ON THE PLURALITY OF NORMATIVE TERMS IN CODES OF RESEARCH CONDUCT

René van Woudenberg

Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

1. DOCUMENTS USED

[1]   Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

[2]   Guide to Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

[3]   "China introduces 'social' punishments for scientific misconduct"

[4]   The Chinese document "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Promotion of Research Integrity"

[5]   Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

2. STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

First:
Inventory of Normative Terms Used

Second:
How do these normative terms relate to each other?

Third:
Is This Relevant?

FIRST:

INVENTORY OF NORMATIVE TERMS USED

3. DOCUMENT [1] TALKS ABOUT:

Principles (of Responsible Research Conduct, or RRC) and Responsibilities (of institutions and individuals)

- The Principles (of RRC) include "*Honesty* in the reporting of research", "*Fairness* in the treatment of others", "*Respect* for research participants, animals and the environment".

- The Responsibilities of institutions are formulated as things that institutions "will do".

- The Responsibilities of researchers too are formulated as things individual researchers "will do".

4. DOCUMENT [2]

- Document [2] too formulates <u>Principles</u>--Principles of procedural fairness, in case a breach of the Code is suspected.

- In contrast with document [1], in which the Principles are formulated as things that institutions and individuals "will do", in [2] the Principles are formulated as "what is expected" of an institution's process for managing and investigating potential breaches of the Code.

- It is expected that the process is *Proportional, Fair, Impartial, Timely, Transparent, Confidential.*

5. DOCUMENT [4] TALKS ABOUT:

- Basic <u>Principles</u>, which are formulated as imperatives.

- "<u>shoulds</u>", such as "Institutions should effectively perform the main responsibilities for the promotion of RI".

- The document also contains a great number of sentences that are, linguistically speaking, <u>imperatives</u> (or perhaps even commands), such as "Fully implement the scientific research commitment system".

6. DOCUMENT [5]

- says that research is a process governed by <u>standards</u> that are partly methodological and partly ethical in nature. These standards are "expressed" in a number of <u>guiding principles</u>", viz. *honesty*, *scrupulousness*, *transparency*, *independence*, and *responsibility*.

- "elaborates" these five <u>principles</u> into 61 "more specific" <u>standards</u> for good research practices, organized under the headings Design, Conduct, Reporting results, Assessment and peer review, Communication, and Standards applicable to all phases of research. All of them are cast, linguistically, in the imperative mode.

- also mentions <u>duties</u>, viz. institutions' duties of care. There duties are organized under the headings Training and supervision, Research culture, Data management, Publication, and Ethical norms an procedures, and all are, linguistically speaking, imperatives (or commands).

7. SUMMARY 1/2

The Codes, then, explicitly *name* the following normative categories:

- principles
- responsibilities
- virtues
- (values?)
- duties.

7. SUMMARY 2/2

Also, the Codes use words or phrases as well as linguistic forms that are normatively loaded, even though they aren't explicitly *named* by names that refer to normative categories such as the ones just mentioned:

- the word "should"

- the phrase "will do"

- the phrase "is expected"

- the imperative form.

SECOND:

HOW DO THESE NORMATIVE TERMS RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

8. QUESTIONS

This overview raises the question:
how do these normative terms (and normative linguistic forms) relate to each other?

- Is there any structure to them?

- Are some of them definable in terms of (some of the) others, for example? Or is there one Master normative notion?

9. PARTIAL ANSWER *ONE*

- "Responsibilities", "duties", "shoulds", "will do's", and "is expected-s", are, when properly understood, synonyms or nearly so.

- E.g. "Disclose conflicts of interest"

- This goes to show that there is structure to the field of normative terms.

10. PARTIAL ANSWER *TWO*

- Both [1] and [5] talk of <u>principles</u>, and examples that are provided include: *Honesty, Rigour, Transparency, Fairness, Respect, Accountability* in [1], and *Honesty, Scrupulousness, Transparency, Independence,* and *Responsibility* in [5].

- These can be values or principles.

- First consider them as principles

- This goes to show that there is even more structure to the field of normative terms than section 9 revealed: values *ground* duties.

10. PARTIAL ANSWER *TWO*

- If V is a value, then that is a reason for trying to bring about things with V.

- E.g. If health is a value, than that is a reason to try to be or stay healthy

- Values AREN'T duties, but they GROUND duties. Duties are grounded in values.

10. PARTIAL ANSWER *TWO*

- Values are universals, that can be instantiated in numerically different things.

- If Honesty is a universal, then it grounds the duty to (try to) instantiate Honesty in what we do and say.

- So: there is structure in the field

11. PARTIAL ANSWER *THREE*

- The <u>principles</u> that [1] and [5] talk about can also be thought of as <u>virtues</u>

- A virtue is a "deep and enduring excellence in persons involving (i) a characteristic motivation to produce a desired end, and (ii) reliable success in bringing about that end" (Zagzebski)

- There would seem to be a difference between a <u>value</u> and a <u>virtues</u>: virtues only had by persons, values by many other kinds of things.

11. PARTIAL ANSWER *THREE*

- Virtues are instantiations of value universals in humans

- E.g. Honesty is a value (so: a Universal) that is instantiated in humans that are honest

12. PARTIAL ANSWER *FOUR*: DIFFERENT VALUES AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF VALUES

- There is a *plurality* of values.

- They fall in a limited number of classes

  1. Moral values

  2. Epistemic values

  3. Professional values

  4. Social values

  5. Legal values

THIRD:

IS THIS RELEVANT?

13. (1) THE ANALYSES CLARITY OF THE LAY-OUT OF THE NORMATIVE FIELD.

- The most fundamental items in the normative field are <u>values</u>. They are the Master normative notions. Values *ground* <u>duties</u> in humans, while they can be *instantiated* in <u>virtues</u>.

- Other normative notions, such as responsibility, principles, "will do's", "shoulds" and imperatives are synonyms, or nearly so, of <u>values</u>, <u>duties</u>, or <u>virtues</u>.

- The values, and so also the duties grounded on them, as well as the virtues that instantiate them, fall in five large classes: moral, epistemic, professional, social and legal.

14. (2) THE ANALYSES SHOW THAT THE IRREDUCIBLE VALUE DIVERSITY PREDICTS DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEM CASES.

We should expect cases where values and duties are at odds with one another, and hence also duties that are at odds with each other:

- The value of truth, and the value of having true beliefs. There is also the value of avoiding falsehoods. These ground duties that are at odds with each other.

- The value of Transparency in sharing data, but there is also the value of Confidentiality of personal information. These values ground duties that are at odds with each other.

14. (3) VALUES ARE REAL

The issue of Research Integrity shows that values are real, as real as electrons, atoms, black holes and supernovas

Friends of scientism (the view that only science can tell us what exists and what is real) claim otherwise

Values and electrons etc. are of course different things. But so are electrons and states and money: yet they are all real, the exist in the one and only sense that "exists" has.

THANKS!

15. APPENDIX

As captain of the ship, X was <u>responsible</u> for the safety of his passengers and crew. But on his last voyage he got drunk every night and was responsible for the loss of the ship with all aboard. It was rumoured that he was insane, but the doctors considered that he was responsible for his actions. Throughout the voyage he behaved quite irresponsibly, and various incidents in his career showed that he was not a responsible person. He always maintained that the exceptional winter storms were responsible for the loss of the ship, but in legal proceedings brought against him he was found criminally responsible for his negligent conduct, and in separate civil proceedings he was held legally responsible for the loss of life and property. He is still alive and he is morally responsible for the deaths of many women and children.

Most of the responsibility-statements in this passage are *not* statements of duty. But one is. I have underlined it.