

PART III

Skepticism and a New Metaethical Position

The first two parts of this book have primarily been concerned with the repercussions of moral underdetermination for normative ethics. Yet the analogy to the philosophy of science points beyond this. Many philosophers of science take underdetermination to have far-ranging consequences for our understanding of physical theories and their postulates. More specifically, they think that the fact that theories have extensionally equivalent yet theoretically incompatible rivals threatens our justification in believing those theories to be true. Might something similar be the case in ethics? To investigate this question, we need to turn our attention away from normative ethics and to metaethics. This is what I want to do in Part III of the book. In Chapter 6, I consider whether and how the skeptical worries extend to moral underdetermination as well. In Chapter 7, I introduce and discuss what I take to be one plausible reaction to the skeptical worries, a new metaethical position called *constructive deonticism*.

I should emphasize that both chapters are much more speculative than the previous ones. In addition, I will also have to revisit some of the arguments and positions that have been laid out so far and take a stronger stance on some issues, e.g. moral explanation or the value of theoretical virtues in ethics. This will make the arguments and views defended in this part much more controversial. However, I think that this is how it should be. For most of this book, I have tried to remain as metaethically neutral as possible since many of the lessons that moral underdetermination holds for normative ethics do not depend on (too) controversial metaethical assumptions. When outlining the metaethical upshots of underdetermination, that neutrality obviously has to be given up. Yet I hope that this will be a price worth paying since what might be gained instead are insights into both a new skeptical challenge and a new metaethical position.

