

CRITICAL NOTICES

UNNATURAL NORMATIVITY?

Critical Notice of Ralph Wedgwood, *The Nature of Normativity*

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Two central trends in recent meta-ethics have been a resurgence of interest in so-called “non-naturalist” realism and a shifting of focus away from morality and toward normativity conceived of more broadly to encompass practical and epistemic norms. The latter development arguably promises real progress, as it concentrates attention on the purest and most general form of some of the central meta-ethical questions. The former development is more controversial. Some of the leading proponents of the new non-naturalist normative realism have sought to finesse its alleged explanatory shortcomings by rejecting certain explanatory demands as misguided.¹ Ralph Wedgwood’s *The Nature of Normativity*² explicitly rejects this strategy. Instead, it offers an ambitious and systematic defense of an avowedly Platonist realism about the normative.

The core of Wedgwood’s meta-ethic is the idea that while normative properties are irreducibly nonphysical, our access to them can be explained by the fact that our status as thinking beings depends upon our instantiating intentional properties that are essentially interdependent with these normative properties. Wedgwood’s development of this idea is the most sophisticated and explanatorily satisfying account yet offered that instantiates both of the recent trends mentioned above. It thus constitutes a wonderfully

1. Contemporary normative realists who defend this sort of quietist strategy include Scanlon (T. Scanlon, “Metaphysics and Morals.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 77.2 [2003], pp. 7–22; *What We Owe to Each Other* [Belknap, 1998], ch.1; and his 2009 Locke Lectures); D. Parfit, “On What Matters,” ms. of July 2009 §104; J. McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 50–73; and (more controversially) perhaps R. Dworkin, “Objectivity and Truth: You’d Better Believe It,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 25 (1996), pp. 87–139. For doubts about the prospects of this quietist approach, see T. McPherson, “Against Quietist Normative Realism,” ms. of June 23, 2009, [http://www.d.umn.edu/~tristram/Against quietist normative realism June23-09.pdf](http://www.d.umn.edu/~tristram/Against%20quietist%20normative%20realism%20June23-09.pdf) (accessed October 13, 2009); S. Street, “Objectivity and Truth: You’d Better Rethink It,” ms. of December 2008. For an important related discussion, see S. Svavarsdottir, “Objective Values: Does Metaethics Rest on a Mistake?” in B. Leiter (ed.), *Objectivity in Law and Morals* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 144–93.
2. R. Wedgwood, *The Nature of Normativity* (Clarendon Press, 2007). All undated citations are to this book.

ambitious test case for philosophers interested in seriously assessing the new normative realism.

Wedgwood aptly describes his book as “aggressively intersubdisciplinary” (p. vii): It is packed with arguments that range through semantics, metaphysics, the philosophy of mind, and epistemology. As a result of both this scope and the book’s architectonic abstraction, it will prove a daunting (if absorbing) read even for those with prior interest in its central questions.³ With such an ambitious book, a reviewer must pick and choose, and here I will focus on a series of central issues that arise from the book’s core metaphysical and epistemological arguments. I begin by sketching the book’s central argumentative thread (section 1), before plunging into Wedgwood’s interpretation and defense of the book’s core claim that the intentional is normative (section 2). I then examine his discussion of reduction and supervenience (section 3), and close by considering his account of the epistemological implications of his view (section 4). I argue that there are serious problems with both the metaphysical and epistemological elements of Wedgwood’s view. Inevitably, this paper focuses on these problems, which risks obscuring how much there is to admire and learn from in this book: Almost any diligent reader will come away from it with a richer grasp of the possible forms that normative realism might take, and of the dialectical challenges facing these views.

1. An Overview of the Argument

The book is divided into three parts, which develop the semantics, metaphysics, and epistemology of Wedgwood’s view, respectively. In this section, I sketch the outlines of Wedgwood’s argument, beginning with his discussion of semantics. Wedgwood accepts a version of *normative judgment internalism* characterized by two principles:

NJI1: Necessarily, if one is rational, then if one judges “I ought to Φ ,” one also intends to Φ (p. 25).

NJI2: Necessarily, if one judges anything of the form “I ought to Φ ,” then one also has a general disposition to intend to do whatever one judges that one ought to do (p. 28).

The alleged truth of these principles (given certain background conditions)⁴ makes normative judgments distinctive, because of the intimate connection to

3. Wedgwood notes that given the complexity of his topic, the confident voice with which he typically states his conclusions is slightly misleading (p. 12). This paper should be read with a similar presumption of authorial epistemic humility, not least regarding my efforts to interpret this challenging text.
4. The conditions that Wedgwood identifies include the absence of relevant uncertainty and the knowledge that one’s intention would make a significant difference in the chance of one’s performing the intended action (pp. 30–31). NJI2 seems to me to need more fundamental revision. Suppose that Hera is an ordinary and competent agent who possesses the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT and who understands and accepts NJI1: The claim that if one is rational, then if one judges that one ought to Φ , then one intends to Φ . Hera, however, is perverse: She wants to become *irrational* in just the respect mentioned in NJI1. It seems possible that she could satisfy

intention that each posits (p. 32). It is hard to overstate the significance of this connection for Wedgwood's argument. Not only does it form the foundation for his central metaphysical project, but it also serves as a central dialectical tool in his arguments against competing accounts of the semantics of the normative that attempt to explain the truth conditions of normative propositions by appeal to conceptual analyses or causal connections (ch. 3).

After rejecting the expressivist approach to moral semantics (ch. 2),⁵ Wedgwood offers what he takes to be the sole semantic account that can adequately explain the truth of normative judgment internalism: a kind of truth-conditional conceptual role semantics (ch. 4). On his view of concepts, the nature of a concept is given by the basic rules of rationality that govern its use (p. 82). These rules in turn determine the semantic contribution of a concept to propositions of which that concept is a part. Wedgwood offers an account of the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT, according to which to believe that I ought to bring it about that p at t is to be rationally committed to making p part of my ideal plan about what to do at t (p. 99). This conceptual role for PRACTICAL OUGHT is intended to explain why the version of normative judgment internalism that Wedgwood accepts is true. He goes on to argue that his conceptual role semantics for "ought" can explain the ways in which the semantics of the word "ought" is context sensitive and can vindicate the principles of so-called "standard" deontic logic, which postulates a logical connection between what ought to be and what would be *best* (ch. 5).⁶

The first part of Wedgwood's central metaphysical project is to explicate and defend his version of the claim that the intentional is normative (ch. 7). He understands the normativity of the intentional as the thesis that intentional states are essentially regulated by normative standards. He suggests that relation to intentional properties is also essential to the nature of normative properties. He thus claims that the intentional and the normative are "essentially interdependent" (p. 175). This thesis provides a general metaphysical explanation for the intimate connection that normative judgment internalism suggests holds between normative judgment and intention. I examine these ideas in more detail in section 2.

Wedgwood argues that intentional and normative properties, so conceived, cannot be reduced to physical properties (pp. 181–4). He then argues that such a nonreductive view faces the challenge of explaining specific supervenience

this desire by carefully training herself to lose the general disposition to intend to do what she judges that she ought to do. Intuitively, the loss of this disposition in this way does not deprive her of possession of the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT. Rather, it seems that she can now correctly judge that she has become less rational in virtue of failing to as reliably respond to her ought judgments as she should. If this description of the case is correct, then NJ12 is false: Hera can judge that she ought to Φ without having the relevant disposition.

5. C.S. Jenkins, "The Nature of Normativity," *Analysis*, 69.1 (January 2009), pp. 156–66, §2, has raised important questions about the argument of this chapter, as has Jamie Dreier in his 2008 Madison Metaethics Workshop presentation "When Do Goals Explain the Norms That Advance Them?"
6. Helpful critical discussion of elements of the first part of the book can be found in M. Schroeder, "The Nature of Normativity," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, March 2008, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=12523> (accessed October 13, 2009).

facts, such as the fact that, necessarily, anyone who instantiates a certain physical property (perhaps C-fiber firing) is in pain (p. 203). Wedgwood's response to this challenge is perhaps the single most interesting argument in the book, requiring him to defend a distinctive view of metaphysical modality (ch. 9). I explain and critique this defense of the irreducibility of the normative and the intentional in section 3.

Finally, Wedgwood explores the epistemic implications of his nonreductive metaphysics of the normative. His central argument here defends a foundationalist epistemology of the normative partly grounded in the metaphysical view just sketched. Wedgwood argues that because it is essential to the capacity for a given mental state type that one be disposed to use that state in rational ways, the intuitive normative judgments generated by such a capacity are basically justified (ch. 10). I examine this argument in section 4.

Wedgwood argues that his distinctive version of foundationalism has a number of important implications. First, he suggests that it vindicates moral philosophers' use of the method of reflective equilibrium,⁷ as well as the less developed pressures to coherence in normative belief experienced by the folk (pp. 242–7). Second, he claims that it permits him to defend a “Kantian” conception of the apriority of normative epistemology, according to which a priori knowledge is that which our cognitive capacities “supply out of themselves” (pp. 248–57). Finally, he uses it to develop a novel approach to the currently fashionable debate about the epistemic implications of disagreement with one's “epistemic peers” (pp. 258–63).

This whirlwind survey barely touches on the key elements of Wedgwood's ambitious project. In the remainder of this paper, I explicate and challenge three such elements. I begin with his account of the relationship between the intentional and the normative.

2. The Normative and the Intentional

Wedgwood's central project in the metaphysics of normativity is to elucidate and defend the view that he expresses by the slogan “the intentional is normative,” to show that intentional and normative properties cannot be reduced to physical properties and to defend the coherence of this nonreductive view. This section examines the first part of this project. Wedgwood calls the normativity of the intentional the “key to metaethics” (p. 2). This is only slightly hyperbolic, as accepting it would transform our understanding of the metaphysics of the normative, tying it closely to central debates in the philosophy of mind, and recasting the debate concerning the causal efficacy of the normative.

Wedgwood develops his account of the normativity of the intentional within an *essentialist* conception of metaphysics. Rather than taking facts about essences to be reducible to modal facts, Wedgwood suggests that facts

7. Compare J. Rawls, “The Independence of Moral Theory,” in S. Freeman (ed.), *Collected Papers* (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 286–302; “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics,” *Philosophical Review*, 60 (1951), pp. 177–97; *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition (Belknap, 1999).

about essences are the fundamental modal facts that (together with certain contingent facts, about which more in section 3) explain all other modal facts (pp. 142–3). This essentialism colors all of Wedgwood’s metaphysics. Most fundamentally, it leads him to conceive of his central metaphysical projects as attempts to provide “real definitions” that state the essences of philosophically interesting properties (p. 140). Wedgwood thus glosses the intentionality of the normative as the claim that intentional and normative properties are “essentially interdependent” (p. 175). This in turn is understood as the claim that the correct account of the essence of each normative property must mention intentional properties, and vice versa.

The argument that the normative is essentially intentional appeals to the conceptual role semantics defended in the first part of the book. There, Wedgwood argued that the essential role of the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT mentions a certain type of intentional state: *plans* (p. 175). Wedgwood accepts a noncircularity constraint on reduction, such that a reductive account of *F*s cannot refer to or quantify over *F*s (p. 177). He suggests that this constraint entails that the role of plans in the essence of the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT blocks the possibility of a reduction of plans (and thus of intentional properties generally) to normative properties.⁸ The normative thus essentially involves the intentional.

The other half of Wedgwood’s essential interdependence thesis is the claim that it is the essence both of every concept and of every propositional attitude type that its possession tends to be causally regulated by certain normative standards: standards of correctness and rationality (p. 161). Wedgwood defends this thesis in two stages. He begins by suggesting that what propositional attitudes and concepts figure in an individual’s thoughts are fixed by the dispositions of that individual, perhaps together with the dispositions of his/her community.⁹ He next argues that it is only an individual’s *essentially rational* dispositions that fix the identity of the attitudes and concepts that he/she possesses (pp. 167–9). This view contrasts with the familiar *holistic* conception of concept possession, according to which all of an individual’s dispositions are relevant to the individuation of the concepts that they possess.

Wedgwood takes it to be a corollary of this point that every thinker who possesses a concept has a disposition to use it in an essentially rational way (pp. 169, 235). For example, he suggests that it is plausible that it is essential to the possession of the concept IF that one be disposed to accept certain inferences of the *modus ponens* form. This view does not have the absurd consequence that no

8. Given how crucial this argument is to Wedgwood’s metaphysical project, it would be strengthened by a clearer explanation of why more complex reductive possibilities are ruled out. For example, if *being a plan* could itself be reduced to something non-intentional (e.g., some complex of dispositional properties and normative properties other than the practical ought), Wedgwood’s analysis of the concept PRACTICAL OUGHT would be compatible with the reduction of the intentional to the normative.
9. Wedgwood’s brief arguments for this intuitively attractive idea (pp. 165–6) are unsatisfying, as they seem, at best, to suggest that the dispositions of concept users play *some* role in individuating the concepts they use.

one ever uses a concept incorrectly or irrationally. This is because possession of a rational disposition for the use of a concept is compatible with the possession of other, irrational dispositions for the use of that concept. For example, an irrational disposition might *compete* with a rational disposition, in the way that someone's disposition to avoid wearing paisley might compete with his/her disposition to wear green, thereby explaining his/her failure to wear a green paisley shirt. Another disposition might also *mask* a rational disposition, as packing materials enclosing a vase can mask its fragility.¹⁰

Wedgwood's argument for his central claim that an individual's essentially rational dispositions fix the identity of his/her mental states begins with two modest points: First, that it would be implausible to count a thinker as possessing a concept if they had no disposition to use it in any rational way, and second, that a concept could be possessed by a thinker who had no dispositions to use it in any irrational way (p. 168). The crux of his argument, however, seems to be the intuitive supposition that the possession of a concept is "a cognitive *power* or *ability*" (p. 169, emphasis his). This, Wedgwood thinks, tells against the idea that someone's possession of a concept could depend, even in part, upon irrational dispositions.

This argument is supposed to show that we need to invoke rationality in order to properly understand concept and attitude possession. This would suffice to show that the intentional is normative, provided that rationality cannot itself be reduced to more basic intentional properties. Wedgwood seeks to rule out this reductive possibility by claiming that the rational disposition that is essential to the possession of a given concept must involve responsiveness to a normatively specified condition. His argument for this is that a rational disposition necessarily involves sensitivity to a host of defeating conditions. For example, it is arguably irrational to simply be disposed to infer q from the beliefs that p and *if p then q* . This is because the rationality of this inference would be defeated by any condition that entailed that one ought instead to abandon one's belief that p or one's belief that *if p then q* . Wedgwood grants that one could have a host of separate (intentionally specifiable) dispositions that were functionally equivalent to the disposition to be sensitive to the normative feature *being a defeating condition*. He argues, however, that if the dispositions are separate in this way, it could just be a fluke that one happens to have them all, and he suggests that manifestation of such fluky dispositions may not count as rational thinking (p. 171).

Wedgwood's thesis that rational dispositions "... cannot be specified without mentioning normative properties and relations" (p. 171) is complicated by an important concession: He grants that it may in fact be, in principle, possible to specify every rational disposition in purely intentional terms (p. 172). This means, for example, that it may be possible to specify in intentional terms the disposition to infer q rationally from the beliefs that p and *if p then q* . Such a specification would be extremely complex, because it would have to include as constituent elements dispositions to be sensitive to all of the (intentionally

10. Compare M. Johnston, "How to Speak of the Colors," *Philosophical Studies*, 68 (1992), pp. 221–63, for the idea that dispositions can be *masked* in this way.

specified) defeating conditions for this inference. This possibility is inconsistent with Wedgwood's original thesis, and he thus retreats to the claim that such intentional specification would not "trivialize" the normativity of the intentional (p. 172). It is difficult to interpret this claim. My best hypothesis is that Wedgwood intends by it to point out that even this sort of possibility is inconsistent with the holistic account of concept individuation that he takes as his central target. Thus, the claim that rational dispositions can be specified in this way entails that only certain of one's dispositions for the use of a concept are relevant to the specification of that concept.

While thus, perhaps, inconsistent with holism, Wedgwood's concession does seem consistent with the reduction of the normative to the intentional. To be rational, on such a gloss, would just be to have the relevant complex intentionally specifiable dispositions. This reductive possibility endangers his claim that the normative and the intentional are essentially *interdependent*. However, Wedgwood's larger argument can survive the truth of this reductive hypothesis. This is because (as we shall see in the next section) his argument for Platonism focuses on intentional properties. The possible reducibility of normative properties to the intentional is thus compatible with the irreducibility of both of these types of properties to the physical.

Even given these concessions, I am unconvinced by the structure of Wedgwood's account of concept possession. Crucial to this account is the thesis that because a thinker's essentially rational dispositions fix what concepts he/she possesses, possession of the essentially rational disposition for the use of a concept is both necessary and sufficient for the possession of that concept. Both elements of this claim are dubious.

Consider first the sufficiency claim. Suppose that Aphrodite possesses a disposition that would be the essentially rational disposition for using the concept OR by, *inter alia*, mentally tokening the word "or." According to Wedgwood, this entails that she possesses the concept. Suppose, however, that this disposition is never exercised. For example, suppose that Aphrodite possesses a large set of competing and masking dispositions for the use of "or" that lead her to use it consistently in a way closer to the way that competent speakers typically use "and." Or, suppose that these dispositions lead her to use "or" in a way that displays no semantically interesting pattern at all. The holist (but not Wedgwood) seems able to say the plausible thing about at least some natural ways of filling out this story: despite possessing this disposition, Aphrodite does not possess the concept OR.

Consider next the alleged necessity of possession of the essentially rational disposition for the use of a given concept. Wedgwood's account of the conceptual role of OR (pp. 83–84) suggests that on his view, the essential rational disposition for its use is to be disposed to accept p or q whenever one (not irrationally) accepts p and whenever one (not irrationally) accepts q . Consider Athena, a once normal user of "or" who has fallen under the sway of a heterodox logician. The logician convinces her completely that while the standard norms for reasoning *from* beliefs of the form p or q are correct, it is only permissible to infer *to* a belief of the form p or q if one both accepts that p and accepts that q . With practice, Athena loses her old general dispositions for using

OR, replacing them with those called for by the logician's norms.¹¹ Athena is able to defend the correctness of her usage with considerable facility, deploying fallacious but seductive arguments she has learned from the logician. I take Athena, so described, to clearly be a (deeply misguided!) user of OR. This is a problem for Wedgwood's account of concept possession because Athena lacks the general disposition essential to the rational use of this concept.

Consider two ways that Wedgwood might seek to accommodate these cases (for the sake of brevity, I set aside Aphrodite and focus on Athena). First, he allows that the dispositions of one's community (and not merely one's own dispositions) may play a role in fixing the content of one's concepts (p. 165). He could thus propose that Athena counts as using OR *because* she possesses intentions to defer to the (essentially rational) dispositions of authoritative users in her community. This response is important because it entails that an individual may possess a concept without *herself* possessing an essentially rational disposition for the use of that concept.¹² However, this is insufficient to address the objection at hand, because it is not plausible that Athena must possess such deferential intentions in order to count as a user of OR. Thus, she needs not be prepared to offload her conceptual work with respect to OR onto a relevant body of experts, as she might be prepared to do for the concepts ELM and ARTHRITIS.¹³ She might rather insist that no one will change her mind about the nature of the concept OR without giving her what she can recognize to be good arguments.

The second point that might seem to help Wedgwood is that he grants that in order to possess a concept, one must only possess a disposition that *approximates* the rational pattern of responses required by that concept (p. 171). This concession is crucial to avoid a distinct challenge to the plausibility of his view, as surely, none of us possesses perfectly rational dispositions for the use of each of the concepts that we possess. However, this concession does not help with Athena, because the meaning of her use of "or" cannot be settled by what rational disposition she best approximates. For example, despite the fact that her use of the word "or" conforms closely to the essentially rational dispositions for the use of the concept AND, it is not plausible to take her use of "or" to mean AND.

There is a better explanation of Athena's case. This is that possession of certain irrational but *intelligible* constitutive dispositions for the use of a concept

11. Compare the discussion of the "connective" *tonk* in A.N. Prior, "The Runabout Inference-Ticket," *Analysis*, 21.2 (December 1960), pp. 38–39. The rules that Athena accepts for OR are in effect the inverse of those stipulated for *tonk*, combining the elimination rules of OR with the introduction rules of AND. It is curious that Wedgwood's account of the constitutive norms for OR, which focuses solely on the dispositional analogues of introduction rules, appears to potentially count someone with "tonky" dispositions, but not Athena, as a user of OR.
12. This point has significant implications for the evaluation of Wedgwood's epistemology in §4 below.
13. Compare H. Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," in K. Gunderson (ed.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science VII: Language, Mind and Knowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, 1975), pp. 131–93; T. Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," in P. French, T. Uehling, and H. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy IV* (University of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. 73–121.

(such as Athena's) are consistent with counting as a user of that concept. The relevant sort of intelligibility may require certain historical facts to hold. For example, contrast Athena's case with that of Ares, who just *decides* to use "or" with similarly irrational introduction or elimination rules. Unlike Athena, Ares is arguably best understood as attempting to add a new (and incoherent) concept to his idiolect, rather than as a misguided user of OR.¹⁴ By itself, this explanation does not commit one to a radical holism about concept possession. However, it undercuts both Wedgwood's positive account of concept possession and his central rationale for resisting holism, the idea that concept possession is an ability. Athena's dispositions for using OR are a cognitive *disability*. However, they are embedded in the right way within her psychology, which we may imagine to be otherwise full of cognitive abilities. This suggests that the intuitive appeal to the idea of a cognitive ability is itself perhaps amenable to a reasonable holistic interpretation, and this in turn suggests that Wedgwood has much more work to do in order to defend his claims against the concept possession holist.¹⁵

The considerations set out in this section leave me uncertain concerning the more ambitious links that Wedgwood claims to hold between normative and intentional properties. The robustness of these links is put into question both by his own admission concerning the possibility of a non-normative account of the dispositions that constitute the nature of a concept and by the intuitive challenges that I have raised against his account of concept possession. These points suggest an important question that I will not pursue here: How much that is distinctive of Wedgwood's proposal would survive fully absorbing the modifications suggested by these points?

3. Reduction, Supervenience, and Modality

The preceding section examined Wedgwood's explication of the thesis that the intentional is normative. According to Wedgwood, the upshot of this thesis is that normative and intentional properties are "essentially interdependent." This means that either both the intentional and the normative are reducible to more fundamental kinds, or neither is. Wedgwood argues that neither type of property can be reduced. In this section, I examine Wedgwood's argument against the reducibility of these classes of properties and raise what I take to be serious difficulties for the resulting view. I begin by sketching Wedgwood's conception of reduction in more detail.

14. Those who, like Wedgwood (pp. 172–3), deny the possibility of inconsistent concepts should perhaps instead say that in such a case, Ares fails to express any concept by his use of "or."
15. It is worth noting that this argument against Wedgwood's account of *concept possession* is compatible with the truth of his essentialism about concepts themselves. For example, accepting my gloss on the case of Athena is compatible with thinking that the essence of the concept OR is that it is rational to accept p or q whenever one (not irrationally) accepts p and whenever one (not irrationally) accepts q .

Wedgwood takes reduction to be a relationship between classes of properties.¹⁶ He offers the following account of reduction:

Reduction: for property A to be reducible to property B,

1. A and B must be necessarily coextensive,
2. the necessary coextension of A and B must follow from A's constitutive essence, and
3. the account of the nature of A properties cannot refer to or quantify over A properties (pp. 145–6, 177).

The second condition makes explicit the essentialist character of Wedgwood's account, while the third condition imposes a plausible noncircularity constraint on reduction.

Applying this account to physical and intentional properties requires further assumptions. First, it requires an assumption of constructibility. Basic physical properties and relations are (roughly) those that play the most fundamental explanatory role in an ideal physics.¹⁷ The broader class of physical properties includes all properties that can be constructed by the recursive application of logical (including quantificational) operations over the basic physical properties.¹⁸ Intentional properties reduce to the physical properties, on this view, if the necessary coextension of each intentional property *I* with some basic or nonbasic physical property follows from *I*'s essence.¹⁹

Because of the interdependence that Wedgwood has argued for between the intentional and the normative, he could potentially avail himself of any number of familiar arguments against the reducibility of normative properties, or

16. For a defense of the metaphysical conception of reduction, see K. Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosophers' Imprint*, 1.1 (June 2001), pp. 1–30, §3. For a defense of the alternative view that reduction is best understood as a relation between theories, see C. Klein, "Reduction Without Reductionism," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 59.234 (January 2009), pp. 39–53, especially §III.
17. For a brief review of the difficult task of defining the physical see D. Stoljar, "Physicalism," in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2009 Edition (Metaphysics Research Lab, 2009), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/physicalism/> (accessed October 13, 2009), §10 and §11.
18. An important strand of antireductionism is motivated by the denial of the idea that every logically complex property constructed from A properties is therefore an A property. For example, this idea is in the background of Fodor's famous argument that, given multiple realizability, special science laws and kinds cannot be reduced to physical laws and kinds (J.A. Fodor, "Special Sciences," *Synthese* 28.2 [October 1974], pp. 97–115), given multiple realizability, special science laws and kinds cannot be reduced to physical laws and kinds. For a brief argument in favor of the permissibility of constructing properties of a sort by application of logical operators, see J. Kim, *Supervenience and Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 152–4.
19. A familiar competing account of reduction dispenses with this essentialist criterion, so that necessary coextension is sufficient for reduction. Call this competitor the *necessary coextension account* (Cf. Kim, *Supervenience and Mind*, p. 151; for the view that the necessary coextension must be knowable a priori in order to suffice for reduction, see D. Chalmers and F. Jackson, "Conceptual Analysis and Reductive Explanation," *Philosophical Review*, 110 [2001], pp. 315–61). Wedgwood briefly argues that the necessary coextension view generates counterintuitive results (pp. 145–6).

against the reducibility of intentional properties. He suggests in passing that most extant arguments against the reduction of the normative are dubious (p. 146) and focuses instead on arguing against the reduction of the intentional.

Wedgwood focuses his attack on attempted functionalist reductions and offers, in response, an argument that he adapts from George Bealer. The argument begins with the following premise:

P: if one is definitely in pain, and one is considering one's own mental state, then one will believe that one is in pain.²⁰

Suppose that one formed a Ramsey sentence for "in pain" according to the usual recipe for functionalist physicalism: conjoining all of the true statements containing "in pain," replacing each instance of "in pain" within the conjunction with a variable, and seeking a complex physical property whose substitution for the variable made the Ramsey sentence true. Suppose for reductio that there was a physical property *PI* that played this role. Because premise *P* is a conjunct of the Ramsey sentence, successful substitution would entail that if one was definitely in *PI*, and was considering one's own mental state, then one would believe that one was in *PI* (p. 183). Wedgwood suggests that this would be true only if the property *being in pain* were identical to *PI*.

Wedgwood refers to two reasons why he thinks that we should reject such an identity, and with it, the reducibility of mental properties to physical properties (p. 183). His first reason is that pain is seemingly realizable by multiple types of physical properties (p. 179). The stock example here is "Martian pain," which is taken to count as a species of pain in virtue of its functional profile, despite being realized by a completely different physical mechanism than pain in humans is.²¹ Wedgwood treats this sort of case as a barrier to reduction of pain.

This is puzzling, because on its face, all that this sort of multiple physical realizability shows is that the reduction base for pain must be disjunctive. Call the disjunctive physical property that realizes pain (i.e.: *the physical property that realizes human pain or the physical property that realizes Martian pain or . . .*) *Pv*. On the necessary coextension view of reduction,²² this sort of disjunctiveness is no barrier to property reduction, because *Pv* can, by hypothesis, be constructed by logical operations on basic physical properties. On this view, there is thus no objection to the idea that pain is *Pv*, and Wedgwood's argument would fail.

As we have seen, Wedgwood offers a more restrictive essentialist criterion of reduction, but it is unclear why this account vitiates the disjunctive strategy just mentioned. Thus, one might gloss the essence of the property of being in pain

20. As Wedgwood notes (p. 182 n.8), *P* in fact needs to be modified into a ceteris paribus claim concerning when one is definitely in pain. The first modification is needed in order to escape the objection that *P* would fail for subjects in the grip of theories that entail that he is not in pain. The second is needed to avoid the objection that pain is not a "luminous" state, in the sense introduced in J. Williamson *Knowledge and Its Limits*, (Clarendon Press: 2000), Ch. 4.

21. D. Lewis, "Mad Pain and Martian Pain," in N. Block (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1 (Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 216–22.

22. Mentioned in note 19.

as being that property whose instantiation is caused in certain characteristic ways, elicits certain characteristic behavioral responses, and (perhaps) possesses a certain phenomenal character. I see no reason why the necessary equivalence of pain to Pv could not follow from that description of the essence of pain, if Pv just is a complex property that uniquely satisfies this characterization.

In rejecting the identity of pain with its physical realizer, Wedgwood also mentions that he accepts an argument offered by George Bealer that provides a sophisticated development of a simple modal intuition: Given any physical property that in fact realizes pain, it seems possible that a being could be in pain without having that property.²³ Bealer cannot mean this just to support multiple *physical* realizability of the sort that features in Wedgwood's first argument. This is because Bealer explicitly recognizes the difficulties inherent in resisting the disjunctive reduction strategy that I have just offered.²⁴ If pain were only multiply physically realizable, then its disjunctive physical realizer would be a necessary condition for the presence of pain. But this is inconsistent with Bealer's modal intuition. It is thus unsurprising that Bealer goes on to argue for the possibility of disembodied minds (§V). However, Wedgwood rejects this argument, and with it, the possibility of disembodied pain.²⁵ This leaves Wedgwood's considered view of the details of Bealer's argument unclear.²⁶

In any case, Wedgwood is convinced that pain is irreducible. However, he notes that this conclusion faces a seemingly deep challenge from what he calls "specific supervenience facts": Facts that identify necessary connections between physical and phenomenal properties. For example, he suggests that the following is plausibly true of some physical property B (perhaps C-fiber firing):

Super: Necessarily, if any individual y has physical property B, then y is in pain (p. 203).

There is an explanatory challenge here: Why is it impossible for an individual to have B but not the (by hypothesis, distinct) property of being in pain?²⁷

23. G. Bealer, "Mental Properties," *Journal of Philosophy*, 91.4 (April 1994), pp. 185–208, especially §IV.
24. Bealer, "Mental Properties," 187–9. For further difficulties that face the inference from multiple physical realizability to the failure of physicalistic reduction, see Klein, "Reduction Without Reductionism," §III.
25. Wedgwood rejects this part of Bealer's argument at 183n10. The more general point is clear from Wedgwood's account of the "fundamental essential truth" about pain at 209.
26. Wedgwood's use of Bealer's argument is also complicated by his focusing on being in pain (a phenomenal property), when his official concern is to defend the irreducibility of intentional and normative properties. This is problematic because Bealer appeals centrally to intuitions that phenomenal properties are modally detachable from physical properties, and analogous claims about normative or intentional properties have much less intuitive support. I return to the implications of these intuitive differences between phenomenal properties and intentional and normative properties at the end of this section.
27. Compare Blackburn's famous supervenience argument against moral realism (S. Blackburn, "Supervenience Revisited," in *Essays in Quasi-Realism* [Clarendon, 1993], pp. 130–48). Note also that if one accepts the possibility of *supernatural masking*, Super is false unless modified.

One response is to accept that specific supervenience facts are metaphysically brute. Wedgwood rejects this alternative, suggesting an explanatory principle according to which all modal facts are to be explained by facts about the essences of things, which he understands to be the fundamental modal facts (p. 142). He notices, however, that together with specific supervenience facts like Super, this explanatory principle can seem to force him to accept the reducibility of pain. This is because in order for the essence of pain (perhaps together with the essences of relevant physical properties like B) to explain the truth of Super, the essence of pain would need to include a truth that every physical property that meets a certain physical condition (a “pain necessitating condition”) thereby necessitates the presence of pain. Wedgwood notes that, together with the thesis that pain strongly supervenes on the physical, this entails that his own criterion of reduction has been fulfilled: The necessary equivalence of being in pain with some physical property would be entailed by the essence of pain itself (pp. 205–6).

In order to resist this further argument for the reducibility of properties like being in pain, Wedgwood must therefore deny that the essence of such properties is sufficient to explain truths like Super. His solution is to suggest that truths like Super are explained by facts about the essence of pain together with contingent facts about the actual world (pp. 207–10). Specifically, he appeals to metaphysically contingent but non-accidental (i.e., nomic) regularities that are features of a world with a given physical structure.

Developing this idea, Wedgwood suggests a partial account of the essence of pain, according to which, roughly, pain is non-accidentally co-instantiated with some physical property in every possible world, and if pain is non-accidentally co-instantiated with physical property B in a world, then pain is also co-instantiated with B in all worlds that are both physically similar to that world and possibly relative to that world (p. 209). For example, in the actual world, the presence of pain may be non-accidentally co-instantiated with the firing of C-fibers. If so, it would follow from the essential nature of pain just described that in any world physically similar to this one and possibly relative to this one, pain is co-instantiated with C-fiber firing. Thus, facts about the essential nature of pain and contingent facts about the nomic structure of the actual world together suffice to explain specific supervenience facts like Super.

Wedgwood notes that this solution can only work if he rejects a fairly standard conception of metaphysical modality. Technically, it requires rejecting the applicability of the axioms of S5 modal logic to metaphysical modality.²⁸ As an intuitive matter, this involves both accepting that certain contingent facts about a given world determine whether certain propositions are possibly

Thus, there could perhaps be a world in which *y* has B and also some supernatural masking property that masks B's pain-making. If correct, this sort of case would refute the letter of Super, but not the worry that Wedgwood is using it to express.

28. J. Schmitt and M. Schroeder, “Supervenience Arguments Under Relaxed Assumptions,” ms. of May 6, 2009, <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~maschroe/research/Supervenience.pdf> (accessed October 13, 2009), argue that Wedgwood's view also requires him to abandon the characteristic axiom of S4 modal logic: $\Box p \rightarrow \Box \Box p$.

relative to that world and denying the validity of certain modal inferences, such as that from *possibly necessarily p* to *necessarily p* (pp. 212–5).

Wedgwood offers two points in defense of the somewhat heterodox view that metaphysical modality has this structure. First, he suggests that there is intuitive sense to be made of the distinction between (say) the necessarily possible and the merely contingently possible (pp. 217–8). Second, he claims that this conception of metaphysical modality permits the view that all modal truths are fully explained either by truths about the essences of things or by truths about the essences of things together with certain contingent truths. He suggests that this makes this conception attractive because it permits the intelligibility of satisfying metaphysical explanation without positing either implausibly strong or implausibly numerous truths about essences (pp. 219–20). In an earlier paper, Wedgwood describes the commitment to this account of metaphysical modality as the “price” of his nonreductivism about intentional properties.²⁹ While this account is indeed controversial, I want to focus instead on Wedgwood’s assumption that this account of modality permits a sufficient explanation of the relevant modal facts about normative and intentional properties.³⁰

The issue can be clarified by examining one of Wedgwood’s own illustrative cases. He asks us to imagine a complete physical description of a non-actual world, p^* . Now consider the proposition C:

C: if p^* is true, then something is in pain.

Suppose that there is a world w_1 which instantiates p^* and that something is in pain in w_1 . Then, on Wedgwood’s view, C is necessarily true at w_1 . However, there could be another world w_2 which instantiates p^* , but in which nothing is in pain. In w_2 , C is necessarily false. If w_1 and w_2 are each sufficiently different from the actual world, Wedgwood’s interpretation of the modal logic applicable to metaphysical modality ensures that relative to the actual world, neither C nor its negation need to be necessarily true (pp. 212–3). Intuitively, we can think of the necessary truth of C relative to w_1 and its necessary falsity at w_2 as explained on his view by the holding of a certain physical–phenomenal bridge law in w_1 and the inverse bridge law in w_2 .

Despite his use of pain as an example, Wedgwood’s argument is supposed to generate conclusions about the metaphysics of normative and intentional properties, not that of phenomenal states. The contrast here is crucial because the idea that the connection between pain and its physical realizer may depend upon some contingent nomic facts has notoriously weighty intuitive arguments on its side.³¹ By contrast, there is little intuitive support for the analogous role of nomic necessities in the case of the normative and the intentional. To see

29. Wedgwood, “The Price of Non-Reductive Physicalism,” *Nous*, 34 (2000), pp. 400–21.

30. For a broadly similar argument against this central element of Wedgwood’s view, see Schmitt and Schroeder, “Supervenience Arguments Under Relaxed Assumptions,” §§6.1–6.3.

31. Most notably, the knowledge argument (F. Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32.127 [April 1982], pp. 127–36) and the conceivability argument (S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* [Harvard University Press, 1980]; D. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* [Oxford University Press, 1996]).

this, consider the analogue of Wedgwood's story about proposition C, replacing pain with some normative or intentional property. For example, try to imagine two physically and phenomenally identical possible worlds, in one of which a certain causing of pain is wrong, while in the other, it is not. I find that I cannot believe that such a pair of worlds could both be possible. Nor can I believe of such a pair of worlds that one contains a person thinking about modal logic, while the other does not. Call this intuitive result the *ban on co-possibility*. The crucial point is that the ban on co-possibility is strikingly intuitively plausible for normative and intentional properties, but not for phenomenal properties.

Perhaps the most promising way for Wedgwood to respond would be to attempt to offer a theory of error concerning the intuitive judgments that underwrite the ban. However, there are no hints in the text as to how such an argument might proceed. Further, there would be a lot to explain away. On the one hand, I take it that the intuition that I press in the preceding paragraph is widespread: This explains why analogues of the conceivability argument, complete with moral "zombie-worlds," do not loom large in meta-ethics. The ban on co-possibility may also help to account for why we are inclined to "imaginative resistance" toward fictions that attempt to baldly posit the moral permissibility of (for example) brutal slayings in the absence of sufficiently morally mitigating circumstances.³²

Wedgwood needs some such response, however, because accepting the ban on co-possibility creates a serious explanatory burden for his nonreductivism. Accepting the ban leaves one with three relevant options: either the ban is inexplicable (because metaphysically fundamental), or it is explained by the essences of things together with some contingent facts about the actual world, or it is wholly explained by facts about the essences of the relevant properties. Wedgwood's desire to reject brute necessities (p. 207) rules out the first option. He also gives good reasons for thinking that the second option is unworkable. This is because the ban on co-possibility applies to worlds dissimilar enough from the actual world that it is implausible that contingent facts about the actual world could suffice to explain it.³³

The remaining alternative is that the ban on co-possibility is wholly explained by facts about the essences of normative properties. This explanation, however, leads us exactly back to the reasoning that Wedgwood's modal maneuvers were designed to avoid. Thus, just as in his discussion of "pain necessitating conditions" (mentioned above on page 75 of this paper), for the essence of a normative property N to explain the ban on co-possibility, that essence would need to identify the set of non-normative "N-necessitating conditions." However, this would amount to the essence of N (alone, without the help of contingent facts) entailing the necessary coextension of N with those conditions, and this in turn would suffice to satisfy Wedgwood's essentialist criterion of reduction.

32. Compare B. Weatherson, "Morality, Fiction, and Possibility," *Philosophers' Imprint*, 4.3 (November 2004), pp. 1–27.

33. Compare especially the last sentence of pp. 211–2, note 11.

Wedgwood's discussion of reduction and modality is fascinating. However, I have argued that his emphasis on defending an alternative conception of metaphysical modality distracts him from what, by his own lights, should be the central challenge facing his nonreductive view. If what I have argued here is correct, the true "price" of his brand of nonreductivism is not merely commitment to an abstract thesis about the structure of metaphysical modality. Rather, it includes sacrificing a set of powerful intuitive judgments. Indeed, an alternative way to understand the upshot of this section is that one can seemingly construct a powerful case for a *reductive* account of normativity by accepting the bulk of Wedgwood's metaphysical proposal while jettisoning his counterintuitive rejection of the ban on co-possibility.

4. Knowing the Normative?

The preceding two sections have focused on Wedgwood's metaphysics. I now shift to one of the most exciting aspects of Wedgwood's view: his attempt to make his metaphysics epistemologically respectable. Here, he faces the familiar challenge that Platonism about a class of facts makes our knowledge of those facts totally mysterious. Wedgwood seeks not only to answer this challenge but also to sketch a general conception of normative epistemology and to put it to work in addressing a series of central epistemic questions.

The Platonist's epistemological task is to improve upon Gideon Rosen's placid suggestion³⁴ that:

it might simply be that we learn moral principles from our parents, which we then refine and revise in light of experience and reflection according to a critical discipline which we also inherit. I see no reason this procedure should not yield knowledge of transcendent moral principles, even though our reliability in the area would then be contingent on the lucky convergence of our culture on roughly true moral precepts.³⁵

Wedgwood's account appears to do much better than this, in virtue of his appeal to the normativity of the intentional. His general response is that, against the standard caricature of Platonic properties as inhabiting a causally inert "third realm," on his view, normative properties are causally efficacious in virtue of their mutual constitution with intentional properties (pp. 184–91). He thus suggests that, given the normativity of the intentional, it is "... not

34. G. Rosen, "Blackburn's Essays in Quasi-Realism," *Nous*, 32.3 (1998), pp. 386–405, defends only the intelligibility (and not the truth) of this sort of explanation. However, there is some reason to deny even this, as the view appears structurally analogous to a kind of local occasionalism that replaces God with chance. If we set aside puzzles about reference, such a view can doubtless account for the (lucky) possession of true moral beliefs. However, one might argue that if a person's claim to normative *knowledge* is not defeated by such chanciness itself, it should be defeated at least by his/her *awareness* that his/her belief in normative propositions inescapably presupposes that he/she is lucky in this way.

35. Rosen, "Blackburn's Essays in Quasi-Realism," p. 398.

surprising that there is less of a problem about our ‘access’ to such objective normative truths than there might at first seem to be” (p. 226). This strategy appears to promise an important advance in the defense of Platonism. However, I will argue that Wedgwood’s way of developing the details of this account is unconvincing.

Wedgwood begins by setting out a disjunctive requirement on rational belief-forming mechanisms, according to which a way of forming beliefs can be rational only (i) because we have evidence that makes it rational to regard it as reliable, or (ii) because it is primitively rational (p. 229). He then suggests that a way of forming beliefs is primitively rational because it has an “essential connection to truth” (232).

Wedgwood’s understanding of this essential connection is best illustrated by his explanation of why sensory experience is a primitively rational way of forming beliefs. As he explains it, for a subject to have the capacity for sensory experience is for her to have a disposition such that:

for every proposition p within [a certain] range, under normal conditions, the subject will respond to being in a situation in which p is the case by having a sensory experience as of p ’s being the case. (231)

Wedgwood calls this disposition to respond to its being the case that p by having a sensory experience as of p the “essential disposition” constitutive of sensory experience. As we have seen in section 2, such an essential disposition might be sidelined or masked by other dispositions. However, any experience that is the manifestation of the essential disposition will be veridical. Such a disposition is therefore essentially reliable, and thus, by Wedgwood’s principle, primitively rational.

Wedgwood takes his account of the normativity of the intentional to entitle him to develop an analogous case for the primitive rationality of our normative intuitions. This case begins with the claim (discussed in section 2) that in order to possess a concept, one must possess essentially rational dispositions for the use of that concept. This appears to show that correct intuitive normative judgment requires only the non-interference of dispositions that would otherwise compete with or mask our essentially rational dispositions to form normative judgments. Thus, on his view, intuitive judgment using one’s normative concepts is primitively rational, for just the reasons that sensory perception is.

Wedgwood defends the underlying idea that possession of essentially rational dispositions for the use of a concept makes intuitive use of that concept primitively rational in two stages. The first stage is a quick transcendental argument. He suggests that because we could not function as agents if we lacked beliefs about our immediate environment, we need to treat some way of forming beliefs about our immediate environment as primitively rational (pp. 231–2). The second stage of the argument is the claim that it is still reasonable, in the face of this “pragmatic” point, to demand that we not treat as primitively rational any way of forming beliefs that lacks some essential connection to the truth (p. 232).

The transcendental part of this argument is seemingly intended to rule out external world skepticism as (practically?) unreasonable. As I interpret him,

Wedgwood takes this to “lower the bar” for a primitively rational source of evidence: All that is required is a reason, however modest, to prefer *this* sort of source over other putative sources, such as hunches or astrology (p. 232). The alleged essential connection to truth permits sensory perception to meet this lower bar.

Wedgwood suggests that the role of the essential connection to truth in this account renders it more explanatorily adequate than either coherentism or a version of foundationalism that simply takes certain judgments to be basically justified because they are “self-evident.” Thus, he notes that the disposition to optimize coherence does not seem to be essentially reliable.³⁶ He suggests similarly that the fact that a proposition is “self-evident” similarly fails to show anything about the reliability of the mechanism that formed it (p. 233). Thus, only his condition on rational belief-forming mechanisms is able to provide the relevant link between epistemic justification and truth.

In the remainder of this section, I argue against both of Wedgwood’s central claims: That his version of foundationalism improves on these epistemological rivals, and that it vindicates the evidential status of intuitive normative judgment. I begin with the latter claim.

Wedgwood’s strategy for vindicating the evidential status of normative judgment fails because the capacity for normative judgment simply does not entail the possession of an essentially reliable disposition. There are at least three central problems here. First, we saw in section 2 that Wedgwood himself granted that the dispositions of one’s community (and not merely one’s own dispositions) might play a role in fixing the content of one’s concepts. This suggests the possibility of counting as possessing a normative concept in virtue of being disposed to defer to others in one’s use. But such a condition does nothing to improve one’s reliability when one is not able to consult others. The second problem, suggested by my case of Athena (also in section 2), is that given the right circumstances, one can seemingly possess a concept despite lacking either the essentially rational disposition for its use or a disposition to defer to one’s community.

A final problem follows from R.M. Hare’s claim that we would treat a linguistic community as sharing our concept GOOD even if members of that community use the term “good” systematically to praise what we take to be vicious behavior.³⁷ If correct, this thought experiment provides domain-specific

36. Wedgwood should grant that the right sort of disposition to coherence is *conditionally reliable*. This point is especially clear given his defense of the method of reflective equilibrium (p. 244). As he notes there, dispositions to coherence are truth preserving, and perhaps (supposing that our initial set of beliefs contains a sufficient proportion of truths), proportion of truth increasing. The inverse objection to coherentism is more consistent with his view: He should complain that coherentism ignores the basic rationality of reliance on sense perception and intuitive normative judgment.

37. This adapts Hare’s “missionaries and cannibals” thought experiment (R.N. Hare, *The Language of Morals* [Clarendon, 1952], pp. 146–9), which is justly famous despite its morally objectionable rhetorical frame. Compare also the more modest (and consequently harder to resist) variant of this thought experiment in T. Horgan and M. Timmons, “New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth,” *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 16 (1991), pp. 447–65.

evidence against the thesis that possession of a normative concept like good really requires possession of a disposition for the use of the term that would, absent interference, generate correct substantive normative judgments.

These points refute the idea that possession of a normative concept entails the possession of a disposition to use it in an essentially rational way. Hence, if Wedgwood's account of primitive rationality was correct, it would thus undermine his own idea that intuitive normative judgment is a basic source of evidence.

Wedgwood's account of primitive rationality, however, should also be rejected.³⁸ I set aside the obvious and deep controversies that stem from his use of a transcendental argument and focus on the dialectic between Wedgwood, and the coherentist and "self-evidence" intuitionist. Suppose that your only putative sources of evidence about some subject matter were testimonial and that you could consult an Achaean, a Trojan, or both. Suppose further that you have no a priori knowledge at all concerning the quality of the Achaeans' testimony. By contrast, you somehow know a priori that at least one of the Trojans always tells the truth. However, you have no information (not even a background probability baseline) about the quality of the other Trojans' testimony and no way of identifying the stipulated reliable Trojan.

One should surely either initially trust both the Achaeans and the Trojans, or trust neither. (I say "initially" because the content of their testimony might eventually provide grounds to favor or discount the testimony of one or the other.) The knowledge that at least one Trojan is reliable appears irrelevant for straightforward reasons: One lacks any sense of how many *unreliable* Trojans there are, and thus, what chance of getting reliable information from a Trojan one has. However, what we know about the Trojans is analogous to the feature of sensory perception that Wedgwood argues is epistemically crucial to its status as a basic source of evidence: While his view ensures that I have one essential disposition to have veridical perceptions in normal circumstances, it gives me *no idea* how many unreliable dispositions to perceptual appearance I might have. Wedgwood's essential connection to truth view thus appears to suggest absurdly that in the analogous testimonial case, it is primitively rational to accept Trojan testimony, but not Achaean testimony. By contrast, the foundationalist who takes testimony as such to be a basic source of evidence, the foundationalist who takes testimony to be inductively justified, and the coherentist all seem equipped to vindicate the intuitively correct result: That we should initially treat the two groups of testifiers equivalently.

For the reasons just sketched, I find Wedgwood's distinctive version of foundationalism unattractive. At minimum, it requires a great deal more elucidation and defense than it receives. Unfortunately, this leaves the hoped-for epistemic payoff of Wedgwood's metaphysics in doubt. It *seems* that the posited intimate connection between normative properties and intentional properties should lighten the Platonist's epistemic burden. This is because it suggests that normative properties are causally efficacious. It should thus

38. See Jenkins, "The Nature of Normativity," §3, for further worries about Wedgwood's account of primitive rationality.

permit the Platonist to avoid the necessity of positing a miraculous faculty of intuition that permits us to track a causally inert “third realm.” However, the argument of section 2 showed that the relationship between the normative and the intentional is quite complex. I have argued here that Wedgwood has not succeeded in developing an account of epistemic access that respects these complexities.³⁹

Wedgwood’s development of his core commitment to the normativity of the intentional makes good on his claim to offer Platonism that does real explanatory work rather than embracing metaphysical and epistemological mystery. However, I have argued, for what I take to be powerful reasons, to doubt the plausibility of his development of this core idea. My discussion in section 2 suggested that the alleged “essential interdependence” of the intentional and the normative is in need of further development and defense. My discussion in section 3 suggested that his defense of nonreductivism is even more problematic. And section 4 suggested that Wedgwood’s way of developing the promise of an epistemologically respectable Platonism was doubly flawed.

I close with a final systematic hypothesis about Wedgwood’s vision. It may be possible to develop a defensible epistemology of the normative from his conception of the normativity of the intentional. However, the dialectic of section 3 suggests that this might only be because Wedgwood’s version of the normativity of the intentional itself turns out to be inconsistent with the Platonism that Wedgwood holds dear. These doubts do not undermine my interest in Wedgwood’s project. Rather, they leave me looking forward to the further development of his ambitious vision in response to the critical attention that this book will deservedly receive.⁴⁰

39. For a largely distinct set of worries about Wedgwood’s epistemology, see Jenkins, “The Nature of Normativity,” §§3, 5, and 6.

40. I am indebted to Mark Schroeder, David Plunkett, and Nadeem Hussain for helpful comments on the draft of this paper.