking about resolving a radial political disagreement is shaped by the meta-ethical theory chosen to underpin a philosophy of radical

political disagreement. 2) Reveal that there are at least two meta-ethical theories that explain the nature of the verbal exchange in a radical political disagreement. In this chapter I demonstrated that in spite of the sceptic's challenge to meta-ethical realism a realist is able to defend their metaphysical and epistemological claims about moral properties. According to Enoch this is possible because "some of the [sceptic's] arguments present a prima facie challenge a realist must face but in the end they only set adequacy constraints on realist ways of addressing the most general semantic and epistemological challenges" (Enoch, 2009, p. 47).

Since I did not find an argument that could settle the debate between moral sceptics and realist in chapter two, in the final chapter I explained in what ways moral scepticism and meta-ethical realism shape the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements. I did not argue for any particular theory to underpin a philosophy of radical political disagreement but I did show how different meta-ethical theories shape the way we think about resolving radical political disagreements.

To start closing the gap that Ramsbotham (2011) identifies in the conflict studies literature. I demonstrated there are at least are two meta-ethical theories that could explain what a radical political disagreement is about, why they are difficult to resolve, and what it would take to resolve them. In this thesis, I argued that descriptions of radical moral disagreement in meta-ethics could serve as an explanation of the verbal exchanges that accompany a radical political disagreement in a violent conflict. Moreover, I explained how meta-ethical theories shape the way we think about resolving radical disagreements and develop conflict resolution intervention strategies to address them.

To conclude, I have shown that meta-ethics can make a contribution to conflict resolution studies and how we think about resolving radical political disagreements. I have argued that an adequate conflict resolution strategy to resolve a radical political disagreement starts with a metaphysical question about the nature of moral properties and an epistemological question about moral statements and the properties they describe. I have defended this claim by showing our thinking about resolving radical political disagreements is shaped by how you describe the properties that statements refer to in a radical political disagreement.

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