

# The sense of incredibility in ethics

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**Abstract** It is often said that normative properties are “just too different” to reduce to other kinds of properties. This suggests that many philosophers find it difficult to believe reductive theses in ethics. I argue that the distinctiveness of the normative concepts we use in thinking about reductive theses offers a more promising explanation of this psychological phenomenon than the falsity of Reductive Realism. To identify the distinctiveness of normative concepts, I use resources from familiar Hybrid views of normative language and thought to develop a Hybrid view of normative concepts. In addition to using this new Hybrid view to explain why reductive theses are difficult to believe, I show how to preserve several patterns of inference involving normative concepts that, intuitively, it is possible to make, and hence answer an important recent challenge to Hybrid views from Mark Schroeder.

**Keywords** Normative concepts · Hybridism · Reductive realism · Robust realism

## 1 Introduction

Try to remember your initial exposure to philosophical ethics. In particular, try to recall one of your first encounters with a *reductive* idea in ethics, like the claim that the wrongness of an action is identical to its failing to maximize pleasure. If your experience was anything like mine, then you might be remembering yourself in a lecture hall struggling to take such an idea seriously; that is, you might be remembering how *incredible* you found such an idea to be. Or you might be recalling, at the very least, how much more incredible you found this kind of idea to

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be than similar ones from outside of ethics, like the idea that a sample of pure grain alcohol is an ionic compound of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, or that an ellipse is the set of points in a plane whose summed distance from each of two fixed points is the same. I call this psychological difficulty of believing reductive theses in ethics the *sense of incredibility*.<sup>1</sup>

You might not have ever experienced the sense of incredibility. But you don't have to take my word for it that many other philosophers have experienced it. Parfit (1997: 121, my emphasis) writes, in discussing views on which normative facts are reducible to natural facts, "These two kinds of fact are as *different* as the chairs and propositions that, in a dream, Moore once confused." Huemer (2005: 94, my emphasis) claims, "value properties are radically *different* from natural properties." Dancy (2006: 136, my emphasis) says, "There remains a stubborn feeling that [normative] facts about what is right or wrong, what is good or bad, and what we have reason to do have something *distinctive* in common, and that this common feature is *something that a natural fact could not have*." And in a statement that has become a slogan, Enoch (2011: 4, emphasis mine) writes, "Normative facts are *just too different* from natural ones to be a subset thereof."

That so many philosophers say that normative properties are too "different" to be identical to or fully analyzable in terms of other kind of properties would be puzzling if Reductive Realism<sup>2</sup> were true, the view that all normative properties are fully reducible to other kinds of properties.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is incumbent upon Reductivists to explain the sense of incredibility, since philosophers who are

<sup>1</sup> Following Andrew Melnyk (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>2</sup> Some, like Jackson (1998), state reductive theses in terms of property identity. Others state them in terms of property analysis, like Schroeder (2005), although he and still others don't treat these formulations as incompatible with one another. Since the arguments to come in this paper do not turn on the question of which approach is best, I will use the word 'reducible' to avoid privileging either reading. I'll also employ a variety of idioms that can be found in the works of Reductivist-friendly philosophers, including 'is', 'just is', 'what it is', 'all there is', 'nothing over and above', 'it lies in the nature of', 'fully grounded in', 'fully analyzable in terms of', etc., in my effort to remain neutral. It's worth mentioning up front, too, that the arguments in this paper also do not hinge on whether we formulate reductive theses in terms of a relation between different kinds of *properties* or a relation between different kinds of *facts*. I'll stick to formulating them in terms of properties, but nothing should be read into this choice.

<sup>3</sup> In the previous note, I said that the arguments in this paper do not turn on whether reductive theses are best understood in terms of property identity or analysis. But it is interesting to note that when reduction is understood as a kind of property analysis, many philosophers who report experiencing the sense of incredibility apparently turn out to hold views that aren't clearly at odds with at least some versions of Reductivism, at least on Rosen's (2017) taxonomy of views concerning the metaphysics of normativity.

Several reactions to this intriguing observation come to mind. So much the worse for Rosen's taxonomy, for one. Another, more constructive response is to understand the observation as supporting the idea that reductive theses are best understood in terms of identity, insofar as we want to preserve as, they currently are, the relevant controversies in ethics. I'm inclined to think, however, that it is a consequence of the arguments to come, as we'll see, that even card-carrying Reductivists will experience at least some trouble believing reductive theses. That those who experience the sense of incredibility might also themselves be Reductivists is exactly what we should expect, at least if my arguments are on the right track. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising the issue.

sympathetic to Robust Realism,<sup>4</sup> the view that at least some normative properties are not fully reducible to other kinds of properties, can be understood as suggesting that the best explanation of the sense of incredibility is that Reductivism is false.<sup>5</sup>

In Sect. 1, I will argue against two Reductivist-friendly explanations of the sense of incredibility—one from Parfit (2011) and Enoch (2011) and another from Wedgwood (2013). Taking loose inspiration from friends of Reductivism about phenomenal consciousness in the philosophy of mind, I argue in Sect. 2 that the distinctive nature of the normative *concepts* we use in thinking about reductive claims might hold the key to understanding the sense of incredibility in ethics. To identify the distinctiveness of normative concepts, I will explore resources available to some Hybridists about the nature of normative language and thought. Over the course of doing so, I will develop the first explicitly Hybrid view of normative concepts. But since the kind of Hybrid view I develop is vulnerable to an important recent challenge from Schroeder (2009), in addition to showing how it offers a promising explanation of the sense of incredibility, I will also show how it avoids the challenge from Schroeder in Sect. 3.

This paper advances a Reductivist-friendly explanation of the sense of incredibility. It is worth stressing, however, that I offer this defense of Reductivism from a place of deep appreciation for the concerns about Reductivism that have led many philosophers to embrace Robust Realism. As such, I take there to be lessons in this paper for Reductive and Robust Realists alike. Many influential concerns about Reductivism from Robust Realists tend to move from premises about normative concepts, thoughts, or language to metaphysical conclusions about the falsity of Reductivism. The main methodological lesson for Robust Realists is that the force of such arguments tends to be overstated, because there are often resources at the level of concepts, thought, or language available to Reductivists for answering them. Since, however, such resources would remain under appreciated were it not for such arguments, one important methodological lesson for Reductivists is that concerns about Reductivism from Robust Realists demand careful attention.

## 2 Two explanations of the sense of incredibility

### 2.1 The explanation from deliberative significance

The first Reductivist-friendly explanation of the sense of incredibility traces to two unlikely sources, Derek Parfit and David Enoch. These are unlikely sources for a Reductivist-friendly explanation of the sense of incredibility, because Parfit and

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<sup>4</sup> All of those philosophers already mentioned in the main text who experience the sense of incredibility maintain one version of Robust Realism or another. Some other contemporary Robust Realists include Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014) and FitzPatrick (2008).

<sup>5</sup> Apart from brief remarks from Finlay (2014), Forcehimes (2015), McPherson (2012), van Roojen (2015), and Wedgwood (2013), few ethicists have acknowledged the sense of incredibility, let alone tried to explain it. While Schroeder (2005) does not discuss the sense of incredibility itself, his discussion is in the same spirit as what I aiming to accomplish in this paper.

Enoch are two of the most high-profile opponents of Reductivism. Nevertheless, such an explanation begins to emerge from a case<sup>6</sup> that Parfit frequently employs when arguing against a prominent species of Reductive Realism, *Reductive Naturalism*, the view, roughly, that normative properties are reducible to so-called “natural” properties that are discoverable via the empirical sciences.<sup>7</sup>

After claiming that “normative and natural facts differ too deeply for any form of [Reductive] Naturalism to succeed,” Parfit (2011: 326) invites readers to imagine themselves deliberating about whether to jump into a canal from a burning hotel to save their lives. In particular, Parfit invites his readers to imagine themselves entertaining the claim that they *ought* to jump to illustrate the significance of normative concepts from the perspective of first-personal deliberation. In the same spirit, after claiming that “Normative facts sure seem different from natural facts,” Enoch (2011: 108) discusses the flipside of Parfit’s idea in imagining himself entertaining the thought that “pressing the blue button will maximize pleasure” in a scenario in which he is deliberating about whether to push it. Enoch then claims that such a thought “is a complete non-starter, it completely fails to address the question [of whether to push the button].” These statements suggest that those who experience the sense of incredibility do so as a result of recognizing the differences in deliberative significance between normative and non-normative concepts.

It is easy to agree with Parfit and Enoch that thoughts containing normative concepts play a characteristic role in deliberation that thoughts lacking such concepts do not, and hence that there is a difference in deliberative significance between normative and non-normative concepts. Nevertheless, if the sense of incredibility is due to such differences, then we should also expect the sense of incredibility to pop up in other cases involving concepts with mismatching deliberative significance, such as in cases involving indexical and non-indexical concepts. But while indexical concepts like *I* and *ME*<sup>8</sup> tend to be more deliberatively significant than non-indexical concepts, no one seems to experience the sense of incredibility while entertaining thoughts containing indexical and non-indexical concepts to quite the same degree as in ethics. *I*, for example, do not have any trouble believing that *the person with brown hair typing* is *me*, or I have far less trouble believing it than I do believing that wrongness is failing to maximize pleasure. Thus, the view on offer from Parfit and Enoch seems inadequate, at least in part because it over generates.

<sup>6</sup> This case makes its first appearance in Parfit (1997).

<sup>7</sup> Parfit focuses much of his criticism throughout his work on Reductive Naturalism. But it is clear that Parfit takes issue with Reductivism, in general. For he thinks, like many other opponents of Reductivism, that normative properties are of their *own* kind, which suggests that he would not welcome reducing normative properties to supernatural properties or any other kind of non-normative property. So, I will be understanding any discussion of Reductive Naturalism as discussion of Reductive Realism more generally throughout this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Small caps denote concepts.

## 2.2 The explanation from the (alleged) indefinability of normative concepts

The second explanation of the sense of incredibility on behalf of Reductivists comes from Ralph Wedgwood's (2013: 392) review of Enoch's *Taking Morality Seriously*. According to Wedgwood, once we make the broadly Fregean distinction between sense and reference and distinguish normative properties (referents) from normative concepts (senses), then "We can explain away the 'just-too-different intuition' [i.e. the sense of incredibility] as arising from the fact that normative concepts and naturalistic concepts are so different that there is no possibility of defining normative concepts by means of naturalistic concepts."

The thought here from Wedgwood seems to be that we experience the sense of incredibility in ethics when we do in virtue of entertaining reductive theses involving normative concepts that are not fully analyzable in terms of other concepts. A subject who entertains the reductive thesis, for example, that what it is for an action to be wrong is for it to be an action that fails to maximize pleasure experiences the sense of incredibility in virtue of the fact that the normative concept WRONG is not fully analyzable in terms of the naturalistic concept FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE. In other words, Wedgwood seems to be suggesting that the sense of incredibility stems from the falsity of Analytic Reductivism in ethics, the view that all normative concepts are fully analyzable in terms of other kinds of concepts.<sup>9</sup>

But this explanation also appears to over generate. It is unlikely, for example, that a concept like WATER is fully analyzable in terms of a concept like H<sub>2</sub>O. Yet no one seems to experience an analogous sense of incredibility regarding the thesis that water is fully analyzable in terms of H<sub>2</sub>O, or at least, no one seems to experience it to quite the same degree as the sense of incredibility is experienced upon entertaining reductive theses in ethics. Compare: chemists who spend their life studying the nature of chemical reality don't tend to express strong resistance to believing reductive views about the nature of water, whereas many ethicists who spend their lives studying the nature of ethical reality, as we've seen, express strong resistance to believing reductive views about the nature of ethics.

While Wedgwood's idea that the sense of incredibility is due to the indefinability of normative concepts seems to come up short, it might nevertheless be on the right track. The heart of Wedgwood's proposal seems to be the plausible idea that we have to look at the ingredients in the sauce to determine why it tastes the way it does. Less metaphorically, Wedgwood is suggesting, at bottom, that it's the features of the concepts (ingredients) we use in attempting to form beliefs about reductive theses (the sauce) that hold the key to understanding why we have so much trouble succeeding in this regard (why the sauce tastes the way it does). While Wedgwood appears to identify the wrong ingredient in focusing on the alleged indefinability of normative concepts, it might still be that there is some *other* feature of the concepts we use in attempting to form beliefs concerning reductive theses that explains the sense of incredibility. Wedgwood's basic thought is itself compelling.

<sup>9</sup> See Finlay (2014) for a recent book-length defense of Analytic Reductivism.

Moreover, Wedgwood seems to be in good company. For there is a seemingly analogous sense of incredibility that many philosophers of mind experience while attempting to believe claims concerning the reducibility of phenomenal consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Many of them even influentially suggest, pace Wedgwood, that this analogous sense of incredibility traces to the nature of the concepts that we use in entertaining such theses.<sup>11</sup> But instead of appealing to any lack of definitional connections among these concepts to explain this analogous sense of incredibility, it is often said that it results from entertaining reductive theses involving concepts that *do more* than merely refer to or pick out properties.<sup>12</sup> Just what concepts could do beyond picking out properties, and just how this could help explain the sense of incredibility is far from obvious.<sup>13</sup> But luckily for us, the idea that *words* might do more than merely pick out properties is a familiar one in ethics—so-called Hybridists have long argued that normative language has a kind of “dual” nature. And so, in the next section, I’ll attempt to identify a candidate extra-referential feature of the normative concepts we use or deploy in attempting to form beliefs concerning reductive theses, by exploring what Hybridists have had to say about the special nature of normative words.<sup>14</sup> I’ll then turn to the question of how such a feature might help explain the sense of incredibility in ethics.

### 3 Toward a more promising explanation of the sense of incredibility

With lessons from two not-fully-promising explanations of the sense of incredibility in ethics under our belt, we turn now to explaining the sense of incredibility in ethics away by trying to find some special feature of normative concepts that might do the

<sup>10</sup> For example, McGinn (2014, my emphasis) writes, “...consciousness as it presents itself to introspection appears to be *just a different kind of thing* from activity in the brain.” And in describing what he calls the “intuition of distinctness,” too, Papineau (2002: 2) says that it is “the compelling intuition that the mind is ontologically distinct from the material world.”

<sup>11</sup> This idea is often found under the heading of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy. Many philosophers advance different versions of it. See Sundström (2011) for an overview.

<sup>12</sup> Again, however, not every proponent of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy advocates the very same version of it. While it seems accurate to say that Balog (2012) and Papineau (1993) hold the kind of view described above, for example, Loar (1997) and Levin (2006) do not.

<sup>13</sup> Some Phenomenal Concept Strategists, like Balog and Papineau, suggest that the concepts we use to pick out phenomenal properties (i.e. phenomenal concepts) also activate phenomenal or proto-phenomenal states. Since it is not plausible to think that normative concepts are a species of phenomenal concepts, I will not explore a *strict* analogue of some Phenomenal Concept Strategists’ idea that phenomenal concepts both pick out properties and activate phenomenal states. In this paper, I will be relying very loosely on the core Phenomenal Concept Strategy idea that there is something special about the nature of normative concepts to which we can appeal in explaining away anti-Reductivist phenomena like the sense of incredibility.

<sup>14</sup> Yetter-Chappell and Yetter-Chappell (2013) were the first to suggest that Reductivists in ethics might benefit from a kind of analogue of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy. By their own admission, however, the authors merely offer a sketch of such an analogue, concluding their paper by writing, “The remaining challenge for the [Reductivist] who wants to adopt [the Concept] Strategy is to flesh it out by providing an account of [normative] concepts...” The sections to come can be read as an attempt to meet this challenge.

trick. And it might be instructive in attempting to identify such a feature to explore, as noted above, how many ethicists have come to think there is something special about normative words.

To bring some perspective on the issue with a potted history, we can begin by noting that the dominant approach to the study of linguistic meaning in the history of philosophy of language has been broadly Descriptivist or Cognitivist or Truth-conditional. On such an approach, the best kind of explanation of the meanings of words appeals to what they describe or what they're about or the contribution they make to conditions under which sentences containing them are true. Going all the way back to at least Ogden and Richards (1923), Ayer (1936), and Stevenson (1937), however, many philosophers have doubted whether the best explanation of the meanings of normative words is Descriptivist or Cognitivist or Truth-conditional (I'll stick to 'Cognitivist' from here on for ease of exposition). For it is a lot less obvious what a paradigmatically normative word like 'good' could be about than a paradigmatically non-normative word like 'tall', for example. Moreover, among other reasons, such philosophers have also thought that normative words seem more closely connected to action than other kinds of words.

Taken by such observations, Ogden and Richards, Ayer, Stevenson, and many other philosophers began developing a Noncognitivist approach to linguistic meaning, where the meanings of normative words are not best explained by what they are about or characterized through a compositional characterization of truth-conditions. Rather, according to such philosophers, the best explanation of the meanings of normative words adverts to the non-cognitive or non-truth-conditional states of mind that are expressed by our use of such words. A word like 'wrong' does not pick out any kind of property when a speaker utters it in a sentence like 'stealing is wrong', on this sort of view, but instead expresses a noncognitive state of mind such as a desire not to steal. Eventually, against this background, so-called Hybridists began to doubt the apparent presupposition of this debate that we must choose between cognitive and noncognitive approaches to the study of linguistic meaning.

Among the wide variety of contemporary Hybrid views in ethics, one prominent family of such views traces to Copp (2001), and takes as its starting point plausible observations about sentences containing slurs. It seems like using the sentence 'Patrick is a mick' not only expresses a cognitive belief about Patrick being Irish, for example, but *also* expresses a negative noncognitive attitude, like *contempt* for Irish people. On such a view, the meanings of slurs are best explained by appealing both to the cognitive and noncognitive states of mind that our use of such sentences expresses. With slurs as their license for optimism, Hybridists claim that *normative* words are also best understood in terms of the cognitive and noncognitive states of mind that uses of them express.<sup>15</sup> Using 'wrong' in the sentence 'stealing is wrong' might on such a view express, say, the cognitive belief that stealing has some property, like the property of failing to maximize pleasure, and the noncognitive

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<sup>15</sup> I am using the terms 'ethics', 'moral', 'normative' and their cognates interchangeably.

attitude of desiring not to do whatever has the property of failing to maximize pleasure.

In an influential article that surveys the costs and benefits of many prominent Hybrid views, including Hybrid views that take slurs as their model, Schroeder (2009) argues forcefully that the best version of Hybridism is one on which sentences containing normative words are *invariant* across all speakers and uses, in the sense that uses of them do *not* express different states of mind across speakers or across uses. He recommends that Hybridists follow theorists like Boisvert (2008) and Hay (2014) in holding that any use of a normative word like ‘wrong’ out of the mouth of any speaker always picks out the same property and expresses the same noncognitive state. To fix ideas, then, I’ll work with a slur inspired, Invariantist Hybrid view on which a use of ‘wrong’ in a sentence like ‘stealing is wrong’ always expresses the belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and the desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure.

Note, however, that these are merely simplifying assumptions made for the sake of exposition. This toy view is more straightforward than other Hybridist proposals that incorporate Contextualist elements, where the properties picked out by the expressed beliefs or the very attitudes expressed shifts across contexts or speakers. Likewise, rather than using *pleasure maximization* as the candidate property for the correct reduction base, we could fill out this style of Hybridism equally well with Kantian notions, maintaining that any speaker’s use of ‘wrong’ picks out the property of failing to conform to the categorical imperative.<sup>16</sup> I’ll call this sort of Benthamite Invariantist Hybridism with which I’ll be working Normative Language Hybridism (NLH) from here on.

Remember that the goal is to identify how normative concepts might do more than merely pick out properties, in an effort to explain away the sense of incredibility in ethics on behalf of Reductivists. The guiding thought of this and the sections to come is that Hybrid views of normative language are illuminating in this regard because such views provide clues as to what this extra-referential feature could be. But since Hybrid views are first and foremost theories of language, not concepts, our route to a Hybrid view of normative concepts is less than direct. Nevertheless, as we’ll now begin to see, the kind of view we are looking for is only a bit further down the road.

### 3.1 From normative language hybridism to normative thought hybridism

In our search for an account of what could make normative concepts special in such a way as to explain the sense of incredibility in ethics, we were led in the previous

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to downplay any of the burdens that proponents of Invariantist Hybridism face in explaining how normative language has come to be about a single property. Doubts about whether it is possible to discharge this explanatory burden arguably serve as one of the principal motivations for Contextualist views of normative language on offer from theorists like Finlay (2014). Relatedly, however, in defending a version of Contextualism about normative language on behalf of Robust Realism, it could be that part of what it is for a range of uses of language to be distinctly moral is for it to be about a particular property. See Laskowski (2014) for more on this suggestion.



section to NLH, which says, for example, that the meaning of ‘wrong’ in a sentence like ‘stealing is wrong’ is best explained by the cognitive belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and the desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure that our use of such a sentence expresses. An intriguing idea suggested by this view is that what makes normative words special is that our use of them not only involves *picking out* properties but also somehow involves *desiring*.

This Hybrid idea about normative language might provide us with a significant clue about normative concepts. To see this, note that for much of the history of Hybridism, theorists have largely taken themselves only to be offering Hybrid views of the meanings of normative *words*. Yet familiar observations concerning our use of normative words, like the observation that our use of them is closely correlated with action, also seem to extend to normative *thoughts*. After all, people who think that they ought to recycle tend to do so and people who believe that torturing children for the fun of it is wrong tend not to torture children for the fun of it. The first step to moving from a Hybrid view of normative language to a Hybrid view of normative thought that we can articulate in English is to claim, as Schroeder (2014) points out, that the semantics for thought-words like ‘believes’ interacts with the semantics for normative words in the right way.<sup>17</sup>

In particular, one way to do this is to hold that a use of the word ‘believes’ in a sentence like ‘S believes that stealing is wrong’ attributes to its subject the states of mind expressed by uses of ‘wrong’. Since, on NLH, uses of ‘wrong’ always express beliefs about the property of failing to maximize pleasure and desires concerning this property, uses of such a term in attitude ascriptions will always ascribe these states to its subject. By putting together this claim about attitude ascriptions together with NLH, and semantically descending, we can say that S believes that stealing is wrong just in case S has the belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and the desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. It is natural to then go further and claim that *what it is* to believe that stealing is wrong is to be in the conjunctive state of believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. Call this view Normative Thought Hybridism (NTH). See Fig. 1 for illustration.

Figure 1 is an illustration of NTH. The triangle represents desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure, the square represents believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure, and together these represent believing that stealing is wrong. This figure does *not* represent believing that stealing is wrong as the triangle. *Nor* does it represent believing that stealing is wrong as the square. Instead, it represents believing that stealing is wrong as the square and the triangle *together*. It is perhaps helpful think of the belief that stealing is wrong as distributed in the head, on this picture. To employ a familiar metaphor, if the head contains something like a “box” for belief, and something like a box for desire, we can think of beliefs about wrongness as placing constraints on *both* boxes. NTH is the view that believing that

<sup>17</sup> Another route to a Hybrid view of normative thought is to first offer an analysis of normative thought, as Tresan (2006) seems to do, and then offer a semantics for thought-words, in order to make sense of the language necessary for stating such a view. See also Laskowski (2015) for how Reductivists might put such views to use.

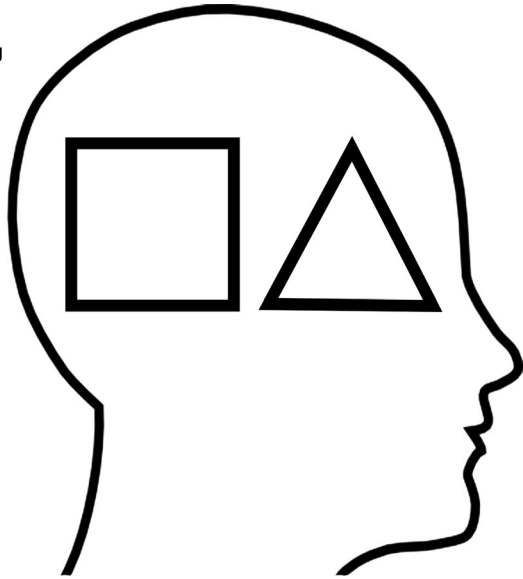
Belief that stealing is wrong



Belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure



Desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure



**Fig. 1** Normative thought hybridism

stealing is wrong is believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure.

It is worth quickly noting that NLH and the resulting NTH both play fast and loose with the noncognitive attitudinal component in their respective analyses. In my gloss of NTH, for example, I claim that believing that stealing is wrong consists in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. Such a gloss might reasonably lead one to think that NTH carries a commitment to a kind of Strong Motivational Internalism, according to which, necessarily, if S thinks that *x* is wrong, then *x* has a motivation not to *x*. However, Hay (2014) argues persuasively that it is possible to characterize the noncognitive attitudinal component of such analyses in a way that doesn't commit to Strong Motivational Internalism.<sup>18</sup> So, I do not take my gloss on such views to commit them to Strong Motivational Internalism, and I will continue to gloss them in the way that I have been for ease of exposition.

<sup>18</sup> His idea is to characterize the noncognitive attitudinal component as generalized attitudes towards types. Instead of saying that S desires not to do whatever has the property of failing to maximize pleasure, for example, Hay might recommend we understand S as desiring not to do actions of the type that fail to maximize pleasure. Plausibly, it doesn't follow from S desiring not to do actions of the type *fail to maximize pleasure* that S desires not to do every particular action of that type. And if this is right, then it doesn't seem like S would necessarily be motivated upon thinking that a particular action fails to maximize pleasure.

### 3.2 From normative thought hybridism to normative concept hybridism

Our route to an account of what could make normative concepts special in such a way as to help explain the sense of incredibility in ethics has now made its way from NLH to NTH—from language to mind. Now that we are in the head, so to speak, we are in a position to build on NTH to offer an account of normative concepts.

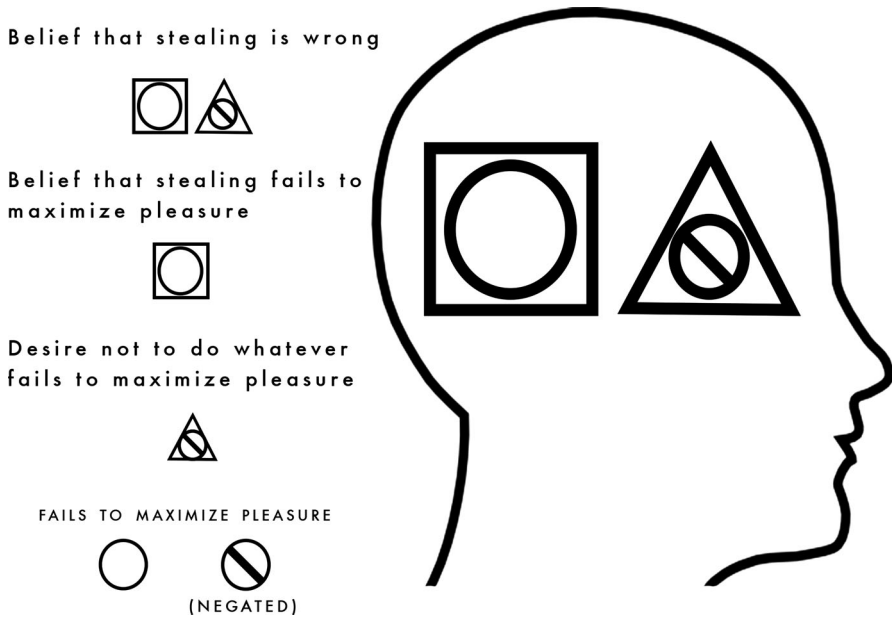
Moving from NTH to a Hybrid view of normative concepts is straightforward. In the general theory of concepts, it is widely held that concepts are the constituents of thoughts.<sup>19</sup> Let's take this claim and combine it with the NTH claim that believing that stealing is wrong is believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. It is now natural to claim that a subject deploys the normative concept *WRONG* in believing that stealing is wrong just in case the subject deploys the concept *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. Call this view Normative Concept Hybridism (NCH). See Fig. 2 for illustration.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 2 illustrates NCH. The triangle with the slashed circle in it represents desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure, the square with the empty circle in it represents believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure, and these together represent deploying the normative concept *WRONG* in believing that stealing is wrong. To be clear, the figure does *not* represent deploying the normative concept *WRONG* as the triangle with the slashed circle in it. *Nor* does it represent deploying the normative concept *WRONG* as the square with the circle in it. Instead, the figure depicts the triangle and the square as *together* representing deploying the normative concept *WRONG*.

NCH looks to be a kind of Hybrid view of normative concepts. This is because it says that deploying *WRONG* consists in both deploying *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* (and hence in *picking out* the property of failing to maximize pleasure with it) and desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. This suggests, on NCH, that deploying *WRONG* also *does more* than merely pick out properties—it might be that deploying *WRONG* further *activates* or *makes occurrent* a coordinated desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. This is an extra-referential feature of normative concepts—an extra-referential feature of normative concepts that we've been exploring Hybrid resources of normative language and thought to find.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Fodor (1998: 26), Margolis and Laurence (2004: 190), and Prinz (2002).

<sup>20</sup> Normative Concept Hybridism is built out of the resources of Normative Thought Hybridism, which is built out of the Invariantist Hybridist resources of Normative Language Hybridism. It is worth mentioning that one of the main motivations for Invariantist Hybridism is its capacity to accommodate familiar Frege–Geach type worries. As Boisvert (2008) and Schroeder (2009) both emphasize, Invariantist Hybridism doesn't have any trouble capturing the embedding and logical properties of normative language, because the view piggy backs on standard Descriptivist accounts of such properties. Normative Concept Hybridism inherits the Invariantist Hybridist solution to Frege–Geach type concerns.



**Fig. 2** Normative concept hybridism

#### 4 Normative concept hybridism, the sense of incredibility, and Schroeder's challenge

Recall that we set out in Sect. 2 to develop a Hybrid view of normative concepts with a Hybrid view of normative language serving as inspiration (NLH). This led us to a Hybrid view of normative thought (NTH), which brought us to the sort of Hybrid view of normative concepts (NCH) that we were looking for. The development of NCH is of interest in its own right. But it is especially interesting in this context, since one of the central aims of this paper is to see whether appealing to an account of the nature of normative concepts on which they have an extra-referential feature could help explain the sense of incredibility away on behalf of Reductivists. That's the question we are finally in a position to begin addressing directly with NCH.

To see how NCH might help explain the sense of incredibility in ethics it would be instructive to again consider the reductive claim that wrongness is failing to maximize pleasure. Attempting to believe this thesis partially consists in deploying the normative concept *WRONG* (on the left-hand side of the claim) and deploying the non-normative concept *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* (on the right-hand side). If NCH is true, then thinking the left-side (deploying *WRONG*) consists in deploying *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. And thinking the right-side (deploying *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE*) consists in deploying *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* in the ordinary way.

Notice, however, that what is going on inside the head of a subject attempting to believe that wrongness is failing to maximize pleasure is that the subject is

deploying FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE *twice*, on NCH, once on the left-side and once again on the right-side. This means that what is going on inside the subject's head is that they are attempting to believe that *failing to maximize pleasure is failing to maximize pleasure*. That's implausible.

That we have run into this problem is not altogether surprising, however. For it is a consequence of a related problem that afflicts, according to Schroeder (2009: 300), the very sort of Hybrid views out of which NCH is built. Since the problem is subtle, though, it is worth belaboring it, by quickly rehearsing why Schroeder thinks views like NTH are vulnerable to it, and hence, again, why NCH inherits this problem.

Recall that, on NTH, believing that stealing is wrong is believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. Schroeder points out that it's a commitment of this kind of Hybrid view that anyone who has any normative thought about wrongness whatsoever desires not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. That is, if a subject has *any* belief about wrongness (e.g. killing is wrong, contributing to climate change is wrong, etc.), then they desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. That's just an easy-to-miss but nevertheless straightforward commitment of the view, since desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure is a necessary condition for having beliefs about wrongness.

The idea that everyone who is competent with the concept WRONG has this desire might itself be cause for concern.<sup>21</sup> But that's not the problem I am highlighting with Schroeder's discussion. Instead, I am focusing on the consequence that if a subject has such a desire, because they have beliefs about wrongness, then as soon as they come to believe, say, that stealing fails to maximize pleasure, they *thereby* count as believing that stealing is wrong. This is because *all it takes* to believe that stealing is wrong, on views like NTH, is believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure.

This is a big problem. It means that views like NTH and hence NCH have a tremendously difficult time vindicating ordinary patterns of reasoning. A subject cannot, for example, come to believe, *first*, that stealing fails to maximize pleasure, and *then* in light of it, come to believe that stealing is wrong. For as soon as they form the former belief they *automatically* count as forming the latter one. Before we can even begin to see how NCH might help explain away the sense of incredibility in ethics, it seems, we first have to show how to avoid *Schroeder's Challenge*, which I am taking to be the challenge of providing an account of the nature of normative concepts on which it is possible to deploy them in those ways it is intuitively possible to do so. That's the task of the next section.

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<sup>21</sup> It's important to keep in mind that the desire not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure is simply an *example*.

#### 4.1 The *structure* of an answer to Schroeder's challenge

In the previous section, we ran into Schroeder's Challenge while trying to explain away the sense of incredibility on behalf of Reductivists. What Schroeder's Challenge seems to reveal is that NCH makes it too easy to deploy *WRONG*, in virtue of making the conceptual connection between the normative concept *WRONG* and the non-normative concept *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* too tight. This suggests that answering Schroeder's Challenge involves severing the connection between *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* and *WRONG* in the NCH-analysis. In this section, I'll show that this diagnosis is on the mark.

Replace *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* in the NCH-analysis with a *different* concept that picks out the very same property.<sup>22</sup> Since *BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY* might also refer to the property of failing to maximize pleasure, suppose that deploying *WRONG* consists in deploying *BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY* while desiring not do whatever has Bentham's least favorite property. Now imagine that a subject by the name of Stan is deliberating about whether to steal. Like most of us, Stan happens to have a few beliefs about wrongness. In particular, imagine, Stan believes that eating meat is wrong. Because Stan has this belief about wrongness, and because desiring not to do whatever has Bentham's favorite property is a necessary condition on having such a belief on our modified version of NCH, Stan has this desire.

Now imagine that over the course of deliberating about whether to steal, Stan then deploys *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure. This does *not* mean, however, that Stan ipso facto deploys *WRONG* in believing that stealing is wrong. Sure, Stan desires not to do whatever has Bentham's least favorite property, and hence satisfies *one* necessary condition for deploying *WRONG* on the kind of modified version of NCH that we are considering. But he does *not* deploy *BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY* in believing that stealing has Bentham's least favorite property, which means that Stan does *not* satisfy the *other* necessary condition for deploying *WRONG* in believing that stealing is wrong. Thus, so long as deploying *WRONG* involves a different concept from *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE*—one that picks out the same property—Schroeder's Challenge can be met.

#### 4.2 Going out to LUNCH

In the previous section, we used the concept *BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY* to demonstrate the *structure* of one kind of answer to Schroeder's Challenge: It has to be the case that deploying *WRONG* involves deploying a different concept from *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE* that picks out the same property as it. In this section, I will reflect on some of the reasons why *BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY* has *merely* been a useful heuristic for demonstrating the structure of an answer to Schroeder's Challenge, in an effort to demonstrate a natural way to add substance to it.

<sup>22</sup> Remember that the property of failing to maximize pleasure is a *placeholder* for the correct reductive base property. It's not actually a constraint that the analysis includes a concept that refers to the particular property of failing to maximize pleasure, per se.

Notice that it's simply implausible to maintain that ordinary normative agents possess the concepts that constitute BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY, and hence it's implausible to maintain that deploying WRONG involves BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY. After all, our students surely possessed the concept WRONG before acquiring the concept BENTHAM in our introductory ethics courses. Indeed, if this is right, then we should also acknowledge that it was never plausible to maintain the original NCH condition on which deploying WRONG involves deploying FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE. For it's pure fantasy to hold that ordinary normative agents have engaged in the kind of sophisticated ethical theorizing that philosophers have undertaken to uncover the property of failing to maximize pleasure and acquire FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE.<sup>23</sup> Nor, for that matter, have ordinary normative agents been privy to the social networks in which this concept has been transferred over time.

These considerations are worth emphasizing. Take a closer look at the features of BENTHAM'S LEAST FAVORITE PROPERTY and FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE that seem to make them implausible candidate constituents of WRONG. Note, both of these concepts are highly *complex*. After all, I made up the former concept a moment ago to illustrate a relatively archaic philosophical point, by stringing together the simpler concepts BENTHAM'S, LEAST, FAVORITE, and PROPERTY, and the latter is the product of esoteric ethical theorizing, in which philosophers navigated complicated intuitions concerning an array of normatively significant elements of the world to construct it out of FAILS, MAXIMIZE, and PLEASURE.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps, then, ordinary normative agents have come to possess a concept that picks out the same property as FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in virtue of a process that has little to do with any of my stipulations, nor the high-powered ethical theorizing of professional philosophers. Indeed, it is plausible to maintain, especially from the perspective of Reductivism, that ordinary normative agents have come to possess such a concept in a more down-to-earth way, like standing in the appropriate *causal* relationship to the property of failing to maximize pleasure that actions instantiate. For example, an action that instantiates the property of failing to maximize pleasure might cause us to identify it *demonstratively* as *that feature* of the action, and repeated instances then dispose us to recognize them as further instances of *that sort* of thing.<sup>25</sup> And because we pick out the property of failing to maximize pleasure

<sup>23</sup> Keep in mind that the property of failing to maximize pleasure is simply a placeholder for the correct reductive base property, which is likely to be even more complex if the sophistication of any of the major ethical traditions in contemporary philosophy is any indication. But even if it turns out that a relatively complex property like the property of failing to maximize pleasure is the correct reductive base property, it's easy to miss its complexity as professional philosophers who are comfortably familiar with the substantive elements *failing*, *maximize*, and *pleasure* that structure it. See Laskowski (2017) for an extended discussion of the relationship between sophisticated ethical theorizing and Reductivism.

<sup>24</sup> Or whichever the constituents of the corresponding concept of the correct reductive base property might be. Again, the property of failing to maximize pleasure and the corresponding concept FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE are placeholders.

<sup>25</sup> This is another place where versions of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy are serving as helpful inspiration. Loar (1990, 1997) influentially argues that phenomenal concepts have a recognitional, demonstrative character. Levin (2006, 2008, 2012) refines and prominently defends this basic idea.



demonstratively, without assistance from thoughtful philosophical reflection,<sup>26</sup> it could be that the concept has a *simple* and hence *unanalyzable* character as a result. Would it do the trick if deploying WRONG consisted in deploying a concept like *this*?

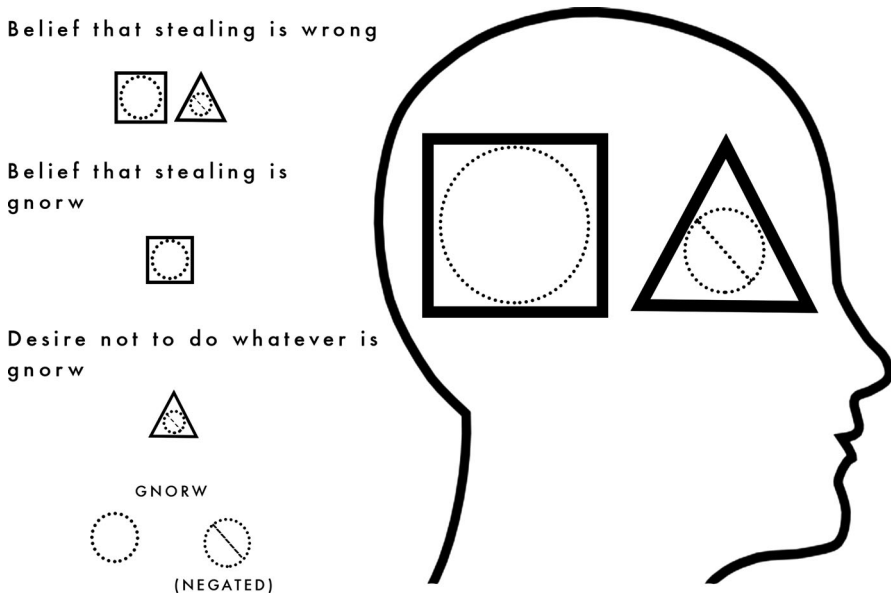
Yes. But let's be crystal clear about the modified version of NCH now under consideration, before illustrating exactly how it copes with Schroeder's Challenge. I am claiming that, plausibly, deploying WRONG involves deploying *an unanalyzable concept* that picks out the same property of failing to maximize pleasure as the *analyzed* concept FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE. To talk about this unanalyzable concept, we cannot use the word 'wrong', since the word 'wrong' denotes the concept WRONG of which this unanalyzable concept is a proper part. And since we do not have another word in English for this unanalyzable concept that forms a proper part of WRONG, I will introduce the word 'gnorw' for it. Instead of claiming that what it is to deploy WRONG is to deploy FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure, as a proponent of NCH would, I claim that what it is to deploy WRONG is to deploy the *unanalyzable* concept GNORW while desiring not to do whatever is gnorw. Call the resulting view Unanalyzable Normative Concept Hybridism (UNCH). Better yet, call it Laskowski's Unanalyzable Normative Concept Hybridism, since it's hard to argue against LUNCH. Figure 3 illustrates the view.

The triangle with the dotted circle in it represents desiring not to do whatever is gnorw, the square with the dotted circle in it represents believing that stealing is gnorw, and these together represent deploying the normative concept WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong. Like our other figures, Fig. 3 does *not* represent deploying the normative concept WRONG as the triangle with the dotted circle in it. *Nor* does it represent deploying the normative concept WRONG as the square with the dotted circle in it. Instead, the figure depicts the triangle with the dotted circle and the square with the dotted circle as *together* representing deploying the normative concept WRONG.

To be clear, GNORW is not a new concept that I am introducing. Rather, it's a cognitive-naturalistic concept that everyone competent with the concept WRONG uses to think about the property of failing to maximize pleasure, in virtue of, for example, standing in the right causal relation to this property. Or so I think the considerations above make it plausible to claim. To be sure, however, I am introducing the word 'gnorw' to express the concept GNORW. And that might seem strange, since we might expect to already have a word to describe such a crucial element of our minds. But our linguistic deficiency here is no surprise, at least from the perspective of someone who takes Hybridism seriously—someone who takes the idea that normative concepts have a kind of dual nature to be a genuinely *novel* insight. The word 'gnorw' simply allows us to talk about a proper part of WRONG that competent users of it have always possessed, but which until now has gone unnoticed. That this has

<sup>26</sup> Space prevents me from expanding on these suggestive remarks about the relationship between ordinary normative agents and substantive ethical theorizing. See Star (2015) for a detailed, systematic treatment of the issue.





**Fig. 3** Laskowski's unanalyzable normative concept hybridism

gone unnoticed should be no surprise to anyone who thinks philosophy makes progress.<sup>27</sup>

### 4.3 Answering Schroeder's challenge

With LUNCH on the table, we are now in a position to provide a full answer to Schroeder's Challenge. To see how the answer works, imagine, again, that Stan still has a few beliefs about wrongness, including his belief that eating meat is wrong. Because Stan has this belief, on LUNCH, he desires not to do whatever is gnorw. Now imagine that Stan is deliberating about whether to steal while desiring not to do whatever is gnorw. Imagine, too, that over the course of deliberating about

<sup>27</sup> A natural worry to have is that LUNCH does not provide a complete explanation of the sense of incredibility that is at the same time plausible. After all, philosophers experience the sense of incredibility in response to all sorts of reductive theses in ethics, not just to reductive theses concerning wrongness. This suggests that a proponent of LUNCH might have to posit that all our normative concepts are hybrid concepts with their own unanalyzed cognitive-naturalistic concept as a constituent, e.g. GNORW<sub>1</sub>, GNORW<sub>2</sub>, and so on. And the mind might start to look implausibly furnished from this perspective.

This sort of worry is a useful reminder that a proponent of LUNCH still faces a number of choice-points in developing a full theory of normative concepts that carries with it an explanation of the sense of incredibility. Whether and if so how normative concepts stand in structural relationships of fundamentality among each other is one such choice-point that comes to mind, for example. In the spirit of Schroeder (2007), it could be that some normative concepts are more basic than others, and that the less basic ones are most plausibly understood in terms of those that are more basic. A proponent of LUNCH could then say that we only have a *single* unanalyzed cognitive-naturalistic concept that forms a proper part of the most basic normative concept in terms of which all less basic normative concepts are best understood. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this concern.

whether to steal, Stan comes to deploy FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure. Here is a figure illustrating Stan's state of mind (Fig. 4).

Notice, even though Stan deploys FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*, Stan does *not* count as deploying WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong. To believe that stealing is wrong, on LUNCH, Stan would need to deploy GNORW in believing that stealing is *gnorw* while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*. But Stan does not do *both* of these things. Yes, he desires not to do whatever is *gnorw*. But he does not deploy GNORW in believing that stealing is *gnorw*; rather, he believes that stealing fails to maximize pleasure. Thus, Stan can believe that stealing fails to maximize pleasure without ipso facto deploying WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong. This means, on LUNCH, that Stan can deploy all the concepts he intuitively ought to have the capacity to deploy, as Fig. 5 represents.

By substituting GNORW for FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in the NCH-analysis of WRONG, it is possible to deploy FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure without ipso facto deploying WRONG and hence without ipso facto believing that stealing is wrong. Thus, LUNCH avoids Schroeder's Challenge.<sup>28</sup> Yet in addition to avoiding Schroeder's Challenge, LUNCH also avoids a closely related problem—one that we might think of as the flipside of Schroeder's Challenge.

This other side is brought out when we consider a case in which Stan is again deliberating about whether to steal, but where he *first* deploys WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong. This means, on NCH, that Stan deploys FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE in believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever fails to maximize pleasure. But that immediately seems like a problem, because it means that Stan cannot reason *from* deploying WRONG *to* deploying FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE. Call this Copp's Challenge.<sup>29</sup>

Copp's Challenge is also not an issue on LUNCH. For when Stan deploys WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong over the course of deliberating about whether to steal, on LUNCH, he deploys GNORW in believing that stealing is *gnorw* while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*. Since GNORW has no connection to FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE, Stan does not ipso facto count as deploying FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE. LUNCH straightforwardly answers Copp's Challenge, too.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Note that I am only claiming that this is *one* way to avoid Schroeder's Challenge. I am *not* claiming that LUNCH is the only way to go in response.

<sup>29</sup> I call this "Copp's Challenge" because David Copp raised it in correspondence.

<sup>30</sup> There is a sense in which one pattern of concept deployment is not possible on LUNCH: So long as Stan has some beliefs about wrongness, and hence desires not to do whatever is *gnorw*, Stan cannot first deploy GNORW in believing that stealing is *gnorw* and then on this basis go ahead and further deploy WRONG in believing that stealing is wrong. This is because LUNCH tells us that there is no further deployment to be made; that is, deploying WRONG just is deploying GNORW while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*. But the idea that it is possible to deploy *any* sequence of normative and non-normative concepts is far from an obviously compelling, pre-theoretical constraint on a plausible theory of the nature of normative concepts that we have to satisfy.

Belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure



Desire not to do whatever is gnorw



FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE



GNORW



(NEGATED)

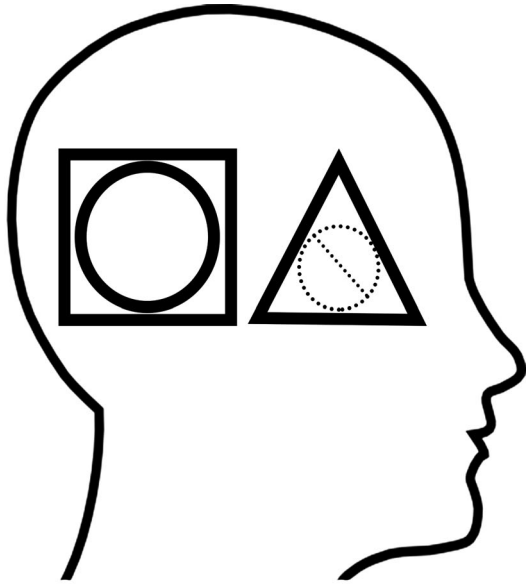


Fig. 4 Believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure while desiring not to do whatever is gnorw

Belief that stealing is wrong



Belief that stealing fails to maximize pleasure



Belief that stealing is gnorw



Desire not to do whatever is gnorw



GNORW



(NEGATED)

FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE

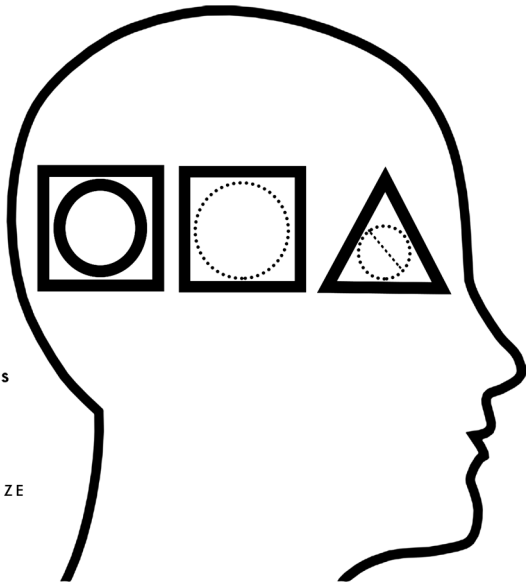


Fig. 5 Believing that stealing is wrong while believing that stealing fails to maximize pleasure and desiring not to do whatever is gnorw

LUNCH might sound like an unusual view, even if it does answer Schroeder's Challenge and Copp's Challenge. But we can think of it this way. I am proposing a marriage between two familiar kinds of views in ethics. Cornell Realists from the 1980s maintain that some normative concepts pick out the same properties as non-normative concepts, but suggest that's *all* normative concepts do.<sup>31</sup> Hybridists from the previous two decades maintain that the meanings of normative words (and hence thoughts and hence concepts) involve a cognitive-naturalistic component and noncognitive component, but suggest that the cognitive-naturalistic component is explicable. I am suggesting that the Cornell Realists were right in maintaining that some normative concepts pick out the same properties as non-normative concepts, but incorrect in suggesting that's all normative concepts do. I am also suggesting that Hybridists are right in maintaining that normative concepts involve both a cognitive-naturalistic component and a noncognitive component, but incorrect in suggesting that cognitive-naturalistic component is explicable. On LUNCH, we understand deploying the concept *WRONG* in terms of deploying the unanalyzable cognitive-naturalistic concept *GNORW* and the desire not to do whatever is *gnorw*.

#### 4.4 Explaining the sense of incredibility

All the way back in Sect. 1, we took off and ran with Wedgwood's idea that there might be something special about the nature of the concepts that we use to think about reductive theses in ethics that helps explain why we find such theses so difficult to believe; that is, why we experience the sense of incredibility. This led us to explore the Hybrid idea that normative words characteristically *do more* than non-normative words, in an effort to identify what might be special about normative concepts, or how normative concepts might also characteristically do more than non-normative concepts. The culmination of this exploration is LUNCH, which says that deploying *WRONG* is deploying *GNORW* while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*. Because deploying *WRONG* involves deploying the cognitive-naturalistic concept *GNORW*, deploying *WRONG* results in picking out the property of failing to maximize pleasure. And because deploying *WRONG* involves deploying *GNORW* while desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*, deploying *WRONG* also results in the activation or making occurrent of the coordinated desire not to do whatever is *gnorw*. This is how normative concepts do more than pick out properties.

Here is how this profile of normative concepts from LUNCH offers a promising explanation of the sense of incredibility in ethics on behalf of Reductivists. Focus again on our familiar reductive claim that wrongness is failing to maximize pleasure. On LUNCH, thinking the left-side (the wrongness side) involves deploying *GNORW* and desiring not to do whatever is *gnorw*, and thinking the right-side (the failing to maximize pleasure side) involves deploying *FAILS TO MAXIMIZE PLEASURE*. This means, on LUNCH, that thinking the left-side and the right-side both involve picking out the property of failing to maximize pleasure, but *only* thinking the left-side involves activating the coordinated desire not to do whatever

<sup>31</sup> See Boyd (1988) and Brink (1984).

is *gnorw*. Whereas deploying *wrong* is “colored” by the activation of the desire not to do whatever is *gnorw*, so to speak, deploying *fails to maximize pleasure* is not. As such, deploying normative concepts feels very different from deploying other kinds of concepts, which might give us the impression that normative concepts could not pick out the same properties as other kinds of concepts. *This* is why normative properties seem “just too different” to be reducible to other kinds of properties.

Space limitations make it impossible to provide a full defense of this style of explanation.<sup>32</sup> But one reason to think that it is nevertheless still promising is that it appears to have an advantage over rival explanations. We saw above that the problem with the Explanation from Deliberative Significance, on which the sense of incredibility is due to a mismatch in deliberative significance between concepts, is that it predicts that we will also experience the sense of incredibility while entertaining claims involving indexical and non-indexical concepts. Yet we do not. We also saw above that the problem with the Explanation from the Indefinability of Normative Concepts idea, on which the sense of incredibility is due to the falsity of Analytic Reductivism in ethics, is that it predicts that we should experience the sense of incredibility while entertaining reductive claims concerning water and H<sub>2</sub>O. Yet we do not. But since deploying indexical concepts and concepts like water doesn’t seem to involve characteristically activating any coordinated desires, LUNCH does not appear to predict that we will experience the sense of incredibility while entertaining claims involving such concepts.<sup>33</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

This paper began with the idea that many philosophers experience the sense of incredibility in ethics. After arguing that two explanations of the phenomenon are unsatisfactory, I went on to develop a Hybrid theory of normative concepts to better

<sup>32</sup> It might be said that the explanation depends on the assumption that desires phenomenologically project, which some philosophers, like Hulse et al (2004), call into question. But while it’s not clear to me that desires don’t themselves have a phenomenological upshot to them, they might nevertheless carry with them other experiential states that do. That would be enough to run the explanation.

<sup>33</sup> However, LUNCH is built out of resources from NTH and NTH is built out of resources from NLH, which is inspired by the idea that the best explanation of the meanings of slurs appeals to the desire-like attitude that uses of them express. It is natural to think, then, that the explanation of the sense of incredibility from LUNCH over generates to cases involving slurs. Reverse-engineering LUNCH to provide an account of deploying a slur concept like *mick* leaves us with the view that deploying *mick* in believing that Patrick is a *mick* involves deploying *Irish* in believing that Patrick is Irish while having contempt for people who are Irish. Since deploying *mick* looks like it involves the activation of contempt, LUNCH might be said to predict that we will experience the sense of incredibility in attempting to believe that the Irish are *micks*.

While I do not think examples like this are devastating to the explanation of the sense of incredibility on offer, I admit that the issue is tricky. Notice, on this LUNCH based account of slur concepts, a subject cannot deploy *mick* without having contempt for the Irish. This means that a subject has to be a racist to even begin attempting to believe that the Irish are *micks*. While the view does predict that racists will experience the sense of incredibility, it’s not easy to determine whether this is a problem without getting inside the headspace of racists.

explain it, modifying it along the way to answer important challenges to Hybrid theories from Schroeder (2009), who along with offering such challenges, has also argued that the advantages that accrue to Hybrid theories over familiar Cognitivist Externalist views of normative thought and talk are subtle at best. Yet the fact that so very many philosophers maintain that normative properties are “just too different” from other kinds of properties to be reducible to them, i.e. that so many philosophers experience the sense of incredibility in ethics, is without a doubt one of the main sources of resistance to Reductivism. If the arguments of this paper are on track, however, then we can at least say that one kind of Hybrid view available to Reductivists carries with it a promising explanation of arguably *the* central hang-up philosophers have about Reductivism. This strikes as more than just a subtle advantage.

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