In this talk, I will explore how we can and should conceptualise the interface between the empirical and the normative in empirical bioethics. What, exactly, is the basis of this apparently magical “shazam” moment? First, I will explain why my question is not a version of the traditional is/ought (logical) objection deriving from Hume, and I will suggest how anyone working in empirical bioethics can sidestep that problem (if they are willing to accept the relevant commitments). Second, I will, instead, focus on what I term the question of methodological intention: a call for greater clarity about what role any empirical component plays in any bioethical project. This is important because there are various very different functions for the empirical to play in relation to the normative. I will explore the way that the ‘shazam’ moment is structuring in a number of such cases. My point is not to suggest that any of these approaches are at least prima facie problematic, just that they are very different tasks. Each one involves a prior set of substantive commitments and these should be articulated and defended by advocates of empirical bioethics.

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