Defining Normativity

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ABSTRACT: This paper attempts to clarify debate over the nature, existence, extension, and analyzability of normativity, by investigating whether different philosophers' claims are about the same subject or (as argued by Derek Parfit) they are using the term 'normativity' with different meanings. While I suggest the term may be multiply ambiguous, I also find reasons for optimism about a common subject-matter for metanormative theory. This is supported by sketching a special hybrid view of normative judgment, *perspectivism*, that occupies a position between cognitivism and noncognitivism, naturalism and nonnaturalism, objectivism and subjectivism. I explore three main fissures: between (i) the "normativity" of language/thought versus that of facts and properties, (ii) abstract versus substantive, and (iii) formal versus robust.

In recent jargon, *metanormative theory* explores fundamental questions crosscutting ethics, political and legal philosophy, aesthetics, epistemology, and more. It is described as the study of *normativity*, suggesting there is something, called 'normativity', that is the common object of the competing theories of the philosophers working in this field. The literature on "normativity" has in a short time become overwhelmingly huge.[1][2] So a curious layperson might reasonably ask, "So, what is this "normativity", then?" This innocent little question might already be interrogation enough to make philosophers squirm and sweat, because it is hard to find any definition that every metanormative theorist can agree on, as we'll see. At least one leading practitioner, Derek Parfit, has recently gone so far as to claim that many philosophers who appear to disagree with him about the nature of normativity must be using their terms with different meanings, and talking about something else entirely.[3] One may reasonably be skeptical, as I previously was. Dismissing opponents' claims as not even about the same subject seems to foreclose on the possibility of substantive theoretical disagreement prematurely. This paper finds, in partial agreement with Parfit, that philosophical discussion about "normativity" is plagued by systematic ambiguities contributing to significant confusion, as there are many things that "normativity" can reasonably be taken to be.[4] However, it ultimately finds cause for optimism, against Parfit, that very

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[1] A *Philosopher's Index* search on 'normativity' (1/12/2017) returns 2,171 records, 1,076 published in the 2010s (to 2016) alone, from 23 records in the 1980s and 216 records in the 1990s.

[2] I use single-quote marks to refer to words and expressions, and double-quote marks for both scare-quotes and ordinary quotation.

[3] E.g. 2011: 439f.

[4] This aligns with a central theme of my 2014 book, that metaethical debates largely stem from a "confusion of tongues". However, there I was insufficiently sensitive to the ambiguities in the word 'normativity' itself, leading

different theoretical positions are nonetheless engaged in substantive disagreements over common questions.

Some readers may be exasperated. Can't language get out of our way and let us think and talk directly about the thing itself? Every philosopher understands the importance of scrutinizing our (meta) language for equivocations and other ways our thinking can be led astray by its linguistic garb. But surely not every philosophical issue conceals significant semantic perils, and the study of normativity might be thought safe for the semantics-averse, since 'normativity' is a term of art recently introduced specifically to get a terminological grip on something elusive in ordinary language. Nonetheless, I've come to believe that debates about "normativity" are mired in equivocation and terminologically-induced confusion, and can only be moved forward by reflecting on the meaning(s) of the word.

This paper aims to advance understanding of the nature of normativity—or rather, of various things that may go by the name. Because my concerns are ultimately metaphysical rather than semantic, I largely avoid making claims about what 'normativity' *should* be used to mean. Neither will I try to give a complete taxonomy of senses. Instead, I'll put pressure on three major fissures, in order to cast light on some central controversies. I start with the distinction between the "normativity" ascribed to (i) language and thought, and (ii) facts and properties, in order to explore the possibility of univocity between cognitivists' and noncognitivists' claims about "normativity". Then I examine the possibility of univocity between different kinds of cognitivists, such as nonnaturalists, subjectivist naturalists and objectivist naturalists, by examining two further distinctions: between (a) abstract versus substantive senses of 'normativity', and (b) formal versus robust senses. This leads to a special kind of hybrid view of normative judgment I'll call *perspectivism*, which has the resources to explain how different cognitivists could be united by interest in a common phenomenon, while at the same time potentially using 'normativity' with significantly different meanings. Whether or not this perspectivism is correct, observing the option casts helpfully disambiguating light on the debates over at least the nature, existence, extension, and analyzability of "normativity".

1   Preliminaries

First I need to explain and defend my basic assumptions. This paper addresses two words: the noun 'normativity' and the adjective 'normative'. Since 'normativity' is just the nowadays-preferred nominalization of the adjective 'normative',[5] one might expect these to be interdefinable as follows: to describe something as 'normative' (in a particular sense) is to ascribe it a property that is denoted by 'normativity' (in a corresponding sense). We'll encounter some important exceptions to this rule, but I will shift between noun and adjective as suits the context.

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to some seemingly inconsistent claims, and inviting skepticism about my claims to have reductively analyzed normativity (e.g. Dowell 2016, Laskowski 2014). This paper is partly a *mea culpa* and an attempt to clarify those claims.

[5] Overtaking 'normativeness' in the early 1970s, per Google's ngram viewer.

I will argue that these words are multiply ambiguous, as used by metanormative theorists (subsequently, "theorists"). Readers might be skeptical that any systematic ambiguities would go unnoticed by so many trained philosophers. When we think about lexical ambiguity, we typically consider forms of simple *homonymy*: identically spelled and pronounced words with unrelated meanings, like 'hide' (animal skin vs. to conceal), or the standard example of 'bank' (financial institution vs. sloping landform). However, the ambiguities at issue here are cases rather of *polysemy*: identically spelled and pronounced words with distinct but closely related meanings, as classically illustrated by Aristotle's example of 'healthy' (as of food vs. as of organisms). Polysemies are often subtle and easily overlooked even by sophisticated thinkers, as well as being ubiquitous in natural language,[6] and therefore pose a much greater equivocation risk in philosophy. So denying that metanormative theory is unified by interest in a common object of inquiry called "normativity" does not imply, implausibly, that it is a Frankenstein's monster stitched together out of unrelated parts, akin to "Hideology", the (imaginary) study of concealment and animal skins. I suspect many theorists are aware 'normative' is polysemous, but that few realize how much this has confused metanormative debate.

In identifying different possible senses for 'normativity', I will be offering *descriptive definitions*. In particular, I will be seeking what I'll call theorists' *effective* definitions, which articulate the concepts that theorists are employing. Such a definition is reference-fixing for a theorist (or use-fixing, for words with nondescriptive functions) and therefore "nonnegotiable": to talk about something that doesn't satisfy the description is necessarily to change the subject.[7] Effective definitions must be sharply distinguished from theorists' *official* definitions, or what they explicitly offer as definitions, whether analytic or synthetic. This distinction is important because theorists' official definitions often constitute substantive theories of the nature of their objects, even when ostensibly offered as analytic or nonsubstantial. Official definitions are therefore "negotiable", and a theorist can in principle come to recognize hers as incorrect and needing revision. Ascribing effective definitions is a difficult and often presumptuous task: I will offer tentative hypotheses about what various theorists' concepts may be on the basis of their statements, but these must be weighed against the alternative possibility that those statements are merely mistaken.

The proposal to offer "definitions" may elicit concerns that some crucial questions are being begged from the outset. These concerns can be allayed, because I'll take a broad, ecumenical approach to the practice of definition.[8] One concern is on behalf of nonnaturalists like Parfit, who often claim that normativity is "indefinable", because primitive and sui generis. However, I allow that an adequate definition of 'normativity' need only individuate the property in question (perhaps only privately), and needn't constitute an analysis of it.[9] For example, I take seriously *ostensive* definitions of the following

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[6] As Fogal 2016 points out in rebuke of my 2014.

[7] Following Joyce 2001: 3-4. A definition's being nonnegotiable in this sense doesn't preclude the theorist from accepting a change of subject, even under the same terminology.

[8] A possible exception is the idea of reference-magnetism. I assume that it is something about the practice, mind, or situation of the speaker that determines what she is talking about, rather than the nature of the object itself.

[9] In particular, it need only identify it by an individuating property *of* normativity. Even if Parfit is talking about a nonnatural property, I can think and talk about the same property in virtue of the definition or concept, *the property Parfit is talking about*.

kind: *that* property (mentally ostending something being cognized, perceived, remembered, or imagined). Definitions of this kind are both compatible with and familiar from the writings of nonnaturalists.

A second concern comes from semantic externalists, who may complain that for a term, like 'normativity', to successfully refer to something, there needn't be any description that every competent user of the term has in mind or associates with the word; i.e. that no description or concept has the status of being the word's conventional meaning. 'Normativity' might rather be the *name* of something. However, I don't assume that an adequate definition of 'normativity' must identify its conventional meaning, and I allow that different people might employ different, perhaps private, definitions or concepts for the same word. This might appear to make claims of ambiguity too cheap, but I'll also assume it is sufficient for univocity between two speakers that their different concepts contingently pick out the same reference; i.e. that sameness of meaning requires only that they are talking about the same thing. Finally, semantic externalists might also object that speakers might use a term like 'normativity' to refer without having any concept or description of the reference in mind at all; e.g. by virtue of their use standing in a causal chain with other uses. While skeptical, I allow for this too: an adequate definition, for a particular use of 'normativity', might simply be a description of the facts that fix the reference for that use, such as.facts about the causal chain.

2   Univocity Between Cognitivists and Noncognitivists

The lack of any agreed characterization of "normativity" might be thought simply an unsurprising consequence of metanormative theory's being an area of live debate, in which there are competing views about its nature. But researchers in disputed fields don't generally have any difficulty agreeing on some characterization of their common object of inquiry. Scientists disputing the chemical composition of water in the eighteenth century, for example, could agree at least that water is the stuff that flows in Earth's rivers, fills its oceans, and falls from the sky in the form of rain. If we are to find a common object for metanormative theorizing, it will presumably be through examining the common ground: what can all parties to the metanormative debate agree on?

The possible answers to this question are seriously constrained by the fact that the field includes significant numbers both of theorists who claim that "normativity" is a property of facts, properties, and relations (like ought-facts, goodness and rightness, and being-a-reason-for), and also of theorists who deny there are any "normative" facts, properties, and relations, but nonetheless don't generally deny that some kinds of things are "normative" or that there is "normativity". Prima facie it might seem that common ground can be found in applications to language and thought—as I have previously assumed. This includes linguistic and mental *entities* such as words, sentences, concepts, and beliefs, and *acts* such as utterances, assertions, claims, and judgments, but I'll write in conveniently fudgy terms of "expressions and judgments".

2.1 The Normativity of Language and Thought

Surely all theorists agree that some language and/or thought is normative? At least, I know of none who refuse to classify any expressions or judgments as 'normative'. But are they all predicating the same property with the term? This question might be thought to stir up needless trouble. Metanormative theorists are members of one contiguous linguistic community, thinking and writing in close engagement with each other, and largely assuming that they are all talking about the same thing. While there is considerable disagreement about the proper extension of the term (exactly *which* expressions and judgments are normative?), this arguably resembles either garden-variety vagueness or substantive disagreement over borderline cases, since there is also convergence on many central cases, like the words 'ought', 'wrong', and judgments about reasons to act. While I agree that these considerations lend a default presumption of univocity, this is undermined by closer scrutiny.

What does it mean to classify an expression or judgment as "normative"? Many theorists, who I'll call *cognitivists*, seem to favor an answer along the following, representationalist lines: an expression or judgment is "normative" just in case it is *about* something in the world of a special kind. What kind? The obvious answer is: of a "normative" kind. This answer is significant here for two reasons. First, it introduces us to an initial ambiguity (polysemy), just within cognitivists' use. Second, it casts doubt on the univocity of different theorists' talk about "normative" expressions or judgments.

This approach requires an ambiguity in 'normative', because whatever it is for something to be a "normative" fact or property, it can't be *to be about something normative*—or about anything at all, since facts (or states of affairs) and properties aren't in the business of being "about" things. Rather, it requires us to distinguish between *ontological* and *representational* senses of 'normative', as follows:[10]

> NORMATIVE$_{ont}$: (As of facts and properties); Having a property P of some special kind.

> NORMATIVE$_{rep}$: (As of expressions and judgments); Being about something normative$_{ont}$.

(To help readers, my definitions are collected together at the article's end.) These entries may need to be divided further into different ontological and representational senses, but for now let's suppose this is sufficiently fine-grained.[11] The relationship between NORMATIVE$_{rep}$ and NORMATIVE$_{ont}$ manifests a common pattern, or *regular polysemy*, which can also be observed, for example, in the adjectives 'mythological' and 'aesthetic'. Mythological$_1$ language (=language about mythology) needn't itself be mythological$_2$ (=existing only in cultural imagination); aesthetic$_1$ language (=language about aesthetic qualities) needn't itself be aesthetic$_2$ (=possess aesthetic qualities).

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[10] Some theorists ("quietists") purport to recognize the existence of normative facts and properties without incurring any "ontological" commitments (e.g. Parfit 2011, Scanlon 2014), while disavowing "quasi-realism" (as defined in Blackburn 1993). For discussion see Dreier 2016, Streumer 2017. Since I understand ontology simply as the study of what exists, I ignore this complication here.

[11] Recognizing these senses is metaphysically noncommittal. Perhaps there is no property P, or nothing instantiates it; then nothing is normative$_{ont}$. Or perhaps there are no normative$_{rep}$ expressions or judgments.

We can't stop with just these two senses of 'normative', because they apparently fail to accommodate the claims of *noncognitivists*, who acknowledge the existence of "normative" expressions and judgments, but deny that they are about "normative" facts and properties. This includes both *nondescriptivists* who deny that "normative" expressions and judgments are about or represent anything at all, and virtually all so-called *hybrid theorists*, who allow that "normative" expressions and judgments are representational, but attribute their status as "normative" not to their representing something normative$_{ont}$, but to some other (noncognitive) function or property they have. As this makes clear, my distinction here between "cognitivism" and "noncognitivism" differs importantly from the usual distinction drawn in these terms. The issue here is not whether normative judgments have cognitive (representational, descriptive) content per se, but whether their status *as normative* is due to their cognitive content.[12]

Noncognitivists are obviously committed to holding that there are no normative$_{rep}$ expressions or judgments, at least in our ordinary "normative" language and thought. So when noncognitivists classify an expression or judgment as "normative", they must mean something other than NORMATIVE$_{rep}$. Indeed, while being normative$_{rep}$ would evidently entail being descriptive, many theorists use the words 'normative' and 'descriptive' as terms of direct contrast. Noncognitivists' talk about "normative" expressions and judgments seems to require a definition conforming to the following schema:

> NORMATIVE$_{funct}$:   (As of expressions or judgments); Having the nonrepresentational function F.

There is a wide variety of noncognitivist theories about function F, although I presume they all construe it as a broadly psychological function. For example, it could be the function of *expressing the speaker's motivational attitudes*, or the function of *motivating attitudes or behavior*: "putting pressure on choice and action" (Blackburn 1993). So this entry itself might need to be divided into distinct functional senses of 'normative', implying a failure of univocity even between different noncognitivists' talk about "normativity", although I'll ignore this complication here. Whatever F might be, however, its nonrepresentational character entails that whether an expression or judgment is normative$_{funct}$ is a completely different issue from whether it is normative$_{rep}$.[13]

If I have correctly albeit roughly identified the effective definitions underlying cognitivists' and noncognitivists' talk about "normative" expressions and judgments, then it seems there is indeed no real common ground over whether there is normative language and thought, only a "verbal agreement" consisting in superficial overlap in application of an ambiguous vocabulary. If this was the best hope for finding common ground and thereby a common object for theories of "normativity", as we were supposing, then perhaps there is no common object at all. Since noncognitivists deny that "normative" language and thought derive their claim to "normativity" from representing special kinds of facts, they can be expected to deny that anything is normative$_{ont}$. And since cognitivists deny that "normative" language and thought derive their "normativity" from a special nonrepresentational function they possess, they can be expected at least to deny that normativity$_{funct}$ is what their investigations are

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[12] Cf. Ridge 2014: 79-80, Streumer 2017: 91-2.
[13] Cf. Copp 2007: 266, Streumer 2017: 128.

concerned with. So with respect to cognitivists' and noncognitivists' claims about "normativity", Parfit's radical pessimism might seem vindicated: they are just talking about completely different things.

It is too early to draw this conclusion, however, because we can dig deeper to try to locate an underlying univocity between cognitivists and noncognitivists. Even philosophers who explicitly endorse definitions along the lines of NORMATIVE$_{rep}$ or NORMATIVE$_{funct}$ might not be identifying their effective definitions, and their official definitions may turn out to represent competing, substantive, falsifiable theories of a common subject-matter.

2.2   Making Do

I'll now explore a solution that might initially seem promising but I think ultimately fails, before introducing a better solution in the next section. We might hope to find univocity by identifying the cognitivist's normativity$_{ont}$ with the noncognitivist's normativity$_{funct}$. In principle, the maximally thin definitions above aren't incompatible: having some nonrepresentational function *is* a property of a special kind. So might cognitivists and noncognitivists be unified by common interest in a single functional property, normativity$_{ont/funct}$? Their differences would then consist in a substantive disagreement about this property: cognitivists maintain that it is a property of facts and properties, while noncognitivists maintain that it is exclusively a property of expressions and judgments.

For illustration, consider the familiar but vague identification of "normativity" with *prescriptivity*, glossed as the function of *guiding* agents or "telling them what to do".[14] A noncognitivist might claim that only expressions and/or judgments prescribe or tell agents what to do. A cognitivist might think that prescriptivity is "objective", and a function of some part of the "world itself", if of anything at all (e.g. Mackie 1977: 23). From noncognitivists' point of view, cognitivism is substantively mistaken because it attributes a property of expressions and judgments to facts and properties in the world—perhaps due to committing the "projective fallacy" of mistaking our subjective reactions to the world for objective qualities that prompt those reactions.[15] From cognitivists' point of view, noncognitivism is substantively mistaken because it attributes a property of facts and properties to certain of our expressions and judgments, which are instead about things with that property—perhaps due to committing the "psychologistic fallacy" of analyzing something objective in terms of our subjective reactions to it.

Could metanormative theory consist in substantive disagreements over such a common object as normativity$_{ont/funct}$. One problem comes, ironically, from what we began by supposing the best hope for common ground: that certain expressions and judgments are "normative". For cognitivists cannot mean to say that these expressions and judgments are normative$_{ont/funct}$. They certainly *may* hold that language or thought is normative$_{ont}$, which is plausibly what is at issue in the debates over the "normativity of meaning" in the philosophy of language (e.g. whether a word's having a particular meaning has entailments about how it *ought* to be used), and over the normativity of intentional attitudes in the philosophy of mind (e.g. whether a particular kind of mental state constitutively involves

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[14] Cf. Copp 2012. I suspect the intuitive appeal of this proposal is due to this language of "prescriptivity" and "guidance" being ambiguous in exactly the same way.

[15] E.g. Hume 1739/1896, Nietzsche 1882/1974, Mackie 1977, Blackburn 1998.

being *rationally required* to behave in some way[16]). But this could not be what cognitivists mean in classifying certain expressions (like 'ought') and judgments as "normative". First, cognitivism as such is neutral on the debates over the normativity of meaning and attitudes, and so clearly isn't committed to holding that expressions or judgments in general are normative$_{ont}$. Yet no cognitivist denies there are any "normative" expressions or judgments. Second, cognitivists' classification of certain expressions or judgments as "normative" or "nonnormative" makes no sense on the supposition that they mean NORMATIVE$_{ont/funct}$, because there is no good reason to think that only (e.g.) words that by the cognitivists' lights are *about* normativity$_{ont}$, like 'ought', 'wrong', etc., and not others like 'tall' or 'blue', are themselves normative$_{ont}$. This is not a plausible alternative to NORMATIVE$_{rep}$ as an interpretation of cognitivists' claims.

This approach fails to find univocity in cognitivists' and noncognitivists' talk of "normative" expressions and judgments, but you might think this needn't be a serious problem. From cognitivists' point of view, the most important sense of "normativity" is normativity$_{ont}$. From noncognitivists' point of view, the important sense is normativity$_{funct}$. If in fact these are the same thing, normativity$_{ont/funct}$, then we have found a common, central object for cognitivists' and noncognitivists' claims. If cognitivists' talk about "normative" expressions or judgments has to be understood in an idiosyncratic, derivative sense, this may be interesting but not very important.

However, we began by thinking that the apparent agreement that certain expressions and judgments are "normative" was the most promising place to find common ground. If this rather turns out to be equivocal, we have to seriously ask whether we have any good reasons to think that cognitivists and noncognitivists are talking about the same thing. The evidence all seems to point the other way. First, as already noted, they locate "normativity" in entirely different places. Cognitivists find it in facts and properties, disagreeing among themselves whether it is also ever to be found in language or thought (generally), while noncognitivists deny it can ever be found in facts and properties, locating it only in language or thought (of a specific class). Second, there is some reason to doubt they are even talking about the same classes of expressions and judgments, since there is disagreement even over the exemplars of "normative" language. Noncognitivists often take *imperatives* like 'Keep off the grass!' to be central and particularly naked examples of normativity$_{funct}$, but cognitivists characteristically deny that they are "normative" at all.[17]

Finally, cognitivists' theories about the nature of normativity$_{ont}$ are generally radically different from noncognitivists' theories about the nature of normativity$_{funct}$. (i) Many cognitivists are *nonnaturalists*, holding that "normativity" can't be reduced to or identified with anything natural, whereas noncognitivists hold that the "normativity" of expressions and judgments is naturalistically analyzable. (ii) Cognitivists typically don't deny that "normative" language and thought characteristically has the natural properties that noncognitivists identify with normativity$_{funct}$, such as expressing attitudes and putting motivational pressure on agents. They just deny that this is the property of normativity$_{ont}$ they're thinking about. (iii) Whereas cognitivists all think that some fact or property's being "normative"

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[16] e.g. Wedgwood 2007.
[17] Cf. Parfit 2011: 291, on W.D. Falk.

has essential entailments about what (e.g.) someone *ought* or *has reason* to do, noncognitivist identifications of some expression or judgment as "normative" involve no such commitments on the part of the theorist. Suppose a sadist judges that *the suffering of innocents is good*; noncognitivists may identify this as a normative$_{funct}$ judgment, but typically would deny that it follows from this that there is anything that the sadist herself, or anybody else, ought or has a reason to do. Noncognitivists do not necessarily or generally claim, for example, that if an agent makes the "normative" judgment that *she herself ought to φ*, then she ought to φ, or be motivated to φ, etc.—although something of the kind would be implied by the judgment's being normative$_{ont}$ rather than merely normative$_{funct}$.

Given all these differences over the bearers, the exemplars, the nature and the implications of "normativity", if cognitivists and noncognitivists were talking about the same property, normativity$_{ont/funct}$, then one party or the other would have to be extremely confused. We should prefer a more charitable interpretation, if one can be found.

2.3   Ostending Normativity

Many other kinds of effective definitions could be considered in the hope of leveraging the superficial convergence in classifying expressions and judgments as "normative" into a common subject-matter for cognitivists' and noncognitivists' claims about "normativity". Rather than surveying a variety of approaches that ultimately fail, I'll now sketch the approach I consider most promising. This takes the form of ostensive, natural (or non-natural) kind definitions, which look to one or more samples of expressions or judgments to pick out some underlying common characteristic, the identity and nature of which is open to dispute. Schematically:

> NORMATIVE$_{lang/judg-ost}$:   (As of expressions/judgments); Having the common property of samples n_1, n_2, ...

Theorists who appeal to different samples would be operating with different versions of this kind of definition, but this is no barrier to univocity in talk of "normative" expressions or judgments so long as their definitions pick out the same underlying property or kind.

This approach has a number of things in its favor as an interpretation of metanormative theory. First, it can be motivated by the plausible observation that metanormative inquiry typically begins from reflection on an ordinary, ubiquitous practice of making a certain kind of claim or judgment. Second, many theorists endorse it either explicitly (e.g. Wittgenstein 1930/1997)[18], or implicitly by the way they introduce their quarry. Parfit, for example, appeals to a particular judgment (*I ought to jump*) in a particular scenario (*Burning Hotel*—in which one's hotel is on fire and the only way out is through the second-story window) to fix on the kind of judgment that interests him.[19]   Third, it plausibly locates a

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[18] Wittgenstein's lecture predates the adoption of the term 'normative', but clearly addresses the same topic.
[19] Parfit 2011: 283, 326. See also Parfit 2011: 265, Wedgwood 2007: 1, Thomson 2008: 1.

common object for cognitivists and noncognitivists, who can agree (mostly)[20] on what is and isn't a paradigm of "normative" language or thought, and that this class of expressions or judgments shares some philosophically important property that is (part of) what interests them. We could then interpret the parties as disagreeing substantively over whether normativity$_{lang/judg-ost}$ is to be identified as normativity$_{rep}$ or rather as normativity$_{funct}$; i.e. whether the common property that unifies the class of normative$_{lang/judg-ost}$ language and thought is the property of being about something that is normative$_{ont}$, or the property of having some nondescriptive function F.

Obstacles to this approach remain, however. These seem best overcome by opting for a thought- or judgment-based definition (NORMATIVE$_{judg-ost}$) rather than a language-based one (NORMATIVE$_{lang-ost}$).[21] This is partly because the words commonly identified as "normative" are at least often ambiguous between normative and nonnormative uses or senses, making it difficult to ostend "normativity" by linguistic samples alone.[22] We can plausibly identify a derivative, theory-neutral sense of 'normative' as applying to language, as follows:

> NORMATIVE$_{lang-exp-judg}$:   (As of language); Having the property of being conventionally used to express normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments.

So, we might hope, cognitivists and noncognitivists can agree that they are interested in normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments, and derivatively, normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ language.

Some cognitivists may seem to resist this attempt at assimilation. Parfit, for example, insists that he's fundamentally interested in a certain property of *facts and properties* that he is directly acquainted with (perhaps picked out by an ostensive ontological definition, NORMATIVITY$_{ont-ost(Parfit)}$), and derivatively in judgments about that property (i.e. normative$_{rep(Parfit)}$ judgments), as in his *Burning Hotel* example. He expresses uncertainty about whether his opponents ever make these kinds of judgments, or whether ordinary natural language even contains normative$_{rep(Parfit)}$ words.[23] Taking Parfit at his word, if his suspicions are correct then he and his opponents would indeed be talking about different things. However, if his suspicions are incorrect then, even taking him at his word, this approach can secure common objects for theorists' talk of "normative" expressions and judgments—for example, if parties on both sides are employing effective definitions of the form NORMATIVE$_{judg-ost}$ using samples that are as a matter of fact of the same kind. Optimism seems justified, given that we are (1) all human agents with the same cognitive faculties, (2) who (at least in English-speaking metanormative theory) are members of the same linguistic community, (3) largely apply "normative" vocabulary and concepts in the same

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[20] This approach is robust enough to survive some disagreement over exemplars. For example, the parties might be able to agree that whether imperatives like 'Keep off the grass!' are properly classified as 'normative' depends on whether they share the underlying property of declaratives like 'You ought to keep off the grass.'

[21] This focus is championed in Laskowski 2017. My previous work focuses on language instead.

[22] Here I have in mind not so much the distinction between "robust" and "formal" senses of normative terms (addressed in section 3.2), but that between normative and epistemic uses of modals like 'must' and 'ought', and between normative and (merely) explanatory uses of 'reason', etc.

[23] Parfit 2011: 293, 304, 369; see also Moore 1903.

ways, to the same objects and actions in the same scenarios,[24] and (4) employ these words and concepts similarly in regulating our conduct and communicating with others.

The main problem facing this approach is that ostension of samples alone might not be enough to fix on a particular underlying kind or property. The same set of samples can, and presumably will, be exemplars of multiple different kinds. A flat-footed example is that most theorists provide samples of words which have in common that they are members of the kind, *words of English*. Of course, we can easily narrow in on a more plausible range of kinds by including examples of what is excluded; e.g. *the common property shared by words like 'ought' and 'good', but not by words like 'tall' and 'blue'*. But even here we might reasonably worry that the samples ostended underdetermine a particular reference for normativity$_{judg-ost}$. Perhaps, for example, the samples feature both normativity$_{funct}$ *and* normativity$_{rep}$ (cognitivists do not generally deny that these words have the functions that noncognitivists describe, after all); do our definitions then pick out one, the other, both, or neither?

Is there any way of narrowing in on the relevant kind of judgment that doesn't exclude either cognitivists or noncognitivists? Plausibly, common ground can be found over the role of normative judgment in practical deliberation.[25] Approximately, normative judgments are the kinds of judgments that we aim at reaching to close our deliberations, and on which we directly base our decisions or actions. This is certainly something that at least some cognitivists and noncognitivists agree about. For example, David Enoch (2011a) is a nonnaturalist cognitivist who claims that normative judgments are "deliberatively indispensible"; i.e. one simply isn't deliberating if not employing normative concepts and reasoning toward normative judgments. The naturalist noncognitivist Allan Gibbard (2003) agrees: normative judgments just *are* deliberative judgments about what to do. Enoch and Gibbard substantively disagree about the nature of the judgments that play this role: Enoch thinks they are judgments about certain kinds of facts and properties, while Gibbard thinks they are noncognitive attitudes of a certain kind (roughly, plans or intentions).

It may seem a problem that not all cognitivists agree that "normative" judgments are deliberatively indispensible. We're already noted Parfit's skepticism about whether all agents even make (what he means by) "normative" judgments.[26] Since he never denies that all agents deliberate and make decisions, he would presumably allow that some of us may close our deliberations or base our decisions on something other than "normative" judgments. I expect he and others would insist that normative judgments are merely the kind of judgments that *rational* agents aim to base decisions on, or that

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[24] This may seem to overlook Parfit's disagreement with Humeans like Bernard Williams over whether there are any "external" reasons unconnected to an agent's motivations. However, this may reflect less first-order disagreement than one might expect. Williams' (1981) famous example of alleged external reasons (of family tradition) would presumably be rejected by Parfit too, and internalists often accept the reasons that theorists like Parfit allege to be external (e.g. moral and prudential reasons), rather claiming they are internal.

[25] E.g. Schroeter and Schroeter ms.: "What's distinctive of the normative is a characteristic psychological role played by certain concepts in deliberation and action", McPherson forthcoming. See Silverstein 2017 for a dissenting view on which normative concepts are rather *about* (sound) deliberation; cf. Williams 1981.

[26] Consider also philosophers (like Broome 2013, Arpaly & Schroeder 2014, Silverstein 2017) who deny that deliberation typically has normativized *content*: e.g. we look to close deliberation by identifying our reasons, not by identifying them *as* reasons/ reaching the judgment that something is a reason.

agents *ought* to aim to base decisions on, and would charge my attempted characterization with the psychologistic fallacy. This is a reason not to try to turn our proposed platitude into an *analytic* definition, true in virtue of meaning. However, an ostensive-style definition can accommodate it. Parfit would surely agree that normative judgments are a kind of judgments that *some* agents aim to close their deliberation with and base their decisions on. We could identify these agents under some normative classification (e.g. *rational*) or simply ostensively (e.g. *me*). Indeed, in Parfit's paradigm of a normative judgment in *Burning Hotel*, the judgment is playing exactly this deliberative role (2011: 326-7). As long as theorists are using ostensive definitions, picking out *that kind of judgment* (whichever it is) that actually satisfies the characterization they have in mind, then they can be talking about the same kind of judgment even if they have different characterizations in mind (i.e. they disagree about the class of agents for whom it plays that role).

I therefore suggest that in NORMATIVE$_{judg-ost}$ we have identified a kind of concept which could, at least in principle, provide a common object for cognitivists' and noncognitivists' claims about "normative judgments", despite the enormous differences between them. Similarly, in NORMATIVE$_{lang-exp-judg}$ we have a potentially unifying concept for their claims about "normative language". There is thus reason for optimism about the univocity of at least these parts of metanormative discourse. I hesitate to draw the stronger conclusion that this is the kind of concept all theorists actually employ, and thereby that claims about "normative judgments" are actually univocal—although if a principle of charity operates at the level of a whole field we might invoke it here.

What about the "normativity" of facts and properties, which cognitivists identify as the ultimate object of their investigations? The ostensive definitions I've proposed don't provide a common object here; cognitivists clearly don't mean to classify these facts and properties as normative$_{judg-ost}$, and so we still need another sense of 'normative' to accommodate these claims along the lines of NORMATIVE$_{ont}$— perhaps of the following, derivative kind:

> NORMATIVE$_{ont-judg-rep}$:   Having the property P that is common to all and only the kinds of facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments (and normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ expressions) are about.

Here our previous conclusions seem to stand. Noncognitivists are committed to denying that anything is normative$_{ont-judg-rep}$, since they reject the presupposition that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments as such are about any special kind of property. From their point of view, cognitivists are engaged in a wild goose chase, led astray by their signature misinterpretation of the underlying nature of these judgments. Their positive claims about the nature of "normativity", therefore, are not claims about normativity$_{ont-judg-rep}$, the primary object of cognitivist's metanormative claims. Regarding this, Parfit's claim that noncognitivism is "close to nihilism" (2011: 267) therefore seems right or even overly cautious.

Which side is right? This is a difficult question, as the past century of metaethics attests. The cognitivists' claim can seem compelling. In Parfit's *Burning Hotel* scenario it seems phenomenologically correct to say that one looks for and recognize a *fact*, of a distinctively normative$_{ont}$ kind, about what one ought or has most reason to do, and that this is what our normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgment is *about*. But

the noncognitivists' positive claim can seem compelling too: that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are distinguished as a kind by having a special nonrepresentational property or function. Another option, however, is a widely overlooked kind of *hybrid* position: that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are distinguished as a kind by the combination of *both* (i) being about a special normative$_{ont}$ kind of property, *and* (ii) having a special nonrepresentational property or function. This is importantly different from the familiar kind of "hybrid theory", very much in fashion today, which attributes normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments both cognitive content and noncognitive properties. These familiar, *first-order* hybrid theories are generally not hybrid regarding the second-order question which is at issue here, concerning a judgment's status as *normative*.[27] Instead, they adopt a straightforwardly noncognitivist answer to this question, assigning normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments ordinary, "nonnormative" contents, rejecting the cognitivist (in our sense) view that they are distinguished by being normative$_{rep}$ or about properties of a normative$_{ont}$ kind. We'll see below that the option of a *second-order* hybrid theory, about what distinguishes a judgment as being normative$_{judg-ost}$, significantly complicates the possible interpretations of cognitivists' claims about normativity$_{ont}$.

3 Univocity Among Cognitivists

I turn now to examine the prospects for univocity in talk about "normativity" among cognitivists. These are commonly divided into two broad camps: *naturalists* who claim that "normativity" is identical or reducible to ordinary "natural" properties, and *nonnaturalists* like Parfit who deny it. Here we can ignore the difficult issue of how to understand the relevant concept of naturalness, as the most salient difference for our purposes is that nonnaturalists generally deny that "normativity" can be analyzed or reduced in "nonnormative" terms at all.[28] The camp of naturalists can be further divided into *subjectivists*, who analyze "normativity" in broadly or partly psychological terms (e.g. involving counterfactual motivation or relations to desires or agency), and *objectivists* who analyze "normativity" in terms of some nonpsychological natural property.[29] Cognitivists have generally assumed that there is something which they all call "normativity", the nature of which is at issue between them. But after many years of arguing against (particularly subjectivist) forms of naturalism, Parfit has come to the conclusion that theorists who appear to disagree with him about the nature of normativity, or of "reasons", must instead be using a different concept and talking about something else entirely. He identifies as many as *five* different senses (2011: 267-8), and claims that naturalism, like noncognitivism, is "close to nihilism", the view that there are no normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties (2011: 368).

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[27] Possible exceptions articulating potentially second-order hybridist views include the "de dicto cognitivism" of Tresan 2006 (about "moral" judgments) and the "relational expressivism" of Toppinen 2013, Schroeder 2013; also Laskowski 2017, and cf. Finlay 2004, 2010, 2014. As I understand Mike Ridge's distinction between "ecumenical" cognitivism and noncognitivism (2014: 6-7), this form of (perfect) hybridism falls in the gap between them.

[28] *Primitivism* is therefore a better, though less familiar, label for this family of views.

[29] Objectivist views commonly take broadly Aristotelian forms (e.g. Foot 2001, Thomson 2008); I have often understood my own views (e.g. Finlay 2010: 71, 2014: 79) as non-Aristotelian objectivist naturalism; see also Copp 2007. Note that subjectivism as understood here needn't imply that what is normative *varies* from agent to agent, and includes universalist views appealing to idealized or normalized psychology, like Hume 1739/1896, Smith 1994.

The previous section provides some reason to suspect this unduly pessimistic. We might reasonably suppose that whatever their differences, cognitivists should all agree that the object of their theories is normativity$_{\text{ont-judg-rep}}$: the special property, whatever it might be, possessed by all and only the facts and properties that our normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgments are about. But among nonnaturalists it is commonly thought that the normativity$_{\text{ont}}$ that interests them is *just too different* (as David Enoch puts it)[30] from natural facts and properties to be naturalistically analyzable, and some go so far to claim that this is so self-evident that nobody could seriously suppose otherwise. On this basis, Parfit concludes that charity requires interpreting naturalists' claims as addressed to a different object altogether. How else could the dramatic differences between the theories be explained?

Below I examine the prospects for univocity between different cognitivists' claims about the "normativity" of facts and properties. I start by exploring two straightforward polysemies in ontological senses of "normativity": (i) an abstract/substantive distinction, and (ii) a formal/robust distinction. Reflection on these will lead us to a second-order hybrid option with significant but ambiguous implications for univocity in metanormative theory. On one hand, against Parfit's pessimism it suggests an alternative, univocity-compatible explanation of why different philosophers are drawn to such radically different theories. But on the other hand, it also suggests a range of subtly but importantly different things that these theorists could be talking about under the label of "normativity", *despite* their shared interest in a single, cognitive kind of normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgment.

3.1 Abstract vs. Substantive

Before we can get to grips with the nature of "normativity" we need to observe an often overlooked distinction between *normative properties* and (the property of) *normativity*. To bring it into view, consider the question of what things are normative. "Normativity" can seem totally ubiquitous. Anything that is a (normative) reason can appropriately be called "normative", for example, and any kind of ordinary fact whatsoever can be a "normative reason" (e.g. a reason to believe something). Similarly, diverse properties can apparently be normative$_{\text{ont}}$, like the property of being painful, or of being what you were asked to do. However, we can distinguish between facts and properties that are *intrinsically* normative$_{\text{ont}}$ (or whose very nature it is to be normative$_{\text{ont}}$), and those that are only *extrinsically* normative$_{\text{ont}}$.[31] Extrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$ facts and properties are "normative" in virtue of either contingently or necessarily having properties that are intrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$. A reason to act, such as the fact that it's raining, is extrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$ because it has the intrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$ property of being a reason for some action, like opening your umbrella. Physical sensations of pain are extrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$ because they have the intrinsically normative$_{\text{ont}}$ property of being *bad*.

This means we need to distinguish between *three* levels of facts or properties. At the first level are the ordinary facts and properties that can be (e.g.) reasons, or valuable, or obligating: the extrinsically

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[30] Enoch 2011a: 105-9 (see also his references in n.27, and Huemer 2005: 94-5); for discussion see Laskowski 2017, ch. 3.

[31] This distinction is drawn in various terms; e.g. Schroeder 2007: 80, Parfit 2011: 278, Audi 2012: 171. It should not be confused with the familiar distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic *value*, which arises at the second level described below, rather than the third.

normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties. Cognitivists' claims that there are "normative" facts and properties are not usually about this level; what distinguishes cognitivists from noncognitivists is not their claims that some facts are "reasons", or that some properties are "valuable", but their recognition of properties like being-a-reason and goodness. At the second level are these special facts and properties—of what somebody ought to do, or of being a reason, goodness, etc.—which are intrinsically normative$_{ont}$. At the third level is the abstract property of normativity$_{ont}$ (being normative$_{ont}$) itself, the common feature of all the facts and properties of the second level (intrinsically) and the first level (extrinsically).

So cognitivists' claims about "normativity" are about this third-level property, right? Not so fast. Theorists commonly proceed straight from an analysis of (e.g.) what it is to be a reason, or an analysis of ought-facts, to the claim to have analyzed "normativity", or from the claim that the reason-relation or ought-facts are unanalyzable, to the claim that "normativity" is unanalyzable.[32] Many claims about "normativity" are clearly about the *second-level* facts and properties, i.e. about the things that are (intrinsically) normative$_{ont}$ like ought-facts, the reason relation, and the property of goodness, rather than about what it is to *be* normative$_{ont}$. (Occasionally, one comes across a particularly flat-footed identification of "normativity" with the first-level or extrinsically normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties, as in the claim that "normativity" is natural because things like pain and the fact it is raining are natural.)

This could be interpreted as a simple fallacy of conflation; failing to observe the difference between a property (normativity$_{ont}$), and that which has that property (the things that are normative$_{ont}$).[33] Perhaps more charitably, we might recognize it as a further form of regular polysemy in uses of 'normativity'. Nouns formed by nominalizing adjectives ('normative'→'normativity') are often ambiguous, used to refer either to the higher-order or *abstract* property P predicated by the adjective, or to any of a set of lower-order or *substantive*, P-making, properties (or tropes/property-instances). For example, we might identify the "nutritiousness" of a carrot substantively with its vitamin-A content and the "nutritiousness" of a potato substantively with its carbohydrate content, whereas the abstract property of nutritiousness, which the carrot and the potato share in virtue of their respective vitamin and carbohydrate content, is approximately the property of being disposed to promote a person's health when consumed.[34]

Use of 'normativity' (="normativeness") presents the same polysemous pattern. First-level normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties (e.g. the fact that it's raining, the property of being painful) have the abstract (third-level) property of normativity$_{ont}$ because they have second-level normative$_{ont}$ properties (e.g. being a reason to open your umbrella, being bad). Accordingly, 'normativity' is apt to be used in a substantive sense to refer to the second-level normative$_{ont}$ properties in virtue of which the first-level facts and

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[32] For a culprit I needn't look further than my own claims (e.g. Finlay 2010, 2014) to have analyzed "normativity" as *end-relational* on the basis of end-relational analyses of what it is to be *good*, a *reason*, etc.

[33] Cf. Parfit 2011: 329. This is, in fact, how G.E. Moore (1903) defines the "naturalistic fallacy": failing to distinguish the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication. Ironically, many contemporary nonnaturalists (as well as others) may be committing the naturalistic fallacy!

[34] Cf. Finlay 2001: 48f. Substantive uses or definitions of nouns are common in metanormative theory. For example, Judy Thomson (1996) identifies moral "goodness" with the various *ways* of being morally good, such as being generous, being just, etc. This could be interpreted as conflating a second-level property (goodness) with first-level (goodness-making) properties. See also Railton 1990 ('seaworthiness' analogy), Mackie 1977: 56.

properties are normative$_{ont}$. In the substantive sense, "normativity" would not strictly be a property, but rather something like a *kind* or *set* of properties, relations, etc., or a *domain* of reality: "the normative".[35] We can therefore distinguish a further dimension of ambiguity in the noun, between abstract and substantive senses:

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont-ab}$: The property of being normative$_{ont}$;
>
> NORMATIVITY$_{ont-sub}$: The properties (etc.) that are intrinsically normative$_{ont}$ ("the normative").

Recognizing such a polysemy only gets charity so far, however. It still seems we have to recognize widespread equivocation or confusion in metanormative theory. Notice that it doesn't necessarily follow from a fact or property at the second level (like goodness, or being-a-reason-for) having a certain property (like being analyzable, unanalyzable, natural, or nonnatural) that the property at the third level (normativity$_{ont-ab}$) also has that property, or vice versa. For example, nonnatural second-level properties, if there are any, can have the (arguably) natural third-level property of *being thought about by us*.

Conceivably, therefore, normative$_{ont-sub}$ properties like *being a reason* could be nonnatural while the property of normativity$_{ont-ab}$ is entirely natural, or vice versa. It is open to nonnaturalists about the reason-relation or value to identify normativity$_{ont-ab}$ as the property of *being the kind of property that agents look to in order to close their deliberations*, for example. This looks like an entirely natural third-level property, although it could conceivably be possessed only by nonnatural second-level properties. A rival suggestion is that to be "normative" is to *reduce to facts about reasons*,[36] which is clearly addressing normativity$_{ont}$ in the abstract sense. This would make normativity$_{ont-ab}$ a reductively analyzable property, but would presumably refer questions about its naturalness back down to the second-level issue concerning the naturalness of the reason-relation.

This possibility of "ticket-splitting" has not been recognized, to my knowledge, and even theorists who draw the distinction explicitly seem to assume without argument that the questions of naturalness and analyzability must have the same answer at both levels. Parfit himself may be a case in point. He objects to theories that analyze normative properties like *being-a-reason* as a natural property N that they face a fatal "lost property" problem, of explaining what it is that we would learn about N if we were to learn that N is the normative property of being-a-reason. A naturalist about reasons could reply that we learn that N has the property of normativity$_{ont-ab}$, or of being normative$_{ont}$; perhaps, for example, that N is a property that certain agents (or even Parfit himself) looks to in order to settle deliberation.[37]

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[35] Moltmann 2013 argues that nominalized adjectives (of the form 'F-ness') don't refer to abstract properties (of F) at all, but this seems to overlook their abstract uses.

[36] E.g. Hampton 1998: 115, Raz 1999: 67, Schroeder 2007: 79f.

[37] See also Copp 2007, 2012, who appears to infer immediately from normative$_{ont}$ properties being natural to normativity$_{ont-ab}$ being natural. On one page (2012: 26), he writes both that "the fundamental issue is whether the *normativity* of moral facts and properties can be understood naturalistically", and that "The arguments I consider…attack the thesis that *normative properties* are natural properties" (my emphases).

Observing this distinction presents us with a fork in the road. Should the problem of univocity in cognitivists' talk about "normativity" be understood in the abstract sense, or the substantive sense—or both? The various familiar positions, like nonnaturalism, subjectivist and objectivist naturalism, seem primarily to be theories of the nature of intrinsically normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties, i.e. of normativity$_{ont-sub}$. Privileging instead the abstract property of normativity$_{ont-ab}$ would make for strange bedfellows and an unfamiliar, topsy-turvy metanormative landscape where the self-described "nonnaturalist" David Enoch might be able to agree with self-described "naturalists" like David Copp (2012) and Laura and Francois Schroeter (ms) that "normativity" is reductively analyzable as the property of *being the kind of thing that agents look toward to close deliberation*, in opposition to the self-described "naturalist" Mark Schroeder and the self-described "nonnaturalists" Parfit and Tim Scanlon (1998) who might agree that it is the property of *reducing to facts about reasons*.[38] So the familiar battlelines drawn between cognitivists over the nature of "normativity" seem best interpreted, by and large, in terms of normativity$_{ont-sub}$, or the nature of intrinsically normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties. By comparison, the question of what normativity$_{ont-ab}$ is has drawn relatively little attention.

Despite revealing what looks like rampant equivocation over "normativity", observing this ambiguity may actually be a promising development for the propects of unity in metanormative theorizing. This is because even if the different theories of "normativity" in the substantive sense turn out to be about radically different facts and properties, they could still be unified by the common aim of describing those facts and properties, whichever they are, that have the further, third-level property of normativity$_{ont-ab}$ that theorists are largely assuming rather than analyzing. The radical differences between the camps could then be explained by divergence in opinion about which facts and properties those are. Of course, this hope hinges on different theorists assuming the *same* third-level property, which is possible even if they do or would endorse different official definitions of it, but we have yet to identify decisive evidence for or against this. I take up this issue below.

3.2   Formal vs. Robust Normativity

The way forward may seem clear. In section 2.3, I suggested that what unifies cognitivists and noncognitivists is a common interest in a particular kind of judgment we all make. What unifies all cognitivists against noncognitivists, I provisionally suggested, is the view that these are representational judgments, about normative$_{ont}$ properties and facts. So we might suppose that univocity can be secured by defining normativity$_{ont-ab}$ as normativity$_{ont-judg-rep}$: the property, whatever it might be, shared by all and only the facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about,[39] and by defining normativity$_{ont-sub}$ as the facts and properties that have this property intrinsically. However, I will now argue that matters aren't so straightforward. The difficulty will emerge from reflection on a further, much-discussed ambiguity in talk about "normativity", between *robust* and *formal* senses.

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[38] I'm not claiming that these theorists all accept these analyses of normativity$_{ont-ab}$, merely that they are broadly consistent with what they say.

[39] This picks out normativity$_{ont-ab}$ by a *fourth*-level property it possesses, leaving open the intrinsic nature of the third-level property, and allowing theorists to pick it out by their own, idiosyncratic concepts.

Cognitivists encounter difficulties in identifying the object of their investigations, normativity$_{ont}$ (whether abstract or substantive) to others in uncontroversial terms, due to the lack of agreement over its nature. These difficulties are particularly acute for nonnaturalists, since they deny that "normativity" can be analyzed, defined, or explained in "nonnormative" terms. Attempts to pick it out therefore generally rely on either the mention (in language-based ostensions) or use (in judgment-based ostensions) of normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ language: "normativity" is the special property or domain of what "ought to", "should", "must", or "may" be, or of "obligation", "right" and "wrong", "correct" and "incorrect", "value", "good" and "bad", or—the present favorite—of "reasons".[40] Allan Gibbard identifies the target by reference to "a circle of ought-like terms", for example, and Mark Schroeder defines it as what is reducible to "reasons".[41]

Inconveniently however, at least much of this normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ vocabulary turns out to be apparently ambiguous. As John Broome puts it,

> I could not explain the term 'normative' except in terms of 'ought'. 'Normative' means 'to do with ought', but this ought has to be a normative one, of course. So this definition gets us nowhere if we cannot already identify the normative ought. I simply have to assume you know a normative ought when you meet one. (2013: 10)

There are ordinary uses of 'ought', 'must', 'may', 'should', 'obligation', 'right', 'wrong', 'correct', 'incorrect', 'value', 'good' and 'bad' that apparently describe facts and properties that most nonnaturalists readily allow are naturalistic and reductively analyzable (e.g. Parfit 2011: 308), and subjectivists readily allow are nonpsychological. For example, "oughts" of etiquette, "right" answers to exam questions, "good" moves in chess, and (more controversially) legal "obligations". Philosophers therefore commonly deny that these statements are about the normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties that are the objects of their metanormative investigations.

One might think the quarry can be identified, extensionally if not helpfully, as what the *normative* uses of 'ought', 'right', 'good', 'value', etc. are about. The need for a general term to capture this "fugitive thought" eluding our grasp in ordinary normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ language may be a primary motivation for theorists largely abandoning talk of "value", "obligation", etc. since the 1970s in favor of 'normativity' as a term of art. But if so the move has been an ironic failure, because today exactly the same distinction is observed for the term 'normative' itself. As Broome continues,

> The terminology in this area is confusing because so many words have both normative and nonnormative senses. Even the word 'normative' has a nonnormative (in my sense) sense. (2013: 11)

This distinction is marked with various terminology; here I'll adopt the relatively theory-neutral labels of *formal* versus *robust* normativity$_{ont}$.[42] "Mere" formal normativity$_{ont}$ is said to be ubiquitous (found in

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[40] This is not to say it is insoluble; I proposed a solution above in terms of *normativity$_{ont-judg-rep}$*.

[41] 'Ought' is also favored in Broome 2013, while 'reason' is also favored in Raz 1999, Parfit 2011, Scanlon 1998.

[42] McPherson 2011. Formal normativity has also been labeled 'rule-implying' (Parfit 2011), 'pseudo', 'institutional' (Joyce 2001), and 'generic' (Copp 2007) while robust normativity has been labeled 'reason-implying' (Parfit 2011), 'genuine' (Joyce 2001), 'true' (Broome 2013), and 'authoritative' (Copp 2007), inter alia.

law, etiquette, games, shopping lists, and more), naturalistic, nonsubjective, but also of little philosophical interest. Robust normativity$_{ont}$ is said to be the important kind of normativity$_{ont}$ of special interest to ethics, epistemology, and other branches of "normative" philosophy.

Some theorists think this ambiguity problem can be solved by identifying a special subset of normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ vocabulary that is unambiguously robust, lacking any formal sense. 'Reason' has been the most popular candidate. Parfit, for example, distinguishes robust normativity as "reason-implying" from formal normativity as "rule-implying". I think this attempt to disambiguate "normativity" fails to cut the phenomena at its joints. We can legitimately talk about merely "institutional" *reasons*, such as legal reasons, or reasons of chess,[43] and some domains of allegedly robust normativity, like morality, seem to imply robustly normative *rules* like the Categorical Imperative or the Principle of Utility. This claim might be rejected, or a theorist might appeal to some other normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ word instead.[44] While the jury is still out on this strategy, I'll sketch an alternative way of looking at the relationship between formal and robust normativity, one which treats the parallel vocabularies as an important datum to be explained rather than a problem to be circumnavigated or explained away.[45] My goal is not to establish that this view is correct (although I believe it is), but to show how it greatly complicates the task of defining normativity$_{ont}$.

Are formal and robust normativity$_{ont}$ both forms of "normativity" in the same sense? Or do the qualifiers here function to disambiguate different senses of a word, as in "river banks and financial banks"? The parallel vocabularies are a strong reason to think the former.[46] But this prompts a second question: what kind of adjectives are the labels 'formal' and 'robust' here? In particular, do they function *subsectively*? (An adjective A is subsective just in case being an A N entails being an N.) For example, 'formal' might function *anti*-subsectively like 'fake' (or *non*-subsectively like 'alleged'), in which case even if there is one common meaning of 'normativity' at issue, formal normativity isn't really (or necessarily) normativity at all. We could then presume that 'robust' is *exhaustively* subsective, and equivalent to 'true' or 'genuine' (e.g. Broome 2013); all normativity would then be robust normativity. Or 'formal' might function subsectively, so that formal and robust normativity are each subclasses of normativity$_{ont}$ in a general and common sense.

Many theorists are attracted to the former, anti- or non-subsective views. Among legal philosophers, for example, it is a popular idea that legal "normativity" (abstract) consists in law as such necessarily

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[43] E.g. Joyce 2001, Finlay 2006, Enoch 2011b, McPherson forthcoming. A certain chess move might be a *good* move because it is likely to provoke one's opponent into a rash response, which is a *reason* to make it, but doesn't obviously imply any *rule*. Similarly, some philosophers acknowledge the existence of *moral reasons* while denying they are necessarily robustly normative; e.g. Finlay 2006, Copp 2007.

[44] For example, 'rational', 'matters', or 'important'. For discussion, see Finlay 2006, 2014: 252f; cf. Korsgaard 1996: 42-4.

[45] A speculative diagnosis: (1) The original sense of 'normative'/'normativity' was the formal one, as suggested by etymology (from 'norm'). (2) Moral philosophers, interested in a particular (robust) subset of formally normative judgments, began using the adjective 'normative' to distinguish these from ordinary, "descriptive" judgments, then (3) in the late 1970s started using the noun 'normativity' derivatively in a new, robust (abstract) sense, intending to refer to a property shared by the objects of those robust judgments that previously lacked a clear label.

[46] Note also that drawing the distinction doesn't seem awkward without repeating the noun; compare 'formal and robust normativity' (natural) with 'river and financial banks' (odd).

purporting to be genuinely (or robustly) normative.[47] However, this view faces difficulties. It is controversial even in the philosophy of law, and seems much less plausible for other instances of "formal normativity", such as games like chess and football, grocery lists, or exam rubrics. (Is calling an exam answer "wrong" really to pretend or allege that it is "robustly" prohibited?) Additionally, there are popular and plausible analyses of what it *is* to be formally normative which make it out to be something real rather than fake or putative. It's commonly and plausibly said that what it is for something to be "formally normative" is just for it to provide a standard, rule, or norm—in the etymologically original senses of *yardstick*, *ruler*, or *builder's square*—against which other things can be compared.[48] So for example, a code of laws describes a set of (ideal) behaviors, against which actual behavior can be compared, and a shopping list describes a set of possible purchases, against which actual purchases can be compared. Formal normativity$_{\text{ont-ab}}$ would then be roughly *norm-relativity*.

Along such lines, in my own work I have claimed to provide a reductively naturalistic, objectivist analysis of "normativity" (in a substantive sense) as consisting in *end-relational* properties of increasing/ decreasing the probability of some outcome or "end", and *rule-relational* properties of conforming/ nonconforming with some proposition or "rule".[49] I subsume these with what Kant called "hypothetical imperatives of skill", or claims about what has to happen in order that some outcome obtains. This invites the objection that my account is about the wrong kind or sense of normativity$_{\text{ont}}$.[50] Other self-described cognitivists, like nonnaturalists and subjectivists, are interested in *robust* normativity$_{\text{ont-sub}}$, or what our normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgments are (apparently) about. So Parfit's pessimistic conclusion might seem partially vindicated: at least one of his supposed cognitivist opponents isn't talking about "normativity" in the same sense at all.

However, this conclusion may be too hasty. I have advanced my claims about "normativity" in full awareness of the formal/robust distinction, and that my fellow metanormative theorists are typically interested only in the latter. My reductivist, objectivist claims about "normativity" are based on the belief that "robustly normative" judgments and expressions are about exactly the *same kind* of facts and properties as "formally normative" judgments and expressions. So these are intended as claims about (substantive) normativity$_{\text{ont-judg-rep}}$, the facts and properties that normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgments are about, which we were supposing to be the common object of cognitivist theories.[51]

This view might seem absurd: surely there is a clear difference between formal and robust normativity$_{\text{ont}}$! I agree, at least, that there is a clear difference between mere judgments about formal normativity$_{\text{ont-sub}}$, such as many ordinary judgments about the requirements of law, games, and etiquette, and (robustly) normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgments, such as (perhaps) those about the requirements of

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[47] E.g. Raz 1979; for extension to formal normativity generally, see Wodak ms. Within the philosophy of law it is disputed whether legal normativity as such is formal or robust; for some recent discussion see Enoch 2011b, Plunkett & Shapiro forthcoming.

[48] See especially Railton 2003: 322-3; cf. Copp 2007: 267.

[49] For my account of end-relational normativity$_{\text{ont-sub}}$, see (e.g.) Finlay 2006, 2009, 2010, 2014. For rule-relational normativity$_{\text{ont-sub}}$, see Finlay & Plunkett forthcoming.

[50] Cf. Dowell 2016. This might be attributed to my focusing on (ambiguous) normative$_{\text{lang-exp-judg}}$ *language*, as opposed to normative$_{\text{judg-ost}}$ judgments; cf. Gregory 2015: 2.

[51] See Woods 2017 for a detailed account of formal normativity along similar lines.

morality or rationality.[52] But it doesn't follow that those judgments are about different kinds of facts and properties. Here we may recall the noncognitivists' views about what distinguishes a judgment as normative$_{judg-ost}$, and the availability of a (second-order) hybrid theory of this. Perhaps what distinguishes a judgment as robustly normative is not merely what it is about, but also some other, nonrepresentational property it has.

For concreteness, I'll just assume my own preferred view here: that robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are distinguished from nonrobust judgments about normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties by *being made from a relevantly motivated perspective*.[53] A judgment with end-relational content (concerning the probability of some outcome) is "robust" in case the judge contemporaneously desires the end in question, and a judgment with rule-relational content (concerning what conforms with some general proposition), such as a legal judgment, is "robust" in case she contemporaneously accepts the rule in question as a guide to conduct. In Parfit's *Burning Hotel* scenario, for example, there is apparently no deliberation or question over whether to live or die; the goal of living is simply assumed. Within this deliberative context, the judgment "[In order to live], I ought to jump!" qualifies as robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$. On this view, an amoralist's "moral judgments" would be "merely formal" judgments— despite possibly having the same *content* as the moral judgments of ordinary people[54]—while the committed mafioso's judgments of familial obligation are robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments. I'll call this kind of hybrid view of normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments a *perspectivist* account, tipping my hat to Nietzsche.

I reiterate that my purpose in introducing perspectivism here is not to establish it as correct (although I believe it is), but rather to explore what recognizing this overlooked part of theoretical space implies about the univocity of metanormative theory. It is worth noting, however, that the option has far more explanatory power on the hypothesis that it is correct. I also believe it escapes at least most of the objections that have been directed against other views.

3.3   A Perspectivist Diagnosis of Metanormative Disagreement

According to perspectivism, metanormative theorists are unified by interest in a kind of judgments that exist, and can be properly understood, only within the two-dimensional space generated by the twin axes of subjective psychology or motivation, and objective world. This gives perspectivism the resources to explain why different theorists could have come to such starkly opposed views of a common subject matter: each of the positions correctly perceives part of the phenomenon but fails to see the whole, and so goes wrong in trying to analyze something essentially two-dimensional in just a single dimension, as depicted in the table below. Furthermore, each camp is sensitive to the errors committed by their

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[52] Similarly, this doesn't identify robust normativity$_{ont-ab}$ (being robustly normative) with formal normativity$_{ont-ab}$ (being formally normative).
[53] For similar views, see references in note 27.
[54] Cf. Tresan 2006, Finlay 2004.

opponents, which, given ignorance of the perspectivist alternative, serves to further strengthen their conviction that their own views must be correct.[55]

			Recognizes Cognitive Dimension?		
			Yes		No
Recognizes Noncognitive Dimension?	Yes		Perspectivism		Noncognitivism
	No		Recognizes Content is Nonpsychological?		
			Yes	No	
	Sensitive to Noncognitive Dimension/ Robustness?	Yes	Nonnaturalism Error Theory	Subjectivism	
		No	Obj. Naturalism		

Fig 1.: *What Makes a Judgment Robustly Normative?*

From this vantage-point, *noncognitivism* is explained as the result of recognizing the noncognitive dimension of robust normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgment (e.g. that they are made from a motivated perspective), but—perhaps blinded by this insight—missing the cognitive dimension, of what those judgments are about. As Parfit complains against Gibbard, normative judgment isn't a matter of arbitrary choice or preference, but (in part) of discovering antecedently existing facts (2011: 386f, 408).

Objectivist naturalism, whether of neo-Aristotelian (e.g. Foot 2001, Thomson 2008) or non-Aristotelian (e.g. Copp 2007, Finlay 2014) forms, is explained as a result of recognizing both the cognitive dimension and (broadly) the essentially nonpsychological nature of its content (what robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about), but perhaps failing to sufficiently heed the (noncognitive) difference between robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments and mere judgments of formally normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties.[56] Hence the charge commonly leveled against such views, that they have left out the "normativity" altogether. As Parfit approvingly quotes Darwall, "For the philosophical naturalist, concerned to place normativity within the natural order, there is nothing plausible for normative force to be other than motivational force" (2011: 363).

Subjectivist naturalism, whether Humean or Kantian, can be explained as a result of sensitivity to the (noncognitive) dimension that differentiates robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments from mere judgments of formal normativity$_{ont}$, as well as recognition of the cognitive dimension, but failing to recognize that these are two separate dimensions, and therefore misinterpreting the noncognitive dimension in terms of cognitive content, incorrectly analyzed in psychological terms (psychologistic fallacy). As Parfit complains against his subjectivist opponents like Williams, Darwall, Korsgaard, and Schroeder,

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[55] For example, Parfit never addressed a theory of this kind, to my knowledge.
[56] Although my own work has been informed by the difference, I have often ignored it when making claims about "normativity", assuming the concept of *normativity*$_{ont-judg-rep}$.

normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments simply aren't about anybody's psychological attitudes or dispositions, actual or counterfactual, or what satisfies them.[57]

Nonnaturalism, finally, can be explained as also being sensitive to both dimensions though failing to distinguish them, but also recognizing that the content is nonpsychological, and as a result misinterpreting the specially robust character of these judgments in terms of their being *about* something of a special robust character (projective fallacy).[58] Also recognizing that no other kind of ordinary, natural property is such that being about it would be sufficient to give normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments their special robust character, nonnaturalists mistakenly but understandably conclude that these judgments must be about special, *nonnatural* properties, the implausible mysteriousness of which encourages *error theorists* to maintain that all positive normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are untrue.

Perspectivism therefore provides an alternative explanation of how metanormative theorists could come to such starkly different views, one that has promise to rescue us from Parfit's pessimism about the unity of metanormative debate. However, once we return to address explicitly what cognitivists might mean by (abstract or substantive) "normativity", the case for ambiguity is bolstered. For this two-dimensional, perspectivist view on normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgment brings to light a large number of alternative things that these different theorists might reasonably mean by 'normativity'. Rather than dismissing the various camps as mistaken about the nature of "normativity", we might rather identify different concepts they could be using on the basis of their sensitivity to different parts of the complex phenomenon of normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgment as understood by the perspectivist.[59]

3.4   The Many Possible Faces of Normativity

Start with the concept we introduced above (separated into substantive and abstract senses);

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep\text{-}sub}$: The facts and properties that normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are about.

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep\text{-}ab}$: The property shared by all and only the kinds of facts and properties that normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are about.

According to perspectivism, objectivist naturalism (of the kind advocated in my own work) provides the correct account of normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep\text{-}sub}$, which turns out to be exactly the same kind of facts and properties that merely "formally normative" judgments are about. So if nonnaturalists (like Parfit) and subjectivists are employing the same effective definition in their talk about "normativity", as I hypothesized above, then their metanormative claims are false. They err about the nature of normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep}$ because they wrongly attribute the special character of their (robust) normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments to it. Of course, they would deny that they are talking about "mere formal normativity".

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[57] 2011: 324f, 431f. See also Dancy 2005, Enoch 2011a.

[58] Perspectivism also offers a potential explanation of many nonnaturalists' barely comprehensible *quietist* claims that "normativity" exists/ is a property, but not in any "ontological" sense (Parfit 2011, Scanlon 2014), as a confused attempt to reconcile the facts that (i) robustly normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are about a particular kind of facts and properties, but (ii) there *is no property* of robust normativity$_{ont}$.

[59] For similar speculation, see McPherson & Plunkett ms.

But this would be mistaken, just like somebody who wonders "what is this stuff?" upon encountering ice for the first time denying they were talking about "mere" water or H_2O.[60] According to nonnaturalists and subjectivists, on the other hand, perspectivism errs about normativity$_{ont-judg-rep}$ because it wrongly attributes this difference to an alleged noncognitive or nonrepresentational property of normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments.[61]

However, there is some evidence that the "robustness" of the property itself may be nonnegotiable for at least some cognitivists' concept of "normativity". For example, some nonnaturalists declare that either "normativity" is irreducible, or else it doesn't exist at all (Parfit 2011: 267). These claims might simply reflect what (from the perspectivist's point of view) is the nonnaturalists' mistake, but they could instead point towards other, more discriminating effective definitions. For example, sometimes nonnaturalists—together with *error theorists* about "normativity"[62]—seem to employ concepts along the following lines:

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-robust-sub}$: The facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about, in virtue of which they are (robustly) normative$_{judg-ost}$.

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-robust-ab}$: The property shared by all and only the facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about, in virtue of which they are they (robustly) normative$_{judg-ost}$.

Or alternatively, a directly ostensive ontological definition:

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont-ost-robust}$: *That* property (ostending a "robust" property being cognized, perceived, or imagined).

In either case, the perspectivist will conclude that the projective fallacy infects the very concepts that nonnaturalists are employing, and that "normativity" in the nonnaturalists' substantive sense neither exists, nor (contra the error theorists) is what our ordinary normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about.[63]

Now consider the subjectivists. They could conceivably be employing any of the effective definitions already surveyed in this section. In this case, perspectivism agrees with nonnaturalists like Parfit that subjectivist theories are in error, on the grounds that whatever normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about (and whether or not it also explains their robustness), it isn't generally something psychological. Parfit doubts that anybody with his concept of (robust) normativity$_{ont}$ could reasonably believe it to be psychological, and so charity leads him to pessimism about a common object of inquiry between himself and subjectivists like Williams, Darwall, Korsgaard, and Schroeder.[64] Perspectivism casts helpful light

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[60] For discussion of such opacity in normative thought and language, see Copp 2012, Laskowski 2017.

[61] The most pressing worry might be that perspectivism, like noncognitivism, cannot adequately account for practices of wondering or deliberating about final ends or intrinsic value (e.g. Olson 2011). See Finlay 2014: 204 for brief discussion. It also must deal with the contextualist's/relativist's well-known problem with normative disagreement; for my response (just one of many) see Finlay 2014: ch. 8.

[62] A once-rare but increasingly popular position; e.g. Biehl 2008, Streumer 2017, Bakka 2015.

[63] Perhaps there is a corresponding abstract property, but if so it would be uninstantiated.

[64] E.g. Parfit 2011: 294.

here too. For it implies that whenever somebody makes a first-personal normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgment (e.g. about what she herself has a reason to do, or ought to do)[65], the propositional content of that judgment is true if and only if the object of judgment has a corresponding *subjective* property: roughly, a property of being instrumentally related to the satisfaction of a desire of the agent. Furthermore, according to perspectivism this subjective property may be the *only* property that is tracked by all first-personal normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments as a kind, since different judgments are about different properties (as relevant to different motivated perspectives). It would therefore be understandable that a theorist might identify substantive normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep}$ (what normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are about) or substantive normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep\text{-}robust}$ (the facts and properties they are about in virtue of which they are robust) with this subjective property—even though this would be an error because, as nonnaturalists insist, normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are nonetheless not *about* such subjective properties.

While this provides a possible explanation of how theories as different as nonnaturalism (Parfit) and subjectivism (Williams) could be aimed at exactly the same object—and even by means of the same concepts—it *also* reveals how subjectivists' claims about "normativity" could be about a subtly but importantly different property or domain. Perhaps subjectivists are not using any of the above concepts at all, but rather a concept like

> NORMATIVITY$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}relation}$: The relation that obtains between an agent and an action iff a first-personal, robustly normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgment about that agent and that action would be true.[66]

According to perspectivism there is indeed such a relation, and a subjectivist or instrumentalist theory of it is correct (for first-person judgments, at least)—although subjectivists are mistaken if they claim that this is what normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are *about*. Nonnaturalists could also be employing this concept too, but if so then (the perspectivist will think) the nonnaturalists' claims about normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}relation}$ are false.[67]

Once we recognize a concept of normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}relation}$, we will also need to recognize additional, related concepts, and potential further polysemies in talk about "normativity". Consider what a subjectivist might then mean by talk about "normative" facts and properties. Presumably, a fact or property would be "normative" in a relevant sense if and only if it stands in this relation to some agent. So "normativity", understood as the abstract property of being "normative" in this sense, will not be the relation itself, but the *relational property* of standing in this relation to some agent or subject. Or more precisely, 'normativity' will be an essentially relativistic or context-sensitive term, like 'tall' or 'big', referring to any of a whole family of relational properties: something could be *normative/normativity-*

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[65] The significance of this restriction to first-personal judgments will be taken up below.

[66] This interpretation is consistent, for example, with the way Mark Schroeder (2007: 1) introduces his subjectivist theory of reasons, in terms of the psychological difference between Ronnie who has a reason to go to a party, and Bradley who doesn't.

[67] Something like this is presumably what Parfit has in mind when he says that he understands what Williams means (by a "reason"), but that it isn't what he means (2011: 271).

relative-to-s₁, or *normative/normativity-relative-to-s₂*, etc., but nothing would ever be *normative-simpliciter*.[68] So we have:

NORMATIVITY-RELATIVE-TO-S: The property of standing in the relation of normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}relation}$ to s.

If there is such a relation as normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}relation}$, which is tracked by our (first-personal, robust) normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments, then why *not* think that this is normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep}$, or what our normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are about? An answer arises from considering what the extension of the relevant class of judgments is. While the central paradigms of normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are first-personal judgments, concerning what "I" have a reason or ought to do, etc., I don't know anybody who denies that there are second- and third-personal "robustly normative" judgments, e.g. about what "you", "he", or "they" ought to do. But this introduces a significant complication, because these judgments can be motivationally "internal" or "external" in two fundamentally different ways, corresponding to the two dimensions distinguished by perspectivism.[69] A judgment could be about normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties that stand in an internal relation either to the specified *agent's* desires or agency ("agent-internalism"), or to the *judge's* desires or agency ("judge/speaker-internalism").

First-personal "robust" normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments are internal both to the judge and to the agent, being one and the same individual, whereas paradigmatic judgments of "merely formal normativity" are external both to the judge and to the agent. Taking first-personal normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments as one's paradigm of robust normativity therefore conceals the fundamental dilemma that faces us here in trying to define (robust) "normativity". This dilemma comes into view when we consider second- and third-personal judgments, in which agent-relativity and judge-relativity can come apart. Which kind of internality determines a judgment as being of the relevantly "robust" or normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ type?

By attributing the robustness of normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments to their tracking or being about a partly psychological relationship between the agent and the action, subjectivists commit themselves to denying that any judge-internal judgment about normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties is a normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgment if it isn't also agent-internal. This gets subjectivists into trouble, with their opponents (nonnaturalists, noncognitivists, and others) objecting that second- and third-personal *moral* judgments are "robustly normative" yet also *categorical*, their truth-value being independent of any instrumental relationship to the agent's desires or agency. Perspectivism understands these objections as a result of privileging instead the judge-internal relation, and classifying a judgment as "robustly normative" only if it is internally related to the judge's own desires or agency (even if nonnaturalists misinterpret it due to

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[68] This shouldn't be confused with the relation of *being-a-reason-for*. Looking beyond first-personal judgments, it allows for reasons *for s₁* that are normative-relative-to-*s₂* but not normative-relative-to-*s₁*. For example, reasons for Hitler not to commit genocide might be normative-relative-to-us, but not normative-relative-to-him (cf. Finlay 2006). This account also shouldn't be confused with a "constructivism" that analyzes F's being "normative-relative-to-*s*" in purely psychological terms of *s*'s *taking* F to be normative (e.g. Street 2008), any more than x's being "to-the-left-relative-to-s" can be analyzed in terms of *s*'s *believing* x to be to the left. Rather, "s₁ believes that p is a normative reason for s₂ to φ relative-to-s₃" is parallel to "s₁ believes that x is to the left of s₂ relative-to-s₃".

[69] This point is widely observed; e.g. Dreier 1990, Harman 1996.

the projective fallacy). Here perspectivism agrees with the noncognitivists: this relation lies wholly on the dimension of motivated perspective, rather than that of cognitive content.[70]

Perhaps, then, subjectivists really are employing a different concept of "robust normativity"? If so, then the perspectivist will think that they should stand their ground and insist that morality indeed isn't necesssarily "normative" (e.g. that Hitler may not have had any genuinely "normative" reason not to engage in genocide)[71], explaining away the indignant reactions such claims provoke as results of misunderstanding their (nonendorsing) sense of "normative". We can grant that there were *exceptionally good* reasons for Hitler not to engage in genocide, even if these weren't normative-relative-to-Hitler. However, subjectivists sometimes respond to this kind of objection by instead trying to accommodate the "normativity" of moral judgments by denying that they really are agent-external— a move which typically strikes their opponents as desperate and implausible. This perceived need to accommodate the "normativity" of morality may be evidence that they are at least in part concerned to capture a kind of robustness which is in fact agent-external.[72]

Since there are no facts and properties that all and only these judge-internal judgments are about (different judges being related in this way to different sets of formally normative$_{ont}$ facts and properties), and no special "normative" property shared by all the facts and properties in this (empty) set, this implies that no property of "robust normativity" along these lines, such as normativity$_{ont\text{-}judg\text{-}rep\text{-}robust\text{-}ab}$, is ever instantiated. So we might conclude that the only robust kind of "normativity" to be found in the world is the noncognitivist's notion of normativity$_{funct}$: the nonrepresentational, purely psychological property (or properties) of normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments and normative$_{lang\text{-}exp\text{-}judg}$ language. However, there is at least one further possibility. We might still make sense of talk about "robustly normative facts and properties" by construing 'normative' as itself a (robustly) normative$_{lang\text{-}exp\text{-}judg}$ term.[73] This would be to adopt a *quasi-realist* concept of normativity$_{ont}$, which could be defined, in the expressivist's "sideways-on" style, roughly as follows:

> NORMATIVITY$_{quasi\text{-}ont}$:   To apply this concept to some facts or properties involves having or expressing a favorable attitude towards them.

So for example, judging a fact F to be a normative$_{quasi\text{-}ont}$ reason to do A might be to approve of weighing F in favor of doing A.

This quasi-realist concept of "normativity" is presumably different from the concept that the subjectivist employs in claiming that "normativity" is always relative to or dependent on the relevant agent's desires. That is, unless the subjectivist happens (unusually and perversely) to approve of agents always acting in ways that instrumentally serve the agent's own desires, even if, for example, the desires in

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[70] This contrasts with unpopular *judge*-subjectivism (not to be confused with the *agent*-subjectivism under discussion here) that analyzes normative$_{judg\text{-}ost}$ judgments as *introspectively* psychological; e.g. Westermarck 1932, Jackson 2008.

[71] Harman 1973; see also Foot 1972, Joyce 2001.

[72] E.g. Schroeder 2007 (cf. Parfit 2011: 361). Another response is to "democratize" subjectivism (Manne 2016), allowing that *any* agent's desires are "normative" for any agent.

[73] E.g. Gibbard 2003.

question are genocidal.[74] However, as Gibbard points out (2003: 184f), the concept of normativity$_{quasi\text{-}ont}$ does a reasonable job of modeling the claims of nonnaturalists, who unlike subjectivists generally describe a fact, property, or consideration as "normative" only if they approve of an agent's being guided by it. So it could be argued that the metanormative claims of nonnaturalists like Parfit actually employ the concept of normativity$_{quasi\text{-}ont}$, attributing their disavowals of noncognitivism either to a lack of self-understanding,[75] or to their metanormative claims being aimed at primarily practical rather than theoretical effect (i.e. "bullshitting"). In addition to being highly uncharitable, however, this interpretation is at odds with nonnaturalists' claims that "normativity" isn't a natural property, rather predicting identifications of "normativity" with whatever natural properties the theorist favors as a basis for decision. More plausibly, therefore, nonnaturalists employ genuinely cognitivist concepts of the "normativity" of facts and properties, of one or another of the kinds surveyed above.

4   Conclusion

What do philosophers mean by 'normative' and 'normativity', and can the univocity of metanormative theory be saved? I first argued that univocity between cognitivists' and noncognitivists' talk about "normative" thought and language could plausibly be secured by an ostensive, judgment-focused concept. Plausibly, all metanormative theorists are united by interest in a common kind of judgment we all make. I then asked whether univocity in claims about the "normativity" of facts and properties between different kinds of cognitivists could be secured by a derivative concept, concerning what those normative judgments were about. My findings here were more ambiguous. First, I showed how a perspectivist, hybrid theory of normative judgments offers an explanation of how philosophers could come to such radically different views on this common subject-matter, potentially saving us from Parfit's pessimism about metanormative theory. But second, I showed how from this point of view we could alternatively distinguish a range of interrelated though different things that these theorists could plausibly mean by 'normativity'—which would save the truth of many of their superficially conflicting claims, but at the expense of implying that many metanormative debates do indeed involve us talking past each other.   One way of looking at this is that metanormative theory is centrally concerned with a complex network of interrelated properties and relations, and the words 'normative' and 'normativity' are commonly used, polysemously, to pick out different parts of this network by different theorists and at different times—as I have concluded that I myself have done. My hope is that this investigation helps advance metanormative debate by aiding the disambiguation of different claims about "normativity" and thereby the avoidance of equivocations and mere verbal disputes.[76]

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[74] Although the implication that they do arguably lies behind the perceived outrageousness of subjectivist claims about (e.g.) what normative reasons monsters like Hitler might have.

[75] Parfit concedes that he "cannot exclude the possibility" (2011: 272).

[76] For helpful comments and discussion I am grateful to David Copp, Jerry Hull, Nick Laskowski, Neil Mehta, David Plunkett, Mark Schroeder, Bart Streumer, Kevin Toh, Jack Woods, and participants of the Yale Law and Metaethics Workshop in 2015 and a meeting of the Princeton Workshop on Normative Philosophy in 2017. I owe special thanks to Derek Parfit for awakening me from this particular dogmatic slumber. I deeply regret the loss of the opportunity to hear his reactions.

Glossary of Definitions:

NORMATIVE$_{ont}$: (As of facts and properties); Having a property P of some special kind.

NORMATIVE$_{rep}$: (As of expressions and judgments); Being about something normative$_{ont}$.

NORMATIVE$_{funct}$: (As of expressions or judgments); Having the nonrepresentational function(s) F.

NORMATIVE$_{lang/judg-ost}$: (As of expressions/judgments); Having the common property of samples n_1, n_2, …

NORMATIVE$_{lang-exp-judg}$: (As of language); Having the property of being conventionally used to express normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments.

NORMATIVE$_{ont-judg-rep}$: Having the property P that is common to all and only the kinds of facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments (and normative$_{lang-exp-judg}$ expressions) are about.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-ab}$: The property of being normative$_{ont}$.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-sub}$: The properties (etc.) that are intrinsically normative$_{ont}$ ("the normative").

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-sub}$: The facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-ab}$: The property shared by all and only the kinds of facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-robust-sub}$: The facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about, in virtue of which they are (robustly) normative$_{judg-ost}$.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-rep-robust-ab}$: The property shared by all and only the facts and properties that normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgments are about, in virtue of which they are they (robustly) normative$_{judg-ost}$.

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-ost-robust}$: *That* property (ostending a "robust" property being cognized, perceived, or imagined).

NORMATIVITY$_{ont-judg-relation}$: The relation that obtains between an agent and an action iff a first-personal, robustly normative$_{judg-ost}$ judgment about that agent and that action would be true.

NORMATIVITY-RELATIVE-TO-S: The property of standing in the relation of normativity$_{ont-judg-reason}$ to s.

NORMATIVITY$_{quasi-ont}$: To apply this concept to some facts or properties is to have or express a favorable attitude towards them.

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