

PART I

Scientific Underdetermination and the Analogy to Ethics

The first part of the book has two aims: to introduce the topic of underdetermination and to outline the analogy to ethics. Chapter 1 provides an overview of scientific underdetermination. The chapter is structured into three sections. I introduce the topic by going through some examples as well as portraying the views of the two earliest progenitors of the idea, Pierre Duhem and W. V. O. Quine. This is followed by an outline of the three main strategies that have been pursued in arguing for underdetermination in science. Finally, a more systematic overview of some of the main versions of the thesis is presented, to give the reader an appreciation of the multifaceted dimensions of the phenomenon. I do not consider objections at this stage, since this would make the exposition too long. Instead, I return to such objections when similar ones suggest themselves for the ethical case in latter parts of the book.

Chapter 2 outlines the analogy that underlies the main argument in the book: just as scientific theories can be underdetermined by the empirical data, so moral theories can be underdetermined by our considered judgments or intuitions about particular cases. I begin by drawing out the picture of normative moral theories that underlies my account. I start with what I consider a widely shared view about the two main functions of moral theories: yielding the correct verdicts (that is, verdicts that accord with our intuitions or considered judgments about particular cases) and explaining them. I then elaborate in some detail on both these functions. Next, I look at the analogs to the evidence in science and outline an ecumenical way in which both considered judgments and intuitions can be thought to serve this function, as long as they are on the level of the particular. Finally, I consider two complications to the analogy: one having to do with the fact that we have intuitions and considered judgments about more general principles as well; the other stemming from considerations about the *theory-ladenness* of observations.

Together, the two chapters should provide a firm foundation for the later parts of the book.

