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The Reconciliation Project: Separation and Integration in Business Ethics Research

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ABSTRACT. This article is about the relationship between business and ethics in academic research. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the status of the separation and the integration theses. In the course of this article, I defend the claim that neither separation nor integration is entirely accurate; indeed they are both potentially confusing to our audience. A strategy of reconciliation of normative and descriptive approaches is proposed. The reconciliation project does not entail synthesizing or dividing prescriptive and empirical approaches, but rather respecting the identity of both inquiries, while recognizing the limitations they place on each other. The research agenda of the reconciliation project is discussed.

KEY WORDS: business ethics research, separation thesis, integration thesis

Introduction

At the core of the foundation of business, and critical to the identity and social legitimacy of our field, one of the central concerns of the contemporary business ethics agenda is the so-called "separation thesis" or "separation fallacy."

The relationship between ethics and the sciences in business and economics is a shared concern with other areas of applied ethics which are necessarily interdisciplinary, such as bioethics, environmental ethics, and legal philosophy. Whereas some philosophers and scientists argue that applied ethics is a contradiction in terms and business ethics an oxymoron (e.g., Duska, 2000; Kagan, 1998; Kitcher, 1994), other scholars have recently advocated full integration between the domain of business and economics and that of ethics (e.g., Harris and Freeman, 2008; Victor and Stephens, 1994; Werhane, 1994). The key issue lies in the justification and intensity of such integration.

This article is about the interplay between business and ethics in the academic domain. It is specifically concerned with the separation and integration theses in business ethics and business and society research, as articulated by Freeman (1994, 2000; Harris and Freeman, 2008). The purpose of this investigation is to examine the status of the separation and integration theses in the business ethics literature. In the course of this article, I shall defend the view that whereas there are enough reasons to challenge the separation thesis, those reasons are insufficient to embrace a full integration between normative and descriptive approaches in business ethics research. Given the deficiencies of both separation and integration, I argue for what I call the reconciliation project, a position which is not a middle-ground between separation and integration, and which does not entail synthesizing or dividing these inquiries.

Two clarifications about the scope of this article are in order. First, this article is about the status of separation and integration in the realm of academic business ethics. It is primarily focused on the understanding of the separation and integration theses in the work of Freeman (1994, 2000; Harris and Freeman, 2008), allegedly the most influential in business ethics scholarship. There are other accounts of the relationship between business and ethics and other proposals for partial and full integration, which shall not be comprehensively examined in this article (e.g., Hartman, 2011; Kahn, 1990; Treviño and Weaver, 1994). Second, this article is not intended as a critique of Freeman's research or as a challenge to his contributions. My argument, it should go without saying, is not a criticism of Freeman's intellect. Rather, it is the very depth and grandeur of his thought that makes it worthy of such attention. The purpose of this article is merely to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the normative and the descriptive domain in academic business ethics.

The article is organized into six sections. "Interpreting and assessing the separation thesis" section examines the articulation of the separation thesis in Freeman's work. "Two traditions of business ethics research" section briefly reviews the state of the discussion in business ethics research along the lines of the normative/empirical divide. "The case against separation and integration" section raises a number of objections against both the separation and the integration thesis. "Reconciliation and polyphony" section outlines the reconciliation project, which is the main contribution of this article. "Conclusion" section concludes.

Interpreting and assessing the separation thesis

The official story tells us that Freeman originally introduced the "Separation Thesis" in his presentation to the 1993 Annual Meeting of the Society for Business Ethics (Wicks, 1996). In the context of a number of controversies associated with the foundations of his stakeholder theory, Freeman denounced that we held a mistaken position on the relationship between economics and ethics (Wempe, 2008). He argued that we see business and ethics as two independent realms, thereby confirming the pervasive view that business ethics is an oxymoron.

Freeman observes that this thesis has a long and rich story. He cites Sen (1987) as one of the first commentators of how the separation thesis has come to endure in the realm of economics. In his original articulation, Freeman lays out what he considers the traditional view in business ethics, which goes along these lines:

> The discourse of business and the discourse of ethics can be separated so that sentences like, "x is a business decision" have no moral content, and "x is a moral decision" has no business content. (1994, p. 412)

More recently, Freeman has defined the separation thesis as follows:

> It is useful to believe that sentences like, "x is a business decision" have no ethical content or any implicit ethical point of view. And, it is useful to believe that sentences like "x is an ethical decision, the best thing to do all things considered" have no content or implicit view about value creation and trade (business). (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 7)

The separation thesis underlies much of the mainstream conversation about business and capitalism, Freeman maintains. Moreover, it is reinforced by the standard approach to research in business schools, in which ethics and values play a marginal role (2000, p. 172). It has important implications in the way corporations are governed as well as in the way business schools are teaching management theories.

Our discourse about the nature of business and economics reflects the dominance of the separation thesis. When we think about business and business decision-making, we think about opportunistic, self-interested agents (Coase, 1937; Smith, 1993). We think about rationality (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Simon, 1976). We see business corporations as the exclusive property of stockholders and, maybe, bondholders (Friedman, 1962, 1970). We revere finance and economics, which are perceived as scientific disciplines with no place for values and ethics (Moran and Ghoshal, 1996). Conversely, a common understanding of what ethics is has much to do with altruistic behavior and compassionate feelings. With impartiality. With the so-called moral point of view (Rawls, 1971). Ethics in business is associated with stakeholder management and with a broad conceptualization of the social responsibilities of business firms (Freeman, 1994). We think about philosophical theorizing. We suggest normative statements and conceptual models (Bowie, 2000). We even associate ethics in the conduct of business with being softhearted (Freeman, 2000).

The division is reflected in the scripts for business decision-making by excluding the moral dimension of business problems. And it is also reflected in the organizational structure and the informal cultures of business organizations (Treviño et al., 1999; Vidaver-Cohen, 1998). Moreover, the assumptions of much of economic theory and the effects of these assumptions on people and institutions can be harmful, as Ghosal and his collaborators have argued. As a result, teaching agency theory in business schools has created agency problems (Ferraro et al., 2005; Moran and Ghoshal, 1996).

However, the main problem with the separation thesis, Freeman claims, lies not in its potential consequences for the way organizations are governed or in the implications for management education. Rather, the separation thesis is, according to Freeman and other business ethics scholars, a logical fallacy (e.g., Harris and Freeman, 2008; Radin, 2002; Vidaver-Cohen, 1998; Wempe, 2008; Wicks, 1996). Therefore, it should be rejected.

Now, there are (at least) two critical issues with the separation thesis. The first issue is about the correct understanding of this thesis, at least under Freeman's articulation. The second problem is related to the critical evaluation of the separation thesis and to whether, as Freeman and his collaborators argue, it ought to be rejected.

What the separation thesis amounts to is a matter of controversy and the subject of a recent debate in *Business Ethics Quarterly* (Volume 18, issues 2 and 4). Sandberg lucidly argues that while there is a general agreement in the business ethics community that the separation thesis should be rejected, there is no consensus on how to understand the thesis and why exactly it should be rejected (2008a, p. 227).

Sandberg suggests that there are many possible interpretations of the separation thesis; he offers nine quite different versions ranging from semantic, to empirical, to reformative, to normative thesis on how to understand separation. He concludes that it is not clear if all these versions should be treated the same. More importantly, he maintains that it is not obvious that they should be rejected at all, and if so, whether they should be rejected for the very same reasons.

In response, Harris and Freeman claims that distinguishing business from ethics is ''not only an unfruitful and meaningless task, it is also an impossible endeavor'' (2008, p. 541). Likewise, Wempe replies to Sandberg that ''managers and economists are not longer allowed to conceptualize problems from a purely economic perspective'' and ''ethicists should refrain from pure moralizing'' (2008, p. 552). And Dienhart concludes, ''every business decision is an ethical decision'' because ''business decisions are a proper subset of ethical decisions'' (2008, p. 556).

Hence, how should we interpret the separation thesis after all? What does it amount to? Elaborating on the debate between Freeman and his commentators, one may say that there are at least three ways to address the question. The separation thesis may be interpreted along the lines of a descriptive account of the relationship between business, economics, and ethics. Or it may be interpreted as a prescriptive thesis about what business is about. Finally, it may be interpreted as a radical rejection of the very distinction between descriptive and prescriptive analysis. Wisely, Freeman has employed the separation thesis in these three senses. In the following paragraphs, I shall briefly present and assess these interpretations.

The separation thesis as a descriptive thesis

The separation thesis can be understood as an empirical thesis about either the conceptualization of commercial activities by businessmen or the state of the art in business ethics scholarship.

According to the first line of reasoning, the separation thesis describes how business executives think and behave on the relationship between business and ethics. Is the separation thesis an accurate description? In a famous *Harvard Business Review* article, Carr expresses a view that is consistent with this understanding of the separation thesis by arguing that business is an amoral activity and that businessmen cease to be moral persons in their office lives to instead become game players ''who must be guided by a somewhat different set of ethical standards'' (1968, p. 145). According to this analysis, a business executive is a player, someone who is guided by a different set of principles, who cannot afford to indulge in ethical sentiments because that might cost his or her seat in the table. In the end, ''Business ethics is an oxymoron'' may still be the dominant paradigm; it has still 12,400 entries in a simple Google search. And the separation thesis as a descriptive account is certainly consistent with the prevailing explanation of the recent financial scandals and the behavior of the most prominent business leaders involved in such cases, from Ken Lay, to Bernard Madoff, to Raj Rajaratnam.

Alternatively, the separation thesis can be seen as a descriptive thesis of how business ethicists conceptualize the nature of business and the foundations of management theories. That seems to be, to some extent, part of Freeman's original endeavor of highlighting the disturbing implications of the pervasive wisdom in the management literature, which does not integrate the ethical dimension of business decision-making.

Is the separation thesis an accurate description of the state of the art in business ethics research? Wicks argues that there is ample evidence confirming that the separation thesis is a widely held view. Indeed, he tries to show that "management researchers are helping to reinforce this thesis" (1996, p. 91). Confirming the gap between business research and ethics research, a recent study on empirical business ethics has shown that while the study of ethics in organizations has witnessed significant strides over the last five decades, we have reasons to be "disappointed by the lack of representation in Academy of Management journals" (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008, p. 546). Business ethics scholars receive an indifferent reception from their colleagues in both philosophy departments and business schools. Business ethics is "pretty much ignored by the profession" in philosophy (Bowie, 2000, p. 15), presumably because business does not entail a philosophically appealing endeavor and because most people in the arts and humanities find business and commerce wholly distasteful. Likewise, management scholars doubt whether ethicists have anything of interest to contribute to business. According to Freeman, "the mainstream conversations in business have had little to do with the work of these philosophers" and business can ignore normative business ethics "without so much as a glance" (2000, p. 169).

In sum, there are good reasons to believe that the separation thesis provides an accurate description of the way businessmen think and act about ethics in business and/or the way management scholars and even business ethicists conceptualize the relationship between the normative domain of ethics and the descriptive domain of business. Precisely because as a descriptive thesis the separation thesis can be somehow accurate, it does not seem to be the right interpretation of Freeman's separation thesis. That is because, as explained above, Freeman calls for the rejection of the separation thesis. He intends to establish that the separation thesis is a fallacy. However, one needs to provide empirical evidence to disconfirm the descriptive interpretation of the separation thesis; that is, to disconfirm the hypothesis of separation and reject the separation thesis. And that is not Freeman's main goal.

The separation thesis as a normative thesis

The separation thesis can be interpreted as a normative thesis about either how businessmen ought to think and behave or as a prescriptive statement on the social responsibilities of business firms, or as a recommendation of how business ethicists ought to think and write about the interplay of business and ethics.[1]

In the first sense – how businessmen and business firms ought to behave – Freeman's argument for the stakeholder model of the corporation is actually based upon the interpretation of the separation thesis as an ethical claim: the demands of business and morality are incompatible and the only responsibility of business firms and business executives is to maximize shareholder wealth. These claims are false and thus, the separation thesis should be rejected, Freeman concludes. The neoclassical account of the social responsibilities of business firms provided by Friedman (1970), Jensen and Meckling (1976) and the likes advocates this (normative) interpretation of the separation thesis. Building upon two hundred years of research in economics and finance, Jensen (2010) argues that, given that it is logically impossible to maximize in more than one dimension, purposeful corporate behavior requires a single-valued objective function. And so, social welfare is only maximized when each firm in an economy aims to maximize its total market value. That is indeed the sole moral responsibility of business managers and hence, of business corporations.

Freeman (1994, 1999, 2000; Freeman et al., 2004; Wicks et al., 2010) famously argues against the single-objective view of the corporation and goes on to say that value maximization is a narrow theory of the nature of corporations which does not do justice to the complexities of value creation and trade in business organizations. The debate over the nature and purpose of business firms far exceeds the scope of this article. Thus, I shall not take a position but rather defer to the rich literature on business ethics and business and society discussing the work of Friedman and Freeman (e.g., Boatright, 1994; Goodpaster, 1991; Hasnas, 1998; Rodin, 2005).[2]

In the second normative sense – how scholars ought to think and teach management and business ethics theories – the separation thesis is formulated as a requirement to keep business and ethics isolated from each other because they are just incompatible. Ethics is, according to this view, a branch of philosophy with no meaningful connection with the world of business. And business is a practically oriented activity where there is no room for entertaining a philosophical conversation. Business executives need to solve practical problems and hence, business scholars should provide a reliable (technical) framework to understand and solve those problems. The idea that practical problems have nothing to do with ethics owes something to the Humean notion, now widespread, that rationality applies only to means and not to ends. Then, if the end is profit, business scholars should only be talking about the means and whether they are effective, not whether they are ethical.

In academia, the traditional views on the ethics of commerce are consistent with this normative understanding of the separation thesis. Plato found commerce to be lowly and Aristotle regards business as an inferior profession: traders and merchants did not have a chance to live morally excellent lives (Machan, 2004). And a normative interpretation of Marx's claim that capitalism was built on the exploitation of labor leads not only to a moral condemnation of capitalism, but also serves as advice to those pursuing studies in ethics (Brenkert, 1983).

Furthermore, Freeman sees some exemplary contributions to business ethics research as "accepting some form of" this interpretation of the separation thesis; for example, the work on stakeholder theory by Donaldson and Preston (1995) and Mitchell et al. (1997) (2000, p. 172).

As explained above, Freeman pleads for the rejection of the separation thesis because it is a fallacy. Why so? Freeman's arguments for the rejection of this (normative) understanding of the separation thesis – as how scholars should think about the relationship between business and ethics – are basically two. First, he argues that this version of the separation thesis is inconsistent with the principle that "most people, most of the time, take, or want to take, responsibility for the effects of their actions on others" (2000, p. 172). Consequently, asking researchers to keep business and ethics isolated is not only detrimental to the development of the field but, more importantly, it makes ethics and morality meaningless. As Freeman puts it, "if business is truly separate from morality then responsibility plays no role" (2000, p. 172). Second, he argues that economics counts and value creation can take place even when the parties share few values. In his words, "value creation and trade are resilient practices that have developed over millennia, before the advent of modern governments, before trade agreements, and before the large multinational corporation" (2000, p. 173).

Freeman is not alone in rejecting this second (normative) articulation of the separation thesis. For instance, Werhane argues that "neither the methodology of social scientists is purely descriptive nor that of the philosophers is strictly normative" (1994, p. 177). In the same vein, Trevino and Weaver have encouraged more "dialogue about the potential for integration in the field" of business ethics (1994, p. 113). Wicks calls for a reformulation of business and society research and the conceptualization of business activities (1996, p. 111). Margolis challenges us to "bring empirical and normative inquiry together" (1998, p. 409). Singer explores directions for "a normative-empirical dialogue about business ethics" (1998, p. 489). And Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe encourage management scholars to meet philosophers and theologians and "understand what they have to offer us in our pursuit to define 'ethical behavior'" (2008, p. 586).

To sum up, there are good reasons to understand the separation thesis along the lines of a normative statement about either how business executives should think and behave on the relationship between ethics and business or how scholars should think and teach on such a relationship. And there may be good reasons to reject the normative interpretation of the separation thesis. However, Freeman's proposal intends to be more radical, as explained next.

The separation thesis as an endorsement of the normative/descriptive divide

In his 2000 article about business ethics at the millennium and the future of the field, Freeman makes clear that he originally formulated the separation thesis "to be used as a diagnostic device to examine the current state of the mainstream conversation about business and capitalism." However, he thinks it works well to diagnose "the conversation about business, ethics, and society" (2000, p. 172).

The third interpretation of what is wrong with the separation thesis is, then, neither a descriptive statement about the beliefs of businessmen and/or business scholars nor a normative statement about what businessmen and business scholars should think about the interplay between business and ethics. Rather, it is a radical departure from the very distinction between the normative and the empirical inquiry in business ethics research. The separation thesis simply holds that there is a difference between business and ethics, which reflects a difference between descriptive and normative statements, between the social sciences and philosophy. However, the separation thesis, as noted, is a fallacy, according to Freeman.[3]

Freeman anticipated this idea in his earlier work on the separation thesis, when he suggested that we should drop the view that we can meaningfully talk about business and ethics while keeping the concepts of each autonomous (1994, p. 413). This view is explicitly formulated as one form of the separation thesis. Freeman argues that "relying heavily on the fact-value – or descriptive-normative – distinction is a form of the separation thesis" (1999, p. 234).

Such a distinction is still widely held in philosophy and the sciences. Traditionally, both scientists and philosophers have endorsed the fact-value distinction (Kitcher, 1994). Social scientists, inspired by the natural sciences model, see themselves as exclusively concerned with the description and explanation of social phenomena, focusing on facts and cause-and-effect relationships. They have maintained that only a value-free sociology, a value-free psychology, a value-free economics, etc., are defensible. Positive economics, for example, is concerned exclusively with the analysis of economic behavior, in a way that avoids any value judgment (Samuelson, 1947). It is distinguished from "normative economics" (Keynes, 1891). Friedman defended Keynes's distinction between positive and normative economics; that is, between what is and what ought to be in economic matters. He argues that as a science, economics should be free from normative judgments in order to be respected as an objective field "in precisely the same sense as any of the physical sciences" (1953, p. 4). Likewise, in the management literature, right from the beginning Simon promoted logical positivism in management research as a requirement for the development of a respectable science of administration. Simon argued for a strong distinction between facts and values: the new field – a science of public administration – is concerned only with facts, as science is. Propositions based on facts, Simon argues, can be "tested to determine whether they are true or false – whether what they say about the world actually occurs or whether it does not" (1976, p. 45).

In his response to Sandberg, Freeman declares that understanding the separation thesis as supporting the normative/descriptive divide in academic business ethics is precisely the implied articulation that he considers problematic. The separation thesis "is based on – and merely a manifestation of – the underlying, more fundamental problem of the fact-value dichotomy" (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 542). The argument for its rejection is twofold. First, separating economic considerations from ethical considerations is impossible: "we cannot single out particular 'facts' from their underlying narratives" (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 542). Second, separating facts from values produce detrimental second-order effects (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 541).

A careful analysis of these and other arguments against this understanding of the separation thesis is provided below. For now, it is relevant to remember that Freeman is not alone in rejecting the fact/value distinction in business ethics. Relying on Freeman's arguments, Wicks (1996) also calls for overcoming the separation thesis in business and society research. Victor and Stephens argue, "business ethics is fundamentally both descriptive and normative" (1994, p. 150). And Hartman suggests how, in the Aristotelian tradition, virtues explain and prescribe actions, thereby leading to the rejection of the separation thesis (2008, pp. 259–260).

In sum, the separation between *is* and *ought*, facts and values, and/or descriptive and normative statements seems to be the preferred articulation of the separation thesis in Freeman's recent work, and the one adopted in this article. As it will be discussed in the next section, this is a widespread view in business ethics scholarship. I shall defer the evaluation of the arguments for and against this interpretation of the separation thesis to "The case against separation and integration" section.

Two traditions of business ethics research

So far we have concluded that the separation thesis can be articulated as a manifestation of the underlying and more fundamental problem of the descriptive/normative divide in business ethics research. Exactly what is this dichotomy and why does it matter at all?

For much of the twentieth century, philosophy and science went their separate ways. Moral philosophers, variously inspired by Hume's injunction against inferring an "ought" from an "is" and Moore's Open Question Argument, maintained that descriptive considerations of the sort offered in the natural and social sciences cannot constrain ethical reflection without vitiating its prescriptive nature (Hare, 1952; Hume, 1888; Moore, 1903; Stevenson, 1944). No valid argument has a conclusion that is a moral claim and premises that form a consistent set of non-moral claims.

The distinction between *is* and *ought*, facts and values, and/or descriptive, and normative statements is reflected in the development of business ethics as an academic field.[4] Two longstanding traditions have been developed in business ethics research. One – *normative business ethics* – is roughly concerned with theories of how business persons ought to behave and how organizations ought to be governed. The other – *empirical (or behavioral) business ethics* – is concerned with how business persons behave and how organizations are actually conducted; that is, with the antecedents and consequences of allegedly moral behavior. The former tradition has been developed by philosophers, who applied their expertise on ethical theory to the business world. The latter tradition – called "business and society" – has been developed in business schools by management scholars, most of whom are trained as social scientists.[5]

Normative theories are about how people ought to act and how they ought to live. They are not claims about how people do act as a matter of fact. We are not (and we should not) be surprised if people sometimes fail to do what they are required to do and fail to live in the way they should live. They may fail frequently; they may fail sporadically; they fail. However, a (normative) statement about how people ought to behave should not be mistaken for a description of how people in fact behave. Hence, as the distinction goes, one cannot disprove any normative claim about what people ought to do merely by describing that they do not actually behave that way. Even if we found that all human beings have a powerful and uncontrollable disposition to lie, such a finding would not help much in establishing whether a prohibition of lying or intentionally deceiving others can be morally justified. Conversely, social scientists are concerned with descriptions of what people (and groups) believe, with predictions and explanations of why people (and groups) do what they do. That is logically independent from the moral evaluation of such practices and behavior.

There are (at least) five dimensions along which the empirical and the normative inquiry in business ethics differ. They are summarized in Table I. Normative theories in business ethics intend to prescribe behavior; they are mostly concerned with reflection on business practice and a rational critique of moral judgments in organizational contexts. In contrast, the empirical approach is intended to respond to the question of what is. It is descriptive. The empirical approach defines ethical behavior in an allegedly neutral way, meaning ethical choices and decisions, rather than conformity to certain moral standards. Both the normative and the behavioral approaches to business ethics research have developed their own vocabulary in isolation from each other. While "ethical" is an evaluative term in normative ethics – which normally connotes right or morally appropriate – it is merely a descriptive term in behavioral business ethics,

TABLE I

Descriptive and normative business ethics

	Descriptive	Normative
Question	Is	Ought to be
Language ("ethics")	Ethical choice (perceptions of)	Right/wrong Good/bad
Methods	Testing predictions vs. observations	Conceptual analysis and critique
Human nature	External determination	Autonomy
Evaluation	Solve business problems	Reflective equilibrium

meaning the behavior of an agent facing a decision that has any bearing on moral matters (where the definition of which matters are "moral matters" is an empirical question about what people think to be a morally relevant issue). They also differ on their assumptions about human nature. Prescriptive business ethics assumes that individuals are autonomous beings. In contrast, behavioral business ethicists tend to be determinist, in the sense that they assume that human behavior is lawful and determined by external factors as well as constrained by external barriers. Thus, research methodologies are also radically different. While empirically oriented studies are committed to formulating testable propositions and testing their predictions against observations – to the point of ignoring psychological events and states entirely on the grounds that they are unobservable – prescriptive business ethics relies primarily on conceptual analysis and a rational critique of our considered moral judgments. Consequently, the parameters used to judge whether a theory is sound are also different. Whereas a sound descriptive theory is one that can provide reliable predictions and explanations of behavior and one that is useful in solving practical problems and guiding practical interventions, a sound normative theory is one that achieves a reflective equilibrium between normative principles and our considered judgments and beliefs.

The case against separation and integration

The articulation of the separation thesis along the lines of the descriptive/normative dichotomy in business ethics research is the most problematic. Freeman argues that it is a fallacy. He pleads for the rejection of the separation thesis. And he proposes that it should be replaced with the integration thesis. In this section, I shall discuss the objections against the separation thesis, introduce Freeman's integration thesis, and highlight why the integration thesis is as problematic as separation.

What is wrong with separation?

Freeman's case against the separation thesis is threefold. First, separating facts from values when it comes to value creation is impossible (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 542). Second, the fact/value dichotomy is inconsistent with the principle that most people, most of the time, take or want to take responsibility for the results of their actions (Freeman, 2000, p. 172). Third, by embracing the fact/value distinction, scholars help to inculcate a certain (negative) social narrative about business and ethics that devalues ethical considerations (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 543).

The first part of the argument is close to the formulation of the integration thesis, which is discussed in the next subsection. The second part of the argument is contentious, as we can say that ethics makes sense even in the absence of people accepting responsibility for the consequences of their actions. It is not clear what follows from the fact (supposing it is a fact) that people take responsibility for the effects of their actions, or that they want to do so. Surely what matters is that they are morally obligated to accept this responsibility. Or, to put it another way, they have this responsibility whether they take it or not. Third, although it may be true that endorsing the separation thesis brings about a number of negative second-order effects, this is not enough in itself to make the fact/value distinction (and the separation thesis) a fallacy.

My case against the separation thesis elaborates not only on Freeman's work on the separation thesis, but also on other contributions from management and the philosophy of sciences that pertains to the discussion of the separation thesis. I shall advance five objections against the separation thesis:

i. *There is no purely objective empirical business ethics*. The ideal of positivism, of a purely objective perspective, is just that – an ideal. However, it cannot be achieved in reality because social scientists cannot entirely disengage their own values from the studies. They must make a number of value-laden decisions, including the selection of observational techniques, the position of the scientist, and the selection of what will be observed, which decisively affect the object of observation and the conclusions that will be reached. Hence, scientific theories rely on normative assumptions, and so the ideal of value-free business ethics is, at most, a mere ideal.

ii. *Value creation brings together economics and ethics*. As Freeman rightly argues, value creation is inherently concerned with ethics and values. It brings together the dimension of facts and the moral dimension. It is not only about the creation of wealth, but also about the consideration of its distribution, or whose interests are being affected by productive activities. In the long term, developing outstanding organizations entails, among other things, creating ethical organizations. And thus, long-term value and profitability converge (Wicks et al., 2010).

iii. *To some extent, facts and values are entangled*. An important part of our moral language ignores the supposed fact/value dichotomy and allows itself to be used sometimes for a normative purpose and sometimes as a descriptive term. Such concepts are often referred to as "thick ethical concepts" (Putnam, 2002, p. 35). Those concepts challenge the descriptive/normative distinction. Putnam discusses the example of the word "cruel" to illustrate the deep entanglement of facts and values. We can extend the example to our business ethics vocabulary. For example, "environmentally sustainable" has clear normative connotations, in the sense that anytime we talk about some practice or behavior as being "environmentally sustainable" we engage in the evaluation of the practice or of the corporation responsible for those practices. Yet, the expression "environmentally sustainable" can also be used in a descriptive sense, as management scholars do when exploring the links between sustainability and financial performance (Russo and Fouts, 1997). Hence, "environmentally sustainable" may be an entangled notion, which is neither clearly descriptive nor clearly normative. The notion of sustainability may be cashed out in descriptive language invoking the long term. Might someone agree that a practice is sustainable but still deny that it is necessarily appropriate for a firm?

iv. *Influential research is both descriptive and prescriptive*. As Bazerman has recently argued, the reason why economics – as opposed to the other social sciences – has been so successful in influencing market and business activity is its ability to offer prescriptions. Bazerman claims that if we want management theory – and, we may add, business ethics theory – to influence business and government, "we must have a useful advice to share. Yet, most researchers in the other social sciences offer only descriptive research" (2005, p. 26).

v. *Ought implies can*. The development of sound normative business ethics theories should rely on realistic assumptions about the kind of persons to whom those theories are directed, the kind of person we can possibly be. That is, business ethics theories must take seriously the kind of persons we are, what we can actually achieve, and the types of cognitive and motivational structures we have. For a moral theory that is not realizable in principle by the creatures for whom it is intended places us under serious moral quandaries (Alzola, 2009).

There may be other objections raised against the separation thesis. And advocates of the separation thesis may offer several replies. For example, they may argue that even as an ideal, the goal of value-free management research is worth pursuing. They may try to discredit the old philosophical principle that *ought implies can*.[6] They may deny that one of the goals of business ethics research is to influence the business world and government policy. For the sake of space, I shall not address these objections here (but see Sandberg, 2008a, b). My conclusion, then, will be minimalist. We have good reasons to believe that the separation thesis is problematic. I shall not say for now whether these reasons are enough to reject the separation thesis but rather move to the discussion of the competing thesis, the so-called integration thesis.

The integration thesis

Freeman pleads that the separation thesis is a fallacy and hence, it should be rejected. Instead of the separation thesis, we need a new conceptualization of business, a new foundation that has as its basis what he calls the integration thesis. Yet, Freeman denies the need for normative foundational justification of his theory (i.e., stakeholder theory) but prefers some "simple and very practical ideas" (Agle et al., 2008, p. 163).

The original version of the integration thesis was articulated as follows:

> most business decisions or statements about business have some ethical content or an implicit ethical view. Most ethical decisions or statements about ethics have some business content or an implicit view about business. (Freeman et al., 2010, p. 7)

Freeman thinks that it is no longer useful to separate questions of business and questions of ethics. As a matter of fact, that is "not only an unfruitful and meaningless task, it is also an impossible endeavor" (Harris and Freeman, 2008, p. 541). We would have "a more useful ethics if we built into our normative ideals the need to understand how we create value and trade" (Agle et al., 2008).

In his most recent textbook, Freeman offers two versions of the integration thesis.

Integration thesis (I)

> Most business decisions, or statements about business, have some implicit ethical view. Most ethical decisions, or statements about ethics, have some implicit view about business. (Wicks et al., 2010, p. 73)

And he provides another way to articulate this idea.

Integration thesis (II)

> 1. It makes no sense to talk about business without talking about ethics.
> 2. It makes no sense to talk about ethics without talking about business.
> 3. It makes no sense to talk about either business or ethics without talking about human beings (Wicks et al., 2010, p. 73).

The articulation of the integration thesis is quite important for our purpose, as it will not only suggest the justification for integration, but also determine the extent and limits of the integrative project.

Even accepting the objections against the separation thesis as a reflection of the descriptive/normative dichotomy, we need to discuss whether the integration thesis holds. The last part of this section is devoted to such an evaluation.

Why the integration thesis does not work either

There may be different ways to give substance to the idea of integration in business ethics research. One might think about different degrees of theoretical integration, all of them entailing some form of hybridization; that is, a development of new theory as a result of blending the cores of the two basic inquiries. For example, Frederick (2004) defends such a conception of full integration by bringing together evolutionary biology, physics, cognitive neuroscience, and evolutionary psychology in order to understand the biogenetic determinants of business behavior.

Weaver and Treviño (1994) list three varieties of hybridization. The first is called conceptual importation and entails that empirical research implicitly assumes normative categorizations of moral phenomena. A second variety is called theoretical reciprocity and assumes the intentional interdependence of normative and empirical theories. The third variety of integration is called theoretical unity and rejects the distinction between normative and descriptive research in business ethics for being untenable, given that there is no normatively neutral description of human activity and that social facts are inseparable from the interpretive stances of the actors who constitute society. Even those business ethicists advocating integration – e.g., Freeman (2008), Werhane (1994), and Victor and Stephens (1994) – defend different forms of integration, for different reasons.

In the remainder of this section, I shall provide four objections to the integration thesis as articulated by Freeman. The first two objections are based on putative counterexamples to the second version of the *integration thesis (II)*. The last two are objections to the first version of the *integration thesis (I)*.

Counterexample-based objections to integration

The integration thesis (II) holds that (1) it makes no sense to talk about business without talking about ethics and (2) it makes no sense to talk about ethics without talking about business. "Most" business decisions are, then, ethical decisions and "most" ethical decisions are business decisions.

One way to challenge the integration thesis (II) is by providing counterexample-based objections to (1) and (2). I shall argue that (1) there are counterexamples of ''morally neutral'' behavior that are economically relevant and (2) there are ''economically neutral'' decisions that are still morally relevant.

Regarding the first sort of counterexamples, we can think about some business decisions that are made entirely on economic grounds because the alternatives are, all things considered, equivalent in terms of the consequences they will likely bring about and how they will affect the interests, needs, and entitlements of every corporate constituent and third parties. Business decisions about, say, whether to have white or blue uniform shirts can be thought of as counterexamples to (1).

Likewise, decisions about location planning, inventory levels, packaging, and so on might be framed this way. Consider decisions about corporate headquarters in the United States. The state of Delaware has no sales tax, no personal property tax, and no intangible property tax. And the annual franchise tax on corporations in Delaware is among the lowest of all the states. More than 50% of all U.S. publicly traded companies and 50% of the Fortune 500 companies have their legal home in the state of Delaware. Now, all other things equal, one may say that choosing Delaware over, say, Illinois is a morally neutral decision, yet economically relevant.[7]

The second kind of counterexamples would challenge (2) by showing that there might be ''economically neutral'' decisions that are still morally relevant. The sort of cases I have in mind concern the state of character of the decision-maker. Consider, for example, corporate decisions about bribery. A business manager may refuse to pay a bribe to a public official for a number of reasons. He or she may do it out of fear of being caught and jailed if the payment is discovered. Or, he or she may refuse to pay a bribe merely because the corporate code of ethics does not allow those kinds of payments. Or, he or she may not pay the bribe because he or she thinks he or she is not the kind of person who would engage in bribery. The distinction between the motivations behind the manager's behavior is very significant from a moral perspective, as it pertains to the evaluation of the agent. Yet, from an economic perspective, the difference – that is, the inner states of the manager leading to the decision – does not matter at all because the firm's behavior is exactly the same. Similarly, we might find that treating employees very unpleasantly has no discernible effect on the bottom line, but we do not have to know the effect on the bottom line to say that one ought not to be uncivil to one's employees.

Although the counterexamples just provided are not only conceivable but to some extent usual, I shall not heavily rely on these objections to substantiate my claim that the integration thesis is problematic. We should not take Freeman's second articulation of the integration thesis too literally. The core objection against full integration is concerned, I submit, with the identity of the normative and the descriptive inquiries in business ethics research.

The identity objections

Integration thesis (I) holds that it does not make any sense to distinguish business concerns from ethical values because most business decisions have an implicit ethical view and most ethical decisions have an implicit economic view.

Even granting that *most* business decisions have an implicit moral dimension and *most* morally relevant decisions in the business world are indeed economic decisions, those premises do not lead to the conclusion that it is impossible or meaningless to make a distinction between descriptive and normative statements, facts and values, and/or theories intended to respond the question of *what is* and theories concerned with the question of *what ought to be.*

What I call here the identity objection comprises two basic claims. First, prescriptive and empirical theories cannot be fully integrated without losing their identity. Second, full hybridization will create more confusion for our audience. Let me briefly elaborate on these objections.

Regarding the first objection, the normative and the descriptive inquiries to business ethics research serve two different purposes and, as explained above, are concerned with a different set of research questions. Whereas descriptive approaches intend to respond to questions about facts and causal relationships, normative approaches are concerned with the question of what ought to be. Since they serve different questions, they use a different language, they have developed distinctive methodologies, they rely on different assumptions about human nature, and they have different tests to evaluate the soundness of a theory. In other words, we cannot describe causes and evaluate behavior using the same set of integrated axioms.

Normative questions cannot be settled by an appeal to the work of psychologists, sociologists, etc. What people (or groups) believe or do is different from substantive moral claims. And the causal relationships that worry social scientists are not to be answered by normative statements. Consequently, it comes as no surprise how different it is to defend an ethical theory, as opposed to defend a scientific one. In choosing between scientific theories, scientists draw upon empirical evidence; that is, by conducting experiments, testing predictions against observations, historical analysis, interviews, surveys, and so on. None of these methods are available in normative research. What kind of experiments would we need to test whether whistleblowing is morally right or insider trading morally wrong?[8] Observations can neither grant nor undermine a normative claim by themselves.[9]

It is a matter of logic. The justification for evaluating some business practices or behaviors as right or wrong must be kept logically differentiated from the causal forces that explain or predict such practices or behaviors. Hence, they cannot be fully integrated without losing *part* of the identity of both inquiries.[10] The project of full integration is, as Donaldson (1994) observes, like attempting to combine triangularity and circularity.

The second objection is concerned with the likely consequences of full hybridization for business ethics research. The complete merger of normative and behavioral approaches is potentially misleading to our audience. It may lead us to judge empirical findings on normative grounds and to assess normative business ethics theories on the basis on their predictive power. That is, simply, a categorical mistake.

Let me illustrate this objection with the most recent challenge to virtue theory, one of the three main traditions in normative ethics and business ethics theory. On the basis of a fair amount of empirical evidence accumulated by experimental social psychologists in the last 70 years – which apparently indicates that character traits do not make any significant contribution to explaining and predicting behavior – some scholars argue that virtue ethics is untenable as a moral theory. This is the well-known situationist attack on virtue ethics (Doris, 2002; Harman, 2000). Morality is, according to virtue ethics, primarily about the development of good character traits. Consequently, if the empirical evidence proves that character traits do not exist or that they have no predictive power, then virtue ethics is, according to the situationist argument, simply false because it fails to provide good predictions of people's behavior. Now, it is quite evident that the situationist objection does not succeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Alzola, 2008) because, among other things, the adequacy of a normative theory cannot be assessed on the basis of its predictive power. That is not what a normative theory is supposed to be or what it aims to be.

Someone may reply that I have already offered enough reasons for the integration thesis at the beginning of this section, where five objections against the separation thesis are listed. Though I do argue that there are good reasons to challenge separation, I shall resist the conclusion that those objections provide enough grounds to embrace the integration thesis (at least the version of the integration thesis favored by Freeman). For example, I have discussed above the entanglement of facts and values in the work of Putnam and extended it to business ethics research. Someone may argue that the entanglement of facts and values actually bolsters the integration thesis. My counter-reply would be that the entanglement of facts and values can help to discredit the separation thesis but it is not sufficient to justify the integration thesis. Granted, an important part of our moral vocabulary consists of concepts and words where facts and values are entangled. However, those so-called thick ethical notions – like the virtues – do not exhaust our business ethics vocabulary. Other *thin* ethical notions such as *right* and *wrong* are still, primarily, evaluative concepts.

In sum, whereas we have good reasons to challenge the separation thesis, they are not enough to substantiate the integration thesis. Integration is also problematic because it is at least conceivable to find cases of morally neutral behavior that is economically relevant and cases of economically neutral decisions that are morally relevant. Furthermore, the integration thesis does not hold because normative and empirical theories cannot be fully integrated without losing their identity and because a full merger will send the wrong message to our audience and potentially be irrelevant.

Nonetheless, facts matter for normative research in business ethics. And moral evaluation matters for behavioral research in business ethics. In the next section, I shall present my proposal, the reconciliation project.

Reconciliation and polyphony

I have concluded so far that neither separation nor integration provides the right account of the relationship between business and ethics, constructed as an expression of the relationship between descriptive and normative approaches to business ethics research. In this section, I shall discuss what is reconciliation (and what is not) and why we need reconciliation at all. And I shall examine a number of examples to illustrate my claim.

The aim of the reconciliation project is to preserve the identity of the normative and the descriptive inquiries to business ethics while acknowledging the limitations they reciprocally place on each other. Reconciliation is neither a form of separation nor a form of integration. It is not a middle-ground position between the descriptive and the normative inquiries in business ethics research either. Reconciliation does not entail synthesizing or dividing normative and empirical approaches because, as explained above, one cannot simultaneously describe and (ethically) assess character and behavior using the same premises.

Both the normative and the empirical traditions offer unique contributions to the development of our field. What the normative approach characteristically contributes to business ethics research is a systematic inquiry into individual and organizational responsibility in business as well as a critical approach to questioning our common sense judgments. What the descriptive approach characteristically contributes to academic business ethics is a conceptual basis to make sense of the observable world, used to examine relationships between certain variables that may lead to good predictions and explanations of specific organizational outcomes and to manage people and organizations in a certain way.

The empiricist can tell you that "if you do X you will increase your profits," but not whether you ought to increase your profits or therefore whether you ought to do X. And arguably the difference between an ethical theory and a business ethics theory is that the latter must consider the practical constraints, as discussed on the previous section about the status of the *ought-implies-can* principle.

It is as unrealistic to aim at a value-free management science – even less a value-free business ethics… that would be the real oxymoron! – as it is to develop normative theories – at least in the field of business ethics – that are disconnected from the sociological and psychological facts that inform those theories. Good normative theorizing involves description and analysis. And sound behavioral theories in business ethics should rely on morally relevant and defensible constructs. The idea behind reconciliation is, then, that business ethicists must recognize the limitations these approaches reciprocally place on each other. Consequently, the reconciliation project is primarily focused on two issues, namely, behavioral constraints on normative theorizing and conceptual constraints on empirical research.

Let me illustrate these claims while considering a few examples from the academic literature. I shall first provide an example of how behavioral research places constraints on normative theorizing. Second, I shall offer an example of normative constraints on empirical studies.

Consider the case of the normative literature on impartiality. Philosophers use the expressions "moral point of view" and "impersonal point of view" interchangeably, referring to the impartial perspective from which moral judgments are supposed to be made (Scheffler, 1985; Wolf, 1982). The moral significance of the impersonal point of view is that from it, every moral agent counts equally (Scheffler, 1992). Yet, social psychologists have found that, as a matter of (psychological) fact, most human beings favor their personal interests and values, special relationships, and personal commitments over others (Brewer, 1991; Messick and Bazerman, 1996; Tajfel, 1970). Then, normative theories in which impartiality and equality have an essential place must recognize a constraint on what they demand, a constraint based on the content and strength of personal motives. A normative business ethics theory that advocates impartiality without any regard for the minimal group paradigm literature may be considered too demanding and may be rejected on metaethical grounds.

Now consider the experimental literature on honesty. One of the greatest contributions to the empirical literature on honesty and deception was the experiment conducted by Hartshorne and May (1928), in which over 8000 schoolchildren aged 8–16 were placed in moderately tempting situations where they had opportunities to cheat on tests and homework, to steal money from a box used in a test, and to lie about their conduct. For instance, in one of their stealing situations they observed whether a child would pocket some change left on a table in an empty classroom. And in one of the lying situations they recorded whether or not a child would lie to prevent another child from getting into trouble.

Hartshorne and May presupposed that honest behavior was going to be explained by certain attitudes and traits that we would define as part of the virtue of honesty. Yet, the most significant finding was that honest behavior appeared to be situation specific rather than character-based. Elsewhere, I have provided a number of objections to the standard interpretation of this and other experiments in social psychology (Alzola, 2008). For the sake of defending the reconciliation project and how normative theories constrain descriptive theorizing, it will be enough to say that the two behavioral measures just described, which were used by Hartshorne and May to operationalize the character trait of honesty, are objectionable. We cannot assume without argument that ''finders keepers'' is deceptive. And insofar as another virtue – the virtue of loyalty in this case – is at stake, whether a child lies or not to help another child may not be a paradigmatic case of honesty. As I explained elsewhere, being honest and being loyal may be observationally equivalent (Alzola, 2009).[11]

In short, the project of reconciliation is a model of dialog without hybridization, a dialog that starts with the premise of respecting the identity of those involved in the conversation. The relation between empirical and normative business ethics research should be in terms of dialog rather than contest or fusion.

A musical metaphor can help us understand the sense of the reconciliation project. I draw on the language and the concept of polyphony to make sense of the idea of reconciliation and to give content to the project. In the conceptual world of music, two (or more) notes can coexist and be in the same place at the same time.[12] Polyphonic business ethics calls into question the widespread assumption that oneness and difference are mutually exclusive categories.

Conclusion

This article has been concerned with the examination of the status of the separation and the integration theses. I have argued that the separation and integration theses – understood along the lines of the normative/descriptive divide in business ethics research – are both problematic. The separation thesis does not hold because there is no purely normative or empirical business ethics, because value creation brings together economic and moral considerations, because facts and values are entangled, because – in order to be influential – business ethics theories must be able to offer useful prescriptions, and because of the *ought implies can* principle. The integration thesis does not fare better because prescriptive and empirical theories cannot be fully integrated without losing their identity, because full hybridization will create more confusion for our audience, and because it is at least conceivable to find counterexamples of ''morally neutral'' behavior that is economically relevant and ''economically neutral'' decisions that are still morally relevant.

Rather than separation or full integration, I argue for a reconciliation of normative and descriptive approaches and methods of research in business ethics, which is not a middle-ground position between the two extremes, and which does not entail synthesizing or dividing them but rather respecting the identity of both approaches. Whereas we cannot both understand causal relationships and assess morally relevant behavior using the same set of premises, we must recognize the limitations that these approaches reciprocally place on each other. Specifically, the research agenda of the reconciliation project is focused on two problems, namely, behavioral constraints in normative theorizing and normative constraints on empirical research.

Notes

[1] One may wonder whether there could possibly be a difference between how executives should think

about business and ethics and how scholars should think about it. Arguably, business executives need not be ethically sophisticated or to exercise normative concepts in the way scholars do. In other words, in teaching business ethics, we should not unduly burden business executives with philosophically sophisticated concepts as drawn from ethical theory. However, we do expect such sophistication in business ethicists. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.

[2] Freeman has recently argued for ending the ''Friedman vs. Freeman'' debate and proposed that Friedman, Williamson, and Jensen are indeed stakeholder theorists (Agle et al., 2008, p. 162).

[3] It is at least possible that undermining the is–ought dichotomy entails a normative view of what businessmen and scholars should think, though.

[4] I shall not discuss here the possible discontinuities between the naturalistic fallacy, the is/ought thesis, the fact/value distinction, and the descriptive/normative dichotomy. For the sake of this examination, they are all the same, though there may be good reasons to make a distinction (see, for example, Frankena, 1939). Furthermore, the *is/ought* thesis does not go without controversy. Searle (1964) has attempted to show that an ''ought'' can actually be derived from an ''is.'' And moral realists argue that moral claims can be true or false and that moral facts are not irrelevant to the explanation of our moral beliefs and other non-moral properties, as Sturgeon (1984) has argued in his debate with Harman (1977). For reasons of space, I shall not dwell upon the subtleties and complexities of the Harman/Sturgeon debate in this essay.

[5] Some scholars prefer to preserve the purity of the ethical inquiry and deny that there are two branches of academic business ethics. *Genuine* ethics, *genuine* business ethics, is normative or it is not ethics at all. Hence, it does not make much sense to acknowledge the existence of ''behavioral business ethics'' or ''empirical business ethics'' as a legitimate field of study. Rather, so-called ''behavioral business ethics'' should be called ''ethical behavior in business'' and understood as a branch of sociology or psychology rather than ethics. Although that view is technically correct, the distinction between normative and behavioral business ethics has taken hold in the business ethics community. For example, a recent special issue of Business Ethics Quarterly (Vol. 20, No. 1, January 2010) is entirely devoted to ''Behavioral Ethics: A New Empirical Perspective on Business Ethics Research'' and written by social scientists. Although the articles make a significant contribution to the descriptive enquiry, none of them make any reference to the work of normative business ethicists, arguably the founders of this field and of the journal of the Society for Business Ethics. I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

[6] Whether ought implies can is a highly controversial matter. Someone may argue that unreachable ideals do have a function. In the Christian tradition, for example, one is called upon to behave in ways that are beyond one's capacity as a sinner. We may fail to behave that way either because of our volitional capacities and/or our cognitive limitations. What is undeniable is that I cannot be obligated to be in two places at once, or otherwise violate the laws of physics or mathematics. I have developed a defense of the *ought-implies-can* principle elsewhere (Alzola, 2009).

[7] Defenders of the Integration Thesis may reply that one is making a moral judgment in considering all things and inferring that the alternatives are morally equivalent. However, my claim is that wearing white or blue uniform shirts is morally equivalent, no matter what the decision-maker does. Defenders of integration may reply that anything that can affect the financial success of the firm *ipso facto* has moral implications. Yet, I do not think this applies to the examples discussed above, namely, decisions about uniform shirts and corporate home in the United States. Defenders of integration may respond that what the state of Delaware is doing is unethically encouraging a race to the bottom and that one's firm should not participate in it. However, presumably these are the same defenders who argue that one has a moral obligation to one's shareholders and so, ''anything that can affect the financial success of the firm *ipso facto* has moral implications.'' I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing this point.

[8] Now, suppose we conduct a survey and discover that widespread insider trading nearly always leads to a great loss of confidence in a stock market. Would that determine the morality of insider trading? The answer is clearly negative. Proving a positive correlation between two (or more) variables is not enough to jump to the conclusion that insider trading is morally impermissible. For there may be other variables and relationships that are not covered in the study and, more importantly, we need a normative premise to conclude whether and why insider trading is morally objectionable.

[9] What is observable, and what constitutes an inference from an observation are old and difficult questions that I cannot address here, but we have good reasons to resist the claim that only sense data or elementary states are observable. If we can observe that Smith is drunk we can also observe that Smith is acting brutally. See (iii) in ''What is wrong with separation?'' section above.

[10] I have argued in the previous section and elsewhere (Alzola, 2009) that the ethical quality of *some* acts

depends on the state of mind that caused it. Virtue ethicists postulate that we can explain an action by reference to the person's character traits. And, more generally, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is an excellent attempt at using the natural end of human flourishing as the background for arguably the most sophisticated normative theory. Yet, as discussed above, this is not what Freeman's Integration Thesis intends to achieve. I thank two anonymous reviewers for raising this point.

[11] These are problems for psychology, considered as an empirically based science. Our attributions of psychological states are often uncertain. More important, we often make assumptions about rationality in attributing these states and events. Hence, in that respect, the attributions are normative to some degree (Davidson, 1963).

[12] "Successive combination of tons are designated by the term melody; simultaneous combinations by that of harmony in general, and by that of chords in particular" (Fétis, 1844, p. 1). Harmony characterizes Western music: in no other music has been developed to such an extent (Snyder, 1983). The technical term for entirely different sequences of tones overlapping one another is *polyphony*, which is often used as a synonym of harmony. Etymologically, *polyphony* refers to the simultaneous sounding of different notes. It can be harmonious or dissonant. Its main characteristic is simultaneous difference, in a sense that is not excluding. More than one note is played at a time thereby maintaining a simultaneous difference that is not synthesized into a single unity. On theories of harmony, see, for example, Bowman (1998); Levy (1985); Schoenberg (1978). For a classic on the philosophy of music, see Kivy (1993).

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