Ralph Wedgwood, *The Nature of Normativity*

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As an intersection of philosophy of language and mind, metaphysics, epistemology, and even logic, metaethics promises to offer a rich and varied discussion of the foundations of normative theory. All too often, this potential remains unrealised, with many metaethicists ignoring new and significant work in neighbouring fields or presenting weak or abbreviated accounts of semantics, ontology, or justification. By contrast, Ralph Wedgwood's *The Nature of Normativity* takes an 'aggressively *intersubdisciplinary*' approach, combining 'ideas from all these different subfields of philosophy into a single unified theory' (p. vii).

Wedgwood targets nearly every prominent metaethical account in the last decade: expressivism or noncognitivism, as developed by Allan Gibbard and Simon Blackburn; the 'conceptual analysis' method of Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit, and Michael Smith; constructivist accounts, such as Christine Korsgaard's; the Cornell moral realism of Nicholas Sturgeon, David Brink, and Richard Boyd; and the 'quietism' of John McDowell and Derek Parfit. In response, he defends a version of conceptual role semantics according to which the meaning or semantic value of normative concepts is the *regulative* role those concepts play in practical reasoning—namely, maximizing one's expectations of being correct with respect to a body of naturalistically irreducible normative facts.

Wedgwood's account spans impressive ground, and a full summary is beyond the scope of this review. Instead, one might attend to four central claims in *The Nature of Normativity*.

First, Wedgwood argues that normative discourse is thoroughly disciplined. Speakers aim to comply with standards of justification and warrantedness, including consistency, valid inference, and entailment from one 'winning' statement to another. 'It is surely highly plausible,' Wedgwood claims, 'that the only property of sentences that has all these features is *truth*' (p. 54). On his view, this truth–conditional theory is superior to expressivism at explaining the features of normative discourse.

Second, Wedgwood defends an account of Normative Judgment Internalism (NJI) according to which any rational agent who judges 'I ought to φ' necessarily intends to φ.

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NJI counts against quietist approaches that claim it is a mistake to ask for substantive explanation of the meaning of normative terms. It also counts against Cornell moral realism and the conceptual analysis method for normative statements, since both rely on a causal theory of reference that, according to Wedgwood, 'does not pay enough attention to the distinctive *role* that normative concepts play in *thought*' (p. 78).

Third, the nature of any normative concept is defined both by conditions of *correctness* (which determine the concept's semantic value) and basic principles that specify which uses of the concept are *rational* (which determine its cognitive significance). Wedgwood claims this rationalist factualism undermines constructivist views that deny there is a procedure for answering normative questions that reaches correct answers, not because of the intrinsic character of the procedure, but because the answer corresponds to normative truth or fact.

Fourth, since the (rational) nature of the mental is essentially normative, Wedgwood opposes any attempt to reduce either to purely naturalistic facts or properties. '[I]f there is any reduction of either the normative or the intentional, it would have to take the form of a *simultaneous* reduction of *both* the normative *and* the intentional in wholly naturalistic (non-intentional and non-normative) terms' (p. 175). Since Wedgwood claims that no sequence of physical properties could capture the *essential* normativity of the mental, he dismisses global functionalism. At the same time, he admits that physical facts realize all instances of intentional and normative facts in the *actual* world. The conjunction of these two claims leads to his rejection of *S*5 modal logic:[1] 'In general, so long as we do not assume that the relation of "accessibility" or relative possibility between worlds is an equivalence relation (that is, reflexive, symmetric, and transitive), it is quite straightforward to construct models in which strong supervenience is true but global supervenience is false' (p. 212).

The Nature of Normativity is wide-ranging, systematic, and provocative. I can only begin an assessment here by considering the place of conceptual role semantics (CRS) in Wedgwood's account. Commentators disagree about the exact nature and commitments of CRS, but most view it as a form of functionalism: CRS attempts to explain the meaning of a concept strictly in terms of the role that it plays in a person's cognition; functional role captures all that is essential to the mental. Moreover, following Wilfrid Sellars, CRS has been an attractive alternative to theories that presuppose mental representations are simply *given* in sense experience. Wedgwood's view, on my reading, does not live up to the original promise of CRS. His specific commitments to correctness and rationality make him posit normative facts that are causally efficacious of mental content, and his claims about the 'essential normativity of the mental' force him to reject functionalism (and even *S*5). These deviations are not, in themselves, sufficient reasons to reject Wedgwood's account, but they may invite closer scrutiny of his other commitments. In the end, a lasting contribution of *The Nature of Normativity* may be the *alternative* variety of conceptual role semantics it develops.

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[1] *S*5 is the normal modal logic developed by C. I. Lewis and C. H. Langford in 1932. *S*5 holds that all modal truths are necessary truths. Thus, a proposition that would be necessary in some nonactual possible world is necessary in the actual world: $\Diamond\Box p \rightarrow \Box p$.