Moral particularism as non-additivity of reasons

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1 Introduction

Particularism is the view that moral judgments are not and should not be based on general principles. It is surrounded by many misunderstandings. Although these misunderstandings reveal wrong views on moral particularism they can help stating the real issue. For example it is suggested that moral particularism holds that the morally right decisions cannot be represented by a finite set of rules such that acting conform those rules is acting morally right. Indeed particularism denies that these rules are codifications in the sense that these rules are the reasons for the rightness or the wrongness of actions. Representations lack the element of exclusive authority.

But the issue is not that moral particularism holds that a finite set of rules cannot cover all morally right decisions. It is difficult to deny that such a set of rules is possible. Authors like Sinnott-Armstrong and Hooker give reasons for the possibility of such a finite set of rules when they argue that exceptions to simple rules can be incorporated in rules. They argue for this possibility as response to the examples Dancy presents to show that some aspects which count in favour of an action do not always count in favour of. For example pleasure for someone doesn’t speak in favour of an action if this pleasure has its origin in the suffering of others. Furthermore it can be shown in a rather formal way that a finite set of rules can be formulated if it is accepted that there is some sort of moral theory, possibly infinite, which can be formulated in a first order predicate language that is consistent with the particular morally right judgments in each situation. This leads to the conclusion that the issue of the possibility of a finite set of rules that could be a criterion whether an action is right or wrong is not the real issue. Moral particularism has another claim which is immune to the above stated arguments against the view that there is no finite set of rules possible covering the morally right decisions. It does not concern the criteria but the reasons why an action is wrong. It is about the role of rules and principles in moral deliberation.

In the discussion about the role of rules in moral deliberation another misunderstanding on moral particularism is seen. This misunderstanding holds that moral particularism is too extreme and that it should be replaced by the reflective equilibrium ideas as a sort of Dutch compromise solution with a mixture of rules and particular intuitions. Moral judgments should be based on rules and particular moral judgments. There should be a reflective equilibrium between them. Rules are indispensable for moral reasoning. Although it does pay attention to practical reasoning, this a priori attractive Dutch compromise model does not capture the central claim of moral particularism as will be made clear in this paper.

I will present moral particularism as the view that holds as its central idea:

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1 See [Hooker, 1998]
2 See [Hooker, 1998] [Sinnott-Armstrong, 1999].
3 See appendix one of [Hartkamp, 1999, p.59-61].
4 See for this distinction [Moore, 1912, p.19].
5 See [Willigenburg, 1991], [Willigenburg, 1998]
Reasons in favour of or against the moral rightness of an action are not a priori separable.

This idea explains why moral judgements should not be based on moral principles. It explains that a reason in one situation is not necessarily so a reason in another situation, although it is not denied that it could be a reason. It explains the rejection by particularists of a widely accepted practice of arguing that a principle in this case cannot be important because it doesn’t play a role in another. 6 It helps to explain why several arguments against moral particularism do not touch moral particularism because they are merely arguments against a misrepresented view on particularism. It shows also why the Dutch compromise model of reflective equilibrium solution to the discussion on moral particularism is not appropriate.

First I will present a common view on practical reasoning holding that:

• Reasons in favour of or against the moral rightness of an action are based on the properties of that action.

• Those reasons are weighed.

• The judgment whether the action is morally right or wrong or neutral is an additive function of the reasons.

After this presentation I will argue that the central claim of particularism is the rejection of the a priori separability of reasons which will mean a rejection of the a priori correctness of the third element of the common view. I will show that this rejection helps to explain the position of moral particularism in the discussions on moral methodology, and moral epistemology.

2 Practical reasoning, the common view

2.1 Reasons in favour of and reasons against

Actions are morally judged because of the properties they have. An action is morally right because of or on the basis of having such and such a property. The properties are the reasons in favour of or against the moral rightness. Furthermore an action can be seen as a n-tuple of properties or reasons. Property \( p_1 \) is a reason in favour of and another property, for example \( p_{34} \), is a reason against etc. 7 In general if an action having properties \( \{p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n\} \) compared to an action \( \{-p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n\} \) is better because of \( p_1 \) then \( p_1 \) is a reason in favour of. Similarly if the action with the properties \( \{p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n\} \) is worse than \( \{p_1, -p_2, \ldots, p_n\} \) then \( p_2 \) is a reason against. In this way a property is a reason for or against, or is not a reason at all. The fact that the action has that property is a reason for or against.

6 See [Kagan, 1988].
7 To be more precise, it could also be a complex property composed of other properties, generalists will hasten to say against the examples of Dancy that they did not find yet the correct complex properties.
The fact that an action, returning a knife you promised to return, is keeping a promise is a reason in favour of returning the knife. The fact that a person intends to do something bad with the knife you promised to return to him is a good reason against, and so on. In the end these reasons which are the relevant properties are weighed.

2.2 Weighing of reasons

After considering the relevant properties of an action the reasons have to weighed vis a vis each other. An overall judgment has to be formed on the bases of these reasons i.e. the properties.

It is said that one of the presidents Roosevelt or Lincoln combined the reasons in a straightforward way. Each property in favour of and each property against counted for one. If the number of properties in favour was greater than the number of properties against the action was chosen, it was considered to be ok, if it was less then it was not chosen, it was considered as wrong, and the remaining possibility resulted in the judgement neither ok nor wrong. The evaluation of the action is a function of the properties. It is even a specific function:

\[ F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = p_1 + p_2 + \ldots + p_n \]

in which \( p_i \) is either 1 or -1 or 0 depending on whether the property is in favour of, against or just neutral.

More sophisticated evaluation functions take the strength or the way the property is present in the action into account by the function \( p_i \). The more the property is present the more it counts in the evaluation function. The more or greater the pleasure that is generated by the action the more this pleasure counts. The more suffering is generated the more it counts against.

\[ F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = p_1 + p_2 + \ldots + p_n \]

in which \( p_i \) does not merely have the values 1, -1 or 0, but represents a measurement of the property.

Even more sophisticated evaluation functions reckon with different weights of reasons. Some reasons are more important than others and some are less futile than others. Reasons concerning life and dead are more important than those concerning the preference of strawberry ice to banana.

\[ F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = w_1 * p_1 + w_2 * p_2 + \ldots + w_n * p_n \]

The common view on reasoning is first looking for the reasons for and against an action and second combine the reasons to an overall judgment of the action in which each reason gets its due weight. So fulfilling a promise by returning the lender knife to the owner counts in favour but can be outweighed by the bad intention the owner has with that knife. The reasons are put on the balance and it is seen how the balance moves.

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8The third possibility could mean conflict or just indifference
3 Particularism

What is wrong with the common view of practical reasoning according to particularists? It is the additivity of the reasons in the evaluation function they object to. Or stated in an other way: separability is the main issue in the discussion on moral particularism. \(^9\) Particularists deny that reasons are a priori separable. They might happen to be separable but that is an empirical coincidence, it is not a necessity for proper moral judgments.

With separability is meant:

\[
F(p_1, p_i, \ldots, p_n) > F(\neg p_1, p_i, \ldots, p_n) \implies F(p_1, p_k, \ldots, p_x) > F(\neg p_1, p_k, \ldots, p_x)
\]

Separability means that a reason in one case is a similar reason in any other case in which it appears. Or to put in other words following Dancy, a feature that makes a moral difference in one case must make the same difference on every reappearance. \(^10\) That is what particularism denies.

Taking the denial of the a priori separability of reasons as the central claim of moral particularism has at least three consequences for the debate on moral particularism:

1. Neither moral particularism nor moral generalism can be refuted by citing examples which lack or show separability, because these examples don’t touch the a priori part.

2. The basis of moral knowledge and moral reasoning is the field of discussion. Moral particularism denies that moral principles can be extracted from examples or particular judgments because of this denial of separability, although it is accepted by moral particularism that it might happen that rules could summarize morally right judgments.

3. The relationship between moral judgments in different situations will be the focus of differences between moral particularists en generalists. The latter provide the relationship with rules the former has to account for a relationship in a different way.

3.1 Arguing by examples

In his *Moral reasons*, Dancy presents some examples of judgements which are meant to show that a reason in one situation is not always a reason in another. Borrowing a book is usually a reason to return a book unless it is learnt that it is stolen by the lender. That an action is a lie is usually a reason against the action, but there are situations in which it is not, for example in a game if the game would be spoiled by not lying. \(^11\)

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\(^9\) See [Broome, 1991](#) for the relation between separability and additivity.

\(^10\) See [Dancy, 1999](#).

\(^11\) See [Dancy, 1993, p. 60-62](#).
Sinnot-Armstrong argues against these examples, that these are not enough to show that exceptionless principles are possible. A similar remark is made by Hooker. And both suggest that moral particularism would be falsified if they could present an example of an exceptionless universal principle, in other words a property of an action such that if it is a reason in one situation it is a similar reason in another. They suggest such principles. For example nonsadistic pleasure ia always a moral plus and counts in favour of an action.

Apparently they take moral particularism as:

**extreme moral particularism:** There is no property or reason for which separability holds.

Indeed if this were the claim then one example of separability would suffice to refute moral particularism. But the argument of one refuting example suggests a moderate variant of moral particularism:

**moderate moral particularism:** There are some properties or reasons for which separability does not hold.

For defending this claim one or more examples of inseparability are sufficient. Apparently this moderate particularism is a denial of an extreme variant of generalism:

**extreme moral generalism:** For all properties or reasons separability holds

By acknowledging the correctness of the examples against the extreme views the discussion would be settled by accepting:

**moderate moral particularism:** There are some properties or reasons for which separability does not hold. And

**moderate moral generalism:** There are some properties or reasons for which separability does hold.

The two moderate views are not inconsistent with each other. Although it would be a nice compromise it is not the solution of the discussion. There is more to it than just the factual existence of examples or counterexamples. It is not about whether or not there are some reasons for which separability hold, but whether or not separability is a necessary feature of a moral reason. And for this question a compromise as an answer is not easily accessible. The discussion is about the character of reasons, and from this character it should be clear when a property is a reason for which separability holds and when a property is a reason for which separability does not hold. A characterization of properties as reasons will be an answer to the question why a property is a reason or even what makes a property a reason. And if there is a theory of reasons and properties that can account for a property being a reason then it is

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12 See [Sinnot-Armstrong, 1999, p. 4]
13 See [Hooker, 1998, p. 7 ff.]
applicable to all properties and reasons, according to generalists. Particularist are not bound to this, it would be rather peculiar if they did not allow moderate particularism and accepted the argument that the reasons for a property to be a reason is alike for those being separable and those not separable. So generalism is likely to be extreme generalism and they take particularism to be extreme particularism. And particularism is arguing against extreme generalism. This compromise model would be unacceptable for generalism.

The limitation to the two views extreme generalism and moderate particularism suggests that some examples would give a definite to questions whether extreme generalism is true or not. The contrary is true. Once the discussion is about the a priori of separability, examples are no longer sufficient to function as definite answers. Moral particularism could be right even if it turned out that all properties happened to be separable reasons, it could be a coincidence. Even if there are no counterexamples to separability of reasons, particularism could still be right. And also moral generalism could still be right even if there are some properties that seem to be reasons that are not separable. It might be that the properties and reasons are not yet spelled out in the right way. The examples that are produced by moral particularists and moral generalists don’t have a conclusive role. Their role is illuminating no more and no less. The discussion between moral particularism and moral generalism is about the a priori separability. It concerns the status of reasons and the status of general principles and this can be illuminated by examples. The examples are not to be seen as counterexamples as Sinnott-Armstrong and Hooker do they can merely be used to illustrate the issue, they cannot decide the issue. The issue is the role of reasons and rules and principles and this will become more clear in the discussion on the next consequences of taking the denial of the a priori separability of reasons as the pivotal claim of moral particularism.

3.2 Moral epistemology

Denying the a priori separability has some consequences for the epistemology of moral judgments and the structure of moral reasoning. Denying separability means that rules and principles can no longer be discerned in particular moral judgments. If moral principles are the basis of moral judgments as generalism holds, then the knowledge of these principles and their authority should be accessible through particular cases. Separability makes this possible. One constructs situations and determines for the properties whether, if changed while keeping other properties the same, how the moral judgments is changed. In this way a set of principles can be discerned from particular cases.

If separability is no longer a priori valid then one cannot use this method of discerning moral principles from particular cases. It might happen that while a property is relevant in one case it is not in another in which the other properties are different. That a property is relevant in one case does not have any implications for other situations. Of course it could be a hint but this lacks authority.

\[ \text{See footnote 7 on page 3 and also } [\text{Sinnott-Armstrong, 1999}] [\text{Hooker, 1998}]. \]
It is different if separability is accepted: Once a reason in favour of, always a reason in favour of.

For example in the discussion on egalitarianism Parfit argues against egalitarianism because of the levelling down objection. Suppose in situation $A$ everybody is equally well off with a certain equal standard of living and in situation $B$ half of the people are on the same standard of living as in $A$, but the other half is better off.

If equality is sometimes a reason in favour of a distribution it would be one in all situations and so it would be a reason in favour of $A$. Of course there could be all kinds of other reasons for example efficiency that can override this reason, but there is at least one aspect, one reason, speaking in favour of $A$ if equality is seen as a reason at all. Parfit argues that the equality in $A$ is no reason at all here in favour of $A$ and that consequently equality is not a reason in other situations either.

If separability is no longer accepted then this kind of reasoning is no longer valid. It could be that equality is not a reason at all in favour of $A$ while it is a reason in other situations. Actually it can be explained why equality is sometimes a relevant reason and sometimes not. But whatever the value of equality is, if separability is no longer accepted one cannot any longer get knowledge of rules and principles.

This problem of the source of knowledge is pressing because the principles and rules do lack a self-evident authority. Moral principles and rule are reminiscent to the ”formulae” ceremony which one had to invoke in order to get permission from the ”praetor” to enter a court in order to receive a juridical verdict which was beyond doubt or better which could be used to get help from

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16 See [Parfit, 1989].
17 See for this latter view [Wolf, 1999].
18 See [Hartkamp, 1999, p. 208 ff].
legally permitted force. 19 Roman Law developed from this system which had an echo in the writ system in England (1066-1837). 20 The sacrosanct source of these formulae are suggested by the way the words and gestures had to be expressed namely literally, otherwise the request for permission to enter the court was rejected. 21 Facts had to be described with the same words as the descriptions in the formulae. Only then one could enter the court in order to get a "verdict exsequatur" a verdict on the basis of which one could execute ones rights by taking the debtor as prisoner for debt and finally sell him as slave on the other side of the Tiber. 22 But this structure is not valid for moral reasoning. Morality is not invoked in order to get a permission to enter a court in which one could receive a "verdict exsequatur".

Morality is concerned with moral judgments, with judgements about which reasons are good reasons for actions, which actions are right and which actions should be avoided. It is concerned with evaluations of several aspects of a life. It can do without the stylized procedural way of getting verdicts which have their meaning in the use of force. The "formulae" are not a necessity for moral deliberations and evaluations. Moral judgments are not necessarily structured in the way juridical judgements are structured. Once this is accepted it is no longer necessary to find rules that can silence others as the "verdicts exsequatur" could and which could result in slavery of the debtor. But it is not a lack of a view on moral judgments if it is acknowledged that they don’t have the knock down force of verdicts. Knock down arguments are not available and need not be available for moral philosophers. A view which is probably difficult to accept. For example Sinnott-Armstrong among others argues that if we cannot invoke rules and principles we have nothing else point to. It appears that moral philosophers would like to have the power to silence others by reason. But reasons do nothing more than lure to a point of view. Sinnott-Armstrong and with him a lot more moral philosophers wants more 23 i.e. a final definite answer that is beyond doubt.

If these principles are no longer available and discernable from particular moral judgments and we can do without them because we are not looking for verdicts but we want to arrive at moral judgments what can be the relevance of rules. In other words what is the relevance of judgments in other situations if separability of reasons is rejected.

3.3 The relevance of moral judgments in other situations

How can judgments in other situations be relevant at all if separability is no longer accepted? What kind of relation is there between judgements in different situations. Would denying separability not lead to a disintegration of our world

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19 See [Tellegen-Couperus, 1993]
20 See [Zweigert & Kötz], p.181-204]
21 The famous example of Gaius in his Institutes according to which someone lost his case because he used the word vites (vines) instead of arbores (trees)[Tellegen-Couperus, 1993, p. 23]
22 See [Tellegen-Couperus, 1993, p 23].
23 See [Sinnott-Armstrong, 1999, p.10].
view? In one situation an action is judged to be $\alpha$ in another $\neg\alpha$ is this an inconsistency? How is it possible to detect similarities or inconsistencies? Are not rules the connecting elements between the particular situations? There is a way out of this disintegration, and it is the unity of the world itself. The world has to be interpreted and this simple view provides the relationship between judgments in different situations as will be made clear.

Suppose I meet a patient with a trichophyta between his toes which hurts him. I treat this patient because he suffers from this condition. His suffering is the reason I treat him with miconazol. 24 The reason for my treatment is not that there is a rule that persons with such and such a disease have to be treated with miconazol. That I or someone else successfully treated on another occasion a patient suffering this disease with miconazol is not a reason for the treatment. I treat this patient because he suffers and the facts of this world are such that this suffering will be cured by miconazol. Not the rule but the facts of this world, that are the reasons. Rules can be seen as summa’s of earlier and widespread experience. They give supportive information about this world but they are not reasons. They don’t have the authority which facts have. Judgments in other situations are relevant but not as directives in the sense of: "Do what you did!" How can they be relevant?

Suppose on different occasions patients suffering a trichophyta enter a building and come out with some substance i.e. miconazol which they apply on their affected skin. Sometimes the trichophyta disappears sometimes not. Sometimes it is seen that people suffering this trichophyta do not enter that building they seem to accept this. What have these situations in common? Why shouldn’t we see them as islands of different events and happenings that are not related to each other. How do we know what was going on on these islands? We interpret what was happening and we interpret the actions of the inhabitants of these islands as treating or not treating a patient with a trichophyta. That is the way we can make sense of the actions, we do not interpret the actions of the inhabitants as people buying a box of sand. We interpret this as people suffering from a disease which they try to cure with miconazol. In such interpretations we are the ones that interpret. And if we want to make sense of what was going on we are bound to suppose that people live in the same worlds as we do, people are rational as we are, have similar preference as we have. We interpret other situations and other people with these supposition which is known as the principle of charity. 25 We are not free to use this principle, we cannot choose it or abandon it. If we want to make sense of this world whether it concerns different persons on different parts of this world or on different times or about ourseles on different occasions, we are bound to it. And this principle accounts for the descriptions of and the similarity of different occasions.

The principle of charity prevents the disintegration. Experiences in different situations are connected by this principle. An outside objective world extending over time is necessarily presupposed if experiences are interpreted. Without such

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24See [http://nhg.artsennet.nl/standaarden/M64/start.htm](http://nhg.artsennet.nl/standaarden/M64/start.htm).
25See [Davidson, 1974](http://nhg.artsennet.nl/standaarden/M64/start.htm).
a world merely thinking one recognises a particular experience implies that one recognises it and that is contrary to the idea of recognising. Recognition could fail. The whole idea of "contrary to" would be impossible if there were not an outside world beyond our mind. There would be no difference between "inconsistency" and just "thinking two ideas do not fit". This objective out there, which is invoked, accounts for being contrary to or being the same, is the one world in which everything takes place. We we take it to be the same for all and in principle accessible to all, whether it concerns other persons or ourselves on different moments in other situations. Interpreting is not possible without this presupposition of one world. The principle of charity accounts for the connection of decisions in other situations.

But again are these interpretations not rule governed? Are not the connections between particular judgments in different situations connected by rules. Are we not following rules in judging? Indeed we could affirm this without accepting the authoritative power of rules. In the sense as suggested here, these rules cannot be accepted or not, they are used just as the principle of charity. They are not rules we can decide to follow, they are rules we just follow, we cannot do anything else they are beyond our cognitive power. They are the limits of our cognitive power, we cannot do without them, we have no choice to follow them or not follow them, just as we have no choice in seeing a table or not seeing a table if we see a table. In this sense rules cannot guide us as reasons, we just follow them.

It is different with the rules that are constructed as for example the "ratio decidendi" as in case law in the theory of "stare decisis" in the English method of law. Rules can be discerned as backing the "ratio decidendi", but these are only applicable and reasons for the case to be decided in court and not rules in general for further cases. What has to be taken as a "ratio decidendi" and what as superfluous statement in the precedent "obiter dictum" has to be decided for the case at hand. It is reminded here too that the issue is not that rules cannot be formulated but rules lack authoritative power. That is what particularists mean. Rules are not reasons. That I decided in such and such case in such and such a way is not a reason for doing it again. But it is not denied to have some relevance. It is relevant because it can help in discovering what the actual case in fact is about. Rules that can be stated and followed and rejected lack the authoritative power because they cannot be stated in an infallible way. Fallible rules cannot be authoritative. From authoritative rules we should expect infallibility. Otherwise what do we gain if we have to determine whether to use this rule or not in this particular case?

But can rules never be a reasons? I can say: "I do this because I follow that rule". This means that I act on behalf of that rule, in accordance with it. But what does that mean? The Wittgensteinian analysis makes clear that following the rule is precisely those actions one performs in following that rule, the rule is made up of these actions in following a rule. There is nothing between

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26 See the argument against private language [Wittenstein, 1945, §265].
27 See [Zweigert & Kötz, p.259-265]
following a rule and the action following a rule. We cannot point to that rule in distinctions apart from instances of following that rule. This explains why the Dutch compromise model of reflective equilibrium has to be rejected. That model suggests a difference between particular judgments or actions on one side and rules on the other. But there is no gap between them. They are one and the same. The following makes up the content of the rule. So acting with a rule as reason is acting seen in a particular way in a particular situation. It is this particular way in this particular situation which is the reason and not the rule or the actions of judgments in other situations.

Rules that can be stated and followed and rejected lack the authoritative power because they cannot be stated in an infallible way. Denying that separability has a priori validity means that rules lack general applicability and authority, they can fail. One could suggest of course: better follow a fallible rule than just your inclinations. But that is not the choice. It is a similar distortion to describe it as the choice between rigidly following rules and adjusting judgments in a flexible way to the demands of situations. All reject whimsiness and rigidity. And it is even not the main question what is better, following rules or not. Although the answer directs ones attention, sometimes it is recommended to pay the utmost attention to details, sometimes this is not recommended because life saving time is wasted. The main question is whether rules are authoritative reasons. Generalists say: Yes, particularists say: No.

But what is now gained by this. Instead of uncertainty of rules we now have uncertainty about facts? Is this not a hopeless victory? In a sense it is, but it is not the whole story. By acknowledging this interpretation of rules and this function of rules and accepting particularism our attention to solve moral problems is directed to where it should be direct to, not to moral theory but to the situation at hand and the different interpretations of it. Of course we will remain uncertain, but it is not uncertainty about moral principles but about our interpretations of this world. To be more specific it is uncertainty about what happened and how the world is going on. Later events influence the meaning of what happened. We do not need a moral theory in order to solve this uncertainty. We should be searching for meanings and many more resources are available for that than constructing and testing moral theories. This is an important insight with several consequences for education, for example the professional education in medicine. Professionals in the health sector are not helped by moral standards, moral rules moral checklists, but they are helped by allowing different ways of approaching difficult decisionmaking problems. They are helped by discovering the "ratio decidendi" in history and imaginary cases. Such a discovery takes time, the knowledge of an acquaintance with them cannot be pressed it can be given opportunities to develop. It comes with experience, but experience not measured in years or the amount of decisions made but by reflective experience. Professionals are not helped by handbooks of clinical ethics in which bystanders give advice what they should do. They should be helped by making their own decision. Advice is welcome but it has to be used

\[28\text{See [Wittenstein, 1945, §185]}\]
by those making the decisions in health care and that are the nurses, the doctors and not the clinical ethicists. The role of the latter is the role of a reflective citizen and may be it is better to replace the ethicist by a reflective citizen who is not preoccupied by finding the right moral theory.

4 Conclusion

As was explained the central claim of particularism is the denial of the a priori separability of reasons. In other words particularism rejects the a priori weighing of reasons with a balance in which the weights of reasons that are placed on that balance depend on their weights in other situations. Generalists hold this balance model to be the principal model of practical reasoning.

It explains that the issue between generalists and particularists is not settled by examples or counterexamples because it concerns the a priori character of rules or separable reasons. It could happen that all reasons are in fact separable but this would be just a coincidence it doesn’t need to be.

Because particularists reject the a priori separability of rules they see no way to extract from particular judgments rules that have authoritative power. That one cannot point to rules to defend ones moral judgment is not a problem if one leaves the judicial ceremonial background and realizes one is not after knock down arguments but after moral evaluation that one can explain to others by pointing to important features of the situation.

Finally it was explained that rejecting the a priori separability does not mean a disintegration of the world. Situations and judgments of situations are connected to each other by being elements of one world in which we interpret what is going on. The principle of charity accounts for the unity of this world. Separability is not a necessity. So far the rules can be stated and formulated these are not infallible and so lack the authority. So far these rules are the bridges we just follow they lack the reason giving character of rules.

Particularism directs our attention to the direction we should be directed to: the situation and case at hand and not to debates about the correctness or incorrectness of moral theories. This has some consequences about our view on what the role of ethicists should be in for example professional education in medicine. They should help the professionals making up their own minds, i.e the role of a reflective citizen.
References


