

New Essays on Normative Realism

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CHAPTER

1 Normative Realism: An Introduction to the Issues

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Abstract

This Introduction aims at a contemporary overview of the multiple issues surrounding the formulation, plausibility, and scope of normative realism. What distinguishes normative judgments is that they entail propositions about prima facie reasons. What distinguishes realism about some domain of the normative is the thesis that true normative judgments about that domain are true in virtue of mind-independent facts. Normative realism so understood has faced older challenges from metaphysics and epistemology, and more recent ones from the apparent existence of alternative normative concepts. After outlining possible responses to these challenges, we consider the claim that the normative is involved in judgments in general, and the nature of any such normativity. The apparent a priori status of fundamental norms, and the possibility of relativism about norms, is considered. Issues about the grasp and acquisition of norms are also of especial significance for normative realism. Finally we consider the scope and character of norms in various specific domains, including the moral, the aesthetic, and the arithmetical. All these areas raise lively and distinctive issues about the relations between the normative and the non-normative.

Keywords: normative realism, norms, reasons, mind-independence, metaphysical challenges, epistemological challenges, a priori, alternative concepts, relativism, morality

Subject: Epistemology, Moral Philosophy, Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic

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This volume collects newly commissioned essays on various facets of ‘normative realism’. What is the normative? And what is it to be a realist about it?

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1 The Normative

Here are some plausible candidate normative judgments:

(1) It is morally right to educate girls and young women.

(2) It is epistemically rational to believe that smoking is bad for your health, given the evidence.

(3) If you need to calculate how much you owe in tax before the end of the day, you ought not to consider propositions irrelevant to that goal.

(4) J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion is aesthetically more valuable than The Who's *Tommy: A Rock Opera*.

(5) If you want to be a concert pianist, you have reason to start studying the piano early in life and practice many hours a day.

(1)–(5) are examples of normative claims drawn from particular domains—the domains of morality, epistemic rationality, inquiry, aesthetics, and prudence, respectively. The statements (1)–(5) contrast with a *descriptive* statement, for example:

(6) Earth is roughly spherical.

In addition to the domains listed, it is arguable that we need to recognize *bare* normative judgments, ones that are not tied to any particular normative domain, but which can express how potential conflicts between such
p. 2 judgments are to be ↳ normatively resolved. For example, it is possible for a prudential judgment ('I have reason to keep this money, given that I might need it') to conflict with a moral one ('I have reason to pay back my debt, given that I promised I would'). The judgment:

(7) I ought to use the money to pay back my debt.

expresses one's all-things-considered view that the moral reasons outweigh the prudential ones. Judgment (7) is bare since it does not emanate from any particular domain but expresses the resolution of a conflict between such domains. Of course, some normative domains will speak to the question whether their deliverances trump those of others: morality, for example, may itself hold that its considerations always dominate those of prudence. The question whether this claim made by morality is true would still remain. And the reasoning that would settle this question would be an exercise of the general capacity to reason, not reasoning that is tied to any particular normative domain.

We can typically recognize normative judgment by the presence within such statements of certain characteristically normative concepts. In English, the following words are typically used to express normative concepts:

ought, ought not

should, should not

may, may not

has a reason to, has no reason to

right, wrong

good, bad

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The concepts listed above are what we may call the canonical normative concepts. Other concepts, such as 'rational', 'beautiful', 'rude', 'polite', can be shown to also be normative by disclosing their distinctive relations to items on the canonical list. For example, 'it is epistemically rational to believe p' plausibly entails 'one ought to believe p, given the evidence'.

We will operate with the hypothesis that a true genuinely normative judgment will always, all on its own, entail some *bare reason statement*. These reasons should be understood to be prima facie and pro tanto. For example, (1) is plausibly taken to entail that there is reason to educate girls; and (2) is plausibly taken to entail that the evidence supplies us with some reason to believe that smoking is bad for one's health; and so forth. Since 'reason' is itself a canonical normative expression, this understanding of the normative doesn't take us outside the normative circle; but it does supply some kind of unifying criterion of the normative. It has the advantage of being able to explain why:

p. 3 (8) ↳ According to NY state law, one is required to A.

and

(9) According to the code of dueling, one is required to B.

are not genuinely normative statements. Even if true, they don't supply an agent with a reason to do what they call for, without an independently specified reason to obey the codes to which they appeal.

2 Normative Realism

Let us turn to the question what makes someone a Realist about the normative. Of course, 'Realism' is a somewhat technical philosophical term which can be, and has been, used in a wide variety of ways. But one question that has rightly been thought to be of especial philosophical interest is whether there is any reason to believe that normative statements are any less objective in their correctness than descriptive statements like (6). This encourages us to define Realism in the way which captures the objectivity of statements about the physical properties of physical objects and to ask whether the correctness of normative statements might be thought of along the same lines.

A standard characterization of Realism about the physical domain, P, consists of the following three theses:

(A) The sentences of P are capable of being true or false.

(B) Some of those sentences are true.

(C) When those sentences are true, they are often true in virtue of mind-independent facts.

Clearly, we are Realists about statements like (6), about the shape of physical things like planet Earth, and of course about a whole host of other judgments about the physical properties of things in the world. We regard such statements as being capable of being true or false; we regard some of them as true (e.g. (6)); and we believe that, when a statement like (6) is true it is true in virtue of mind-independent facts about the shape of Earth: the truth of the statement has nothing to do with us and our mental states or inclinations.

A parallel view of statements from normative domain N would have it that:

(A) The sentences of N are capable of being true or false.

(B) Some of those sentences are true.

(C) When those sentences are true, they are often true in virtue of mind-independent facts.

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p. 4 Is there a similar prima facie reason to hold that we are Realists about normative domains, such as that of morality? A strong case can be made that even non-philosophers are Realist in their use of moral judgments, even as some of them might repudiate the label if offered it. Thus, ordinary moral agents do not hesitate to say that judgments such as (1) are true, and to regard those, like the Taliban, who hold the opposite view as believing something false.

Perhaps the most controversial claim will be that ordinary moral agents endorse (C), mind-independence. But anyone who holds that, for example, what makes slavery wrong is independent of anyone's thinking it wrong is committed to at least some form of mind-independence. At least in the realm of morality, we tend to reject Hamlet's thesis that 'nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.'

In our ordinary attitudes, then, we embrace a relaxed Realism about both the physical world and the normative world. Philosophers have always felt, though, that it is much harder to make sense of the latter commitment than the former, for two formidable reasons.

3 Challenges to Normative Realism

These two reasons were nicely expressed by John Mackie in his book, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977: 38–9):

> If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. [. . .]
>
> When we ask the awkward question, how can we be aware of this *authoritative prescriptivity*, of the truth of these distinctively ethical premises or of the cogency of this distinctively ethical pattern of reasoning, none of our ordinary accounts of sensory perception or introspection or the framing and confirming of explanatory hypotheses or inference or logical construction or conceptual analysis or any combination of these, will provide a satisfactory answer; a 'special sort of intuition' is a lame answer, but it is the one to which the clear headed objectivist is compelled to resort.

These are the by now very well-known problems of the alleged Metaphysical Queerness of moral facts and their alleged Epistemological Queerness, even if the exact content of these problems is not always made clear. Under the first heading, we have the claim that moral facts, if they existed in some mind-independent sense, would be both intrinsically strange and utterly different from anything else in the universe. Under the second heading, we have the claim that there can be no satisfactory epistemology of such facts: any epistemology would need to appeal to the notion of an *intuition*, and that is condemned as a 'lame' answer.

p. 5 Why does Mackie allege that objective moral facts would have to be deemed metaphysically queer? His answer is that it would be in the nature of such a fact that:

> Knowledge of a moral fact provides the knower both with a direction and an *overriding* motive [. . .] (1977: 40)

Here Mackie is relying on a very strong version of what is sometimes referred to as an Internalism about moral facts: knowledge of the fact that some action X is right is said to entail, all by itself, without any supplementation by facts about the agent's desires, a psychological *motive* to pursue X—indeed, a motive of such a strength that it *overrides* all the other motives that the agent may have. (Psychological motives are also referred to in the literature as 'motivating reasons' as opposed to justifying reasons. We will reserve the use of the word 'reason' for the latter normative notion.)

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If any such thing were true, there would be a lot less evil in the world than there actually is (or, in any case, a lot less moral knowledge). It's very implausible that knowing a moral fact *constitutively* supplies one with any psychologically effective motive at all to pursue the action it recommends, let alone an overriding one (see Svavarsdottir 1999). As we indicated earlier, the most that could plausibly be claimed is:

> Knowledge of a moral fact provides the knower with *some (justifying) reason* to pursue the action it recommends.

This differs from Mackie's characterization in being about reasons and not motives, and in not insisting that anything be overriding.

As for the epistemological worry, Mackie's argument is vulnerable on two grounds: first, in that there are seemingly viable candidate epistemologies that make no use of the notion of intuition (see e.g. the contributions to this volume of Christopher Peacocke (Chapter 2), Declan Smithies (Chapter 3), and Sarah McGrath (Chapter 4)); second, in that there are seemingly viable epistemologies which, while employing the notion of intuition, make a case for its theoretical fruitfulness (see e.g. Benson 2015; Chudnoff 2013).

A third source of vulnerability in Mackie's argument has in recent times finally received the attention it deserves, and that is that his objections to moral facts do not especially concern the moral but apply to any *normative* fact whatsoever. For the two features that Mackie isolates as problematic for moral facts—intrinsic prescriptivity and unknowability by ordinary means—are features that they potentially share with any other normative fact. In particular, his objections, if valid, would apply equally to facts about *rationality*. This is important because it's a good ↳ question whether they might not end up proving too much: it is far less clear that we can make sense of an anti-realist picture of rationality than one of morality.

p. 6

More recently, philosophers have become concerned about two new challenges to Normative Realism. The first is modeled after the so-called Benacerraf–Field problem for Platonism in the philosophy of mathematics (Benacerraf 1973; Field 1989). We may call it the Reliability Challenge. Suppose a domain of fact, D, is mind-independent and causally inert; and suppose we claim to be somewhat reliable in our beliefs about what facts D contains. How could such a reliability be explained if we rule out mere luck? In being causally inert, our beliefs, or other factors that might explain them, could not themselves be explained in terms of the facts themselves. In being mind-independent, we could not claim that our beliefs somehow or other construct the facts in question. That seems to leave only one option—the one adopted by Christopher Peacocke in this volume: the judgments about D couldn't so much as be about D unless they got some of the basic facts about D correctly. The appropriate theory of reference for D guarantees that we are substantially reliable about it.

Street (Chapter 5) rejects all such anti-skeptical solutions to the Reliability Challenge. This leads her to a Mind-Dependent conception of moral facts along with the Relativism to which such a conception inevitably leads. Her contribution consists of a defense of such a relativistic view of morality against objections in the recent literature.

A second novel challenge is of even more recent provenance. We may call it the challenge of Alternative Normative Concepts (ANC). On the characterization of Normative Realism that we have been working with, a realist view of normative judgments of domain N would be vindicated provided the following three conditions are satisfied:

(A) The sentences of N are capable of being true or false.

(B) Some of those sentences are true.

(C) When those sentences are true, they are often true in virtue of mind-independent facts.

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The ANC challenge questions whether this is realism enough. Our normative judgments—the ones about whose status we are asking—are couched in terms of the familiar core normative words, especially that of 'reason'. But what if we encountered another community that had normative concepts very closely related to ours—their concepts shared the normative role that our concepts have—but differed from our normative concepts in having different extensions? Whereas our word 'good', say, has a certain extension, their word, let's call it 'good*', has a different extension. Because both types of concepts share a core normative role, they are
p. 7 both used to promote the pursuit of certain acts, and are both taken to report ↳ on the existence of reasons for doing something. However, they would appear to disagree about which acts there is reason to promote. But what warrant is there, asks the promoter of the ANC challenge, to prefer our concepts over theirs? Does the world itself prefer our using certain concepts over others? If the answer is yes, how does it do so? By assumption, both 'good' and 'good*' are instantiated. If the answer is no—if the propriety of using one set of normative concepts as opposed to another is partly a matter of preference or entrenchment—does that not compromise the objectivity of the normative that the Normative Realist was after?

This interesting problem has been explored and developed by Matti Eklund and by Shamik Dasgupta; Chapters 6 and 7 in this volume set out their latest thoughts on this intriguing new puzzle. A dissolution of the challenge is briefly considered in Paul Boghossian's contribution (Chapter 8).

In Chapter 9, Justin Clarke-Doane argues that this issue is not restricted to moral notions. Just as there seem to be asterisked variants of *good*, so equally, for any specific notion of logical consequence, there are variants of it too. He concludes that there is no factual sense in which there is 'One True Logic'. There is only the practical question of how to infer. This, Clarke-Doane argues, is parallel to the fact that, in the face of the asterisked variants of *good*, there is only the practical question of how to act.

4 The Authority of Norms

Christine Korsgaard writes (1996: 8–10):

> [. . .] ethical standards are *normative*. They do not merely *describe* a way in which we in fact regulate our conduct. They make *claims* on us; they command, oblige, recommend or guide. Or at least when we invoke them, we make claims on one another [. . .] When we seek a philosophical foundation for morality we are not looking merely for an explanation of moral practices. We are asking what *justifies* the claims that morality makes on us. This is what I am calling 'the normative question.'

Let's distinguish between *there being a reason* to do something, and *your having a reason* to do that thing. We can then say that, on a Realist view:

> A moral fact is a reason for someone to do something.

while:

> That person's recognizing that moral fact gives them a reason to do that thing.

p. 8 With that distinction in place, we can now distinguish three distinct questions that might fall under Korsgaard's 'normative question'.

1. How is the mere existence of a moral fact a reason for someone to do something?
2. How does your recognizing that moral fact give you a reason to do that thing?
3. What weight do moral reasons have compared to the weight of other reasons—e.g. prudential ones?

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On the assumption that moral facts are normative facts, which Korsgaard seems to grant, Realism would appear well-equipped to provide answers to these questions, even if they are somewhat unexciting ones. With respect to (1), the answer would be that it's just in the nature of a normative fact to provide reasons (as we previously said). Of course, that may leave it open whether there are any such facts; and if there are, whether they are naturalistic or sui generis. However those questions are resolved, if the Realist answer to (1) is accepted, the answers to (2) and (3) would appear also to be relatively straightforward (which is not to say that there wouldn't be much to figure out).

In Chapter 10, John Bengson, Terence Cuneo, and Russ Shaeffer-Landau endorse the Realist answer to (1) and go on to rebut skepticism about the existence of such intrinsically normative facts. In doing so, they run counter to Korsgaard's famous claim that the Realist answer to (1) is hopeless, even if we did not dispute the existence of non-natural, irreducibly normative facts. Korsgaard's claim is that these mind-independent moral truths would be too external, too alien, to have much of a normative grip on agents as they consider normative questions from a first-personal perspective. Thus, she contended, a satisfying answer to the 'authority question' must deny the Realist's contention that moral truths are grounded in mind-independent facts. In Chapter 11, Claire Kirwin argues that this gets things exactly the wrong way around: if our normative judgments are to play the role in practical deliberation that we expect them to play, they must be understood as answerable to facts that are constituted independently of themselves and of our other evaluative attitudes.

For his part, John Broome (Chapter 12) delves into the question how we should understand the notion of a reason to do something. The metaphor of *weighing up* the reasons provided by one normative truth (a moral one, for example) versus that provided by another (a prudential one) encourages thinking of reasons either as some kind of *stuff* or as some kind of *force*. Broome argues against both construals, opting instead for explaining them in terms of what they contribute to *ought* judgments.

5 Content, Judgment, and the Normative

There are considerations that suggest that norms govern any judgment, whatever its subject matter. Judgment is a mental action, and so is subject to specific norms depending on the content of the judgment. Here is a short argument for the point:

> Judgments should be made in accordance with reasons.
>
> Reasons for making a judgment should be reasons for thinking its content is true.
>
> The truth of a judgment depends upon its specific content.
>
> So: Reasons for judgments should be sensitive to their specific contents.

We can distinguish three important questions about the objectivity of judgment.

The first question is this: Are there mental elements in the condition for the correctness of the content of a given judgment? It is arguable that for any concept that features in a content, there must be mind-dependent elements in the account of *grasp* of the concept, since possession of a concept must involve mental properties and relations of the thinker. Grasp of a concept is in its nature a partially psychological matter. It does not follow that the condition for falling under the concept grasped itself involves a mental element. Nor it is excluded that it does so. It is just a further issue. We may for instance hold that:

> (a) grasp of an observational shape concept involves such mind-dependent states as finding it compelling that the concept applies in rational response to certain perceptions,

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while also holding that:

> (b) the pattern of such requirements on mind-dependent states determines a mind-independent shape condition for falling under the concept.

These considerations show that there is no sound argument simply from the presence of mental elements in an account of grasp of concepts to some form of global mind-dependence of the condition for falling under a concept.

The second question about judgeable content in general is raised by Hannah Ginsborg in Chapter 13. When someone recognizes that an object is properly classified together with those in an initial sample, how should we characterize that recognition? Ginsborg's proposal is that this recognition is recognition of a primitive normativity. It is of a kind, Ginsborg argues, that cannot be reduced to more familiar kinds of normativity. Her view is that this primitive normativity underlies all grasp of meaning and intentional content, whether that
p. 10 content is itself descriptive ↳ or normative. A primitive normativity is present in the account of grasp of any concept whatever on Ginsborg's view.

A third question is whether in distinguishing mind-independence of grasp of a concept from mind-independence of the property it picks out, we have really dug deep enough in identifying elements of mind-dependence. Shamik Dasgupta (Chapter 7) would say we have not. The conceptual content of a judgment may not carve the world at its joints; our use of that content may just reflect our preferred modes of classification. Dasgupta's view is that only a norm could give us reasons for preferring our actual concepts to other modes of classification, such as Nelson Goodman's *grue* (Goodman 1955: 74). If such a norm, that justifies use of our concepts, is mind-dependent, there will thereby be an element of mind-dependence in all our judgments; and if not, not. Unlike Ginsborg, however, Dasgupta finds primitive normativity that is not mind-dependent unintelligible. He concludes that there is no such thing as full objectivity. As we noted, some of Dasgupta's arguments about concepts in general parallel Eklund's arguments about alternative normative concepts. Dasgupta extends their challenge to metaphysics in general.

6 Norms and the A Priori

Fundamental moral principles seem to have an a priori status. 'A priori' here has traditionally been taken to mean: 'can be known justificationally independently of perception and certain other conscious states and events'. This characterization of the a priori certainly needs refinement and motivation, but it will serve for the formulation of the present issue.

Some moral principles do depend on empirical information, ultimately derived from perception and scientific research. It is a moral principle that people should be warned about lead in their drinking water. But this moral principle follows from the empirical information that absorbing lead causes harm, together with the principle that people should be warned about harm caused by public services they can reasonably expect to be safe. The latter principle seems to be a priori. The claim that moral principles are fundamentally a priori is the claim that any empirical moral principle follows from non-moral empirical information together with moral principles that are a priori.

The same partition is plausibly available for a wide range of epistemic norms. It is an empirical norm that we should judge, when the issue arises, that Covid-19 is present in a patient when there is a red line on the testing device. That empirical norm follows from the empirical, non-normative truth that the totality of evidence implies that a red line on this device indicates the presence of Covid-19, together with the plausibly a priori principle that we should judge what is implied by the totality of the evidence.

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p. 11 In cases in which the norms are fundamentally a priori, what is the significance of such a priori status?

The a priori status of specific moral norms is incompatible with the view that moral principles about a state of affairs are metaphysically determined by which conscious mental states are caused by that state of affairs. Hume's view of morality in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* seems to be a clear instance of such a view:

> The hypothesis which we embrace is plain. It maintains, that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be *whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation*; and vice the contrary. (1998: appendix 1, §10)

The problem does not concern the epistemic status of the Humean view itself. The philosophical theory that morality is determined by sentiment can be regarded by its advocates as having an a priori status. The problem rather concerns the status of propositions about moral status of specific action-types or states of affairs.

Causation of a sentiment, or any other mental state, by a certain kind of state of affairs is not an a priori matter. Which sentiments are caused by unjust actions is an a posteriori matter. It is, however, a priori that unjust actions are prima facie wrong. It follows from the Humean view that which action-types are unjust is an a posteriori matter. This is in conflict with our a priori assessment of unjust action-types as prima faice wrong.

We characterized the normative earlier in this Introduction in terms of prima facie reasons. In domains in which such reasons are fundamentally a priori, at least two related questions arise: (1) How is such knowledge possible? (2) What kind of metaphysics of the normative is consistent with such a priori status?

An influential thought is that all a priori knowledge can be explained by recourse merely to a thinker's understanding of the concepts ingredient in the propositions in question. In his contribution (Chapter 8), Paul Boghossian argues that while such analyticity-based views may work for some domains, they fail in the case of substantive a priori normative principles. Such principles are *synthetic* a priori, not analytic. He explores the implication of this view for the semantics and epistemology of moral concepts.

Question (2), about the metaphysics of the normative, appears to some thinkers to be settled by principles internal to the domain of normative thought. Such a stance is an instance of a more general position on ontology. The more general position holds that ontological questions about any domain are properly settled by standards internal to that domain. Thus, Thomas Scanlon writes (2014: 19):

> the way of thinking about these matters that makes most sense is a view that does not privilege
p. 12 science but takes as basic a range of domains, including ↳ mathematics, science, and moral and practical reasoning. It holds that statements within all of these domains are capable of truth and falsity, and that the truth values of statements about one domain, insofar as they do not conflict with statements of some other domain, are properly settled by the standards of the domain that they are about.

Scanlon speaks of 'the thesis that the truth values of statements in a domain, including existential statements, are properly settled by standards internal to that domain' (2014: 20). As he notes, this general position has affinities to that of Carnap in his essay 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology' (1956). Carnap distinguishes 'internal' and 'external' questions about existence, and states that only the internal questions are genuine.

Assessment of this internalist position about ontological questions turns in part on the account it can give of a thinker's grasp of concepts of any particular domain. The concern here need not be scientistic. Suppose that grasp of the concepts involves at some point a thinker's concepts standing in an ineliminable relation of reference to objects and properties. Then the question of the metaphysics of these entities, and of the thinker's relations to them, will not be purely internal after all. Suppose on the other hand that the relation of reference is

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eliminable, and can be explained in terms of minimalist, deflationary, or redundancy accounts, along the lines of Horwich (1998), in the tradition of Ramsey (1990). Then the internalist position would have a consistent account of grasp of concepts. But whether deflationary accounts of reference really work is a highly substantive current issue in the philosophy of language and thought. Here we confine ourselves to noting the link between these large-scale issues. Internalism about metaphysical issues, including those about norms, will be feasible only with an accompanying account of grasp and understanding that does not involve irreducible relations of reference and irreducible relata of referential relations.

7 Reasons and Their Relations to Thinkers

Relativists are concerned with one kind of relation between reasons and thinkers—the relation that, according to them, makes something a reason. Relativists endorse one variety or another of Hamlet's thesis that 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so'. In the case of moral reasons, much discussion in the past half-century stems from a defense of relativism offered by Gilbert Harman (1975). Relativism about epistemic reasons has been somewhat less discussed in mainstream epistemology, though it has featured vividly in the philosophy and sociology of science. David Bloor's *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (1976) was one important focus of the discussion.

p. 13 Some forms of relativism are very close to some versions of expressivism. Traditional expressivism about a normative notion is the thesis that utterances and judgments involving the notion do not have a truth-assessable content concerning a normative property, but are instead expressive of attitudes of the speaker or thinker. More recent sophisticated expressivists have adopted versions of expressivism according to which accepting a normative claim is to express one's acceptance of norms that are consistent with the proposition. Allan Gibbard is a prominent example, in his claim that to call something rational, for instance, is to express one's acceptance of norms that permit it (1990: 7). Consider a relativist who says that a person's normative judgments are correct if they are consistent with her own personally endorsed norms. This relativist will say that a person's normative judgments are assessable as true or false. But the truth-condition offered by this relativist is the same as the assertability condition for a normative judgment offered by an expressivist who says that normative judgments express acceptance by the thinker of norms consistent with the content of the judgment.

In Chapter 5, Sharon Street develops a distinctive version of relativism about reasons for action. Street holds that something's being a reason for a subject to do something is a matter of the subject's normative attitudes to doing it. What distinguishes her version of relativism is her thesis that the relativist claim is itself a normative statement. For her, the relativist thesis is not merely a claim about what follows from what. Street thereby aims to avoid the objection that the relativist reduces the normative to the non-normative.

The relation of reasons to thinkers is also the area of dispute between two varieties of Normative Realists. Does Normative Realism exclude, or does it actually require, some non-normative account of what it is to grasp norms? The exclusionary position for the case of moral norms was defended by Ronald Dworkin (1996). He argued that any attempt to give a theory of grasp of moral norms either results in an untenable position or is itself just an addition to moral norms. On a generalized exclusionary view, one which extends Dworkin's position to all norms, there is no true non-normative theory of what it is to grasp a norm.

The contrasting, non-exclusionary thesis holds that there are such true theories of the grasp of norms. This is an issue on which the theory of normative realism needs to be integrated with more general, domain-general theories of concept possession. On the one hand, if there are sound arguments that accounts of grasp of normative concepts cannot themselves be non-normative, that will have ramifications for the normative across the board. On the other hand, examination of accounts of concept possession in other cases may suggest models for non-normative accounts of grasp of the normative. This crux merits much further investigation.

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In Chapter 14, Michael Tomasello and Ivan Gonzalez-Cabrera discuss some empirical findings about the role of reasons in children's thought and discourse. They argue that children's thought takes a 'normative turn' only
p. 14 within the domain of joint agency, of activities governed by a 'we'-intention. Similarly, they hold ↳ that epistemic reasons are 'used by children to socially coordinate in the first place about what to believe'. The crucial distinction here is between:

> giving a reason, an overt public act that may be performed linguistically or by non-linguistic means (e.g. pointing at something evidentially important)

and

> judging for a reason.

An issue for further investigation is whether sensitivity to evidential or moral reasons precedes their overt articulation in conversation.

8 The Scope and Character of Norms

The question of the scope and character of norms can be raised along at least two dimensions. Some domains appear to be such that thought about them is governed by norms specific to that domain. Which domains are they, and what is the subject matter of their respective norms? Then there is also the question, within any given domain, of the scope and character of norms applicable within that domain.

Recent research has suggested that we should enlarge our conception of the range of domains with distinctive norms. There are, for instance, plausibly specific norms governing inquiry in general (Friedman 2020). As a special case of inquiry, there have also been recent investigations into the nature and existence of norms concerning what we should attend to, either in thought or in perception (Siegel 2017; Watzl 2022).

Several of our contributors suggest revisions of our previously held conceptions of norms applicable within more specific domains. New ideas in this area can be divided into those concerned with the proper subject matter of the norms of a given domain, and those concerned with the more general character of norms in that domain.

The positions of Samantha Matherne (Chapter 15) and Mark Johnston (Chapter 16) concern the proper subject matter of norms within the domains they discuss. In the realm of aesthetics, Kant famously distinguished between the beautiful and the agreeable. He held that aesthetic norms and claims apply only to the beautiful. Matherne argues that Kant's own conception, properly developed, should admit colors and tones into the scope of aesthetic norms.

In the domain of morality, Johnston argues that the scope of norms concerning who can be morally wronged should be understood as extending to all those agents who consciously value what is valuable, in directing their
p. 15 own lives. Johnston's position gives a more prominent role to the capacity to will in the possession of moral ↳ status than was present in those earlier accounts that tended to mention consciousness as crucial to moral status.

The more general issue of the character of norms within certain specific domains variously concerns Gideon Rosen (Chapter 17), Antonia Peacocke (Chapter 18), and Crispin Wright (Chapter 19). Gideon Rosen and Antonia Peacocke are concerned with the relation of the non-normative to the normative in the domains of morality and aesthetics respectively. Rosen argues that there are explanatory moral laws linking the non-normative with the morally normative. He holds that when an individual a has a moral feature F there is a φ such that $\varphi(a)$ fully normatively grounds Fa. Rosen distinguishes normative grounds from full explanations. A covering law

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linking non-normative with moral properties is not in the normative grounds of *Fa*; but the law does still feature in the full explanation of *Fa*.

Antonia Peacocke argues against any version of a covering-law model for the relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties. She holds that there can be an explanatory grounding of the aesthetic properties of an artwork in its non-aesthetic properties even in the absence of general principles linking the two. The grounding can be supported by the truth of the counterfactual that if a certain non-aesthetic property were removed from a particular artwork, it would not possess the aesthetic property. This is a counterfactual about a particular, and she argues for a distinction between the interpretation of the particular artwork and the standard that applies to the work given that interpretation. Her point is that in assessing the grounding counterfactual, we hold fixed the standard for assessing the work.

The existence of the distinction between the interpretation of a work and the standard it sets is a difference between the aesthetic and moral domains. Taken together, the contributions of Rosen (Chapter 17) and Antonia Peacocke (Chapter 18) set questions for further investigation. There are some domains that are not purely moral, and not purely aesthetic either. Judgments about personal character and about the actions flowing from character are one example. Do we need a particularist account of this domain? If so, how are we to incorporate the relevant moral elements?

Finally, in the domain of elementary arithmetic, Crispin Wright argues in Chapter 19 that we misconceive the norms governing judgments about natural numbers if we think of them as answerable to some form of mind-independent reality. Rather, he argues, arithmetic is essentially normative. The counterfactual robustness of arithmetic should be regarded as consequential upon our attitudes, upon our willingness to use, in assessing counterfactuals, truths reached by empirical methods. Wright holds that rival realistic accounts can provide no satisfactory model of what the required recognitional accomplishment of thinkers would be.

We hope and expect that Wright's challenge, like those of our other contributors, will lead to fruitful discussion across the multiple and diverse areas of philosophy in which the normative plays a crucial part.

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