

"Ethical Reductionism"

Abstract:

Suppose you believe that moral facts are part of the natural world. How should you understand the relationship between moral properties and properties of the natural and social sciences? On the reductionist view I defend, the relationship is simply one of identity – goodness and pleasure (or whatever is good) are the same thing, like water and H₂O. I criticize the nonreductionist view of the Cornell Realists, on which moral properties supervene on scientific properties without being identical to them. Nonreductionism requires moral properties to do implausibly robust explanatory work, which reductionism doesn't require. And the problem of multiple realizability, which bedevils reductionism in the philosophy of mind, is easily solved in ethics.