Non-Inflationary Realism about Morality: Language, Metaphysics, and Truth

by

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Dedication

In loving memory of

my father, George Bryson,

and

my grandparents Merle and Elmer Bryson

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This is an essay at the intersection of metaethics and the history of contemporary analytic philosophy. It explores the relationships between Allan Gibbard's mature quasi-realist expressivism and (*i*) three non-naturalistic varieties of what I call "non-inflationary realism" and (*ii*) moral fictionalism.

Moral or normative realism is frequently (if mistakenly) taken to involve certain existence-affirming external assumptions about the metaphysical status of substantive normative thought and discourse. The non-inflationary realists seek to embrace moral or normative objectivity and truth without any distinctly—as they see it, "inflated"—moral or normative ontology. This position, along with a shared emphasis on the primacy of substantive moral or normative thought and discourse, brings them very close to Gibbard, and so to what it is tempting to treat as a strikingly different metaethical account. Focusing on the non-inflationary realists Ronald Dworkin, T.M. Scanlon, and Derek Parfit, I examine similarities among their views, and between each of these views and Gibbard's. I argue that the non-inflationary realist project should be understood as including the work not only of these figures, characteristically seen as among its paradigmatic representatives, but also, crucially, that of Gibbard.

They all agree that our moral or normative claims purport to state normative truths and that such claims are capable of being true or false and that when true they do not depend on the particular standpoint anyone happens to take. Our moral or normative thoughts can be characterized as beliefs. We can have moral knowledge. There are substantive moral and normative facts. These facts are not reducible to non-normative facts. Normative concepts cannot be analyzed in purely naturalistic terms; and normative facts do not depend on any robustly existent truth-makers.

Focusing on these shared commitments enables me to home in on the apparent differences that nonetheless remain. They differ in significant respects, for instance, about whether—and, if so, to what extent—we can make any meaningful *external* (non-substantive) judgments about the moral or normative and about whether there is a role for property-based explanations that minimalism about the normative fails to capture. By investigating these and other differences, I shed light on what is at stake in giving an adequate account of our moral and normative thought and talk. I pursue this aim further by considering why it might seem that quasi-realist expressivism was a form of normative fictionalism or error theory—though it is not.

I attempt here to clear up confusions stemming from common assumptions associated with terms like "realism," "cognitivism," or "fictionalism" with respect to morality or normativity. I distinguish some differences in the ways in which normative properties can be understood by non-inflationary realists and the roles they can play in explaining normativity. I underscore the implausibility of treating the moral domain as completely autonomous. And I attempt to offer suggestions regarding some conceptual options that remain to be further explored. I maintain that Gibbard makes explicit otherwise unacknowledged implications of Scanlon's or Dworkin's accounts, implications regarding deep differences between normative or moral and other domains, implications which might help explain the uneasiness that prompts Scanlon and Dworkin to resist Gibbard's account and that pushes Parfit toward what seems to be a sort of intermediate position between non-inflationary and more ontologically committed realism.

Non-inflationary realism forces us to rethink metaethics in interesting and promising ways.

Chapter 1

Non-Inflationary Realism about Morality or Normativity: Setting the Stage

I. What's Going on When We Make Moral Claims?

A. Ordinary Moral Thought and Discourse Seems Realist

When we make substantive moral claims, claims such as "Poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong," "It is morally unacceptable to enact policies that prevent some people from earning a living wage," or "We ought to act in ways that undermine systematic racism," we seem to assume that such claims, and the judgments to which they give voice, are true or false. Furthermore, they present themselves as objective. They do not seem to depend on anyone's point of view, what anyone or perhaps even everyone happens to think. They do not seem to be claims about how we react, or are disposed to react. It seems to us that whether a choice or a pattern of choices or a character-trait is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable is something about which we can be correct or mistaken. It also seems as if sometimes we are not mistaken. Our thoughts about what is right or wrong can themselves be right or wrong. Or so it seems.

Our ordinary moral[1] discourse and thought, therefore, seem to presume objectivity and truth, a presumption that's a function of our experience and language. It seems to presume, therefore, a set of features often taken to be associated with so-called "realist" metaethical theories (*i.e.*, realist theories about the status of our moral thought, discourse, and practice and the assumptions that underlie them) and to count against non-realist metaethical theories. According to some such non-realist theories, so-called versions of non-cognitivism, though our moral practices serve a very

[1]I treat "moral" and "ethical" as interchangeable—while recognizing that "ethics" is often used for a broader set of questions than "morality."

important role in our lives as social creatures, our substantive moral claims and judgments are simply not *capable* of being true or false. Perhaps they are more like expressions of pro- or con-attitudes or expressions of approval or disapproval. According to other such non-realist theories, though moral claims purport to be about the way things really are, none of these claims actually is true. Perhaps they're all false. According to yet others, some moral claims and thoughts can be *treated* as true but they are so only in a (putatively) *useful* fiction. Or perhaps the fiction is that they're capable of being true or false in the first place.[2]

Many philosophers have long thought that moral realism faces serious and persistent challenges. We think we know what it is for a judgment to be correct. We use the language of "tracking" or "correspondence" or "representation." Someone might assert of a given judgment—perhaps, "Purposefully attacking noncombatants is wrong"—that it is true because it accurately represents moral facts, or that it's appropriately responsive to moral reality, or that it accurately tracks moral properties. But as soon as we begin talking in this way, we have to ask what the relevant feature would amount to. We know, or think we know, what we mean when we talk about correspondence or tracking or representation in the physical domain of thought and discourse. I judge that two red apples are on the table. This seems to presuppose a state of affairs consisting of objects and their characteristics, one to which my true judgments are appropriately responsive and false ones not. But what could this mean in the moral domain? Is there a moral law with which, in Platonic fashion, we interact? Or are there distinctly moral entities or properties to which we can be responsive? Are there properties of wrongness or rightness attached to certain acts or character traits? If so, what sort of properties might these be? They would not seem to be natural (like the properties of suffering or redness or roundness). Are they then supernatural? Or is there some category of property that's neither supernatural nor natural?

If it turns out that our moral claims and thoughts referentially commit us to some sorts of entities or objects, they would certainly seem to be strange ones, ones that don't seem to fit easily in-

[2]I do not claim to offer here a full accounting of all the ways in which one can be a moral antirealist.

to our broader ontological commitments, that is, our accounting of what exists. Or perhaps our accounting of what exists in such a way as to in some sense to account for the possibility of this understanding.

Not only is the nature of putative moral properties puzzling, but if wrongness or rightness corresponds to a property, moral properties would seem to co-vary with natural properties. If two acts feature all of the same natural properties (*e.g.*, the properties of causing suffering to the kittens for fun and the like), then they also feature all of the same moral properties (perhaps of being wrong)—at least, this seems very plausible. What sort of connection might there be, however, between natural and moral properties that could explain this? And does the moral law, do moral properties, *exist* in a way that involves causal impingement on immaterial minds or physical brains? If so, how? And how would we know?

But even if we could come up with a plausible story that makes sense of the nature of moral entities and of how to explain how we, as natural beings, could come to know about moral facts, to have access to moral properties, it would still be difficult to explain how it is that morality seems to be non-optional in our lives. Moral truths seem to have a certain kind of authority over us. There's a to-be-doneness associated with moral requirements. All of these (and other) worries, understood by many to include both *metaphysical* and related *epistemological* worries, call into question moral realism.[3]

Realist responses have included boldly insisting on the existence of non-natural, distinctly moral entities. These are the so-called non-naturalistic versions of moral or normative realism. Realist responses have also included offering what we might think of as a modest revision of our ordinary moral experience and embrace the view that moral properties just are natural properties, or the so-called naturalistic versions of realism.[4]

[3]See John Mackie's discussion of metaphysical queerness, epistemological queerness, and relativity: J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1977) 29-82.

[4]Below, I offer a fuller and more careful discussion of what I mean by a "moral fact."

Perhaps, however, the above mentioned ontological and epistemic problems are not after all problems for moral or normative *realism*. Perhaps they are rather problems for a particular construal of moral or normative realism. This is the view I defend here.

B. Chapter 1 Overview

Exploring the similarities and differences among alternative versions of what I call non-inflationary realism about morality or normativity—roughly, the view that moral or normative realism can be affirmed in the absence of any sort of positive ontological commitment—can help to clarify the merits of this position and the challenges it continues to face. In Chapter 1, I seek to frame the exploratory project I will undertake in the remainder of my dissertation. I have begun, in Part I, by elaborating the presumption of realism shared by many of those who affirm *and* those who reject the notion that moral and normative thought and discourse can be truthful and objective. I go on to elaborate what I call the Realism and Representation Argument, designed to exhibit the links among a number of assumptions about the status of morality and our knowledge of the (putative) truth of moral propositions and to show why some common versions of realism, even while attractive, might also seem to encounter serious difficulties. I employ this argument as a touchstone throughout my dissertation, making clear how the various positions I consider might attempt to respond to or modify it.

I go on in Part II to consider some standard responses to the argument offered by those who—in stark contrast to the philosophers on whom I will focus in the remainder of the dissertation—treat representation as integral to truth-claims (including both proponents and critics of moral or normative realism). Then, in Part III, I introduce the non-inflationary realist alternative, explain how non-inflationary moral or normative realists might respond to the Realism and Representation Argument, and outline why they might be skeptical about the assumption that representation is essential to moral or normative truth. In Part IV, I introduce the approach to exploring non-inflationary moral or normative realism I will take in my dissertation before outlining the remainder of the dissertation in Part V.

Next, I attempt to elaborate in more detail what I have thus far laid out in a fairly skeletal manner.

C. The Realism and Representation Argument

1. Purpose of the Argument

The Realism and Representation Argument provides a more precise statement of the problem I've narratively sketched in the proceeding paragraphs. It seeks to highlight some tradeoffs associated with assuming that morality is in good working order. I'm going to be concerned with some of these tradeoffs in my subsequent engagement in this dissertation. Each of the argument's premises is going to be challenged by different participants in the debate. All I am doing here is attempting to clarify the stakes. Throughout the dissertation, I'll be showing in more detail at which points different positions take issue with the particular elements of this argument.

Here is the sort of reasoning that might lead to the conclusion that we must accept into our ontologies entities that are neither natural nor supernatural (and so non-naturalistic realism), or conclude that moral facts are empirical facts (so naturalistic realism), or give up on moral truth (error theory or some other nihilism), or treat morality as a fiction, or treat morality as not in the business of stating facts (for instance, simple emotivism), or the like.

2. The Argument

Realism and Representation Argument

(1) All that exists is natural [*naturalistic* assumption].[5] (I bracket here questions about the reality of God and similar matters.)

(2) Morality (or normativity) is in good order.

(3) For morality (or normativity) to be in good order we'd need to treat moral (or normative) claims and thoughts as capable of being either true or false [*truth-aptness* or cognitivist assumption[6]].

[5]There is a good deal of controversy over just how we are to understand a claim that all that exists is "natural." A careful outline of the various ways of thinking about this goes beyond the scope of this project. Here I'll say by calling something "natural," I mean that it's something that can be the subject of the empirical sciences. And I'll be calling "naturalistic" thoughts or claims about the natural world that would fit into the practice of the empirical sciences.

(4) For morality (or normativity) to be in good order, we'd need to understand our moral utterances and thoughts as things with which others might strictly disagree, something that would not be out of place to support with reasons and arguments. [*belief-like* status assumption].[7]

(5) For morality (or normativity) to be in good order, there must be some moral truths.

(6) In order to treat moral (or normative) claims and thoughts as truth-apt or as having belief-like status, we'd need to explain their meanings representationally [*representationalist* assumption]. Representationalism is the idea that utterances that we intend to be true, and so assume are capable of being true or false, are such that their function is to *represent* or *track* how things are, and *represent* is understood as a relation between words and their subject matters that we can understand as basic to explanation.

(7) In order to cash out language representationally, there must be entities to which such language is referentially committed.

(8) From (3), (4), and (6), for morality (or normativity) to be in good order, we'd need to cash it out representationally.

(9) From (7) and (8), for morality (or normativity) to be in good order, there must be entities to which our moral language and thought is referentially committed.

(10) Our moral (or normative) thoughts and claims, regarding what ought to be (e.g., "One ought not to kick dogs for fun") are importantly distinct from our naturalistic thoughts and claims (e.g., "Slavery causes suffering"). They're not naturalistic, so they're non-naturalistic [*Hume's Law*].[8]

(11) In order to understand our language as representing or describing such entities, the language or thought must be thought of as varying in some important sense with the natures of the en-

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[6]See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of cognitivism versus non-cognitivism about morality or normativity.

[7]I'm torn about this way of putting it. I'd like to say "that at least in principle could be supported with reasons and arguments." It would still seem to count as a belief, though, if I assumed there was no way, even in principle, of offering a reason in support of whatever it is I believed. Perhaps I just believe it—say, on faith. And even if I conclude, say, that non-natural moral ontology is incoherent, I'd not want to deny that others 'believe' in there being such non-natural moral ontology.

[8]David Hume argued that we cannot get an ought-judgment from an is-judgment. We might correctly describe what is the case, some naturalistic state of affairs detailed in full, but we can still ask what we ought to do/think/feel, etc. Naturalistic moral realists, of course, are going to object.

tities themselves—in whatever sense is required for the language or thought to *represent* whatever it is that they represent. (So, for instance, if our words give voice to what we might call a naturalistic concept, the entity with which the concept is intended to be linked is natural.)[9]

(12) From (9), (10) and (11), moral (or normative) entities must be *non-natural*.

(13) From (1) and (12), the entities to which our moral (or normative) language and thought is representationally committed are "ontologically dubious."[10] (We conclude that they exist but we are unsure what it would mean for them to exist and for them to exist conflicts with our other assumptions.)[11]

(14) An adequate semantic account of our moral (or normative) thought and discourse won't involve commitment to ontologically dubious entities—or at least to entities the meaning of the existence of which is unclear.

(15) From (1) -(13), embracing objectivity and truth in moral (or normative) thought and discourse commits us to ontologically dubious entities.

Moral realism is generally taken to involve accepting premises (2) -(5) while denying premise (1). As this argument shows, either we give up one of the premises, or we get the denial of moral (or normative) realism itself.

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[9]Huw Price has a nice discussion of this: "Imagine a child's puzzle book . . . On the left side of the page are some peel-off stickers—perhaps the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, a koala. The aim of the game is to match each of these stickers to the corresponding object in a picture on the right hand side of the page. The game is successfully completed when every sticker has been placed in its correct location. Now think of the right hand side as the world, and the stickers as statements we take to be true of the world. For each statement, […] [we] ask what *makes* it true—what fact in the world has precisely the 'shape' required to do the job. Matching true statements to the world seems a lot like matching stickers to the picture; and many problems in philosophy seem much like the problems the child faces, when some of the stickers are hard to place." Huw Price, *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* (Cambridge: CUP 2013) 20.

[10]This can be expanded to epistemic worries, of course. We might add the premise that we are natural beings and can straightforwardly have epistemic access to natural entities (and relations and properties of such). Having epistemic access to non-natural entities is more puzzling. Of course, we do think we have epistemic access to the truths of logic and math. But the challenge is to explain this.

[11]Perhaps once someone accepts the possibility of supernatural beings, it would seem odd to reject the idea of non-natural entities. I'm not sure, though. It seems to me that someone could imagine that all that exists is either natural or supernatural and so conclude that non-natural moral properties are ontologically problematic.

3. Moral or Normative Realist Responses

Given the assumptions in the above argument, it is not surprising perhaps that moral or normative realism is often defined in the literature as involving the adoption of a particular metaphysical thesis.[12] Often this is put in terms of being ontologically committed to moral properties,[13] or sometimes treating moral or normative properties as at least in some special sense elite or fundamental.[14] I think it is important to note, however, that ultimately what matters to the realist is that moral or normative thoughts and claims are capable of being true and are belief-like, so premises (3) and (4), and that some moral claims are, in fact, true, so premise (5). The metaphysics is assumed to give us this.

Realist responses have included robust (or ontic) non-naturalistic versions, defenders of which posit the existence of non-natural, distinctly moral entities, or treat such entities as fundamental or elite, so a rejection of premises (1) and (13) or (14), or both. Some naturalistic responses have included offering what we might think of as a modest revision of our ordinary moral experience and embrace the view that moral properties just are natural properties, so a rejection of premise (10), so (12) and (13).

I want to say, however, that the above mentioned ontological and epistemic problems are not after all problems for moral or normative *realism*. Rather, they are problems for a particular construal of moral or normative realism.

Before saying more about the accounts on which I focus in this dissertation, let's take a closer look at some of the more traditional responses to the Realism and Representation Argument. This will help clarify what the views on which I focus here amount to. (Even if what follows amounts to a closer look at these accounts than what I offer above, it remains nonetheless a sort of survey of the metaethical or meta-normative domain viewed from forty-thousand feet.)

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[12]Jamie Dreier maintains that a *sine qua non* of a realist explanation of moral language will involve the adoption of a such a thesis. See Jamie Dreier, "Metaethics and the Problem of Creeping Minimalism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (2004): 23-44.

[13]Dreier.

[14]Tristram McPherson, "What is at Stake in Debates among Normative Realists?" *Noûs* 49.1 (March 2016): 123-46.

II. Representationalist Responses to the Realism and Representation Argument

A. Representationalism

As the Realism and Representation Argument makes clear, a particular view on the relation between truth and representation has played a very important role in this discussion. This turns out to be really important for everything that follows. So, let me talk about how the notion of representation plays in this discussion. Representation may well turn out to be the fulcrum on which things turn.

Answers to the question of what it would mean for morality to be in good working order are often worked out in terms of what we might call a defeasible presumption of moral or normative realism. Traditionally, this has taken the form of a sort of representationalist understanding of realism. Here, I highlight this especially important issue of representation. In the course of doing that, I'll talk about how a number of the different positions that all seem to embrace this shared view of the significance of representation.

Roughly, representationalism is the idea that utterances that we intend to be true and so assume are capable of being true or false are such that their function is to *represent* or *track* how things are. Representationalism is a semantic account, an account of the meanings of our language and thought. It explains the meanings of utterances that we take to be capable of being true or false in terms of links between language and whatever such language is *about*. On a representationalist semantics, *represent* is understood as a relation between words and their subject matters that we can understand as basic to explanation. So such links are treated as *basic* to explanation. Representationalism assumes that such claims are true in so far as they accurately represent what they purport to be true *of*, and they are false in so far as they misrepresent that they purport to be true of.[15]

[15]Russell Shafer-Landau puts it this way. See his *Moral Realism: A Defense* (New York: OUP 2003) 17, 20n8.

Importantly, this assumes that there is, and needs to be, something that can be correctly or incorrectly represented and that in some sense *makes* the relevant claims true. On a representationalist semantics, therefore, claims and the thoughts to which they give voice can be true only if there are accessible truth-makers to which our discourse and thought are understood to be accountable.

Metaethical or meta-normative representationalists explain not only thought and discourse about the natural world representationally, but also moral, and more broadly, normative thought and discourse. It would seem to follow, however, that for moral or normative claims to be true, there must be moral or normative accessible truth-makers. Such truth-makers are puzzling, however, because it's difficult to make sense of their natures, difficult to make sense of how we can access them, and difficult to make sense of the hold they have over us.

In some sense it seems fairly straightforward to make sense of this with respect to what we might characterize as naturalistic thought and discourse. I judge that two red apples are on the table or that poking a needle into a cat hurts the cat. It does seem reasonable to conclude that I'm describing something to which I take my thoughts and claims to be responsive in a particular sort of way. The function of my naturalistic language does seem to be to *represent* natural states of affairs—understood as collections of objects, including individuals, and their associated relations and properties.[16] Furthermore, the accessible truth-makers for such claims on such a semantic account, namely, the objects, individuals, relations, properties, structures of these as states of affairs, etc., are the very sorts of things the existence of which is not especially puzzling.

Of course, in a way even these *are* puzzling. Indeed, some philosophers have denied that it makes sense to posit the existence of even natural entities or to make sense of natural states of affairs. But the puzzlement over the nature of the entities to which our moral discourse and thought might seem referentially committed is of another sort entirely. Indeed, it is precisely *in contrast to* natural entities that some philosophers are inclined to talk of "ontologically dubious" entities. The wor-

[16]Allan Gibbard nicely puts this as follows: "States of affairs are structures of properties and relations more generally, along with individuals such as you, a rabbit, and the planet Venus, and such logical devices as quantification." Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (Oxford: OUP 2012) 28.

ry, as many philosophers understand it, is how to place in a natural world, a world studied by science, entities to which our discourse and thought seems referentially committed but which seem to be ontologically dubious and epistemically inaccessible.[17] Putatively ontologically dubious entities often include moral or normative entities but might be taken also to include causes, or mathematical or truth properties. Some worry too about the entities to which our talk of minds are referentially committed. These are often called in the literature "placement problems."

In spite of puzzles over moral or normative entities, many philosophers retain the representationalist or tracking picture for moral language and thought. The views on which I focus in this project reject this picture. It might be helpful, therefore, to have a clearer idea of what it is that they reject. The following are some of the types of responses to worries about moral realism that presuppose a kind of representationalism.

B. Representationalist Responses to Worries about Moral Realism

*1. Representationalist, Non-Naturalistic Responses (*Robust *Non-Naturalism)*

Traditional non-naturalistic moral or normative realists, now often characterized as "robust" non-naturalists or realists (or what we might also call ontic realists),[18] assume representationalism. They suppose that the mistake we've made when thinking about putative worries about moral (or normative) realism is in thinking that everything that exists is *natural*. They thus challenge premise (1) of the Representation and Realism Argument, and thus challenge the fateful (13) and (14).

People like David Enoch and Tristram McPherson, following Plato and many others, (boldly) posit the existence of distinctly moral, non-natural entities (to be understood as distinct from both natural and supernatural entities). Such non-natural, distinctly moral properties are different from the properties that figure in our talk about the physical world, they would grant, but, they in-

[17]For an interesting discussion of this see Terry Horgan and Matjaz Potrc's "Abundant Truth in an Austere World," *Truth and Realism*, ed. Patrick Greenough and Michael P. Lynch (Oxford: Oxford UP 2006) 137-161.

[18]Often in the literature they are called versions of "robust moral realism" or "robust normative realism." But, of course, this latter ignores naturalistic versions of robust moral or normative realism.

sist, we have no compelling reason not to accept into our ontology a broad range of properties. It's one thing to think that the natural sciences are very good at unpacking the dynamics of law-governed *physical* behavior, but the question whether description in terms of such behavior is the only kind of description of the world possible is not, as such, a question scientific inquiry can answer. So because scientific inquiry cannot yield non-natural moral properties, it doesn't follow that we don't have good reason to posit their existence.

Note, of course, that all of this is compatible with the view that the natures of such entities are, indeed, puzzling. One might treat them as puzzling, presumably, while also maintaining that the assumption that such properties exist, link up with our moral terms, and play a basic theoretical role in explaining morality has clear theoretical advantages, advantages that outweigh the costs associated with welcoming such entities into our ontology, our accounting of all that exists.

Defenders of this form of non-naturalism suppose that their approach has the advantage of not requiring any revision in our ordinary moral language. They might also offer the following sort of parity defense: We worry about how we are to understand ourselves interacting with or coming to know about normative entities or properties, but such worries include worries about the entities to which our talk of mind is referentially committed, or talk of numbers or causes, etc. Robust (or ontic) non-naturalists, therefore, are in good company. If we have good reason to embrace, for instance, mathematical properties, why balk at accepting moral properties?

Are the robust (or ontic) non-naturalists right, however, that their position is the only one that requires no revision to our ordinary moral language? Perhaps not. Note that they make very specific assumptions about our ordinary moral thought and discourse. They assume that moral utterances are capable of being true or false. They also assume that for utterances to be capable of being true or false in any domain (or, for some other reason, in that particular domain) to be capable of being true or false, there must be links between language and thought and whatever it is that they track, and that such links are basic to explanation. For there to be such links and for them to be basic to explanation, the robust (or ontic) realists furthermore assume that there are moral entities that our claims might track or mistrack.

Some naturalistic moral realists accept basically all of this while defending a different sort of account of what sorts of truth-makers are required for moral claims to be capable of being true.

2. Representationalist Naturalistic Responses

Naturalistic moral (or normative) realists reject the notion that we need to incorporate non-natural entities into our ontologies in order to make sense of our normative thought and discourse. A subset of naturalistic moral realists, like the defenders of robust (or ontic) non-naturalism, accept the representationalist assumption. They object, however, to the ontology associated with non-natural properties. Defenders of so-called analytic naturalism reject the idea that normative claims really are distinct from naturalistic claims in the way that premise (10) presupposes. Given this, they reject the idea that normative entities are non-natural, rejecting, thus, premise (12), and thus the notion that normative entities are ontologically dubious, and so premise (13). In this way, they can embrace premise (14), that an adequate account of our morality or normativity won't commit us to ontologically dubious entities while rejecting the fateful premise (15).

According to naturalists, if it makes sense to say that out moral (or normative) language and thought represents or tracks something, what is represented or tracked is *natural*, so natural properties or arrangements of such properties—properties such as the property of causing suffering or being painful.[19] So-called analytic naturalists adopt this sort of view. They thus claim to accommodate premise (11), the assumption that the things tracked must vary in relevant ways with that which tracks, because, on their view, the things tracked are natural and the tracking thought and discourse is itself naturalistic.[20]

Naturalism, as some of its prominent defenders acknowledge, does involve a sort of "moderate reform" of our understanding of moral language and thought.[21] How much and what sort of reform depends on the version of naturalism.

[19]These are, of course, just a few proposals.
[20]See Frank Jackson.
[21]As Peter Railton suggests.

If this form of naturalism is plausible, some important puzzles are solved. No more mysterious metaphysics is involved than that involved in talk about natural properties. Furthermore, as long as we assume we can have epistemic access to moral properties via our senses and through empirical enquiry, into the natural world, we can assume we have epistemic access to moral (or normative) facts understood as natural facts. The meanings of moral claims, on the analytic naturalist view, can be explained in terms of relations between moral words, claims, and thoughts and natural properties and states of affairs.

This view too has its challenges. It is difficult to see, for instance, how to make sense of the to-be-doneness of moral conclusions understood this way. We seem to have lost the normative. Also, it certainly doesn't seem as if we're describing a natural state of affairs when we make a moral judgment. Nonetheless, if the objectivity and truth of morality depends on a representationalist semantics, it seems reasonable to take this sort of albeit revisionary proposal seriously.

Other representationalists about the moral or normative find the idea that moral facts just are natural facts less than satisfactory. Some of these also reject the robust non-naturalist position that we can make enough sense of non-natural moral properties to realize any sort of theoretical gain from positing their existence. Of these, some are drawn to one or more error theories. Note that traditional error theorists agree with the representationalist robust moral realists about what it would take for morality to be in good order. They just disagree that what it would take actually obtains.

3. Representationalist, Error-Theoretic Response

Error theorists accept the Realism and Representation Argument basically in its entirety and select premise (2) for rejection. They deny, that is, that morality (or normativity, depending on the view) is in good order.

J. L. Mackie, for instance, agrees with the metaethical representationalist, and in particular with those who defend the non-naturalistic variety, about what would have to be in place for our ordinary moral discourse to be in good order. But he adopts a sort of error theory according to which there is an appearance/reality distinction and we get it wrong.

Mackie explains that to understand morality is to understand that it involves some sort of objective prescriptivity. Moral truths tell us how to think, feel or act. But if we assume that the truth of moral claims requires the relevant, accessible truth-makers, it follows that the truth of our moral claims requires the instantiation of objectively prescriptive properties. But such properties simply cannot be instantiated, maintains Mackie. "[I]f there were objective values," Mackie writes, "then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe."[22] So there cannot be moral facts. All moral claims, Mackie concludes, are therefore false. Mackie defends an error theory because, on his view, our actual moral thought and discourse is mistaken because we don't treat our moral claims and thoughts as false but those claims involve untenable presuppositions.

Of course, if it turns out that Mackie (like the representationalist non-naturalists) is mistaken about what would have to be the case for morality (or normativity) to be in good order, then even if non-natural moral properties aren't (or cannot be) instantiated, we can reassess the merits of an error theory of morality.

4. Representationalist Fictionalist Responses

Another sort of representationalist response to the Realism and Representation argument is one that rejects the idea that our moral or normative claims and thoughts are even capable of being true or false, that they're in the business of stating facts.

Some so-called moral fictionalists agree with Mackie about the appearance and reality distinction. Unlike Mackie, however, they might offer moral fictionalism as a solution. Rather than believing that stealing is wrong, the recommended attitude is one of taking it that stealing is wrong "in a fiction" or "within a pretense", and our claims such as "Stealing is wrong" are best understood as true "according to a fiction." Other moral fictionalists insist that our ordinary discourse and thought already involves some sort of pretense, that all along we've been pretending that our moral claims

[22]Mackie 38.

were true.[23] All along when we've made claims such as "Slavery is wrong," we've take this to express states of mind that might be characterized as taking slavery to be wrong according to a fiction—or in some game of make-believe. Others might want to say that the fiction is at the metaethical or meta-metaethical level. (I spell out how this latter sort of fictionalism would work in Chapter 5.)

5. Non-Cognitivist Representationalist Response

So-called non-cognitivists maintain that with our moral language, we're not even in the business of stating moral facts. We don't even pretend to do so. One possible way to avoid the putative ontological and epistemic worries about morality without giving up on the representationalist assumption is to accept some other account of what we're doing when we engage in moral practice.

A. J. Ayer maintained that when we make substantive moral utterances using sentences such "Slavery is wrong," we are expressing anti-slavery feelings or attitudes,[24] saying, for instance something like "Slavery: boo!"[25] And when we utter sentences such as "We ought to help those in need!" we are expressing pro-helping-people-in-need feelings or attitudes, saying something like "Helping those in need: hurrah!" He concluded from this that as "expressions of emotion" our moral utterances "can neither be true nor false,"[26] or that we cannot "strictly speaking, contradict" each other when we communicate about our moral views.[27]

Ayer's account is generally characterized as a version of emotivism, which, in turn, can be seen as a version of expressivism. Roughly put, expressivism is the view that the meanings of moral sentences are explained in terms of the state of mind such sentences express. Of course, to say that "Slavery is wrong" is to express an anti-slavery attitude is to say that it expresses a certain sort of a

[23]Defenders of such an account include Mark Kalderon. Ken Walton defends a version of fictionalism about aesthetic value that mirrors this sort of fictionalism as applied to morality. See Mark Eli Kalderon, *Moral Fictionalism* (Oxford: OUP 2005); Walton.

[24]Given that Ayer took it that our moral claims were expressions of emotions, his account is called emotivism. But emotivism can be seen as one version of expressivism.

[25]The "boo" and "hurrah" language was not Ayer's. But it is an apt characterization of the state of mind Ayer takes the moral state of mind to be.

[26]A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London: Gollancz 1936) 102-3.

[27]Ayer 107. This is not to say, of course, that our emotions cannot come into conflict with the emotions of others in the sense of being different. I say boo! Dropping bombs on civilians; you say hurrah! Dropping bombs on civilians. We clearly conflict in some sense.

psychological fact. This psychological fact, in turn, is a state that can be described naturalistically. We can describe it. What the expressivist says is that whatever psychological state of affairs constitutes a specific moral state of mind, it is one we *express* (not describe) when we utter moral sentences. Basic to expressivism is this distinction between, on the one hand, telling someone that one is in a certain state of mind or even telling someone to care about something or other, and, on the other, expressing a particular state of mind.[28]

Note that expressivism itself doesn't determine what sort of state of mind to which we give voice when we utter any given utterances. It is often overlooked in the literature that an expressivist semantics, on the face of it, is not *incompatible* even with a representationalist semantics. For instance, an expressivist might want to say that some language or other is best explained as giving voice to a tracking/representing/describing state of mind. Someone who maintained that there were irreducibly moral properties and that such properties were tracked with our moral terms could offer an expressivistic account of moral utterances according to which the state of mind expressed when we make such claims is a tracking state of mind. Note, however, that even this does not amount to explaining the meanings of moral utterances in terms of links between our words and moral properties with those links understood as basic to explanation. Only on a representationalist semantics are such links *basic* to explanation. Even this, though, is perfectly compatible with an expressivist semantics according to which the state of mind expressed when one makes a moral utterance is a tracking state of mind. One sort of view one might adopt, therefore, is that naturalistic language, say, is tracking, calls for a representationalist semantics whereas moral language does not.

This is compatible with maintaining that in order for language to be capable of being true or false, to be characterized as beliefs, to be supportable with reasons, to be subject to disagreement, etc., it must be language that is amenable to a representationalist semantics.

Again, my point here is not that this is Ayer's view, but, rather, that this is coherent sort of view. One could defend a view that embraces both the representationalist assumption, premise (6)

[28]See Gibbard's discussion of this in, *e.g.*, Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, 3 vols. (New York: OUP 2014-17) 3: 210.

of the above argument, and an Ayer-style account of what's going on when we engage in moral practice. If in order for any language or thought to be capable of being true or false, the language with which one might use to give voice to the related thought must be such that it is amenable to a representationalist semantics, then it does follow that if we are not representing, describing or tracking with our moral utterances, then our moral utterances would not be capable of being true or false. Note that this approach would involve offering a different account of what it would take for morality to be in good order.

Of course, one might adopt an Ayer-like account of what's going on when we make moral utterances while also proposing that we take ourselves to be making claims that are capable of being true or false when, in fact, they're not. From this it seems that a sort of error theory would loom. It wouldn't be a Mackie-style error theory which has it that our moral language actually is capable of being true or false (we're not mistaken about that), but that we mistakenly assume that there are moral truths. This other sort of error theory would have it that the mistake we make is in thinking that our moral thought and discourse is capable of being true or false.[29] It would be an error theory according to which the appearance is that our moral language works a certain way when in fact it does not.[30] (This will turn out to be important for a discussion in Chapter 5 of moral fictionalism. For now, I put it aside.)

Here's the idea: One could accept premise (1), that all that exists is natural and premise (2), that morality (or normativity) is in good order, while rejecting premise (3), that for morality to be in

[29]Perhaps calling this an error theory creates confusion given that error theory is generally interpreted as involving the view that all of our substantive moral claims are false. It might be useful, therefore, to find some other name for the sort of view I have in mind.

[30]Apparently, later in life Ayer claimed to be tempted by Mackie's moral error theory. Note, though, that he would have arrived at an error theory in a different way from Mackie. Mackie focused on the error in supposing that moral properties exist (so ontology played an important role in his error theory). Ayer's focus was on moral language and its capability to be either true or false. Graham Macdonald makes this point: "It is perhaps these 'surface' features of moral discourse, those that make it look like moral claims are assertions, and hence expressions of belief, and so truth-evaluable, and that moral disagreement appears to be genuine *moral* disagreement, that later tempted Ayer to consider Mackie's 'error' theory of moral language … as closer to the truth …." Graham Macdonald, "Alfred Jules Ayer," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U., Oct. 22, 2010) https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ayer/> (Aug. 1, 2017).

good order we'd need to treat moral claims and thoughts as capable of being either true or false and premise (4) that we'd also need to think of our moral thoughts as having a belief-like status. One could do so while accepting premise (6), that in order to treat moral claims and thoughts as truth-apt, we'd need to explain their meanings representationally. The rejection of (3) and (4), lead to the rejection of premise (5), that for morality to be in good order, there must be moral truths. So we wouldn't need to explain moral truths or facts. And because we've given up on a representationalist semantics for our moral language, we wouldn't need to assume that our moral language is referentially committed to moral entities, so we wouldn't need to explain and thus we wouldn't need to worry about the troubling premises (12) -(15).

C. Tradeoffs

Where does all of this leave us? As we've seen, there seems to be a presumption in favor of objection and truth in ethics that's a function of our experience and language. There's a simple way in which robust non-naturalism seems to capture our moral language's *evidently* representationalist features. As we've seen, though, there are problems with this. One sort of response involves flat-footedly insisting on robust non-naturalism and so on a fairly puzzling ontology along with a representationalist semantics. Another seems to revise away the to-be-doneness that we might think is distinctive to moral concepts. Still another response involves denying objectivity and truth in moral thought and discourse. Yet another involves denying that representationalism is ever a plausible account of the meaning of language and thought in any domain. Let's turn now to the latter approach.

III. Focus of this Project: Non-Representationalist Responses to Realism and Representation Argument

A. Non-Inflationary Moral or Normative Realism, a Non-Representationalist Approach

1. Non-Inflationary Realism and the Landscape

My focus in this dissertation is on what I take to be a promising *realist* alternative proposal, one that, if plausible, reveals that the putative ontological and epistemic problems are not, after all,

problems for moral or more broadly normative realism. They're just problems for a particular construal of such realism, one according to which in order for our moral or normative claims to be capable of being true or false, we must understand them as tracking and we must explain their meanings in representationalist terms.[31] It is this assumption, after all, that gives rise to the assumption that we must posit certain kinds of moral or normative properties and the resultant worries about how we can have access to them—so to the ontological and epistemic worries about moral or normative thought and discourse. Among the traditionally realist theses, it is representationalism that commits us to the existence of distinctly moral or normative properties.

2. The Non-Inflationary Realists

These philosophers on whom I focus in this project challenge traditional ideas of what it would take for morality or normativity to be in good order. According to these philosophers, we can do justice to the implicit commitments of our ordinary moral practice, as they see it, we can thus embrace objectivity and truth in ethics, without needing to make any specifically metaphysical commitments to the existence of distinctly moral properties or a distinctly moral reality.

These philosophers have radically changed the contemporary metaethical or meta-normative landscape. And their views have brought about a sort of smoothing away of differences between and among types of accounts that were once taken to be strikingly distinct. That it is no longer clear that all versions of non-naturalism, naturalism, and expressivism are incompatible with each other forces us to ask questions about the roles properties can play in our explanations of morality or normativity, and whether there's anything at issue between the understanding of a moral fact advanced by the robust realists and the understanding advanced by non-expressivistic non-inflationary realists and by quasi-realist expressivists. In addressing these questions, we must rethink what is required for objectivity and truth in moral or normative thought and discourse. To do this is to rethink what it is to be a moral or normative realist.

[31]Below I address the worry of those who think that moral realism just is what these philosophers reject.

Though otherwise distinct in their methods, non-naturalists such as Ronald Dworkin, T. M. Scanlon, Matthew Kramer, Hilary Putnam, Thomas Nagel, and Derek Parfit, naturalists like Peter Railton,[32] and even expressivists like Allan Gibbard,[33] all agree that we secure moral *objectivity* and *truth* without moral *ontology*. As Parfit puts it, the position defended by such philosophers is that non-empirical normative truths are *not* "made to be true by correctly describing, or corresponding to, how things are in some part of reality."[34] Call these views versions of "non-inflationary" moral or normative realism.[35]

I begin my discussion of these accounts by highlighting their responses to the Realism and Representation Argument (B.1.). I focus especially on what I take to be the motivation for the important representationalist assumption (B.2.). After this, I offer explanations for why I've chosen the name "non-inflationary moral or normative realism," explanations that I believe are important to making clear just what sort of view we have here.

Let's now take a closer look at how the non-inflationary realists might respond to the Realism and Representation Argument.

B. Non-Inflationary Realism and the Realism and Representation Argument

1. Specific Responses to the Argument

Defenders of the views on which I focus in this project argue that all of the above representationalists are mistaken in their conclusions about what would have to be the case for morality to be

[32]Note that Railton, a naturalist about the moral, is not often treated as sharing in this project even though he does in an important way share in the general project. Parfit, therefore, is right to note this in his third volume of *On What Matters*, even though I think he goes too far in claiming that there is not, after all, anything of meta-normative significance between his account and Railton's. Though I find the relation of Railton's account to other versions of non-inflationary realism of real interest. I leave this for another project.

[33]The inclusion of an expressivist in this group will be surprising to some readers. This is something I defend throughout this dissertation.

[34]Parfit 3: 59.

[35]The non-naturalistic versions of these views are generally called in the literature "relaxed" or "minimalist" or "quietist" versions of non-naturalism. There is nothing relaxed, however, about their approach to moral or normative metaphysics, and not all of them are either minimalist or quietist about anything, so there's something less than satisfactory about these characterizations. They do all agree, however, that robust realists inflate moral or normative metaphysics. They are thus, on their own terms, non-inflationary realists.

in good order. For one, they all reject a representationalist semantics for moral or normative thought and discourse. Non-inflationary non-naturalists agree with premise (1) of the Realism and Representation Argument, that all that exists is natural. They agree with premise (2), that morality (or normativity) is in good order, and with premise (3), that for it to be in good order we'd need to treat moral claims and thoughts as capable of being either true or false [*truth-aptness* assumption]. They agree with premise (4), that for morality to be in good order, we'd need to be able to support our moral claims and thoughts with reasons and arguments. We'd need to be understood as stating something with which others might strictly disagree [*belief-like* status assumption]. They agree with premise (5), that for morality to be in good order, there must be moral facts—some moral truths, and with premise (10), that our moral thoughts and claims (e.g., "slavery is wrong") are importantly distinct from our naturalistic thoughts and claims (e.g., "Slavery causes suffering"). Indeed, they call their accounts versions of non-naturalism precisely because they take moral (or normative) thought and discourse to be non-naturalistic.

As we've seen, however, they reject premise (9). They reject the view that for morality to be in good order, we must posit the existence of moral or normative entities or assume that our moral language and thought is referentially committed to such entities. Since they also reject a tracking picture of moral or normative thought and discourse, and thus premise (8), that for morality to be in good order, we must be able to make sense of explaining the meanings of our moral thoughts and claims in terms of representational relations, and so (6), that for morality to be in good order, we'd need to cash it out representationally, they need not worry about the entities to which the representationalist takes it that our moral language and thought is referentially committed, and thus reject premise (7).

Some objectors might worry that it's too easy simply to dismiss representationalism and thus posit objectivity and truth without, as it were, truth makers. Whyever, though, should we think that representationalism is the best way to explain moral or normative thought and discourse in the first place? It seems to me that this stems from assuming that all language and thought that is capable of being true or false or that we are going to treat as having belief-like status calls for the same semantic

treatment. I think there's a natural tendency to assume that there are domain-independent standards. In turn, representationalism is assumed as that one semantic account given that it most plausibly explains naturalistic thought. This, in turn, matters because of the important role naturalistic thinking plays in our lives.

First, let's take a closer look at what I mean by domain-independent standards.

2. Domain-Independent Standards; Domains versus Realms

I think it's plausible that the assumption that the moral or normative domain calls for a representationalist semantics stems from the assumption that all language and thought that is capable of being true or false or that we are going to treat as having belief-like status calls for the same semantic treatment. This involves assuming that there are very specific domain-independent standards for explaining the meanings of truth-evaluable, belief-like language or thought.

What do I mean by domain-independent standards? Following Scanlon, I use the term "domain" here to group together ways of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to link. So we might think of the *physical* or *moral* or *normative* or *mathematical* domain (with subdomains, overlapping domains, and larger domains limited only by conceptual possibility).[36] By "domain," then, I do *not* mean to imply something filled up with entities of some sort. We might ask, to be sure, about any domain whether it presupposes the existence of entities and even about what sorts of entities these might be. But the entities themselves, if there are any presupposed, are not *part* of the domain as I'm using the term. Perhaps we could reserve the term *realm* for this.

Let's take an example: We can talk for instance about the domain of the natural sciences. By this, I mean ways of conceiving of things scientifically, ways of thinking about the subject matter of the natural sciences. There are clearly plenty of approaches to thinking and talking about the things the natural sciences attend to. In contrast, as I use the term "realm," the "realm of the natural sciences" will refer to the collection of all the entities, relations, etc., with which the natural sciences are concerned. These are all the things, properties, etc., presupposed by the domain of science, or, in

[36]Though presumably we'd only care about grouping together language and thought into domains that we find useful.

other words, the things the natural sciences attend to.[37] There are, of course, plenty of things we can think or say that are not part of the *domain* of science, whether or not they are part of the *realm* of science. It seems plausible that *value* talk is not part of the domain of science (whether or not it's part of the realm of science). Talk of mentality does not seem exclusively part of the domain of science (though it might be, but again, this is separate from whether or not it's part of the realm of science).[38]

Let's use the term 'naturalistic domain' for the collections of *naturalistic* descriptions of the natural realm, or the collection of all that is natural. We are, of course, parts of nature. But not everything we might think or say about the natural realm would qualify as naturalistic descriptions. Let's use the term 'normative domain' for the collection of all normative things we can say or think, leaving aside for now what makes a thought distinctly normative as well as what it is we're putatively saying or thinking things about.

As I'm using the terms, to assume that there are "domain-independent standards" for determining whether any domain involves objectivity and truth, is to assume that if certain conditions must be met in order for language or thought in one domain to be capable of being true then those conditions must be met for language or thought in another domain to be capable of being true. In other words, we don't have to ask questions specific to the nature of language or thought in any domain in order to determine what it would take for such language or thought to be capable of being true or false. To be sure, we'd need to ask questions specific to that language or thought to determine if it is in good order. But if we conclude, say, that in order for it to be in good order it must involve making claims and thinking thoughts that are capable of being objectively true or false, the next step is simply to apply the domain-independent standard for the truth-evaluability of language or thought. If puzzles arise, we might conclude that the domain is not, after all, in good order, or

[37]Not much turns here on which terms we use. We could use "realm" for the set of concepts and rules, etc., and "domain" for the set of objects that are picked out by these concepts and rules.

[38]There are sciences, e.g., psychology that study mentality. But psychology doesn't include everything there is to say about mentality.

that the domain presupposes the existence of what seem to be ontologically dubious entities, or some other assumption that we might take to involve certain costs.

If we are going to settle on just one account of how to explain the meanings of claims that are capable of being true or false, capable of giving voice to facts, it's easy to see why representationalism would be a good candidate here.

Notice, of course, that we might reject representationalism while accepting the assumption that I think explains or motivates the acceptance of what I call in the realism and representation argument, the representationalist assumption, i.e., premise (6).

It is not just that, like Ayer, one could reject a representationalist account of moral or normative thought and discourse. Unlike Ayer, one might reject the assumption that there are domain-independent standards for determining if language and thought is truth-evaluable or belief-like. This leaves one open to embrace the view that some types of truth-evaluable discourse and thought is amenable to a representational semantics whereas other types of truth-evaluable language and thought is not. If one adopted such a view, on one's own terms, nothing would compel one to give up the idea of the objectivity and truth of moral or normative discourse or even the notion that moral thoughts have a belief-like status even if one concludes that a representationalist semantics is not called for by normative or moral thought and discourse.

Even if it seems reasonable at least to start with the assumption that language and thought work the same way across domains, I do think that upon reflection there's not compelling reason to think that the costs associated with this assumption are worth the benefits. To be sure, the idea that there are domain-independent standards is more parsimonious. But if there is not any compelling reason over and above some Occam's-razor like principle to adhere to domain-independent standards, I think it makes sense to consider the costs associated with this position. There are other reasons, however, that one might give up on the idea of domain-independent standards. Ronald Dworkin's view, for instance, is that we actually can't make sense of the truth of moral statements with a representational semantics. The representational explanations just don't work. To the extent

that Dworkin is right about that, this might be a reason (over and above intuition) to reject representationalism in the normative domain.[39]

If we *do* assume domain-independent standards, however, I don't think it's surprising that we might think that any domain that involves objectivity and truth, would have to be explained representationally.

3. Why Assume a Representationlist Approach?

What I say here is speculative, of course, but perhaps the representationalist assumption for all language and thought that we take to be truth-apt or belief-like has to do with the important role that naturalistic thinking plays in our lives. There's something respectable about empirical evidence in support of our naturalistic claims that makes such claims a sort of paradigm example of truth-evaluable language and thought.

As we've seen, traditional non-naturalists and naturalists alike have assumed that it makes best sense to explain moral or normative thought and discourse representationally. Why should we think this, though? What is it about moral or normative thought or discourse that might lead us to think it is best explained in terms of links between our language or thought, on one hand, and properties or other such entities, on the other? Perhaps it is not, after all, something about *moral* or *normative* thought or discourse.

And it seems very straightforward to suppose that if a representationalist semantics is a useful or accurate account of the meanings of our language or thought, it applies most obviously to the naturalistic domain. When we say things like "There are three trees in my yard" or "Poking needles into a kitten hurts the kitten," it seems plausible that the meanings of these sentences can be explained in terms of links between our language and that which they are about (namely, trees and yards, kittens and needles, and relations among these). Such claims do indeed seem to be made true by correctly describing, tracking, or corresponding to how things are in some part of reality. It's not

[39]Thanks to Damian Wassel for pushing me to be clearer about the answer to the question of why we might relax our presumption in favor of a representationalist semantics for normative thought and discourse.

clear, however, that our moral or normative thought and discourse is best understood as being made true by correctly describing, tracking, or corresponding to how things are in some part of reality.

And since, as we've seen, representationalism does seem to be a very plausible semantic account of such language and thought, if we also assume that there are domain-independent standards for the truth-evaluability of language and thought, it's not surprising that we might settle on representationalism as the domain-independent standard.[40]

4. Rejection of (i) Representationalism and (ii) Domain-Independent Standards Assumption

Defenders of accounts of what's going on when we engage in morality or normativity that I'm calling non-inflationary realists views all reject the representationalist assumption, the assumption that for moral or normative thought and discourse to be understood as capable of being true or false or to have a belief-like status we must explain it representationally. As we've seen, they reject the assumption that objectivity and truth in ethics or normativity requires metaphysical commitment to ethical or normative entities of any kind. They also reject, however, what I take to be the motivation for the representationalist assumption, namely, that there is only one way for language and thought to be understood as being truth-evaluable or to have belief-like status, or, more specifically, that the specific nature of a given domain itself is not relevant to what it would take for language and thought in that domain to be treated as truth-evaluable or as having belief-like status.

Note that one might reject representationalism without rejecting the idea that there are domain-independent standards for objectivity and truth. This is important because not recognizing this very different approach can create confusion regarding how, say, Gibbard's version of expressivism

[40]As Gibbard proposes, people have a paradigm of representation in mind and it involves some sort of tracking that's like the tracking that happens when my eyes track the movement of my child on the swing, flying back and forth. On this view, our language and ideas are accountable to some sort of extra-mental reality with which we interacts causally. It seems to us *as if* "representation of normative features like wrongness" are to be explained in the same way as "representations of shapes and sizes," Gibbard writes. But this is misleading.. Though normative discourse does share some of the features of world-representing discourse, he maintains, it's a mistake to attribute all features of this kind of discourse to normative talk. See Allan Gibbard, "Global Expressivism and Truth in Representation" (unpublished paper, Global Expressivism Conference, Johns Hopkins U 2013).

differs from, say, Ayer's. As I read Ayer, he does not reject domain-independent standards. (Even if I'm mistaken about Ayer, this is clearly a coherent position and one that differs from Gibbard's.)

In one sense, of course, Ayer treats different domains differently, and thus could be seen as rejecting some possible domain-dependent standards. What he doesn't reject are domain-independent standards for objectivity and truth. Ayer distinguishes between the types of thoughts and claims that he takes to be truth-evaluable and the types of thoughts and claims that he thinks are not truth-evaluable and groups the moral domain in the latter. On Ayer's own view, language that is truth-evaluable is language with which we give voice to propositions. And language with which we give voice to propositions is either strongly or weakly verifiable[41] or analytic (so true in virtue of meanings). As he explains it, when we make what we might call naturalistic claims,[42] claims such as "Poking needles into a kitten causes the kitten to suffer," we give voice to propositions. In this case, we give voice to the proposition that poking needles into a kitten causes suffering. And, on his view, when we make analytic claims, claims such as "Obstetricians are doctors," we give voice to propositions. We thus in both cases state something that is either true or false. We state something that we can support with reasons and arguments. We state something with which others might strictly disagree.

This is not so, Ayer maintains, when we make moral utterances, when we give voice to sentences such as "Slavery is wrong." Ayer explains that it follows from our moral utterances' being, as he put it, "expressions of emotion," that they do not give voice to propositions and they "can nei-

[41]For my purposes, it doesn't matter whether Ayer is best understood as defending a weak or a strong verifiability criterion. All that matters is that there is such a type-independent criterion. Ayer adopted a deflationary view of truth. For this reason, a number of philosophers have remarked that he had the tools to accept the truth of moral claims. Ayer himself, however, focused on assertions. It was assertions that had meaning in virtue of their verification conditions. Ayer took it that moral utterances were not assertions. They did not give voice to propositions. For something to be an assertion, by which Ayer meant a verbal performance that's verifiable or analytic. Since moral utterances, as he saw it, were not either verifiable or analytic, they were not assertions.

[42]Following Gibbard's lead. Gibbard, as we'll see below, distinguishes between "naturalistic" and other sorts of thoughts and claims. Non-naturalistic ones might include normative or moral or claims or thoughts about numbers or minds or causation or even reference. More on this throughout the dissertation.

ther be true nor false."[43] Ayer's view, then, is moral terms—moral utterances—do not have cognitive meanings, or what he calls "literal" meanings.

Note that if we replace Ayer's semantics for every occurrence of the term 'representationalism in the Realism and Representation Argument, we get similar conclusions.

The non-inflationary realists reject the idea, however, that domain-independent criteria not influenced by the moral (or normative) domain itself tell us anything about whether moral (or normative) claims or thoughts are capable of being true or false or whether their being capable of being true or false requires the positing of objects as truth-makers.

One must focus on individual domains in order to determine in virtue of what we might say that the domain involves truth-evaluable claims or whether the domain presupposes the existence of entities. Some non-inflationary realists treat these as partly external (to the domain) questions, others as entirely internal (to the domain), but they all think that they are, as Scanlon puts it, made relevant by their relation to claims that are internal to the domain itself.[44] Scanlon explains that existence questions about numbers or sets, for instance, "are settled by mathematical reasoning," in the same way that "scientific questions, including questions about the existence of bosons, [are settled] by scientific reasoning."[45] "[T]he indispensability for science of mathematical terms referring to abstract entities such as sets and numbers does not," for instance, suggests Scanlon, "provide reason to accept that such things exist."[46]

Dworkin, who, like Scanlon, insists that moral questions are answered by the moral domain itself, explains that positing the existence of non-natural entities involves constructing some "non-moral metaphysical argument showing that there is some kind of [non-natural] entity or property in the world," but this, he maintains is missing the point. "[I]t is hard to imagine," as Dworkin compellingly argues, "any distinct state of the world" involving non-natural moral particles of some sort,

[43]Ayer 102-3.
[44]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford: OUP 2014) 21-22.
[45]Scanlon 19
[46]Scanlon 27-28.

"that can make your moral opinion true the way physical particles can make a physical opinion true."[47]

Gibbard too—like Scanlon and Dworkin, and unlike Ayer—maintains that moral and normative claims and thoughts are capable of being true or false and are belief-like. He does not assume that in order to adopt this view one would need to adopt a uniform account of what in virtue of which language or thoughts are capable of being understood in this way.

One very interesting question we will want to consider is whether there are any, and, if so, which questions might best be understood as relevant to the normative but nonetheless external to the normative. The non-inflationary realists don't all offer the same answer to this question.

Even if we assume that there is good reason to reject representationalism or to reject moral or normative ontology, is there not nonetheless good reason to treat the 'realist' label in a consistent way across domains? And why do I call these views "non-inflationary"? I address these questions as well as explaining why it's important to distinguish between the moral and the normative in what follows.

C. Why the Term "Non-Inflationary Moral or Normative Realism"?

1. Why "Moral or Normative"?

While some of the philosophers on whose work I focus here offer accounts specifically of the moral, others offer accounts of the normative. This makes for a sort of awkwardness when doing so-called metaethical work, work focused on explaining the meanings of moral terms and concepts, and questions about the status of moral judgments and the assumptions that underlie them. Much contemporary work in metaethics is actually more accurately characterized as meta-normative—but the meta-normative covers much more than metaethics and not all meta-normative worries are metaethical worries. These distinctions matter, and it's not clear to me that this distinc-

[47]Ronald M. Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2011) 29. (It would be good if I could address the issue of evidence. Thanks to Jim Joyce for pointing out that I should talk about causal explanations and justificatory explanations. I will have to leave this for another time.)

tion is always treated as important as I think it is. For instance, much work on Dworkin treats his account as an account of the normative. Dworkin himself, however, focuses exclusively on the moral. I'm less concerned about the use of the term "metaethics" to cover both metaethics proper and meta-normative theory.[48]

Sometimes a focus on the moral as compared to the normative will make a difference. Other times, it will not. Some of the philosophers on whose work I focus here offer accounts specifically of normative thought and discourse, treating the moral as a subset. Others of these treat the moral as separate from the normative but with normative implications, however. And still others focus exclusively on the moral. I am interested in understanding moral language and thought. Whenever possible, I'll put things in terms of the moral. When the distinction matters, I'll talk in terms of the normative.[49] I'll sometimes use the term "metaethics," though to refer to both metaethics and what would more properly be called "meta-normative theory."

In general terms, we might say that normative judgments are, as Wilfrid Sellars puts it, "fraught with ought."[50] Or they are "oughty."[51] One ought not to kick dogs for fun. One ought to conclude that 2+2=4. One ought to take the trash out if one wants to avoid having the house smell. Once we have an account of normative thoughts and language, we can distinguish different kinds of oughts, say, the epistemic ought from the 'prudential' ought, from the 'moral' ought, etc. The latter two might amount to the difference between the thought that it's morally wrong to kick a dog for fun from the thought that it's prudentially unwise to do so, say, because the dog might bite. Note, of course, that the prudential reason's holding or not is perfectly compatible with the moral reason's holding and perfectly compatible with the moral reason's not holding.

[48]Which I realize may seem odd given my insistence on taking seriously how we use other terms.

[49]While at points I seek to clarify it when I believe I can help to do so, the relationship between the normative and the moral obviously deserves more attention than I give it here.

[50]Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (New York: OUP 2012) 10.

[51]A term Gibbard credits to Kevin Mulligan.

Of course, what I say here is rough. I hope it is nonetheless helpful. Next, I address the question of why I characterize these accounts as "non-inflationary" instead of using the terms that are more commonly used in the literature.

2. Why 'Non-Inflationary'?

I say something about this above, but I think it's worth underscoring why I've chosen this term. In the literature, the accounts defended by these philosophers are often characterized as "minimalist," "quietist," or "relaxed" versions of either moral realism or normative realism, sometimes "relaxed non-naturalism."[52] The latter, of course, is problematic when used to refer to the project as a whole given that it ignores widespread agreement between Railton and other non-inflationists.[53]

I find the terms "quietist" or "minimalist realism" problematic because, although some members of the group in question do, indeed, embrace a quietist or minimalist or deflationary understanding of talk about distinctly moral or normative metaphysics and even about truth,[54] others strongly oppose such an approach. Deflationists such as Dworkin or Gibbard propose that we understand language that seems to be about the metaphysics of value as serving a sort of pragmatic function. On this *deflationary* view, in claiming, say, that torturing kittens "has the property" of being wrong, one is making no particular positive metaphysical commitment. One is simply making the *emphasized* moral claim that torturing kittens is wrong. In short, all claims that appear to be about the metaphysics of value are really (insofar as they are intelligible) just substantive moral claims about what is right and wrong.

Scanlon, Parfit, and Railton, among others, strongly oppose minimalist or deflationary readings of claims about metaphysics or ontology and certainly about truth, however. But, as we'll see, there is wide-spread agreement about just what sorts of metaphysical posits are required between

[52]See Sarah McGrath, "Relax! Don't Do it! Why Moral Realism Won't Come Cheap," *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 9, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford: OUP 2014) 186-214.

[53]A focus on Railton and his relation to the group is one (of numerous) contribution to work in this area made by the third volume of Parfit's *On What Matters*, which discusses the large metaethical convergence between Parfit's account and Railton's.

[54]These terms are sometimes used interchangeably; other times, with at least subtle differences, differences that don't matter for our purposes here.

and among these non-inflationary realists and the ones who support minimalist or deflationary readings of claims putatively about moral or normative metaphysics.

In turn, accounts like Dworkin's make it especially clear why it's problematic to characterize non-inflationary moral realism as "relaxed." On an understanding like Dworkin's, an account of moral realism that faces the sorts of metaphysical and epistemological challenges I outline above cannot even be coherently articulated. Dworkin denies that metaphysical questions about morality can be articulated or answered. To call a view like his "relaxed" is thus, in effect, to presuppose that it is mistaken. Some critics characterize them as being relaxed in the sense of not experiencing anxiety about what they take to be the theoretical implications of moral realism, namely, that realism presupposes dubious ontology.[55] Since they deny we can make sense of any of this, it would be odd to say that they are relaxed about it. Indeed, they might want to say that the robust realists are relaxed when they should be experiencing anxiety. And even philosophers like Scanlon or Parfit are not really "relaxed" about anything, certainly not about moral metaphysics. They claim to posit all the metaphysics that is needed to make sense of the moral domain.

In contrast to Dworkin and others, Scanlon maintains that metaphysical conclusions involving ontological commitment make sense, but the sorts of metaphysical conclusions we ought to draw in a given domain should be determined by standards internal to the domain.[56] Existence questions about numbers or sets, for instance, "are settled by mathematical reasoning," in the same way that questions, say, "about the existence of bosons, [are settled] by scientific reasoning."[57] "[T]he indispensability for science of mathematical terms referring to abstract entities such as sets and numbers does not," for instance, suggests Scanlon, "provide reason to accept that such things exist."[58] (Note that Scanlon here takes issue with Quine's conclusion that the indispensability for science was a good reason to accept that sets exist.) It's an interesting question whether something really is at is-

[55]McGrath takes this perspective. See McGrath 187.

[56]I recognize the worry that we'd have to find a way to make claims that involve statements in two different domains at once.

[57]Scanlon 19.

[58]Scanlon 27-28.

sue between Scanlon (who explicitly rejects a deflationary reading of metaphysical claims) and Dworkin (who do) with respect to moral metaphysics. But characterizing Scanlon as a minimalist moral realist is misleading, and characterizing any of the non-inflationary realists as relaxed realists is misleading.[59] Or so I want to argue.

One final note about the term "relaxed": it seems to presuppose the "robust" perspective, that is, the perspective of those who *do* treat explanations in terms of distinctly normative or moral properties (or a certain metaphysical understanding of such properties, say, as elite) as necessary to explaining normativity or morality. This, though, is precisely what the non-inflationary realist rejects. Of course, calling the "robust" realists "inflationary" also presupposes what *they* reject. Let's call the ontic moral realists, therefore, "robust" realists, in spite of the awkwardness of having this term used for a view we contrast with what we're calling "non-inflationary" moral or normative realists.

3. Why 'Realism'?

Many of even those who are thus far persuaded may remain puzzled by why I think it makes sense to characterize such accounts as "realist." As I understand our non-inflationary views, they share whatever it is that motivates one to defend a version of moral or normative realism. Characterizing them as "non-realists" would, I believe, mischaracterize their views as well as grant too much to their objectors.

Too often, it seems to me, philosophers focusing on the question of the boundary between realism and non-realism about morality or normativity share a cluster of assumptions about properly realist accounts of moral or normative thought and discourse that simply ignores the challenge to categorization posed by the accounts offered by defenders of non-naturalistic versions of non-inflationary moral realism.

Often metaethical discussions of this question take the form of asking what is at issue between a defender of a sophisticated version of expressivism and a moral realist. The conclusion is drawn that the moral realist but not the defender of expressivism makes certain "second-order as-

[59]For a differing opinion, see McGrath.

sumptions" about "the metaphysical status of . . . first-order propositions,"[60] or is ontologically committed to moral properties,[61] or treats normative properties as at least in some special sense elite or fundamental.[62]

While these may well be things at issue between *some*—in particular, *robust*—realists and, say, Gibbard, they are very much not things at issue between Gibbard and most, if not all, defenders of non-inflationary moral realism. That, it seems to me, is the question to ask. Like Gibbard, defenders of non-inflationary moral realism like Dworkin, Scanlon, Kramer, Nagel, Parfit, Putnam, Railton, and others, embrace characterizations of objectivity and truth in ethics while denying that ethical or normative thought and discourse involves an ontological commitment to moral or normative properties, much less for the assumption that such properties are fundamental or elite. As I hope will be clear by the end of this dissertation, it will not do simply to take some sort of ontologically serious version of realism as a paradigm cases of realism, highlight a distinction between such an account and an account such as quasi-realism, and thus conclude that the distinction between realist and non-realist accounts is metaphysical.[63]

Why should we care, though, whether such accounts are characterized as realist? And isn't it confusing to call them versions of moral or normative "realism," given that as the term "realism" is most often used, it implies some sort of positive metaphysical thesis? Why not just say about the non-inflationary accounts that their defenders embrace objectivity and truth about the moral or normative domains? Parfit, for instance, calls his account a version of "non-realist cognitivism."

4. Our Terms Matter

I think Parfit is mistaken to think his account is best understood as 'non-realist', and I don't think suggesting that Scanlon or Dworkin, say, should give up the realist label is as innocent as it might seem. I think it implies that there's something less objective or less truth-apt about moral

[60]Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosopher's Imprint* 1.1 (June 2001): 11.
[61]Dreier.
[62]McPherson.
[63]This is not so say, of course, that non-inflationary moral realist accounts aren't also challenged. People like Sarah McGrath and Tristram McPherson, for instance, argue that we have reason to be skeptical of the plausibility of non-inflationary moral realism. See McGrath; McPherson.

thought and discourse on a non-inflationary account as compared to a robust account. And I see no reason for the non-inflationary realists to grant this. Indeed, this presupposes the very point at issue.

People can, of course, define terms in any number of ways. And I grant that what matters even more than the particular terms we use is how clear we are about how we are using terms. Terms don't just appear out of nowhere, however. They are freighted with associations that make it difficult to use them without conveying particular implications.[64]

Russ Shafer-Landau defines moral realism as the view "that there are moral truths that obtain independently of any preferred perspective."[65] Gibbard and the other non-inflationary realists agree with Shafer-Landau's moral realists that there are moral truths and that such truths obtain independently of any preferred perspective.. They just don't agree that this is a *metaphysical* matter. Merely defining moral or normative realism as a view that presupposes the relevant metaphysics doesn't seem helpful. It also seems to beg the question against the non-inflationary realists. The issue between the so-called robust realists and what I'm calling non-inflationary realists is precisely whether explanations of moral thought and discourse necessarily involve the adoption of a particular sort of metaphysical thesis *about* morality, whether there is a metaphysical issue about ethics that involves a positive existence claim that is not itself a substantive moral issue, and whether moral language and thought work in the same way as other language and thought.

Note that even if we grant that positing the existence of properties of some sort is the best way to characterize the distinction between realist and antirealist accounts in the domain of, say, the natural sciences, it's just not clear why we should accept that this carries over to the moral domain. It's not clear to me why we should think that all facts obtain in the same way as facts studied by the natural sciences. It's not even clear to me that within the domain of the natural sciences we are

[64]See Doug Kremm's doctoral dissertation (in progress) for an excellent discussion of this and a persuasive case that how we use the terms "cognitivism" and "non-cognitivism" and, as I would add, "realism" and "anti-realism" really matters. Douglas Kremm, "Practical Cognitivism: An Essay on the Nature of Normative Judgment" (PhD diss, Harvard U, projected).

[65]Shafer-Landau, *Realism* 15.

compelled to think that the existence of properties, for instance, should be understood in the same way that we understand the existence of concrete objects.

To be sure, many traditional metaphysical questions, such as whether possible worlds exist or whether time is a substance above and beyond events involve positive or negative existence claims about entities in the mind-independent world. And if someone didn't posit the existence of physical entities of some sort or other, it's hard to see how she could be properly characterized as a realist about the physical.

The assumption that existence claims are necessary elements of a realist account is in some sense not surprising. This is a common approach to distinguishing realists from non-realists not only in the moral domain but also to a wide range of other domains. If the relevant properties are taken to exist, the account is realist; if not, it's antirealist.[66]

Scientific realists, for instance, would be understood as those who adopt perhaps a Platonist theory about properties, perhaps trope theory. On a sort of Platonist theory, properties, e.g., being yellow, or a kangaroo, are abstract universal objects. All objects that are yellow or are kangaroos exemplify the property in question. In turn, a relationship between individual objects and the relevant abstract universal objects explains why one object is yellow, another is a kangaroo, or both. On a trope theory, though properties are taken to exist, they're not understood as abstract universals but, rather, as abstract particulars. On this view, each kangaroo, say contains an instance of the trope kangaroohood and each yellow object, contains an instance of the trope yellowness. All other properties of kangaroos, in turn, are individual tropes. In turn, anyone who denied the existence of the relevant abstract objects or universals or even abstract particulars would be understood as an antirealist.

If, indeed, even in the moral domain, a realist understanding of our moral language involves robust ontological commitments, and, if, indeed, this is the sort of metaphysical thesis that Dreier

[66]Alexander Miller, for instance, presupposes this understanding of realism. See Alexander Miller, "Realism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosopy* (Stanford U, Oct 2, 2014) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/realism/> (Aug. 1, 2017).

thinks a moral realist must make, he does indeed, achieve his stated goal of isolating something significant between a "strong-minded realist" like Moore and a quasi-realist like Blackburn or Gibbard. Furthermore, he achieves his goal of offering a characterization of the divide separating moral realists from realists that has Moore on the realist side and Gibbard and Blackburn on the antirealist (or nonrealist) side—along with non-cognitivist quasi-realists, that is, quasi-realism interpreted as a view that disallows moral assertions. But it's not clear why this alone should compel us to assume that to be a moral realist, one must posit moral properties.

Of course, if we added a further assumption that we should even just begin by searching for domain-independent criteria (for objectivity and truth in a domain) for the divide between realism and antirealism, this, it seems would greatly increase the plausibility that the divide between realism and nonrealism amounted to some sort of metaphysical divide. If we assume that the criteria for qualifying as a realist must be the same across domains, then, given the importance of naturalistic thinking, it shouldn't be surprising that we discover that being a realist involves making existence claims—or other sorts of metaphysical claims. Unless, however, we're compelled to accept domain-independent criteria for the divide between realists and non-realists, because we assume that language functions consistently, however, and unless we're compelled to think that moral facts work like natural facts, it's just not clear to me that we have reason to accept that we've left something out of our explanation of our moral language if we make no reference to moral properties. Insisting on a use of the term "realism" that's understood in precisely the same way across all domains is just another way of insisting, say, that if the naturalistic domain is best understood representationally, then all domains that are capable of objectivity and truth must be understood representationally. It's another way of remaking other assumptions such as these, but then it cannot be used as a separate sort of approach to distinguishing accounts. Given this, it's not clear to me why we'd assume that a moral realist must make the sorts of ontological commitments robust realists think we need to (and can) make.

To be sure, like Gibbard, Scanlon and Dworkin are non-realists about some things. Indeed, they're non-realists, for instance, about Platonic moral realities. The question, though, is why this

would render them *moral* or *normative* non-realists. We often think of positions as realist or non-realist with respect not only to domains of discourse, but also with respect to particular questions *within* a domain. A trope theorist is clearly a realist about properties, for instance, but she isn't a realist about abstract universals. Whether a position qualifies as realist, it seems to me, is best seen as turning on *what questions we're trying to answer* or on *how we conceive of the problems we're trying to solve*. If this is right, then whether someone qualifies as a moral realist turns would turn on the assumptions we make about what matters most in the moral domain.[67]

Scanlon defends an interesting understanding of metaphysics that lines up nicely with this suggestion. On his view, metaphysics is not a separate domain from the moral or the scientific or the mathematic domain. Rather, metaphysical questions are questions about how a domain is to be "best understood at the most basic and fundamental level."[68] Even if Scanlon is mistaken that this is the extent of metaphysical questions, he's clearly on to something here. It seems plausible to me that the divide between realists and non-realists in the normative domain is best understood as dependent on judgments we make about what matters most, which turns on what is most basic or fundamental to morality. If that's right, though, it won't do to suggest that the normative realists take, say, normative facts to be more fundamental than do the quasi-realists.

[67]Here is Railton making a similar point in his contribution to Parfit's *On What Matters*, Volume 3. I had not encountered this when I expressed the arguments I have formulated here, but I am pleased to note the agreement. "Nagel the Non-Naturalist and Railton the Naturalist see themselves as defending Realism about value, while Parfit prefers to speak of Non-Realism. Why? If one thinks that the reality of value requires seeing values as Platonic objects, or a special kind of non-natural entity rattling around in the world, then Parfit's choice is more apt. He's not a Realist about that—the way some historical figures have been—and neither are we. But if one thinks, as I do, that there is some reasonable prospect of showing how the job descriptions for <value> or <objective value> can only be met in our world and our lives, then Realism would be preferable. We need not, after all, be too concessive to a reified conception of value and reasons that won't be found, except as an object of criticism, in Aristotle, Hume, Smith, Kant, Mill, and many others. […] [And] the natural thing to say at this point, I think, is that we should not be too concessive to a reified conception of the real, either. Perhaps we should say that philosophers read things into 'real'—or 'truth', 'reference', 'property', 'proposition', or 'fact'— that never were there in the first place." Parfit 3: 124.

[68]One such question might be "whether set theory is basic to all of mathematics." Scanlon 19.

IV. My Approach in this Dissertation

A. The Attractiveness of Non-Inflationary Realism

I begin with the recognition that there's something very attractive about trying to do what these various philosophers are trying to do. I share their dissatisfaction with taking on what I also view as excess metaphysical baggage—their view that there's something less than satisfactory about an explanation of our moral or normative thought and discourse in which non-natural moral properties play a basic explanatory role. At the same time, I share the assumption that we've lost something significant if we give up on objectivity and truth in moral or normative thought and discourse.

Ultimately, of course, I take the question of most interest to be how well individual members of this group or how well the group as a whole achieves their shared goal of defending objectivity and truth in moral or normative thought and discourse but without moral or normative ontology. In order to answer this question, it's important to get clear about just what sorts of accounts are on offer. There is a surprising amount of disagreement about this. This disagreement seems to reflect a sort of uncertainty about what really is at issue between and among these various accounts.

Defenders of views outside this group, primarily defenders of more traditional versions of moral realism disagree about what should be said about these accounts. But defenders of these accounts themselves also disagree, not only about their own commitments, but also about what is wrong with more traditional versions of moral realism. And both robust and non-inflationary non-naturalists continue to disagree about what to say about Gibbard's version of expressivism, how to understand the view itself, how to distinguish it from robust realism, and how to distinguish it, if at all, from non-naturalistic and naturalistic versions of non-inflationary realism. My goal is to explore what we can learn about the nature of the non-inflationary moral or normative realist project and thus how it can be moved forward. Doing so, I believe, is a means to the end of gaining insight into our own thought and talk about what we have (moral) reason to do.

B. Case Studies: Dworkin, Scanlon, Parfit, Gibbard

In this dissertation, I treat the following accounts as case studies of what I ultimately conclude are distinct versions of non-inflationary realism: (1) Dworkin's non-naturalistic version that he characterizes as the most robust version of *moral* realism that's possible (note that Dworkin's emphasis is on the moral and not on the normative more broadly); (2) Scanlon's non-naturalistic version, which he characterizes as a full-blown *normative* realism, as an account that's, as he puts it, "realistic about reasons" (note that Scanlon is very clear that what he says about the normative does not necessarily all apply to the moral); and (3) Parfit's non-naturalistic version, which he characterizes as a version of non-realist (a description with which I take issue) *normative* cognitivism (he focuses on the normative, but his examples are all moral, so it does seem that he has specifically morality in mind).

My approach is to address each of these philosopher's critique of Gibbard's expressivism, an account that many people take to be an alternative to both traditional and non-inflationary moral or normative realism, and, indeed, a threat to non-inflationary realism, an account that is mistakenly treated in the philosophical literature as a paradigm case of non-cognitivism—roughly, the view that our moral utterances are not capable of being true or false[69]—and non-realism about the moral or more broadly the normative.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, given the sort of state of mind Ayer proposes as the moral state of mind, and given the role Ayer plays in the discussion, expressivism has traditionally been treated as a paradigm example of non-realism about moral thought and discourse. Indeed, Ayer himself concluded that as "expressions of emotion" our moral utterances "can neither be true nor false,"[70] or that we cannot "strictly speaking, contradict" each other when we communicate about our moral views.[71] What I propose is whereas Ayer does seem to be a non-cognitivist expressivist, Gibbard is clearly a cognitivist expressivist.

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[69]I say more about cognitivism below.

[70]Ayer 102-103.

[71]Ayer 107. This is not to say, of course, that our emotions cannot come into conflict with the emotions of others in the sense of being different. I say boo! Dropping bombs on civilians; you

The final case study, then, is (4) the sophisticated version of expressivism defended by Gibbard (who focuses more broadly on the normative).

My view is that Dworkin, Scanlon, Parfit, and Gibbard are all on the same team. In making this case, it is not just that I play the first three of these off against someone like Gibbard. What I offer here is an attempt to understand the bounds of the project in which I propose they are all involved.

C. My Focus on What's at Issue Between Sophisticated Expressivism and Non-Inflationary Non-Naturalism

1. Jamie Dreier and "The Good Old Days"

The idea that it is no longer easy to distinguish between some sophisticated forms of expressivism and some forms of non-naturalism, in particular, is not new. Jamie Dreier writes (longingly) of what he calls "the good old days" when we could easily distinguish these accounts by the answer to the question "Is there really such a thing as moral wrongness?" In those days, he pointed out, expressivists, like Ayer, denied that our moral claims were even in the business of stating truths, and error theorists, like Mackie, judged that though our moral claims purported to state moral truths, there were no such truths. Back then, moral realists could clearly be identified as those who insisted that there was, indeed, such a thing as moral wrongness.[72] Today, not so. "Ask [the expressivist] Allan Gibbard," writes Dreier, "whether some things are objectively worth pursuing and, expressivist though he is, he'll tell you that some are. And practically all expressivists [unlike the earlier Ayer] are happy to say that the sentence 'Slavery is wrong' expresses a proposition, [and, indeed,] a true one, [so] a fact."[73]

Dreier's discussion forces an engaged reflection on, and brings to light new sorts of agreement and disagreements in, current discussions of the metaphysics of value. Dreier thus has moved forward the discussion in interesting and important ways. Nonetheless, the conclusion he himself

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say hurrah! Dropping bombs on civilians. We clearly conflict in some sense. The question is whether this conflict captures what we assume is involved in moral disagreement.

[72]Dreier 23-44.

[73]Dreier 25, 31.

reaches is puzzling. He concludes that what distinguishes the so-called non-realists, his characterization of all expressivists, and the so-called realists—again, his term for what really amounts to non-naturalists—is that the former do not and the latter do adopt some metaphysical thesis involving commitment to the existence of moral properties. Realists but not expressivists, Dreier concludes, appeal to normative properties in their explanations of normativity. This sort of proposal is puzzling, however. To be sure *some* non-naturalists (e.g., robust non-naturalists) treat distinctly moral or normative properties as basic in their explanations of moral or normative language and thought. But non-inflationary non-naturalists, including, as we've seen, Scanlon, Dworkin, Kramer, Putnam, Nagel, do not.

If Dreier has misidentified the difference, what is the difference? Is there really no difference, after all? This is one of the guiding questions of this dissertation. I am interested in what is at issue between them and sophisticated expressivists like Gibbard.

2. Gibbard, Scanlon, Dworkin, and Parfit: Shared Assumptions

Just as non-inflationary realism reflects the fact that non-naturalism and naturalism have evolved, so too expressivism has evolved. Indeed, the sophisticated expressivist Gibbard agrees with adherents of non-naturalistic and naturalistic versions of non-inflationary realism that ethical and normative claims *can* be objectively true—though he also, again like other non-inflationary realists, denies that this possibility depends on a metaphysical commitment to moral properties or a moral reality.

Offering a response to the worry that an expressivist cannot be said to offer an account that coincides with a version of non-naturalism or naturalism is one of the primary goals of this project. A real answer to this question will, therefore, come at the end of this dissertation. I note here, however, the following non-exhaustive list of (overlapping) assumptions shared by the above-mentioned non-naturalists Dworkin, Scanlon and Parfit, and the expressivist Gibbard:

- We understand and intend our normative or moral claims to state normative truths.
- Our normative or moral claims are truth-apt, *capable* of being true or false.
- Our normative or moral thoughts can be characterized as *beliefs*.

- We can have normative or moral *knowledge*.
- There are substantive normative or moral *facts*.
- Moral or normative facts are irreducibly moral or normative. That is, they are not reducible to non-normative facts.
- Normative or moral facts or truths have standpoint-independent validity: they are not true simply or exclusively or primarily in virtue of a particular standpoint anyone happens to take.
- Moral judgements are based upon reasons: they reflect considerations of which it's reasonable to acknowledge and to which it's reasonable to respond. (Such reasons are impartial, universal, general, and objective.)
- Normative concepts cannot be analyzed in purely naturalistic terms. (According to so-called analytic naturalists, including Jeremy Bentham and Frank Jackson, moral facts just are natural facts, and to say this means that in order to make a moral claim, it could be enough to make a naturalistic claim.[74])
- Normative concepts are best understood as *non-natural*.[75]
- Normative or moral truths are not *made* true by metaphysical truth-makers.[76]

Each of these will be discussed in more detail in the pages that follow. Some objectors will want to insist that though an expressivist can talk about beliefs, that is, using the word 'beliefs', she cannot really capture beliefs. Others that though she'll talk about truths or facts, she cannot really

[74]Assuming a simple version of ethical hedonism, for instance, it could turn out to be *enough* to claim that some act fails to maximize pleasure in order to state that some act is wrong. The point is not that naturalists adopt simple versions of ethical hedonism. This sort of simple theory just usefully illustrates what an analytic naturalist might mean by saying that moral facts just are natural facts.

[75]Some philosophers, of course, treat talk about "non-naturalism" as implying positive existence claims about things not belonging to the furniture of the physical world. This is something Gibbard, Railton, Scanlon, Dworkin, etc., would deny—though, as we'll see, perhaps in different ways.

[76]Here's Scanlon: "[N]ormative truths do not require strange, metaphysical truth-makers" (Scanlon, *Being* 62). Here's Parfit: Normative truths are *not* "made to be true by correctly describing, or corresponding to, how things are in some part of reality" (Parfit 3: 59). Here's Dworkin: There are no metaphysical truth-makers "that can make your moral opinion true the way physical particles can make a physical opinion true" (Dworkin, *Justice* 29).

capture moral or normative truths or facts. What I attempt to determine throughout this project is whether there is a sense of belief, or facthood, or truth that the non-naturalistic or naturalistic versions of non-inflationary realism can capture but that even the most sophisticated version of expressivism cannot.

D. Structure of Chapters 2 through 5

Rather than turning next to a direct defense of my position that Gibbard belongs to the non-inflationary group, I begin, in Chapter 2, with a close study of what one non-inflationary non-naturalist, Dworkin, actually says about Gibbard's account, namely, his attempts to distinguish his own account from Gibbard's and to argue that Gibbard's account is either a form of moral skepticism or it is simply self-defeating. By carefully working through Dworkin's own objections to Gibbard, I bring to light many of the ways in which their accounts actually converge. This models the sort of approach I take at multiple points throughout. In Chapter 3, I treat Scanlon's objections to Gibbard's account as a sort of backdrop for responding to some common objections to Gibbard's account. In Chapter 4, I focus on what's at issue between Gibbard and Parfit, and in particular on Gibbard's and Parfit's attempts to translate what Parfit says about normativity into claims Gibbard can accept. And, in Chapter 5, I address the question of whether Gibbard's (or Scanlon's) account might veer toward a sort of fictionalism about normativity.

While some participants in the discussion, including Dworkin, insist that Gibbard's account is a version of moral or normative nihilism, at least one participant in the conversation, namely Parfit, has recently proposed that there are *no* significant disagreements between his account and Gibbard's.[77] Ultimately, I argue that positing *this* much convergence is a mistake (see Chapter 4). Just as it is a mistake not to recognize what's at issue between Dworkin and Scanlon, or Dworkin, Scanlon and Parfit. I also argue, however, that there is far more convergence between these non-naturalists and Gibbard than most philosophers take there to be. Indeed, there is more convergence, I'll argue, between Gibbard and, e.g., Scanlon than between Scanlon and, e.g., Parfit. Note that the fact that

[77]See Parfit 3: 4, 149-51.

the expressivist Gibbard belongs to the group of non-inflationary realists tells us something about the status of non-inflationary moral or normative realism.

By considering the assumptions of the various participants in the debate, I call attention to the relationships among these assumptions, and their relative costs and benefits. Rather than directly assessing the overall project of any of the philosophers with whose work I am concerned, I focus on the insights we can gain into the metaethical or meta-normative debates in which they take part, and, indeed, into the metaethical landscape itself, by focusing on the actual exchanges among them, specifically on what they have to say about quasi-realist expressivism in particular and how this measures up with what they have to say about their own accounts.

My goal is to get clear about what the distinctive features of their proposals are, both the features they share with each other and they exhibit individually so we can understand them more clearly on their own. I explore this by looking at them in relation to Gibbard. We can also understand how they, or they plus Gibbard, can be understood by focusing on what's at issue between and among them. This also helps provide insight into the relation between them and the robust realists by focusing specifically on their differences with Gibbard.

E. What I Presuppose

What I am trying to do is to take a step back and survey the issues in a way that does not presuppose much by way of a substantive view. Of course, a more traditional moral or normative non-naturalist, skeptic, or nihilist might accuse me of presupposing a great deal; perhaps they are right. I do not ask, for instance, whether morality is a matter of taste. I just assume that it is not. I do not ask whether moral standards are culturally relative. Again, I assume they are not. I assume we have good reason to do justice to our ordinary moral practice and furthermore that doing so involves embracing the assumptions that our moral claims and thoughts are *capable* of being true; that

some *are* true, and when true, objectively so. And I share the worry that non-natural moral properties are mysterious enough that we have good reason not to allow them into our ontologies.[78]

What if it turned out, however, that without moral metaphysics there could be no moral truth? What if I were persuaded of that? I suspect this would incline me to explore some sort of moral fictionalism or error theory. (For this reason and others, one chapter of this dissertation will focus on moral fictionalism.)

My focus on the critiques of each other actually offered by the participants in the debate, I believe, offers a useful way into reflection on difficulties with and challenges faced by the views being critiqued while at the same time revealing issues that the philosopher issuing the critiques is confronting. I believe that focusing on what is at issue between representative examples of non-expressivisitic non-inflationary moral realism and Gibbard's expressivism will enable me to say something positive about the role of metaphysical considerations in giving a positive grounding for ethics. And it will enable me to critique the role that properties can play in explanations of morality. I want to understand distinctions among nearby positions in order to help us see more clearly what important issues remain to be sorted out in the course of elaborating this sort of view as an appealing research program in philosophy.

The metaethical and meta-normative work of the non-inflationary moral and normative realists is currently among the most influential, most read, and most cited. Their work has, indeed, as I'll show, changed the metaethical and more broadly meta-normative landscape. Indeed, it has enriched the discussion, moving it in new and exciting directions. They have forced a rethinking of the metaethical landscape, which involves questioning how we think about metaethical problems. In this dissertation, I am interested not just in different solutions to different problems but in seeing the problems themselves in a different way.

[78]In response to my queries about just what sorts of things non-natural moral properties might be Terence Cuneo explained to me that I need only think of a natural property and then eliminate the natural. I cannot say I found this very illuminating.

I am interested in what, if anything, distinguishes the various non-inflationary moral or normative realists from each other, and what distinguishes some of the non-naturalistic versions, such as Scanlon's, Dworkin's, and Parfit's, from the expressivist version defended by Gibbard. While I find the convergence intriguing and interesting, and while I think it might well be a sign of real progress, I remain interested in what it is that prevents them from all being the very same view. If we can understand this, then we can understand them. I believe that focusing on what is at issue between and among these various defenders of non-inflationary realism helps move forward what I take to be the very attractive project of attempting to do justice to objectivity and truth in ethics without having to rely on potentially problematic metaphysical claims.

As we've seen, the non-inflationary non-naturalists propose that the problems with moral or normative realism can be resolved or dissolved by simply bypassing moral or normative metaphysics. We now have this group of people, all of whose members, despite their differences, can generally share in this project. What's striking, however, is that we can include Gibbard, an expressivist, in this group. What's striking is that we can expand the group to include some expressivists.

What follows is a brief overview of each chapter of this dissertation. Note that I have sought to ensure that all of the elements of this project contribute in a mutually supportive way to the achievement of my goal of clarifying and beginning to assess the project of non-inflationary realism. There is a good deal of repetition in the various chapters, most of which I have treated as standalone papers. I hope this will make it easier for readers to engage with individual arguments not only as contributions to my larger project but also on their own.

V. Chapter Overview

A. Non-Inflationary Realism about Morality or Normativity: Setting the Stage (Chapter 1)

See I.B. above for an overview of Chapter 1.

B. Of Hedgehogs and Foxes—External Reasoning about Ethics: What's at Issue Between Dworkin and Gibbard? (Chapter 2)

Dworkin characterizes his version of non-naturalistic *moral* realism as the most robust version of moral realism that's possible. In Chapter 2, I argue that if Dworkin counts as a moral realist, so does Gibbard. I also maintain that Dworkin does not successfully show that to defend non-inflationary moral realism amounts to rejecting the possibility of metaethics.

What's intriguing about Dworkin's account is that on his view metaethical realism is through and through a *substantive* moral doctrine. Like robust non-naturalists, he thinks that there are mind-independent moral facts. Whereas the robust realists want to say that such facts presuppose metaphysical theses and that such facts, therefore, are explained with reference to claims that are external to substantive morality, Dworkin insists that statements about their being moral facts are not only best understood as but are only *capable* of being understood as substantive moral commitments made within the moral domain. The mistake Dworkin thinks most people who attempt to explain what's going on when we make moral claims have made is in presupposing that we can ask metaphysical, psychological, semantic, or epistemological questions about the status of moral judgments and the assumptions that underlie them while treating these questions as something other than substantive moral questions. They think that we can vindicate or undermine moral judgments by asking these questions, and, therefore, by engaging in inquiry that is not itself moral. Dworkin thus seeks to call into question the very possibility of metaethics itself.

Dworkin's strong objections to Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism help offer a clearer picture of what Dworkin himself is up to and the implications of his view. Either (1) in spite of Gibbard's aims, his quasi-realist expressivism is a "skeptical" account of morality, and thus fails on its own terms, argues Dworkin, or (2) it "fully succeeds," in which case, it is self-defeating.[79] I conclude that Dworkin, on his own terms, cannot say that Gibbard's account doesn't succeed without saying that his own account fails. I also conclude that Dworkin fails to defend his position that there can be

[79]Dworkin 63.

no coherent claims about the moral domain from outside the moral domain. I conclude that the following is at issue between Dworkin and Gibbard: Gibbard, though not Dworkin, offers a worked out semantic account of our moral thought and discourse. In the end, therefore, there's a meta-semantic difference between them.[80] While Gibbard offers an explanation of moral or more broadly normative concepts, Dworkin leaves them unexplained.

Dworkin focuses on the moral. Sometimes, though not always, this distinction will matter. For instance, as I read Dworkin, though he focuses on the moral, he thinks of the moral domain as a subset of the normative. Scanlon, by contrast, treats the moral as a separate domain, but one with normative implications. This sort of distinction has consequences, which I explore below.

I conclude Chapter 2 with a brief discussion of what's at issue between Dworkin and a similarly-minded non-inflationary realist, Scanlon. Scanlon agrees with Dworkin about the primacy of substantive moral or normative thought and discourse. Indeed, on Scanlon's view all questions about, say, what exists in any given domain are determined by questions that form a part of that particular domain. Questions about which questions are relevant in a particular domain, however, have to be understood as questions external to the domain. In the end, therefore, Scanlon, like Gibbard, does think we can comment meaningfully on moral thought and discourse from without.

Finally, interestingly enough, unlike Gibbard and Dworkin, Scanlon does not think of the moral as a subset of the normative. Indeed, Scanlon treats the moral as a domain separate from the normative, but one with normative implications. This too underscores the importance of what we might think of as the *uber* domain of questions that Scanlon clearly must presuppose.

C. Objections and Replies: What's at Issue Between Scanlon and Gibbard? (Chapter 3)

Especially in light of some long-standing assumptions about what quasi-realist expressivism really involves, in Chapter 3 I address what are potentially some lingering objections some readers

[80]Some philosophers have suggested that to posit that there's merely a semantic difference between Gibbard and any (Gibbard would add 'other') moral realist is uninteresting. If it turns out that the only real difference between Dworkin and Gibbard is semantic, however, I find this extraordinarily interesting (for reasons I spell out subsequently [or "Chapter 2 and Chapter 5").

may have to my proposal that there is no compelling reason not to understand the non-inflationary realist project as including at least one quasi-realist expressivist project. In order to move things along and to prepare the way for later discussions, I focus in this chapter on undermining some of those assumptions. I use Scanlon's debate with Gibbard to highlight just how narrow the gap between what one might have taken to be quite distinct positions has become.

At the core of the objections I propose that the reader may be inclined to endorse is the thought that however close the views may be, quasi-realist expressivism is non-cognitivist and views such as Dworkin's or Scanlon's or Parfit's are cognitivist. I begin, therefore, with a discussion of how the cognitivist versus non-cognitivist divide is generally understood in the literature and defend the view that, contrary to what is often assumed, classifying all expressivists as non-cognitivists risks creating confusion. I proceed to touch on a number of common objections of quasi-realist expressivism. These include the following objections:

Cognitivists assume something beyond minimal truth; there is a significant semantic difference between expressivism and cognitivism; what quasi-realist expressivists call "beliefs" aren't genuine beliefs; quasi-realist expressivists cannot capture genuine disagreement; they cannot adequately account for the direction-of-fit of genuinely normative beliefs; even quasi-realist expressivists grant that they have to earn the right to embrace objectivity and truth about normativity but everyone grants that non-expressivist realists have to earn this right; and, finally, Scanlon's objection that quasi-realist expressivists cannot account for the fact that the correctness of our normative commitments is independent of those commitments themselves.

What I offer in this transition chapter do not amount to much more than a first-pass at responses to these objections. Furthermore, I deal with these objections first and foremost *not* by showing that Gibbard's response to all of these arguments is perfectly satisfactory, but rather, by showing that Scanlon, who is as important a figure as there might be in this connection, may not, after all share any significant disagreement with Gibbard.

D. Normative Properties and Concepts of Properties: What's at Issue between Parfit and Gibbard? (Chapter 4)

Interestingly enough, while Dworkin vehemently objects to idea of convergence between his account and Gibbard's and Scanlon's views, Parfit proposes in the third volume of *On What Matters* that there is not, after all, anything of meta-normative significance between his account and Gibbard's as well as his account and Railton's. This is striking. Not only because Gibbard's account is often treated as a paradigm example of normative non-cognitivism, but also because as recently as the second volume, Parfit characterized both Gibbard's and Railton's accounts of normativity as "close to nihilism."

In Chapter 4, I focus on Parfit's and Gibbard's attempts to translate what Parfit has to say into claims Gibbard can accept. I grant that there is, indeed, a great deal of agreement between Gibbard and Parfit. I conclude, however, that, in spite of the appeal of the idea that Gibbard's and Parfit's accounts converge, there is good reason to think that something of significance, something that goes beyond the sort of semantic difference I highlight between Gibbard and Scanlon and Gibbard and Dworkin, remains at issue between them. Specifically, they differ with respect to what sorts of normative facts are required to offer an objective account of normativity. More precisely, however, I conclude that there's an instability in Parfit's account and that there are two possibilities: (*i*) Nothing of meta-normative significance remains at issue between Parfit and Gibbard in which case Parfit should give up his insistence that explanations of normativity in terms of normative properties is essential along with his attempts to establish that non-analytic naturalists in fact abandon normativity. (*ii*) Something *does* remain at issue between them, in which case, Parfit is best seen as offering a position that, if plausible would afford insight unavailable to nearby accounts—not only Gibbard's but also other versions of non-inflationary non-naturalism.

This difference matters because it turns out that even if Parfitian normative properties turn out to do the work Parfit wants them to do without exhibiting the sort of *robust* normative ontology he seeks to avoid, they might well, for all that, end up facing at least some of the challenges faced by more robust accounts of properties. Seeing this allows us to gain further insight into the role of facts and proper-

ties in normativity more clearly. It also enables us to get a clearer picture of the ways in which one might defend a version of non-inflationary moral realism.

E. What's at Issue Between the Fictionalists and Gibbard? (Chapter 5)

It might be tempting to think that Gibbard's quasi-realist project is a version of moral or normative fictionalism. David Lewis interprets quasi-realist expressivism as a form of moral fictionalism. He does so for somewhat the same reasons that Dworkin interprets Gibbard as a moral skeptic and Parfit once interpreted Gibbard's account as veering toward normative nihilism. Though I think they are all mistaken, I nonetheless think the interpretation of quasi-realist expressivism as fictionalism is interesting. It tells us something about how people read and understand the view, and perhaps also about the views defended by the objectors.

Interestingly enough, however, whereas in the end, I do not think that Gibbard's account is compatible with moral or normative fictionalism, the same cannot be said about Scanlon's account. So for all the worries about the possibility that Gibbard's account might veer toward fictionalism, there's a sense in which this is much more a worry for at least one version of non-naturalistic normative realism.

Exploring the possibility of quasi-realist expressivism's being a version of fictionalism helps to highlight ways in which we might think that it does veer toward a kind of error theory. But the sort of error theory with which it might understandably be confused is perhaps best understood as a revisionary one. It's not that the quasi-realist expressivist concludes that we are in error to treat our substantive moral positions as capable of being true or false, as being objectively so when true, or as being, in many cases, actually true. The error concerns what I take to be the common assumption that our moral or normative language functions in the same manner as our naturalistic language, language in which representation involves some sort of causal interaction, a relation between our language and objects of some sort. The error is in treating our moral or normative language because truth-apt, as descriptive, that is, as accountable to some robust moral or normative reality for it to be in good order. This is, of course, a philosophical error, if it is an error, and treating it as an error isn't

revisionary with respect to ordinary normative discourse and practice unless ordinary normative discourse and thought really is descriptive.

Chapter 2

Of Hedgehogs and Foxes, External Reasoning about Ethics: What's at Issue Between Dworkin and Gibbard?

I. Introduction

What is at issue between the self-styled non-naturalistic moral realist Ronald Dworkin and the quasi-realist expressivist Allan Gibbard? For one, Dworkin focuses on the moral and Gibbard more broadly on the normative. They both treat the moral as a subset of the normative, however. I focus here, therefore, on the moral with the caveat that sometimes whether we're focusing on the moral versus the normative, more broadly, will make a difference. When it does, I'll be clear about this. What then is at issue between them?

Gibbard, of course, adopts an expressivist semantics for our moral and normative thought and discourse and Dworkin does not. They clearly disagree, therefore, about the sort of semantic account called for by moral discourse. The important question, though, is what, in the end, this difference amounts to. Often the suggestion is made that the difference between a version of expressivism like Gibbard's and any version of moral realism amounts to a metaphysical difference. This is the sort of view defended by Jamie Dreier, Kit Fine, Tristram McPherson, among others. The problem with this sort of proposal, however, is that Dworkin, like the other non-inflationary realists (including Scanlon, Derek Parfit, Mathew Kramer, Hilary Putnam, Thomas Nagel, Peter Railton, and others) defends a version of moral realism, an account according to which we have the most robust notion of objectivity and truth about morality that is possible, without the adoption of any sort of moral or normative metaphysical commitments. There is, therefore, no metaphysical difference be-

tween Dworkin and Gibbard. This distinction, therefore, is no longer a useful way of distinguishing moral realism from versions of expressivism—unless, of course, one would want also to defend the view that neither Dworkin, nor Scanlon, nor Putnam, nor even Railton were a realist about morality.

Dworkin's non-naturalistic moral realism is interesting in that it is one of the clearest challenges to the idea that the implications of giving up on irreducibly ethical metaphysics would be skepticism. This takes the form of an account according to which metaethical realism just is through and through a substantive moral doctrine.[1] Focusing on this approach enables us to get clear about the ways in which this form of non-inflationary moral realism does or does not engage with the issues that matter as well as who exactly the challenge does or does not touch.

There are different views, however, about how to specify just what is at issue between advocates of non-inflationary moral realism and defenders of accounts that purport to take moral metaphysics seriously. One type of defense of non-inflationary moral realism involves going so far as to claim that the metaphysical status of moral thought and discourse are not even articulable as such. On this view, moral language that seems to be about the metaphysics of value might be seen as serving a sort of pragmatic function. On this *deflationary* view, in claiming, say, that torturing kittens "has the property" of being wrong, one is making no particular positive metaphysical commitment. One is simply making the *emphasized* moral claim that torturing kittens is wrong. In short, all apparently metaethical, claims about the metaphysics of value are really (insofar as they are intelligible) just substantive moral claims about what is right and wrong. On this particular understanding of non-inflationary moral realism, an account of moral realism that faces the sorts of metaphysical and epistemology challenges I outline above cannot even be articulated.

In this chapter, I focus on a disagreement between two defenders of objectivity and truth in ethics both of whom reject the possibility of specifically metaethical (or second-order) claims about the metaphysics of value but one of whom expands this rejection to all putative metaethical claims or thoughts. I focus on this disagreement because (I find it to be interesting in its own right, but,

[1]Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2011); "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe it," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25.2 (Spring 1996): 87-139.

more importantly, because) doing so enables us to explore considerations that count for and against a thoroughgoing anti-metaethical, anti-externalist approach to non-inflationary moral realism. In so doing, it will enable us to consider what is at stake in debates over the status and plausibility of moral realism. This takes us to the heart of debates over the very status of metaethics.

Many philosophers have taken it for granted that there are important *metaethical* questions. They have taken it for granted, that is, that there is important work to be done on, say, the semantics, epistemology, or metaphysics of moral thought and talk. These questions, or at least some of them, they insist, are not simply substantive normative questions about what it is morally right and wrong for us to do. A subset of defenders of non-inflationary moral realism want to say that this assumption is mistaken, however. They want to say not only that claims about the metaphysics of value are not, after all, metaethical but that any putative metaethical claim is either (i) a dressed-up substantive moral claim, (ii) a claim about something that has nothing essential to do with morality, or (iii) unintelligible. On this view, whatever the metaethicists are doing would actually end up being internal or empty.

I will focus on one such understanding of non-inflationary moral realism, the account defended by Dworkin (and outlined in Part II below). More particularly, I will focus on Dworkin's objections to an account that some people take to be an alternative to non-inflationary moral realism, and, indeed, a threat to non-inflationary moral realism, but that may well turn out to be itself a version of non-inflationary moral realism: the sophisticated version of quasi-realist expressivism defended by Gibbard.[2]

Expressivism, as we've seen, is the view that the meanings of moral sentences are explained in terms of the state of mind such sentences express. Expressivism has traditionally been treated as a paradigm example of non-realism about moral thought and discourse. Perhaps this stems from the mistaken assumption that the state of mind expressivists characterize as the moral state of mind are all like A. J. Ayer's account. According to Ayer, as we've seen, when we utter, say, the sentence

[2]Dworkin, *Justice*; Dworkin, "Objectivity."

"Slavery is wrong," we are simply expressing anti-slavery attitudes, saying, for instance something like "Boo! Slavery!" It might thus seem unsurprising to some that Dworkin would deny that an expressivist account can do justice to the basic commitments of moral realism. One might suppose that it never intended to do justice to *these* commitments in the first place. This is the sort of reading Carrie Jenkins, for instance, offers of quasi-realist expressivism.[3]

Though, there *are* expressivists who do defend the sort of position that Jenkins attributes to Blackburn and Gibbard, this is not their view. Just as non-inflationary moral realism reflects the fact that moral realism has evolved, so too expressivism has evolved. As we've seen, some expressivists, indeed, agree with adherents of non-inflationary non-naturalists and naturalists that ethical claims *can* be objectively true—though they also, again like adherents of non-inflationary moral realism, deny that this possibility depends on metaphysical commitment to moral properties or a moral reality. The convergence in particular between Gibbard's version of quasi-realist expressivism and some versions of non-inflationary moral realism is so great that some participants in the conversation have proposed that there are *no* significant disagreements between them.[4]

Elsewhere, I argue that positing this much convergence is a mistake.[5] Here, though, one of my chief aims is to show that there is far more convergence between Dworkin's version of non-inflationary moral realism and Gibbard's version of expressivism than Dworkin takes there to be. This, of course, tells us something about the status of non-inflationary moral realism.

More particularly, however, I will argue (Parts III - V) that (1) Dworkin's objections to Gibbard actually serve to undermine the plausibility of the version of non-inflationary moral realism he seeks to defend, that is, his objections offer us reason to think that external or metaethical matters, *are* integral to any plausible account of objectivity and truth in ethics; that (2) a close look at the rela-

[3]Carrie Jenkins, "Lewis and Blackburn on Quasi-Realism and Fictionalism," *Analysis* 66 (2006): 315-9.

[4]In the third volume of his *On What Matters*, Parfit, a self-styled non-naturalist about the normative, proposes that he and quasi-realist expressivist Gibbard may not be divided by any significant meta-normative. See Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, 3 vols. (New York: OUP 2014-17) 3: 4, 149-51.

[5]See my "Normative Properties and Concepts of Properties" (unpublished paper 2015).

tionship between Dworkin-style non-inflationary moral realism and Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism reveal that the latter is fully compatible with treating moral realism as a moral doctrine. Indeed, if there really is the sort of disagreement between Dworkin and Gibbard on which Dworkin insists, then Dworkin himself may not really be an advocate of non-inflationary moral realism after all.

Ultimately, I maintain that there is potentially something at issue between Gibbard and Dworkin. Gibbard offers a distinct account of what's going on when we make normative claims and think normative thoughts. If Gibbard is mistaken about this, this is significant. It's not significant in the way that many have thought, however. It does not follow from this that we can think of Dworkin as having captured objectivity and truth about moral thought and discourse but that Gibbard has not. Indeed, a close look at Dworkin's engagement with Gibbard's account provides support for the view that, finally, Gibbard may best be understood as an advocate of non-inflationary moral realism. He's a non-inflationary realist who may or may not have, finally, captured quite what we're up to with moral practice. This leaves open the possibility that non-inflationary realists are mistaken to think that there is not something more to moral or normative beliefs, to moral or normative facts. That something is not assumed by people like Dworkin or Scanlon, however, and rejected by people like Gibbard. More generally, then, this discussion of what's at issue between Dworkin and Gibbard sheds some light on what is really at stake in some debates over the status of moral thought and talk.

I think the interest of this dialectic goes quite beyond the particular merits of Dworkin's view. His account throws certain issues into stark relief. Focusing, therefore, on what is at issue between him and Gibbard yields a better starting point for the dialectic than looking, for instance, at the most complex distinction between two kinds of expressivism. Furthermore, Dworkin seems to be motivated by something that does seem to motivate people, namely a sense that somehow or other quasi-realist expressivism is missing the objective picture of ethics. Part of what my larger pro-

ject is about is whether there is or is not something to that suspicion. Dworkin's is one attempt to make this case about quasi-realist expressivism in a way that is striking and sweeping.[6]

II. Moral Realism as a Substantive Moral Doctrine

The Greek poet Archilochus famously observed, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."[7] Dworkin characterizes his account as a moral theory for hedgehogs. Matthew Kramer, another prominent defender of hedgehog theory, characterizes it as "moral realism as moral doctrine"[8]—the view that metaethical realism just is a substantive moral doctrine. The idea behind treating moral realism as a substantive moral doctrine is that whatever we can say *about* moral thought or discourse must have moral implications and thus be itself a substantive moral claim. This is the hedgehog's conception of morality as just *one thing*—as simply *moral* "all the way down."

According to Dworkin, substantive moral thought and discourse are all there is to moral realism. Substantive morality includes such first-order substantive moral claims such as the claim "Poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong!" or "It is morally unacceptable to enact policies that prevent some people from earning a living wage" or "We ought to act in ways that undermine systematic racism." Substantive morality also includes, however, second- or even third-order substantive claims. I could say "The physical punishment of children is cruel," which is a first-order claim.

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[6]In her "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Rethink It," Sharon Street addresses Dworkin's version of moral realism as substantive moral doctrine. Street comes from a distinctive angle, from a distinctive program of her own. What I am trying to do is to take a step back and survey the issues in a way that does not presuppose much by way of a substantive view. See Sharon Street, "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Rethink It," *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 11 (2016): 293-334. (This is the 2009 version of the paper.)

[7]This a paraphrase of a line by Archilochus made famous by Isaiah Berlin. Dworkin quotes Berlin's paragraph: *Justice* 1.

[8]As Kramer explains hedgehog theory, we can engage in metaethics, but he understands metaethics as part of substantive morality. So when we ask second-order questions about morality but within morality, we're engaging in metaethics. He, like Dworkin, rejects the idea that it is possible to engage in metaethics understood as external to substantive morality—so understood as asking questions about morality that are not themselves substantive moral questions. Matthew Kramer, *Moral Realism as a Moral Doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell 2009).

But I could add: "Any act with the feature of being cruel is inadmissible as a form of pedagogy." Here we have the second-order claim that having the feature of being cruel is inadmissible as a form of pedagogy. We have not yet moved beyond substantive morality, however. Furthermore, substantive morality includes moral theories (often called "normative theories"), theories that can help us determine which moral claims are true–by identifying which sorts of considerations count in favor of acting, believing, and feeling. Thus, for example, a moral theory might tell us that, for any act, if it fails to maximize pleasure, it's wrong. This (arguably over) simple version of ethical hedonism is supposed to explain and justify our first- or second-order substantive moral judgments–about, e.g., the moral significance of sticking pins in kittens.

A note about terminology: Dworkin uses the term "second-order" to mean "external to the domain of moral thought and discourse," to mean, that is, "metaethical." I'll sometimes follow Dworkin in using "second-order" just to mean "metaethical." When this might lead to some confusion, I'll make sure to specify that by this I mean claims external to the domain of moral thought and discourse. Doing so, I hope, will avoid confusing such claims with second- or third- (or even higher) order claims that are best understood as part of substantive morality.

Matthew Kramer characterizes hedgehog theory in a way that diverges in some respects from Dworkin's characterization of the view. On Kramer's view, we can ask metaethical questions. It's just that, for him, metaethical questions are second-order substantive ethical questions. He agrees with Dworkin that if a claim doesn't involve taking a substantive moral position then it's not relevant to morality (or it's nonsense). But he thinks there's still room for metaethics. In the end, this distinction does not, as far as I can tell, make a difference for what I argue here. It might create some terminological confusion, however. I will attempt to avoid this confusion as much as possible.[9]

[9]I thank David Gordon for encouraging me to distinguish two versions of the hedgehog theory: one that metaethical views have substantive moral implications and the other that metaethical views consist entirely of substantive moral claims. See Kramer. Whereas this distinction may well be important in some respects, I cannot see how making it would resolve the problems I address in this chapter.

Note also that, as Dworkin uses the term, characterizing a claim as "second-order" does not necessarily mean taking it to be external to the domain of normative thought and discourse. Dworkin focuses very specifically on the moral. (I address this in IV.B below.)

If Dworkin is right, all there is to morality is substantive morality. Philosophers who think we can also engage in metaethics, philosophers who think that from outside moral thought and discourse, we can attempt to isolate the meanings of moral terms (in non-moral terms) and can ask a wide range of (non-moral) questions about substantive moral theories and their bases, these "foxes," are mistaken.[10] According to Dworkin, foxes think that we can ask non-moral—metaphysical, psychological, semantic, or epistemological—questions about the status of moral judgments and the assumptions that underlie them. They think, furthermore, that we can vindicate or undermine moral judgments by asking these questions, and, therefore, by engaging in inquiry that is not itself moral.

Dworkin rejects robust moral realism as nonsense. He rejects the view that moral realism involves making certain "second-order assumptions" about "the metaphysical status of . . . first-order propositions,"[11] or that the moral realist is ontologically committed to moral properties,[12] or that the oral realist treats normative properties as at least in some special sense elite or fundamental.[13]

As Dworkin sees it, this involves confusing the way we become aware of and justify naturalistic facts with the way we become aware of and justify moral facts.[14] As Dworkin explains, "scientists form opinions about the chemistry of metals through a causal process in which the chemistry of metals itself plays an important part. It is because gold has the properties it does that experiments involving gold have the results they do." With respect to such natural questions, as Dworkin points out, "the best explanation of why you hold most of your opinions is also a sufficient justification of

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[10]Note that more traditional realists who think objectivity and truth in ethics requires commitment to moral ontology are foxes, but so are some defenders of non-inflationary moral realism. Gibbard, too is a fox, on Dworkin's terms.

[11]Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosopher's Imprint* 1.1 (June 2001): 11.

[12]Jamie Dreier, "Metaethics and the Problem of Creeping Minimalism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (2004): 23-44.

[13]Tristram McPherson, "What is at Stake in Debates among Normative Realists?" *Noûs* 49.1 (March 2016): 123-46.

[14]Dworkin, *Justice* 29.

those opinions." When we think about moral questions, however, it doesn't seem as if the causal story we'd tell about why we have moral judgments unites in the same way with our justification story.[15] In the moral case, the justification, it seems, is always going to be provided by further moral arguments.

In challenging even the coherence of, so possibility of, metaphysically informed moral realism, Dworkin is in some sense more radical than many other defenders of non-inflationary moral realism. Again, while all adherents of non-inflationary moral realism reject the need to make any positive existence assumptions about moral properties or the like, very few of them reject either negative existence assumptions or the intelligibility of positive claims about moral ontology, and fewer still reject the intelligibility of *any* putatively metaethical position. In endorsing non-inflationary moral realism, very few endorse Dworkin's rejection of metaethics. It's an open question, however, whether Dworkin's position is more stable than a view according to which we can pick and choose the meaningless among our metaethical claims.

Dworkin offers the following argument for his thoroughgoing anti-externalist account: *All* putative external[16] questions about moral thought and discourse *either* have moral implications or they have no moral implications. If they have moral implications, Dworkin maintains, they are best read as substantive moral claims and thus don't lie outside the domain of substantive morality. But if they have no moral implications, they cannot undermine or vindicate morality, in which case they are not, after all, about morality at all—and thus not even metaethical.[17] It follows, Dworkin concludes, that commitments of the "ordinary view" of morality, which Dworkin calls the "realist view," are all substantive moral commitments.

What is the "ordinary view" according to Dworkin? It involves embracing the following commitments that he takes to be implicit in our moral thought and talk. These are what he takes to be the commitments which the moral realist endorses:

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[15]Dworkin, *Justice* 69.
[16]'External' to the domain of ethical thought and discourse.
[17]Dworkin, *Justice* 33; "Objectivity" 112.

(1) *Truth-aptness*: Our substantive moral claims—for instance, "Poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong!" or, equivalently for our purposes, "One ought not to poke needles into kittens for fun!,"—and the judgments to which they give voice are *capable* of being true or false.

(2) *Truth*: Some such claims and judgments *are* correct or true. To disagree with a correct moral judgment is to make a mistake.[18]

(3) *Objectivity*: The correctness or truth of moral judgments does not depend on what anyone happens to think or feel. "Poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong!" would be wrong even if nobody disapproved of such activity Subjectivists, of course, deny this. They grant that moral claims are truth-apt and some are true, but insist that they are true in virtue of the speakers' own attitudes and reactions.

(4) *Non-optionality*: At least some moral considerations are decisive, trumping non-moral ones in all relevant circumstances.

(5) *Non-causal character*: The wrongness of, say, torturing kittens is not what causes us to judge that such acts are wrong. Rightness or wrongness, themselves, like goodness or badness, do not figure in our explanations of the sorts of moral judgments that we form in the way that natural features figure in our explanations of the naturalistic judgments we make about the natural world.[19]

(6) *Non-natural character*: Rightness or wrongness, good or bad, unlike natural features of the world, are not the sorts of things we can investigate via our senses or with empirical inquiry. We might accurately isolate, for instance, all the consequences of torturing kittens, the physical and psychological harm to them; we might determine that the act of torturing kittens fails to minimize suffering in the world, etc. But even if we have established all this, we can still coherently ask why it is

[18]Note here that error theorists like John Mackie grant that moral claims are truth apt but deny that any are correct. Some moral fictionalists maintain that though our moral claims are truth-apt, they're true only according to a fiction.

[19]Note here that some realists would regard this as precisely an anti-realist point. Scott Sturgeon has an influential paper, "Moral Explanations," arguing that moral properties do figure in our explanations.

wrong to produce these consequences. Asking or explaining why involves engaging in distinctly moral, or non-naturalistic inquiry.

Note that these are the elements of what Dworkin thinks is our ordinary conception of ethics. On his view, anything that is going to count as a version of realism about ethics is going to have to capture these somehow. Of course, it would not make sense to say that someone who was a naturalistic realist would endorse all of these. In a sense, then, Dworkin seems to be saying that naturalistic moral realism is not real moral realism. Non-naturalism, Dworkin seems to be saying, is part of the concept of ethics. What is important here, though, is that Dworkin does not think that these commitments involve 'non-natural metaphysics.' On this point, he agrees with some naturalists, like Railton.

One question of interest to us here is what various defenders of non-inflationary moral realism can and do say about versions of metaphysical moral realism. Recall that Dworkin maintains that any putatively second-order, or metaethical, claim is either (*i*) a dressed-up substantive moral claim, (*ii*) a claim about something that has nothing essential to do with morality, or (*iii*) unintelligible. About metaphysical moral realism, Dworkin says that claims that they take to be about the metaphysical status of moral properties, claims such as "Torturing kittens has the property of wrongness," really amount to dressed-up substantive claims, (*i*). Saying that torturing kittens has the property of wrongness does have moral implications, on the Gibbard-Dworkin view—it says that torturing kittens is morally wrong.[20]

Anything further than this, says Dworkin, would amount to *nonsense*. Such a view, he explains colorfully, involves "morally charged particles [*moral* protons] or *morons*—whose existence and configuration can make a moral judgment true."[21] Presumably, then, he takes it that some of what some non-naturalists say belongs in the realm of the unintelligible. Snarkiness aside, on Dworkin's official view, attempts to posit ontological commitment to irreducibly moral, non-natural properties are (perhaps quite intelligible) attempts to posit something unintelligible. (There are obviously views ac-

[20]Dworkin, "Objectivity" 112; Dworkin, *Justice* 33.
[21]Dworkin, *Justice* 26.

cording to which there are reducibly moral properties.) Again, for Dworkin, the character of moral realism is its endorsement of the commitments of ordinary moral thought and discourse.

III. Dworkin's Objections to Gibbard: Self-Defeating Challenge

A. Dworkin's Skeptical and Self-Defeating Challenges

"We're . . . damned if we [quasi-realists] fail, of course, but we're damned, the claim goes, if we succeed."[22] This is Gibbard's apt characterization of Dworkin's objection to QRE.

On Dworkin's view, quasi-realist expressivism faces a dilemma. Either: (1) In spite of its aims, quasi-realist expressivism is a "skeptical" account of morality, one that "rules out," or is in "sharp disagreement with the ordinary [realist] view,"[23] and thus fails on its own terms. Quasi-realist expressivism amounts to saying the same things that other realists say but then, Dworkin maintains, reinterpreting such language and so not doing justice to the ordinary commitments and thus merely mimicking the realist when he says, e.g., "Torturing kittens is wrong."[24] (Call this Dworkin's *skeptical challenge* to quasi-realism.)

Or: (2) The quasi-realist expressivist "fully succeeds," in which case, quasi-realist expressivism is self-defeating.[25] Success "erases any difference between" quasi-realist expressivism and its "realist" (or "ordinary view") contenders.[26] With success there would be nothing left of quasi-realist expressivism to which the realist could or would object. With success, it would "swallow itself." It is thus "the Cheshire Cat of moral philosophy."[27] (Call this Dworkin's *self-defeat challenge*.)[28]

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[22]Allan Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2003) 184.

[23]Dworkin, *Justice* 33, 63. In some respects, his argument parallels David Lewis's argument that quasi-realism is a version of moral fictionalism. I discuss this further in "Quasi-Realism Is Really No Fictionalism" (unpublished paper 2015).

[24]Dworkin, "Objectivity" 111-2.

[25]Dworkin, *Justice* 63.

[26]Dworkin, "Objectivity" 108-12; *Justice* 434n22, outlining and reaffirming the view he had defended in "Objectivity." Note that it's Dworkin who characterizes the "realists" as "opponents" or contenders.

[27]Dworkin, "Objectivity" 108-12.

[28]Dworkin, "Objectivity."

Note that Dworkin frames his objection to quasi-realist expressivism in terms of a disjunction, which would be satisfied if it turned out either that quasi-realist expressivism was a version of moral skepticism or was self-defeating. In the next two sections, I will look closely at each of these challenges. I begin with the *self-defeat challenge*.

B. The Self-Defeat Challenge and Quasi-Realist Expressivism, an Overview

Dworkin's *self-defeat challenge* is puzzling. While it is trivially true that if a successful quasi-realist expressivist were to say only what a moral realist said, there would be no reason for the realist to object, it's very much *not* trivially true that a realist could not or even would not object if a successful quasi-realist expressivist said only what the realist said when making *substantive* claims but did so while making different *metaethical* claims. And this is precisely what Gibbard takes himself to be doing.[29]

Let's take a closer look at quasi-realist expressivism and Gibbard's version in particular.

Roughly put, Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism involves: (1) the acceptance of all the substantive moral claims and judgments that moral realists endorse—all, that is, of what Dworkin takes to be the entirety of moral thought and discourse (see Part II above). Furthermore, Gibbard agrees with Dworkin that claims and thoughts about rightness and wrongness, goodness and badness, are capable of being true, some *are* true, and such thoughts are non-natural, non-causal, and non-optional. He endorses, that is, all of the basic commitments Dworkin associates with ordinary moral discourse and thought.

In addition, he embraces: (2) a deflationary account of truth, along with a deflationary understanding of metaphysical claims. Dworkin and Gibbard both maintain that our talk of *truth* contributes no meaning, no content, to our claims. "It's true that slavery is wrong," for instance, just means that slavery is wrong. What matters, very roughly put, is that someone has the concept true if she is

[29]Of course, as we've seen, Dworkin denies there are metaethical claims that aren't substantive moral claims, so the different metaethical claims, if intelligible, would also be different substantive moral claims.

disposed to accept instances[30] of the equivalence schema "'P' is true if and only if P" (e.g., "Slavery is wrong" is true if and only if slavery is wrong"). On this view, stating that something is true is not always pointless. But its purpose is often pragmatic or rhetorical. It can, for example, add emphasis, or clarify one's position. Sometimes, at least on Gibbard's treatment of truth, the term "true" is not always indispensable. I need something like the word "true" to say, for instance, "Trump said at least one true thing during the debate" The word "true" here works as an abbreviation for "He said the trans-pacific partnership was terrible, and it is terrible," etc. [31] One other important thing to note about deflation. Using Gibbard's example, I can say "'La neige est blanche' is true" even if I do not know French just because I am trusting someone who says this. But this won't count as asserting "la neige est blanche." I cannot assert something that I don't understand. I would just be repeating something. (This is important in part because oftentimes people mistakenly conclude that all deflationist about truth are merely relying on the surface structure of the language.)

Much of the same can be said about stating that something has a moral *property* (see Part I above). Dworkin and Gibbard take it that there is no ontological commitments associated with moral properties, and, generally, all there is to moral property talk is what we get from Paul Horwich's equivalence schema: "For any object *x*, *x* has the property of being *F* if and only if *x* is *F*.[32] This is not to say that Gibbard doesn't have anything else to say about moral or normative properties. As

[30]Non-controversial instances. See Daniel Stoljar and Nic Damnjanovic, "The Deflationary Theory of Truth," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Oct. 4, 2010) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-deflationary/> (Aug. 1, 2017).

[31]Furthermore, on this view, "facts" are "true thoughts," and, given this, we can say there are moral facts. As Gibbard puts it, "the fact that pain is bad just consists in pain's being bad; to believe that pain is bad is just to accept that it is." In short, "it's true that pain is bad and it's a fact that pain is bad." Gibbard, *Thinking* 182-3. See also Michael Glanzberg, "Truth," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Jan. 22, 2013) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/> (Aug. 1, 2017).

Relying on minimalism, we can even reach the conclusion that "Slavery is wrong" expresses the proposition that slavery is wrong. As Dreier explains, "the expression 'the proposition that' serves as a logical-grammatical device to form noun phrases out of sentences, helpful for generalizing. Since ethical sentences are meaningful (and embed grammatically into that clauses), there are trivially, ethical propositions." We can even talk of moral beliefs. As Gibbard puts it, "the fact that pain is bad just consists in pain's being bad; to believe that pain is bad is just to accept that it is." In short, "it's true that pain is bad and it's a fact that pain is bad

[32]Paul Horwich, "Theories of Truth," *A Philosophical Companion to First-Order Logic*, ed. R. I. G. Hughes (Indianapolis: Hacket 1993) 74.

Gibbard uses the term "moral properties," moral properties are natural properties. We can say that a wrong act (such as torturing kittens or slavery) has "the property of wrongness." This term, though, picks out whatever natural property it is that all and only wrong acts share. What naturalistic property is picked out, is, of course, controversial. What matters for our purposes here, however, is that the natural property that is picked out is picked out even if we say "Torturing kittens is wrong." Adding "torturing kittens has the *property* of wrongness" serves merely to emphasize the claim that it is wrong.

To be sure, reasonable people can disagree about whether there is more to truth than given by the deflationary schema. What matters for our purposes here, however, is that Gibbard and Dworkin agree about the aptness of a deflationary account of both truth and talk of moral or normative properties. On both their views the following are analytically equivalent: "It's true that slavery is wrong" and "Slavery is wrong." As are the following: "Slavery is wrong" and "Slavery has the property of wrongness."

The terms that seem to be about some distinct entity or realm, like the term "truth," serve a sort of pragmatic function. To say that slavery has the property of wrongness is to *underscore*, let's say, the moral claim that slavery is wrong. Both Dworkin and Gibbard thus reject the view that there are sensible, articulable claims *about* the metaphysical status of morality.

With so much in common between Gibbard and Dworkin, the obvious question is: where do they part ways? What is the significance of the fact that Gibbard, but not Dworkin, is an "expressivist"?

There are two important places to look. First, (3) Gibbard offers an account of the meaning of moral sentences: his *expressivist semantics* for moral discourse.[33] According to this theory, the meaning of a sentence like "Slavery is wrong" is given in terms of the state of mind this sentence expresses. Gibbard explains that he accepts some form of Paul Horwich's theory of meaning according to which the meaning of each term is expressed by a sentence that says how sentences using the term

[33]Again, Gibbard focuses on normative discourse.

in question are accepted.[34] The expressivist says we should characterize the meaning of a term like "wrong" by saying what sorts of sentences using the word "wrong" a speaker is supposed to accept.

On Gibbard's particular version of expressivism, the *normative* state of mind involves states of planning "what to do, what to believe, and how to weigh considerations for and against," which include contingency planning and restrictions on plans.[35] The meaning of a claim such as "One ought not to torture kittens" is given in terms of the planning state that it expresses.

Second, Gibbard is a quasi-realist: (4) The *quasi-realism* aspect of his account amounts to (*i*) (2) above, the acceptance of the substantive moral judgments and theories that moral realists also accept, but *also (ii)* the adoption of specific meta-theoretical claims that explain why substantive realist claims are consistent with expressivism.

Like the non-naturalists, Gibbard proposes what he characterizes as "a sharp distinction between the normative and the naturalistic." He denies that "normative terms have naturalistic meanings, suitable for empirical science." Nonetheless, his account is "naturalistic" in the sense that "it shows us how we as parts of nature, products of natural processes of genetic selection and ecological dynamics, could turn out to think in normative terms."[36] Also like the non-naturalist, Gibbard begins with the concept *ought*. Like them, he recognizes that if someone does not have this concept, one could not explain it to her. The planning thoughts that Gibbard lays out are what he takes to be "conceptually equivalent" to ought thoughts. Gibbard takes it that planning thoughts, once we recognize the ways in which they are subject to disagreement and the like, actually make clearer the ought thoughts to which they are conceptually equivalent. The planning analysis, Gibbard maintains, helps us better understand moral thinking.[37] If successful, Gibbard's account, on his own terms, explains how substantive moral claims can be cashed out expressivistically while its being the case that, if I ought not to kick dogs for fun, then it's *literally true* that I ought not to kick dogs for fun. If this

[34]See chapter "Horwich on Meaning" in Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (New York: OUP 2012)

[35]Gibbard, *Meaning* 19.

[36]Gibbard, *Meaning* 20.

[37]Gibbard, *Meaning* 218.

works, moral attitudes "are subject to disagreement, and . . . embed in more complex beliefs, as with the belief in a negation." An expressivist account can even, on Gibbard's view, "explain why [normative judgments] obey the principles of logic and other platitudes.[38]

Here then is what is at issue between Dworkin and Gibbard. Gibbard grants everything Dworkin says about the commitments implicit in moral thought and talk; but he also offers both an expressivist semantics for moral thought and discourse and a meta-theoretical account of why this semantics is compatible with the basic commitments.

This suggests two different ways of interpreting the self-defeat challenge. On the first interpretation, *(i)* Gibbard's putative second-order semantic claims and/or his third-order claims about the relation between these claims and substantive moral claims call for substantive readings. On the second interpretation, *(ii)* the second- and third-order claims are unstatable and thus senseless (at least insofar as they have a moral subject matter).

If (*ii*) better captures Dworkin's objection, the philosophical confusion on the part of the quasi-realists would involve thinking that we can make external claims about our moral language, when, in fact, we cannot. Perhaps the idea is that the successful quasi-realist expressivist is the one who simply abandons her *futile* attempts to make meta-theoretic claims. To be sure, if Gibbard were to do this, all that would be left of his account would be substantive moral realist thought and discourse, and he would thus have eliminated any potentially significant difference between his account and a Dworkin-style "realist" contender. But, surely, Dworkin's point cannot be the trivial one that if quasi-realism were to be successful on *Dworkin's terms* it would follow that quasi-realism would be indistinguishable from Dworkin's own account. We need a reason to think that the abandoned attempts are, indeed, futile.

The quasi-realist expressivist's ambitions go beyond just using all the substantive language of moral realism, making all the substantive moral claims made by the moral realist. His project aims at doing so *while* framing such language *metaethically* in a particular way. One might think, therefore, that

[38]Gibbard, *Meaning* 232.

only if Gibbard could use realist substantive language while also framing it metaethically in the way he proposes could his project successfully achieve *its* aims.

Of course, on Dworkin's view metaethical framing is not possible. Perhaps, then, the idea of the *self-defeat challenge* is not that Gibbard should eliminate such claims just because they're second-order (seeming), but rather because there's reason to think that they don't make any sense. But if Dworkin thinks that such claims were pure nonsense, then why doesn't he make the case for *this*? After all, in challenging traditional non-naturalist moral realism, he spends a good deal of time explaining why putative ontological commitment to a distinct sort of property ("moron" theory) is just nonsense. It seems, then, that the philosophical mistake he takes Gibbard to be making must be of a very different sort.

This brings us back to the first of the interpretive options, namely, (*i),* that Dworkin believes Gibbard's putative second-order (external to morality) claims call for substantive readings. If this is right, though, Dworkin's owes us those translations if he is to defend the point that they are "swallowed." To be sure, it's unclear to me how we would offer substantive *moral* translations of Gibbard's putative second- and third-order claims. If we did, however, and the realist did not or could not object, that might well signal success of his quasi-realist expressivism project—but we need more from Dworkin to suppose that knowing that the realist could not object means that they were swallowed, with an understanding of being swallowed that implies being self-defeated.

It would seem, therefore, that if we are to take seriously the *self-defeat challenge*, we will have to take seriously interpretive option (*ii)* according to which Gibbard's putative second- or third-order claims are unstatable and senseless. As we've seen, if Dworkin wants to go this way, though, he needs to tell a very different kind of story from what he offers.

I turn now to Dworkin's *skeptical challenge*.

IV. Dworkin's Objections to Gibbard: Skeptical Challenge

A. The Skeptical Challenge and Mimicry

Dworkin's *skeptical challenge*, again, is that in spite of the quasi-realist expressivist's aim to embrace our ordinary substantive moral discourse and thought, understood as involving objectivity and truth, quasi-realist expressivism offers an account that is "skeptical of," rules out, or is in sharp disagreement with, "the ordinary view" of morality (and so with what Dworkin characterizes as moral realism). I begin with his contention that quasi-realist expressivism only *mimics* what the realist says.[39]

The talk of *mimicking* is particularly puzzling, though. As Dworkin grants, a key part of quasi-realist expressivism is the acceptance of ordinary substantive moral discourse and thought. The quasi-realist expressivism will thus acknowledge that it could well be true that "Torturing kittens is wrong," or that "We have a moral obligation to help those in need," or that "We ought not treat other people's bodies as objects." If there is no way to justify (or challenge) such claims from a position beyond moral discourse, then how can any such justifactory stories call the justified claims into question? Imagine, for example, that Dworkin and Gibbard utter the sentences mentioned above, and that both say about such sentences that they are capable of being true, may well be true, etc. If in saying the same thing as Dworkin, *Gibbard* is merely mimicking Dworkin, then this must be because he is not merely uttering "an ethical or moral conviction." But then he must be making a nonmoral claim with significant moral implications—the very thing Dworkin claims is not possible.

More charitably, then, it must be that the problem Dworkin finds with expressivism is that it involves problematic substantive moral claims. Perhaps this is what Gibbard's alleged moral skepticism comes to. Could it be that expressivism implies a *normative* challenge to moral realism?

B. Quasi-Realist Expressivism as Moral Skepticism

As Dworkin uses the term, a "moral skeptic" is skeptical about the ordinary, realist moral commitments (see Part II above).

[39]Dworkin, "Objectivity" 111-2.

Dworkin appeals to error theory to argue that what appears to be an *external, nonmoral* challenge to moral realism is really a challenge internal to moral discourse. Error theorist, he argues, are mistaken to think that they can take an external skeptical stand on ethics from which it is apparent that all moral claims are false. The assertion that all moral claims are false, just amounts to the denial of the truth of any and all substantive thoughts or claims.[40]

Dworkin recognizes that Gibbard is not an error theorist, however. Indeed, Dworkin identifies quasi-realist expressivism as a form of "status" skepticism—skepticism about the status of moral thoughts and claims. In so doing, he groups quasi-realist expressivism with A. J. Ayer's simple emotivism, according to which our moral thoughts and utterances are not the sorts of things that can be true or false.[41]

The difficulty of characterizing Gibbard in this way is obvious. As we have seen, and as Dworkin acknowledges, Gibbard does maintain that our moral claims and thoughts are capable of being true or false, that some are true, and that they can be objective, etc. In virtue of what, then, is Gibbard a *status* skeptic?

Dworkin is clearly worried about whether Gibbard can do justice to whatever it would be for substantive moral claims and thoughts to be true. He seems to want to say that Gibbard says "'Slavery is wrong,' and by that I mean that it is true that it is wrong, even it's a fact that it's wrong. And I want to say that it holds objectively." But then, Dworkin seems to want to say, Gibbard gives his quasi-realism, which amounts to taking back the *true* part (and perhaps others too). He ends up, therefore, just saying "Slavery is wrong," but all we have is a similar surface structure of the language.

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[40]Dworkin, *Justice* 25-6. Elsewhere I argue that Dworkin's critique of error theory as a version of internal skepticism is inadequate. See Chapter 5.

[41]Ayer explicitly holds that moral claims are simply not the sorts of things that are capable of being true or false. So if the ordinary view is that they are not only capable of being true or false but that, also, some are true, and when so *objectively* true, it would seem at least reasonable to worry that Ayer's account undermines the ordinary view. (Of course, as a number of philosophers have noted, on Ayer's own terms he probably should have granted that moral claims were capable of truth. This would seem compatible with his defense of a deflationary account of truth. Nonetheless, it seems to matter that Ayer's explicit view was that to be truth-apt claims would have to give voice to propositions, something he denied moral claims could or did do.)

Whatever other problems there may be, however, it's hard to see how this sort of discussion does not presuppose the possibility of metaethics. If Dworkin is really worried that quasi-realism changes the status of moral claims and thoughts such that they are not, after all, capable of being true, then it seems he is engaging in precisely the sort of endeavor that on his official view is impossible. He may not want to call it "external" or "second-order" or "metaethical," but he's raising the sort of objection to Gibbard that is not supposed to be possible, if external, second-order, or metaethical reasoning is not possible. Let's say, then, that Dworkin thinks Gibbard makes problematic metaethical claims. This takes me to a second worry, though: how can Dworkin characterize Gibbard's metaethics as *problematic* metaethics.

Dworkin objects to Ayer that on his view, the activity of uttering of moral sentences ends up being more like the activity of coughing than of stating facts. Note, though, that even Ayer thinks that attitudes expressed by moral statements are ones over which we can conflict—unlike a cough. I say "Slavery: Boo!!" and you say "Slavery: Hurrah!" These are in conflict. I would have to change my mind in order to go from "Boo" to "Hurrah." Gibbard clearly recognizes that "truth minimalism has to be restricted," explaining that "it can apply only to linguistic forms that express states of mind, such as belief[s] or attitudes. Moreover, they must be states of mind with which one can agree or disagree. Headaches, for instance, or coughs aren't the right kinds of states of mind for this, since you can't agree or disagree with my headache."-][42] Gibbard point out that you have to have even more than simple disagreement. On Gibbard's account, you have to have disagreement that could explain things like logical disagreement.

Dworkin seems to recognize this, just as he recognizes that Gibbard accepts not only the core desiderata for a realist account but also Dworkin's own proposed remaining of the basic commitments for the ordinary view of morality. Furthermore, Dworkin recognizes that Gibbard, like him, offers an account in terms of a deflationary notion of both truth and moral metaphysics.

[42]Gibbard, *Meaning* 71. See Gibbard's discussion of Dreier's "hiyo" example.

Perhaps this is too fast, though. Perhaps rather than treating Gibbard's putative external judgments about substantive moral language as indeed external, Dworkin really is treating them as substantive—as he must on his official view.

C. Dworkin's Case for Gibbard as Moral Skeptic

As we've seen, Dworkin does seem to take seriously the possibility that external seeming claims are senseless. Indeed, claims in support of what Dworkin calls "moron" theory would be senseless. It doesn't seem likely, though, that he wants us to think of Gibbard's external seeming claims as senseless, though, as I noted above. This is highlighted in an even more striking way when considering the skeptical challenge, though. If Dworkin is to maintain that Gibbard is a moral skeptic, he cannot also maintain that the claims at issue are unstatable or senseless. If they were simply inarticulable claims, they couldn't contradict or undermine *any* other claims, including substantive moral claims like "Slavery is wrong." Note that positing what Dworkin characterizes as "morons" does not therefore, on his view, render an account skeptical of the ordinary view. These are just nonsensical positions, and being nonsensical cannot undermine non-naturalistic moral realism.

Either then, Dworkin actually does understand Gibbard's second- and third-order claims *as* Gibbard intends them to be understood, so as second order (expressivist) semantics of moral language plus second- or third- order claims about the compatibility of expressivism with ordinary moral practice, or he understands them as dressed up substantive claims.

So far, as we've seen, Dworkin does not mistake Gibbard for an error theorist, but he does think that he's a status skeptic. As Dworkin understands status skepticism, however, it must be internal to moral thought and discourse (though this would seem to be precisely what it could not be). How could this work?

A clue comes from the way that he (and Gibbard) interprets allegedly metaphysical claims (that don't reach the point of posting "morons"). Someone says "Slavery is wrong, and when I say that, I mean slavery has the property of wrongness!" As we've seen, both Dworkin and Gibbard

maintain that we might say here that the property talk serves to *underscore* the substantive moral judgment that slavery is wrong.

Imagine Gibbard, then, saying the following: "'Slavery is wrong', and when I say *that* I'm expressing a state of mind that might be characterized as the acceptance of a plan for living." Once he says the latter, so once he expresses his expressivism, in spite of the fact that he claims to believe that slavery is wrong and claims to assert "Slavery is wrong," he's somehow taken back his belief. This appears to be Dworkin's charge. Adopting quasi-realist expressivism, he suggests, amounts to saying that our moral thoughts and discourse can be true, and objectively so, but then saying to "ourselves (silently in order not to blunt the impact of what we say out loud) that in so insisting we are only" expressing complex states of mind.[43]

What, exactly, is the problem supposed to be? We might find a clue in Dworkin's "only." Imagine one were to say the following: "'*Slavery is wrong*,' and when I say that I mean that it is objectively true that it is wrong, but when I say *that*, I am *only* doing something more like [fill in whatever].' This, of course, would imply that I'm doing one thing *instead* of doing something else. And Dworkin seems to assume that whatever the something else is, it is the very thing that is required for there to be objectivity and truth in ethics.

The problem is that Gibbard very much does *not* say that, by "Slavery is wrong," he *does not* mean that slavery is really wrong, or that *instead* he is expressing a particular planning state of mind. It is Dworkin who supplies the *instead*—or interprets what Gibbard says as involving an *instead*. In spite of Gibbard's attempts to do justice to the commitments of ordinary moral discourse and thought, Dworkin seems to be arguing, his second and third-order *seeming* claims show that Gibbard does not really endorse his substantive claims, after all.

It turns out, though, that the strategy of translating external seeming claims takes a very different form when applied to Gibbard than when applied to the metaphysical moral realists. This seems important. *Underscoring* is not the reverse of *undercutting*. In the underscoring case, we have lan-

[43]Dworkin, *Justice* 36.

guage that appears to be second-order and meaningful but turns out not to be meaningful or second-order. It can serve a pragmatic function precisely because it doesn't add content. In order to undercut, however, language must have content. It must be meaningful.[44] Dworkin takes it that Gibbard's language that appears external actually adds content to what is said. It involves making meaningful claims that "rule out" the possibility of doing justice to the ordinary commitments of language.

This brings us back to the point that in order for Gibbard's expressivism to be incompatible with moral realism, it seems it must be an intelligible metaethical theory—but not only that, a problematic metaethical theory that fails to do justice to the commitments of ordinary moral discourse.

Of course, one might want to object that understanding any sort of thought and discourse as capable of objectivity and truth involves presupposing the existence of accessible truth-makers to which our discourse or thought must be accountable. This is not the sort of objection Dworkin would (or could) make, however. It is not just that this sort of objection involves taking issue with Gibbard's external claims as external claims; it also involves presupposing that there is more to truth than a minimal or a deflationary understanding allows. It presupposes that making sense of ethical language and thought as truth-evaluable requires ontological commitments—adopting existence affirming hypotheses about the metaphysics of value.

Not only then does it seem that Dworkin has abandoned hedgehog theory, or moral realism as a substantive moral doctrine. To ask questions about the status of moral claims and thoughts and the assumptions that underlie them *is* to engage in what we might call metaethics—no matter what we do end up calling this. And to argue that a particular account of the status of moral thought and discourse renders it incapable of being evaluated as true or false seems very much to take it to be possible to engage in the activity that we call metaethics.

[44]One might undercut a statement by grimacing or saying something with a certain tone. The undercutting Dworkin seems to suppose Gibbard's metaethical claims entail, however, is something else.

There might be one other option available to Dworkin, however. We have seen problems associated with his reading Gibbard's seemingly external claims as senseless and trying to defend either the self-defeat or the skeptical challenge. And we have seen problems with Dworkin maintaining that Gibbard's seemingly external claims are really substantive claims while trying to defend the skeptical challenge. There might be one other option available to Dworkin, however. He might grant that Gibbard's seemingly external claims call for substantive level translations while granting that if moral realists could not object, then quasi-realist expressivism is best seen as a version of non-inflationary moral realism. Indeed, taking this sort of approach would render his own version of non-inflationary moral realism more plausible.

This, though, is clearly not what Dworkin wants to say.

I want to bring this chapter to a close by indicating what any such disagreement must amount to. In so doing, I will be arguing that it is difficult to see how Dworkin, on his own terms, can object to quasi-realist expressivism. I suspect that Dworkin has a compelling challenge to expressivism, only if he rejects the position on moral metaphysics essential to non-inflationary moral realism.

V. What is at Issue Between Dworkin and Gibbard?

A. Understanding Dworkin's Objection

As we've seen, Dworkin attempts to respond to a wide array of metaethical worries by insisting that (1) *all* judgments *about* morality should be understood as substantive moral claims. At the same time, he maintains that (2) his version of non-naturalistic moral realism, his version of non-inflationary moral realism, is importantly different from, and preferable to, Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism, which he claims is damned if it fails, because if it did it would prove to be a version of moral skepticism, but also damned if it succeeds, because if it did it would swallow up its own view.[45]

[45]Again, the "damned" language is Gibbard's. Gibbard, *Thinking* 184.

As a result of the preceding inquiry, however, I conclude that there are only two options: either (*i*) nothing of significance from Dworkin's perspective is at issue between Dworkin and Gibbard, and Dworkin fails to accomplish (2) or (*ii*) either something significant *is* at issue between them and it is best understood as a disagreement about the standards of legitimacy for moral thought and discourse, so Dworkin fails successfully to defend (1), or something significant is at issue between them, and it is that while Gibbard offers an explanation of moral or more broadly normative concepts, Dworkin leaves them unexplained.

This, indeed, is Gibbard's challenge to non-naturalists like Dworkin and Scanlon: He challenges them not only to give an account of the meaning of normative terms that's better than his, but even just to give an account. Gibbard maintains that non-naturalism falls short in that (1) it takes it that we have normative concepts without explaining them, (2) it leaves unexplained the point of normative concepts—we're told that they enable us to conceive the normative aspects of the world, but we aren't told why this matters—we just have to *get it*[46] and (3) it tells us that normative concepts are legitimate without telling us what makes something legitimate.[47]

From Gibbard's perspective, what sets his account apart from the non-inflationary non-naturalism is that he gives an account, indeed, a naturalistic account, of the meaning of the normative *ought* rather than taking it as either primitive, undefinable, or defined in terms of non-natural normative properties. In his latest book, though, Gibbard defends a normative account of meaning which explains meaning in terms of the concept ought. But ought itself doesn't get explained. So instead of explaining in naturalistic terms "the meaning of 'means OUGHT'," he explains 'means OUGHT' normatively. Gibbard is taking it that meaning is normative, so any analysis involving meaning is going to involve reference to the normative. So language about the language of morals involves such an element, because it involves claims about what moral language means—and meaning-talk is normative. Gibbard is, therefore, speaking to people who already have the concept

[46]Perhaps if they're *sui generis* and primitive, this is not a problem. It seems, though, reasonable to take it that generally speaking it's better to have as few primitives as possible.

[47]Gibbard, *Meaning* 227-8.

ought.[48] The role this primitive ought plays in his account is similar to the roles it plays in the accounts of other non-naturalists.

B. Semantic Disagreement

As we have seen, the key disagreement between Gibbard and Dworkin is a disagreement over Gibbard's expressivist semantics. It would be a mistake, however, to think that noting this is trivial, even that noting that this is at issue between Gibbard and the robust realist is trivial. Obviously, the quasi-realist expressivists offers one sort of semantic account for our moral or normative discourse and the robust realist offers a representationalist or broadly truth-conditional semantics. And obviously Dworkin rejects Gibbard's expressivist semantics. What's important here is what this disagreement really amounts to in the end.

The key disagreement between Gibbard and Dworkin is a disagreement over Gibbard's expressivist semantics and Gibbard's claim that expressivism is compatible with the ordinary view of moral thought and discourse.

What does this disagreement amount to? Perhaps the charge is that Gibbard has the wrong positive proposal, one that rules out the conditions that must be satisfied in order for a claim to be true and objectively true. Alternatively, his point is that Gibbard's positive proposal leaves something out—so it's not that his account is wrong but that it falls short. Either way, this spells trouble for Dworkin's own view, as I show below.

C. Gibbard Has the Wrong Account

Here's the problem with reading Dworkin as saying that Gibbard has the wrong account, one that rules out the ordinary view of morality. I have argued that Dworkin is mistaken to think that expressivism is itself a moral doctrine. Expressivism is, however, an account of what we are doing when we make moral claims. And it's clear that when we utter moral sentences, we *are* expressing complex states of mind. Gibbard proposes that the states of mind we're expressing involve states of

[48]Gibbard, *Meaning* 228.

planning "what to do, what to believe, and how to weigh considerations for and against," including contingency planning and restrictions on plans.[49] Note that we could, of course, grant the general point without endorsing all features of the particular view. It is hard to deny, though, that we are expressing complex states of mind when we utter moral sentences. Even if Gibbard's account is not exactly right, even if it calls for some modification, we are doing what he suggests. Furthermore, we are expressing complex states of mind even if this is not the whole story of what we're doing.

This being the case, it's hard to see why we should think that Gibbard's expressivist semantics for moral thought and discourse *rules out* the ordinary view or contradicts the idea that such language might be capable of truth, actually true, and, when true, objectively true? And Dworkin clearly does object to the plausibility of Gibbard's planning analysis as an accurate account of what we're doing when we make moral claims and think moral thoughts. He thus seems to want to say that the analysis itself contradicts what one would need to say in order to to embrace objectivity and truth in ethics.

What's striking, though, is that Gibbard's expressivist semantics is not even incompatible with a representationalist understanding of our moral thought and discourse. On a representationalist view, there are relations between our thoughts and words and sentences, on the one hand, and items or states of affairs in the world, on the other; and such relations are explanatorily basic: our statements represent states of affairs, and our true sentences accurately represent the state of affairs they are intended to represent.

Even if we assume that a given selection of language can be cashed out expressivistically, this, on its own, is not incompatible with *also* characterizing its meaning in other ways, perhaps even representationally. Even when we make naturalistic claims, we *are* expressing certain complex states of mind. This is totally compatible with maintaining that we're making claims and forming judgments that can be explained in terms of links between our concepts or our terms and objects in the world.

[49]Gibbard, *Meaning* 19.

Of course, even if expressivism is compatible with our ordinary moral practice as non-inflationary moral realism understands it, it might be unable to capture *every* commitment of moral thought and talk. From the fact that expressivism captures something important about our ordinary thought and talk it does not follow that it does justice to *all* the realist commitments implicit in such thought and talk. We have already seen, however, that quasi-realist expressivism does endorse all the realist commitments Dworkin identifies. What, then, could possibly be missing?

If expressivism is *compatible* with what is typically called "representationalism," then it is not incompatible with the view that moral claims do refer to a special sort of property. If expressivism is read as saying that the *only* thing we're doing with our moral thought and discourse is expressing states of mind—that some planning or some such analysis is exhaustive—perhaps the representationalist might protest. Dworkin, too, might want to protest, might want to protest to the idea that expressivism tells the whole story.

D. Gibbard Leaves Out Something Essential

What can Dworkin say is missing from Gibbard's account? As we've seen, Dworkin would not (both because he could not and because on his explicit view he would not want to) argue that what is left out is representationalism. What is less clear, though, is what other supplementation Dworkin might take to be required in order to get objectivity and truth in ethics.

Perhaps, of course, Dworkin is not, after all, really rejecting representationalism—or at least not entirely. He certainly seems to be rejecting it when criticizing traditional, metaphysical non-naturalists. It's hard to see how else to make sense of his objections to quasi-realist expressivism, though.

I wonder whether what we see in the case of someone like Dworkin is the embrace of a kind of intuitive sense of what realism about the moral might amount to, what a commitment to truth or objectivity might involve, followed by instinctive resistance to Gibbard's view as inconsistent with the relevant commitments. This might explain what seems to me to be a common occurrence once objections to quasi-realist expressivism on the part of defenders of non-inflationary moral realism

leaves the level of instinct. Once the objections are spelled out, this seems to raise problems for the accounts the objectors themselves have been defending. Some defenders of non-inflationary moral realism seem to think that their view requires seeing quasi-realist expressivism as potentially skeptical or threatening skepticism. The question is: What is bothering them since they are not bothered by the lack of metaphysics? What worries them about quasi-realist expressivism if it is not that quasi-realist expressivism is missing the metaphysics? It seems to have to do something with the idea that there is belief and there is reality and there is some kind of accountability. It seems to be that they are assuming that it is insufficient to have a discourse that functions not to hold belief states that are accountable to reality.

I just cannot see that Dworkin has spelled out a characterization of truth or objectivity that goes beyond what Gibbard embraces. It does seem plausible, though, that his intuitive sense of how to understand moral claims such as "Slavery is wrong" is something like the sense one would have *if* representationalism were the right account of moral claims. But then what is it that's like representationalism but not representationalism?

Again, a representationalist might assume that moral objectivity and truth involved the idea of accountability to some sort of extra-mental reality and that relations between our moral thoughts or claims and objects in or something about that extra-mental reality did some important explanatory work. We care about moral judgments, on this view, because we're trying to accommodate ourselves to this external moral reality.

I actually think this sort of objection may well be getting at part of Dworkin's worry. To spell this out and defend it, however, would be to make some important assumptions, including the following: (1) that our moral thought and discourse work the same way as our naturalistic thought and discourse.[50] This, of course, is what the defenders of non-inflationary moral realism, including, most notably Dworkin, deny, however. And (1) seems to presuppose (2) that unless our moral terms pick out items in the world, in other words, unless we're ontologically committed to something like

[50]Of course, in principle, someone could be a realist about moral claims but deny realism about naturalistic claims. Thanks to David Gordon for pointing this out.

moral properties that we might track or mistrack, we cannot have objectivity and truth in ethics. Here again, though, this is precisely what the defenders of non-inflationary moral realism, again, including notably Dworkin, deny.

Of course, Dworkin might be presupposing something other than representationalism on the hypothesis that he thinks there's a required supplement to expressivism. It's just not clear what that could be. What is clear, as I have argued here, is that the best way to make sense of Dworkin's objections to quasi-realist expressivism involves his making assumptions about the legitimate use of non-naturalistic moral language—standards of legitimacy that he assumes himself and thinks the quasi-realist cannot meet. It turns out, then, that Dworkin may well be, like Gibbard, a fox—though one in hedgehog's clothing. This, of course, is compatible with both Dworkin and Gibbard defending accounts best characterized as versions of non-inflationary moral realism.

E. Dworkin's Contribution

What Dworkin offers is a serious metaethical work that forces us to ask what sorts of questions we can really ask about our substantive moral thought, discourse, and practice.

I do happen to think, as I argue here, that Dworkin is too quick to dismiss the concerns of the foxes: at least some metaethical and meta-normative worries are meaningful and even important, and the questions they prompt call for answers. If I'm right, Dworkin's proposed response to what many philosophers have taken to be a number of important worries about moral thought and discourse, which amounts to concluding that they are not, after all, reasonable worries, may not be as promising as he imagines. It is nonetheless an argument that raises some interesting and important questions about what sorts of metaethical concerns call for serious consideration. One of Dworkin's most important contributions, it seems to me, is forcing us to recognize the lack of basis for the assumption that all domains of thought and discourse are best understood as calling for the same semantic treatment. He argues clearly and persuasively for the view that just because we might conclude that our naturalistic discourse calls for a semantic account that involves assuming that such discourse referentially commits us to certain sorts of natural truth-makers, it does not follow that all

truth-evaluable, that all cognitive thought and discourse will work the same way. Furthermore, I think he argues clearly and persuasively for the view that there are no positive metaphysical issues about ethics that are not themselves substantive moral issues. He argues clearly and persuasively, therefore, in support of a sort of non-inflationary moral or normative realism. Indeed, it is largely thanks to Dworkin's important work that it no longer makes sense to argue that the difference between a moral and a non-moral realist is that the realist and not the non-realist adopts a positive metaphysical thesis about morality. As descriptive matter, as a matter of the metaethical landscape, this distinction simply no longer holds. Furthermore, as a normative matter, Dworkin powerfully makes the case that there's little reason to insist on a positive metaphysical thesis to ground moral or normative judgments.[51]

Finally, I turn to a brief comment upon Dworkin's focus on the moral rather than on the currently more common approach, which involves focusing on the normative.

VI. Dworkin vs. Scanlon vs. Gibbard on Moral vs. Normative

A. Dworkin vs. Gibbard on Moral vs. Normative

I don't think Dworkin is best understood as making a general point about all domains. He is not suggesting that in order for a claim to count as relevant to, say, the physical domain that it must be itself a substantive physical claim. He's not saying that a claim fails to be theological if it's about creation and thus entails the denial of naturalism.[52] That would be absurd. I think it's a mistake to think that hedgehog theory is so easily dismissed. Clearly, and most charitably, Dworkin takes it that there is something special about the *moral* domain.

[51]Returning again to David Gordon's suggestion that it might be helpful to distinguish two versions of the hedgehog theory: one that metaethical views have substantive moral implications and the other that metaethical views consist entirely of substantive moral claims. While I think this distinction may well be important, I am not sure that making it would resolve any of the problems I address in this chapter.

[52]For a differing opinion, see Stephen Ingram, "I Can't Relax! You're Driving me Quasi!" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 96.3 (2015).

One important question about Dworkin's discussion, though, is to what extent the relevant arguments are peculiar to the moral case and whether they will hold for any area of normative thought and discourse.

To be sure, as I noted at the beginning, there is a certain awkwardness about applying Dworkin's criticisms directly to Gibbard's project. Gibbard's project is more broadly about the normative rather than more narrowly about the ethical. Gibbard is not unique in this respect. As we've seen, much contemporary work in metaethics is actually more accurately characterized as meta-normative.

Dworkin's criticisms bear some features that might be typical of any normative domain but other criticisms reflect his distinctive realist attitude towards morality. Dworkin says that if a claim does not have any implications for morality, then it is irrelevant to morality, and that, if it has implications for morality, then it *is* moral. This certainly doesn't seem plausible. We can, for instance, make claims about logic or epistemology that are relevant to moral thought and discourse, but it would certainly not be plausible to say that such claims because they have relevance to morality *just are* moral claims.

Note, though, that it does seem to make sense that they have implications for morality because they have *normative* implications for morality. This might have to do with what it is rational to do, or what we have evidence to believe, etc. Having normative implications does not, of course, make claims *moral* claims, but it might show that they would have normative relevance to morality.

And, interestingly enough, Gibbard's view is that holding a theory of the meaning of our utterances is in a sense taking up a normative stance. What makes Dworkin's view distinctive is that he wants to maintain that all claims that have moral implications are *moral* claims. While this does not seem plausible, it may well be plausible that they are all *normative* claims.[53] So parts of Dworkin's criticisms might appear to hold up if we focused on the normative rather than more narrowly on the moral.

[53]Dworkin focuses on the moral and he clearly has strongly realist *moral* convictions. He may not, though, have strongly moral convictions about some other normative thought or discourse.

B. Dworkin vs. Scanlon on Moral vs. Normative

Scanlon, another non-inflationary realists who, like Dworkin, wants to insist on the primacy of first-order thought and discourse, that is, substantive discourse, doesn't go as far as Dworkin does in insisting that all putatively external claims really are internal (or irrelevant if not nonsense). Importantly, though, Scanlon, explicitly focuses on the normative rather than on the moral.

Scanlon differs from Dworkin in thinking that it is intelligible to raise "external" questions about the status of moral thoughts and claims. He takes it, however, that there are fewer "external" questions that we can ask about *normative* thoughts and claims. Furthermore, Scanlon rejects much of what passes for metaethical theorizing—or, in this case, meta-normative theorizing—that is rejecting by Dworkin. In a way, then, perhaps we could see him as adopting a sort of modified hedgehog theory, one according to which a good deal of the worries about normative language and thought are not, after all, worries *about* normativity.

Scanlon understands a focus on the normative as a focus on reasons for action, belief, attitudes, feelings, etc.—understood as distinct from, say, motivating reasons, reasons that actually motivate someone to do, believe, or feel something, or even reasons she takes herself to have.[54] Scanlon takes it that reasons talk is intertranslatable with talk of what we ought to think, feel, or believe. We can talk of what we have reason to do but we can also talk about what we have conclusive reason to do, and Scanlon proposes that what we have conclusive reason to do is what we *ought* to do.[55]

As we've seen, there are some worries about the view that there are no questions to be asked about morality that are not themselves substantive moral questions. Perhaps, though, more questions about normativity are themselves substantive normative questions than questions about morality are substantive moral questions. Scanlon also takes it that there are other advantages to focusing

[54]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford: OUP 2014) 1.

[55]See Scanlon, *Being.* Inter-translation here is not as straightforward as it might seem to be by the way I put things here. For our purposes, all that matters at this point is that we can see a way in which these terms can be used to help understand what we mean by the normative. See Gibbard, *Meaning* (212n11) for a nice discussion of some difficulties with inter-translation.

on the normative rather than on morality. Indeed, he takes it that there are fewer meta-normative worries than metaethical worries.[56]

Scanlon insists, contra Dworkin, that the question "Why be moral?" or "What reasons do we have to care about morality?" are *non-moral* questions we *can* sensibly ask.[57] If he's right that these are non-moral questions, it follows that they are external to the moral domain. I think this seems plausible.

Importantly, however, Scanlon does not think that there are similar questions to be asked and answered about the normative. Take the question "What reasons do we have to care about doing what we have reason to do?" This question doesn't have the same force. Indeed, it doesn't even seem to be a meaningful question to which there could be an informative answer. To ask this question, it seems, is to presuppose the authority of reason.[58]

To be sure, there are, say, sociological or anthropological claims that we can ask about the normative. But it does seem that Scanlon can reasonably maintain that (almost) anything we're going to ask about the normative is itself normative.

This still leaves open, however, questions about the relationship between the moral and the normative. This is not something on which I focus in this dissertation. It's worth mentioning, however, that on Scanlon's approach, it does seem that something like moral fictionalism is at least a possibility. A normative fictionalism, however, would be absurd, and perhaps that should be enough

[56]I leave a fuller discussion of this for another project. Note here, however, that Scanlon does not claim to be a 'moral' realist. He claims to be a realist about normativity. This is important. Scanlon seems to suppose that a number of putative metaethical problems would dissolve if we focused on meta-normative issues instead. He points out that Mackie focuses exclusively on the moral. Of course, as Scanlon points out, this was typical of "most people discussing these issues at the time he was writing." Mackie thus does not focus on practical reasons more generally. He does not focus on normativity. Scanlon proposes that when Mackie "speaks of claims about objective values, he may intend to contrast these with claims about "subjective" values— claims about what a person ought to do, or has reason to do, that, unlike moral claims, are claimed to hold only insofar as the agent has certain desires or aims. Mackie may have no objection to values, or claims about reasons, of the latter kind." Scanlon 132.

[57]See Scanlon, Frankfurt.

[58]See Scanlon, Frankfurt.

for those of us who would be dismayed to discover that a fictionalist approach to morality would be our best option.

Focusing on the relation between the moral and the normative, it seems there are at least two options. One option is that we might think that claims about what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, *just are* normative claims. On this view, the moral would be a subset of the normative. Moral claims then, put into Scanlon's terminology, would just be claims about what people have conclusive reason to do or claims regarding what we owe to each other, as he puts it. A separate sort of option is to think of morality as a separate domain. To be sure, as noted above, moral questions would have normative implications, but morality itself would not be understood as a subset of normativity. On this view, we might learn all there is to learn about morality, we might be able to determine whether some act is right or wrong, but we could still ask "Why be moral?" That would not turn out to be a question that could be settled by the moral domain. Notice that on this latter view, we might think that there are correct answers about what is morally required, what we have most moral reason to do, without concluding that we ultimately have reason to be moral.[59]

This latter approach is Scanlon's, but it's one that comes with a cost. If it turns out that we ultimately do not have conclusive reason to be moral, morality might even turn out to be a kind of fiction. It seems plausible that Dworkin's view is that once we have settled that something is morally right or wrong, good or bad, there is no separate question about whether we have reason to be moral. Perhaps, then, given problems with Dworkin's focus on morality, the best option for Dworkin is to treat morality as a subset of normativity. But then he'd need to focus on the normative rather than more narrowly on the moral if he wanted to insist that all questions relevant to the relevant domain are internal to the domain.

What about Scanlon vs. Gibbard on the moral vs. the normative? As we've seen, Gibbard, like Scanlon, focuses on the normative. Gibbard though, unlike Scanlon, treats the moral as a subset of the normative. Perhaps, then, the question why be moral, for Gibbard, would end up being a

[59]Thanks to Scanlon for helping me spell out this distinction (conversation, 3 February 2017, at Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, Frankfurt, Germany.)

question that could be understood as a question about what reasons we have to care about doing what we have reason to do. While I find these questions both interesting and important, I do not yet have the conclusive sort of answer I'd like to have. I will have to leave this for a further project. I do return to the question of Gibbard and moral or normative fictionalism, however, in Chapter 5.

E. Is There More to the Objection that Gibbard has the Wrong Account than I Acknowledge Above?

Perhaps, in the end, there is more to Dworkin's putative worry that Gibbard has the wrong account than what I acknowledge above. In particular, some of Dworkin's critical remarks about quasi-realism suggest that he assumes there is something more to moral commitments than he himself explicitly acknowledges. Perhaps Dworkin does, after all, presuppose standards of legitimacy for our moral or normative claims and thoughts that Gibbard's account cannot meet, that, somehow, Dworkin thinks his expressivist semantics undermines. Perhaps there's a sense of 'belief' that Dworkin takes himself to capture but that he thinks Gibbard cannot. Perhaps Dworkin thinks Gibbard's moral or normative state of mind is more desire-like than belief-like. Perhaps Dworkin thinks Gibbard's account has the wrong direction of fit, mind-to-world instead of world-to-mind. Some such issues are metaethical or meta-normative. Some, however, are perhaps interpretive. In Chapter 3, I address these sorts of worries about Gibbard's account.

If indeed, Dworkin really did, until the end of his life, think that Gibbard fails to do justice to moral discourse, the question before us is what could be missing from Gibbard's account. This is a difficult question, especially in light of the points of agreement on which I have focused in this chapter. I will continue to pursue this issue in Chapter 3, with a focus on what's at issue between Gibbard and Scanlon, but also in Chapter 4, where I turn to Parfit. There is good reason to think that Parfit came to think that there was more to normative facts than what we get on Gibbard's account. In exploring this issue, I will, in effect, be exploring what conceptual space, if any, there is/could be between a full-blooded Platonism about reasons/values and the positions defended by Scanlon and the quasi-realists.

VI. Conclusion

Either nothing that Dworkin would take to be significant is at issue between Dworkin and Gibbard, and they're both best understood as defenders of non-inflationary moral realism, or something significant *is* at issue between them and it is best understood as a disagreement about the standards of legitimacy for moral thought and discourse, standards best understood as external to the moral domain. If this is right, though, Dworkin has failed to defend the eliminability of external claims about ethics. Of course, even if I'm right about Dworkin, it remains possible that moral thought and discourse might be able to get along without external claims. If, however, Dworkin is implicitly committed to the intelligibility of such claims, despite his insistence to the contrary, this raises broader questions about their dispensability. Among these questions is what exactly those standards of legitimacy might be.

Gibbard acknowledges a task that Dworkin does not take on, namely, the task of explaining moral or broadly normative concepts. I say more about this in Chapter 3. Perhaps Dworkin's worries about Gibbard arise because he does not offer any such explanation himself. The disagreement, if there is any, emerges in response to Gibbard's explanations.

Chapter 3

Objections and Replies: What's at Issue Between Scanlon and Gibbard?

I. Introduction

My goal in this dissertation is to get clearer about just what non-inflationary realism amounts to and how it differs from some nearby accounts. I want to argue that the non-inflationary project can be carried out with the understanding that Gibbard belongs in the same camp. The point is not that there are no interesting differences between Gibbard's account and the accounts of other defenders of non-inflationary realism. Rather, the point is that there is no compelling reason not to understand the non-inflationary realist project as including Gibbard.

Though some readers may have been persuaded by the preceding chapter that there is less distance between Dworkin and Gibbard than they had assumed, many will still find it hard to accept that some versions of non-naturalism and of quasi-realism can be understood as mere variants of the same metaethical view. Especially in light of some long-standing assumptions about what quasi-realist expressivism really involves, readers might still believe that the gap between any version of quasi-realist expressivism and any version of non-naturalism (or naturalism, for that matter) remains considerable. In order to move things along and to prepare the way for later discussions, I want to undermine some of those assumptions. I'm going to do this fairly briskly because the point of this dissertation is neither to defend nor, per se, to explicate quasi-realist expressivism generally or Gibbard's view particularly.

Some metaethical literature mistakenly presupposes that no expressivist attempts to do justice to objectivity and truth in moral or normative thought and discourse. Other philosophical

treatments of quasi-realist expressivism does focus on these questions, however. As this literature has made clear,[1] it is anything but easy to determine definitively whether on an expressivist account can or cannot do justice to objectivity and truth in moral or normative thought and discourse. I do not seek to reproduce or resolve this debate. Though I do offer what I take to be *modest* defenses of Gibbard's account, I do not manage to do this as conclusively as I would like. Much of what I offer here, therefore, will have to be picked up and completed in a further project. Some of this I believe is worth doing here, however, even if it cannot be done perfectly.

For the most part, I will seek to show that T. M. Scanlon, who is as important a figure as there might be in this connection, may not, after all, disagree significantly with Gibbard. My aim is not to examine the details of Scanlon's account, but to use it to make the more general point that at least some expressivists are no less justified than some non-naturalists in claiming to have defended moral objectivity and truth.

A focus on what's at issue between Gibbard and Scanlon is especially interesting in light of Scanlon's resistance to acknowledging a significant alliance on the points that matter most. This is in stark contrast to another non-inflationary realist, Derek Parfit, who, as I will show in Chapter 4, became convinced that Gibbard's expressivism largely overlaps with other non-inflationary realist accounts.[2] Indeed, in the third volume of his *On What Matters* (*OWM3*), Parfit proposes that there may not be no significant metaethical disagreement between them.[3] Gibbard largely concurs.

Scanlon is more skeptical than Parfit (and perhaps even than Dworkin) about the possibility of treating quasi-realist expressivism as an account that might be placed in the same part of the metaethical or meta-normative landscape as his own. He acknowledges, however, that it is difficult to isolate just what is at issue between his account and sophisticated versions of quasi-realist expressivism like Gibbard's. Scanlon maintains that "[i]mportant differences remain" between him and Gibbard. He suggests that the two differ regarding "the way in which the practical significance of

[1] I count early versions of emotivism and prescriptivism among the expressivist options.

[2] Parfit does not adopt this characterization of this view. Indeed, he'd reject it.

[3] "[T]he three of us [Gibbard, Railton, and Parfit] have resolved our main meta-ethical disagreements," writes Parfit. See Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, 3 vols. (Oxford: OUP 2014-17) 3: 2.

normative commitments is explained, . . . the way in which interpersonal advice and disagreement about normative questions is interpreted, and . . . the sense in which the correctness of our normative commitments is independent of those commitments themselves."[4]

Scanlon seems to accept that there is something to what is often characterized as the cognitivist vs. non-cognitivist divide and to believe that he falls on the cognitivist side of the divide and Gibbard on the other. As I show here, however, it is more difficult to make the case than Scanlon assumes.

After focusing on wide-spread agreement between Scanlon and Gibbard, I will consider how the cognitivist versus non-cognitivist divide is generally understood. I will argue that classifying all expressivists as non-cognitivists risks creating confusion. I will then address a number of common critiques of quasi-realist expressivism, each of which concerns ways in which Gibbard may be thought to fail to achieve his goals. Since each of these critiques in some way concerns the cognitivist vs. non-cognitivist divide, I will be forced to revisit certain key moves more than once.[5]

II. Scanlon's Focus on Domain-Dependent Standards

As we've seen, Scanlon, like Dworkin and other non-inflationary realists, wants to insist on the primacy of substantive normative thought and discourse. The most important questions we can ask, explains Scanlon, involve "inquiry into how [a] domain is best understood at the most abstract and fundamental level." (Recall that Scanlon uses the term "domain" to group together ways of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to link.) Interestingly enough, Scanlon characterizes such questions as questions about "the metaphysics of a domain." In contrast to Gibbard (and to Dworkin), Scanlon *does* claim we can say that there are interesting or even important metaphysical and ontological questions. In the end, though, this looks like a disagreement

[4]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford: OUP 2014) 52.

[5]Indeed, sometimes it may seem as if I'm starting over. I nonetheless think it's useful to divide things in the way that I do here.

over how best to frame what is in fact a shared view—or set of positions. In particular, it looks like a difference over how to apply the terms "metaphysics" and "ontology" and their cognates.

Questions about how a domain is best understood at the most abstract or fundamental level are questions, Scanlon says, that must be answered by focusing on issues internal to the domain in question. Dworkin and Gibbard would agree. This calls for some clarification. Gibbard, who welcomes the idea that his account and Scanlon's, to a large extent, overlap,[6] worries that Scanlon starts his explanation of normativity in the wrong place. Scanlon beings with "distinct realms into which we can inquire," Gibbard points out. And "for each realm, there are appropriate methods of inquiry. These methods are ways of coming to know the layout of things in their respective realms." Gibbard says that he finds "such an explanation mysterious." I don't think Gibbard is thinking of realms in the right way, though. Gibbard's image strikes me as more reflective of robust non-naturalism, accounts such as David Enoch's or Terence Cuneo (who once in response to my queries about just what sorts of things non-natural moral properties might be, explained to me that I need only think of a natural property and then eliminate the natural[7]). Scanlon distinguishes between thinking of the term "domain" as referring to a sort of "realm of objects of a certain kind and their properties" and thinking of it as a term used to group together ways of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to link. "The normative domain, for example, is not a distinct realm of objects," explains Scanlon. "Things in the natural world, such as persons and their actions, have normative properties, and most normative claims are claims about such things.[…] So a domain is better understood in terms of the kind of claims it involves, and hence in terms of concepts that it deals with, such as number, set, physical object, reason, or morally right action."[8] I cannot see that there is anything here for Gibbard to object to.

[6]Gibbard focuses for much of Chapter 10 in his *Meaning and Normativity* spelling out why we might think that "expressivism and non-naturalism, in their best versions, [may well] end up coinciding in their theses." Gibbard, *Meaning* 218.

[7]I cannot say I found this very illuminating.

[8]Scanlon, *Being* 19.

In contrast to Dworkin's explicit view, though, Scanlon thinks that we can also ask meaningful *external* questions. There are external questions about morality but also about normativity. The external questions we can ask are what Scanlon characterizes as "questions about the adequacy of reasoning in a domain and about the truth of statements, including existential statements, that those modes of reasoning support."[9]

When we ask such questions about the natural world, for instance, Scanlon things we posit the existence of entities, natural world entities. We are ontologically committed to the existence of such entities. Those are the right sorts of conclusions to draw about how to understand the natural world. What is important here is that it is a given domain itself that determines what questions we need ask, what entities, if any, we need posit, how the domain is best understood at the basic level. As Scanlon uses the term "metaphysics," then, it does not presuppose that all questions will be like questions, say, "about the nature of time, or [about] causation, or about whether objects endure or perdure," etc. Indeed, the "metaphysics" of whatever questions in a given domain are about does not need to include the positing, say, of properties or things of some sort or other. To be sure, we seem to need to posit the existence of certain sorts of things when answering questions about the naturalistic domain, things that we track or mistrack (things reference to which Gibbard explains not only i-representationally but also e-representationally). But it does not follow that we'd need to posit the existence of things when answering questions about, say, the mathematical domain or the normative domain.[10]

One mistake Scanlon thinks that traditional realists and non-realists alike have made is thinking that moral facts exist only if they play a role in explanations of our moral beliefs.

> In the domain of natural science . . . Harman's explanatory requirement makes good sense in this form: we have reason to be committed to the existence of things of a certain sort only if they play a role in explaining what happens in the natural world (including our experience of it). But this maxim is specific to the domain of the natu-

[9]Scanlon, *Being* 21.
[10]Scanlon, *Being* 25-26.

ral science. It does not apply, as Harman's explanatory requirement is often held to apply, to every domain, for example to the normative domain, or to mathematics.[11]

Both Dworkin and Gibbard agree. Dworkin points out that the sort of test outlined here is the sort of best for "beliefs about the physical world," but not for our moral or normative beliefs.[12] What Scanlon characterizes as "metaphysical" inquiry will include questions about the relations between domains. "For example," he explains, "a satisfactory account of the normative domain needs to explain the supervenience relations between normative facts and non-normative facts."

Scanlon concludes that the modes of reasoning inherent in the moral or normative domains do not require the sorts of ontological commitments many realists suppose. They don't support the need to posit the existence of certain sorts of properties or entities the way the modes of reasoning in the naturalistic domain do support such a need. He rejects the idea that the moral or normative domains support there being a sort of moral or normative reality that we track with our claims.

This is in full agreement with Gibbard, who rejects the idea that explanations of normative thought and discourse will involve tracking or representationalism.

III. Wide-Spread Agreement Between Scanlon and Gibbard

Scanlon and Gibbard agree about a good deal. They agree that with our normative claims, we purport to state normative truths, that our normative claims are capable of being true or false, and that our normative thoughts can be characterized as beliefs. They agree explicitly, therefore, with the assumptions often characterized in the literature as amounting to the necessary and sufficient conditions for rendering an account a version of cognitivism about the normative or the moral. (See Part III below.)

Their agreement extends to some metaphysical and epistemological issues. They agree, *contra* Mackie and others, that some normative claims and thoughts *are* true, and when true, objectively so.

[11]Scanlon, *Being* 25-26.
[12]Ronald M. Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2011).

They insist that there are substantive, normative facts. They take it that normative facts or truths are *standpoint-independent*: they are not true simply or exclusively or primarily in virtue of a particular standpoint anyone happens to take. They both maintain that we can have normative beliefs and even normative knowledge. Given all of this, their views both have what are often taken to be the virtues of what is often characterized as a "realist" approach to normativity or morality.

They largely agree about normative epistemology. Both Gibbard and Scanlon embrace some form of reflective equilibrium as a means of assessing and refining philosophical theories. They share a rejection of analytic naturalism, agreeing that normative concepts cannot be analyzed in purely naturalistic terms. (According to so-called analytic naturalists, including Jeremy Bentham and Frank Jackson, normative facts just are natural facts, and to say this means that one can make a normative claim by making a naturalistic claim.[13]) They reject the idea that normative truths *just are* features of the natural world—so natural features. Like other so-called non-naturalists, they agree that normative concepts are best understood as *non-natural*.[14] As Scanlon points out, for instance, he and Gibbard both claim "that normative judgments are about our reactions to the natural world, rather than about that world itself."[15] They also disagree in similar ways with more traditional forms of non-naturalism—what I'm calling robust non-naturalism. They both reject the idea that normative objectivity and truth need be cashed out in terms of specifically normative metaphysics.

These affinities ally them with other non-inflationary normative or moral realists, again, non-naturalists like Dworkin or Parfit, Matthew Kramer or Thomas Nagel, and non-analytic naturalists like Peter Railton, who, though otherwise rather distinct in their methods, are prepared to embrace objectivity and truth about the normative while maintaining that doing so involves *no* ontological

[13]Assuming a simple version of ethical hedonism, for instance, it could turn out to be *enough* to claim that some act fails to maximize pleasure in order to state that some act is wrong. The point is not that naturalists adopt simple versions of ethical hedonism. This sort of simple theory just usefully illustrates what an analytic naturalist might mean by saying that moral facts just are natural facts.

[14]Some philosophers treat talk about "non-naturalism" as implying positive existence claims about things not belonging to the furniture of the physical world, something Gibbard, Railton, Scanlon, Dworkin, etc., would deny—though, as we'll see, perhaps in different ways.

[15]Even though he thinks that he, though not Gibbard, can explain "the appropriateness of these reactions." More about this important point below. Scanlon, *Being* 52.

commitments. Again, like all these philosophers, Gibbard and Scanlon maintain that our normative claims do not commit us referentially to some sort of distinctly normative reality or distinctly normative entities. They agree (like the other non-inflationary realists) that explaining objectivity and truth in normativity, embracing what I characterize (see Chapter 1) as realism about morality or normativity does not require normative properties.[16] To be clear, by rejecting the view that there need be metaphysical truth-makers for morality or normativity, they reject robust realist accounts such as those defended by David Enoch or Terence Cuneo. This means that Gibbard and Scanlon both reject representationalism. In contrast to what representationalists presuppose, in neither Gibbard's nor Scanlon's discussions of normativity does *reference* play what might be characterized as a basic explanatory role.

Note that one advantage to their approach is that it does not give rise to the placement problems. The placement problems, recall, stem from the worry that certain sorts of utterances representationally commit us to things about which we find we must (or can) ask "What sort of thing is this?" or "What is its nature as a thing?" but that we can offer no non-dubious answer to such questions.

Scanlon and Gibbard also share other specific views on normativity. They share, for instance, the view that normative beliefs motivate—that it would be surprising for someone to judge that it would be wrong for her to do *X* while also proving quite indifferent to whether or not she did *X*. (More about this in Part V below.)

Of course, these agreements are compatible with some disagreements. The most obvious point of disagreement is that Gibbard defends an expressivist account of normative thought and discourse and Scanlon strongly rejects expressivism. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that this disagreement is necessarily reflective of a significant difference. And this is not only because, as I

[16]As I see it, all these non-inflationary realists pose a challenge to what Jamie Dreier or Kit Fine propose is a *sine qua non* of moral or normative realism. They even challenge, I see it, even Tristram McPherson's eliteness requirement for normative properties. Jamie Dreier, "Metaethics the Problem of Creeping Minimalism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (2004): 23-44; Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosopher's Imprint* 1.1 (June 2001): 11; Tristram McPherson, "What is at Stake in Debates among Normative Realists?" *Noûs* 49.1 (March 2016): 123-46.

emphasize in Chapter 2, giving an expressivist semantics for some domain of language or thought doesn't necessarily preclude non-expressivist semantics for the same domain.

To say that only one of them is an expressivist, is to say that only one of them explains concepts and the meanings of terms in terms of the states of mind to which we give voice when we make certain utterances. What does this difference amount to? In the case of Scanlon and Gibbard, this is not a disagreement about whether the claims should be given a representationalist analysis. Another possible account of what this difference amounts to might be that whereas the expressivist will say that in order to understand, say, wrongness, we would need to understand what it is to think that something is wrong, the non-expressivist claims to be interested more in what it is that is thought. Scanlon, like Gibbard, however, focuses on the state that is the state of judging that something is wrong. I say more about Scanlon's account below, but here I note that for Scanlon, what is primitive are instances of normative judgments.[17] Another answer to the question about what this difference amounts to might be that it seems to have something to do with their attitude toward various linguistic theories or proposals. Whereas non-expressivists, the idea might be, can say everything that, say, linguists say, expressivists end up giving up on many important semantic notions. Gibbard, however, explicitly embraces the linguistic notions semanticists elaborate or those on which linguists focus. They don't disagree about whether we can talk, say, about reference or the like. They disagree, we might say, over whether expressivism is compatible with, say, all the linguistic notions semanticists elaborate. This, though, seems best understood as a sort of meta-semantic disagreement.

By focusing on explanations of semantic content, which are, in turn, explained in terms of states of mind that are expressed when we make certain utterances, Gibbard proposes that he can

[17]What is primitive on Scanlon's account are judgements about reasons or instances of holding a reason relation. The fundamental relation on Scanlon's view is a five place relation: Were it to be the case that P, then a person X, if that person were in situation C, P would be a reason of strength S, or whatever, to do A. Scanlon wants to deal with these questions in terms of reason relations, of which there are a variety, including "being a reason," "being a conclusive reason," etc. Thanks to Scanlon for clarifying this for me. Private conversation with Scanlon (4 February 2017).

make the sorts of claims semanticists make. Gibbard thus welcomes what linguists have to say about first-order semantics, including about reference.[18] To be sure, some philosophers will object that Gibbard's meta-semantic view does not allow him to embrace what linguists have to say about first-order semantics. Scanlon does not offer a meta-semantic account, however, that would block Gibbard's meta-semantic account. So even if it turns out that there's a disagreement here between Gibbard and some self-styled realists, it doesn't follow that there is a disagreement between Gibbard and Scanlon.[19] There is clearly much more to say about this subject. For our purposes here, however, I note that Scanlon does not propose that there is a substantive semantic difference between Gibbard and him—even though he, Scanlon, rejects both expressivism and a minimalist approach to truth, facthood, and the like. I say more about this below. It is hardly clear, therefore, what any meta-semantic differences between Scanlon and Gibbard would amount to. Note, however, that this is not Scanlon's primary focus when objecting to Gibbard.

What Scanlon does say, as we've seen, is that he and Gibbard disagree over "the way in which interpersonal advice and disagreement about normative questions is interpreted, and . . . the sense in which the correctness of our normative commitments is independent of those commitments themselves."[20] Scanlon's proposals, as I understand them, focus on some assumptions about

[18]Gibbard explains that we can talk about reference but in a deflationary way. It is not merely by deflation that he proposes to have a notion of reference, however Gibbard credits Paul Horwich with the notion of reference that he adopts. Gibbard proposes that the notion of co-reference can be used to paraphrase what we say in terms of reference. Imagine I'm talking about my word "Sarah" and I say that it refers to Sarah. Just positing that it *refers* by deflation is not very helpful. How does someone else's term "Professor Buss" end up referring to Sarah? Horwich's proposal, adopted (and modified) by Gibbard, involves relying on the notion of coreference. We say that the term "Professor Buss" is coreferential with my term "Sarah" and that by deflation my word "Sarah" refers to Sarah. Putting this together, we have the term "Professor Buss" refers to Sarah. On his view, then, "Sarah" refers to Sarah, but that is not playing a substantial role in our theory of how people use the term "Sarah." Reference is not what's doing the heavy lifting. As we've seen, Gibbard doesn't simply say "my name 'Sarah' refers to Sarah. He also says that by saying "Your word 'Sarah' refers to Sarah" I commit myself to "My word 'Sarah' is co-referential to your word 'Sarah'." On Gibbard's view, then, the heavy lifting is being done by the notion of co-reference.

[19]There is a vast literature on this subject, which is not the focus of my work. One area in which I plan on spending time thinking about further is the question of semantic or meta-semantic differences between some expressivists and some non-naturalists. I do not say anything further about this here beyond noting that Gibbard does not reject any substantive semantic notion that Scanlon embraces.

[20]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford: OUP 2014) 52.

what it takes for an account of the normative to be cognitivist, as contrasted with non-cognitivist. I begin to explore the plausibility of this by first saying something about how these terms have been used in the literature.

IV. Objection: While Scanlon's Account is Cognitivist, Expressivism is Inherently Non-Cognitivist

A. Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism

Let us return now to our guiding question: Given the evident convergence between Gibbard's and Scanlon's accounts, what is ultimately at issue between them? Given that Scanlon seems to think that his account can accommodate genuine moral disagreement whereas Gibbard's cannot and given that he thinks that the correctness conditions for normative beliefs is external to those beliefs in a way that it is not in Gibbard's account, one obvious suggestion is that whereas Scanlon's account is cognitivist, Gibbard's is a version of non-cognitivism.

The cognitivist versus non-cognitivist divide is often treated as the most basic metaethical or meta-normative distinction. Furthermore, it is a divide that is often treated as having a special sort of significance. Just as the term "realism" is freighted with associations that offer special advantages to an account carrying such a label (as I argue in Chapter 1), so too, the term "cognitivism" suggests various positive associations. Indeed, I think the cognitivist label is associated with treating our ordinary moral or normative thought and discourse as being in good order, as involving truth and objectivity, as involving genuine disagreement, as entailing knowledge, and the like. As Russ Shafer-Landau, puts the point, cognitivism "preserves ordinary talk of moral truth."[21]

To be sure, some philosophers object to one or another of these assumptions often made about our ordinary normative thought and discourse. The point that the term cognitivism carries with it certain advantages needs qualification, therefore. What matters for our purposes is that a metaethical or meta-normative account's being characterized as "cognitivist" carries with it associa-

[21]Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence* (Oxford: OUP 2003) 23.

tions that would be thought of as advantages by the various defenders of the sorts of projects on which I focus in this dissertation—including both Scanlon and Gibbard.

We need to be careful here. The terms *cognitivism* and *non-cognitivism* have been used in a variety of ways in the literature. These differences notwithstanding, however, there seems to be broad agreement about which accounts of the moral or normative count as cognitivist and which accounts count as non-cognitivist. Versions of robust non-naturalism are treated as straightforward examples of cognitivism. Plato, for instance, is understood as a cognitivist, as are those philosophers who follow in his path, including such contemporary robust non-naturalists as Enoch, McPherson, Cuneo, and Shafer-Landau. Non-naturalists of the non-inflationary variety, such as Scanlon, Dworkin, Kramer, and Parfit, are also treated as cognitivists—as are naturalists like Railton, Boyd, and Sturgeon.[22]

Again, in spite of some differences in uses of the term, I think it's safe to say that moral or normative cognitivism is generally supposed necessarily to exhibit the following features—though exhibiting them is not always taken to be sufficient, at least not without some qualification:

(1) *Truth-aptness*: Our substantive moral or normative claims—for instance, "Poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong!" or, equivalently for our purposes, "One ought not to poke needles into kittens for fun!"—and the judgments to which they give voice are *capable* of being true or false. Furthermore, with our moral or normative claims, we purport to state *truths* (sometimes put in terms of *facts*).

(2) *Belief-like status*: Our moral or normative thoughts (to which we give voice with our moral or normative claims) are properly understood as *belief*-like states rather than, say, *desire*-like states, with this distinction often characterized in terms of direction of fit. They can be embedded in more complex beliefs and obey the principles of logic and the like. Cognitivism is also often treated as a *sine qua non* of there being moral or normative *knowledge*.

[22]I do not intend this list to be complete.

(3) *Epistemic evaluability*: Our substantive moral or normative claims and thoughts are things with which others might strictly disagree, something that would not be out of place to support with reasons and arguments.

I recognize that there is some awkwardness (or worse) to my separating out (2) and (3) from (1), above. Belief-like status surely entails truth-aptness since belief-like mental states can have only truth-apt contents. I separate them because it's at least plausible to separate truth-aptness from belief-like status. One might suppose that if an utterance or thought is such that it is capable of being true or false, then it follows that it has a belief-like status just as it follows that it is epistemically evaluable. To be sure, this is one common view. But not everyone agrees. Someone could, for example, intelligibly insist that moral utterances can be true or false, even though they are more like desires than beliefs. Some versions of simple emotivism might best be seen as taking this form. Such a view, it would seem, would qualify as a version of moral or normative non-cognitivism. I say more about this sort of view below.

Just as there are philosophers who are generally treated in the literature as paradigm examples of moral or normative cognitivists, so too, others are generally treated as paradigmatic non-cognitivists. The most common examples of non-cognitivists offered in the literature are those who share the expressivist tradition, arguably begun in its modern form by A. J. Ayer, and continuing through C. L. Stevenson to R. M. Hare, and then on to Blackburn and Gibbard. As Mark van Roojen explains, expressivist accounts are among the "principal varieties of non-cognitivism." He treats this as a mere matter-of-fact. "'Quasi-Realism,'" he tells us, "is Simon Blackburn's name for [a] sort of non-cognitivism, and especially his own version of expressivism."[23] The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article titled "Non-Cognitivism in Ethics" focuses exclusively on expressivism (again, including Gibbard's version).[24]

[23]See Mark van Roojen, "Moral Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Dec. 4, 2013) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-cognitivism/> (Aug. 3, 2017).

[24]Even Blackburn and Gibbard have characterized their own accounts as versions of non-cognitivism—though Gibbard has recently granted that he has reason to avoid doing this.

It will not do, however, to simply *assume* that all expressivists are non-cognitivists. Indeed, characterizing a moral or normative theory as a version of non-cognitivism just because it is expressivistic is at best unhelpful and at worst outright misleading.[25] Just as the term "realism" is freighted with associations that give rise to confusion (see Chapter 1), so too, the term "cognitivism" evokes misleading associations that make it difficult to apply the term in a useful and informative way.[26] If non-cognitivism is understood as presupposing the rejection of *truth-aptness, belief-like status,* or *epistemic evaluability*, then starting out by characterizing expressivism as the principle variety of non-cognitivism misleadingly sends the message that all expressivists reject each and every one of these features.

B. Non-Cognitivist Expressivism

To be sure, if we assume that non-cognitivism amounts to the rejection of *truth-aptness, belief-like status,* or *epistemic evaluability,* then, *some* expressivists are reasonably classified as non-cognitivists. As I read Ayer, his account reasonably qualifies as a version of non-cognitivist expressivism. It is expressivistic in that he explains the meanings of moral sentences in terms of the state of mind such sentences express. Ayer's proposal (as I mentioned in Chapter 1) is that when we utter sentences such as "Slavery is wrong," we say something like "Slavery: boo!" And when we utter a sentence such as "We ought to help those in need," we express pro-helping-people-in-need attitudes, saying, for instance something like "Helping those in need: hurrah!" On Ayer's view, we can, and do, utter

[25]I do not mean to imply that nobody recognizes the challenges associated with categorizing, say, Gibbard as a non-cognitivism.

[26]See Doug Kremm's doctoral dissertation (in progress) for an excellent discussion of this and a persuasive case that how we use the terms "cognitivism" and "non-cognitivism" and, as I would add, "realism" and "anti-realism" really matters. Kremm, in his own words, "argues that the key insights that have animated the so-called "non-cognitivist" tradition have been distorted and obscured through attempts to express them in a theoretical framework that cannot accommodate them. When properly understood, these ideas point towards a distinctive kind of metaethical view that [he calls] practical cognitivism. This view understands ethical practice as the product of a distinctively practical kind of cognition, which we engage in by adopting, revising, rejecting, and carrying out practical commitments. Understanding ethical practice in this way allows us to place ethics in the natural world without distorting or undermining it; it sheds light on normative guidance and akrasia; and it allows us to make sense of ethical reflection and understanding without turning ethical inquiry into something else." Douglas Kremm, "Practical Cognitivism: An Essay on the Nature of Normative Judgment" (PhD diss, Harvard U).

the same words, the same sentences, as do people who maintain that moral claims are capable of being true or false. Nonetheless, according to Ayer, our moral utterances "can neither be true nor false."[27] In short, he denies *truth-aptness*, (1) above.

Ayer also explicitly rejects *belief-like status*, (2) above, and *epistemic evaluability*, *(3)* above. He declares that we cannot "strictly speaking, contradict" each other when we communicate about our moral views. We cannot contradict expressions of emotion.[28]

Some philosophers have argued that, on Ayer's own terms, he need not have granted that moral claims were not capable of being true or false.[29] Whatever we want to say about this (and I return to this point in Part III below), it's important to note that Ayer himself concluded that moral utterances understood as expressions of emotion were not capable of being either true or false. On his own theory of assertions, our moral utterances do not meet the necessary conditions.

What matters for our purposes here is that some expressivists (a) offer an account of the moral, or more broadly normative, state of mind that is very different from the state of mind characterized by Ayer, and (b) maintain that understood as expressions of such a state of mind, moral utterances meet the above conditions for moral or normative cognitivism. Such expressivists, I maintain, are thus best seen as explicitly *defending* a cognitivist account of morality or normativity—whether or not we might conclude that this is successful. Gibbard is just such an expressivist.

C. Cognitivist Expressivism

Gibbard not only offers a very different sort of account of the moral or normative state of mind than does Ayer; he also explicitly defends the view that our substantive moral claims *are* capable of being true or false, *can* be defended with reasons and arguments, *are* judgments and claims about which we can be mistaken and about which we can and do disagree, *do* give voice to *beliefs* (granting that more needs to be said here about the term 'belief'), *can* be embedded in more complex

[27]A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London: Gollancz 1936) 102-103.
[28]Ayer 107.
[29]Gibbard, for instance, finds it strange that Ayer, on his own terms, so dismissive of morality. He has noted in conversation that he finds it strange given that Ayer adopted a deflationary account of truth and falsity.

beliefs, and *do* obey the principles of logic and the like.[30] In short, Gibbard explicitly embraces the conditions that are generally treated as rendering an account of normativity a version of cognitivism.[31] On Gibbard's account, moral, and more broadly normative, utterances are subject to genuine disagreement, can be defended with reasons and arguments, function like beliefs, etc. It seems to me, therefore, that if the cognitivist and non-cognitivist labels are at all useful, Gibbard's *aim* is to defend what is best characterized as a version of cognitivist expressivism (as contrasted with the non-cognitivist expressivism defended by Ayer and others). Perhaps one will want to argue that he fails to achieve his goals—perhaps the question about whether this is so is the most important question. Note that one might want to make this case against robust realists like Enoch. We might conclude, for instance, that he fails to show that morality/normativity is in good order by grounding it in moral/normative metaphysics. Just as one might make this case against any other attempt to explain normativity or morality in such a way as to make sense of objectivity and truth.[32]

Characterizing an expressivist such as Gibbard right off as a non-cognitivist reflects a misunderstanding of his intentions. Treating Gibbard's account as a version of non-cognitivism obscures the important differences between an expressivist like Gibbard and an expressivist like Ayer. It obscures the important affinities between accounts like Gibbard's and versions of non-inflationary non-naturalism like Dworkin's and Parfit's and Scanlon's. Whatever turns out to be at issue between these accounts, it is not the case that only the non-naturalists aim to vindicate the assumption that normative claims can be objective and true.

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[30]The primary aim of probably the largest portion of the literature focused on so-called "non-cognitivism" is to show why an expressivist account of our moral language is inadequate in that it cannot account for one or the other above-listed features of our moral thought and discourse.

[31]To be sure, Gibbard himself often characterizes his own view as a version of non-cognitivism. However, in more recent work (*OMW*3), he acknowledges that he should not be so ready to do so.

[32]Note that whether Gibbard fails to achieve his goals is a separate question from what his goals are. To be sure, whether he achieves his goals is in some sense the most important question. Note that one might want to make this case against robust realists like Enoch. We might conclude, for instance, that he fails to show that morality/normativity is in good order by grounding it in moral/normative metaphysics. It would surely be odd to characterize Enoch as a non-cognitivist based on one's objection to explanations of normativity in terms of, say, metaphysical theses. Enoch is a cognitivist, it seems because of his intentions (whether or not we find his account satisfactory).

D. Confusion Arising from the Cognitivist vs. Non-Cognitivist Divide

There is a good deal of misunderstanding in the metaethical and meta-normative literature about the aims of quasi-realist expressivism, and I suspect focusing on the cognitivist versus non-cognitivist divide has contributed to this. John Cottingham, for instance, points out that Gibbard denies that moral claims and thoughts are objectively true. He claims that on Gibbard's view our moral intuitions "will have no independent validity." Cottingham mentions the story of "chicken-pull," a game played with chickens,[33] one that hurts the chickens while causing great enjoyment to the humans playing the game. Cottingham says that for Gibbard it "does not ultimately matter' whether one judges that there is something wrong with this game or one judges that there is not something wrong with this game. It "does not ultimately matter for Gibbard, since there is no real fact of the matter about whether animal pain is worth avoiding," he writes.[34] This, though, is very much *not* Gibbard's position.

Take another example: Carrie Jenkins maintains that, according to quasi-realists, when we make moral claims, not only do we not intend to say something that could be true or false, but we're not even pretending to do so. (I return to the point about *pretending* in Chapter 5.) On her interpretation, quasi-realism is the view that moral sentences with the surface structure of claims that can be true or false are not really *assertions*, that is, they are not really claims that can be true or false.[35] This, of course, is a mistake. Yet Jenkins' characterization of quasi-realism expressivism fits comfortably with a good deal of metaethical literature.

To be sure, the fact that expressivists like Gibbard don't fit comfortably under the non-cognitivist label is not overlooked by everyone. Mark Schroeder, for instance, acknowledges this. Nonetheless, even Schroeder titles the book in which he spends more time engaging with Gibbard than with any other single philosopher *Noncognitivism in Ethics*.[36] In spite of Schroeder's explicit

[33]A story Gibbard frequently tells (in his classes, in talks, in papers, etc.).

[34]John Cottingham, "Intuition and Genealogy," *Intuition, Theory, and Anti-theory in Ethics*, ed. Sophie Grace Chappell (Oxford: OUP 2015) 12-3.

[35]Carrie Jenkins, "Lewis and Blackburn on Quasi-Realism and Fictionalism," *Analysis* 66 (2006): 315-9.

[36]Mark Schroeder, *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (New York, NY: Routledge 2010) 12-13.

statement that it makes sense to call Gibbard a non-cognitivist because of his historical position in a tradition stemming back to Ayer, it seems to me that more is said simply by applying the non-cognitivist label to Gibbard than Schroeder grants. It seems to me that the non-cognitivist label sends the message that someone with this label at most one can take account of moral or normative truth or beliefs that are somehow less genuine than the truth or beliefs on cognitivist accounts. And, indeed, as I read Schroeder's critique of Gibbard, one way to put what he has to say is that on Gibbard's account we don't have genuine beliefs involving genuine disagreement. This seems also to be Scanlon's point.

E. Cognitivism as Representationalism

Even though Scanlon obviously doesn't assume that cognitivism presupposes representationalism, I do think that it's important to note the tendency in the metaethical and meta-normative literature to treat the term "cognitivism," like the term "realism," as presupposing some sort of representationalism.[37] (See my Chapter 1 discussion of the Realism and Representation Argument.) Shafer-Landau is explicit about this association. "[A] view is cognitivist," he maintains, "if it allows for a central class of judgments within a domain to count as beliefs, capable of being true or false . . . [that is,] capable of being true or false in virtue of their more or less accurate representation of the facts within the domain."[38] Quasi-realist expressivists, he maintains, are non-cognitivists because, on their view, "there is nothing that can make moral judgments true—no moral facts or moral reality that they could possibly correctly represent, nothing they are true *of*. This characterization builds representationalism right into the definition of *cognitivism*—just as it is often built right into the definition of *belief*. And it seems to presuppose that representationalism is integral to truth-talk.[39] On this view, true claims and thoughts are those that succeed in accurately representing that which they are

[37]This is a point persuasively defended by Kremm.

[38]Shafer-Landau 17.

[39]Some representationalists, of course, maintain that some moral or normative claims really do represent how things really are. Others, like Mackie-style error theorists, think none accurately represent how things are morally or normatively (depending on whether it's an error theory about morality or normativity).

putatively about.[40] Indeed, *if* any of our moral claims are true, this will be because they accurately represent moral entities.[41]

We should ask, however, whether we need to endorse representationalism in order to make sense of our normative thoughts and utterances as being responsive to that which they are *about* in the sense of having correctness conditions that are independent of our individual commitments. And we should ask, in particular, whether there is no way of characterizing the aboutness of normative thought and talk that is available to an expressivist.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Dworkin appears to think that this is not possible. And Scanlon appears to agree. The challenge for Dworkin or Scanlon, however, or for any non-inflationary realists who objects to Gibbard's account, is to offer an account of such correctness conditions that avoids the metaphysical worries associated with robust realist proposals. And it's not clear to me that such accounts are forthcoming.

V. Objection: Cognitivists Posit Something beyond a Minimal Approach to Truth, Reference, or Properties

A. The Compatibility of Minimalism about Truth and Cognitivism

Some people may think that adopting a minimalist account of truth leaves one with more lightweight, less interesting cognitivistic notions. To the extent that this is plausible, given that Scanlon rejects and Gibbard embraces minimalism, this might seem to render Scanlon's account more favorable to the idea that normative claims are truth-apt, etc. Anti-minimalism confers no such advantage, however.

Embracing minimalism about truth is compatible with denying that moral or normative utterances are truth-evaluable, have belief-like status, or are epistemically evaluable, but embracing

[40]See Huw Price for a nice discussion of what he calls big-R Representationalism. Huw Price, *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* (Cambridge: CUP 2013) 24.

[41]Here's Price: Representationalists will take it that the purpose of normative vocabulary "is to keep track of items in some platonic, non-natural realm." Price 184n16.

minimalism certainly doesn't entail such denials. Indeed, some defenders of a minimalist account of not only truth but also of facts, beliefs, properties, and the like, vigorously defend views that not only seem very clearly cognitivist but are generally treated as cognitivist. The most prominent example is probably Dworkin, who characterizes his own view as the most robust version of realism[42] about morality on offer and who, as we've seen, strongly objects to Gibbard's expressivist account in spite of fully agreeing with him with respect to minimalism about truth, properties, and the like. For Dworkin, it's enough to affirm that slavery is wrong in order to affirm that it is *true* that it is wrong, or that it is a *fact* that it is wrong, or that slavery has the *property* of wrongness. And affirming that it is true or a fact that it is wrong is nothing more than affirming that it is wrong.

Defending a minimalist account of truth does mean denying some things, of course. In particular, it entails denying that in order for such utterances to be truth-apt, have belief-like status and to be epistemically evaluable, etc., one must assume that the truth predicate carries with it *metaphysical* significance, in short, that it presupposes ontological commitment to the existence of properties of some sort. But this is not an objection available to Scanlon, Dworkin, Parfit, or any of the other non-inflationary realists.[43]

Of course, in spite of agreeing that the truth predicate does not carry something of metaphysical significance, non-inflationary realists may well disagree about what significance it does carry. And, indeed, some non-inflationary realists do seem to presuppose that adding the predicate "is true" to a claim adds content to the claim. They assume, that is, that the truth predicate carries something more than what we get from a minimalist account. This prompts the important question: What resources does a non-inflationary realist have for supplementing a minimalist account of truth?

[42]Note that whatever else we might take to be required for an account to be realist, the rejection of cognitivism entails the rejection of realism.

[43]I should point out that there is a huge literature on truth with which I do not engage in this dissertation. I do not pretend, therefore, adequately to defend the view that the truth predicate does not carry with it metaphysical significance. The important point for me is that according to Scanlon, Dworkin, Parfit, and the other non-inflationary realists, it does not. So it would be difficult to say that because he rejects this view, Gibbard is either a non-cognitivist or a non-realist without also saying the same thing about the other non-inflationary realists.

It's not entirely clear why Scanlon (unlike, say, Dworkin, with whom Scanlon largely agrees)) rejects a minimalist account of truth. Here are several possibilities: (*i*) Perhaps he shares the common misconception that minimalists treat minimalism as a free pass for all the realist or cognitivist goodies—in other words, as an easy way to get normative truth, facts, and beliefs without having to work for them. (*ii*) Perhaps he really does presuppose that the truth predicate carries some significance beyond what we can get on a minimalist account—or at least something that goes beyond what Gibbard takes it that we can get on a minimalist account. Or (*iii*) perhaps he simply takes issue with the characterization of a view he shares with Gibbard as "minimalist." Perhaps what Scanlon calls the "ordinary" or "commonsense" view of truth, facthood, and belief, is what Gibbard calls a "minimalist" account.

I suspect that Scanlon's reasons for rejecting a minimalist account of truth is closest to (*iii*), but perhaps there is something to (*ii*). Note, however, that given that Scanlon grants "the limited nature of [his own] claims of truth for normative assertions," if he does, indeed, assume something like (*ii*), it is not easy to spell out something he assumes about truth that is rejected by Gibbard.[44] So even if Scanlon assumes something like (*ii*), it's not clear to me that he gives us enough to evaluate whether he's right about that.

B. Minimalism is Necessarily a Free Pass for Truth and Other Cognitivist Goodies

Some critics worry that minimalism is a free pass for cognitivist goodies, so a free pass for things like normative *truth* and *facthood* or *belief*. Again, truth minimalism is roughly the view that our talk of *truth* contributes no meaning, no content, to our claims. "It's true that slavery is wrong," for instance, just means that slavery is wrong. According to minimalists, it matters whether someone has the concept TRUE if she is disposed to accept instances[45] of the equivalence schema "'P' is true if and

[44]Scanlon, *Being* 51-52.

[45]Non-controversial instances. See Daniel Stoljar and Nic Damnjanovic, "The Deflationary Theory of Truth," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Oct. 4, 2010) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-deflationary/> (Aug. 3, 2017).

only if P" (e.g., "Slavery is wrong" is true if and only if slavery is wrong").[46] But if truth is just a device for semantic assent, if to engage in truth talk *merely* means to use that device, in a way, the worry is that it's thereby too easy to get truth. This seems to be Paul Horwich's approach to minimalism about truth.[47] From this it seems to follow that it is too easy to get to factuality, reference, denotation, properties, etc. On Gibbard's view, for instance, distinctly normative *facts* are true normative thoughts. If there are true normative thoughts, then there are normative facts. As Gibbard puts it, "the fact that pain is bad just consists in pain's being bad; to believe that pain is bad is just to accept that it is." To accept that pain is bad is to accept that "it's true that pain is bad and it's a fact that pain is bad."[48]

One worry seems to be that Gibbard gets truth, factuality and the like simply by relying on the surface structure of the language. If a sentence has the surface structure of sentences that we grant are assertions, then it too is an assertion. On this sort of view, uttering "Slavery is wrong" would amount to uttering an assertion however one interpreted such an utterance (including if one read it as "Slavery: Boo!"). This doesn't seem plausible.

To see the point, it will help to consider Dreier's objection to treating truth-aptness as a mere syntactic issue, and Gibbard's response to this. Dreier, assuming that what matters for Gibbard is the surface structure of the language, introduces the predicate "hiyo," which he proposes is used in the way that "Hey Bob" is used to accost Bob. Dreier stipulates that "hiyo" is an adjective from

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[46]Again (see Chapter 2), on this view, stating that something is true is not always pointless. Its purpose is often pragmatic or rhetorical. It can, for example, add emphasis, or clarify one's position. Sometimes, the term "true" is not even indispensable. I need something like the word "true" to say, for instance, "Trump said at least one true thing during the debate" The word "true" here works as an abbreviation for "He said the trans-pacific partnership was terrible, and it is terrible," etc. This is Gibbard's example. Furthermore, on this view, "facts" are "true thoughts," and, given this, we can say there are moral facts. As Gibbard puts it, "the fact that pain is bad just consists in pain's being bad; to believe that pain is bad is just to accept that it is." In short, "it's true that pain is bad and it's a fact that pain is bad." Allan Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2008) 182-3. See also Michael Glanzberg, "Truth," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Jan. 22, 2013) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/> (Aug. 1, 2017). See previous example.

[47]About Horwich, Gibbard says that Horwich thinks that "there is nothing special for the expressivists who accepts minimal truth to explain." Gibbard disagrees, and, indeed, has something to say. Gibbard, *Thinking* 42n3.

[48]Gibbard, *Thinking* 182-3.

which is follows that "Bob is hiyo" is grammatically correct. But if I can affirm "Bob is hiyo" (call that sentence "P") and I adopt a minimalist account of truth, it seems I can affirm "Bob is hiyo is true" (so P is true). This seems problematic. And, indeed, it seems fair to insist that to have and use a device for semantic assent presupposes showing that in some area of discourse things behave in such a way as to fit the truisms characteristic of truth.[49]

Gibbard does not rely on mere surface structure of the language. He takes up this challenge to show that in some area of discourse things behave in such a way as to fit the truisms characteristic of truth. For that matter it seems plausible that so does Ayer.

Let's return to the observation made by some philosophers (including Gibbard) that on Ayer's own terms, he need not have granted that moral claims were not capable of being true or false. Ayer's position, as I understand it, is not that since talk of *truth* contributes no meaning, no content, to our claims, all utterances are claims or even (less implausibly) all utterances with a certain surface structure are *claims*. On Ayer's view, we can distinguish between language that is capable of being true or false and language that is not. Ayer's proposed criterion for so distinguishing is *not* mere surface structure. Rather, his focus is on other criteria for determining that some utterance is an assertion. Utterances that have meaning in virtue of their verification conditions are assertions, on Ayer's account. On his view, because moral utterances are expressions of emotion they do not give voice to propositions. For an utterance to give voice to a proposition, he claims, it would have to be verifiable or analytic. So if moral utterances are neither verifiable nor analytic, they are not assertions; and so, they "can neither be true nor false."[50] It is Ayer's account of assertions and his understanding of moral utterances that lead him to conclude that we cannot "strictly speaking, contra-

[49]Peter Railton offered the following example: Let's imagine someone adopts a pragmatic theory of truth. Imagine that person says about the Tarski schema, "P is true, just in case P", that it is a truism about truth. It seems fair to challenge that person because their pragmatic theory of truth has it that "P is true, just in case it's practical." They have to show that the two are equivalent. By defending the pragmatic theory of truth, it seems they've added something, namely, they've added that something will count as true if it works out in practice in a certain way.

[50]Ayer 102-3.

dict" each other when we communicate about our moral views.[51] In short, it does not seem as if truth is quite as easy to come by on Ayer's account as some might suppose.

And it is certainly not as easy to come by on Gibbard's account as some of his critics suppose. Gibbard, like Ayer, *does not* automatically treat all utterances with a surface structure that parallels or matches the surface structure of some prosaic assertions—claims such as "Lack of adequate health care causes unnecessary suffering" or "Snow is white"—as themselves truth-apt assertions. Here's an example offered by Gibbard: I can say "'La neige est blanche' is true" even if I do not know French just because I am trusting someone who says this. But this won't count as asserting "la neige est blanche." I cannot assert something that I don't understand. I would just be repeating something. So one thing we might want to say about assertions is that in order to assert, so, in order to make an utterance that counts as a claim that might be true or false, I must understand what I am saying. Note, though, that the sentence 'La neige est blanche' has the surface structure of an assertion. It is also an utterance that when made by a French speaker, does qualify as an assertion.[52]

In response to Dreier's "Bob is hiyo" objection to minimalist accounts of truth, Gibbard explains that to adopt minimalism about truth is not to avoid any obligation to explain how it could be that "P" has the same truth conditions as "P is true."[53] So, yes, if it turned out that "Bob is hiyo" is an assertion, then "Bob is hiyo" and "'Bob is hiyo' is true" have the same truth conditions. But on Gibbard's account, he can show why "Bob is hiyo" is not an assertion.

There is much more to say about this, but what matters here is that Gibbard distinguishes utterances and thoughts that are truth-evaluable from those that are not. He works out a theoretical account of the minimum requirement for what he calls an opinionated epistemic state. And, on his view, only utterances that express states of mind that we might properly characterize as opinionated epistemic states are the sorts of utterances that we might characterize as truth-apt claims—or what

[51]Ayer 107.
[52]Conversation with Gibbard.
[53]Gibbard, *Thinking* 61-65.

are commonly characterized as assertions—utterances that give voice to *beliefs*.[54] On an interesting deflationary or minimalist account of truth, surface structure doesn't just give us a free pass to truth. There are certain conditions that must be met before we can treat an utterance as an assertion.

So if the worry about expressivism is that the expressivist's adoption of a minimalist account of truth means that she gets truth for free, or that she can get away with saying that things are true without having to show that in some area of discourse things behave in such a way as to fit the truisms characteristic of truth, I think this worry is unfounded. (Dworkin, a vehement anti-expressivist, who, as we've seen, adopts a minimalist account of truth, would agree. See Chapter 2.) If the worry about expressivism is that the expressivist's adoption of a minimalist account of truth means that she cannot say enough about truth in order to render her account cognitivist, my challenge to the anti-minimalist is to spell out just what it is that the non-expressivist minimalist like Dworkin or the expressivist minimalist like Gibbard leaves out.[55] What matters for our purposes here is that Scanlon does not spell out something that he assumes about truth that goes beyond what Gibbard assumes about truth.

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[54]Take the case of epistemic modals and indicative conditionals. On Gibbard's view, these can be given an expressivist analysis. They, nonetheless, are not truth evaluable because they are not opinionated epistemic states. Saying, for instance, "If I were 45 miles east of here, I'd be in Canada" is truth-apt. It has truth conditions. Let's assume I'm in Ann Arbor. Then this claim is, indeed, true. But then take the indicative conditional "If I am 45 miles east of here, I'm in Canada." Although there is a way things might have been that I were 45 miles east of here, explains Gibbard, there is no way things may be in the sense of the way things are that I am 45 miles east of where I am. This is not a thought that obtains as an epistemic possibility.

If the thought were, "If I *were* 45 miles east of here, I'd be in Canada" or "I might be 45 miles east of where I think I am," that would be coherent, as would "My location at time *t* could be different from the location I actually occupy at time *t*." But "I'm 45 miles east of here" (or "It's possible that I'm 45 miles east of here," or anything similar) is no more a possible thought than "Orange is faster than up." There is no proposition to entertain. By definition, *here* is where I am now, and 45 miles east of here is not where I am now; it makes no sense to assert that I am not here; to suppose otherwise is to misunderstand "am" and "here."

To be sure, things might have been so. The state of affairs of my being 45 miles east of here is certainly one possible state of affairs. But this possible state of affairs is picked out by the claim that things might have been so.

This is a rough adaptation of an example of Gibbard's. Allan Gibbard, comment, *Gibbardfest* (U of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, May 14, 2016). See also Gibbard, *Thinking* 61-65.

[55]Here again there is a vast literature on this subject.

Gibbard thus distinguishes between utterances with which we might strictly disagree and those with which we cannot, utterances we can support with reasons and claims that we cannot, utterances that attribute properties to things and utterances that do not, and so forth. It follows that only *some* utterances that are subject to an expressivist analysis are also truth-apt, "subject to disagreement, . . . embed in more complex beliefs, … obey the principles of logic and other platitudes", etc.[56]

This discussion, though, does bring us back to Scanlon's explicit criticism of Gibbard. For Gibbard disagreement is key: the intelligibility of disagreeing with a claim is the key to its being true or false. Truth-apt claims are those with which we can say we might strictly disagree. One of Scanlon's objections to Gibbard has to do with what Scanlon takes to be an important difference regarding how "disagreement about normative questions is interpreted."[57] The worry that on an expressivist account we cannot have genuine normative disagreement is connected with a general worry that expressivism is not compatible with our having genuine normative beliefs. Questions about normative disagreement cannot be settled without addressing questions about normative beliefs.

VI. Objection: What Quasi-Realist Expressivists Call "Beliefs" Aren't Genuine Beliefs

A. Gibbard's Account of Normative Beliefs

Defending a minimalist approach to truth, therefore, does not mean proposing that there is nothing at all to say about what makes certain thoughts or utterances the sorts of thoughts or utterances that are truth-apt or epistemically evaluable. What is it, though, about minimalism that Scanlon rejects? Some objectors worry that what quasi-realist expressivists call normative "beliefs" aren't genuine beliefs. This, of course, is related to the worries about minimalism and deflationism discussed above and continues the discussion regarding what sorts of utterances count as truth-

[56]Gibbard, *Meaning* 232.
[57]Scanlon, *Being* 52.

evaluable utterances. Recall that for Gibbard truth-evaluable utterances are ones with which we can disagree. It's thus important for him to offer an account of disagreement in normative belief. While ultimately I find this to be the most important challenge, my question here is whether Scanlon has a basis for objection to this account. More broadly, I'm interested in whether Scanlon offers an account of normative belief that goes beyond, or in some ways, Gibbard's account.

It seems plausible that the ordinary view of normative thought and discourse is that if I conclude that honor killing is morally wrong and you conclude that honor killing is morally permissible then one of us is mistaken and one of us is correct. So we need an account of disagreement; for this, we need an account of what it is for a claim or belief to be correct or incorrect.

Expressivism, recall, explains concepts and the meanings of terms in terms of the states of mind to which we give voice when we make certain utterances. So an expressivist will say that in order to understand, say, wrongness, we would need to understand what it is to think that something is wrong. On some expressivist accounts, thinking that something is wrong amounts to having a certain kind of attitude, where this attitude is *not* best understood as an ordinary belief that something is wrong. On other expressivist accounts, however, the state of mind that is thinking that something is wrong *is* an ordinary *belief* that it is wrong. This is Gibbard's view.

Of course, we have to be careful here. The expressivist doesn't begin by calling any particular state of mind a *belief*. If an expressivist were to say that the sentence "Michigan winters are cold" expresses a state of mind, namely, the *belief* that Michigan winters are cold, there is a sense in which she would be just helping herself to the content of the sentence "Michigan winters are cold." The expressivist wants to offer a more informative account, one that does not characterize the state of mind *by* its content.

The expressivist, thus, focuses on specifying the normative state of mind, that is, the state of mind we express when we utter normative sentences. Gibbard's proposal, as we've seen, is that the states of mind we're expressing when we make normative claims involve states of planning "what to

do, what to believe, and how to weigh considerations for and against," including contingency planning and restrictions on plans.[58]

Of course, if one can accept an actual correct system of norms, it must be the case that one can disagree—genuinely disagree—with someone else's system of norms. And we might want to say that if some state is a *belief-state* then it's also going to have to be answerable to certain kinds of evidence or subject to standards of correctness.

B. Gibbard's Account of Normative Disagreement

It seems to me that a good deal of the literature focused on the purported failure of Gibbard's account to capture disagreement in belief fails to engage adequately with what Gibbard actually has to say about the normative state of mind.

As we've seen, Gibbard's analysis of the normative state of mind focuses on "something like 'plans,'" as he puts it, planning "what to do, what to believe, and how to weigh considerations for and against," including contingency planning and restrictions on plans.[59] These are "plans for what to do, what to prefer, . . . and how to feel about things." He tries to show that the similarity of moral reasoning to naturalistic reasoning stems from the possibility of disagreement, maintaining that we can agree or disagree with "planning states" much as we can agree or disagree with naturalistic beliefs. Gibbard is at pains to show how positing such states is compatible with conceding that there can be genuine moral or normative disagreement. Indeed, we can agree or disagree with "planning

[58]Gibbard, *Meaning* 19. My goal here is not to take a position regarding the plausibility of Gibbard's account. I will say, though, that it does at least seem plausible that sometimes when we make or when some people make moral utterances that appear as moral claims or whatever, they're doing what Ayer says they're doing, and when they're doing that it seems reasonable to conclude that they're not saying something that's truth evaluable—that is, they are simply expressing preferences masked as cognitively meaningful assertions. It also seems, however, that other times they're doing what Gibbard says they're doing. Or something close to what Gibbard says they're doing. Or something that with some small (or great) refinement ends up being truth-evaluable in the way it's plausible Gibbard's states of mind are. Note, again, that we could, of course, grant the general point without endorsing all features of Gibbard's view. It is hard to deny, though, that we are expressing complex states of mind when we utter moral sentences.

[59]Gibbard, *Meaning* 19.

states" in a way that we cannot agree or disagree with, say, "an accosting" and so with, for instance, "Bob is hiyo" (see V.B. above).

One might be tempted to think that the sort of disagreement we have on Gibbard's account is a kind of difference in state of mind and that this sort of disagreement is not quite the sort of genuine disagreement we might think is involved when we disagree about moral or normative questions. Imagine I desire a drink and you don't. It does seem though as if we disagree in the sense of having different states of mind. It seems it even makes sense to say that my emotions *can* come into conflict with the emotions of others. I say "Dropping bombs on civilians: Boo!"; you say, "Dropping bombs on civilians: Hurrah!" We clearly conflict in some sense. It seems fair to say, however, that this doesn't quite capture the sort of normative disagreement we would expect to have if our normative thoughts are epistemically evaluable beliefs.

That this wouldn't quite count as genuine normative disagreement is, of course, Ayer's view. As we've seen, he insists that we cannot "strictly speaking, contradict" each other when we communicate about our moral views precisely because he doesn't think that disagreement in emotional states could amount to genuine disagreement.[60] Gibbard, however, does not treat moral disagreement as emotional conflict. Nor, does he think that it can be modeled as the sort of disagreement in attitude that expressivist Stevenson describes. You say "Let's go to the cinema tonight" and I say "Let's go to the symphony"[61] To be sure, we have a sort of practical disagreement in such a case. We're disagreeing about what to do. This isn't quite the sort of disagreement Gibbard has in mind, though.

Here's an example from Gibbard: "Holmes can wonder whether Moriarty will draw nigh at nine, and then later conclude that he will or that he won't." But Holmes can also "wonder whether to pack at nine, and later conclude in favor or conclude against." In turn, we can agree or disagree with his planning. "In thinking what to do in his circumstances "we can say 'No' to his plan. Holmes can express his state of mind with the sentence 'Packing now is the thing to do,' and [we] can ex-

[60]Ayer 107.
[61]C. L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," *Mind* 46 (Jan. 1937): 27.

press [our] disagreement by saying 'No, packing is not the thing to do."[62] "We can decide, hypothetically, for the case of being Holmes in his exact situation […], to start packing."

Scanlon is skeptical of this account of disagreement. On his view "when we disagree about a normative question there is some fact of the matter we are disagreeing about, independent of each of us, which neither has any special authority to determine." And he points out that this "provides if anything a more attractive picture of the relation between us than the idea that we are each simply trying to get the other to adopt the plan that we have adopted."[63] The idea seems to be that it's not just that our plans or our weighing of reasons—our judgments about "the thing to do"—differ; to talk about disagreement is to say that we believe there's the possibility of getting right or getting wrong what we're talking about—right or wrong vis-à-vis an actual correct system of norms.

But, of course, as we've seen, normative disagreement on Gibbard's account is not merely a matter trying to get others to adopt the plans we have adopted. On Gibbard's view, there is an actual correct system of norms.[64] Also, as Gibbard points out, whereas the standard approach is to start with the notion of negation and then to explain disagreement, negation is not something that is generally explained. It is just assumed that people have the concept of negation. Scanlon certainly assumes this. Gibbard, though, starts with disagreement and then explains negation. To be sure, then, he is offering an account that will make sense only to people who have the concept disagreement.

Take an example: Gibbard explains that one can be in a certain planning state of mind and express it with something like "The suffering of the chicken is reason not to engage in the act of chicken pull." This for Gibbard amounts to the imperative "Weigh the consideration that the act would inflict suffering on the chicken against the act of chicken pull." And if another responds "that

[62]Gibbard, *Thinking* 67.
[63]Scanlon, *Being* 68.
[64]Gibbard works this out in numerous articles and in his three books, primarily in *Thinking How to Live*. I will not attempt to reproduce his account of normative disagreement in full. My goal here is merely to point out that it's not clear that Scanlon offers an account that either goes beyond or contradicts Gibbard's.

gets it right" she's agreeing with the imperative; she's agreeing with the state of mind that the imperative expresses (and she's agreeing that the suffering of the chicken is reason not to hurt it).[65]

There is, of course, a good deal to be said about this and a good deal has, indeed, been written about it.[66] It's not clear to me though, and this is matters most for our purposes that Scanlon offers an account of disagreement in belief that amounts to proposing something to which Gibbard would object.

B. Gibbard and Scanlon Both Begin with a Commonsense Notion of Normative Belief

Scanlon maintains that his account of normative judgments is "more in accord with the common-sense understanding of normative judgments than [Gibbard's and other] expressivist interpretations are."[67] What I want to argue is that we would need more from Scanlon to settle this. What I cannot find in Scanlon, however, is a theoretical account of normative 'belief' that goes beyond our commonsense notion of a normative belief, a notion that Gibbard too embraces.

Scanlon and Gibbard both begin with our commonsense idea of a normative concept or thought, a normative belief. And much of what each says about this commonsense idea mirrors what the other has to say.

"What's in the name 'belief', after all?," Gibbard asks.[68] "[T]o believe that pain is bad is just to accept that it is [bad]."[69] If I give voice to this thought and assert that pain is bad, as long as I am sincere, I gave my interlocutor reason to conclude that I *believe* that slavery is wrong, reason to conclude, therefore, that I have a normative belief. What do we know about beliefs, Gibbard asks. His answer is that "Beliefs are true or false, they are subject to disagreement, and they embed in more complex beliefs, as with belief in a negation," is his answer. They can be embedded in disjunctions,

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[65]Allan Gibbard, "Ethics and science: is plausibility in the eye of the beholder?" *Objectivity in Ethics* Conference (The University of Utrecht, NL, 31 March 2016) Keynote Lecture.

[66]For a more thorough and careful account of disagreement in Gibbard, see the chapter "Judgment, Disagreement, Negation, in Gibbard *Thinking*. (Again, my point here is just to say enough to show that Gibbard does have an account of disagreement and one that is compatible with what Scanlon says.)

[67]Scanlon, *Being* 61.

[68]Gibbard, *Meaning* 232.

[69]Gibbard, *Thinking* 182-3.

can figure in inference and negation, can be rational or irrational, and can be supported by reasons.[70] What about normative beliefs in particular? Normative claims and thoughts get their content "from their role in thinking toward decisions and the like," explains Gibbard. "We are beings who must decide what to do, and when we ponder and reason what to do, [normative concepts] play a role."[71] Normative thinking thus involves practical reasoning.

This largely mirrors what Scanlon has to say about normative beliefs. "Little turns on the term 'belief'," says Scanlon, "as long as it is recognized that judgments about reasons [that is, normative beliefs] can be correct or incorrect independent of their being made, and thus that they behave like [other] beliefs in interpersonal argument and disagreement."[72]

Note that whereas Gibbard begins his analysis with Ewing's primitive non-naturalistic concept OUGHT (the notion of the all things considered 'ought'), Scanlon begins with the commonsense idea of a reason. But reasons are intertranslatable with talk of what we ought to think, feel, or believe. We can talk of what we have reason to do but we can also talk about what we have conclusive reason to do, which Scanlon thinks is best understood as what we *ought* to do.[73]

But, again, like Gibbard, Scanlon thinks that little turns on the term "belief," as long as we understand that normative beliefs "obey the principles of standard propositional and quantificational logic, and satisfy (at least most of) the other 'platitudes' about truth . . . ."[74] And like Gibbard, he thinks there's a practical element to normative belief for Scanlon. Gibbard and Scanlon share an approach to normative beliefs according to which motivation is a distinguishing feature.

C. Normative Beliefs and Motivation

That normative beliefs are inherently motivating is a compelling idea. Indeed, it would be surprising if someone told you that she judged that it was wrong to eat non-human animals but also

[70]Gibbard, *Thinking* ch. 4.
[71]Parfit 3: 207.
[72]Scanlon, *Being* 64-65.
[73]See Gibbard, *Meaning* (212n11).
[74]T. M. Scanlon, "Metaphysics and Morals," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 77.2 (Nov. 2003): 7.

that she was totally indifferent to whether anybody ate non-human animals. It seems that when we judge that something is wrong, these judgments come with a certain motivating force.[75] This is even more plausible when the claim is explicitly normative (e.g., I have reason not to eat non-human animals) than when it is a moral one, precisely because there is a reasonable controversy about the normative status of moral claims.[76]

Many philosophers have thought, however, that there is something problematic about saying that beliefs can be *motivating*. One central worry is that it looks as if one can accept a belief without motivation and disagree with someone else's belief without motivation.[77] It does seem, however, that the worry is more pronounced if we assume a representationalist character to *beliefs*.

As we have seen, Mackie presumes representationalism. So, for Mackie, for it to be true that it is wrong, say, to torture a cat, it would have to follow that there was the moral property of wrongness attached to such acts. But such properties would have to be seen as having a certain motivating power, Mackie notes, precisely because recognizes the motivational feature of moral judgments. These moral properties, he points out, would have to have a strange sort of "objective prescriptivity." (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of this.) Indeed, such entities would have to be of such a "strange sort" that Mackie's conclusion is that we cannot countenance the existence of any moral facts.[78]

In response to worries such as these, some philosophers have attempted to find ways of explaining the motivating force of normative beliefs.[79] Others have concluded that either normative beliefs aren't, after all, motivating or that normative thoughts aren't, after all, *beliefs*. If normative be-

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[75]The issue of motivation figures in a whole range of major discussions of this topic, including Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism* and Smith's *The Moral Problem*. For a helpful overview of the discussion, see Connie Rosati, "Moral Motivation," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford U, July 2016) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/> (Aug. 3, 2017). Here, again, I focus primarily on making a sort of parity argument involving Scanlon and Gibbard. What matters most here then is that Scanlon and Gibbard agree about the connection between motivation and normative belief.

[76]Thanks to Sarah Bush for pushing me to make this point.

[77]Again, there is a vast literature on this topic to which I could not even begin to do justice in this dissertation. My purpose here is to highlight the assumptions shared by Scanlon and Gibbard.

[78]J.L. Mackie, *Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 38.

[79]See Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: CUP 1996).

liefs aren't, after all, motivating, however, the challenge is to explain how it is that such beliefs are normative—one distinguishing feature of which seems to be this connection with motivation. If alternatively, we conclude that normative thoughts aren't really beliefs, we have a straightforward way of understanding them as motivating. If normative utterances express states of mind that are best understood as desires, then it would, indeed, be odd to deny that such states of mind are motivating. Indeed, by definition, they would be motivating.

There are costs associated with this straightforward way of explaining the connection between normative belief and motivation, however. It seems that on such accounts we cannot do justice to other features of normative or moral claims or thoughts. After all, when we make substantive moral or normative claims, claims such as "It is morally unacceptable to enact policies that prevent some people from access to health care," we seem to assume that such claims, and the judgments to which they give voice, are true or false. They seem to present themselves as objective. They do not seem to depend on anyone's point of view, what anyone or perhaps even everyone happens to think. They do not seem to be claims about how we react, or are disposed to react. It seems that we might be mistaken. In short, they seem to be genuine *beliefs*.

And yet if there's a puzzle about moral or normative motivation, as Connie Rosati points out, it "arises for those who maintain that moral judgments express *moral beliefs*, for the connection between belief, a *cognitive* state, and motivation is uncertain."[80]

Here's what's interesting, then, about Gibbard and Scanlon's shared view. They both defend the position that normative beliefs are straightforward *beliefs*. They also both defend the position that normative beliefs are motivating. They are motivating precisely because that's the nature of distinctly *normative beliefs*.

Rosati seems to assume that in response to worries about beliefs and motivation, the options are to embrace representationalism and thus embrace an account of morality (or normativity) according to which our normative thoughts are *beliefs* or to give up on representationalism and em-

[80]Rosati.

brace noncognitivism, according to which normativity involves normative desires and not normative *beliefs*.[81] As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, however, there's little reason to think that these are our only options. Indeed, the non-inflationary realists deny both that representationalism is the best way to explain normativity. They also reject the idea that it follows from the rejection of representationalism that normative judgments are not genuine beliefs. (Again, though I want to defend the view that if Dworkin or Scanlon count as non-inflationary realists, so does Gibbard, I do not want to defend the view that if Gibbard is a non-inflationary realist then so is Ayer or even Blackburn.)

What matters here is that for neither Scanlon nor Gibbard does the fact that *other* sorts of beliefs are not motivating in anyway create a worry about specifically normative beliefs. For both of them, as we've seen, questions about the nature and meaning of language or thought in a particular domain have to focus on that particular domain. Just because naturalistic language and thought, for instance, is best explained in terms of links between words or concepts and physical world properties, we shouldn't assume that normative language and thought or mathematical language and thought are best explained in this way.

One distinctive feature of normative judgments, explains Scanlon, is that "it is irrational to judge some consideration to be a reason to do some action, and then refuse to treat it as a reason."[82] In this way, he explains, normative judgments differ from empirical or mathematical judgments. The former but not the latter two are "rationally related to intentions and actions."[83] Therefore, even if someone else might well object to the connection between normative beliefs and intentions and actions on Gibbard's account, Scanlon does not. Indeed, he explicitly grants that Gibbard's account is like his "in seeking to explain the connection between more reflective states, involving an element of judgment or commitment, with subsequent responses of various kinds, including actions." Furthermore, he points out that both he and Gibbard "explain this connection by appealing to an ideal of

[81]Rosati.
[82]Scanlon, *Being* 64.
[83]Scanlon, *Being* 64.

rational agency: an agent will, insofar as he or she is not irrational, act in accord with imperatives or norms he or she accepts, carry out plans he or she has adopted, and, in my version, adopt attitudes in conformity with his or her assessments of the reasons for them."[84]

Of course, the fact that both Scanlon and Gibbard presuppose a close connection between normative judgment and motivation does not entail their offering the same sort of explanation of this. I return to this below.

D. Reasons and Oughts

Scanlon assumes that "truths about reasons are fundamental in the sense that truths about reasons are not reducible to or identifiable with non-normative truths, such as truths about the natural world of physical objects, causes[,] and effects, nor can they be explained in terms of notions of rationality or rational agency that are not themselves claims about reasons."[85] It seems fairly straightforward to translate Scanlon's discussion of reasons into claims with which Gibbard can agree. Gibbard, as we've seen, begins with Ewing's primitive non-naturalistic concept OUGHT. This is the notion of the all things considered 'ought'. It is, as Gibbard explains, "tied to how reasons to believe [or to act, or to desire, or to prefer, or to feel, etc.] combine and weigh together and against each other, and what we ought to believe [or how one ought to act or desire or prefer or feel]" is what results. In the end, "what I ought to believe," for instance, "is what I have reason on balance to believe given my evidence."[86] In turn, he defines the concept IS A REASON TO in terms of Ewing's primitive OUGHT. "In situation S, consideration C is a reason of strength x to ç' means this: in S one ought to weigh C to degree x in favor of çing." Scanlon, Gibbard tells us, begins with the primitive normative concept of a REASON (in what Scanlon characterizes as the "standard normative sense").[87] Reasons talk, Scanlon explains, is intertranslatable with talk of what we ought to think, feel, or be-

[84]Scanlon, *Being* 57.
[85]Scanlon, *Being* 2.
[86]Gibbard, *Meaning* 14.
[87]From this, Gibbard proposes that "Scanlon may need two primitives" since he also needs the concept HAS CONCLUSIVE REASON TO. Gibbard, *Meaning* 212n11. And, indeed, Scanlon grants that he would need to have two reason relations as primitive. Private conversation with Scanlon (4 Februrary 2017).

lieve. We can talk of what we have reason to do but we can also talk about what we have conclusive reason to do, which Scanlon thinks is best understood as what we *ought* to do.

In *Meaning and Normativity*, Gibbard writes:

> We might alternatively take as primitive the concept of a reason to do a thing or believe a thing. I mean here a reason in what Scanlon calls "the standard normative sense", a consideration, he says, that "counts in favor" of doing it. Talk of "reasons" here isn't talk of wants or preferences: I might want to murder the man whose nephew got the job I might have been offered, but still, you might well insist, that his nephew got the job is no reason at all to kill him. It doesn't count in favor, even though irrationally, I do count it in favor. Whether we talk in terms of "a reason to" in this sense or in terms of Ewing's primitive "ought" won't much matter, since the two are interdefinable. I'll mostly talk in terms of Ewing's primitive ought [the all-things-considered 'ought'], but switch easily between the two ways of talking. The "expressivism" I develop … offers an account of both of these notions.[88]

Both Gibbard and Scanlon want to offer accounts according to which our normative beliefs can be true, some are true, and when true are objectively so. They both want to say that, as Scanlon puts it, "the correctness of our normative commitments is independent of those commitments themselves."[89] Scanlon acknowledges that unlike robust non-naturalists, he and Gibbard both claim "that normative judgments are about our reactions to the natural world, rather than about that world itself." Scanlon maintains, however, that in his case, unlike Gibbard's what matters is "the appropriateness of these reactions."[90] But it's not clear to me just how Scanlon distinguishes his account from Gibbard's in this way—aside from stating that there is this difference between them.[91]

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[88]Gibbard, *Meaning* 15. See T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1998) 17-77.

[89]Scanlon, *Being* 52.

[90]Scanlon, *Being* 52.

[91]One might be tempted to reason as follows: If Scanlon's primitive notion is a reason, and if he interprets the normative 'ought' or 'should' in terms of reasons, perhaps he's focusing on that which is independent of our normative commitments, that to which our normative commitments

Note that both Scanlon and Gibbard insist on the primacy of the first-order substantive thought and discourse, that is, thought and discourse that is internal to the normative domain. (Again, Gibbard is skeptical of domain talk but I think he would have little reason to object to such talk when the term "domain" is used to group together ways of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to link.) Both Gibbard and Scanlon insist that there are normative reasons that explain the appropriateness of any given normative judgment, the appropriateness of any reaction to the world.[92]

To be sure**,** according to some critics Gibbard explains how normative beliefs can be motivating only by appealing to mental states that have what is characterized in the literature as the wrong "direction of fit" for beliefs. I'm skeptical that such objections are effective against Gibbard. What matters most here, though, is that Scanlon's account of how it is that normative beliefs can be motivating leaves him subject to the same direction-of-fit objections.

E. Direction-of-Fit Objections to both Scanlon and Gibbard

Some participants in this debate focus on direction-of-fit analyses to show that Gibbard's expressivism does not give us genuine beliefs.[93] According to these critics, Gibbard explains how normative beliefs can be motivating only by appealing to mental states that have what is characterized in the literature as the wrong "direction of fit" for beliefs. I'm skeptical that such objections are effective against Gibbard. Indeed, I'm skeptical of direction-of-fit characterizations of belief. What

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are appropriately responsive when we get it right. What is it to which we can be appropriately responsive? Reasons—which are treated as primitive.

Scanlon does not treat reasons as primitive, however. What is primitive on his account are judgements about reasons or instances of holding a reason relation. The fundamental relation on Scanlon's view is a five place relation: Were it to be the case that P, then a person X, if that person were in situation C, P would be a reason of strength S, or whatever, to do A. Scanlon wants to deal with these questions in terms of reason relations, of which there are a variety, including "being a reason," "being a conclusive reason," etc.

[92]Cp. Sharon Street, "Mind-Independence without the Mystery: Why Quasi-Realists Can't Have It Both Ways," *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 6, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau, R. (New York: OUP 2011) 1-32.

[93]A standard discussion of direction of fit [hyphens needed when this is a modifier rather than a noun] is Michael Smith's *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell 1994).

matters most here, though, is that Scanlon's account of how it is that normative beliefs can be motivating leaves him subject to the same direction-of-fit objections.

We might worry about direction of fit if we suppose that in order for beliefs to be epistemically evaluable—which they should be if they are genuinely to count as *beliefs*—they'd need to have one particular direction of fit.

Beliefs, the story goes, "'aim' to accurately represent the world." In turn, to say this is to say that "part of the functional role of prosaic beliefs is to represent their contents as true." When we consider adopting a *belief*, or so the story goes, we're attempting to make a mental state fit the world. The world is out there, with its facts, and we want our minds, our mental states, accurately to reflect what's there, to fit it. By contrast, when we have desires (perhaps when we are in a desire-like state such as one to which we can give voice with "Boo!" or "Hurrah!"), when we desire a given goal, we're attempting to make the world fit our mental state.

I have three general responses to the direction-of-fit objection: (i) The distinction often evoked in these arguments may presuppose some of the confusion I discussed earlier regarding the relationship between genuine beliefs and representational states. (*ii*) It's also not clear to me that the best way to understand Gibbard's planning states is as *desire*-like states rather than belief-like states. (*iii*) Whatever concerns one might have about Gibbard in this regard, they apply equally to Scanlon.

Take (*i*): It's not clear to me that the direction of fit analogy adequately captures a strict division between beliefs and desires. There is a good deal to say about this, of course. But here again I suspect that when people talk about beliefs as having a mind-to-world direction of fit, they often have some notion of tracking in mind, one that involves the assumption that, in order to make sense of moral beliefs, we'd have to be seen as responding causally to a moral reality. But this is precisely the representationalist account rejected not only by Gibbard but also by Scanlon, Dworkin, and the other non-inflationary realists.

This has implications for (*iii*): Given what I say about (*i*), this is not the sort of objection Scanlon would make to Gibbard. Indeed, what matters here is that Gibbard and Scanlon are equally subject to such objections. Gibbard and Scanlon both resist the idea that to be a belief, a state of

mind must reflect just one direction of fit. Both Gibbard and Scanlon reject the characterization of moral beliefs as aiming at "accurately representing the world" if the "world" is taken to include moral reality (in some non-deflationary way). They both reject the idea that the function of moral beliefs is to track reality—with tracking understood as involving a relation between our words or thoughts and the world that's basic to explanation. Both insist, as we've seen, that normative beliefs differ from other kinds of beliefs in that normative beliefs are rationally connected with action.

Furthermore, even if there wasn't this parity with Scanlon, (*ii*) holds: Gibbard's planning states are not straight desire-like states, at least not the way that is assumed in direction-of-fit objections. For one, it seems implausible that we could disagree with a desire-like state in the way that Gibbard proposes we can disagree with a planning state. (See discussion above about Gibbard's account of normative disagreement.)

Regarding both (*ii*) and (*iii*): Given the tight connection Gibbard and Scanlon take there to be between intention and action, assuming we can make sense of direction-of-fit analyses, there *is* a sense in which they understand normative beliefs as having a world-to-mind direction of fit. Their understanding of normative beliefs is not one that features only this direction of fit, however. The best way to understand both Gibbard's and Scanlon's accounts of normative beliefs is as states of mind featuring both world-to-mind and mind-to-world directions of fit.

Here's a rough paraphrase of Gibbard: Imagine I judge that it's wrong to torture chickens, or let's say it's wrong to engage in chicken pull because it's wrong to torture chickens.[94] Gibbard grants

[94]The story of chicken pull is one Gibbard tells in his classes and in lectures. According to his account, Richard Brandt spent some time with the Hopi in the 1940s. One question he asked was whether the Hopi had fundamental ethical disagreements with non-Hopi Americans or whether any disagreements they had concerned non-ethical facts. He concluded that there was large agreement, but he found one difference. He discovered that they seemed not to think that the pain caused to an animal was reason not to hurt the animal. Apparently, they played a game called "chicken pull" that caused clear suffering to chickens. As Gibbard tells the story, Brandt discovered that the Hopi agreed that the game caused the chickens to suffer. Nonetheless, Brandt understood that the Hopi did not think that this was reason not to play chicken pull. For Gibbard, this shows that we can have fundamental moral disagreement that cannot be explained by lack of information about the natural facts. Those of us who think the pain of the chicken is reason not to play the game and the Hopi who think it is not reason not to play the game do not disagree, the story goes, about any natural fact. But they do disagree about how the natural facts are related to what we ought to do, how we ought to behave.

that "normative beliefs have a world-to-mind direction of fit: their function is to match the world to what we have in mind."[95] So there's a world-to-mind direction of fit in that takes us from, say, planning not to torture chickens to not torturing chickens—from what I ought to do to my doing it.[96] The idea is that normative judgments understood as states of planning commit you to acting as you judge (plan) on pain of a certain kind of conceptual incoherence. But there's also a mind-to-world relation between what I ought to do in circumstances under which I ought to do it. Whether I ought not to torture chickens depends on whether the circumstances I'm in are those in which I ought not to torture chickens—so in one sense I'm trying to get my normative beliefs in line with what's the case normatively.[97] Gibbard explains: "We can speak of the 'world' and normative 'facts' in deflationary senses, so that in the extreme case, if peas are yucky, then it's a 'fact' that peas are yucky, and this fact characterizes the 'world'. Likewise, if doing a thing would cause one to suffer, one ought to weigh this consideration against doing it—and so this conditional ought too, we can say, is a "fact out there in the world."[98]

In short, while it may well be the case that Gibbard explains how beliefs can be motivating by appealing to mental states that have world-to-mind direction of fit—the direction typically associated more with desires than prosaic beliefs—he explains the truth-evaluability and the like of normative beliefs in a way that could be characterized as having a mind-to-world direction of fit.

This lines up nicely with Scanlon's account. Indeed, Scanlon explicitly maintains that normative beliefs can and do have *both* directions of fit. He thinks that the best way to understand specifically *normative* beliefs is as having both "standards of correctness" (a "mind-to-world" direction of fit) and rational connections to intention and action (a "world-to-mind direction of fit").[99] Indeed, according to Scanlon, insisting that normative beliefs cannot have both directions of fit amounts to

[95]Gibbard, *Meaning* 237.

[96]Of course, this isn't quite how the objection is typically put. To be in a state with a world-to-mind direction of fit is assumed to capture being in a state of desiring the world to come into sync with one's desires, and this is typically understood as being in a state that is motivating

[97]This is roughly how Gibbard put it to me in conversation (April 2015).

[98]Gibbard, *Meaning* 232.

[99]Scanlon 65.

"merely stipulating"[100] that normative beliefs cannot be beliefs awhile at the same time being rationally related to action. (Again, he rejects the idea that there is just one semantic account that applies to language and thought across domains about which we can say we have genuine beliefs. We can ask about a particular domain whether for it to be in good order we must be able to account for genuine belief.)

On Scanlon's view, normative disagreement is connected to our practical outlook. To be sure, if the best way to understand normative disagreement involved disagreements over what sorts of properties were associated with certain acts (because normative judgements involved attributing normative properties to actions and the like) then it would be difficult to explain how normative beliefs could be motivating. But if you think that when people have a normative disagreement, they are disagreeing about what is the thing to do, the connection between belief and motivation is clear.

Given Scanlon and Gibbard's agreement about the connection between normative judgment and motivation, direction-of-fit arguments will not highlight a difference between Scanlon and Gibbard. Think again about Holmes concluding that packing now is the thing to do and our disagreeing with him, concluding, that is, that packing now is not the thing to do (though in a case like this, it's probably wisest to agree with Holmes). "What is conceptually distinctive about ought claims," so about normative claims and thoughts, argues Gibbard, as contrasted with, say, empirical claims, "is their ties to action. The point of normative claims is to tie in conceptually with action.

In response to those who say that on Gibbard's account so-called "beliefs" have the wrong direction of fit, I say that if the states of mind one associates with moral or normative beliefs play something like the functional role that desires play, then I would grant that they are not epistemically evaluable. But my basic response on behalf of someone like Gibbard is that if the states of mind one associates with normative beliefs play something like the functional role that something like plans (understood in a specific way) play, then these states of mind may well be genuine beliefs, and thus

[100]Scanlon 64.

epistemically evaluable—or at least that it would be difficult to argue on putative wrong-direction-of-fit grounds that whereas Scanlon offers an account involving genuine beliefs, Gibbard does not.

Given the similarity with respect to what they have to say about normative beliefs, it would be difficult to argue that normative judgments as understood by Gibbard do not qualify as beliefs if we assume that normative judgments as understood by Scanlon *do* qualify as beliefs.

VII. Can Scanlon Object that Gibbard Does Not Offer a Satisfactory Account of Normative Belief?

A. Scanlon's and Gibbard's Accounts of Normative Belief

While the issue deserves more detailed treatment, I want for now to highlight some potential differences between Scanlon and Gibbard with regard to the connections between normative judgement and motivation. I don't believe that it would be reasonable on the basis of these differences to maintain that Scanlon offers an account of genuine belief while Gibbard does not. Exploring these differences might, however, underscore some advantages and disadvantages associated with their respective understandings of normative belief.

As I have noted, Scanlon is happy to assume that our ordinary normative discourse is in good order, and to endorse, without argument, the commonsense, ordinary understanding of normative truth and normative belief. This may seem to put him in a better position than an expressivist like Gibbard. After all, common sense does not seem to regard moral judgments as plans. But we should be slow to draw this conclusion. Whether Scanlon's account does a better job capturing our ordinary understanding of normative judgments depends on whether he has a way of making sense of what some people characterize as the two directions of fit, a way of making sense that is more plausible than, and significantly different from, Gibbard's.

We can grant to Scanlon that normative beliefs seem connected to motivation and that they seem to have independent correctness conditions while also demanding an explanation of what it is to be a reason to believe, do, or feel something. It seems fair to demand an explanation of how be-

liefs can have correctness conditions that are independent in the way Scanlon supposes (and that he thinks Gibbard cannot capture) while also being motivating.

After all, it is one thing to endorse commonsense assumptions and another thing to make sense of them. Commonsense, of course, is sometimes confused. And when it is, we often come to recognize this only once we begin to offer explanations of how things work. Take the free will problem. I might conclude that commonsense recognizes that people's choices are causally necessitated *and* that commonsense recognizes that people are free in a non-caused way. It would be odd, though, for me to insist that because of what commonsense tells me, it would be some kind of mere stipulation to say that people cannot be both free and caused. We might reasonably respond that common sense does indeed say this, but the philosopher's job is to figure out how to make sense of the tension between our being both free and caused—or to offer a defense of one or the other.[101]

Scanlon and Gibbard both begin by embracing the commonsense, ordinary understanding of truth and belief. Scanlon tells us that normative judgments have external correctness conditions and that normative judgments are motivating. He maintains that "it is irrational to judge some consideration to be a reason to do some action, and then refuse to treat it as a reason [or be motivated]."[102] On Gibbard's view, one is being inconsistent if one believes that something is wrong but is not against it, does not oppose it. And, on his view, that is the same sort of inconsistency involved in accepted, say, that all people are mortal and that Socrates is a person but that Socrates won't die. This sort of inconsistency we might characterize as asserting with one hand and denying with the other.

Beginning with a commonsense understanding of normative beliefs does not obviate the need to explain how it is that normative beliefs are in good order, in particular how normative beliefs can have correctness conditions and be motivating.

Gibbard takes on this challenge. Gibbard begins with our commonsense understanding of normative concepts, but he attempts to go further, to say something more, to say something enlight-

[101]I thank Peter Railton for this example. Personal communication, U of Michigan, July 6, 2017.

[102]Scanlon, *Being* 64.

ening and revealing about normative thoughts and discourse. Gibbard offers a theory of what it is to be in a state of believing that something is wrong. He offers an account of what kinds of mental states are belief-states. And from that account of what kinds of mental states are belief-states, specifically, let's say, normative belief-states, we can answer the question why normative beliefs are motivating. We do that not by analyzing the *concept* of normative belief, but by focusing on the characteristic state one is in when one has a normative belief. And once we understand that state, we can see how that state would be one that would be motivating.

And so in that sense, he's discharged a certain obligation, provided, of course, that he has also established that this state deserves to be classified as a belief. We have seen reason to think that he has made a strong case. Gibbard's project goes far beyond conceptual analysis of normative beliefs Gibbard explains how plans can be answerable to evidence or subject to standards of correctness. He offers an account of what it is to *be a believer* in the case of a normative belief.

It's an interesting question how best to understand Scanlon's position, though. One option is that Scanlon merely affirms a commonsense understanding of normative belief (according to which it is intimately connected to motivation) and doesn't explain why there is this connection. Another option is that Scanlon assumes a substantive theory of rationality according to which it's a substantive feature of rational agents that when they accept reasons, or all-things-considered reasons (when they accept plans or norms), they will act accordingly or they will be motivated accordingly. If the latter, of course, the important questions to ask will focus on the implications of his account of rationality.

If what Scanlon offers is the latter, there are some potential problems that Gibbard's account would avoid. Gibbard's account does not entail that the mere fact that one has accepted a norm or adopted a plan entails that one rationally one ought to follow through on it. According to Gibbard's account, we can say that insofar as someone is rational, she will give up on certain kinds of plans or norms. His account does not entail, however, that once someone has accepted a plan, then insofar as that person is rational, she'll act on that plan. Depending on how we read Scanlon, it's possible, though, that he's committed to someone being irrational if one doesn't act on a plan she's adopted.

It's possible we'd have trouble giving the kind of criticism we think we have reason to give to someone who is being consistent in a certain way.

Perhaps Scanlon understands the connection between judgment and motivation as one such that if one forms a normative judgment but is not motivated by it, one is being inconsistent in this way. So in the mind of the rational person, normative judgments will be motivating. On this view, though, we need a substantive account of irrationality to explain why such judgments are motivating.

It seems clear that Scanlon thinks that there's a particular conceptual relation that holds, that it's inconsistent, say, to believe that slavery is wrong but not to be against it. What is unclear, though, is whether he wants to say that to understand a normative concept is to recognize the connection between judgment and rationality or whether he wants to say that the way to understand the connection is with a substantive account of rationality.[103]

Does Scanlon have an advantage? It's just not clear to me what Scanlon gives us that Gibbard would deny.[104] Indeed, Scanlon insists on the primacy of the first-order substantive thought and

[103]According to one version of internalism, if you make a moral or normative judgment *and* you are an ideally rational agent, you will be motivated to act. So it's not that just making the judgment is sufficient for *making* one act. If this is right, the fact that some people make moral judgments and are not motivated does not count against the theory. Such people, after all, might not be rational—or rational enough necessarily to be motivated. Granting all of this, however, does not mean not being required to say what these forms of irrationality or rationality *are*. Saying that what makes this connection work is *rationality* could be true at the level of truism, but it seems fair to demand an account of how rational and non-rational people differ such that non-rational people might not be motivated in the relevant way whereas rational people will be motivated. It seems we need a theory of how being rational would have the effect that it's supposed to have. Perhaps the only thing we can say is that rationality is whatever it takes to have attitudes and beliefs fall in line. It seems fair to challenge this, though. Scanlon says normative beliefs have both directions of fit. Perhaps conceptually this seems right. It is still fair to ask, however, what it takes for this to be the case. If we cannot say what it takes, perhaps we're mistaken. This takes us back to the above-outlined worries about the connection between motivation and belief.

[104]One might be tempted to reason as follows: If Scanlon's primitive notion is a reason, and if he interprets the normative 'ought' or 'should' in terms of reasons, perhaps he's focusing on that which is independent of our normative commitments, that to which our normative commitments are appropriately responsive when we get it right. What is it to which we can be appropriately responsive? Reasons—which are treated as primitive.

As noted above, however, Scanlon does not treat a reason as primitive. Again, what is primitive on his account are judgements about reasons or instances of holding a reason relation. The fundamental relation on Scanlon's view is a five place relation: Were it to be the case that P, then a person X, if that person were in situation C, P would be a reason of strength S, or whatever, to do A. Scanlon wants to deal with these questions in terms of reason relations, of which there are a variety, including "being a reason," "being a conclusive reason," etc.

discourse, that is, thought and discourse that is internal to the normative domain. So one defends the appropriateness of any given reaction to some event in the world—say torturing a chicken—by offering first-order, substantive normative reasons. Gibbard too insists that there are normative reasons that explain the appropriateness of any given normative judgment.[105]

Here's the bottom line: Scanlon talks about plain old beliefs, not plans; but Gibbard's talk of plans is part of an attempt to explain how moral or normative beliefs can be motivating. Either Scanlon, like Gibbard, wants to say that to understand normative beliefs is to understand them as motivating but, unlike Gibbard, doesn't offer an explanation of this, or Scanlon explains this in terms of a substantive theory of rationality. If the latter, then there is a sense in which Scanlon and Gibbard come apart. For one, Scanlon has an explanatory burden that perhaps Gibbard doesn't have (given that Gibbard doesn't explain the conceptual connection between normative judgment and motivation in terms of a substantive theory of rationality).

And if Gibbard is right, then in a sense Scanlon is missing something important. On Gibbard's view, it is not my rationality that explains the connection between normative belief and motivation but rather it's an understanding of the meaning of normative language, an understanding of what it is to be in a normative state of mind.

This question deserves further consideration. I think it is an interesting question whether there are advantages or disadvantages between Gibbard and Scanlon in this respect.

What specifically should we say about Scanlon's notion of *belief*? Scanlon claims to help himself to a commonsense view of belief. But whether what Scanlon is pointing to is a classical picture of belief, is not clear. We would need to know more about what Scanlon assumes about belief in order to understand how it could be both responsive to evidence, etc., and action-guiding. Until we learn more, we don't know what it is that we're taking on board when we take that on board.

[105]Cp. Street.

In the end, it seems to me that there is little reason to think that Scanlon and Gibbard have to discharge different obligations in order to make good on their theories—in particular, in order to be able to claim, "yes, it's a *belief* and it *motivates*; therefore, it plays the role needed."

Perhaps, of course, Gibbard has left something out in his analysis or perhaps he doesn't have it quite right. But then it's open to the objector to suggest refinements. Gibbard, it seems has discharged a certain obligation. Importantly, he has explained how normative judgments can be motivating, truth-apt, and objective. It is this very virtue, it seems, that leads critics to think that the attitudes to which he appeals (plans) are not the attitudes of moral or normative thought and talk. But those who make this crticism have a burden to offer an alternative account of how attitudes with the features of beliefs can be action-guiding (i.e., *they* have to earn the right to claim that they are talking about genuine beliefs).

B. Can Scanlon Claim Rights that an Expressivist like Gibbard Would Have to Earn?

Even those more favorable to quasi-realist expressivism seem to assume that whereas defenders of accounts often treated in the literature as obvious examples of cognitivist or realist accounts can take the truth or objectivity of normative claims for granted, expressivists have to *earn* this feature of normative thought and talk. Many expressivists themselves say this about their views. Blackburn claims quasi-realists can and do earn these rights. Michael Ridge, who defends a form of quasi-realist expressivism, explains that quasi-realist expressivists "have worked really hard to 'earn the right' to talk" in certain ways." In particular, he explains, they've worked hard to earn the right to maintain that normative "facts are in a certain sense not mind-dependent; [that] they are not made true by the stance that we take to them."[106]

It is just not clear to me, however, that those expressivists whom I (in contrast to many other participants in the debate) characterize as cognitivist expressivists have reason to grant that they have to *earn* anything that others do not have to *earn*. It seems to me that this focus on having to

[106]Mike Ridge, "Relaxing realism or deferring the debate," lecture, *Moral Realism: Robust or Relaxed?* (Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, Frankfurt, Germany, Feb. 3, 2017).

earn the right is another way to retain the impression that expressivism necessarily renders an account somehow less than genuinely or fully cognitivistic.

Take Richard Joyce's discussion of quasi-realist expressivism, for instance. Joyce explains that the "quasi-realist [expressivist] is someone who endorses an anti-realist" [in this case, non-cognitivist[107]] stance but who "seeks through philosophical maneuvering, to *earn the right* for moral discourse to enjoy all the trappings of realist [or cognitivist] talk."[108] Similarly, Schroeder explains that the expressivist relies on a particular semantics and then once she has successfully defended this semantics, no longer needs to deny that there are moral beliefs (note that 'no longer' implies that she previously did deny or needed to deny this) or to deny that moral sentences give voice to beliefs. Joyce and Schroeder are just two examples. This is the standard way that quasi-realist expressivism is explained, discussed, and analyzed.

But why should we think that expressivists have to earn certain rights that someone like Scanlon does not? To be sure, one way to be an expressivist is to begin with a naturalistic account of states of mind and from there get normative concepts, with a focus on how states of mind are expressed. Such normative ways of thinking could then be characterized as normative beliefs. We could work our way up to beliefs, as it were. Perhaps this is the approach taken by Blackburn and Ridge. If we assume that Scanlon, say, begins right off with beliefs, perhaps there is a sense in which the expressivist has to work for something that Scanlon does not. Even if this is right, though, even if an expressivist does not have the same starting point as a non-expressivist, it does not seem to follow that there's any difference in the obligations that they're going to have to discharge in the end in order to make good on their theories. Furthermore, even this sort of approach to defending an expressivist account doesn't strike me as one according to which one begins with an anti-cognitivist or anti-realist approach and then works up to cognitivism or realism.

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[107]Because, like Mackie, one can be a cognitivist but a non-realist in virtue of denying that there are any moral or normative truths.

[108]Richard Joyce, "Moral Anti-realism vs. Realism: Explanatory Power" [supplement to "Moral Anti-Realism"], *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, 2015) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-anti-realism/moral-realism-explain.html> (Aug. 3, 2017).

In any case, as I read Gibbard, he does not begin with a naturalistic account of states of mind. Rather, he starts by supposing that we do understand ought concepts. He then attempts carefully to work out an explanation of such concepts. He starts out with normative concepts and explains planning in terms of these. Sincere plans are the ones you make when you recognize the oughts that apply to you. The best way to understand an account such as Gibbard's, however, is not as one according to which we start out by denying *truth-aptness, belief-like status,* and *epistemic evaluability* and then working up to withdrawing this denial.

So what sort of earning might we say is required of Gibbard but not of, say, Scanlon? It does seem that quasi-realist expressivists do very often need to take the time to persuade people that explanations in terms of expressive states of mind are helpful, informative, and even adequate. Indeed, people *do* seem to have an intuitively negative initial response to these ideas. Given this, quasi-realist expressivists do have to work hard, indeed. They must work to undermine people's initial responses. In this sense, then, she has to earn the right to talk in certain ways. This, though, is not the explanatory burden that people generally assign to expressivists.

Most importantly for our purposes here, if an expressivist like Gibbard has the earn the right objectivity and truth, I think it is important to make the point that this is not a special demand on him. Indeed, if Gibbard has to earn this right, then it seems clear to me that non-inflationary realists such as Dworkin, Scanlon, or Parfit need to earn this right. I also think, however, that in an interesting sense of having to earn these rights, it's not clear to me why if we think Gibbard and the other non-inflationary realists have to earn the right to objectivity and truth, we would not say the same thing about the robust non-naturalists.[109]

[109]This is a challenge that is clearly taken on by Gibbard. It's also a challenge clearly taken on by so-called robust realists. When robust realists posit, say, normative properties and spell out ways in which our normative claims and thoughts track or mistrack such properties, they're offering explanations that can be understood as attempts to earn (in the relevant sense) the right to talk in terms of objectivity and truth. I think there's an obvious problem with this sort of metaphysical postulate. It seems to me, for instance, that it leaves normativity as puzzling as before. This sort of response, though, is a worry about the success of the project—just as one might worry about the success of Gibbard's or Scanlon's or Dworkin's project.

Robust non-naturalistic and naturalistic realists and non-inflationary realists, including expressivists like Gibbard, share the goal of characterizing our moral or normative thought and discourse as featuring objectivity and truth (featuring, for instance, truth-aptness, belief-like status, and epistemic evaluability). They all also treat these as features of our commonsense understanding of moral or normative thought and discourse. It's one thing to accept these features of our ordinary thought and discourse, however, and it's another to make sense of it, to explain these features. Offering these sorts of explanations is one of the things people working in metaethics do.

In our non-philosophical voices or modes of thought, it seems clear that we can all embrace objectivity and truth in normativity or in ethics. In our theoretical voices, however, it seems fair to demand that we explain features of normativity. For instance, if we want to say that normative or moral beliefs have correctness conditions that are independent of such beliefs, it seems fair to demand that the theorist explains what this independence of normativity consists in. In short, they must earn the right to talk about such features of normativity in their philosophical voice.

I end this chapter by saying something very speculative about the different ways in which Gibbard and Scanlon use the terms 'minimalism', 'metaphysics,' and 'ontology.' This will turn out to be related to what I have to say in the next chapter about what's at issue between Gibbard and Parfit.

VIII. What Finally is at Stake in Scanlon and Gibbard's Disagreement about Minimalism or Their Respective Understandings of Metaphysics?

B. Might Gibbard and Scanlon use the Term 'Minimalism' in Different Ways?

"My view is not 'minimalist'," says Scanlon. "It aims to give normative and mathematical statements exactly the content and "thickness" that they require when taken literally: no more and certainly no less." Scanlon acknowledges that some objectors might insist that "In the case of normative truth, . . . in order for normative truths to have the significance normally attributed to them, they would have to be true (or justified) in a sense that goes beyond what reasoning internal to the

normative domain (i.e. thinking about what reasons we have) could by itself establish." But he does not believe that this makes any sense. (This charge does "not seem to me to have merit," he maintains.[110])

Gibbard's view is that the truth predicate carries with it no *metaphysical* significance. By this, Gibbard seems to mean that we don't need to explain truth in terms of truth properties. (Indeed, he doesn't even think such explanations are coherent.) Scanlon agrees with this. He'd just put the point differently. He might say that when we "inquire into how the [normative] domain is best understood at the most abstract and fundamental level" (so when we ask metaphysical questions about the normative domain), the best answer is that the domain doesn't call for the positing of properties.

What I say here is speculative, but, for what it's worth, one question we might have is whether the term "minimalist" or "deflationary" really are apt terms when used by Gibbard to characterize his own account. Perhaps "minimalism" when it comes to truth really is best understood as the view that there really is nothing more to say about truth—and so nothing more to say about which claims are capable of being true—than what we get from syntax. Perhaps Gibbard's theoretical account of how to determine which utterances are assertions and which are not, which are truth-evaluable and which are not, appeals to a more-than-minimalist conception of truth. To be sure, on Gibbard's view, explicitly saying of some "P" that it is "is true" adds nothing to what is already there in "P", but there are conditions that must be met for "P" to be the sort of linguistic entity to which we can add the predicate "is true."

What about Gibbard's characterization of his account as minimalist about metaphysics—and in particular about property talk in the normative domain? Here again, I'm not entirely sure that "minimalism" is the best way to think about his position. After all, Gibbard does use the term "property" in a way that cannot simply be deflated away, specifically when he talks about physical world properties.

[110]Scanlon, *Being* 28-29.

As Gibbard uses the term "property," properties necessarily concern the physical world. Properties, on his account, are constituents of states of affairs which, as Gibbard understands them, are all natural. As Gibbard uses the term "state of affairs," these are "structures of properties and relations more generally, along with individuals such as you, a rabbit, and the planet Venus, and such logical devices as quantification."[111]

For Gibbard, the normative is a distinction among thoughts and concepts and not among states of affairs or properties. So ways of thinking about the natural world can be either naturalistic or non-naturalistic. For instance, the concept of BEING WATER is *naturalistic* and the concept of BEING GOOD is normative, or *non-naturalistic*. Some, but not all, non-naturalistic concepts, are normative. We have the psychological (naturalistic) concept HAPPINESS and a separate normative concept (non-naturalistic) BEING RIGHT. But, on Gibbard's view, these concepts can both pick out the same psychological property.

Given this, it's not surprising that Gibbard would hold that properties would not play a basic explanatory role in the normative domain. Properties do play a basic explanatory role in the naturalistic domain, however. Thus, Gibbard does not read claims about the property of being water or being red or being happy the same way as he reads claims about the property of being wrong or right, good or bad. It is only the latter claims that, on his view, call for minimalist or deflationary readings.

To say that slavery has the property of wrongness is just to say that slavery is wrong. To be sure, to say that a particular apple has the property of redness also just means that the apple is red. But in the latter case, the *property* of redness plays a basic explanatory role. Furthermore, this predicate does carry with it *metaphysical* significance.[112]

[111]Gibbard's definition of "state of affairs." *Meaning* 28.

[112]Gibbard himself wouldn't put it quite this way. He doesn't use the term "metaphysics" or "ontology," both of which he thinks lead to mischief.

Blackburn, who like Gibbard, defends a version of minimalism about property talk, maintains that "[t]here is no harm in saying that ethical predicates refer to properties, when such properties are merely the semantic shadows of the fact that they function as predicates."[113]

To be sure, if moral (or normative) properties are understood as mere semantic shadows of predicates, non-inflationary realists like Scanlon, Dworkin, or Gibbard can talk of moral or normative properties. I suspect, though, that this gives rise to confusion. Perhaps the confusion stems from the varying uses of the term "property". It's just not clear to me, though, that a deflationary or minimalist approach to property talk is helpful. For instance, both Gibbard and Dworkin deny that they are committed to negative existence claims about moral or normative properties. They have to be if their minimalism is to make sense. It seems to me, though, that there's a way of understanding their views as involving precisely such a commitment to negative existence claims about moral or normative properties. This is not something that I have worked out carefully enough confidently to make this case, and so the most I can do now is to say something in a rather hand-wavy manner.

I'm sympathetic with the project of attempting to do justice to the commitments of ordinary moral or normative discourse without needing to make metaphysical commitments, but I worry about the plausibility of attempts to do without metaphysics entirely. It seems to me that the best way to understand non-inflationary moral realism is as ruling out certain things, but then non-inflationary moral realism plausibly involves commitments to negative existence claims about moral entities of some sort or a moral reality. This, though, is a metaphysical enterprise.[114]

Whereas Gibbard will deflate away the term "property" in a claim such as "kicking dogs for fun has the property of wrongness," it seems Scanlon will want to say that property talk here is simply not relevant. We need properties to explain naturalistic claims, perhaps, but we don't need

[113]Simon Blackburn, "How to be an Ethical Antirealist," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12.1 (1988): 181.

[114]Gibbard, for one, does presuppose natural properties, properties with which we can interact causally and that do explanatory work. It's not clear to me why, especially in light of this, with respect to thought or discourse about which he wants to say moral properties play no role, it wouldn't make sense to say that he makes negative existence assumptions about properties that are not natural. It seems to me that Gibbard could give up his deflationary reading of claims seeming to be about the metaphysics of value while leaving quasi-realist expressivism intact.

them to explain normative claims. To be sure, people may well talk this way, but I guess on Scanlon's view we might say they are therefore making a mistake. Scanlon would be able and would want to say that claims expressing the commitments of robust or Moorean moral realists are false. Gibbard and Dworkin would insist, however, that they don't even reach the level of being either true or false. This doesn't seem right to me, though. I think there is a real question regarding whether the normative or the moral domains, at the most basic level, are best explained in terms of properties or not, and there's a real question about whether there are moral or normative *properties* to which our truth moral or normative claims are responsive.

Furthermore, I think there may well be one or more disagreements about the metaphysical status of reasons or values persisting underneath in the apparent agreements among those who endorse non-inflationary realism—disagreements that explain why these different "realisms" are not simply a single view. I return to this in Chapter 4 with my focus on Parfit. Even if I am wrong about this, however, it does seem to me that rejecting ontological commitment to properties is best understood as itself a metaphysical position. If there *are* lurking disagreements, they concern what it is *not* to make a robust metaphysical commitment – i.e., they are disagreements about a metaphysical issue which is central to all the views.

C. Perhaps What Gibbard Characterizes as "Minimalism," Scanlon Characterizes as the Ordinary View

Although, as far as I can tell, Scanlon does not spell out precisely why he rejects a minimalist approach to truth, he does say some things about quietist or minimalist approaches, more broadly, to normativity: "I don't like [the terms] 'quietist' or 'minimalist'," he says, "because I don't think there's anything to be 'quietist' or 'minimalist' *about*. I think the other people [namely, the robust realists] should be called 'inflationist'."[115]

[115]T. M. Scanlon, "Normative Realism—what is there to disagree about?" lecture, *Moral Realism: Robust or Relaxed?* (Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, Frankfurt, Germany, Feb. 4 2017). It was this comment that triggered my thinking of the "non-robust" realists as "non-inflationary" realists.

I think this is a key to understanding Scanlon's account as compared to Dworkin's and Gibbard's. As Scanlon uses the terms "thin" or "minimal" as contrasted with "thick" or "robust," we have to understand the relevant ideas from a "domain specific" perspective.[116] To understand naturalistic thought and discourse is to understand that for "physical objects to exist is for them to have spatio-temporal location, to have various physical properties, and to interact causally with other objects." But, continues Scanlon, "The relevant idea of "thickness" . . . is not provided by some further idea of metaphysical reality over and above the properties just mentioned." In the same way, Scanlon proposes, "the kind of thickness that is relevant to existential statements about numbers is provided by the structure of the relevant mathematical realm. For numbers to exist is for them to stand in various relations with other numbers, such as to be the solution to equations. Similarly, various normative relations give thickness to that domain." So normative facts exist in the way that is determined by the normative domain just as numbers exist in a way determined by the domain of numbers and physical objects obtain in a way determined by the physical domain—nothing more, nothing less.

As far as I can tell, there is nothing here that either Dworkin or Gibbard would object to, however—in spite of their explicit defense of minimalism about truth, properties, etc. On Gibbard's account, we have a paradigmatic domain of truth and belief, the naturalistic domain, and it has an *external* tracking condition as necessary for it to be in good order. By contrast, Gibbard suggests that truth in the normative domain doesn't depend on the fulfillment of this condition but that it's nonetheless equally a domain within which truth and objectivity are possible.

Some objectors might understand this as Gibbard offering an account according to which truth and objectivity are different in the normative domain as compared to the naturalistic domain. There are features of truth and belief and so on in the moral case that don't function the way that they function in the prosaically factual, familiar case. And there are notions of reference, and the like, that don't function the same way. Scanlon, though, would not object to Gibbard in this way.

[116]Scanlon, *Being* 28.

This sort of distinction between, say, the naturalistic and the normative domains is maps onto the distinction made by Scanlon.

Perhaps that's not quite right, though. Perhaps Scanlon shares some intuitions with traditional non-naturalists. Perhaps he suspects that there is some sort of non-causal, non-representational accountability to mind-independent reality that matters and is missing from Gibbard's account. Of the traditional non-naturalists, Gibbard says that they "explain the crucial features of normative thinking . . . by parallels to the plainest cases of property attributions—like, for instance, the layout of checkers on a checkerboard or whether the cat is on the mat."[117] I think Gibbard is right about this. But, of course, this is the image Scanlon rejects. Perhaps, though, Scanlon's sense is that Gibbard has moved too far away from a picture that if not quite like the picture defended by robust non-naturalists is more like it than Gibbard's. If that's right, though, I think we'd need more from Scanlon to get a good sense of just what it is that is missing in Gibbard's account.

IX. Conclusion

In this chapter, I use Scanlon's debate with Gibbard to highlight just how narrow the gap between what one might have taken to be quite distinct positions has become. I have sought to consider potential objections to Gibbard's position, especially from someone taking a position like Scanlon's, and to articulate replies on Gibbard's behalf. Though I offer the beginnings of a defense of Gibbard against objections to the effect that he fails to capture objectivity and truth in normativity, again, I do very little to explicate or resolve these issues here. I touch on defenses of Gibbard primarily to highlight just how narrow the gap really is between what many have taken (and still take) to be quite distinct positions. The point, in short, is that Gibbard and Scanlon embrace very similar positions. It is possible that neither manages to capture objectivity and truth in ethics; but if one does it will be difficult to maintain that the other does not.

[117]Gibbard, *Meaning* 218-9.

I focus here on framework-type questions, such as ones concerned with cognitivism versus non-cognitivism. One question I ask is whether there is a way in which Gibbard has to earn some sort of entitlement that Scanlon does not. Is it the case that people like Scanlon can help themselves to objectivity and truth, help themselves to cognitivism, whereas people like Gibbard have to work to earn the right to find room for such notions in their theories? The general assumption that expressivists have this burden corresponds, I believe, to the widespread assumption that Gibbard's view is less cognitivist than Scanlon's. It seems to me, however, that there's little reason to suppose that Gibbard has to earn something that Scanlon does not. Perhaps they both have to earn their talk of cognitivism, their talk of normative beliefs, normative disagreement, and the like. Once we start talking about earning, though, it's unclear to me that if Scanlon and Gibbard have to earn this talk of objectivity and truth, then this is not something that all theorists have to earn.

I show that Scanlon and Gibbard can be seen as starting out in quite the same place, that is, assuming the commonsense understanding of normative thought and discourse. It's fine for Scanlon to take the default position that morality or normativity is in good order. But if he is going to say that his account is "more in accord with the common-sense understanding of normative judgments than [Gibbard's and other] expressivist interpretations are,"[118] it also seems fair to demand more from him, more about his theory that is supposed better to explain how it is that our normative judgments have correctness conditions independent of the judgments themselves and are also motivating.

Indeed, one difference between Gibbard and Scanlon seems to be that Gibbard goes farther than Scanlon in offering certain sorts of explanations of normativity. Scanlon and Gibbard both say that if we want to know what we ought to feel, think, believe, or do, we have to explore what normative reasons we have. Though, according to Scanlon, this means that we don't need to offer an account of what we are doing when we say that we have a reason to do something, Gibbard thinks that important questions remain: we can intelligibly wonder what the normative really amounts to.

[118]Scanlon, *Being* 61.

Gibbard asks a question that Scanlon doesn't ask and that Dworkin actively rejects. Dworkin rejects it because he thinks we cannot get out of the space of the normative. Anything you're going to ask about the normative will be normative. But this seems to overlook the intelligibility of Gibbard's question: in virtue of what do normative claims qualify as objective and (in some cases) true? What does their truth and objectivity amount to, if not that they represent an external reality with which we interact causally? In trying to answer this question, Gibbard is, in a sense, sticking his neck out. He is running the risk of making proposals that we have reason to reject. But if Dworkin and Scanlon are right to reject this proposal, this is not because they have offered a more promising alternative. Importantly, however we are to understand Scanlon's or Gibbard's starting points, they share the same obligations in their attempts to do justice to objectivity and truth in normativity.

Chapter 4

Normative Properties and Concepts of Properties: What's at Issue between Parfit and Gibbard?

I. Introduction

In the third volume of his *On What Matters* (*OWM3*), normative non-naturalist Derek Parfit proposes and both quasi-realist expressivist Allan Gibbard and non-analytic naturalist Peter Railton concur that they may not be divided by any significant metaethical disagreement.[1] This is striking given, among other things, (*i*) Parfit's assessment in the second volume of his *On What Matters* (*OWM2*) of Gibbard's and Railton's accounts as "close to nihilism," (*ii*) the widespread treatment of quasi-realist expressivism as a paradigmatic example of normative non-cognitivism, and (*iii*) Parfit's stated reasons for insisting, even in *OWM3,* that to embrace (non-Railton-style) non-analytic naturalism is to give up on normativity.

Parfit and Gibbard agree about a good deal. Furthermore, unlike Dworkin (see Chapter 2) and Scanlon (see Chapter 3), Parfit agrees with my assessment of Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism as neither a version of non-cognitivism nor a form of normative nihilism. Indeed, he recognizes that Gibbard's account belongs alongside those offered by the group of philosophers I call non-inflationary normative realists. Ironically, however, by carefully detailing reasons to posit near-full convergence between his view and those of Gibbard (and Railton), Parfit helps bring to light ways in which, arguably, contrary to his own intentions, he himself, though not Gibbard, *may* well occupy a unique position just outside the non-inflationary realist group.

[1] "[T]he three of us [Gibbard, Railton, and Parfit] have resolved our main meta-ethical disagreements," writes Parfit. See Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, 3 vols. (Oxford: OUP 2014-17) 3: 2.

As it happens, there is one obvious difference between Parfit and the members of this group, including Scanlon, Dworkin, and Gibbard. Parfit, unlike the others, explains irreducible normative facts in terms of non-natural normative *properties*. Gibbard and the others hold that explanations in terms of such properties are neither necessary nor possible. It follows that only if we can translate what Parfit says about normative facts and properties into claims Gibbard could endorse, does convergence between the two philosophers remain a realistic possibility. I focus here on Gibbard's and Parfit's respective efforts in *OWM3* to understand each other's explanations of the normative, and to translate what Parfit says about properties and facts into claims with which Gibbard can agree.

Examining their attempts at translation enables us not merely to clarify their agreements and disagreements but also to enhance our understanding of the limits of non-inflationary realism in particular and our ability to assess the roles properties can play in explaining normativity, more broadly.

In *OWM3*, Parfit embraces Gibbard's translation of his term "normative fact" as "true normative thought," but he rejects Gibbard's translation of his term "normative property" as "concept of a property." As a translation of his term "normative property," one that Gibbard can accept, Parfit proposes "conceptual properties." I argue that there are two possibilities: (*i*) Nothing of significance remains at issue between Parfit and Gibbard with respect to normative facts and properties, in which case Parfit should accept *both* of Gibbard's proposed translations and give up his insistence that explanations of normativity in terms of normative properties is essential along with his attempts to establish that NANs abandon normativity. (*ii*) Something *does* remain at issue between them, and not just one but *both* of Gibbard's translations leave something out. In this case, Parfit is best seen as offering a position that, if plausible would afford insight unavailable to nearby accounts—not only Gibbard's but also other versions of non-inflationary non-naturalism. Even if Parfit's properties$_{df}$ turn out, however, to do the work Parfit wants them to do without exhibiting the sort of *robust* normative ontology he seeks to avoid, they might well, for all that, end up facing at least some of the challenges faced by more robust accounts of properties.

In support of convergence (see Part II below), much of what Parfit says about normative facts and properties fits Gibbard's proposed translation of Parfit's terms. (*a*) Parfit's explanation of the sense of "fact" he has in mind when he talks of "normative facts" overlaps to a large extent with what Gibbard has in mind when he talks of "true normative thoughts." (*b*) Normative properties as Parfit understands them are properties in what he calls a description-fitting sense of "property." When Gibbard talks of normative "properties," he's talking about ways of thinking (so, associated with descriptions) of properties in the world. If we read Gibbard's translation of Parfit's term "normative property" as Gibbard's "normative concept of a property in the physical world," Gibbard's proposed translation does seem to fit much of what Parfit wants to say about normative properties.

In support of *less* convergence (see Part IV below), (*a*) Parfit insists that we can make informative claims using different concepts which do not correspond to different $\text{properties}_{\text{df}}$. But, if that's right, it won't be the case that Gibbardian concept of $\text{properties}_{\text{pw}}$ will be individuated in the same way as Parfitian $\text{properties}_{\text{df}}$. (*b*) Parfit presupposes a reference relation between concepts and $\text{properties}_{\text{df}}$ for which there seems to be no room in Gibbard's theoretical framework. (*c*) Though Parfit takes Gibbard to be an ally, he insists that non-analytic naturalists, excepting Railton, are *not* allies. But if Gibbard's proposed translations are on target, the notion of "fact" Parfit employs in his anti-non-analytic naturalism arguments turns out to be strikingly equivocal. When we salvage Parfit's point about non-analytic naturalism without equivocation, however, we see differences even more clearly.

I conclude that in spite of widespread agreement, there is ongoing disagreement between Parfit on the one hand and Gibbard and Railton on the other regarding *what it means* to say, the extent *to which* we can say, and our potential *grounds* for saying that a normative property counts as a genuine constraint on thought and action.

II. An Easy Case in Support of Assimilation

A. Parfit's Vision of the Meta-normative Landscape

1. Parfit Treats Gibbard as Cognitivist about the Normative

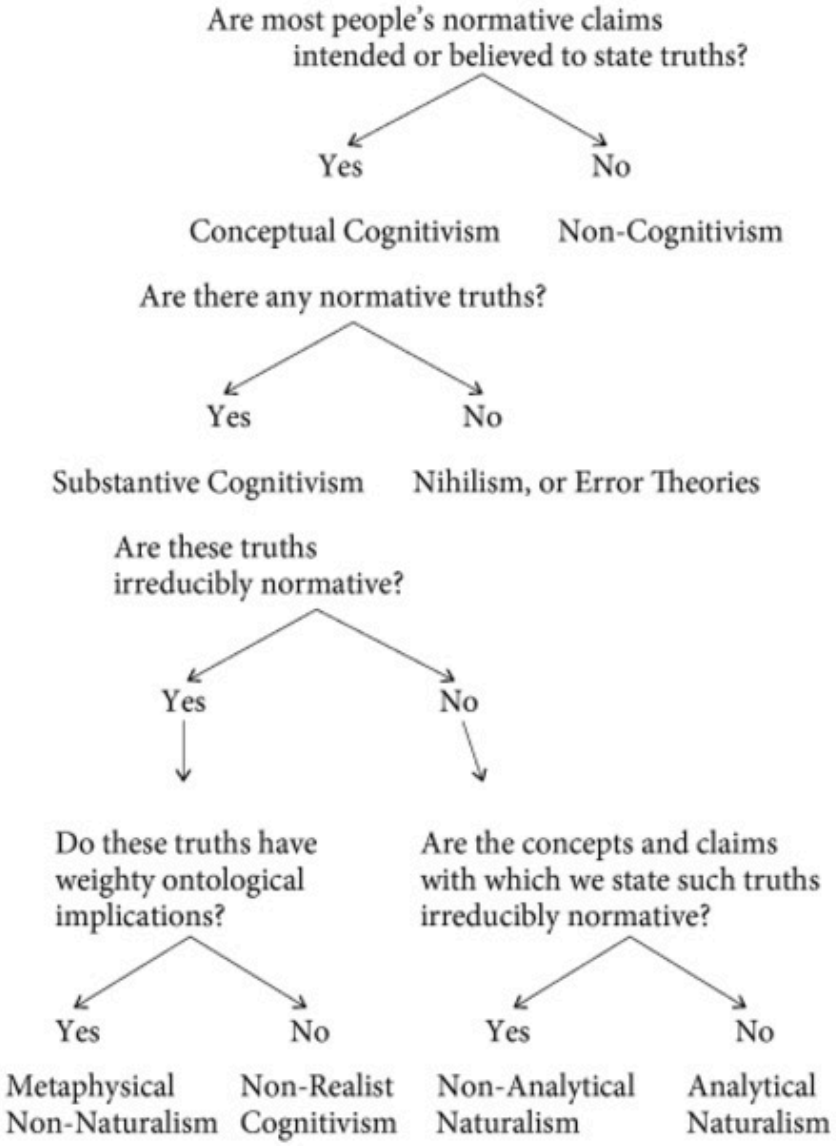
One interesting feature of Parfit's perspective on quasi-realist expressivism as compared to the perspective of Scanlon and Dworkin is that as he envisions the meta-normative landscape, quasi-realist expressivist Gibbard is a normative *cognitivist*. (See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of cognitivism.) Parfit recognizes, of course, that Gibbard has sometimes accepted the non-cognitivist characterization of his own view which probably explains his invitation to Gibbard to embrace normative cognitivism. On his own terms, though, Parfit seems to assume that Gibbard already has accepted normative cognitivism.

Let's begin with a quick overview of Parfit's layout of the meta-normative landscape before taking a closer look at the relation between Gibbard's and Parfit's accounts.

2. Parfit's Vision of the Meta-normative Landscape

Here's Parfit's chart, one that focuses on his view of the questions to ask in order to divide up the landscape.

Parit's Vision of the Meta-Normative Landscape from *OWM3*



(Again, the above is straight out of Parfit's OWM3.[2])

B. Parfit's Treatment of Cognitivism about Normativity

1. Conceptual Cognitivism

As we see above, Parfit treats the most basic meta-normative distinction to be that between what he calls "conceptual cognitivism" and "non-cognitivism." As Parfit uses the term, he under-

[2]Parfit 3: 56.

stands "conceptual cognitivists" as those who maintain that "when people make normative claims, they intend or believe themselves to state truths." He clearly takes Gibbard to be a conceptual cognitivist. Some conceptual cognitivists also judge that there *are* some normative truths. Others deny that there are any normative truths.

2. Substantive Cognitivism

Conceptual cognitivists who agree that there *are* some normative facts or truths, Parfit characterizes as "substantive cognitivists." They also agree that the truth of a moral proposition is not *mind-dependent*: whatever it is in virtue of which such a proposition is true, it's *not* true in virtue of our beliefs, attitudes, etc. Parfit contrasts these with those who defend some form of conceptual cognitivist version of normative "nihilism," understood very generally as the view that there are no normative truths. Nihilists might defend, for instance, "error theory," or the view that while our normative thoughts and claims are capable of being either true or false, none are true.

Parfit does not mention fictionalism, but presumably philosophers who maintain that our moral or normative claims are capable of being true only within a fiction would be treated as fictionalists about conceptual cognitivism and those fictionalists who maintain that our moral or normative claims are capable of being true or false but that some are *true* only within a fiction would be conceptual cognitivists but fictionalists about substantive cognitivism. (See Chapter 5 for a more careful treatment of this distinction.)

As Parfit grants, he and Gibbard agree not only that our normative utterances are capable of being true or false (so about conceptual cognitivism), but also that some of our normative beliefs *are* true (so about substantive cognitivism). They both agree that there are substantive, normative or moral facts, perhaps that "pain is bad for its own sake."[3]

C. Parfit's Rejection of Representationalism as Unhelpful Semantic Account of Normativity

Parfit and Gibbard agree that representationalism is an unhelpful semantic account of moral or more broadly normative thought and discourse. Representationalists assume that to talk about

[3]One of Gibbard's examples.

truth regarding any domain of thought and discourse is to talk about correspondence and reference. So to talk of normative truth is to assume that there must be distinctly normative realities to which discourse refers or corresponds. Some notion of reference, perhaps truthmaker, etc., plays a basic theoretical role. Our true normative thoughts and claims, therefore, will be those whose terms do link appropriately with normative entities, wherever we take them to be located—in the natural world or in some non-spatiotemporal non-natural realm (perhaps a Platonic realm of some sort).[4] Representationalists about the normative must then tell a story about how our words and concepts link with things and properties, a story in accordance with which our true thoughts and claims are those that are adequately responsive to, that adequately *represent* how things really are.

Normative beliefs are *not* "made to be true by correctly describing, or corresponding to, how things are in some part of reality," explains Parfit.[5] Gibbard agrees.[6]

D. Parfit on Irreducibly Normative Truths

"[N]ormativity is either an illusion, or [else something that] involves irreducibly normative facts,"[7] Parfit argues. Anyone concerned, therefore, with avoiding normative nihilism must accommodate such facts. Given that by his third volume of *OWM* Parfit had withdrawn his second-volume contention that Gibbard's account was a form of nihilism, indeed, arguing that he and Gibbard did not disagree about any substantial issue, it follows that Parfit must assume that Gibbard can accommodate irreducibly normative truths or facts. Whether this is right will depend on just how we are supposed to understand talk of irreducibly normative facts or truths. This will be one primary focus of this chapter.

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[4]Here's Price: *R*epresentationalists will take it that the purpose of normative vocabulary "is to keep track of items in some platonic, non-natural realm." Huw Price, *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* (Cambridge: CUP 2013) 184n16.

[5]Parfit 3: 59.

[6]Note that on Gibbard's view, we can talk about reference but in a deflationary way. His example: "Fido" refers to Fido, but that's not playing a substantial role in our theory of how people use the term "Fido." Reference is not what's doing the heavy lifting. On Gibbard's view, the heavy lifting is being done by the notion of co-reference.

[7]Parfit *2:* 267.

Parfit defends a version of non-naturalism about the normative that accommodates such facts without what he takes to be the conceptual and logical costs associated with more ontologically robust non-naturalist accounts. But he *is* committed to non-naturalism, to the position that normativity is best understood as non-naturalistic. He wants to give normativity an irreducibly foundational role, and he thinks naturalism will always give at best a derivative account of the normative.

As we've seen above, in Parfit's vision of the meta-normative landscape, so-called "substantive cognitivists" (who, recall, are those who have granted that there are some normative truths) are divided into "non-naturalists" and "naturalists" depending to their answer to the question: "Are these truths irreducibly normative?"[8] Non-naturalists say *yes*, naturalists—per Parfit, of all stripes, both analytic naturalists and non-analytic naturalists—say *no.* Answering *no,* though, is fatal. Importantly, Parfit recognizes that Gibbard would answer 'yes'. Gibbard believes, he writes that "[o]ur normative concepts and claims . . . cannot be defined or restated in naturalistic terms. As Non-Naturalists believe, these concepts and claims are irreducibly normative."[9]

Even the most obvious naturalist competitors to his version of non-naturalism, versions of non-analytic naturalism, Parfit thinks, ultimately abandon normativity. One important reason for this, as he sees it, is that they believe that the distinction between the normative and the natural is a distinction between two different kinds of concepts rather than a distinction between two different kinds of properties, all of which they take to be natural. They nonetheless maintain that we can have objectivity and truth in normativity or in ethics and that we have learned something of normative importance when we learn that a particular normative concept picks out the same property that is picked out by a particular naturalistic concept. Call this the *normativity as conceptual* thesis.

This is puzzling given that both Gibbard and Railton do adopt some form of the normativity as conceptual thesis. And Parfit maintains that nothing of metaethical or meta-normative significance remains at issue between him and Railton or him and Gibbard. Presumably, then, he must

[8]Parfit 3: 56.
[9]Parfit 3: 14.

conclude that Railton would better characterize his account as something other than a version of 'naturalism'. Either that or Parfit uses the term 'naturalism' in an inconsistent manner.

E. Analytic Naturalism is Implausible

Parfit and Gibbard share a clear dissatisfaction with at least one form of naturalism about the normative, so-called analytic naturalism. This is a form of naturalism in accordance with which normative attributions are analytically equivalent to attributions of natural properties. Parfit and Gibbard both reject the possibility that if, say, a simple version of ethical hedonism were true, that it could turn out to be *enough* to claim that some act fails to maximize pleasure in order to state that some act is wrong.[10]

F. Normativity Explained without Normative Metaphysics

Parfit and Gibbard exhibit evident affinities with the group of philosophers I call non-inflationary realists, people like Dworkin, Scanlon, Kramer, and Nagel, all of whom are prepared to embrace objectivity and truth about the normative while maintaining that doing so involves *no* ontological commitments, all of whom agree that our normative claims do not commit us referentially to some sort of normative reality or entities or to any metaphysical thesis.

Those who answer yes to the question "Are these truths irreducibly normative?" Parfit further divides into defenders of what he calls "metaphysical non-naturalism" and "cognitivist non-realism" depending on their answers to the further question "Do these truths have weighty ontological implications?"

Parfit's term "metaphysical non-naturalism" picks out the "robust moral realists" and his term "cognitivist non-realism," he uses to pick out what I call "non-inflationary realism." Note, of course, that unlike other non-inflationary moral realists, including Dworkin and Scanlon, he characterizes his own view (and theirs) as a version of *non*-realism. He does so because he rejects the view that in order to accommodate objectivity and truth in normativity we'd need to be committed to

[10]Parfit 3: 5.

some positive existence affirming distinctly normative metaphysical thesis. As I argue in Chapter 1, however, I see no reason to grant this usage of the term 'realism' in the moral or more broadly the normative domain.

Parfit and Gibbard agree that robust realism is a non-starter.[11] They reject views such as that of the robust realist David Enoch that doing justice to normative objectivity and truth this requires *metaphysical* commitment to irreducibly moral or normative entities. Parfit and Gibbard maintain, as Scanlon who agrees with them puts it, that "normative truths do not require strange, metaphysical truth-makers."[12]

G. The Extent of Their Agreement

Note that basically all of this overlaps nicely with the convergence that I posit between Dworkin and Gibbard in Chapter 2 and between Scanlon and Gibbard in Chapter 3. Of course, Parfit's own view of Gibbard as a cognitivist about the normative is distinctive—just as Dworkin's adoption of a minimalist or deflationary account of truth, facthood, and the like, is something that he recognizes is something he shares with Gibbard (but not Parfit or Scanlon).

Regarding the above-outlined points of convergence between Parfit and Gibbard, in no way, do I intend this to be an exhaustive list of their agreement. Nor do I intend to imply that there is not, in spite of all this, some important areas of disagreement between Parfit and Gibbard. What matters most for our purposes here is that Parfit and Gibbard agree that there is no metaphysics at stake when we make normative commitments. Of course, as I argue below (Part IV), it may well turn out that Parfitian normative properties cannot do the work Parfit needs them to do unless he does presuppose that they involve metaphysical commitment. If that's right, this would, indeed, be one thing at issue between Gibbard and Parfit. Parfit's explicit view, however, is that Parfitian normative properties exist non-ontologically or non-metaphysically. This is puzzling, but nonetheless a clear embrace of something like non-inflationary moral realism.

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[11]See Chapter 2, *supra*.
[12]Scanlon, *Being* 62.

As I mention above, however, there is another notable difference between Parfit and Gibbard, however. Whereas Parfit explains normativity in terms of non-natural, irreducibly normative properties, Gibbard does not. Indeed, he rejects such explanations. As it turns out, however, as much as it can sound like Gibbard and Parfit are saying different things, when we disambiguate their talk of facts and properties, it does seem as if there is far more agreement than there are first seemed to be.

III. A More Challenging Case in Support of Assimilation

A. Irreducibly Normative Facts

Parfit explains normativity in terms of irreducibly normative facts and he explains normative facts in terms of irreducibly normative properties. One worry is that Gibbardian normative facts are nor irreducibly normative, or, at least they are not irreducibly normative in the way that Parfit takes to be required in order to avoid nihilism about the normative. Indeed, if anything remains at issue between Parfit and Gibbard, it seems very likely that it'll have to do with Parfit's account of irreducibly normative facts, but these are the very facts he maintains one must posit in order to avoid nihilism, so he must grant that Gibbard can take account of such facts if he is to posit convergence.

I begin by taking a closer look at what Parfit means by normative facts.

B. Ambiguity in the Notion Facts

Gibbard and Parfit both embrace a kind of broad naturalism. They would both grant, for instance, that there is nothing out there in the universe that is not the kind of thing that science studies. They agree that there are no supernatural substances, there are no non-natural realms, or mysterious non-natural objects existing either as part of the spatio-temporal world or even as part of some non-spatio-temporal part of reality.[13] They both maintain, however, that there are facts that are not

[13]Parfit maintains, for instance, that normative properties exist "[n]either as natural properties in the spatio-temporal world, [nor as non-natural properties] in some non-spatio-temporal part of reality." Parfit 2: 486.

natural facts. If we offered a full, naturalistic description of everything that exists, there would be facts left out, in particular, specifically normative facts. Such facts may not be supernatural facts on their view, but they're nonetheless *not* natural—or non-natural.[14]

Of course, the term "fact" is ambiguous. Given this, it is important to get clear about what sense of 'fact' Parfit has in mind when he talks of irreducibly normative facts, which are understood in terms of irreducibly normative properties and without which normativity is an illusion.

Here is one way of thinking about a distinction (this refers back to a discussion from Chapter 1): We might talk of facts and by this term we mean something like that which we're trying to get at, that in the world which we're trying to talk *about*. In this case, we might be focusing on the realm of, say, science in the sense of all the entities, things, relations, etc., with which science is concerned. Such facts, for instance, we might talk of as "states of affairs." But we might also talk of "facts" in such a way that has to do with thinking about how things are, or something like the ways of getting at things in the world. In this latter case, we are thinking about science as a sort of project involving ways of conceiving of things. Here too we might be tempted to talk about realms. The term "realm" seems to imply something that exists and that is filled up with things, however, so let's use another word, perhaps borrowing Scanlon's terminology, let's use the term "domain." As Scanlon uses the term, a domain is not something that exists and it's not something that's filled up with things. It's just a useful way of grouping together ways of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to group together.

We can talk, therefore, about the domain of the science project, in other words, the ways of thinking about the subject matter of science. We can contrast this with the realm of things science attends to.[15] Focusing on the domain, understood, again, as ways that we can coherently group together ways of thinking about things, we recognize that there are plenty of things we can talk about

[14]Gibbard characterizes the distinction as one between 'non-naturalistic' and 'naturlistic' facts. More about that below.

[15]Not much turns here on which terms we use. We could use 'realm' for the set of concepts and rules, etc., and 'domain' for the set of objects that are picked out.

that are not part of science. *Value* talk is not part of science. Talk of *mentality* is not part of science. Even talk of *reference* is not part of science.

Once we talk about various things we can think and talk about, focusing on our concepts and thoughts, these are going to generate facts. We have systems of concepts that we use to talk about the world. Something like this sort of distinction is an important part of Gibbard's project. Gibbard explains that it's important to distinguish between (*i*) states of affairs that obtain, understood, as he puts it, as obtaining "structures of properties and relations more generally, along with individuals such as you, a rabbit, and the planet Venus, and such logical devices as quantification,"[16] and (*ii*) ways in which we can think about those states of affairs, so our thoughts, or clusters or networks of concepts.

Let's begin, though, by looking at Parfit's treatment of the term "facts."

C. Parfit's Informational vs. Referential Senses of Facts

Parfit carefully distinguishes between two different senses of fact. Different claims state the same fact, he explains, in the "informational sense" ($fact_{inf}$),[17] "when these claims give us the same information."[18] And different claims state different $facts_{inf}$ when these claims give us different information. This is the sense according to which claims such as "water is water" and "water is H_2O" can be understood to state informationally different facts: "water is water", a trivial claim, that something is itself; "water is H_2O", an important discovery.[19]

Contrast this with a sense of fact according to which the claims "water is water" and "water is H_2O" state the *same* fact. Parfit characterizes this as the "referential" sense of fact ($fact_{ref}$). This is the sense according to which different claims can refer to the same thing and ascribe the same properties to that thing. In this sense, both "water is water" and "water is H_2O" refer to the same thing and tell us that something "is identical to itself."[20]

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[16]Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (New York: OUP 2012) 28.
[17]This notation is mine, not Parfit's.
[18]Parfit 2: 336.
[19]Parfit 2: 336-8; *What* 3: 54.
[20]Parfit 2: 337.

When Parfit talks of irreducibly normative facts, he is very clear that he is talking about $facts_{inf}$. Irreducibly normative facts, Parfit maintains, are stated by claims that are "*informative*," but also, and here's a part about properties, such claims state that something has a *distinctly* normative property[21] that's *separate* from a natural property.[22]

For a claim to be "*informative*", maintains Parfit (and thus the only sort of claim that can state an irreducibly normative fact), is for it to highlight a relation between *different* properties *of* a thing or act, etc. $Facts_{inf}$ highlight a relation between *different* properties *of* a thing or act, etc. If it doesn't highlight a relation between different properties, it's not informative. The term "property" here, however, is being used in a specific way.

D. Parfit's Description-Fitting Sense of Property ($Property_{df}$) and his Property in the Physical World ($Property_{pw}$) Sense of Property

Parfit recognizes that the term "property" can be used in different ways. Properties can be understood, writes Parfit, as "features of concrete objects or events. . . . "[23] Let's say, then, that sometimes the term "property" picks out a property in the physical world ($property_{pw}$).

What about Parfit's term "property" when he talks of "normative properties"? Here's what we know from Parfit: He says that for a claim to be a substantive or informative normative claim, it must pick out a *distinctly* normative property that's *separate* from a natural property: "when something has certain natural properties, this thing has some other, different normative property."[24] In this way, when we state an informative fact ($fact_{inf}$), we highlight a relation between *different* properties *of* a thing or act, etc.[25]

We might discover, Parfit explains, that there's a relation between the properties of, say, *failing to minimize suffering* and of *being wrong* such that when an act has the natural property, it has the

[21]Parfit 2: 275.

[22]"[W]hen something has certain natural properties, this thing has some other, different normative property." Parfit 2: 343.

[23]Parfit 3: 37 (my italics).).

[24]Parfit 2: 343.

[25]Parfit 2. [Note to self: Check page number.]

separate irreducibly normative property of *being wrong*.[26] It's informative to make this distinction, Parfit will say, because even if it turned out that all things or acts that had some particular natural property also had some particular normative property, stating this would not be stating an analytic claim.

Furthermore, normative properties, as Parfit understands them, are properties in what he characterizes as the description-fitting sense of property (property$_{df}$). "Description-fitting" because, as Parfit notes, "descriptive words or phrases can all be claimed to refer to, or denote, some *property*." In this sense of property, Parfit explains, there will be a property corresponding to every way of talking about a thing:[27] "[A]ny true claim about anything can be restated as a claim about this thing's properties [in the description-fitting sense]."[28] "Instead of saying that the Sun is bright, and that some proof is valid, we can say that the Sun has the property of *being bright* and that this proof has the property of *being valid*".

If some act fails to maximize pleasure, it has the (natural) property of *failing to maximize pleasure*. Furthermore, given that one way of thinking about some things—say, certain pain-inflicting actions—is as *wrong*, it would make sense that even this could be restated as a claim about a thing's properties. If we can claim that some act is wrong, we can say that it has the property of *being wrong*. And this would be on Parfit's view a distinctly normative property$_{df}$, which, for him, would have to be a non-natural property$_{df}$. On Parfit's picture, then, as far as I can tell, we have descriptions (or concepts), which can be either naturalistic or normative. And these descriptions pick out, or are satisfied by properties$_{df}$, some of which are distinctly natural and other of which are distinctly normative. One final note: Parfit is not proposing a view of reference according to which a term like "red" or "happiness" refers to the set of red things or of happy things. Such terms, on Parfit's account, refer to properties. It's the nature of these terms to pick out properties. So even though he may very well believe, say, that all and only the things that are happiness making are good, so that the same set

[26]Parfit 2. [Note to self: Check page number.]
[27]Parfit 2: 756.
[28]Parfit 3: 6, 36. (On page 36, he leaves out "true," which doesn't seem right)

instantiates these two properties, he thinks that these terms refer via the properties to the extension.[29]

As Parfit understands normative properties, we can have no causal interaction with them. They exist, he explains, "[n]either as natural properties in the spatio-temporal world, [nor as non-natural properties] in some non-spatio-temporal part of reality."[30] In Parfit's terms, they exist "non-ontologically."

Gibbard makes distinctions similar to Parfit's distinctions between different senses of *fact* and different senses of *property*.

E. Gibbardian True Thoughts vs. States of Affairs that Obtain

Look again at Parfit's distinction between $facts_{in}$ and $facts_{ref}$. Gibbard makes a similar sort of distinction. Regarding the claims "water is water" and "water is H_2O," Gibbard says that both describe or signify the same state of affairs (with states of affairs understood, as Gibbard explains, as "structures of properties and relations more generally, along with individuals such as you, a rabbit, and the planet Venus, and such logical devices as quantification").[31]

So there's a fact that Gibbard would characterize as a state of affairs that obtains which can be signified equally by the claims "water is water" and "water is H_2O." This Gibbardian sense of fact shares most affinity with Parfitian $facts_{ref}$. Nonetheless, the concept of BEING WATER and the concept of BEING H_2O (a constituent of the second but not the first thought) are different. So the *true thought* voiced by each of these is different.[32] So the thought to which we give voice with the claim "water is H_2O" is different from the thought to which we give voice with the claim "water is water". The latter is a trivial claim (giving voice to a trivial thought) and the former is an important discovery. Note also, however, that though the concept of BEING WATER and the concept of BEING H_2O,

[29]Thanks to Peter Railton for helping me with this reading of Parfit.
[30]Parfit 2: 486.
[31]Gibbard's definition of "state of affairs"; see Gibbard, *Meaning* 28.
[32]Allan Gibbard "Normative Properties," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41 (Spring 2003): 144.

each pick out the same property in the world.[33] This shows how our concepts and properties can come apart—just as our thoughts can come apart from states of affairs.

Parfit explains that different claims (e.g., "water is water" and "water is H_2O") state different $facts_{inf}$ when these claims give us different information. Gibbard would say that different claims state different true thoughts when they give us different information. Gibbardian true thoughts, therefore, seem to share most affinity with Parfitian $facts_{inf}$.

Hence Gibbard proposes in his contribution to *OWM3* translating Parfit's term "fact" as it relates to normative facts, and so Parfit's term $facts_{inf}$, as his term "true thoughts." What about Parfit's term "property"?

F. Gibbardian Normative Concepts vs. Properties Picked out by Such Concepts

As Gibbard uses the term "property," properties necessarily concern the physical world. Properties, on his account, are constituents of states of affairs which, as Gibbard understands them, are all natural. In turn, constituents of thoughts are concepts. So Gibbard will say that the property picked out by the term "water" just is the property picked out by the term "H_2O."[34] Nonetheless, Gibbard maintains that the concept of BEING WATER and the concept of BEING H_2O are different. (I follow Gibbard here in using small caps for concepts.) Furthermore, this is so even though, as it turns out, each of these concepts signifies a single property.[35]

In this way, we can see how our concepts and properties can come apart—just as our thoughts, which Gibbard understands as clusters or networks of concepts, can come apart from states of affairs—networks of properties.

For Gibbard, the normative is a distinction among thoughts and concepts and not among states of affairs or properties. Thoughts and concepts, then, can be either naturalistic or non-naturalistic. And some non-naturalistic concepts, are normative. For instance, the concept of BEING WATER is *naturalistic* and the concept of BEING GOOD is normative, or *non-naturalistic*. We have the

[33]Gibbard, "Properties" 144.
[34]Gibbard, "Properties" 144.
[35]I follow Gibbard by formatting concepts in lower-case caps and properties in italics.

psychological (naturalistic) concept HAPPINESS and a separate normative concept (non-naturalistic) BEING RIGHT. But, on Gibbard's view, these concepts can both pick out the same psychological property.

As Gibbard uses the term "property," then, what Parfit calls "normative properties" wouldn't count as *properties*. Gibbard would say that we can have normative thoughts and we can have normative concepts, all of which are ways of thinking about states of affairs and about their constituents, so properties.

This is an often misunderstood feature of Gibbard's account. There are no distinctly normative properties on Gibbard's account. Not acknowledging this has led to a good deal of confusion—confusion for which it's probably fair to say Gibbard is at least partly responsible.

Gibbard, for instance, will say things like: if a simple version of ethical hedonism is true, it might be that "the property of being good just *is* the property of being pleasant."[36] On one natural reading of this claim, one might conclude that the property itself is distinctly normative and that the property itself is also distinctly natural. (As I show below, this seems to be Parfit's *OWM2* interpretation of both Gibbard's and the non-analytic naturalist position.) But on Gibbard's account there is no distinctly normative property that is the property of being good. When he says things like "the property of being good just *is* the property of being pleasant," he means that the property that can be conceived of naturalistically as BEING PLEASANT is the same property that can be conceived of normatively as BEING GOOD. Though only one property (in Gibbard's sense, in which all properties are natural properties) is in play here, and though it is picked out equally well by the normative concept BEING GOOD and by the naturalistic concept BEING PLEASANT, no single property is *both* in itself normative and naturalistic—indeed, no single property is distinctly normative.

Returning to the water and H_2O example, note that just as it was a discovery that "water is H_2O", it can be a discovery that poking needles into kittens for fun is wrong. (Many of us, of course, might not think of this as a discovery, but it's certainly possible for people to think of this as morally

[36]Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2003) 35.

acceptable and possible furthermore to discover that it's actually wrong. Furthermore, the naturalistic concept HAPPINESS would remain distinct from the normative concept RIGHTNESS even if we discovered that a simple version of ethical hedonism was true and that each of these concepts picked out the very same property in the world. So we can have the naturalistic concept PLEASANT or HAPPINESS (or numerous other possibilities) and a separate normative, non-naturalistic concept GOODNESS or RIGHTNESS (or some other). But, as Gibbard sees it, these concepts can both pick out the same natural property, happiness or pleasant or whatever. Gibbard's term "concept of a property" thus picks out a way of thinking (a concept or cluster of concepts) about a property in that world (property_{pw}).

This helps explain Gibbard's proposed translation of Parfit's term "[normative] property_{df}" as his term "[normative] concept of a property_{pw}." And we can see how this fits nicely with Gibbard's proposed translation of Parfitian "[normative] facts_{inf}" as Gibbardian "true [normative] thoughts."

Gibbard is satisfied with this translation; Parfit less so.

G. What to Make of Gibbard's Proposed Translations

He is not proposing that properties just are concepts, Parfit insists.

Here's the thing, though, if any claim about anything can be restated as a claim about this thing's properties_{df} (which is what Parfit seems to propose), it follows that for every Gibbardian concept (of a property), there will be a Parfitian property_{df}. Gibbard could agree with Parfit that what he, Gibbard, would characterize as a concept of the property of being wrong (Parfit's property_{df} of being wrong) is separate from the Gibbardian concept of the property of failing to maximize happiness (Parfit's property_{df} of failing to maximize happiness). Nonetheless the concepts have a special relation mediated by the fact that they refer to the same properties.

There's some reason to think that this is a plausible Parfitian fact_{inf}, or, as Gibbard would put it, a true thought. Parfit says necessarily, a substantive normative claim "states that something has a normative property." Gibbard can say, necessarily, a substantive normative claim states that some

normative concept applies to a thing. Parfit might say that there's a relation between, say, the property of *failing to minimize suffering* and the separate property of *being wrong* such that when an act has the natural property, it has the separate irreducibly normative property.[37] Gibbard could put the claim into his language and thus agree. He might say necessarily, when the naturalistic concept FAILS TO MINIMIZE SUFFERING applies truly to a thing, then the separate normative concept IS WRONG applies truly to it (and vice versa).

Furthermore, if we understand true thoughts (which we're supposing are Parfit's facts in the informational sense) as clusters or networks of concepts, all of which are ways of thinking about the entirely natural world, then the relation of Gibbardian "concepts of properties$_{pw}$" to "true thoughts" matches up nicely with the relation between Parfitian properties$_{df}$ and facts$_{inf}$.

One puzzling feature of Parfit's response is that he accepts Gibbard's proposed translation of the Parfitian term "normative fact" as the Gibbardian term "true normative thought" but he rejects Gibbard's proposed translation of the Parfitian term "normative property" (which I read as "normative property$_{df}$") as the Gibbardian term "normative concept of a property$_{pw}$" (which I read as "normative concept of a property$_{pw}$"). But if nothing is left out of Gibbard's translation of "facts" in the relevant sense, then nothing is left out of Gibbard's translation of "properties."

H. Irreducibly Normative Facts, Again

Are there irreducibly normative facts, on Gibbard's account? The sorts of facts without which Parfit maintains normativity is an illusion?

Take the normative thought that poking the kitten with needles just for fun is wrong. On Gibbard's view, this thought is irreducibly normative, just as the concept of BEING WRONG is irreducibly normative. So, on Gibbard's view, we have irreducibly normative facts (in the sense of *true thoughts*). To be sure, however, Gibbard doesn't posit irreducibly normative properties. Gibbardian irreducibly normative facts, of course, would involve irreducibly normative concepts, such as the concept of BEING WRONG or RIGHT, GOOD or BAD, and so forth. But as Gibbard understands prop-

[37]Parfit 2:14, 301, 332.

erties, they necessarily concern the physical world. They are constituents of states of affairs and not of thoughts.

There would have to be a way to understand Parfitian irreducibly normative properties, therefore, understood as constituents of irreducibly normative facts, that would be compatible with something Gibbard would embrace.

One note of clarification: The claims "water is water" and "water is H_2O" state different Gibbardian truth thoughts and different Parfitian $facts_{inf}$. It does not follow from this, however, that two strings of words that differ must state either different Gibbardian truth thoughts or different Parfitian $facts_{inf}$. We'd have to work out an account of synonymy, of course. But if two different strings of words are synonymous, it would seem clear that they could be used to give voice to the same thoughts. And Parfit explicitly states that different claims *can* state the *same* $fact_{inf}$. They do so, he says, "when these claims give us the same information."[38] Two separate claims, then, can be used to state two separate or one and the same Gibbardian true thought or two separate or one and the same $fact_{inf}$. And two separate claims can be used to pick out two separate or the same Parfitian $fact_{inf}$ as well as two separate or the same fact in the sense Gibbard would distinguish as "state of affairs that obtain."

Let's turn now to the evidence against there being even as much convergence between Gibbard's and Parfit's accounts as we've found there to be between Gibbard and Dworkin and Gibbard and Scanlon. This, in spite of the fact that of the three—Dworkin, Scanlon, and Parfit—only Parfit comes close to recognizes the extent of the convergence between their accounts and Gibbard's.

IV. Evidence against Assimilation

A. An Overview of Evidence against Assimilation

There is reason to think that the reconciliation is not as complete as the figures themselves believe. This is what I want to explore, but while doing this I'll be exploring the bigger question of

[38]Parfit 2: 336.

what our options are, what kinds of accounts are most promising or genuine options on the table. Obviously when you have this reconciliation and when you celebrate reconciliation, what we're assuming is that there really is only one plausible set of commitments.

One reason to suspect something significant is at issue between Gibbard and Parfit is Parfit's insistence that non-analytic naturalists, aside from Railton, aren't allies. But if non-analytic naturalists are normative nihilists for the reasons Parfit proposes, so are Gibbard and Railton. Another reason to suspect difference is that there seem to be things Parfit wants to say about normative properties that go beyond what Gibbard captures with "concepts of properties." We should take seriously, of course, Parfit's rejecting of Gibbard's proposed translation of his term "normative property" as Gibbard's term "concept of a property" (with 'property' understood as Parfit's property$_{df}$). Even more importantly, however, Parfit thinks we can make informative claims using different concepts that do not correspond to two different properties. Moreover in that context, he says normative concepts are special in that regard, that there is this one to one connection. We need to understand this. It doesn't seem to fit. The bottom line is that conceptual distinctions aren't isomorphic to property distinctions.

Finally, related to the first point above, in *OWM3* Parfit very clearly leaves on the table his *OWM2* so-called Fact-Stating Argument. Indeed, he reaffirms it in his third volume—though he does not again lay it out. And this argument is simply incompatible with a reading of a Parfitian normative property as a Gibbardian concept of a property. For that matter, it's incompatible with a reading of Parfitian normative facts as Gibbardian true normative thoughts. Something, it would seem, has to give.

Let's begin now with a look at the so-called Fact-Stating Argument.

B. Fact-Stating Argument to the Effect that Non-Analytic Naturalists are not Allies

1. Parfit's rejection of normativity as conceptual thesis

Why does Parfit accept Gibbard on the side of the angels as well as the self-styled non-analytic naturalist Railton while rejecting non-analytic naturalism in general? Non-analytic naturalists

share Parfit's dissatisfaction with analytic naturalism along with his embrace of objectivity and truth in normative thought and discourse.[39] They are, of course, naturalists and he's a self-styled non-naturalist, but each is of a special sort.

Parfit's arguments against non-analytic naturalism include his triviality objection, which appears in both the second and third volumes of *OWM* and his fact-stating argument, which appears only in his second volume but which he affirms in his third. Both of these arguments focus on their adoption of a thesis that I'm calling *Normativity as conceptual* and that Parfit seems to want to argue leads to nihilism about the normative.

Normativity as conceptual states that the distinction between the normative and the natural is a distinction between two different kinds of concepts or thoughts rather than a distinction between two different kinds of properties or states of affairs. Furthermore, defenders of this thesis maintain that properties and states of affairs are all natural. Nonetheless, according to the thesis, we have learned something of normative importance when we learn that a particular normative concept picks out the same (natural) property that is picked out by a particular naturalistic concept. If this thesis is correct, we can have irreducibly normative thoughts about a reality the contents of which are exhausted by the physical. Such thoughts are irreducibly normative, however, in that they cannot be defined or restated in non-normative terms.

Gibbard, as we've seen, adopts the normativity as conceptual thesis—as does Railton.[40] There's a puzzle then over why Parfit posits as much convergence between his view and Railton's and his view and Gibbard's in his third volume while insisting that, in general, non-analytic naturalists are not allies—but not only not allies, they're nihilists about normativity. This is hard to square with the posited agreement between Parfit and Gibbard and Parfit and Railton. Indeed, it gives us reason to question whether what Parfit has in mind when he talks of "irreducibly normative facts" really doesn't go beyond what Gibbard has in mind when he talks about "truth normative thoughts"—in spite of Parfit's acceptance of the latter as an adequate translation of the former.

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[39]Parfit 3: 5.
[40]Gibbard, *Meaning* 27-8.

Parfit's so-called fact-stating argument is an argument against non-analytic naturalism. The problem is that it seems to be a very bad argument, especially if we are going to accept the reconciliationist approach. There's, of course, good reason to hesitate before attributing something to some sort of flat-footed mistake. If there is any hope of salvaging Parfit's point in the fact-stating argument without equivocation, however, it seems to me that Parfit will have to give up his claim to agreement with Gibbard about normative facts.

Let's turn now to the fact-stating argument. What I offer below is a direct quote.

2. Parfit's fact-stating argument against non-analytic naturalism.

[Parfit's] Fact-Stating Argument[41]

(1) We make some irreducibly normative claims.

(2) According to Non-Analytical Naturalists, when such claims are true, they state facts that are both normative and natural.

(3) If such normative facts were also natural facts, any such fact could also be stated by some other non-normative, naturalistic claim.[42]

Therefore

(4) Any such true normative claim [perhaps "kicking the dog for fun is wrong"] would state some fact that is the same as some fact that could be stated by some other, non-normative claim [perhaps "kicking the dog for fun fails to maximize pleasure"].

(5) If these two claims stated the same fact, they would give us the same information.

(6) This non-normative claim could not state a normative fact.

Therefore

[41]Directly quoted from Parfit.

[42]This seems poorly phrased. If the relevant facts are both normative and natural, per (2), then any of the relevant facts could only be stated by claims that are both normative and naturalistic. It's inconsistent with (2) to think about stating a given truth in purely naturalistic terms. First, he says the facts are both normative *and* natural; in (3), however, he speaks of normative as if they might or might not be natural facts, and then imagines the possibility of translating them without remainder into normative facts. But I can't do that and still be consistent with (2) as it's stated here.

[Conclusion:] If these two claims stated the same fact, by giving us the same information, this normative claim could not state a normative fact. Therefore, such normative claims could not, as these Naturalists believe, state facts that are both normative and natural.[43]

3. Critique of Parfit's Fact-Stating Argument

Let's look at this more closely. Recall that we're assuming that Parfitian $facts_{inf}$ are Gibbardian *true thoughts*—as they must be if Parfit is right to accept Gibbard's translation. We're also assuming that Parfitian $facts_{ref}$ are Gibbardian *states of affairs that obtain*. For each occurrence of the term "facts" in this argument, we'll have to decide which sense of fact Parfit has in mind.

Premise (1) reads: "We make some irreducibly normative claims." Parfit correctly notes that defenders of *normativity as conceptual* would grant Premise (1). Let's look at premise (2). [According to non-analytical naturalists, when such claims are true, they state facts that are both normative and natural.] Let's plug in $facts_{inf}$ (so, *ex hypothesi*, true thoughts). Premise (2) thus reads: "According to [non-analytic naturalists], when [irreducibly normative] claims are true, they state [true thoughts] that are both normative and natural." Of course, an irreducibly normative claim for a non-analytic naturalist, such as the claim "kicking dogs for fun is wrong" would give voice to a thought that includes a natural element (the kicking dogs part)—just as it would for Parfit—but it would incorporate an irreducibly normative element. And the irreducibly normative element of an irreducibly normative claim or thought, even for the non-analytic naturalists, would not be both normative and natural. On their view, irreducibly normative claims state irreducibly normative thoughts, not both normative and naturalistic thoughts!

Perhaps, then, "facts" in premise (2) is supposed to be understood as $facts_{ref}$. Now we have: "According to [non-analytic naturalists], when [irreducibly normative] claims are true, they state [that states of affairs obtain] that are both normative and natural." This certainly makes more sense. Of course, according to *normativity as conceptual*, "[t]here is no such thing as a specially normative state of affairs."[44] States of affairs are all natural. So to talk of a normative state of affairs would be to talk of

[43]Parfit 2: 338-9.
[44]Allan Gibbard, *Thinking* 181.

a natural state of affairs that can be conceived of normatively. When explaining the implications of adopting NC, Gibbard, for instance, will say things like: if a simple version of ethical hedonism is true, it might be that "[t]he property of being good just *is* the property of being pleasant." By this he means that the property that can be conceived of naturalistically as BEING PLEASANT is *the same property* that can be conceived of normatively as BEING GOOD. No single property or single state of affairs is *both* in itself normative and naturalistic.

Back to the argument: $\text{Facts}_{\text{ref}}$ does make most sense in premise (2).

Now premise "(3) If such normative facts were also natural facts, any such fact could also be stated by some other non-normative, naturalistic claim." Here it's clear that "facts" must be read as $\text{facts}_{\text{ref}}$ and so Gibbardian "states of affairs that obtain." These are the facts that on the *normativity as conceptual* view can be stated by a normative claim and by a non-normative, naturalistic claim.

But then what are we to make of premise (4)? The way premise (4) reads, it's clear we're supposed to take the sense of "facts" here as the same as the sense of "facts" in premise (3). But Parfit stipulates that "the phrase 'the same fact' [in premise (4) must be read] in the informational sense" of fact,[45] which, *ex hypothesi*, amounts to reading "facts" in this premise as true thoughts. But, as we've seen, we simply cannot read "facts" in either of the previous premises as "true thoughts."

Assuming, therefore, that Parfit's two senses of "fact" map onto Gibbard's "true thought" versus "state of affairs that obtains," Parfit either makes a fairly striking error in his attempt to represent the *normativity as conceptual* position or equivocates in his use of the term "facts" in this argument. Either way, he does not establish his conclusion.

To be sure, as I mention above, the fact-stating argument doesn't make its way into Parfit's third volume of *OWM*. The Triviality Objection does, however, and it fails for the same sorts of reasons. Furthermore, Parfit, who acknowledges in his third volume mistakes he thinks he made in the second volume, doesn't there say anything to imply that he no longer affirmed the fact-stating argu-

[45]Parfit 2: 339.

ment. Indeed, in his third volume, he defends the argument in response to at least one set of objections.[46]

4. Parfit's Triviality Objection to Non-Analytic Naturalism

Even in *OWM3*, where Parfit maintains that Gibbard is an ally, he maintains that the non-analytic naturalists are not. In his third volume, he offers what he called in his second volume his triviality objection, which is puzzling in the same way that the fact-stating argument is puzzling: "According to all Non-Analytical Naturalists, though we use some irreducibly normative concepts and make some irreducibly normative claims, these concepts refer to natural properties, and these claims, when they are true, state natural facts." "Though these claims could state only natural facts," Parfit continues, non-analytic naturalists also believe that "if we had true beliefs about these facts, such beliefs would help us to make good decisions, and to act well."[47] Parfit thinks this cannot work. He thinks the information we might gain here "would be negative, since we would learn that there were no irreducibly normative truths."

Note, though, that the non-analytic naturalist view is *not* that a true belief that some particular state of affairs obtains is what helps us make good decisions and act well. Rather, it's the true belief that some property that can be conceived of naturalistically (say, as maximizing net pleasure) can *also* be conceived of normatively (say, as being what we ought to do). This helps us by letting us know, say, that some act that is pleasant, is good. The idea would be that we'd learn that every act that has the physical property of maximizing net pleasure is an act we ought to perform.

5. What to Think about the Fact-Stating Argument

If nothing is left out of Gibbard's translation of "facts" in the relevant sense, then nothing is left out of Gibbard's translation of "properties." But if nothing is left out of Gibbard's translation of "facts," Parfit's arguments against the adoption of *normativity as conceptual*, both in his second and third volumes, fail in a fairly striking way. If he's not equivocating, it seems there must be a way in which he's using the term "fact" that isn't equivalent to Gibbard's "true thought." The only hope of

[46]See Parfit's response to Bruce Russell (Parfit 3: 161).
[47]Parfit 3: 7.

redeeming this argument, it seems, is for there to be something that's left out of Gibbard's translation of Parfit's term "normative fact" as Gibbard's term "true normative thought"—again, in spite of Parfit's acceptance of this translation.

Perhaps Parfit is using the term "fact" in a way defenders of *normativity as conceptual* fail to capture. I cannot here promise to offer a clear construal of what I think might be left out, indeed, of how Parfit uses the term "fact" when discussing normativity. I do think I can gesture at one possibility, though, with the aim of salvaging Parfit's point in the fact-stating argument without equivocation.

It is, of course, possible that Parfit somehow overlooked the above outlined problems with his fact-stating argument and his triviality objection. I hesitate, however, to attribute this sort of flat-footed mistake to him. I suspect, though, that the best hope of salvaging Parfit's point will be if we understand Parfitian properties as being either more robust than his comments suggest or at least involving some sort of perhaps lightweight but nonetheless positive metaphysical commitment.

Of course, if problems with the fact-stating argument and triviality objections is the only reason to suspect that Parfitian normative facts go beyond Gibbardian true normative thoughts or that Parfitian normative properties involve more than is involved in Gibbardian concepts of properties, at least the case could be made that we have reason to conclude that Parfit simply overlooked the above sorts of problems. There are, however, other reasons to posit more difference between Parfit and Gibbard than the former suspects.

C. Things Parfit says about Properties that Don't Fit What Gibbard Says

1. Overview of Claims that Don't Fit

Parfit says some things about normative properties that don't fit with what Gibbard could say. As we've seen (Part II), if we understand Gibbardian "true (normative) thoughts" as Parfit's "(normative) facts in the informational sense," as clusters or networks of concepts, all of which are ways of thinking about the entirely natural world, then the relation of Gibbardian "concepts of properties$_{pw}$" to "true thoughts" matches up nicely with the relation between Parfitian properties$_{df}$

and facts$_{inf}$. In spite of Parfit's puzzled response that he's not proposing that properties *just are* concepts, as we've seen, much of what Parfit says about normative properties$_{df}$ really does fit with Gibbard's proposed translation as his "normative concepts of a properties$_{pw}$."

One possibility, then, is that Gibbard's proposed translation is on target and nothing of significance has been omitted. If this is right, however, there is little basis for Parfit's insistence that property talk is *essential* to explaining normativity, even though it's plausible that property talk might be helpful in doing so. Indeed, a Parfitian account of normative properties would be compatible even with a minimalist understanding of normative properties$_{df}$. And if explaining normativity in terms of properties is *not* essential, Parfit ought to give up his claim that adopting *normativity as conceptual* amounts to abandoning normativity.

Another possibility is that Gibbard's proposed translation leaves something out. This hypothesis receives at least some support by Parfit's clear puzzlement over Gibbard's translation. It is also supported by responses Parfit makes to proposals regarding the putative implications of his notion of properties in the relevant sense. Importantly, Parfit thinks we can make informative claims using different concepts which correspond to separate properties, an impossibility if Parfitian "normative properties" really are Gibbardian "concepts of properties." Furthermore, some of what Parfit says when characterizing his agreement with Gibbard, and in particular when characterizing what he takes to be his own previous misreadings of Gibbard as well as some of what Parfit says when proposing how Gibbard might recharacterize Parfit's view incline me to think that something, perhaps even something significant, remains at issue between them.

2. Parfit proposes "conceptual properties" instead of "concepts of properties"

Parfit responds with puzzlement to Gibbard's proposed translation of his term "[normative] property" as Gibbard's term "[normative] concept of a property." Surely, he writes, "Gibbard doesn't mean that when I say that the Sun has the property of being bright, he would say that the Sun has the concept of being bright. As Gibbard would agree, the Sun doesn't have the kind of

brightness that having any concept requires."[48] No, this is not what Gibbard means. Gibbard would say that when we say that the sun has the property of being bright, we mean that we can apply this description to the sun, which, in turn means *we* can *conceive* of the sun as being bright—or the sun can be conceived of as being bright. (We can think of the sun a certain way, that is, have the concept of the sun, BEING BRIGHT, which, in turn, is the concept of the sun's property$_{pw}$ of *being bright*.) Parfitian properties$_{df}$ necessarily involve the descriptions themselves, the way of thinking *itself*, perhaps as objects of conscious reflection or cognition, in a way that Gibbardian properties$_{pw}$ don't but Gibbardian concepts of properties$_{pw}$ do.

Parfit proposes that a better translation of his term "description-fitting properties [read: properties$_{df}$]"—indeed, a translation that he would "accept"—would be "conceptual properties." He explains further that "the word 'conceptual' suggests [that] these properties are individuated by the concepts with which we describe them, and refer to them."[49] Parfit points out that Gibbard writes that he "could have formulated [his] expressivism treating our thoughts of properties as Parfit does", and on the assumption that Gibbard is reading Parfit as Parfit reads himself, he proceeds to assume that this would be a satisfactory replacement of Gibbard's translation and to conclude that there is, after all, "no substantive disagreement" with respect to normative properties. [50]

Gibbard would, of course, agree that "concepts of properties$_{pw}$", as he reads this, are individuated by concepts. Indeed, they are so individuated by definition. Properties$_{pw}$, though, are *not* individuated by concepts and this is the sense of property in Gibbard's proposed translation. But Parfit seems to be using the term "property" in the description-fitting sense of property in his proposed translation. Again, he proposes that Gibbard translate his (Parfit's) term "normative properties$_{df}$" as Gibbardian "conceptual properties", so "conceptual properties$_{df}$". This amounts to something like "conceptual concepts of properties$_{pw}$", though, which, of course, has one too many terms.

[48]Parfit 3: 149.
[49]Parfit 3: 149.
[50]Parfit 3: 149.

Perhaps, though, the way to read Parfit is that in addition to concepts and thoughts, in addition, that is, to ways of thinking about the world, and in addition to properties in the world and worldy states of affairs, there exists something else, say, properties, understood as perhaps abstract objects, things to which we "refer", using Parfit's language, or that we even "describe"—again, which is how he puts it. Here, of course, we're not talking about a "description" of the physical world or of wordly states of affairs, that is, those things we can think of in different ways, say, naturalistically or normatively or otherwise. Might it be, then, that when Parfit insists that on his view normative beliefs are *not* "made to be true by correctly describing, or corresponding to, how things are in some part of reality,"[51] he means in some physical reality? He certain means at least that. He explicitly states, though, that he also means that they are not part of some putatively non-spatio-temporal part of reality. They are not part of some Platonic realm. They do not involve non-natural entities existing in the spatio-temporal realm. Whyever then does he use the language of "reference" and "description"?

It's this reference relation or descriptive quality that seems to be left out by Gibbard. To be sure, he'll reserve the term "reference relation" only for the relation between words and thoughts, on one hand, and physical properties in the world or objects or states of affairs, on the other, and he'd reserve the term 'descriptive' for 'naturalistic' descriptions of natural states of affairs. But that's clearly not how Parfit is using these terms. And so there's something he calls a reference relation and something he calls a description that is not available to Gibbard in his theoretical framework.

3. Different sort of reference relation, Parfitian vs. Gibbardian normative properties

There is a reference relation between our concepts of normative properties and normative properties themselves that seems to be part of Parfit's understanding of normative facts and that seems to be missing from Gibbard's understanding of normative concepts (of natural properties). Parfit treats normative properties$_{df}$ as things or entities to which we *refer* with our normative concepts.[52] These properties are "description-fitting," he explains, "in that they fit the descriptive words

[51]Parfit 3: 59.
[52]Parfit 3: 150.

or phrases with which we *refer* to them" (italics mine).[53] There at least appears to be a reference relation and something at the other end of it that's left out of Gibbard's translation.

Of course, on Gibbard's account too there's a reference relation between concepts and properties. But, as we've seen, Gibbard's term "concept of a property" is talking about a way of thinking, a concept, about something fixed in the physical world, a property$_{pw}$. So Gibbard's proposed translation of Parfitian "normative properties$_{df}$" are objects of thought or entities we think that involve thinking about entities in the world properties$_{pw}$ in a particular way. As Gibbard puts it, "when we think "Hesperus is now visible", the concept HESPERUS is thought as part of one's thinking HESPERUS IS NOW VISIBLE. In thinking this, I refer to Hesperus, which is referring to Venus."[54]

Parfit too grants that we can use the term "property" to in such a way as to refer to properties$_{pw}$. When we talk of normative properties, however, Parfit insists that we either refer or fail to refer to existing normative properties (properties$_{df}$), properties that are separate from our concepts or thoughts of them. They are non-natural properties$_{df}$ (so very clearly distinct from properties$_{pw}$ that are picked out by our thoughts). It's hard to see why positing the existence of such properties, understood as separate from things in the world and separate from our concepts is not positing the ontological existence of such properties.

Let's attempt to take Parfit at his word, however, and assume that properties$_{df}$, of which normative properties are one kind, do not involve ontological existence, even though we do *refer* to them with our terms and thoughts. If this *is* right, surely, then, he's *not* using 'refers' in a strict sense.

Perhaps Parfit is using the term "refers" in what might be characterized as a broad sense here, that is, in such a way that when I say "That barn is red," I have referred to the color red. In a narrower sense of "refers," of course, I haven't referred to the color red, whereas I have when I say "The color red attracts attention." Cornell realists Richard Boyd and N. Sturgeon use the broad sense of the term "refers" and take the case of referring to the property red by saying "the barn is red" as being parallel to the case of referring to moral properties with our moral terms—even

[53]Parfit 3: 6.
[54]Gibbard, private correspondence, October 5, 2015.

though they, as defenders of non-analytic naturalism, don't hold that any properties are distinctly in themselves normative. Perhaps Parfit too then is using the term "refers" in this broad sense.

If that's right, though, we have to ask what then does he think the non-analytic naturalists are leaving out? And why then does he resist Gibbard's translation of his term "normative property$_{df}$" as Gibbard's term "concept of propertys$_{pw}$"? It seems clear to me that Parfit would resist any suggestion that on his account it could turn out that there are no properties that are distinctly in themselves normative. Furthermore, as Parfit wants us to understand properties$_{df}$, two different concepts can "correctly describe" and "thereby individuate the same property", as in property$_{df}$, and not only the same propery$_{pw}$.[55] All of this, of course, points to less agreement than Parfit posits and Gibbard admits.

4. Unclear how to distinguish Parfitian properties$_{df}$

We know how Gibbardian concepts are distinguished, but there is a puzzle over how to distinguish Parfitian properties$_{df}$. Parfit explicitly states that "properties[$_{df}$]" are "individuated by the concepts with which we describe them . . . ."[56]. What Parfit means by "describe" here will be key to understanding his term "properties$_{df}$". On one natural reading, it seems that for every concept, say, the concept of BEING HESPERUS, there is a property, the property of *being Hesperus*.[57] And for every conceptual distinction there will be a property distinction—indeed, as there would have to be if Parfitian properties$_{df}$, are Gibbardian concepts of properties.

And yet Parfit explicitly denies that he's treating properties$_{df}$ in such a way that for every concept, there's one property$_{df}$, insisting, for instance, that two concepts can mean something different while referring to the same property$_{df}$, even offering examples.[58] Furthermore, he denies that he wants to say that "if an identity statement 'X is Y' is informative, then X and Y must refer to differ-

[55]Parfit 3: 149.

[56]Parfit 3: 150 (my italics). The portion of this quotation which I've omitted here may turn out to be significant; I return to it later.

[57]Gibbard has pushed me to be clear about this. Also, this is one of his favorite examples.

[58]Parfit grants that critics like Russell claim that he "covertly assumed that 'we cannot discover that two expressions that mean something different refer to the same property'." Parfit insists, however, that he "did not make that assumption," pointing out that he "often mentioned such discoveries." See Parfit 3: 161.

ent properties." Rather he insists that "some true statements of this kind are informative even though they are claims about the identity of a single property."[59]

Not only does this give us reason to think that something is at issue between Parfit and Gibbard here, but, also, it leaves us with a puzzle over how to distinguish Parfitian properties$_{df}$. (It's clear how different concepts could pick out different properties$_{pw}$, but that's another matter.)

As we've seen, though, he does insist that in the normative case, there would have to be a distinctly normative property that is separate from any natural property. Parfit also claims that Railton "partly misdescribes" his position by assuming that he wants to say that for a claim "to state an important discovery, this claim must describe the relation between two different properties."[60] Here again, though, the normative case, he's clear that such a relation must be highlighted. Nonetheless, he argues, we can have facts in the informational sense even when we don't have distinct properties.

We need therefore to understand why Parfit would insist, as he does, that we gain something by explaining normative thought and discourse in terms of properties understood as distinctly normative and separate from other non-normative, including natural, properties (and not just normative concepts which pick out natural properties).

Parfit invites Gibbard to revise his translation, to translate his term "properties$_{df}$" not as "concepts of properties" but, rather, as "conceptual properties."[61] As I read Parfit, this is in part because for him concepts and the properties to which they refer are separate, and, indeed, that properties serve an important explanatory role that concepts cannot serve. In his theoretical landscape, it seems, there are both concepts and sorts of concept-matching properties, and among the concept-matching properties, there are both normative and non-normative properties. The question, though, is what role is played by these concept-matching properties. Why is it that having the concept is not enough to have the concept-matching property?

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[59]Parfit makes this point in response to objections by Russell (Parfit 3: 161).

[60]Parfit 3: 93. Railton adds a qualification here, pointing out that there are lots of informative claims that relate properties to one another. 'Dogs exist' doesn't relate two properties but it's an informative claim.

[61]Parfit 3: 149-50.

V. Some Proposals

A. Parfitian Normative Properties Don't, After All, Go Beyond Gibbardian Concepts of Properties

Perhaps, in the end, Parfitian normative properties (read properties_{df}) don't involve any commitment beyond Gibbardian concepts of properties (read properties_{pw}). After all, even quasi-realist expressivist Simon Blackburn, more of an emotivist than Gibbard, maintains that "[t]here is no harm in saying that ethical predicates refer to properties, when such properties are merely the semantic shadows of the fact that they function as predicates."[62] If this is right, however, then it's hard to see how Parfit can insist that explaining normativity in terms of normative properties is essential.

On this interpretation of Parfit, he would have to give up his attempt to establish that non-analytic naturalists abandon normativity, at least he would have to give up the arguments he offers in support of this (see his Fact-Stating Argument and Triviality Objection). Parfit resists this concession, however, even in his third volume.[63] But not only this. Parfit would have to give up a good deal of what he has to say about normative properties and the work they can do in explaining normativity. This seems, therefore, quite an uncharitable reading of Parfit.

B. Parfit as Defender of Ontic-Realism-Lite

The most obvious thought, it seems, is that Parfit's assumptions about normativity encourage him to favor a more robust non-naturalist construal of normative language than he wants to grant. 'Robust', of course, wouldn't be quite right. So if we think of robust realists as ontic realists,

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[62]Simon Blackburn, "How to be an Ethical Antirealist," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12.1 (1988): 181.

[63]To be sure, as we have seen, he posits full convergence with Railton, who defends what he characterizes as non-analytic naturalism. Yet, Parfit takes convergence with Railton to be compatible with holding that non-analytic naturalism cannot avoid nihilism about the normative. How are we to make sense of this combination of positions? Either Parfit reads Railton as a non-analytic naturalist or not. On the first assumption, he sides with Railton in thinking that normative properties are simply a way of thinking or conceiving of natural properties, or he thinks that there is something more to normative properties than this and that there's something in Railton's account that can help us see what this is. On the second assumption, it is not clear what it is about Railton's account in particular that makes Parfit posit the convergence he posits. This is something about which I need to think further.

Parfit may be defending ontic-realism-*lite*. If this is right, then we might explain Parfit's seeming puzzlement over Gibbard's translation of his property talk as follows: Parfit takes it that a normative concept (of a property$_{pw}$) can be at best a tool we use to pick out some feature of the physical world. He sees it as a feature of our thought and language, not an object of thought. But Parfit wants to retain a sense of distinctly normative property-as-object-of-thought. He wants to say that a property, whether normative or non-normative, is a feature something has and that we can think and speak about, and he seems to assume that Gibbard avoids this by characterizing normative properties as concepts (of properties).[64]

Perhaps Parfit thinks that if we speak in terms of normative "concepts" instead of normative "properties," we are committed to conceding that normativity is merely a matter of the thoughts people have about states of affairs, rather than something that is objectively true of such states of affairs.[65] On Parfit's view, it seems, it is objectively true or false of a state of affairs that it has the property of wrongness. Perhaps he takes it that without properties, we cannot have it that people are objectively correct to apply certain concepts and thoughts to states of affairs.

When characterizing Gibbard's proposal, Parfit explains that Gibbard takes it that there are facts referred to by the contents of our true normative thoughts. I think this suggests that he thinks Gibbard and he agree about properties-as-objects-of-thought and that there is merely a problem with Gibbard's proposed translation. I'm just not sure he's right about this, though. I think it's likely that Parfit and Gibbard are further apart than Parfit thinks.

If I'm right, this might help to get at what troubles him about Gibbard's approach and once made him think Gibbard's approach veered toward nihilism. He might be thinking that if wrongness isn't a property of (say) kicking dogs for fun, if it's not a feature of this state of affairs (a feature we actually pick out with our concepts), then it is not an objective feature after all. And if wrongness just is some natural property, then we can state that something is wrong by stating that something

[64]Thanks to David Gordon for pushing me here.
[65]I thank David Gordon for pushing me here.

has such and such natural property; and then, as he claims in his fact-stating argument, we have reduced normativity away.

It seems, then, that Parfit presupposes some sort of something separate from our thoughts to which our true thoughts are responsive and that is missed by our false thoughts. And this something is not part of the natural world. Yet Parfit's explicit view is that positing this does not mean positing ontological commitment to something part of a non-natural reality. Indeed, it doesn't even mean positing a non-natural reality itself.

It is thus unclear what, on his account, normative properties could be. He insists that they exist but states also that they exist non-ontologically. Perhaps by this what he really means is that they don't involve the sort of robust ontological status assumed by Platonists or perhaps merely that we don't have causal interactions with them. But these negative claims leave unsettled the ontological status or metaphysical nature of such properties.

Is there conceptual room for a position that straddles the line between what I've been calling robust non-naturalism and what I've been calling non-inflationary moral realism? Is there room for a position between robust non-naturalism and non-metaphysical non-naturalism – for a position we might call "relaxed normative realism"? Gibbard certainly doesn't think so, and Dworkin explicitly rejects the coherence of ontological or metaphysical claims about normative properties and normative facts. Parfit's apparently conflicting comments suggests that he thinks there must be something more than is dreamed of in their philosophies–even if he doesn't understand how this could be.

If this is right, then perhaps, in spite of (misplaced, as I've argued) characterizations of accounts such as Scanlon's or Dworkin's as versions of "relaxed moral realism" Parfit might be the only one of this group properly characterized as a "relaxed" realist—or a defender of non-naturalism *lite*.[66] Gibbard explains that "what's crucial to normative thinking isn't how it bears on the non-natural layout of the world, but how it bears on action and the like.[67] And it seems to me that this is

[66]The "lite" characterization is not mine. Gibbard characterizes Scanlon and Dworkin as "non-naturalists light" (Gibbard, *Meaning* 227).

[67]Gibbard, *Meaning* 219.

the very point that Scanlon, for one, emphasizes and defends.[68] If my tentative proposal about Parfit is right, however, perhaps Parfit is thinking of normativity in a way that's parallel to thinking of the layout of the world. And if this is right, then there's no room in Gibbard's theoretical landscape for Parfitian normative facts or properties.

Perhaps, though, we should take Parfit at his word that he posits no normative ontology.

C. Accountability but No Ontology

In the concluding pages of this chapter, I want–very tentatively–to speculate on what might be at stake in Parfit's ambivalent relation to both the expressivists and the other non-naturalists who reject a robust (Platonic) ontology of values.

Consider, again, non-analytic naturalism. According to those who endorse this view, a property that we can conceive of naturalistically (say, as being pleasant) can also be conceived of normatively (say, as being good). Parfit rejects this way of thinking about the relationship between the natural and the normative. It is, he says, because he attributed this view to Gibbard that he also rejected his form of expressivism. In particular, he misunderstood Gibbard to be using the phrase 'a property' in the description-fitting sense while insisting that it can be informative to learn that a natural concept and a normative concept can refer to the same property.[69] Now he sees that Gibbard was relying on the "necessarily-co-extensional" sense of property—but, again, not in the description-fitting sense of property.

Note that Gibbardian properties$_{pw}$ would be characterized as the extensions of our terms. So if properties$_{df}$ just are concepts of properties$_{pw}$, then using the description-fitting sense of property would involve taking account of the extensions of our terms. And if we did indeed learn that the concepts WRONG and WOULD FAIL TO MAXIMIZE NET PLEASURE referred to the same physical property, then if properties$_{df}$ are concepts of properties$_{pw}$, this would amount to learning that the property of *being wrong* is coextensive with the property of *failing to maximize pleasure*.

[68]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford: OUP 2014).
[69]Parfit 2: 8.

But, then, this is the position adopted by defenders of the normativity-as-conceptual thesis, that is, one defining feature of defending either non-analytic naturalism or Gibbard-style expressivism. Perhaps, then, the right thing to say is that Parfit in both his second and third volumes has misunderstood the sort of position adopted by defenders of the normativity-as-conceptual thesis—and thus has misunderstood the position defended by non-analytic naturalists and by Gibbard. Note, however, that he would therefore lose the tools to distinguish his account from at least this version of naturalism, and key portions of volume three would have to be revised.

Parfit clearly holds that there's a level of explanation of our normative thought and discourse where it looks as if the explanations must be given in terms of properties—and not in terms of ways of thinking of states of affairs or bearers or ways of thinking of properties in the physical world. Perhaps there is a way we might think of properties being necessary to explanations that doesn't involve ontological commitment to properties. If this were possible, then we would have a story about what Parfit means when he says that normative properties exist non-ontologically.

Chris Swoyer and Francesco Oriolia point out that "[p]hilosophers who argue that properties exist almost always do so [that is, posit the existence of properties] because they think properties are needed to solve certain philosophical problems." This certainly seems to be the most important reason to posit the existence of moral or normative properties. We want to say something about what is the *object* of normative thought and discourse. We want to talk about that object of our thought, that which we are said to believe. And we want to keep this separate from our attitudes—our state of mind. Properties seem to provide us with the resources to talk about whatever it is that is our object of normative thought and discourse.

Representationalists assume properties must be taken to exist in such a way as to link up with my thoughts and words, and such links must somehow be basic to explanation. But then properties come with severe costs, specifically ontological worries, worries we might put in terms of the placement problems.

Perhaps, though, there's a role that properties can play that doesn't involve placement problems. Perhaps there's a way of thinking of normative properties as constitutives of normative facts,

normative facts, of course, understood as not just a truth thought about a natural state of affairs. The question is whether such properties can be thought of as existing *non-ontologically* and what this could possibly mean.

Swoyer and Oriolia further explain that individual philosopher's "views about the nature of properties are strongly influenced by the problems they think properties are needed to solve."[70] Perhaps Parfit has in mind something like the role properties might play in characterizing the content of one's thought or one's assertion that is understood as independent from a state of mind. Perhaps Parfit thinks he needs properties to characterize what it is that someone believes when someone has a normative belief understood as a different matter from what it is to have a normative belief.

Parfit is very clear that he thinks only natural properties can be 'causal'. But he rejects the view that normative facts are natural facts described in a certain way. Rather he thinks that normative facts are facts with a certain significance, and he seems to think that we need normative properties in order to capture this significance.

The challenge for Parfit is to explain how the irreducibly normative properties can play the explanatory role he needs them to play, how they can explain the content of judgments—fix such content. Parfit introduces a notion of non-causal "responding to," but it's hard to fix precisely what this is supposed to be. It's hard to see how any of this can get off the ground without wading into metaphysics. What do we get from normative properties? Perhaps for Parfit they offer something for normative truth-claims to be *about*, something that's *responsible* for our knowledge of it. But this comes at a high price, since we get all the metaphysical baggage, while, it seems, the normative remains unexplained. Positing properties might help to explain our *knowledge* of the normative, but it makes sense to posit such properties only if we already understand what normativity *is*. It is not clear how a property can be what we respond to without being either what we interact with causally or the sort of thing that Gibbard has in mind**.**

Perhaps, though, there is another way.

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[70]Chris Swoyer and Francesco Oriolia, "Properties," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Feb. 16, 2016) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/properties/> Aug. 1, 2017.

D. Accountability and Structure[71]

The thought that there is a third alternative is, it seems, (closely related to) the thought that natural properties are no more fundamental than non-natural properties. In other words, if normative properties are ultimately to be cashed out in terms of how we conceptualize reality, then so, too, are natural properties. In both cases, it is the properties of things that determine their nature, and so determine the "domain" to which these things belong. This vague suggestions is, it seems, compatible with Railton's suggestion that Parfit regards properties as set-generating things, rather than as a constellation of different things.

This view applies to mathematical properties as well. Taking an example from Parfit's third volume involving an exchange with Frank Jackson: We can say that being equilateral and being equiangular are different properties, even though they coincide extensionally. And he can have these be properties even though they're not part of the causal order of nature, they're not properties in the physical world. But they can nonetheless be understood as real properties and understanding them this way can play an informative role in one's explanation of how mathematical thought and language works.

On this view, there's a real, substantive question in any given case: Is there a distinct property here or not? We might say that the property of being an even number is the same property as the property of being a number that we have got from an odd number by adding one while concluding that being equilateral and equiangular are different properties. We can even further divide these properties into ones that involve ontological commitment and ones that don't. Mathematical properties wouldn't seem to be particularly ontological, but psychological properties might.

The idea is that what gives you a good explanation is the answer to questions such as What is this property equilaterality? What is this property equiangularity? The answer is that each of these properties is what generates a given set. And in explaining why something belongs in a given set, they also thereby explain why the set of all the equilateral things is also the set of all the equiangular

[71]I am heavily indebted to Sarah Buss for the ideas elaborated in this section.

things. Similarly, in the normative case, we can understand that what it is for something to be good and what it is for something to make someone happy are different properties but we can understand that all and only the things that make someone happy are good.[72]

On this admittedly rather impressionistic account, the role of properties is tied to the role of a structure of explanatory relations that is not reducible to the relations among concepts. Something of this sort has been defended in the philosophy of mathematics. Thus, for example, one view in the philosophy of mathematics is that explanations go by illustrating structural relations—between sets and numbers and groups and functions and so on. On this view, the status of those relations doesn't seem to be the status of concepts. So when we ask about the existence of a function with a certain property, that doesn't seem to be asking do we have a concept of a function with that property. One could think that mathematical explanation then involves these somewhat robust ideas of property, but not a notion of property with the kind of reality that we find with physical properties. It requires only, let's say, mathematical reality. On this view, it makes sense to say we have a meaningful layer of explanation at the level of properties that is distinct from either matters of concepts and concept identity or concrete facts

In his third volume Parfit offers an example of two terms (or claims) with different meanings (so conceptually distinct) referring to one property$_{df}$: the "discovery that 'heat' and 'molecular kinetic energy' though having different meanings, refer to the same property." [73] I think here he's trying to resist the idea that just any description (or any distinct concept) generates a brand new property. Heat and mean molecular kinetic energy are quite different descriptions. And that's an informative statement.

I do worry somewhat about this example. It's, of course, a physical example and Parfit has been very clear that two terms, one normative and one naturalistic, cannot refer to the same proper-

[72]I thank Peter Railton for helping me think of Parfit in these terms.
[73]Parfit 3: 103-4.

ty property$_{df}$. In the end, therefore, it seems the intuitive understanding of the normative as distinct from the naturalistic is doing a good deal of work.[74]

Of course, once we recognize the importance of the intuitive understanding of the normative and the role this seems to play, it's less clear that Parfit can insist that there's a level of explanation he can capture and that Gibbard cannot. Gibbard is going to say that he can explain everything Parfit can explain without needing to refer to non-natural properties or any properties$_{df}$. Parfit can say there are informative statements of property identities. Gibbard can say that separate concepts pick out the same things. What about facts? Facts contain concepts. Gibbard can have different kinds of facts, descriptive and normative, and he can explain that difference by saying you have descriptive concepts of properties and normative concepts of properties.

Here's what matters. We have two separate questions: Can we get away with just natural properties? To this, I'm proposing Parfit answers no. A separate question is can we get away with talking in terms of properties with the understanding that this language can be deflated away? To this I propose Parfit also answers no. If we are not to posit the existence of non-natural properties that are like natural properties only not-natural, the question is whether we have another coherent picture of normative properties. The preceding reflections are my best attempt to sketch such an account. The sketchiness of this sketch reflects my uncertainty about whether any such answer is to be had.

E. Transcendental

My uncertainty on the above outlined point may reflect my uncertainty on what to say about Kant's discussion of the synthetic a priori. If Parfit is gesturing at a genuine alternative possibility, perhaps the key to understanding this possibility lies in Kant. Here, things get even more speculative. I'm really unsure about all of the following. I am going far out on a limb here, but I want to think about the possibility that in spite of what he says, Parfit is more of a Kantian than he avows (or recognizes). Perhaps what he's presupposing is something like the synthetic a priori. People who

[74]I should take note of Parfit's "they're just too different" argument in vol. 2.

embrace the synthetic a priori think that there are cases where it is not about analyzing concepts. In the most famous example, you're asked to imagine you have a sphere and it has the property of being red all over. It will follow that it doesn't have the property of being green all over. This latter isn't a consequence of meanings. This is a necessary synthetic truth. On this view, normative facts may not be natural facts, they may not be platonic universals, they may not be Dworkin's *morons*, but they are also not natural facts described in a certain way. They have a certain significance that goes beyond how we think of things.

Think about how math works: it's natural to say we're trying to discern a structure. We're trying to understand a relation among things. We're engaged in discovery not construction. We're trying to discover the norms that govern thought, the norms of good thinking, and the facts about what we have reason to do or believe, and the relation between and among these. You might think that once we have the ontology of the natural world and we have our ability to conceptualize it in different ways, we have everything. You might also think, however, that something intelligible transcends the natural world, including what we concept users do when we apply concepts. Perhaps Parfit thinks of the normative in this way. Of course, accounting for normativity in this way faces the additional problem of explaining the tight connection between the normative structure and motivations and action.

I offer these very speculative reflections in the interest of stimulating further efforts to discover whether Parfit saw something dimly or was simply confused. Parfit did seem to assume that Gibbard's picture makes the norms too mind-dependent. What Parfit thinks is missing, perhaps, is this idea that in a really important sense, the constraint comes from without. This, recall, seems also to be what Scanlon thinks is missing from Gibbard's picture. The idea seems to be that a fact is what a true thought is *about*. It's not a true thought. I am really not sure what this comes to, because just insisting that there's a sense in which the contrast comes from without is not quite to offer a theoretical account of how this work.

It seems likely that Parfit and Scanlon both share a kind of background picture, one that resist the idea that, on the one hand, there are some sorts of objects out there that are distinctly nor-

mative but that also resists the idea that all that's out there is physical and that the normative is a way of conceiving of the physical. Perhaps it's the latter sort of worry that prompts a robust realist like Enoch to go for normative ontology. As we've seen, Scanlon and Parfit want to back off from that. But this seems to leave them in a situation of wanting to say there is this "non-ontological sense of real." This, of course, is Parfit's term, but perhaps this is the sense that Scanlon seems to think is missing from Gibbard's account.

VI. Conclusion

Parfit and Gibbard largely agree. As Parfit grants, he and Gibbard agree not only that our normative thoughts and utterances are capable of being true or false, but also that some of our normative beliefs are true. They both agree, therefore, that there are substantive normative or moral facts. Furthermore, they agree that representationalism is an unhelpful account of moral or more broadly normative thought and discourse. Indeed, as Parfit puts it, normative beliefs are *not* "made to be true by correctly describing, or corresponding to, how things are in some part of reality." He and Gibbard both also agree in rejecting a form of naturalism in accordance with which normative attributions are analytically equivalent to attributions of natural properties. In addition to rejecting the idea that normative truths *just are* features of the natural world, they agree that normativity is best understood as *non-natural*. Parfit, Dworkin, Scanlon and Gibbard all agree that we do not have to be causally affected by something in order to know about it. Just as it is difficult to make the case that Dworkin's (Chapter 2) or Scanlon's (Chapter 3) versions of non-naturalistic moral or normative realism are really incompatible with Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism, it is also difficult to isolate just what is at issue between the non-naturalist Parfit and the expressivist Gibbard.

We have seen, however, that there may well be something about which they disagree. Focusing our attention on this disagreement promises to shed light on some long-standing metaethical debates. In particular, I think that, there's a real issue between Gibbard and Parfit about whether there

is a role for property-based explanations that minimalism about the normative fails to capture. Indeed, ironically, Parfit's attempts to defend the view that he and Gibbard do not disagree reveals where they may well part ways. Parfit seems to make assumptions about normative thought and discourse for which there is no room in Gibbard's theoretical framework. When Parfit talks about normative properties, this seems to point to assumptions about something other than the natural world or our thoughts about it to which our normative claims or thoughts must be responsive in order to be true. His property-talk also seems to have to do with the relationship between natural facts and normative facts—the latter facts of which Parfit seems to understand neither as Gibbard's states of affairs that obtain nor as Gibbard's true normative thoughts. If his view differs from Gibbard's in this respect, it may well differ from Scanlon's and Dworkin's. If so, this would be revealing.

I suspect that Parfit, like Scanlon, has a nagging sense that there's just not enough reality to the normative as Gibbard sees it, not enough independence from our attitudes. Of course, we have to be careful here. In what Parfit characterizes as the narrow sense of the term "reality," reality consists of that to which we are ontologically committed. Parfit also uses what he calls a broader sense of "reality," however. And Parfit seems to want to include normative properties within the bounds of reality understood in this broader sense. To be sure, on Parfit's view, normative properties are not real in the same way that properties of physical objects are real—or at least they have a way of being *in* reality, in the broad sense, that's different from the latter. Perhaps Parfit's assumption that they're in reality, however, should be understood as a way in which he agrees with robust non-naturalists like Enoch—even though, whereas Enoch embraces an ontologically hefty account of the normative, Parfit does not. So whatever this way of being in reality amounts to, it differs from what the robust non-naturalists have in mind. But perhaps it involves a sense of being in reality that goes beyond what other non-inflationary realists have in mind.

The sense that their needs to be more than what we have on Gibbard's account is perhaps what leads Parfit to talk about properties existing, being real, but in a non-ontological sense. The problem, though, is that as far as I can tell, Parfit has not offered a satisfactory account of what that

non-ontological sense of the real amounts to. Whatever Parfit and Scanlon, and Dworkin, for that matter, take to be missing, it's what Gibbard has, on their view, left out of his account.

Perhaps Parfit posits something like Ross's objectively existent normative realm, a realm to which he posits reason and intuition gives us access but a realm about whose nature we need not or cannot ask questions:

> The moral order expressed in these propositions is just as much part of the fundamental nature of the universe (and, we may add, of any possible universe in which there were moral agents at all) as is the spatial or numerical structure expressed in axioms of geometry or arithmetic. In our confidence that these propositions are true, there is involved the same trust in our reason that is involved in our confidence in mathematics; and we should have no justification for trusting it in the latter sphere and distrusting it in the former. In both cases we are dealing with propositions that cannot be proved, but that just as certainly need no proof.[75]

Scanlon and Parfit seem to agree with Gibbard that the best way to understand our normative thought and discourse is *not* by positing the existence of some sorts of distinctly normative entities with which we can interact or that our thoughts and words can track or mistrack. Nonetheless, they seem to share the sense that, just as an adequate account of mathematics might, arguably, involve more than just the natural world and the mathematical concepts in accordance with which we organize it, so too, an adequate account of normativity might arguably involve more than just the natural world and the normative concepts in accordance with which we organize it. They might assume, for instance, that just as there are mathematical relations that are quite independent of any way we might conceive things, so too, there are normative relations that are independent of the way we conceive of things.

[75]W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ed. Philip Stratton-Lake, (Oxford: Clarendon-OUP, 1930, 2002), 29-30.

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Parfit maintains that we have a kind of non-causal response to mathematical truths and proposes that we have a similar sort of response to normative truths. I'm not sure what to think about this sort of analogy. There do seem to be important differences between what we might call the mathematical domain and the normative domain, in particular between the way we come to have mathematical knowledge and the way we might come to have normative knowledge. It seems to me that if we have to be careful about overstating the similarities and obscuring the differences.

Chapter 5

Quasi-Realism's *As-If* Talk, and Fictionalism: What's at Issue Between Gibbard and the Fictionalists about Morality or Normativity?

I. Introduction

David Lewis interprets quasi-realist expressivism as a form of moral fictionalism.[1] Ronald Dworkin interprets Gibbard as a moral skeptic (see Chapter 2) and Derek Parfit once characterized Gibbard's account as veering toward normative nihilism (see Chapter 4). They're all mistaken, but I think their interpretations of quasi-realist expressivism as moral or normative fictionalism or skepticism or nihilism is interesting. It tells us something about how people read and understand quasi-realist expressivism, and it tells us something about the views defended by the objectors. In this chapter, I focus on the claim that quasi-realist expressivism is a version of normative fictionalism. Defenders of quasi-realist expressivism, of course, would count it as a failure, on their own terms, if their accounts amounted to a fictionalism. Gibbard, for instance, does not want to say that it's a fiction that any of our moral or normative claims are true or that any of these claims are capable of being true. He doesn't want to defend the view that it's a fiction that when true, they are objectively so or that it's a fiction that when true they are true whatever any of us happen to think. He doesn't want to say that it's according to a fiction that there is an actual, complete, system of norms.

[1]Sometimes I speak loosely in a way that equates the moral and the normative. With respect to some questions, it makes a real difference whether we're focusing on the moral or on the normative. With respect to questions related to properties and the metaphysical grounding of our moral or normative judgments, there is no special problem for either the moral or the normative. This distinction does not matter for much of what I do here. As I mention in Chapter 2, though, Scanlon's view is compatible with moral fictionalism though not with normative fictionalism. This, indeed, might point to an advantage to focusing on the normative rather than on the moral.

Perhaps, though, rather than a version of fictionalism, it would be best understood as a version of error theory. After all, Gibbard does seem to want to say that the way many have thought about objectivity and truth in ethics or normativity is in error—at least the way many philosophers have thought about it. It is an interesting question to what extent a quasi-realist expressivist might be satisfied with this. I here explore the ways in which quasi-realist expressivism can be seen to veer toward moral or normative fictionalism. In the end, I conclude that it is not plausible to characterize the view as fictionalist. I do think that there's some reason to think that the view veers toward a form of error theory, however. Ultimately, I think, however, that 'error theory' is not quite the best way to characterize what a quasi-realist like Gibbard is up to.

Error theorists maintain that there is an appearance/reality distinction to moral, or more broadly, normative, thought and discourse and that we get it wrong. When we affirm, say, we ought to act in ways that undermine systematic racism, we take ourselves to be affirming something that can be true or false. Some of us are even persuaded that this is, in fact, true—and objectively so. Error theorists about the moral maintain that we're in error. J. L. Mackie, for instance, makes the case for an error-theoretic view of morality by arguing that moral judgments ascribe moral properties to things, and that it is these properties that explain their truth, but since there are no such moral properties, and that no moral judgment, therefore is true.[2] On his view, then, we think and speak as if at least some of our moral claims exhibit a metaphysically grounded objective to-be-doneness, but that we are mistaken to do so. In fact, none of our claims are, or could be, true.

I will argue that there is at least some reason to read Gibbard as proposing that our ordinary view of morality or normativity is in error—and thus as proposing a sort of error theory. If he does assume that there's an error, however, it's not the error Mackie takes himself to isolate. Nor is it the error Lewis takes him to isolate. The irony is that I think Lewis fails to see that he, Lewis, is commit-

[2]See J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). Note that there's a puzzle over how we might read Mackie's claim if Dworkin and Gibbard are right and the only way to read ascriptions of moral properties are on a deflationary reading. If I say "X has the property of wrongness," then either I've just said X is wrong and nothing more or I've said something that isn't even coherent enough to be true or false. (See Chapter 2 discussion.)

ted to just the view that Gibbard takes himself to overcome—just the erroneous view that he thinks our moral or normative language makes tempting. Whether or not the quasi-realists are fictionalists or even whether or not there's an error theory implicated here, clarifying the dispute between the quasi-realists and Lewis brings into sharper relief some issues between Gibbard and many of his interlocutors. And perhaps exploring why one might think Gibbard is a fictionalist or an error theorists is a way of clarifying what Gibbard is up to.[3]

II. Is Anything Really Wrong?

A. David Lewis on Quasi-Realism

Lewis begins by supposing that the quasi-realist program "has succeeded perfectly on its own terms," which, interestingly enough, he thinks is "not unlikely." It follows, Lewis contends, that quasi-realists are either moral realists or pretending to be moral realists. Since they're not realists, claims Lewis, they're pretending to be realists, so they're really moral fictionalists.[4]

What would it mean for a quasi-realist project such as Gibbard's to succeed on its own terms? Here's a *brief* (and thus barely adequate) overview of Gibbardism: Gibbard's substantive theory of the meaning of moral sentences is his expressivist semantics for moral discourse, which gives the meaning of a sentence like "Slavery is wrong" in terms of the state of mind this sentence expresses. And the states of mind on which he focuses are something like 'plans', as he puts it, "plans for what to do, what to prefer, [. . .] and how to feel about things." Furthermore, he adopts a minimalist or deflationist view of truth, factuality, reference, denotation, properties, etc. On this view, our talk of truth, factuality, or properties, for instance, contributes no meaning, no content, to our claims.[5] For instance, on this view, "It's true that slavery is wrong," just means that slavery is wrong.[6]

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[3]I also think that moral or normative fictionalism is interesting in its own right.

[4]David Lewis, "Quasi-Realism is Fictionalism," *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, ed. Mark Eli Kalderon (Oxford: Clarendon-OUP 2005) 322–38. Interestingly, Ronald Dworkin contends that assuming quasi-realism succeeds on its own terms, quasi-realists are really just moral realists. I explore this elsewhere.

[5]Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (Oxford: OUP 2012).

Finally, Gibbard's *quasi-realism* amounts to (1) the acceptance of all the substantive moral or normative claims that traditional normative realists can make (*e.g.*, "Kicking dogs for fun is wrong", "We ought not to steal", etc.) but also (2) the adoption of specific meta-theoretical claims that Gibbard holds show us why substantive realist normative claims are consistent with expressivism.

Lewis seems to suppose that if the quasi-realist can say everything that the moral realist can say—not just substantive moral claims but also claims about "moral psychology and metaethics"—his project succeeds on its own terms. This is puzzling. For a quasi-realist project to succeed on its own terms, it would seem that the quasi-realist would need to embrace all the substantive moral claims the moral realist makes but to do so *while* framing such language metaethically in a particular way, namely, showing how these ordinary substantive moral claims can and, indeed, should be given expressivistic treatment. Indeed, one might think that *only if* Gibbard can use realist substantive language while also framing it metaethically in the way he proposes does it make sense to say that his project successfully achieves its aims.[7]

Let's suppose, however, that the quasi-realist can make all the substantive moral claims that the realist can make—which is, indeed, an important aim of quasi-realism. The question is whether Lewis is right that the quasi-realist is thus either a realist or pretending to be a realist, and since not realist, pretending to be a realist.

As Lewis sees it, quasi-realists suppose that we either explicitly or implicitly add a "disowning preface" to our substantive moral claims. This preface amounts to asking our interlocutors to join us in making believe "that moral realism is true, though it isn't."[8] I'll want to argue, however, that Lewis sees a "disowning preface" precisely because *he* makes presuppositions about what it would it take for our moral language to be in good order, presuppositions that Gibbard rejects and that his project aims to undermine. (And if it isn't successful do so, then, it's not successful on its own terms.)

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[6]See Michael Glanzberg, "Truth," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, Jan. 22, 2013) <http://plato,stanford.edu/entries/truth/>. Aug. 1, 2017.

[7]To be sure, Lewis characterizes what the successful quasi-realist will say as "echoing" what the realist will say, which is misleading.

[8]Lewis 322–38.

B. Blackburn's Response to Lewis

Blackburn's response is swift and forceful. An "incredulous stare awaits moral fictionalism," he tells Lewis:

> I say that it is bad to neglect the needs of children. According to [the] version of moral fictionalism [Lewis has in mind], I am taken to be saying that in the moral fiction, it is bad to neglect the needs of children, although it is not bad really. So: what would it be for it to be told as known fact that it is bad to neglect the needs of children? It is not so in this world, evidently, so what is different about worlds in which it is? Do children in that world suffer more? But why would that cast doubt on it being bad to neglect ours?[9]

This strikes me as a very good argument against a certain form of fictionalism. And, as an interpretive matter, I think it's clear that it's not plausible to characterize Blackburn and Gibbard's accounts as involving the version of fictionalism Blackburn seems to suppose Lewis has in mind. Quasi-realism is *not*, as Gibbard puts it, "a denial of all the [substantive] moral realist claims coupled with the claim that we should *pretend* that the realist claims are true."[10]

I think Blackburn (and perhaps Gibbard) misreads what Lewis is proposing, however. These responses seem to be responses to what Daniel Nolan characterizes as the simplest version of fictionalism about an area of discourse, one that "takes certain claims in that discourse to be literally false, but nevertheless worth uttering in certain contexts, since the pretense that such claims are true is worthwhile for various theoretical purposes."[11]

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[9]Simon Blackburn, "Quasi-realism, No Fictionalism," *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, Kalderon 325.

[10]Allan Gibbard, personal communication, March 2014, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

[11]Daniel Nolan, Greg Restall, and Caroline West, "Moral Fictionalism versus the Rest," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 83.3 (2005): 307-329.

Ken Walton reads Lewis the same way Blackburn does[12] and points out that the version of fictionalism he, Walton, defends, what he calls prop oriented make-believe, "bypasses it cleanly and completely."[13]

Perhaps Walton and Blackburn are right about the sort of fictionalist account Lewis would have in mind. As I read Lewis, though, I think what he says lends itself to the interpretation that he's offering a more interesting claim than what Blackburn and Walton suppose—indeed, one closer in some respects, though not all, to Walton's prop oriented make-believe. I think Lewis wants to say that the quasi-realists take it that though our moral claims are not truth-apt, and so aren't assertions, we nonetheless have good reason to treat them *as if* they were truth-apt assertions, to pretend, as it were, that they are something that they're not.[14] In any case, I think it would be more compelling if this were Lewis's claim. The pretense that I want to propose that Lewis finds in quasi-realism is the pretense *that* moral utterances are truth-apt, *that* they are assertions, or that they express propositions.[15]

I can see why it might be tempting to think this is what Gibbard is up to given some of what he says.

III. Gibbard's "As If": Appearance or Pretense?

A. Gibbard on How Language Can be Misleading

Language plays tricks on us. We might take ourselves to be representing worldly states of affairs even when we're not. Perhaps this happens when we talk about numbers or when we make

[12]He grants, more precisely, that it's the account of fictionalism "suggested by Lewis's own account of fictionalism."

[13]Kendall Walton, *In Other Shoes: Music, Metaphor, Empathy, Existence* (Oxford: OUP 2014) 92. (Note, though, that he doesn't spell out a version of specifically 'moral' fictionalism.)

[14]Walton suggests that it doesn't follow from treating a claim as if it expresses a proposition that there is any sort of proposition that we can take the speaker to pretend to assert (Walton 114-5).

[15]I have in mind something like the following: "A speaker may pretend that her words express a proposition, however, even if they don't, and she may pretend to be asserting a proposition by means of them. Moreover, it may be fictional, true in the pretense, that she asserts something true, even if there is no proposition that, fictionally, she asserts. Whether this is fictional will depend on real world circumstances" (Walton 97).

moral claims. That's how Gibbard sees it, at least with respect to moral discourse, and more broadly normative discourse. (Gibbard treats moral thought and discourse as a subset of normative thought and discourse.) He tells us that our language tempts us to explain normative reasoning in representationalist terms—that is, to think that the function of our statements is to *represent* some normative state of affairs. People have a paradigm of representation in mind, he explains, and it involves some sort of tracking that's like the tracking that happens when my eyes track the movement of my child on the swing, flying back and forth. On this view, our language and ideas are accountable to some sort of extra-mental reality with which we interact causally. It seems to us *as if* "representation of normative features like wrongness" are to be explained in the same way as "representations of shapes and sizes."[16] But this is misleading, says Gibbard. Though normative discourse does share some of the features of world-representing discourse, he maintains, it's a mistake to attribute all features of this kind of discourse to normative talk.

Gibbard has recently adopted Huw Price's distinction between i-representation ('i' for internal or inferential), and e-representation ('e' for external, world tracking), which I find enables him very helpfully to clarify his approach to language, and the tricks it might play.

B. Representation, e and i

Price, who defends a version of global pragmatism, insists that the only semantic notion of reference is i-representation, claiming that when we "get to language, there isn't any useful external notion, of a semantic kind—in other words, no useful, general, notion of relations that words and sentences bear to the external world, that we might identify with truth and reference.[17] All language, for Price, is explained i-representationally, but a subset of language is *also* e-representational. When we e-represent "the crucial idea is that some feature of the representing system either does, or is (in some sense) 'intended to', vary in parallel with some feature of the represented system." But e-

[16]Allan Gibbard, "Global Expressivism and Truth in Representation" (unpublished paper, Global Expressivism Conference, Johns Hopkins U 2013).

[17]Huw Price, *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* (Cambridge: CUP 2013) 36-7.

representation in no way contributes to the content of the language[18]—e-representation is exclusively a matter of function.[19]

Gibbard adapts this sort of distinction. His treatment of e-representation is importantly different from Price's however.[20] In particular, I think Gibbard's approach can tempt people to interpret him as a fictionalist—as if he proposes an 'as if' of *pretense* and not just *appearance*. This worry is not new, of course. The "quasi" in "quasi-realism" has long misled people into thinking there's some sort of pretense. In response to this, Blackburn explains that he's taken "some care to distance [him]self from [what he characterizes as] an 'as if' philosophy, holding that we talk 'as if' there are (for instance) rights and duties, although there are none really."[21] Gibbard sees an 'as if' of appearance in our language, however, and perhaps he's right not to avoid talking about this in an attempt to avoid the risk of being misunderstood to be also or instead positing an 'as if' of pretense.

Here's Gibbard's view: All language is explained *i*-representationally[22]—*i*-representation "gives priority to the internal [or *i*nferential] functional role of representation."[23] But a subset of language is *also* *e*-representational, or *e*nvironment-tracking. In naturalistic language about the natural world, for instance, environment-tracking representation plays "a genuine explanatory role, a genuine role in explaining meaning."[24] In the naturalistic case, e-representation explains *why* the internal works are as they are, so e-representation explains i-representation. But internal aspects of the system can "function on their own and serve other purposes. Even when no genuine *e*-representation is in play, *i*-representation in a system can look, in many ways, as if *e*-representation explained it." A "prime example" he gives of this is "ethical reasoning," with respect to which it's "as if e-representation explained it," though it doesn't.

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[18]Price 36.
[19]Price 38-40.
[20]Indeed, I think this distinction is what explains why Price is best understood as a global pragmatist and Gibbard is not, in spite of widespread agreement between them. I spell this out more carefully elsewhere.
[21]Blackburn 323
[22]Using a term he borrows from Price.
[23]Gibbard, "Global."
[24]Gibbard, "Global."

Perhaps Gibbard's claim is that it's a contingent feature of the genealogy of our moral discourse that our naturalistic language tempts us in this way. I do think questions remain, however. We might wonder: How important is it that our moral language play this trick on us? What do we gain by having our moral language seem as if it worked the same way as naturalistic language? Without this, would we have the normative concepts we have? Would we take our normative beliefs as seriously as we do?

Might it be that the trick Gibbard tells us that our language plays on us is best, after all, characterized a sort of useful game of make believe? Walton explains that "pretense [can be] serious business" and extremely useful.[25] While sometimes what matters is the *content* of a fiction, that is the make believe or fictional world, other times what matters are the real world facts that the implied game of make-believe helps us to better understand or think or talk about. Sometimes there are features of the real world that "are not easy to think or talk about in any other way" than via a fiction.[26] "We are beings who must decide what to do," Gibbard tells us. Perhaps the only way we find we can reason what to do, that we can get at what to do is to think of what to do as something to get *at*—to think of it as something to which we must be responsive in a way that we must be responsive to natural states of affairs when we reason about what is the case naturally.

How might this be a sort of moral fictionalism?

III. Moral or Normative Fictionalism and Quasi-Realist Expressivism

A. Varieties of Fictionalism

Fictionalists about any area of discourse and thought are classified in the literature as either *hermeneutic* or *revisionary* (or *revolutionary*).[27] Very roughly put, revisionary fictionalists take it that

[25]Walton 92.
[26]Walton 92.
[27]Eklund offers a nice discussion of this. See Matti Eklund, "Fictionalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford U, July 20, 2011) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/fictionalism/> (Dec. 3, 2014). "Revolutionary" seems to be more common in the literature, but I prefer "revisionary".

though our ordinary moral language and thought involve pervasive and systematic error, we nonetheless have good reason to treat our language and thought *as if* this were not so. The idea might be that we ought to treat our moral claims as if they were how they seem to be on the naïve view—as if they were truth-apt expressions of moral beliefs, some of which are true. Furthermore, depending on what sorts of semantic assumptions the fictionalist makes, in addition to this linguistic thesis, she might add a further ontological thesis to her fictionalism. The view might be that, though our ordinary moral discourse presupposes moral entities that many take to have dubious ontology, such entities don't exist, but that we nonetheless have good reason to adopt a fictional account according to which the relevant sorts of moral entities exist according to a fiction.[28]

Revisionary fictionalism,[29] thus, begins with an error theory. The defender of such a view might grant, perhaps, that we have moral concepts while holding that nothing satisfies these concepts; she'll go on to offer fictionalism as a solution. Rather than believing that stealing is wrong, the recommended attitude is one of taking it that stealing is wrong "in a fiction" or "within a pretense", and our claims such as "Stealing is wrong" are best understood as true "according to a fiction." The simplest version of a revisionary fictionalist account seems to be what Blackburn takes Lewis to be claiming the quasi-realist is offering up—unintentionally, of course. Though I do think there's a way in which one could make the case that Gibbard's account involves a sort of error theory, I don't think it's plausible that he's proposing that there's a pragmatic or theoretical reason for us to pretend it's not there. This is not the only sort of fictionalist approach available, however.

Defenders of a hermeneutic fictionalism contend that our ordinary discourse and thought already involves some sort of pretense.[30] A defender of the simplest version of hermaneutic moral fictionalist, say, might argue that all along we've been pretending that our moral claims were true. All along when we've made claims such as "Slavery is wrong," we've take this to express states of mind

[28]Eklund.

[29]Such as the account defended in Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

[30]Defenders of such an account include Mark Kalderon and Kendall Walton. See Mark Eli Kalderon, *Moral Fictionalism* (Oxford: OUP 2005); Walton.

that might be characterized as taking slavery to be wrong according to a fiction—or in some game of make-believe.

More interesting than the distinction between hermaneutic and revisionary fictionalism, however, I think, is the distinction between fictionalist accounts that treat substantive moral claims as fictions and those that treat meta-ethical or meta-meta-ethical claims as fictions. Again, there's the possible claim that naïve usage involves an error (per revisionary fictionalism) or pretense (per hermeneutic fictionalism) at the first-order, substantive level. But there's also the potential claim that our ordinary usage involves an error at the meta-theoretical level, e.g., we take it that our moral claims are the sorts of things that *can* be true, though they're not, along with the proposal that the sophisticated view to which we should[31] commit ourselves involves some sort of second (or higher)-order pretense (revisionary meta-linguistic fictionalism?)—or perhaps that we already do engage in such a pretense (hermeneutic meta-linguistic fictionalism?).

There are, of course, multiple ways a fictionalist might want to characterize our language in any given domain.[32] And I certainly cannot do justice to even a small subset of them here. The following three seem to me to be perhaps most relevant, however.

(1) A moral fictionalist might hold, for instance, that moral claims are not truth-apt assertions. Perhaps some other sort of speech act is performed when we make what appear to be moral claims, and perhaps our attitude toward moral claims and thoughts has not been one of belief. Nonetheless, the claim might be, we have good reason to (or we already do) treat them *as if* they were truth-apt assertions and as if our attitude were one of belief. Note, though, as Walton explains, that it doesn't follow from treating a moral claim as if it expresses a proposition that there is any sort of proposition that we can take the speaker to pretend to assert.[33]

[31]This "should" worries me. It seems odd to offer a fictionalist account of moral claims (so probably normative as well), but then claim that we "should' adopt a fictionalist claim since we cannot explain our moral or normative claims any other way.

[32]Eklund offers a nice discussion of this.

[33]Walton 114-15.

(2) In contrast, a moral fictionalist might hold that we really are asserting when we make moral claims but that when we say "Slavery is wrong," what we're really asserting is that slavery is wrong according to a game of make-believe that we play—though we pretend that we're asserting that slavery is wrong.

(3) Or perhaps we are asserting when we make moral claims but we're asserting, as Eklund puts it, "that the world is in a certain condition, namely, the condition it needs to be in to make it true in the relevant fiction that [Slavery is wrong]." I find the third of these to be the most interesting proposal. I return to this below.

(4) One other possibility is a Scanlon-style approach to the moral domain that I mention in Chapter 2. In response to problems associated with thinking of the moral as a subset of the normative, Scanlon proposes that the moral is a separate domain from the normative. On his view, then, there are correct answers to substantive moral questions. On this view, we might learn all there is to learn about morality. And when we do so, we might be able to determine whether any particular act is right or wrong, permissible or impermissible. Moral questions would have normative implications, to be sure, but morality itself would not be understood as a subset of normativity. And answer to the question "Why be moral?", however, on this view, would not be settled by the moral domain. It is compatible with this view, therefore, that it is only in a fiction or according to a fiction that we have reason to be moral.[34]

Perhaps these views can be combined. Also, depending on her linguistic and metaphysical assumptions, a fictionalist might maintain that, though moral entities don't *exist*, our ordinary moral discourse (which we have good reason to preserve) already involves the *fiction* that they do exist. Again, this is just a rough characterization of some options a fictionalist might have.

[34]David Enoch mentioned during a talk that he was writing (or had written) a paper with Tristam McPherson arguing that Scanlon cannot avoid moral or normative fictionalism. I have not read this paper and am unsure whether his line of argument connects up in any way with what I offer here. I look forward to exploring this further.

B. Pretending to Assert

Blackburn reads Lewis as saying that quasi-realists take it that we express propositions using moral language but take it that such propositions are false in the real world and true only in a fictional world. I read Lewis as saying, however, that quasi-realists take it that our moral claims are not, in fact, truth-apt, that we do not express propositions when we utter them, but that the ordinary view is that they *do* express propositions (with the result that Lewis is proposing that the quasi-realist offers an error theory not, like Mackie, at the substantive level, but rather at the meta-theoretical level), but that the quasi-realists recommend that we nonetheless *pretend* that our moral claims are truth-apt assertions.[35] (I think Lewis's claim would be more compelling if he'd attributed to the quasi-realist the view that this is what we already do, so a hermeneutic rendering, but I still think what he offers is better than if he'd given a hermeneutic rendering but focused on our substantive level language—saying, that is, that we pretend that our claims are true, though false.)

Carrie Jenkins shares my reading of Lewis. She takes Lewis to be proposing that quasi-realists don't think our moral claims are truth-apt assertions, but ask us to join them in pretending, nonetheless, that they are. Jenkins's response on behalf of the quasi-realists is thoroughly apt in some respects, but some aspects of what she says about the quasi-realists is mistaken. She contends that quasi-realists are not fictionalists because they aren't *even pretending* to utter truth-apt claims when using moral language. She notes that Lewis has set up a false dichotomy, that one is either a realist or pretending to be a realist. This, of course, leaves out the possibility that one is a straight-out non-cognitivist who takes it that our moral thoughts are not beliefs and that our moral claims are not truth-apt. Her response to Lewis is that the quasi-realists are just these sorts of non-cognitivists,[36] namely, that they take it that we can, and do, utter the same words, the same sentences, as moral realists, but that moral sentences with assertoric surface structure are in fact not *assertions*.[37]

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[35]Lewis 322–38.

[36]I'm very uncomfortable with the use of the terms "cognitivism" and "non-cognitivism" in the way Jenkins uses them, and the way in which they are commonly used in the literature. (See Chapter 3.)

[37]Carrie Jenkins, "Lewis and Blackburn on Quasi-Realism and Fictionalism," *Analysis* 66 (2006): 315-9.

Jenkins is exactly right that Lewis ignores an important possibility. But with respect to quasi-realism's two principle exponents, Gibbard and Blackburn, Jenkins is mistaken to take it that they don't take themselves to be asserting when they make moral claims, that they don't take it that our moral claims are truth-apt (and even that some are true).[38]

The problem is that Jenkins' response provides reason to think quasi-realists are not asserting when they utter moral claims such as "Slavery is wrong", only if expressions of states of mind, even when they're understood not to involve anything else, cannot *also* be assertions, that is, cannot be truth-apt claims.

As I argue in Chapters 1 and 2, however, expressivism is perfectly compatible even with representationalism. But, also, it's not clear to me why there might not be something aside from tracking in virtue of which claims might be taken to be assertions. It doesn't seem to me that the notion of external world tracking is conceptually tied to assertions in the way Lewis, Jenkins and Walton seem to believe.[39]

C. Representationalist Assumptions

As I read them, Lewis and Jenkins both seem to suppose that there's an unproblematic notion of assertion at work when they critique quasi-realism. Lewis and Jenkins both seem to assume that a necessary condition for taking language as assertoric is the offering of a realist semantics for such language (or pretending to do so) and that a realist semantics must involve some notion of reference understood as a relation between our words and the world which plays a basic theoretical role in explaining our moral language.[40]

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[38]It's because of this that I find it problematic to call them "non-cognitivists"—at least without special qualification. I think doing so leads to precisely the sort of mistake Jenkins makes. It's possible, of course, that though this paper was published in 2006, Jenkins was basing what she wrote on pre-2003 Gibbard and Blackburn.

[39] See Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, "Morality without Moral Facts," *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory,* ed. James Dreier (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell 2006) 220-38.

[40]I'm basing what I say here about Lewis only on what he says about quasi-realists in the paper I cite here.

As I read Lewis, he's proposing that the quasi-realist supposes that, when we engage in moral discourse, we talk *as if* we're asserting, which based exclusively on what Lewis says in response to Blackburn,[41] seems to amount to talking *as if* there's a correspondence between our true moral claims and a state of affairs that our moral language purports to track. We do so even though we hold that, in fact, some notion of reference understood as a relation between our words and the world plays no basic theoretical role in explaining our moral language. And Jenkins seems to suppose that, since the quasi-realists don't believe that this notion of reference is at work, they must imagine that when we make moral claims we're not asserting.[42]

What's striking about this is that Lewis and Jenkins seem to be assuming something very close to the erroneous view that, as I read Gibbard, he maintains our ordinary moral language makes tempting. Though only i-representation explains our moral language, Gibbard maintains, we nonetheless talk *as if* there's e-representation (so as if, perhaps, we're assuming a sort of realist semantics for our moral language). When we e-represent, recall, "the crucial idea is that some feature of the representing system either does, or is (in some sense) 'intended to', vary in parallel with some feature of the representing system." We thus talk *as if* there's a correspondence between our true moral claims and a state of affairs that our moral language purports to track, even as we believe that there's not. Perhaps then, Lewis is caught up in the very error Gibbard isolates, and perhaps because of this, isolates a separate sort of error that he thinks the quasi-realists are identifying. He mistakes the quasi-realists to be making the same error claim that John Mackie makes—a claim Mackie makes precisely because of his representationalist and accompanying ontological assumptions.[43]

And, interestingly enough, it may well be that one of the appeals of fictionalism is precisely that it can be seen as an attractive solution to problems arising from making these sorts of represen-

[41]At least as Lewis frames the debate in "Quasi-realism is Fictionalism."

[42]Of course, again, it's possible Jenkins has in mind a straightforwardly non-cognitivist version of quasi-realism, the sort of view Gibbard held pre-2003.

[43]Lewis writes: "The distinctive error of 'moral realism' says that there are properties, perhaps non-natural properties, such that we can somehow detect them; and such that when we do detect them, that inevitably evokes in us pro- or con-attitudes toward the things that we have detected to have these." 315-6.

tationalist and ontological assumptions with respect to certain areas of discourse and thought. Indeed, Walton characterizes fictionalism as an appealing strategy "for making sense of discourse (ostensibly) about ontologically dubious entities of one kind or another."[44] Fictionalism may be seen, it seems as a response to the so-called "placement problems."[45]

Quasi-realists don't need to make sense of such entities, however, in the moral case if they're right about the way our moral language works. If they're right, they needn't worry about the placement problem—so they don't need a solution to it. Or so I want to claim.

D. Fictionalism as a Solution to the Placement Problem

Here's why one might be concerned about a moral placement problem: It seems plausible to many that there's a presumption in favor of moral realism provided by our ordinary moral language. But moral realism, as traditionally spelled out, seems to involve some worries—for instance, worries about how to place in a natural world, a world studied by science, entities to which our discourse seems referentially committed but which seem to be ontologically dubious and epistemically inaccessible.[46] Putatively ontologically dubious entities might be taken also to include causes, or mathematical or truth properties.[47]

The moral instance of this problem is taken to be a pressing worry by many moral naturalists and non-naturalists alike. Some self-styled realists try to show that moral entities are not, after all, ontologically dubious, arguing that they are or are somehow reducible to natural properties. Richard Boyd[48] and David Brink,[49] for instance, offer versions of reductive moral realist accounts.[50] Others insist that talk of non-natural moral properties is perfectly in order—that there's nothing dubious about the ontologies associated with such properties. To be sure, non-natural moral entities, defend-

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[44]Walton.
[45]Price.
[46]See J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).
[47]See Horgan 137-161.
[48]Richard Boyd, "How to be a Moral Realist," *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca: Cornell UP 1988) 181-228.
[49]David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, Cambridge: CUP, 1989).
[50]Perhaps, say, to social-behavioral facts.

ers of such a view might grant, are different from the entities that figure in our talk about the physical world, but it doesn't follow that we have compelling reason not to accept into our ontology a broad range of properties. David Enoch defends a contemporary version of non-naturalism, unabashedly calling it *robust* moral realism.[51]

Moral fictionalists might seem attractive because it avoids what many take to be the problematic metaphysics and epistemology of robust moral realist accounts without rejecting the characterization of our moral language in terms of moral properties or entities and without rejecting a representationalist account of our moral language.

Gibbard and Blackburn reject a representationalist account of our moral language, however. And they reject the need to posit moral properties and such.

E. One Reason to Think Quasi-Realism is Not Fictionalism

Gibbard's account isn't vulnerable to charges of specifically moral fictionalism in the same way that, say, Scanlon's might be. In contrast to Scanlon's proposal that the moral is a separate domain from the normative, on Gibbard's view, moral questions are one variety of normative questions. Claims about what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, *just are* normative claims. Moral claims are claims about what people ought to do, which can be put in terms of what people have conclusive reason to do. The advantage of this approach is that the question "Why be moral?" makes no sense. It would amount to asking whether we ought to do what we ought to do, or whether we have reason to do what we have reason to do.

Gibbard claims that our language doesn't work the way many robust realists (as well as error theorists including some nihilists) assume it works. As Gibbard sees it, in normative language e-representation plays no genuine role in explaining meaning, that is, it's not the case that the "representing system either does, or is (in some sense) 'intended to', vary in parallel with some feature of the representing system." But, as in good science, in good ethics, the internal workings of the system function according to the rules of logic and inference. When we recognize that *this* is what matters in

[51]David Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (New York: OUP 2011).

the case of good ethics, that is, that our moral language is i-representational (but not e-representational), we can see that our language is in good order[52] and that we don't need to worry about the ontological status of entities which don't seem to belong to the natural world in order to see this. We give reasons for judgment and action, recognizing some as better than others. And as long as we can do so in the moral domain, this domain qualifies as cognitively meaningful.

Lewis supposes that the quasi-realists pretend to assert moral claims and Jenkins that they don't even pretend. This ignores, however, that an important part of the quasi-realist project in the philosophy of language is a nuancing of our account of what an assertion *is* in the first place.[53] Relying on a deflationary account of truth and factivity, Blackburn and Gibbard hold that while an utterance of "Stealing is wrong" is the expression of a state of mind, it's also a true assertion just in case stealing is wrong, and that the utterer ordinarily *seeks* to announce a true assertion. On Gibbard's view, an assertion expresses a state of mind of the speaker. As Gibbard explains, uttering "Stealing is wrong," expresses a state of mind, but "I can express this state of mind . . . in much the same way as I can express a belief of the most prosaic kind, such as the belief that rain wets the ground. In either case, you my hearer will agree with my *assertion* if you share the state of mind I express with it."[54]

Gibbard aims to help us see that, relying on minimalism, we can talk of reference and truth and even properties and see that this works just as well for normative claims as it does for claims about mid-sized physical objects. He seeks to surmount what was once seen, and may still be seen by some, as an unbridgeable gap between expressivist or quasi-realist views, long taken to be unproblematically non-cognitivist, and the various cognitivist alternatives on offer.

And, indeed, some self-styled non-naturalists and naturalists join them in adopting this approach—which I think deserves to be taken seriously. These naturalists and non-naturalists share the

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[52]See Gibbard, *Meaning*; Price.

[53]I will need to engage with Robert Brandom's work. Brandom's inferentialism influences Price, who has influenced Gibbard. For Brandom, an assertion is a certain move in a game of giving and asking for reasons. Gibbard agrees. And like Gibbard, Brandom offers an expressivist semantics.

[54]Gibbard, *Meaning* 19. Gibbard does use the term "assertion" in a liberal way, perhaps too liberal for Jenkins or Lewis. So perhaps there is something important at issue here that I'll need to address.

quasi-realist's claim that our ordinary moral discourse is basically in good order as it stands but that we can make sense of this without including *moral* entities, properties, and (for some) facts, in our ontologies. T.M. Scanlon and Ronald Dworkin reject a characterization of our moral language in terms of moral properties or entities—and Derek Parfit rejects that such properties or entities exist, as he puts it, ontologically. And non-analytic naturalist Peter Railton joins quasi-realists like Gibbard in holding that we use moral language to convey non-reductively moral thoughts, but that the only facts to which these claims refer are natural.

If Walton is right that "[t]he central idea" of a "make-believe approach is . . . that what seem to be commitments, by speakers or theories, to nonexistent entities are to be understood in a spirit of pretense or make-believe,"[55] Gibbard doesn't seem to be in need of this sort of make-believe approach.

If we are to take seriously the aims of one of quasi-realism's principal exponents, then, it will not do simply to *assume* that quasi-realists cannot (or do not attempt to) characterize our moral claims as truth-apt assertions. Indeed, one attractive feature of Gibbard's account is that he doesn't ask us to abandon the common assumption that our ordinary moral talk is truth-apt and our moral judgments are beliefs—and contra-Jenkins that we're not asserting when we make moral claims. They don't ask us, it seems to me, to make the sorts of "disowning prefaces" Lewis assumes.[56]

And yet Gibbard does tell us that e-representation is the paradigm of representation and that when we're engaging in normative thought and talk, it's as if we're e-representing. Surely then, there's an error in our moral discourse, or an error in the way we think about it. I'm not sure he needs to hold this view, though.

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[55]Walton 114-15.

[56]I'm not sure this is relevant for my purposes here, but whether or not his expressivist semantics says all there is to say about our moral language, I think it's clear that, whatever else we're doing, we *are* expressing complex states of mind. So when I say "Slavery is wrong", whatever else I may or may not be doing, I am expressing a complex state of mind with respect to slavery, one in accordance with which it is wrong. So even if it turns out that a full account of a claim such as "Slavery is wrong" would involve some sort of representationalist semantics, it doesn't follow that leaving this out and offering only an expressivist semantics would involve denying the substantive moral claim.

F. Priority or Parity?

Gibbard maintains that e-representation is the paradigm case of representation but that from this it would be a mistake to conclude that language that's explained e-representationally is somehow first-class as compared to language that's explained only i-representationally. It's not clear to me why we should think that it's the paradigm case, however. Why not offer a sort of parity thesis? If there's a priority thesis, might there be an implied game of make believe according to which there's a parity thesis? Or perhaps the priority thesis is just an error many of us who think the way moral language works happen to make?

Gibbard insists that when he says "where there's i-representation, it's as if (in many respects) it were because there's rich e-representation," he's not saying there's pretense involved. "Suppose we have bright lights on at night, and I say, 'It's as if it were daytime. But in fact it isn't daytime.' I don't thereby pretend it is daytime."[57] From Gibbard's saying "It's as if *p*, but not-*p*" it doesn't follow that we're "pretending that *p*."[58]

Suppose it's nighttime, there are bright lights on, and I comment: "It's as if it were daytime." Gibbard is clearly right that "I don't *thereby* pretend it is daytime."[59] In the absence of a pretense, though, why might I say "It's as if it were daytime"? Presumably, in such a case we're treating the salient feature of "daytime" as what it does for us, how it figures in our actions. Nighttime-with-bright-lights and daytime share this salient feature: our physical environment is illuminated (presumably, so we don't bump into each other, or so that we can adequately track our physical environments with our eyes—adequately for whatever our purposes may be). That's what we're interested in, that our physical environment is illuminated enough for us to engage in some set of activities.

[57]This is actually Gibbard's example. Personal correspondence with Gibbard, November 2014.

[58]Personal correspondence with Gibbard, November 2014.

[59]I *might*, of course, pretend it's daytime. Perhaps I'm making a film, and, for whatever reason, I need to set up the fiction of "daytime" at night. Let's imagine, however, that we are not, in fact, pretending that it's daytime.

Saying "it's as if it's daytime" seems natural precisely because we take daylight as the paradigm case of having our physical environments illuminated enough to move around and navigate our physical world. There's a sense, though, in which it seems that daylight is somehow first-class as compared to brightly illuminated nighttime. Indeed, isn't that why we'd say "it's as if it were daytime"? Surely, though, when Gibbard says 'it's as if we e-represent when we speak normatively' he doesn't want to say that e-representation is somehow first-class as compared to second-class exclusively i-representational language. (Huw Price accuses the quasi-realist of having this unsavory consequence.)

Of course, even here, perhaps we could find a way to formulate a parity thesis. Take the daylight/nightlight example: For the pragmatic purposes that are relevant here, namely, the adequate illumination of our physical environment, perhaps the two cases are on all fours—given our goals, of course. If the point is to navigate our physical environment, all that's needed is that that environment is adequately illuminated whether by sunlight or floodlights. Might this not push us in a direction of a sort of *parity* thesis regarding the representation involved when we engage in normative and when we engage in non-normative discourse? What is it in the normative vs. non-normative claims case that parallels the salient feature of the daytime vs. nighttime case, namely the "adequate illumination of our physical environment"? The salient feature of *representation* that's common to both the normative and non-normative language cases, one could argue (and, indeed, Gibbard does argue) is not accountability to a causally independent order but a broader notion of accountability—one that (i) might demand something like (and nothing more) substantive relations between our words or thoughts and the world as well as the internal works of the system that functioning according to the rules of logic and inference or the like; or (ii) one that might demand nothing more than the internal workings of the system functioning according to the rules of logic and inference or the like. As we've already seen, Gibbard (rightfully, I think) takes it that utterances can be understood as assertions even if we're not offering a semantics for such language that involves some notion of reference understood as a relation between our words and the world which plays a basic theoretical role in explaining our moral language.

Once we've realized that our moral claims are cognitively meaningful exclusively in virtue of their i-representational features, we've learned something. We've learned, for instance, assertions, language that predicates things of objects or subjects, is not necessarily descriptive. (Just like we've learned that when we need to navigate our physical environments in certain ways, the source of adequate lighting is not necessarily from the sun—or in the case of someone raised in the artificial light context, not necessarily from artificial lights.) We've learned, it seems to me, that there's a feature that is more general than what we're doing when either (i) we're exclusively i-representing (e.g., when we engage in ethical discourse) or (ii) we're e-representing and i-representing (e.g., when we're engaging in naturalistic discourse). We've learned, it seems to me, that it was a mistake to think that the paradigm case of having surface features that predicate something of objects or subjects or that is representational (in a sense neutral between i- and e-representation) are our naturalistic or descriptive claims.

But once we've figured this out, are we going to want to say that when we look at our moral discourse, it's *as if we're i-representing because there's rich e-representation*? We might say, of course, that some people might think that we're i-representing because there's e-representing, but that they're mistaken. If the latter is all Gibbard wants to say, however, why think e-representation is anymore a paradigm of representation than i-representation? After all, Gibbard agrees with Price that the *normative* enterprise of giving and asking for reasons is as much in order, just as it stands, as is the *naturalistic* enterprise of giving and asking for reasons.[60] There are two kinds of priority, of course. There's priority in terms of what must be the case for our language to be in thought to be in good order. But there's also priority in terms of temporary priority about how we learned to talk and think. (Perhaps this is what Gibbard means when he calls e-representation the paradigm of representation.)

I cannot seem to shake the nagging worry that somehow we gain something from having our normative language appear as if it involved some sort of tracking—a worry that I suspect I share with Scanlon and Parfit (see Chapters 3 and 4).

[60]Price 24-5.

G. Walton's Prop Oriented Make-Believe

Walton's prop-oriented account of make-believe offers an intriguing way of understanding the usefulness of fictionalism. Sometimes what matters, Walton maintains, are the "the real world facts [or 'props'] that generate the fictional truths."[61]

Imagine that children are playing "a game in which bicycles are horses, and a garage is a corral. The real world fact that a bicycle is in the garage makes it fictional, true in the make-believe, that a horse is in the corral. [Walton] call[s] the bicycles and the garage *props*. Facts about them *generate* fictional truths." A parent "might tell Johnny not to ride the fence even if some of his cattle are wandering away, because she doesn't want him to be playing near a busy street. What for the children is probably a largely content oriented make-believe, is for her a prop oriented one."[62]

In this example, of course, the fiction is clearly not the only (even if sometimes a very good) way of understanding the world in a certain way. But Walton tells us that sometimes the only way we can understand real world facts in a certain way is by taking real world facts to be props in our game of make believe. Perhaps a case in which it might be considered the best way would be, say, "the fiction that there is such a thing as absolute motion and rest."[63] I cannot seem to find any other examples in Walton. I wonder if others might include the fiction that there are possible worlds (to be clear: not one of Walton's examples).

Might it be that there are real-world facts that we can best understand in a certain way, for instance, that we can best conceptualize normatively, if we engage in some sort of implied game of make-believe? Gibbard maintains that "normative concepts arise . . . if we can reason what to do and disagree with the consequent states of mind." For Gibbard, there are no normative states of affairs. States of affairs are always naturalistic. The normative is a way we can think about such states of affairs. The distinction between normative and naturalistic is a conceptual distinction. For instance, if

[61]Walton 92.
[62]Walton 94.
[63]Walton 92.

ethical hedonists are right, the right thing to do is always to maximize happiness. The concept, however, of *being the thing to do* is distinct from the concept of *maximizing happiness*.

A fictionalist reading of Gibbard's quasi-realism would suggest that there was a game of make-believe implicated by our ordinary moral discourse capable of helping us understand, think about, and talk about the physical world normatively. Perhaps, indeed, we have the normative concepts we have because we think and talk about normativity as we do. On Gibbard's account, moral claims get their content, as he puts it, "from their role in thinking toward decisions and the like". On a fictionalist reading, we might be understood as better at reasoning what to do (somehow or other) because our normative discourse was such that it tempted us into thinking such reasoning represented some sort of external reality, was accountable in some way to such a reality.

Perhaps we are asserting when we make moral claims but we're asserting, as Eklund put is, "that the world is in a certain condition, namely, the condition it needs to be in to make it true in the relevant fiction that" something is the case. The example Eklund gives focuses on numbers. "The characteristic objects of the discourse, the numbers," he says, "are mere props we use to make utterances about how things stand in the real world." Is there a way to make sense of moral thought and discourse working this way? I'm not sure, but I find it an interesting proposal.

IV. Error Theory and Quasi-Realist Expressivism

Is an error theory, finally, implicated in Gibbard's account? If so, perhaps the relevant error has to do with what would need to be the case in order for our moral language to be in good order. Such an error would be at the meta- or meta-meta level. The error would be that our normative language functions in the manner of e-representation, where that representation involves some sort of causal interaction, a relation between our language and objects of some sort. The error would be that moral language needs there to be some robust normative reality for our language to be in good order. So it's not a claim about what's going on in our ordinary moral language and not a claim about the ontology presupposed by our ordinary moral language. It's a claim about an error regarding what

would have to be the case for any language with this structure (whether in the moral context or some other) to be in good order. The error is something like the assumption that for any i-representing language to be in good order, it must also be e-representing—not necessarily tracking the physical world, but engaging with some sort of mind-independent reality. The point is not that when we give and ask for reasons when engaging in moral talk, it's only as if such reasons bear on what to do. It's not that our normative claims are all false–nor that it is false that there is an actual, correct and complete system of norms. The point, rather, is that in reflecting on what we are doing when we give and ask for reasons, we misunderstand what it takes for this practice to be in good order.

To say that there is a sense in which Gibbard is offering a higher-order error theory is really just to say that he is offering a higher-order revisionist theory. Again, on this theory, it may well be a fact that you should not hold slaves even if you think you should. But Gibbard's account of why this is so–and what it is for it to be so–breaks with both common sense (to the extent that any such account is implicit in common sense) and most philosophical accounts.

In any case, as I point out above, it is important to distinguish this sort of revision from the sort exemplified by fictionalism about the normative. To appreciate this distinction, it may help to consider some other examples. Instrumentalist accounts of science, for example, offer a systematic reinterpretation of theoretical statements in terms of some kind of operationalization kind of experimental method. The view is not that it is a mistake to talk in terms of mass or atoms. Rather, the point is that such claims are in order because they are not to be taken literally. So, too, phenomenalism is a revisionary theory of what's really going on when we talk about physical objects. Berkeley's point is not that there are no trees, that they are just perceptions. He is saying there are trees. It's just that trees are constituted by perceptions. That's how we can see trees and how trees can be objects of cognition.[64]

[64]Thanks to Peter Railton for suggesting these examples to me.

Gibbard offers an explanation of what people mean when they make normative claims and form normative judgements. He's not trying to deny what people are thinking and saying—at least not at the substantive level.

V. Conclusion

There are various thoughts that objectors may have in suggesting that Gibbard's account is fictionalist. If it is, I think the fiction, if there were one, would involve a particular construal of our language. Perhaps our language is such that we take ourselves to be representing distinctly normative "states of affairs" when we're not. Perhaps, somehow, this trick is what Walton would characterize as an extremely useful pretense. In this case, what would matter were the real world facts that the implied game of make-believe helps us to better understand or think or talk about. We are beings who must decide what to do, what to think, how to feel. Perhaps pretending, as it were, that we are tracking a normative reality—one that mirrors somehow the natural reality—helps us make sense of what is the case normatively.

Perhaps, though, if our normative language really is descriptivist, this feature isn't best thought of as a fiction but rather an error. The error would be that normative thought and practice presupposes and purports to describe what is in fact a nonexistent robust normative reality. It seems to me, however, that if there is an error of this sort, it is best attributable to certain philosophical accounts of normative thought and talk. So if Gibbard's account can be characterized as an error theory, this would simply be because he claims that Platonism and other sorts of representationalism about the normative are in error—not that ordinary moral thought, practice, and discourse are in error.

Gibbard may reasonably be interpreted as offering a revisionary account of certain underlying assumptions or commitments. In particular, he might been seen as recommending replacing representationalism.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

This dissertation has been an essay at the intersection of metaethics or meta-normative theory and the history of contemporary analytic philosophy. It has been concerned with understanding the relationships between Allan Gibbard's mature quasi-realist expressivism and (*i*) other varieties of non-inflationary realism and (*ii*) moral or normative fictionalism. Exploring these relationships has enabled me to identify similarities between accounts that might seem superficially to be strikingly different. And, by considering what disagreements might remain after the elucidation of these similarities, I have also identified significant differences that might not have appeared obvious or straightforward. A deepened understanding of these relationships, I believe, helps move forward the project of articulating a satisfactory variety of metaethical realism.

I am sympathetic with the non-inflationary realist project. Indeed, I want some form of non-inflationary realism to work. While I have not offered a full-blown defense in the course of this dissertation—which has served more to clarify some features of the debate of which it is a part, reframe the metaethical landscape, and assess some individual arguments—I hope that what I have done does offer further reason to take this project seriously. I am quite aware that each element of the dissertation demands more in-depth exploration. But I believe that what I have written makes clear, at minimum, that the non-inflationary realist project should be understood as including the work not only of those figures—like T. M. Scanlon, Derek Parfit, Ronald Dworkin, Hilary Putnam, Thomas Nagel, and Matthew Kramer—who are characteristically seen as its paradigmatic representatives but also, crucially, that of Gibbard (and perhaps other quasi-realist expressivists). And recognizing this, in turn, should help to make clearer what sorts of positions might satisfy the desiderata of realism, and why.

From the end of the twentieth century through the early twenty-first, non-inflationary realism has played an influential role in metaethics and meta-normative theory. I believe the contemporary debate about its merits enables us to see the metaethical terrain in a new way, and I have attempted to redescribe that terrain accordingly. There's a familiar story about metaethics that we read and reread in articles and introductory texts. It's a story that seems innocently descriptive. But the way the story is told and the terms in which it's told reflect a variety of generally unquestioned assumptions about truth, objectivity, and reference, assumptions which I'm inclined to think are in significant part responsible for the puzzles we confront when we seek to defend the view that our moral or normative thought and discourse is in good order. I have sought to bring these assumptions more clearly into focus and make it more apparent why we might wish to challenge them.

On the conventional story, embracing moral or normative realism means agreeing that our moral claims and judgments are *about* something distinctly moral, and are thus accountable to that which they are about—perhaps a distinctly moral reality that transcends them, perhaps distinctively moral or normative properties as well as relations between and among the properties that our moral judgments pick out. Traditional moral realists think we can investigate the nature of moral reality and moral properties. The conventional story assumes, then, that realist accounts include some positive metaphysical theses about morality. And it also assumes that, without these theses, we cannot maintain that our moral claims and thoughts are true or false. There are different ways of understanding what the sort of moral or normative reality posited by the conventional story might amount to. But one common view is that moral or normative thoughts and claims are taken to be true precisely when they are appropriately accountable to how things stand with respect to an irreducibly moral or normative reality or arrangements of irreducibly moral or normative properties.

The non-inflationary realists challenge this story in what I take to be an appealing way. To the extent that their accounts are plausible, we have reason to think that some ontological and epistemic problems traditionally associated with moral or normative realism turn out to be problems for a particular *construal* of realism.

In assessing the accounts defended by Dworkin, Scanlon, and Parfit, I have in effect offered case studies of distinct versions of non-inflationary realism. I have focused on ways in which Dworkin and Scanlon attempt to distance their accounts from Gibbard's and highlighted ways in which their accounts actually agree with his on a variety of fronts. And I have evaluated Parfit's attempt to posit full convergence between his views and Gibbard's and concluded that the convergence is not as complete as Parfit supposes. My examination of Gibbard's account through the dissertation is thus a fourth case study. By focusing on what's at issue between Gibbard and these other non-inflationary realists, I have attempted to clarify and deepen our understanding of the non-inflationary view. Doing so, I believe offers insight into some long-standing debates, including, for instance, related to the roles properties can play in explanations of normativity.

There is broad agreement between Gibbard and Dworkin, Scanlon, and Parfit. They all agree that with our normative or moral claims, we purport to state normative truths. Our normative or moral claims are capable of being true or false. Our normative or moral thoughts can be characterized as beliefs. We can have normative or moral knowledge. There are substantive normative or moral facts. Moral facts are irreducibly moral or irreducibly normative in that they are not reducible to any non-normative fact. Normative or moral facts or truths are not *mind-dependent*: they are not true simply or exclusively or primarily in virtue of a particular stance we happen to take. Normative concepts cannot be analyzed in purely naturalistic terms, and normative concepts are thus best understood as *non-natural*. Normative facts do not depend on any robustly independent, existent truth-makers, which rules out both robust non-naturalism and some forms of naturalism.

In spite of this wide-spread agreement, some other non-inflationary realists object to Gibbard's account. Dworkin's attempts to argue that Gibbard either doesn't have a distinctive account or else defends a version of moral skepticism fail. Dworkin cannot take issue with Gibbard's account without granting that the sort of account he wants to defend is not viable. What's interesting is that Scanlon, Dworkin, and Parfit (as well as the other non-inflationary realists), all recognize that, to understand moral thought, discourse, and practice is to understand that it has a kind of *autonomy*. It has distinct characteristics that it doesn't share with other types of thought and discourse—what

we might call other domains. What's intriguing about Dworkin is that he offers a view of morality as *completely* autonomous. His objections to quasi-realist expressivism, however, highlight some reasons to be skeptical of a thoroughgoing anti-metaethical, anti-externalist approach to non-inflationary moral realism. In fact, he cannot reasonably take issue with Gibbard's account without granting that a sort of external debate about the status of morality or normativity is possible.

Scanlon grants more convergence between his account and Gibbard's than Dworkin grants between his and Gibbard's. Nonetheless, Scanlon insists that important differences remain between them with respect to how normative disagreement is understood and over the way in which the correctness conditions for normative beliefs are understood to be independent of such beliefs. I have shown, however, that there is good reason to think that Scanlon and Gibbard are on a par when it comes to standard objections to Gibbard's account of normative belief, including, direction-of-fit objections. Though I recognize that there is much more to say about whether genuine normative belief is compatible with non-inflationary realism—though I believe that it is—I have attempted to show that if it is compatible with non-inflationary realism, it follows that it is quite compatible with expressivism.

In contrast to Dworkin, Scanlon focuses on the normative rather than the moral. But like Dworkin and other non-inflationary realists, Scanlon insists on the primacy of substantive normative thought and discourse and focuses on domain-dependent standards. In particular, he maintains, every domain—that is, every way of talking and thinking about things that we find it makes conceptual sense to link—has its own set of standards, standards that determine which claims have truth values, which claims are true, and which conditions must be met for truth in a domain.

Scanlon agrees with Dworkin about the primacy of the substantive normative thought and discourse. But, unlike Dworkin, he grants that there are external judgments that can be made about both morality and normativity. The job of metaethicists is to inquire into how the normative or moral domains are best "understood at the most abstract and fundamental level," to ask "questions about the adequacy of reasoning in a domain and about the truth of statements, including existential

statements, that those modes of reasoning support."[1] Scanlon understands these tasks as rightly undertaken at least in part form an external perspective.

I think it's an interesting question what sorts of external questions really are possible on Scanlon's account. These questions and the sort of uber-domain of which they seem to be a part certainly deserve further attention.

In spite of Scanlon's and Dworkin's skepticism, they are best understood as offering accounts that are part of the same non-inflationary project to which Gibbard belongs. Nonetheless, while they agree with Gibbard in challenging assumptions about truth, objectivity, and reference, they resist Gibbard's account—whether because they doubt that talk about planning states captures the objective to-be-doneness of the normative; because, even though they have abandoned representationalism about the normative (and, perhaps, other domains as well) they still suspect that some sort of (non-causal, non-representational) accountability to mind-independent reality matters, and is missing from Gibbard's account. Though they have not adequately supplied what they take to be missing in Gibbard's account, and though Gibbard's proposal seems to render normativity non-mysterious in a way they ought to find helpful, the unresolved issues they raise remain important.

Perhaps Parfit takes these issues in a direction that diverges from Scanlon's or Dworkin's. Indeed, despite Parfit's welcome optimism, there is good reason to think that something significant *does* remain at issue between Gibbard and Parfit. Parfit may well be best seen as offering a position that, if plausible, would afford insight unavailable to nearby accounts—not only Gibbard's but also other versions of non-inflationary realism. Parfit seems to want to take a middle way between accounts such as Dworkin's and Scanlon's and robust realist accounts such as David Enoch's. Parfit seems to suspect that there is not enough reality to normativity as Gibbard conceives it and yet he's not satisfied with the sort of reality posited by Enoch. I suspect, however, that even if Parfit's irreducibly normative properties turn out to do the work he wants them to do without exhibiting the sort of *robust* normative ontology he seeks to avoid, they might well, for all that, end up facing at

[1]T. M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (New York: OUP 2014) 21.

least some of the challenges faced by more robust accounts of properties. The precise nature of Parfitian normative properties demands further consideration, as does the precise understanding of truth presupposed by Parfit's account.

Gibbard and the other non-inflationary realists intend to offer a way of treating normative thought and discourse as not only truth-apt but also, in at least some cases, as true. Some critics might be tempted to conclude that quasi-realist expressivists have abandoned the goal of understanding normative thought and discourse as truth-apt and of judging some moral or normative claims to be true, and that it follows from this that quasi-realist expressivism should be understood as a version of moral or normative fictionalism. Exploring how this account might be fictionalist helps shed light on what I suspect are some of the worries people have had about it. Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism is neither a version of fictionalism nor an error theory—even if it is understandable that some critics might misread it as one or other, given its challenges to assumptions some philosophers take to be integral to realism.

On Gibbard's view, truth-claims about physical reality are subject to tracking conditions while truth-claims about the normative are not. Truth and belief don't function, therefore, in the same way in the two cases even though some features of thought and discourse are the same in both—a fact which arguably encourages people to make the sorts of metaphysical mistakes Gibbard and the other non-inflationary realists seek to avoid. Perhaps his articulation of some clear differences between the way language and thought function in the two domains makes explicit otherwise unacknowledged implications of Scanlon's or Dworkin's accounts. Gibbard's clarification might make it apparent that the differences between the domains is deeper than other non-inflationary realists might be inclined to suppose. Perhaps Gibbard has shown us that we need not worry about such differences, but an uneasiness about whether the differences are as pronounced as Gibbard suggests and, if so, how best to deal with these differences may well be what prompts Scanlon and Dworkin to resist Gibbard's account and pushes Parfit toward what seems to be a sort of intermediate position.

Moral or normative realism seems to face serious and persistent ontological and epistemological challenges. These challenges reflect puzzlement over the normative realities or properties to which it might seem as if our claims and thoughts need to be appropriately responsive; puzzles over the objective to-be-doneness of normative facts; and worries about how we can come to know moral truths. Non-inflationary realism offers some reason to think that such problems are not, after all, problems for moral or normative realism as such—but rather for realism as it has traditionally been understood.

Though it is frequently misunderstood as non-cognitivist, i.e., an account that avoids these difficulties by giving up on normative objectivity and truth, Gibbard's quasi-realist expressivism is in fact better understood as a variety of non-inflationary realism; common arguments that Scanlon or Dworkin manage whereas Gibbard fails to capture truth and objectivity simply don't succeed, as I've tried to suggest. Comparing and contrasting Gibbard's view and other versions of non-inflationary realism, as well as exploring the ways in which Gibbard's account might seem to be, even as it turns out not to be a version of fictionalism highlights, I hope, reasons to be optimistic about the non-inflationary realist project. Making the same kind of argument he does in the normative case, Parfit suggests that the evident convergence between what might have been thought to be strikingly different metaethical accounts gives us reason to believe that the proponents of these accounts are making genuine metaethical progress.[2] Whether or not this is the case, non-inflationary realism does, in fact, respond in a promising way to the challenges faced by other sorts of normative or moral realism. While this is hardly decisive, its seeming effectiveness in doing so gives us further reason to develop and extend the non-inflationary realist program and to hope for its success.

[2]Here's Parfit: "I try to show that, as Railton and Gibbard separately suggest, we can resolve the deepest meta-ethical disagreements between Naturalism, Non-Naturalism and Quasi-Realist Expressivism. I make these attempts partly because, if they succeed, the resulting theories are more likely to be true. We could reasonably hope that, in ideal conditions, most of us would have sufficiently similar normative beliefs. We could then more justifiably believe that there are some objective irreducibly normative truths, some of which are moral truths." Parfit 3: 37.

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