DRAWING THE MARK OF THE NORMATIVE

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Drawing the Mark of the Normative

What is normativity? What is the mark of the normative? What distinguishes normative

from descriptive properties, facts and propositions? A good start at answering these

questions is to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for when any proposition is a

normative proposition. I proceed to answer these questions by identifying necessary and

sufficient conditions for when a proposition is normative, as these conditions track the

normativity of a proposition. What I do not do in this thesis is advocate for a specific

answer. That goal is beyond the scope of the current work. Instead, I examine two

approaches and critically assess their prospects for success. The first is inspired by the

work of Kit Fine and Gideon Rosen, which is based on the modal status of a proposition.

The second is by Barry Maguire, which is based on the grounding relations between

propositions. Along the way, I explicate certain constraints upon the normativity of

propositions, which furnish us partial answers by providing necessary conditions, yet

sufficiency conditions remain elusive. Making progress on this front by providing

conceptual constraints on which propositions are normative contributes towards

philosophical debates concerning the reality of ethics, its reducibility, its necessity, as

well as reformulations of Hume's Dictum that Ought-Statements are not derivable from

Is-Statements.

ÖZET

Normatifin Sınırlarını Çizmek

Normativite nedir? Normatif olanı ne belirler? Normatif olanla tanımlayıcı özellikler, olgular ve önermeler arasındaki ayrım nedir? Bu soruları yanıtlamak için iyi bir başlangıç bir önermenin ne zaman normatif olduğunun gerekli ve yeterli koşullarını ortaya koymaktan geçer.Bu koşullar, bir önermenin ne zaman normatif olduğunun gerekli ve yeterli koşulları olduğundan, yukarıdaki sorulara bir önermenin normatif olması için gereken koşulları belirlemek suretiyle yanıt arayacağım. Ancak bu tezde, belirli bir yanıtın savunuculuğunu yapmayacağım çünkü böylesi bir girişim işbu çalışmanın sınırlarını aşar. Yerine, bu sorulara verilmiş yanıtlar olarak görülen iki yaklaşımı inceleyip onların eleştirel bir değerlendirmesini yapacağım. Bunlardan ilki, Kit Fine ve Gideon Rosen'ın çalışmalarından esinlenerek ortaya konan, bir önermenin kiplik (modal) durumuna dayalı model. İkincisi ise, Barry Maquire tarafından ortaya konan ve önermeler arası temellendirme (grounding) ilişkilerine dayalı model. Bu sırada, önermelerin normativitesi üzerindeki belirli sınırlamalara da açıklık getireceğim ki bu bize gerekli koşulları sağlamada kısmen yanıt olabilsin, ne var ki böyle bir yanıtı yeterli koşullar için bulabilmek pek de kolay değil. Kavramsal sınırlamalar sağlayarak hangi önermelerin normatif olduğu konusunda bu cephede gelişme kaydetmek ahlak biliminin gerçekliği, indirgenebilirliği, gerekliliği ve Hume'un Olan'dan Olması gereken'in çıkarılamazlığı görüşünün yeniden yapılandırılması ile ilgili felsefi tartışmalara katkı sağlayacaktır.

DEDICATION

For my wife Ayşegül and for my great aunt Marjorie, without whom this work would not have been possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FE – Finean Essentialism

ENN – Ethical Non-Naturalism

SLS – Strong Local Supervenience

SGS – Strong Global Supervenience

SLA – Simple Logical Autonomy

NVLA – Non-Vacuous Logical Autonomy

MAE – Metaphysical Autonomy of the Ethical

CMAE – Converse Metaphysical Autonomy of the Ethical

MANN – Metaphysical Autonomy of the Normative (necessity condition)

CMANN – Converse Metaphysical Autonomy of the Normative (necessity condition)

MANS – Metaphysical Autonomy of the Normative (sufficiency condition)

CMANS – Converse Metaphysical Autonomy of the Normative (sufficiency condition)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What is normativity? What is the mark of the normative? What distinguishes normative from descriptive properties, facts and propositions? A good start at answering these questions is to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for when any proposition is a normative proposition.

Of course, this project presumes that there is something to be investigated, that there are normative propositions of which necessary and sufficient conditions can be discerned. A prior question, a question of realism, is whether there is anything that is normative. This in turn presupposes a criterion of what it takes for a concept to be normative so as to investigate whether anything real falls under that concept. Determining the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for that concept, the concept of the normative, is my present object of inquiry.[1]

I use the definite article prefixed to the term 'normative' to cover what is under discussion, whether it be properties, facts or propositions. I presume that if you have one, then you have the others, and interchange between discussing properties, facts or propositions depending upon the context.

I contrast 'descriptive' with 'normative' to simply be synonymous with 'non-normative.' Thick concepts are defined as those that are partly normative and partly

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[1] We may classify a line of questions as levels of specification on realism. Firstly, are there normative properties, facts or propositions? This is the contrast between realism and anti-realism. Secondly, does the normative reduce to the descriptive? This is the contrast between reductive realism and non-reductive (or robust) realism. Thirdly, does the normative obtain in virtue of its particular instances or do its particular instances obtain in virtue of its generalities? This is the contrast between metaphysical particularism and generalism about normativity. Fourthly, can the normative vary without change in the descriptive? This is a contrast between different supervenience theses, depending upon the modal strength of the term 'can.'

descriptive. Examples include virtues/vices such as courage or vanity, pejoratives, and other examples such as *rudeness*, *lewdness*, and *nastiness*. Some maintain that thick concepts cannot be disentangled so as to analyze them into their separate descriptive and normative parts. This would turn on the modal strength of the term 'cannot' in the previous sentence such that for any thick concept there are two worlds in which its descriptive and normative parts diverge.

Thick concepts are contrasted with thin concepts, which are either wholly descriptive or wholly normative. Unless otherwise stated, my concern is with thin concepts and it is in this context that I contrast the normative from the descriptive. It is in this context that I omit the qualifier 'wholly' as redundant. Thick concepts may represent borderline cases that smudge the sharpness of the normative/descriptive distinction and will be put aside for the moment.[2]

This project will be negative. When I asked what normativity was, which is a question that is presumably answered (or at least addressed) by identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for when a proposition is normative,[3] what I do not do is advocate for an answer to this question. That goal is beyond the scope of the current work. The reason for this is that the question is incredibly difficult to answer. The work of great philosophers can be brought to bear to provide systematic answers to this question, which in my opinion do not work. I elaborate upon why these answers do not work, but as for my own I have none.

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[2] For an argument that thick concepts collapse this distinction, see Putnam (2002). Roberts (2013) provides a suitable rebuttal to Putnam. For an argument that in fact there are no thick concepts, see Vayrynen (2013b) who argues that their putatively evaluative content is not part of the semantic content but rather convey evaluation only pragmatically. If Vayrynen is correct, thick concepts pose no problem for drawing the mark of the normative. I'm not so optimistic and as such shall assume that at least one thick concept is both partly normative and partly descriptive in its semantic content. For a good anthology concerning thick concepts, see Kirchin (2013b).
[3] This is what I call "drawing the mark of the normative."

If I had to be pressed on providing one, then I would go with a suitably modified version of Maguire's autonomy theses (as discussed in chapter 4), which draw the mark of the normative at the level of the fundamental. However, as I briefly describe at the end of chapter 4, the grounding approach works only if there is one kind of fundamental normative fact. But it is far from clear whether the prudential or the aesthetic are fully grounded by the ethical. Along the way, I explicate certain constraints upon the normativity of propositions, which furnish us partial answers by providing necessary conditions, yet sufficiency conditions remain elusive. As such, my only conclusions are negative and my thesis is that the project of drawing the mark of the normative is incomplete.

CHAPTER 2

NORMATIVE MODALITIES

2.1 Which categories of propositions?

Some authors contrast the normative from the evaluative, instead of from the

descriptive.[4] Normativity may be narrowly-construed in which case only the concepts

expressed by phrases such as 'it ought to be the case that *p*' or '*A* ought to do *X*' or '*A*

has a reason to *X*' are normative, whereas evaluative moral and aesthetic terms such as

'good,' 'bad,' 'beautiful,' 'ugly,' 'sublime,' and the like are not normative. Although

simple cases of such evaluative language have a predicative sentence structure, such as

'pleasure is good' or 'Michelangelo's *David* is beautiful,' or an attributive structure,

such as 'this is a good hammer' or 'the sublime catastrophe struck us with astonishing

terror,' such evaluative language is clearly not purely descriptive. Predicating beauty to

a statue or attributing goodness to a hammer does not merely describe the objects of

such predications and attributions, but endorses or advocates for them in some way. As

such, it falls under my discussion of the normative, broadly-construed as non-

descriptive.

Other authors contrast the ethical from the natural, instead of the broader

categories of the normative and the descriptive.[5] There are three problems with doing

this for the purpose of dichotomizing propositions into two taxonomic categories.

Firstly, the ethical does not exhaust the normative. As long as there are non-ethical or

amoral evaluative concepts such as is the case with aesthetics, contrasting the ethical

from the natural fails to draw the mark of the normative. Regardless of whether

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[4] Simon Kirchin does this in Kirchin (2013).
[5] Some of the few who do this shall be considered later in this essay. Among them include Fine (2002), Rosen (2010, 2014), Woods (2015), and sometimes even Maguire (2015).

reduction is supported or rejected, merely reducing the ethical to the natural would be of lesser interest if other normative concepts such as *beauty* were also not reducible. Descriptions of the world would be incomplete if they included everything ethical yet passed over aesthetic matters in silence. Secondly, most ethical theories maintain a distinction between what is prudent and what is moral, neither of which are purely descriptive alone and may come into conflict with one another. Ethics forms a proper part of normativity as a whole. Thirdly, the contrast of the ethical from the natural presumes that the ethical is not natural, provided that neither are empty. This is a conclusion to be reached upon argument and not presumed by definition, or at least when introducing such a distinction it should be argued that the distinction tracks a difference. More is needed to establish whether normative facts must, may or cannot be natural, let alone whether natural facts must be descriptive.

One may object that contrasting the normative from the descriptive dichotomously does not track anything other than the principle of the excluded middle. Either a proposition is normative or not. In such a case, there's nothing unique or special about normativity as there would be about any other predicate term. Facts about Bob could be contrasted with facts that are not about Bob. Given a fact, either it is about Bob or not. What's so special about normativity that's not special about Bob?

Propositions come in categories such that we can taxonomize them into their respective categories. We could subdivide all propositions into those about Bob and those not about Bob, but this highly unnatural division does not cut at the joints the class of propositions presumably possesses. One candidate joint is the division between the natural and the non-natural. Another is the division between the normative and the descriptive. Problem cases arise for any putative division, so the degree to which one

should accept one division over another is the relative explanatory power it possesses, when applied to relevant philosophical debates, so as not to foreclose their prospects for resolution. By employing the normative/descriptive distinction as categories propositions possess such that every proposition is either normative or descriptive, an abductive case is built in favor of its adoption just to the extent that it helps explain what is at issue in debates, say, over the reduction or grounding relations that obtain between them.

The objection to employing a normative/descriptive distinction to provide a dichotomous taxonomy of propositions may be further pursued by pointing out that thick concepts are both partly normative and partly descriptive. However, this objects to the dichotomy that every proposition is either normative or descriptive but not both, and not whether propositions have joint-carving conceptual categories that track the normative/descriptive distinction.

For this to be objectionable, the normativity of a proposition would have to vary by degrees from clear cut descriptive cases employing thin concepts through borderline cases with thick concepts out to clear cut normative cases with again only thin concepts. For instance, a vague concept that would vary in its thickness by degrees would do the work. The existence of propositions on the borderline between normative and descriptive would undermine the taxonomical project of bifurcating propositions into discrete categories such as those that are normative, those that are descriptive, and those that are both or neither. However, in the absence of such a counter-example, it is far simpler to hold that propositions come in categories and two of such categories are the normative and the descriptive, even if some propositions involving thick concepts may fall under both.

To help make it more clear just how difficult a project the construction of such a counter-example would be, consider the vagueness of thick concepts such as virtues. It is vague whether someone is courageous just as it is vague whether they are thin. This is evident by analogy as one may pass from cowardice to haughtiness just as one may pass from emaciation to obesity. Along this spectrum, there may be instances of vagueness whether any particular action is courageous on the borderlines. However such borderline actions are best characterized, whether definitively courageous or whether their courage is not so definite, what is vague is whether the action is courageous or not and not whether *courage* itself as a concept is what is definitely thick or thin.

For the counter-example to go through against my proposed categorization of propositions into the normative and the descriptive, there would have to be borderline cases of propositions that are neither normative nor descriptive to any specified degree of precision. This would smooth out the topography of the propositional landscape into shades of normativity. Clearly, there are clusters such as the evaluative concepts and so clearly propositions come in categories one of which is the normative.[6]

Regardless of whether thick concepts and propositions are analyzable into thin concepts and propositions or whether they represent borderline cases between what is fully normative and what is fully descriptive, they nevertheless do not undermine the

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[6] Another objection to the taxonomy of propositions into the categories of the normative and the descriptive is the following. All declarative sentences express descriptive propositions but only a proper subset of these are normative. These include descriptions of what ought to be, what one ought to do, etc. This breaks the dichotomy of the normative and the descriptive because every normative proposition would be descriptive. The problem with this objection is that describing what my duties are and commanding me to do them express categorically distinct propositions. The former are descriptive, while the latter are normative, so the objection fails to consider the normativity of imperative sentences. Another potential solution to this objection would be requiring that the taxonomy be commenced at the level of atomic propositions so as to rule out mixed cases such as material conditionals with normative consequents and descriptive antecedents. Such mixed cases are addressed in Chapter 4. Restricting our taxonomy to atomic propositions also does not rule out those expressed by simple indicatives that are clearly not purely descriptive. For example, 'God hates fags,' which is both atomic and not purely descriptive (i.e. normative).

normative/descriptive distinction nor collapse them as categories that taxonomize propositions. Borderline cases presume rather than undermine the distinction between what is bordered just as "the vagueness of dusk fails to undermine the day/night distinction" (Maguire, 2013, p. 10).

Thus, we may categorize propositions into the normative and the descriptive in a way that does not merely track the principle of the excluded middle, but rather has some non-vacuous explanatory purchase. What makes a division of propositions into those about Bob and those not about Bob objectionably arbitrary is precisely their vacuity: the name 'Bob' was arbitrarily chosen and just any particular name would do to illustrate that not any distinction will do. Contrasting the normative with the descriptive as a means to categorize propositions has the advantage over the ethical/natural distinction because normativity is what is shared by both ethical and aesthetic concepts as well as propositions with evaluative concepts and those expressed by statements involving the term 'ought.' Lastly, regardless of whether thick propositions belong to both categories, the normative and the descriptive categorize propositions only if the thickness of a concept does not vary by degrees, which is safe to assume in the absence of a palpable counter-example.

2.2 Alethic and deontic modalities

A proposition *P* is alethic just in case its necessity entails its truth. A proposition *P* is non-alethic just in case its necessity does not entail its truth. A proposition *P* is deontic just in case its necessity entails its possibility. I leave the question unanswered for the moment as to whether any given proposition may be alethic at one world but non-alethic at another. If so, then these definitions will need to be indexed to worlds; if not, then they stand as is.

Some normative propositions are non-alethic. For example, it does not follow from the fact that *it ought to be the case that Bob is driving on the correct side of the road in Britain* that *Bob is driving on the correct side of the road in Britain*, even though it is possible that he could be driving on either side. It would still be the case that he ought to drive on the correct side of the road regardless of which side of the road Bob was actually driving on, whether it is the correct side or not. The fact that there is a correct side of the road to drive on is a normative fact, if it is a fact at all, that is.

The proposition *Bob allegedly cleaned the dishes* is normative,[7] yet in worlds in which the dishes are dirty or in which somebody else cleaned them, the allegation may nevertheless be true. For instance, if there was insufficient evidence either way as to whom cleaned the dishes upon any update of the facts concerning the case.

To see that these propositions are normative, consider substituting 'left-hand' for 'correct' and 'wash' for 'clean' into both propositions. Substitution by descriptively indiscernible predicate terms may generate descriptive correlates for some normative propositions, but whether it can be generalized for any normative proposition without loss of content amounts to whether or not the normative is reducible to the descriptive, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Normatively-loaded terminology was deliberately chosen for such examples to avail ourselves of paradigm cases before moving onto the borderlines.

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[7] One could think that the normativity of this proposition is pragmatic and not semantic. Later on, I give examples of descriptive propositions with normative implicatures such as the case of in which one of two bank-robbers fleeing the scene of their crime utters, 'the police are around the corner,' which gives the other criminal a reason to run in the other direction. Clearly there are such examples. The issue is whether every putatively normative proposition is a descriptive one in disguise with normative pragmatics. I do not address this objection just as I presume normative realism throughout the text, that is, there is at least one proposition that is normative and is true at the actual world. Arguments in favor of normative realism go beyond the scope of this work.

Clearly, some normative facts are modal, such as what is obligatory, permissible or forbidden. If normativity were construed in the narrow-sense, drawing the mark of the normative would be complete by specifying which kind of necessity normative propositions enjoy. Unfortunately, reality is not quite so simple and it has yet to be argued that all normative propositions are modal in the wide-sense of the term 'normative' (including *goodness*, *beauty*, *rudeness*, *cleanliness*, etc.).

Perhaps a more technical example of a non-alethic proposition is given by the sentence 'I believe that I do not have any beliefs.'[8] This proposition is obviously self-refuting (it is impossible that it is true for if it were true it would be false and if it were false it would be true), and hence cannot be consistently held, but consider its necessitation: 'I cannot believe that I do not have any beliefs.' We're capable of believing falsehoods, even necessary falsehoods, but we can very well imagine a world of perfectly rational people who are incapable of believing self-refuting propositions or holding inconsistent beliefs. At such a world, the necessitated proposition *I cannot believe that I do not have any beliefs* is true of the speaker, yet its non-necessitated proposition *I believe that I do not have any beliefs* is false of the speaker. Hence, *I believe that I do not have any beliefs* is a non-alethic proposition, as its necessity does not entail its truth.

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[8] This example was taken from Joe Salerno's blog <http://knowability.blogspot.com.tr/2006/10/most-general-factive-mental-state.html>, though under his analysis many mental state operators have both factive and non-factive readings, which in this case is 'cannot believe.' Salerno is responding to Williamson's (2000) central thesis that 'knows' is the most general factive mental state operator, which means that 'knows' is a "factive semantically unanalyzable expression that attributes a propositional attitude to a subject" such that 'knows' "is never synonymous with a complex expression whose meaning is compose of the meanings of its parts" and 'knows' is the most general of all such things. On his blog, Salerno argues that 'could know' as with 'is knowable' is more general than 'knows.' Salerno's mistake is that knowability is not a mental state; infinitely-many propositions are and have been knowable, but throughout history and up until the present there have been only finitely-many mental states. Salerno explicitly holds 'knowable' synonymous with 'could know.'

I take facts to be true propositions, so while the normative proposition that *Bob ought to clean the dishes* is true, this scenario may consistency be described as one in which the dishes are dirty. Epistemic facts about who knows what are classic examples of alethic propositions, as the knowledge relation is taken to express a kind of alethic necessity, which is factive. If *Bob knows that the dishes are clean*, then *the dishes are clean*. If *Bob ought to make it the case that the dishes are clean*, then it does not follow that *the dishes are clean*, since Bob's cleaning obligations would be ever the most pressing were he to shirk them.

What ought to be the case or what a subject ought to make the case are consistent with the state of affairs being the case or not. If Bob got motivated and started cleaning the dishes, then his obligation to clean them would persist unless and until they are fully cleaned. If Bob were to stop halfway through the job, his obligation to clean the dishes would persist as the job would be incomplete. Only when completed the job would his obligation be satisfied and hence the proposition *Bob ought to make it the case that the dishes are clean* would change in its truth value from true to false.

Because anything actual is possible, every alethic proposition is deontic, but the converse does not hold for all propositions. Any normative fact that is modal is deontic yet non-alethic. If the dishes were physically impossible for Bob to clean, then it would be false to say that he ought to clean them. Furthermore, in order for it to be true that *Bob ought to clean the dishes*, it mustn't be the case that the dishes were already clean; there would be nothing left to do. Hence, if the dishes have already been cleaned by Bob, then it is trivial to say that Bob ought to clean them. However trivial it is commanding others to do what they've already done, the proposition expressed by such commands are normative regardless of their truth value.

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For the remainder of this subsection, I will argue that there is a subclass of normative propositions that are impossible to follow and hence are false in every possible world. Examples include commands to complete a task already performed or directives that are either impossible to obey or disobey. In all such cases, the propositions expressed are nevertheless normative even though necessarily false. The place they serve in my argument is to make the case that normative facts do not enjoy a uniform degree of modal strength, which is required of the approach[9] that attempts to draw the mark of the normative with the pen of necessity, that is, to identify which propositions are normative by appeal to their modal status. This approach is unworkable precisely because it fails to account for this subclass of normative propositions.

Consider the imperative sentence, 'be unique.' There are tee-shirts with such commands imprinted upon them. Setting aside what is likely the intended message, which probably has something to do with being original in one's thoughts, actions or character, a more interesting case arises when the sentence is interpreted literally. Something x is unique if and only if there is one and only one x. How could one fail to be unique? Does this imperative express an obligation that everyone trivially succeeds?

People could fail to be unique if they could duplicate themselves. But if the duplicate and the original are the same person, then there would be one and only person who happens to be multiply located, which is sufficient for that person to be unique. If the duplicate and the original are not the same person, then and only then would each of

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[9] This approach is what is required for the Finean Essentialist Ethical Non-Naturalist to draw the mark of the normative.

them not be unique. The same considerations apply to branch-line cases in which the original splits into two duplicates.[10]

However these puzzles of personal identity are resolved, the imperative 'be unique' surely is not commanding us not to duplicate. If duplication were possible and I was considering whether to use a tele-transportation machine, seeing somebody clothed in a 'Be Unique' tee-shirt would not seem normatively relevant to my decision. Rather, a 'Teleportation Kills' tee-shirt would be much more normatively relevant. Let's assume for the sake of argument that uniqueness-vitiating duplication is metaphysically impossible, so that there is no possible world in which somebody fails to be unique by doing something.

If we analyze imperatives as elliptical for listener-directed normative propositions, we can combine such troublesome trivialities into a single problem, rather than two independent ones. Insofar as propositions are truth-apt, so too are imperatives. For imperatives of the form, 'be φ,' we analyze them into 'you [the listener] ought to make it the case that you [the listener] are φ.' For the imperative 'do φ,' we have 'you [the listener] ought to do φ,' which in turn analyzes into 'you [the listener] ought to make it the case that φ occurs.' Of course, one way of making something the case is by getting others to do it for you. Furthermore, there could be special obligations (subject-specific duties) that one and only one individual can fulfill by some specified actions. So, for instance, hiring somebody else to clean the dishes for him would not discharge Bob's duty to clean the dishes, provided that he promised to do it himself. When Bob said, 'I promise to clean the dishes,' he did not promise to have somebody else clean

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[10] Branch-line cases of personal duplication were inspired by chapter 10 of Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*.

them. To avoid these difficulties, we could substitute 'you [the listener] do φ' for 'φ occurs' into this last formulation, but for the moment we can omit such subtleties from the analyses, as our present concern is over what to be and not over what to do.

Coming back to our tee-shirt example, the imperative 'be unique' is analyzed into the second-personal indicative 'you [the listener] ought to make it the case that you [the listener] are unique.' Anything capable of understanding this message fulfills its conditions. Merely by existing, one satisfies this directive.

Imperatives that are impossible to make true express false normative propositions, which, being trivial, are false in every possible world. My argument proceeds as follows: (1) Bob cannot make it the case that Bob is not unique (as it is assumed that uniqueness-vitiating duplication is impossible); (2) it is not the case that Bob ought to make it the case that Bob is not unique (which follows from 1 and the contrapositive of the Ought-implies-Can principle); (3) it is not the case that Bob ought to be non-unique (by my analysis of imperatives into ought-indicatives); (4) to Bob, the imperative 'be non-unique' is false (as imperatives inherent their truth-value from the normative propositions they express); (5) to anyone, 'be non-unique' is false (by universal generalization as Bob was chosen arbitrarily); (6) 'be non-unique' is necessarily false (as this argument can be rerun in any possible world). Presuming that 'be non-unique' and 'do not be unique' are synonymous, we get the result that 'do not be unique' is necessarily false.

By parity, imperatives that are impossible to make false express true normative propositions, which being trivial are true in every possible world. The argument proceeds the same as with 'do not be unique,' except switching the truth-value to get that 'be unique' is necessarily true. No restriction on the modal strength of the necessity

operator was presumed or tacitly implied as restricting its range of quantification, hence the kind of necessity involved is what Fine (2002) would call "metaphysical" necessity, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2. For the moment, it will suffice to say that a proposition is metaphysically necessary if and only if it is true in every possible world, where the universal quantifier 'every' is unrestricted. Thus, imperatives that are either impossible to make true or make false express a class of normative propositions that are metaphysically necessary.

Earlier it was asserted that some normative propositions are non-alethic, such as the proposition that *Bob is driving on the correct side of the road in Britain*, and we left it open as to whether some normative propositions are alethic, that is, whether some normative propositions are such that their necessity entails their truth. If knowledge is normative, then knowledge ascriptions express alethic normative propositions. If this is mistaken and all normative propositions are non-alethic, then the fact that a certain normative proposition is necessary does not entail that it is true. Its truth is compatible with its necessity but does not follow from it.

Another way in which normative propositions could be non-alethic would be if what ought to be the case never actually is the case, or, in other words, every normative proposition's necessity entails its falsehood. Normative propositions would still be deontic, so their necessity entails their possibility and their actual falsehood. So such normative propositions would all be contingent. 'Ought' exhibits a restricted form of necessity under which statements such as 'it is necessary to chew before you swallow' are synonymous with 'you ought to chew before you swallow,' or 'you cannot violate the law' and 'you ought not violate the law.' This has the strange result that every narrowly-defined normative proposition (i.e. propositions such as obligations,

permissions, and what is forbidden) would be false, as they are necessary in a restricted sense, while widely-defined normative propositions (e.g. facts about goodness or beauty) would be at best contingently true. If what ought to be the case never actually is the case yet if there is still goodness in such a world, then the idealized version of this world in which everything that ought to be the case actually was the case would be unachievable, yet may still play some regulative role insofar as it would determine how good the world was in reference to its ideal. I consider this idea only in passing as I find its presumptions too implausible to continue with. Hence, some but not all normative propositions are non-alethic.

2.3 Normativity and modality

Earlier it was asserted that some normative propositions are modal (e.g. obligations, permissions and what is forbidden), while others are not, at least not obviously, modal. The fact that *this is a good hammer* and the fact that *that is a beautiful sunset* are not obviously modal. The reason I caveat this intuition is in preparation for two accounts of normativity on the basis of the modal status of a proposition. These accounts conclude that normative propositions have a modal status that is definitive of what they are.

Both Fine (2002) and Rosen (2014) maintain the position that every normative fact is modal, being a necessity distinct in kind from other necessities such as those that identify the nature of something (metaphysical necessities) and those under which causes necessitate their effects (natural necessities). However, this very notion that normative propositions are necessary in a sense is not expressed merely as an accidental generalization about normative propositions. Rather, it is proposed as essential to normativity, that we can define just what it is to be normative on the basis of a candidate proposition's modal status.

Obviously, those normative propositions with necessity operators as parts are modal propositions. However, it is far from clear whether every normative proposition is reducible to some other normative proposition that indispensably features modal predicates in its expression. So, some preliminary discussion of what distinguishes modal from non-modal (categorical) propositions is in order.

Maguire (2013) distinguishes modal from categorical propositions by cases, counting as modal the following (albeit not exhaustive) list: contingencies, im/possibilities, necessities, dispositions, powers, laws, essences, and abilities. These are contrasted with categorical propositions that do not appear on the list of kinds of modal facts, which include facts produced by the connectives of classical predicate logic of otherwise categorical facts. Examples of categorical properties (at least for David Lewis' Modal Realism) include *being an individual*, *being without proper parts*, *being a part of something*, and *being a world*. What matters here is that even under this rough sketch it is far from clear where many normative facts fall on the modal/categorical distinction. Permissibility may be clearly modal, while goodness and beauty appear for the moment categorical.

2.4 Normative necessity as fact-independence

One attempt to draw the mark of the normative is via a kind of necessity. Fine (2002) and Rosen (2014) call this 'normative necessity.' Normative necessity is not circularly defined with the prefixed rubric of 'normative' in that a normative proposition is normatively necessary just in case it is normative. Rather, each gives a separate biconditional for when a proposition is normatively necessary in terms that do not mention anything normative. However, they resist the conclusion that such biconditionals reduce the normative to the descriptive. Nevertheless, the attempt to draw

the mark of the normative by a kind of necessity is an attempt at understanding in what sense it is not accidental that normative features are glued onto certain descriptive features and how they co-vary.

Which propositions are normatively necessary? For Rosen, a proposition p is normatively necessary at a world w if and only if p is "fact-independent" at w; in turn, p is fact-independent at w if and only if p is "the case and would have been the case no matter how things had been in wholly non-normative respects" (Rosen, 2014, p. 16). Rosen's (2014) official definition is as follows:

> For a proposition p to be normatively necessary at w is for p to be a proposition true at w such that for any wholly non-normative proposition q, the counterfactual 'if q had been the case, p would still have been the case' is true at w. (p. 17)

I unpack Rosen's definition of "fact-independence" as follows. A proposition p is fact-independent at a world w if and only if (1) p is true at w and (2) every counterfactual proposition ψ is true at w. Here, each of the counterfactual propositions ψ are expressed by the sentence, 'if q had been the case, then p would still have been the case,' for some descriptive proposition q. The relevant kind of facts that normative necessities are thereby independent of are descriptive facts.

I consider three objections against Rosen's definition of normative necessity as fact-independence. Firstly, it is circular in that it presupposes what it attempts to account for. Secondly, there's nothing specifically normative about it as opposed to any other taxonomic category of propositions. Thirdly, it fails to account for the features normative propositions enjoy that are peculiar to them.

Rosen's characterization of fact-independence attempts to build counterfactually robust fact-norm conditionals directly into its definition. Presumably, if a proposition is

fact-independent at some world, then it is fact-independent at every world, but Rosen gives no argument for this. Furthermore, it builds into its definition a range of counterfactual conditionals the antecedents of which presuppose the very thing attempting to be defined, namely, wholly descriptive propositions. It is as if the response we get when asking 'which propositions are normative?' is 'the ones that are not descriptive.' Fact-independence cannot draw a mark that it presupposes.

Perhaps we're asking too much of the Fine/Rosen approach by assessing whether it can provide non-circular necessary and sufficient conditions for when propositions are normative. After all, this wasn't their project. Fine's project was to account for the varieties of necessity that putatively obtain and to foreclose their prospects for reduction. Rosen's project is to further Fine's project by showing how it accounts for certain kinds of failures of modal covariance between the normative and the descriptive.

However, there are reasons to reject Rosen's equivalence of normative necessity with fact-independence, even if one accepts that some propositions are normatively necessary. Let's say that a proposition is normatively necessary only if it determines counterfactually robust laws that only feature general kind terms. Not every normative proposition need be normatively necessary under this constraint. Whether descriptive propositions abide by this constraint is not uncontroversial, as it depends upon whether they determine normative principles – whether the normative reduces to the descriptive. Let's not build anti-reductionism into the definition of normative necessity, even if a constraint such as this is not attempting to provide a definition as it presupposes a distinction between normative principles and descriptive laws.

Even if we assume that some non-circular version of fact-independence can be articulated without presupposing, for instance, that ethical facts are not natural, there's

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my second objection that there's nothing peculiar about normativity in Rosen's definition of fact-independence. Of course, there's nothing peculiar about normativity in my above constraint on normative necessity either, but this is merely a necessary condition on which propositions are normatively necessary. On its own, it is insufficient to establish which or even whether some propositions fulfill it. As a constraint, it is shared by the natural necessities in a parallel way. A proposition is a natural necessity only if it determines counterfactually robust laws that only feature natural kind terms. As a constraint, we leave it open as to whether anything fulfills this condition. As an account, we commit ourselves that there are such propositions.

Let's say that a proposition p is a Bob-necessity at world w if and only if p is Bob-independent at w. Further, p is Bob-independent at w if and only if (1) p is true about Bob at w, and (2) every counterfactual conditional of the following form is true at w: 'if q had been the case, p would still have been the case' for some class of propositions q none of which are about Bob. My constraint above at least rules out singular terms like 'Bob,' since they're not general. That Bob-facts are counterfactually robust does not make them modal, it merely ensures that Bob-propositions are true at nearby possible worlds where what counts as "nearby" is bounded by the scope of how robust the counterfactuals go. By restricting the modal quantifier of 'necessity' to all and only those worlds in which Bob-facts are counterfactually supported, they thereby become necessities but necessities on the cheap. We could speak of Bob-laws that Bob-necessitate the Bob-facts and even further inquire as to what strength of necessity the Bob-facts Bob-supervene over the non-Bob-facts.

However, there's something objectionably arbitrary about such a strategy of modal restriction, which casts doubt upon Rosen's whole project of discovering which

modal kinds there are, which carve at the joints of the modal structure of reality.

Allowing for arbitrary restrictions on the scope of the modal quantifier of necessity

collapses a discrete coarse-grained structure of metaphysical, natural and normative

necessity into a dense fine-grained structure of infinitely-many varieties of necessity.

Precisely for these reasons, Fine (2002) resisted such a restriction strategy by holding

each kind of necessity mutually irreducible, endorsing what he called "Modal

Pluralism." But at the very least, arbitrary restrictions on the necessity operator counts

against the project of drawing the mark of the normative with a kind of necessity,

regardless of whether that kind is joint-carving.

The upshot is that there's no principled reason to accept Rosen's definition of

fact-independence in non-circular terms without prejudicing the issue of reduction.

Under Rosen's definitions, fact-independence about normativity is just as arbitrary as

fact-independence about Bob. Rosen does introduce some constraints on which

normative necessities there are to rule out unusual cases of radically counter-moral

worlds, but these further constraints apply to which propositions are normative and not

to which propositions are fact-independent. The only constraint upon the restriction of

the necessity operator that defines normative necessity as fact-independence is

monotonicity – that any restriction of necessity of metaphysically contingent and any

ordered series of iterative restrictions are each pairwise contingent with respect to the

former necessity.

All Rosen requires to avoid gerrymandered restrictions on the scope of the

necessity operator is that the relative kinds of modalities be nested such that the relative

modal strength each restriction enjoys is monotonic. For instance, what is normatively

necessity is naturally contingent and what is naturally necessary is metaphysically

contingent. Both Fine and Rosen allow for mixed cases of natural necessities that are also metaphysically necessary, yet do not extend these considerations into the normative domain due to a commitment to Ethical Non-Naturalism, which I will discuss below.

2.5 Constraints on normative necessities

Rosen gives some further ad hoc constraints on what he takes to be the boundaries of the pool of possible normative necessities. For instance, that they do not feature singular terms, that it lies in the nature of permissibility that it is a property of actions, and that normative facts about particulars are grounded in general normative facts he calls "principles." Further, normative principles must be knowable or at least epistemically accessible enough for rational agents to reasonably believe (Rosen, 2014, pp. 26-27). However, on his own lights, the violation of these constraints are metaphysical impossibilities, not merely normative impossibilities. As such, they did not obtain in virtue of the laws of normativity, the pure normative principles in virtue of which all other normative facts at a world obtain, and hence cannot be normative facts themselves. Instead, they are metaphysical necessities that constrain which worlds are metaphysically possible by ruling out worlds with unknowable moral laws or patchwork worlds in which the moral law radically changes from time to time.

These further constraints are welcome and to be discussed on their own accord if only because they're not so much constraints upon which propositions are fact-independent under Rosen's definition, but rather which propositions or properties are normative. For instance, 'permissibility' picks out a normative property only when predicated of actions. Rosen uses the example, "the *sun* is morally permissible" is ruled out as an impossibility (Rosen, 2014, p. 26). This strikes me more as a category mistake

when permissibility is predicated of objects rather than events, but the result that it is metaphysically impossible remains the same regardless of the reason.

Not all of such constraints need obtain with metaphysical necessity. Even if *right* and *wrong* have mutually exclusive extensions as a matter of metaphysical necessity (such that in no possible world there is something both right and wrong), they need not be exhaustive in every possible world for all things in the category of their attribution. For instance, if *right* and *wrong* only apply to actions, not all actions need be either right or wrong, nor for any one action must there be one right choice. However, the modal status of this last 'must' may be metaphysically contingent as what is *right* or *wrong* is determined by contingent moral laws.

If Rosen (2014) is right about there being laws of normativity in virtue of which some (but not all) normative facts obtain, which hold of a restricted form of necessity such that they are counterfactually robust in nearby possible worlds, then we can consider worlds with different laws of normativity or even laws of morality and to what extent they can differ. We can then classify groups of worlds that would be broadly consequentialist or deontological on the basis of their moral laws. For instance, Act-Utilitarian worlds would be closer to Rule-Utilitarian worlds than Kantian Worlds with different yet incompatible formulations of the Categorical Imperative.

Let's call a moral law 'perfectionist' if for every action there is exactly one right option the agent may chose, even if the best among bad alternatives. When proposed as an ethical theory, such theories deny that there could be ethically neutral choices for action and have problems explaining how equally good alternatives never obtain no matter how seemingly insignificant the choice. Insofar as Rosen denies Strong Supervenience (which will be discussed in chapter 2), such worlds are metaphysically

possible and are not ruled out by what few constraints Rosen proposes, so the very same action can be assigned different ethical profiles on the basis of which moral laws are plugged into the world at which the action occurs in. Taking the moral law on a stress test is in order.

So we can imagine two worlds, one of which with some perfectionist ethics and the other with some other ethics, such as Aristotle's virtue theory. The virtuous person in the second world makes no moral error when choosing arbitrarily among two apparently equally good alternatives, while the perfectionist in the first world has a 50-50 shot at doing what's right when he fatefully finds himself caught between two duplicate meals carefully laid out for him equidistant from his location.

Of course, the fact that people in perfectionist worlds do no wrong when the consequences of their behavior result in catastrophic horror does not entail that they are not responsible for those consequences even if no choice was made. How different perfectionist ethics handle tough cases or hard choices depends on the content of their moral laws. There may be other moral categories, for instance, than merely what is right or wrong, and which entities are morally salient in accordance with these other moral categories would vary by world as well as the boundaries of ethical consideration. All that matters for the sake of our stress test is whether perfectionist ethics are metaphysically possible, not whether they are extensionally accurate in the actual world or even nearby worlds.

Whether or not every action must have exactly one right choice seems at best metaphysically contingent. Imagine a world in which only one choice ever occurs and it is made by a suicidal agent who chooses to commit suicide. If you do not think the agent made a mistake, then imagine a code of ethics under which suicide is morally wrong and

plug that code of ethics into that world such that it is the moral law of that world. The choice concerned whether or not to commit suicide, whether or not to kill oneself. No other choice ever presented itself up until that choice was made and as such no other choice is ever made thereafter. This code of ethics thereby counts as perfectionist, as it assigns to every action exactly one right choice, which in this case is the choice not to kill oneself. Now consider the actual world. Does every action have exactly one right choice? If not, then perfectionist ethics are metaphysically contingent.

If these perfectionist worlds seem too incredible, then you might be tempted to think that perfectionist worlds are not metaphysically possible. But then what is the modal status of the constraint that there are no perfectionist worlds? This is a constraint as to which kinds of moral laws there could be and as such is metaphysically necessary if true. As a metaphysical necessity, the Finean Essentialist is required to identify some particular such that it lies in the nature of that particular that *there are no perfectionist worlds*.

Perhaps it lies in the nature of *actions* as a kind that there need not be exactly one right choice, which as a general essential fact can thereby be reduced to its particular instances as facts about collectives are reduced to facts about individuals. However, this flies in the face of Rosen's Ethical Non-Naturalism, as it cannot only lie in the nature of actions that there need not be exactly one right choice, since *rightness* is a moral kind. If true, this would constitute a naturalistic reduction of *rightness* under the Finean Essentialist framework, so it must at least partly lie in the nature of some pure ethical principle as well as actions that they together are such that there need not be exactly one right choice for every action. But this was supposed to be a constraint upon which moral laws there could be such that there are not moral laws that are perfectionist. Pure ethical

principles are metaphysically contingent for Rosen, even though essential truths about them are metaphysically necessary. Which moral laws instantiate cannot be metaphysically contingent, as constraints against which moral laws are possible are metaphysically necessary. To put it another way, counter-morals instantiate necessarily and what we might call the 'Normative-Verse' is as it is necessarily.

Recall that these constraints were introduced to restrict which normative necessities there could be. Insofar as whatever is normative is normatively necessary (i.e. fact-independent), these constraints help draw the mark of the normative by classifying which propositions are normative. Namely, metaphysical impossibilities such as the proposition *the sun is morally permissible* is not normative.

I would say that such propositions are not normative because they're impossible to make true (because ought implies can). By parallel, the proposition *it is not the case that the sun is morally permissible* also is not normative because it is impossible to make false. Similarly, *the sun is morally impermissible* is also not normative for the same reasons. In each case, the proposition is descriptive and what is being described is an impossibility, as it is a category mistake to predicate permissibility to an object and not an event. Not all events are actions, so Rosen's constraint on permissibility to actions is true, even if there's a weaker constraint in the vicinity, which constrains permissibility to the category of events.

Which behaviors constitute actions may vary world to world, but whichever entities constitute events do not. Under Rosen's action constraint on permissibility, the sentence 'the splitting of the amoeba was permissible' does not express a normative proposition in the actual world, because it does not predicate permissibility to an action but rather a mere behavior of a mindless creature. In remote possible worlds in which

the subvening base of mentality is radically different, this sentence may express a normative proposition that could be true or false. Further constraints are needed if the normativity of a proposition does not vary by world.

2.6 Variable modal status

Nothing about Rosen's definition of fact-independence requires that normative necessities are not alethic (necessity entails actuality), nor does it encode the deontic axiom that necessity entails possibility. Or, as some put it, the foundational axiom of normativity that ought implies can. Any satisfactory account of the peculiar necessity normative facts enjoy (provided they all do enjoy a uniform level of necessity) should at least accommodate the fact that the term 'ought' is not alethic and is deontic.

The picture of normative proposition's necessity becomes even more complicated when we consider that not all normative propositions enjoy a uniform level of necessity. As discussed above, some normative propositions are alethic while others are not. Examples of alethic normative propositions include knowledge ascriptions. Examples of non-alethic normative propositions include propositions that are expressed by imperatives that are impossible to make true or false, such as commanding somebody to do or not do whatever it was they already did or telling someone 'be unique.'

Knowledge ascriptions enjoy a kind of necessity distinct from Rosen's definition of normative necessity as fact-independence, because the counterfactuals are extensionally divergent in different possible worlds. Whether an agent knows a proposition p and whether an agent ought to make it the case that p are at best rarely if ever both true of the same agent and the same proposition, let alone true in all the same possible worlds. Impossible imperatives are similarly impossible not only in worlds that have all the same normative properties, but some imperatives such as 'be unique' remain

impossible to violate in any world. However, neither of these examples is uncontroversial as the Finean Essentialist may deny that knowledge ascriptions are normative or that imperatives can be analyzed as ought-indicatives. So we'll need better counter-examples to the claim that all normative propositions have a uniform strength of modal status.

There are a class of normative facts that are true in virtue of their meaning. I call these 'analytic normative truths.' Examples include 'murder is wrong,' but can be generated by predicating the appropriate thin normative concept to any thick concept. Negative analytic moral truths include: murder, torture, thievery/stealing, embezzlement, etc. Analytic normative truths may include otherwise conventional facts such as the fact that 'crimes break the law,' as well as considerations of etiquette such as 'vulgarity is rude,' but not synthetic necessary truths such as 'one foot is twelve inches long.' A sufficiency test as to whether a given proposition p is an analytic normative fact true in virtue of its meaning is whether it is impossible for linguistically competent, fully informed and rational users to understand what the thick concept means without thereby knowing that p.

So we get normative facts that obtain in every possible world without any restriction on the domain of the modal operator. It is unclear in virtue of what objects analytic normative truths obtain such that it is an essential truth of something that such analytic normative truths are the case. However, I leave this to the Finean Essentialist to discover. The absence of such a discovery tells more against Finean Essentialism than it does against the fact that analytic normative truths are metaphysically necessary.

The Finean Essentialist may reply by conceding that analytic normative truths are metaphysically necessary and identifying for each analytic normative truth p some

particular *X* in virtue of which *p* is essential, that is, it lies in the nature *X* that *p*. Which particular does it lie in the nature of that murder is wrong? The act of killing itself? Yet not all killings are murders as homicide is sometimes justifiably in the actual world. It could not be only those killings that constitute murders, as then it would lie in the nature of each murder that murder is wrong. Why would it lie in the nature of unjustifiable killings that murder is wrong whereas it does not lie in the nature of justifiable killings that murder is wrong?

The same act of killing could be plugged into varying circumstances that would justify or condemn it and on that basis its essential normative nature would change. Killing a bear may be justified if one is suitably endangered without time or many viable alternatives such as when in defense of one's life. Killing that same bear for fun when not endangered may be unjustified, especially if the species is in danger of extinction, if the hunter is well fed, and if there are viable alternatives to shoot non-living things that are just as fun. I could keep piling on circumstantial features that are mitigate or aggravate the justifiability of killing a bear. The point is that in both contexts, nothing about the action itself changed, except for its justifiability.

Of course, this is not unwelcome to the Finean Essentialist as Rosen (2014) explicitly denies the supervenience of the normative over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity, while endorsing it with normative necessity. The problem with this is that analytic normative truths are not merely normatively necessary but metaphysically necessary as was conceded. So, either normative necessity does not account for the modal status of every normative proposition, or what I call "analytic normative truths" are not really normative at all.

If you were considering whether to murder somebody and I told you, 'murder is wrong,' I thereby gave you a reason to not to murder. Perhaps you already had that reason and perhaps I told you nothing new or informative, but at the least you could follow my advice by not doing it. Propositions that are action-guiding, or in this case inaction-guiding or action-forbidding, are good candidates for being considered normative propositions. Of course, not every proposition that gives us reasons or guides actions is normative. If I told you that there is a fire in the building we're in, then we have reason to leave the building. Similarly, if two bank robbers are fleeing the scene of a heist, and one tells the other 'the police are around the corner,' they then have reason to run the other way. If you're attempting to draw a triangle but for some reason forgot what a triangle is, and I told you, 'a triangle is a two-dimensional closed three-sided planar figure bounded by straight line segments,' you might be more confused, but nevertheless have conditions that uniquely specify triangles. None of these cases express normative propositions, even though they may give reasons or guide actions.

Compare the felicity of answering the question, 'should I murder?' with 'murder is wrong,' as opposed to replying 'it lies in the nature of murder that it is wrong.' The question did not ask about the nature of things and even if it determined the wrongness of murder, it simply does not answer the normative question, 'should I murder?' Descriptive responses simply do not answer normative questions. Essential truths are descriptive facts, which gives us reason to believe that not only are what I call "analytic normative truths" metaphysically necessary, they are normative as well.

For those allergic to analyticity and believe that nothing is true in virtue of its meaning alone, notice how in every example of what I call "analytic normative truths" there is a thick concept predicated by its thin conceptual constituent. Compare 'murder

is wrong' with 'murder is rude.' It may be rude to murder somebody and it may be the case that in any possible world in which some actions are rude, murder is one of them, but the thin concept of *rudeness* is not part of the thick concept of *murder*. The fact that *murder is rude* is a necessary synthetic normative truth. If it turned out that there are remote possible worlds in which it is polite to murder, then the rudeness of murder would be contingent, yet the fact that *murder is wrong* is not contingent.

There are no permissible murders, only permissible killings just as there are no married bachelors, only married men. Being a thick concept, *murder* is partly descriptive and partly normative such that some particular *x* is a murder if and only if *x* is a killing and *x* is wrong. Being a thin concept, *bachelor* is wholly descriptive such that some particular *x* is a bachelor if and only if *x* is unmarried and *x* is a man. The proposition that *murders are wrongful killings* is true at all the same worlds that the proposition that *bachelors are unmarried men* is true, so the former's modal status is at least as strong as the latter's modal status, which are both necessary under the widest scope of the necessity operator, metaphysical necessity.

Provided that constitution is a metaphysically necessary relation, the fact that what I call 'analytic normative truths' are composed of a thick concept predicated by the thin normative concept that partly constitutes it suffices to establish that the predication expresses a metaphysical necessity.

In conclusion, in this chapter I argued that attempting to draw the mark of the normative with the pen of necessity fails. Firstly, I argued that the proper contrast class to frame the debate over which propositions are normative was between the normative and the descriptive, and not the ethical and the natural. I discussed thick concepts and propositions as problem cases for demarcating the normative from the descriptive as

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they are partly both. Secondly, I turned to Fine (2002) and Rosen's (2014) proposal that normative facts are normative necessities, which if true would do the work my project is aimed at as it would draw the mark of the normative with the pen of necessity, that is, a proposition is normative if and only if it is normatively necessary. This is a kind of necessity strictly weaker than natural and metaphysical necessity. In order for this proposal not to be circular, more needs to be said about when propositions are normatively necessary, which Rosen (2014) accounts for as "fact-independence," that is, a proposition is normatively necessary if and only if it is fact-independent. Thirdly, I reject this characterization as it remains circular, is objectionably arbitrary insofar as there's nothing peculiarly normative about it, and further fails to account for the modal features normative proposition do peculiarly enjoy, namely, the fact that normative propositions are deontic and many are non-alethic. Fourthly, I discuss several constraints Rosen adopts to rule out strange patchwork worlds and radically counter-moral worlds, which I attempt to delineate whether such constraints are upon the normativity of a proposition or its metaphysical impossibility. Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of several kinds of normative propositions with various modal strengths. Insofar as the normative propositions at a world do not share a uniform level of modal strength, Fine and Rosen's approach cannot draw the mark of the normative with the pen of necessity, however restricted. Thus, the mark of the normative remains undrawn.

CHAPTER 3

REDUCTION, ESSENTIALISM AND SUPERVENIENCE

Some argue that the normative reduces to the descriptive, while others reject this.[11] To

have a clearer idea of what is being debated, some preliminary discussion of the

reduction relation itself is in order. Firstly, I shall consider the distinction between

eliminating and preserving reductions as made by Mark Schroeder (2005). Secondly, I

will discuss the three elements, Finean Essentialism, Ethical Non-Naturalism and Strong

Supervenience, which form what Rosen (2014) describes as an inconsistent triad.

Thirdly, I will present and evaluate one of Rosen's arguments for his inconsistent triad,

namely, that Finean Essentism and Ethical Non-Naturalism entail the denial of Strong

Supervenience. Rosen's argument only establishes that the local supervenience of

normative properties over descriptive properties fails, while the global supervenience

thesis that two worlds are descriptively identical only if they are normatively identical

could very well be true. I conclude this chapter with my own attempt at reducing the

normative to the descriptive and demonstrate its failure.

3.1 Schroeder on reduction

In "Realism and Reduction: The Quest for Robustness," Mark Schroeder attempts to

account for what he calls "strident pessimism" on behalf of non-reductive normative

realists such as Thomas Nagel and Derek Parfit on the prospects of successful reductions

of the normative to the descriptive (i.e. non-normative). Unfortunately, Schroeder only

considers the Open Question Argument in passing, rejecting its original formulation as

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[11] Notable supporters of reductive realism include, among many, Schroeder (2007), Wedgwood (2007), Jackson & Pettit (1995) and Jackson (1998). Notable realists rejecting reduction include, among many, Parfit (1984, 2011), Scanlon (1998, 2014), Enoch (2011) and Heathwood (2012, 2015), as well as Fine (2002) and Rosen (2014).

was criticized by Prior (1949) and Frankena (1939), describing it as a test of cognitive significance and asserting that "properties are *not* the kinds of thing to be distinguished by criteria of cognitive significance," which would be concepts (Schroeder, 2005, p. 4). Schroeder aims to account for strident non-reductive realism in preparation for a larger project that also goes beyond the scope of this one paper, which consists in providing a successful reduction of the normative to the descriptive that still maintains realism about the relevant reduced domain in question.[12]

This is a challenge Schroeder first identifies in the work of Alvin Plantinga's (1986) reduction of possibilist quantification by way of a truth-preserving translation to actualist quantification, which is why Schroeder dubs this 'Plantinga's Challenge.' This challenge seems to identify some conceptual tradeoff between reduction and realism. Plantinga's Challenge may also be put more generally in which there must be a principled criterion (with necessary and sufficient conditions) to distinguish cases of eliminativist reductions and non-eliminativist (preserving) reductions; whether the reduction has ontological implications or merely ideological ones (in which case the reduction relation is explanatory). For example, an unprincipled criterion for what distinguishes eliminativist from preserving reduction is the following: reductive relation R reducing the class of entities X to the class of entities Y eliminates X's if and only if X consists of mental phenomena or normative concepts or properties, and not otherwise. Picking out specific classes of phenomena such as the mental or the normative as being the exceptions for or against elimination is clearly too gerrymander. A general theory of reduction is called for which will in turn make the distinction for when its reductions are eliminative or not.

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[12] This was the project of his later book, *Slaves of the Passions* (Schroeder, 2007), especially chapter 4.

Schroeder's first candidate theory of reduction comes from Frank Jackson (1998) in which one set of properties A reduces to another B if and only if A is a subset of B. Schroeder claims that this account treats reduction as property identity, since by definition every element of a subset is identical with an element of the superset. Schroeder contrasts this theory of reduction as property identify from his own, which is reduction as property analysis. This, he claims, possesses the virtue of allowing for reductions between disjoint sets of entities, which is precisely the worry he claims Nagel had about any reductionism of the normative.

Schroeder does not give a general account of what property analysis consists in but instead only gives examples. These include the following: (1) *good* is reduced to *contributing to overall happiness*; (2) *triangle* is reduced to *being a three-sided planar figure*; (3) *circle* is reduced to *being a set of points equidistant from a fixed point*; (4) *ellipse* is reduced to *being a set of points whose summed distance from two distinct points is the same*. Schroeder makes some general remarks about the reductive bases of the class of two-dimensional (Euclidean) planar figures, but for the most part the examples are quite specific. Moreover, I think there is something instructive about the preponderance of mathematical examples Schroeder gave, of which we might as well add *bachelor* or *vixen* to the list. This is namely that property analyses are likely a priori, which is not incompatible with Schroeder's reductionist project but is likely a supposition that he may be quite resistant to if his said reductionist program is motivated with the intent to make normativity naturalistically respectable.

There is a problem with the manner in which Schroeder treats his example of reducing *good* to *contributing to overall happiness*. Namely, it is circular. As Schroeder (2005) puts it,

For example, instead of saying that *good* reduces to *contributing to overall happiness*, we could say that it reduces to the constitutive *parts* of the property of *contributing to overall happiness* - namely, *contributing to*, *overall*, and *happiness*. (p. 9)

What he in effect is telling us is that *good* reduces to *contributing to overall happiness* just in case *good* reduces to *contributing to*, *overall*, and *happiness*. Okay, but this simply restates reduction on both the sides of the biconditional and is thereby imprecative.

Let's return to the mathematical examples. *Circle* is reduced to *being a set of points equidistant from a fixed point*. The term 'circle' does not appear in the reduction base and hence Schroeder has it that what best explains the reduction is not property identity but rather property analysis. So a geometric object having whatever properties the description 'has all of its points equidistant from some fixed point' picks out is enough to make it a circle. Whether circlehood is identical with the cluster of properties picked out by the description or merely necessarily coextensive with it is important insofar as the reduction is eliminative or not. If eliminative, then Schroeder's reduction is not realist about normativity and so he counts as a realist only insofar as his reduction counts as not being eliminative.

This is what drives him to write, "the two-dimensional shape properties are analyzed in terms of the others. Or, put another way, they are identical not with these properties, but with properties in some kind of closure of this set" (Schroeder, 2005, p. 11). What this "closure" amounts to is unclear, since in Topology, the closure of a subset in a topological space consists of the union of itself with its boundary – the set of limit points of the subset. This seems to be not the mathematically technical sense of the term

'closure' but rather something metaphorically analogical to the mathematical concept of 'linear combination' – to extend the mathematical metaphors a bit further.

A vector is within the span of two others if and only if there exists a linear combination of the latter that are identical with the former, where a linear combination is the sum of the two vectors with scalar values as constants. If there is no such linear combination, then the vector is said to be 'linearly independent' of the other two and together forms a new dimension in virtue of which higher dimensional spaces can be re-described with respect to this frame of vectors. This is the analogical equivalent to an irreducible concept, one that introduces a distinct and independent conceptual dimension, and in turn cannot be reduced to other dimensions, such as the descriptive (for the normative robust realist) or the physical (for the mental properties dualist).

However, linear vector additional has no conceptual non-analogical equivalent as such and instead the better candidate is the semantic parthood relation that obtains between a proposition and its constituent parts. Instead of linear dependence establishing whether a property is reducible to others, its conceptual dependence that establishes it. This is further motivated by Schroeder's own treatment of his examples.

We may extrapolate from these cases to give a more general account of reduction as property analysis. One set of properties *A* reduces to another set *B* if and only if there is a conceptual dependence relation *R* such that any property of *A* is identical with some *R* relations of properties of *B*. In the easiest case of the reduction of *bachelor* to *unmarried man*, the conceptual dependence relation is such that whenever these two properties co-instantiate, they thereby realize *bachelorhood* as well. Perhaps the identity claim on the right-hand side can be weakened to a material biconditional or necessary coextension or having identical causal powers. Whatever connects a reduced property

type to related elements of its reduction base must be strong enough to count some reductions as eliminative yet weak enough to count others as not eliminative. These objectives seem in tension with one another and it is far from clear whether Schroeder's own account of reduction as property analysis satisfies what I take to be this upshot of Plantinga's Challenge.

Following Maguire (2013), we can classify reduction relations in accordance with how strict or permissive they are. Identity is the least permissive as everything reduces to itself and nothing else, while supervenience is the most permissive reduction relation. Maguire further distinguishes eliminative and preserving reductions from identity and supervenience as dependence relations. This follows closely with Schroeder's discussion of reduction, except without the troublesome notion of property analysis. All that's required for there to be a preserving reduction is that there's a dependence relation, not that the dependence relation be between concepts. "*Preserving reductions* are metaphysical relations between two sets of phenomena which obtain whenever the following is true: the two sets of phenomena are nonidentical and there is some asymmetrical dependence relation between the two" (Maguire, 2013, p. 2). Preserving reductions seek to explain the reduced entities in terms of the reducing entities, but must also explain the nature and modal status of the dependency relation in question. By contrast, eliminative reductions have the advantage, according to Maguire, of not having to do this: what at first appeared to be two distinct kinds of phenomena, upon analysis, turned out to be just one.

Rather than discuss whether the normative reduces to the descriptive as a matter of preservation or elimination, I will turn to an argument that tests the boundaries of whether the normative reduces to the descriptive at all. As the most permissive reduction

relation, the modal strength of the supervenience of the normative upon the descriptive is critical for those allergic to any reduction whatsoever. If supervenience fails, then the prospects of any kind of reduction look grim.

As we shall see, Rosen (2014) argues against the supervenience of the normative upon the descriptive with metaphysical necessity, what he calls 'Strong Supervenience.' Instead, he opts for what we may call 'Weak Supervenience,' namely, that the normative supervenes over the descriptive with normative necessity. In chapter 1, normative necessity as characterized by fact-independence was rejected, but even if we accept some restriction of the modal operator to get a kind of necessity that obtains whenever certain normative facts are fixed between worlds, and call it 'normative necessity,' there are independent reasons to reject Rosen's argument against Strong Supervenience.

3.2 Finean Essentialism

Rosen (2014) claims the following theses form an inconsistent triad such that if any two are true, the third is false. These are Strong (Local) Supervenience (SLS), Ethical Non-Naturalism (ENN), and the essentialist account of metaphysical modality, which I shall call 'Finean Essentialism' (FE). Rosen takes this last thesis to be a reductive account of metaphysical necessity.

While Rosen claims to have an argument from the premises of FE and ENN that the normative fails to supervene over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity, I will argue in this chapter that his argument fails unless restricted to target SLS. In other words, I argue that FE and ENN are consistent with Strong Global Supervenience (SGS) in which the normative globally supervenes over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity, that is, two worlds are descriptively identical only if they are normatively identical under Rosen's own premises.

Central to Finean Essentialism is the notion of "essential truth." A proposition p is an essential truth if and only if there is a particular entity X such that it lies in the nature of X that p (Rosen, 2014, pp. 5-6). The essentialist account of metaphysical necessity is as follows: a proposition is metaphysically necessary if and only if it is an essential truth. Similarly, a proposition is metaphysically possible if and only if it is logically consistent with the essential truths (Rosen, 2014, p. 6).[13]

Essential truths are given by the notation '$\Box_X p$' to represent 'it lies in the nature of X that p.' Here, p is a proposition expressed by a sentence, X is a referent of a singular term, and $\Box_X$ is a sentential operator formed from the essentialist operator '$\Box$' and the singular term 'X.' Plural or collective essences are handled in a similar fashion: '$\Box_{X, Y, ...} p$' if and only if 'it lies in the nature of entities X, Y, … that p,' where the nature of multiple entities are under consideration. Instead of indexing the essentialist box operator to multiple singular terms $x_1, x_2, ...$, a general predicate term F is used instead such that $\Box_F p$, rather than $\Box_{x1, x2, ...} p$. Here, the extension of F is all and only x_1, x_2, …. Plural or collective essences represent problem cases for the Finean Essentialist only insofar as metaphysical necessities obtain in virtue of the identities of particular objects and not arbitrary objects or universal kinds. Hence, plural or collective essences are candidates for reduction.[14]

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[13] In the ensuing discussion of Finean Essentialism, I am following Fine (1994, 2001) and Rosen (2010, 2014). For a friendly criticism of Finean Essentialism, see Fabrice Correia (2012).

[14] The issue as to whether there could be essential truths of universals and not merely of particulars is one of the few discernable disagreements between Rosen (2010, 2014) and Fine (1994, 2001, 2002), at least as written. If there could be essential truths of universals independently from particulars, what I call "analytic normative truths" could be essential not of any particular but some universal such as the kind *murder* without instantiating into some particular killing. Nevertheless, the proposition *murder is wrong* still has a different modal status than *killing is wrong* and as such is still a counterexample to Rosen's uniformity thesis that every normative proposition is normatively necessary. Essential truths of universals saves Rosen's Finean Essentialist (contra Fine), but still sacrifices the modal uniformity of the normative.

In cases of general terms, such general facts are reduced to singular facts. For instance, if it lies in the nature of *knowledge* that knowledge entails belief, then this general fact obtains essentially only because it lies in the nature of any particular knowing that the knower believes what is known.[15] Essential truths of general terms reduce to essential truths of a collection of singular terms, which in turn reduce to a collection of essential truths of singular terms by a principle of essence called 'Separability' (Rosen, 2014, p. 6). Essential truths are closed under logical consequence such that whatever is a logical consequence of an essential truth is itself an essential truth.[16]

Notice that the propositions expressed by the sentences 'Superman is identical with Clark Kent' and 'Superman is identical with Superman' do not share the same modal strength as essential truths. It lies in the nature of anything that everything is self-identical, but does it lie in the nature of Clark Kent that he is Superman or visa-versa? Perhaps we should say that it does not lie in the nature of Kal-El that he is identical with Clark Kent or Superman.

To see that Finean Essentialism is a reductive account of metaphysical modality, compare it to David Lewis' reductive account of Modal Realism. What makes Modal Realism a reductive account is that modal facts are eliminated in favor of non-modal facts about worlds and their constituent individuals. This relies on the critical inter-theoretic biconditional: possibly *p* if and only if there is a world at which *p*. It is possibly the case that Wilbur is a talking donkey if and only if there is a world at which Wilbur is

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[15] The entailment relation here is that of the material conditional. What is important is that the relation does not involve modal terms.

[16] Presumably, another requirement on essential truths is that they are true, so falsehoods do not lie in the nature of something.

a talking donkey.[17] Modal terms appear only on the left-hand side of the biconditional, while this is not the case on the right-hand side.

However, even a Finean essence is a modal concept. Their account gives only a preserving reduction under which the metaphysical necessities are reduced to essential truths because the former obtain in virtue of the latter and are explained by them. The explanation would be trivialized if metaphysical necessities and essential truths were identical or if there wasn't anything to explain. For Fine and Rosen, there are modal facts, but they are not fundamental, whereas for the Lewisian there are no modal facts. Metaphysical necessities thereby stand in an asymmetric dependency relation of some kind to the essential truths.

Which facts lie in the nature of which entities is critical to which truths are essential. Fine claims that it lies in the nature of electrons that they have negative charge (Fine 2002, p. 242). Hence, it is an essential truth that electrons have negative charge and it is metaphysically necessary that electrons have negative charge. However, for a brief period of time in the past, there were no electrons as they had yet to come into being. Was there a fact of the matter as to whether electrons have negative charge during this time? Similarly, there may come a time in the far future in which there will be no electrons. Will it still be the case that it is an essential truth that electrons have negative charge when there are no longer any electrons?[18] While Fine implicitly endorses

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[17] I am here taking Maguire (2012) to be approximately representative of what I consider to be an upgraded version of Lewis' Modal Realism than the historical views expressed in Lewis (1986). For one, it has no furtively modal commitments and as such provides a non-circular reduction of modal items to non-modal items.

[18] Electrons have long been known to be stable but there is debate over whether they could ever decay, which would require them to be capable of splitting into smaller particles: <http://profmattstrassler.com/articles-and-posts/particle-physics-basics/why-do-particles-decay/most-particles-decay-yet-some-dont/>. This debate concerns whether electrons are elementary particles and

uninstantiated properties in both his distinction between prevailing and non-prevailing natural laws as well as in his rejection of the doctrine of immanent universals (Fine, 2002, pp. 242-5), the essentialist account of metaphysical necessity is committed to denying that essential truths about uninstantiated kinds obtain, as there is no particular X (electrons) for it to lie in the nature of that *p* (that electrons have negative charge). As an account of metaphysical necessity, it is strange to think of metaphysical necessities as temporary, being contingent upon the times at which their objects exist.

Perhaps this is a reason to believe that we were mistaken in our example and as it turned out the fact that electrons have negative charge is not an essential truth. But it is important for the Finean Essentialist that some example of a fact involving only natural kind terms obtain with metaphysical necessity, while others do not. Otherwise, we fall back into one of two of Fine's dialectical opponents, depending upon whether we see all laws of nature as metaphysically necessary or contingent, while failing to heed the distinction that some facts involving only natural kind terms may be metaphysically necessary, while others are contingent.

The fact that electrons are temporary need not render the further fact that *electrons have negative charge* metaphysically contingent, but only if we deny the doctrine of immanent universals by admitting the existence of uninstantiated kinds. Prior and posterior to the existence of electrons this general fact remains uninstantiated. The upshot here is that some natural facts are metaphysically necessary while others are metaphysically contingent yet naturally necessary.

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what it takes to be elementary. If it turns out that electrons are not indivisible, then it is likely they will not be considered "elementary" as such was the case with atoms, neutrons, and protons.

Fine's touchstone example of the former is that of *electron's having negative charge*, and the latter is that of *the constancy of the speed of light in a vacuum*. Perhaps a better example of a fact involving only natural kind terms that is metaphysically necessary is that fact that *all particles are either fermions or bosons*, where fermions such as electrons are particles with odd half-integer spin, while bosons such as photons are particles with whole-valued integer spin.[19] The fact that *all particles are either fermions or bosons* has a mathematical proof that rests upon the assumptions that space has dimensionality and distance. Whether space has distance (is metrizable) or is merely topological may be metaphysically necessary or contingent, and the natural fact that *all particles are either fermions or bosons* would share in its modal status. For instance, if there is a possible world at which particles exist but where there is space without distance (a non-metrizable topological space). Particle spin would not be orientable at this world, hence there could be particles that are neither fermions nor bosons. My point here is that there are not uncontroversial examples of metaphysically contingent natural facts, as they rest upon how permissive we are about which remote possibilities obtain, which in my example was whether it is possible for there to be space without distance.

For the moment, let's accept that space without distance is metaphysically impossible, perhaps because it is inconsistent with the essential truths as it lies in the nature of everything that their spatial relations have distance. Hence, the natural fact that *all particles are either fermions or bosons* is metaphysically necessary. Now we need an example of a natural fact that is metaphysically contingent. That *the speed of light is constant in a vacuum* will not do as we could just as easily say that it lies in the nature of photons that their speed has a limit, which is constant. What motivates the example as

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[19] Source: <http://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/spin_stat.html>.

one of metaphysical contingency? Why do facts about electrons such as that they have negative charge count as essential, while the speed of light does not? When pushed beyond the usual paradigm examples of entries on the Periodic Table or simplified particle physics, the Finean Essentialist runs the risk of appearing stipulative and arbitrary as to what counts as essential truths and what does not.

Perhaps a better example of a natural fact that is naturally necessary but metaphysically contingent is an instance of Pauli's Exclusion Principle, which in this case is applied to electrons but enjoys a generality of all fermions, is such: *two electrons of the same atom cannot have the same quantum state simultaneously*.[20] This principle is said to generalize to all fermions but fail with respect to bosons. For example, lasers shoot photons (bosons) many of which are moving in the same direction with the same spin. The fact that electrons are chaotic in their movement while photons are not along with their negations both seem to be consistent with whatever essential truths there are, provided that a suitably non-arbitrary method were found to regiment and delineate them. The modal term 'cannot' in Pauli's Exclusion Principle can thus be read as one of natural and not metaphysical necessity. Of course, in order for the fact to be natural it must only involve non-modal natural kind terms, so our example of a metaphysical contingency would be some further instance such as the fact that *two electrons of the same atom do not have the same simultaneous quantum state*. The example need not pick out suitably generalized, counterfactually robust laws to suffice to establish that some natural facts are metaphysically contingent; all that Fine's argument requires is that there are some such facts.

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[20] Source: <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/pauli.html>.

The change of examples was motivated by the objection that what counts as "essential" is arbitrary, since there did not seem to be anything unique or special to electrons that wasn't unique or special about photons. By identifying two salient principles of particle physics, namely, the classification of all particles into fermions and bosons and Pauli's Exclusion Principle, I have revealed a relevant dissimilarity between electrons and photons that generalizes into a metaphysical necessity and a metaphysical contingency on the Finean Essential model of metaphysical necessity, which was what is dialectically required to motivate the entire project of discriminating between varieties of necessity to begin with. This relevant dissimilarity follows from the fact that electrons are fermions and photons are bosons, which is itself metaphysically necessary as for Fine it is an essential truth of anything that it is of the kind that it is, provided that it is a member of some kind at all.

It is likely that differential considerations concerning electrons and photons is not what is motivating the Finean Essentialist. Instead, there's a nagging feeling that the metaphysical necessities reveal something deep about the nature of reality and its constituents. Fine's itch that what it is to be an electron just is to have negative charge wasn't scratched when it came to light having a speed limit. In the absence of a principled, non-circular criterion for identifying when and when not it lies in the nature of things that some proposition is true, identifying the most general features of the examples given is about all that can be done.

3.3 Ethical Non-Naturalism

Once we transition from the natural domain of the descriptive to the domain of the normative, both Fine and Rosen dump what was a mixed view that some natural facts are metaphysically contingent while others are not to the blanket view that all normative

facts are naturally contingent. This is due to their overly reliance on a non-reductive realism about normativity, which they call 'Ethical Non-Naturalism.' This doctrine excludes the mixed cases of normative facts that are natural necessities by holding them either to be descriptive facts in disguise or natural contingencies in disguise if indeed normative. Fine and Rosen's Ethical Non-Naturalism goes beyond the mere affirmation that there are normative properties, but rather that any putative reduction that purports to fully explain normative propositions in terms of descriptive propositions simply fails to get at what it is to be normative. Fine's unscratched itch about light having the accidental feature of a constant speed limit is generalized to any attempted naturalistic reduction of the normative. Fine is not a non-naturalist about light, so what's different about normativity?

Given that the metaphysical necessities reduce to essential truths, it might seem somewhat odd that both Fine and Rosen are resistant to such explanatory reductions of the normative to the descriptive. Rosen gives at least three different definitions of Ethical Naturalism, which entail three different versions of Ethical Non-Naturalism as the latter is in all cases the former's denial. Rosen characterizes naturalism by use of "real definition" such that ethical naturalism is the thesis that every normative property admits of real definition in descriptive terms.

Rosen explains what he means by 'real definition' as the following. *G* really defines *F* if and only if (1) it is an essential truth of *F* that $\forall x\,(Fx \leftrightarrow Gx)$ and (2) the essences of the constituents of *G* make no non-trivial reference to *F*. The second condition is given to avoid circularity problems.

Rosen's avowal of ethical non-naturalism amounts to the claim that there is at least one normative property that does not admit of real definition in descriptive terms. But given his Finean Essentialism, ethical non-naturalism entails that it is a metaphysical possibility that there is a normative property type N and some object x that instantiates N such that any descriptive predicates are coextensive with the normative N-predicate. For at least one normative property, its nature is such that it has no necessary and sufficient descriptive conditions for its application. Such a normative property would not co-vary with some subvening base of descriptive properties and as such would not supervene upon the descriptive with *metaphysical* possibility.

3.4 Supervenience

Normative properties supervene on descriptive properties just in case nothing differing in its normative properties can differ in its descriptive properties. Here, if the quantifier 'nothing' ranges over worlds, the supervenience is global; otherwise, the supervenience is local, wherein the quantifier ranges over entities such as objects, regions, events, particular actions or action types. The modal term 'can' has an attenuating sense for Rosen that corresponds to a restriction upon metaphysical necessity. This is what Rosen calls 'normative necessity' to distinguish it from metaphysical and natural necessity. Rosen (2014) is following Fine (2002) regarding inter-modal contingencies. Every natural necessity that is not a metaphysical necessity is a metaphysical contingency, and every normative necessity that is not a natural necessity is a natural contingency. These are qualified, since every metaphysical necessity is a natural necessity and every natural necessity is a normative necessity.

However, Rosen (2014) is less clear about whether there are three kinds of necessity that are mutually irreducible. Fine (2002) explicitly endorses this as an avowal

of Modal Pluralism, as opposed to Modal Monism, which holds that every kind of necessity is a restriction or relativization of some one general kind. The fact that every natural necessity is and only is metaphysically necessitated by some law(s) of nature does not really define natural necessity, but rather provides an intensionally accurate biconditional. Fine makes a similar argument against naturalistic reductions of morality/goodness in a metaphysical version of the Open Question Argument.

Rosen (2014) argues against what he calls "Strong Supervenience" – the thesis that if two possible entities are alike in every descriptive respect, they are alike in every normative respect. Rosen attenuates this supervenience thesis by restricting its modal term 'possible' from metaphysical possibility to normative possibility. Nevertheless, the thesis remains a local supervenience thesis.

Let's call the supervenience thesis that Rosen (2014) endorses 'Weak Supervenience' to contrast it with his own definition. By quantifying over entities, both Rosen's Strong and Weak Supervenience theses are local to whatever kinds of entities those things are. Rosen's examples suggest that the entities in question are actions, but all that is required is that it is something other or less than a world. Such local supervenience requires there to be de re normative necessities about whatever the supervening entities are.

Fine (2002) reduces all de re natural necessities to de dicto natural necessities and de re metaphysical necessities. The reason for this is within the essentialist framework for modality, the only de re necessities there are lie in the nature of things, which in turn constitute the essential truths. Essential truths do not vary from world to world as they account for how the world could and must be, but in such a framework the nomic and normative facts vary. Hence, there are no de re natural or normative

necessities. De dicto necessities are given by laws, which are natural laws in the natural case and normative laws in the normative case (or, to be more specific, moral laws in the case of morality).

Just as Fine does with natural necessities, so can Rosen do with normative necessities. For instance, Fine explanatorily reduces the de re natural necessity that some particular photon has a maximum speed to the de re metaphysical necessity that that particular photon is of the kind that it is and the de dicto natural necessity that photons of that kind have that maximum speed. Rosen may explanatorily reduce the de re normative necessity that some particular war is wrong to the de re metaphysical necessity that that particular war is of the kind that it is and the de dicto normative necessity that wars of that kind are wrong.

The only disanalogy is that normative necessities are not alethic, that is, if it is metaphysically or naturally necessary that something is the case, then it is actually the case. Unfortunately, this does not obtain with represent to normativity. Fine (2002) equivocates on whether there are or are not uninstantiated kinds at worlds governed by corresponding laws, which just do not prevail. Fine concedes to his dialectical opponent that kinds vary necessarily to their laws.

Further notice that the things differing in their normative properties may be two things in one or two worlds or just one thing at one world between times, contexts, etc. Rosen is ambivalent on whether the supervenience of the normative upon the descriptive concerns intra-world or inter-world objects, and hence his use of the prefix 'strong' to his discussion of the doctrine of Strong Supervenience is idiosyncratic. The strength of this supervenience thesis concerns the strength of its modal terms.

Rosen's (2014) argument for the inconsistency of his triad proceeds as follows.

1. Let a, b, … be all of the metaphysically possible right acts.
2. Let $D_a(a)$, $D_b(b)$, … be their respective complete descriptions.
3. $\Box_m \forall x$ (x is right $\leftrightarrow [D_a(x) \vee D_b(x) \vee \ldots]$) by Str.Supervenience
4. $\exists Y \, \Box_Y \, \forall x$ (x is right $\leftrightarrow (D_a(x) \vee D_b(x) \vee \ldots)$) by Essentialism.
5. $\Box_{right, P, Q, \ldots} \, \forall x$ (x is right $\leftrightarrow [D_a(x) \vee D_b(x) \vee \ldots]$) for descriptive P, Q,…
6. $\Box_{P, Q, \ldots} \, \forall x$ ($\varphi x \leftrightarrow [D_a(x) \vee D_b(x) \vee \ldots]$) by Separability.
7. $\Box_{right} \, \forall x$ (x is right $\leftrightarrow \varphi x$) for descriptive φ, by Separability.
8. *Right* is really defined in wholly descriptive terms.
9. /.: Supervenience entails naturalism within the essentialist framework.
   a. /.: Inconsistent Triad:
      i. Strong Supervenience
      ii. Ethical Non-Naturalism
      iii. Finean Essentialism

Let's say that two worlds are descriptively identical if and only if any descriptive property of one *is* a descriptive property of the other. The term 'is' in the former sentence expresses qualitative identity, so we may say that descriptively identical worlds are indiscernible in their descriptive properties. Similarly, let's say that two worlds are normatively identical if and only if any normative property of one is a normative property of the other. Also, normatively identical worlds are indiscernible in their normative properties. If possible, worlds devoid of normative properties are normatively distinct from any world with at least one normative property.

Rosen's "Strong Supervenience" thesis can now be contrasted with the following Global Supervenience thesis: two worlds are descriptively identical only if they are normatively identical. Rosen's argument at best establishes the inconsistency of this global supervenience thesis with his Ethical Non-Naturalism and Finean Essentialism.

To see this, consider whether eating meat is wrong. At some point of time in the past, the process of factory farming initiated. Beforehand, the eating of meat was presumptively permissible. Thereafter, it was sometimes impermissible.

When presented with an opportunity to eat some meat, the act of eating that particular meat is descriptively invariant across the times and contexts at which factory farming rendered it impermissible. Part of what truly describes the meat in question is what origin it has and the causal history by which it arrived ready for eating. At least some of these true descriptions pick out descriptive properties the meat has, but such descriptive properties vary by context, depending upon the origin and causal history of the meat. However, the act of meat-eating itself does not vary by the origins or causal history of the meat, as it is the same action regardless whether the meat was procured by factory farming or free range butchery, or even if it mysteriously materialized out of a swamp hit by lightning. Eating swamp meat is the same as eating free range just in case the various meats are of the same kind. Only the normative feature of permissibility changed across the various contexts of meat-eating.

To use a less contentious example, reading this essay now is permissible. But if you are reading this essay now next to a drowning person that's easy to save, then it is not permissible to continue reading. Nothing about the act of reading changed from the ordinary context of reading in solitude to the extraordinary context of reading near a drowning person. The complete specification of the act's descriptive properties does not include facts that are not even about the act at all, such as its Cambridge properties.

The point is to give an example of an action that at one time is impermissible but at another time is permissible due to extraneous changes surrounding the action. What's critical is that the descriptive features of the action remain unchanged such that it is the same kind of action that it is and only the normative feature of its permissibility changes. This is seen across times for the example of eating meat and across contexts for the example of reading this essay.

Once localized, the normative may fail to supervene over the descriptive due to changes extraneous to the action itself yet salient to its permissibility. Further argumentation is needed to establish that such cases are not failures of local supervenience or that Ethical Non-Naturalism and Finean Essentialism are incompatible with global as well as local supervenience.

In conclusion, in this chapter I argued that there is at least one sense in which the normative reduces to the descriptive in every possible world. Namely, the normative globally supervenes over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity such that any two metaphysically possible worlds are descriptively identical only if they are normatively identical. I supported this conclusion by looking at an argument to the contrary by Rosen (2014) and rejected it, conceding that successfully refuted only SLS and not SGS. That supervenience is a form of reduction I discuss at the opening of this chapter.

That some form of metaphysically necessary reductive relation obtains between the normative and the descriptive is critical for the drawing the mark of the normative insofar as one line need be drawn. Otherwise, a different line must be drawn for each world or classes of worlds. If the only reduction relation that obtains between the normative and the descriptive is at best a weak form of supervenience that is metaphysically contingent, as Rosen (2014) maintains, then the project of finding necessary and sufficient conditions for the normativity of a proposition requires identifying the contingent normativity-makers invariant across nearby possible worlds at which the proposition in question is true. As we shall see in the next chapter, even when what accounts for the normativity of a proposition is its grounds, holding such normativity-making contingent creates its own problems.

CHAPTER 4

NORMATIVITY AND GROUNDING

Given the failure of fact-independence to draw the mark of the normative, perhaps we

should give up on the project of finding both necessary and sufficient conditions for

when and only when a proposition is normative. Constraints on which propositions are

normative may content us for now.

It is sometimes asserted that you cannot get an 'ought' from an 'is,' which is

generally referred to as 'Hume's Dictum.' In "Grounding the Autonomy of Ethics,"

Maguire (2015) argues that the standard counterexamples to Hume's Dictum can be

avoided if we interpret it not as a logical thesis of the autonomy of the ethical from the

non-ethical, but rather a metaphysical thesis. He then articulates and defends two

metaphysical autonomy theses composed in the spirit of Hume's Dictum, demonstrating

that they avoid the standard counterexamples that derive ought-statements from is-

statements, as well as stand on their own accord against independent objections.

For our purposes, Maguire's autonomy theses each present necessary conditions

upon which propositions are normative. He makes use of the grounding relation to

establish some necessary conditions upon demarcating ethical propositions from natural

propositions. In the spirit of Maguire, we may generalize its relevant contrast classes

from *ethical* and *natural* to *normative* and *descriptive*, as was argued for in chapter 1,

and in so doing bring our project to a close with a procedure that generates necessary

and sufficient conditions for when a proposition is normative. Whence, the mark of the

normative is drawn with the line of which fundamental normative facts obtain. Provided

that each world has exactly one such fact, which is unique, supreme ethical principles

draw the mark of the normative. Two objections to this proposal shall be considered in closing.

4.1 Autonomy – logical or metaphysical?

What does it mean for a thesis to be autonomy thesis? Maguire uses the term in at least two ways. Firstly, "autonomy theses maintain that there is some specific relation such that facts or propositions from two different categories do not stand in that relation to each other" (Maguire, 2015, p. 190). Secondly, autonomy theses "maintain that there is some relation such that facts or propositions from some category do not stand in that relation to facts or propositions from *any* other category" (Maguire, 2015, p. 190). In either case, the relevant relation in question must be specified to deny that propositions from one category stand in that relation to propositions from another or all categories, depending on whether the kind of autonomy is in the first or second sense. In both cases, cross-categorical comparisons between the relevant propositions must be made to establish the independence of the autonomous category from the other or all categories with respect to the specified relation. In this way, a category of propositions may conceivably be autonomous from another category with respect to one specified relation but not another. For instance, the normative may be classically entailed by the descriptive, but the descriptive may be metaphysically grounded in the normative. Or, more plausibly, the normative may be epistemologically justified by the descriptive, yet fail to be metaphysically grounded by the descriptive.

Maguire considers the constraint on ethicality that ethical facts have ethical constituents. His counterexample is foot-binding in China during the Song Dynasty. At that time, it was considered morally obligatory for court dancers to bind their feet, yet the fact that it was considered morally obligatory does not make it obligatory (Maguire,

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2015, p. 190). True, but the issue is not with what people believed or considered, yet rather with whether there are propositions with ethical constituents that are not themselves ethical. Disqualifying propositions from ethicality because we disagree with their truth does not deprive them of their categorical nature. It is all the more important that we recognize that the proposition *all court dancers morally should bind their feet* is not only a claim about what is ethical but a false one at that.

In chapter 1, I gave multiple examples of propositions that may guide actions or give rise to reasons, yet are descriptive propositions with normative implicatures. These were the best candidate counterexamples I could think of that would be normative propositions with purely descriptive constituents. The normativity of a proposition is determined only by its semantic content. As such, neither the propositional attitudes people have nor their conversational implicatures falsify the constraint that normative propositions have normative constituents. In lieu of a better candidate counterexample, the constraint stands.

Identifying descriptive propositions with normative constituents is not all that difficult when not in their customary sense. For instance, the descriptive proposition *Rosen believes that permissibility is a feature only of actions* has the normative constituent 'permissibility.' Outside of belief reports and other propositional attitudes, and perhaps if we restrict ourselves to categorical (non-modal) cases, examples become more controversial. Consider the primary thesis of hedonism, *pleasure is good*. This appears to me to be a descriptive proposition with the normative constituent of *goodness*. The proposition *the highest purpose of love is the love of wisdom* is a description of what kinds of love are best, but is not in itself an endorsement that one

ought to love wisdom, at least, not without the supplementary pure normative principle that *one ought to do what is best*.[21]

Maguire astutely observes that almost all of the literature surrounding Hume's Dictum focuses on the logical relations between normative and descriptive propositions.[22] This focus motivated the adopting of various kinds of logical autonomy theses, such as what Maguire calls 'Simple Logical Autonomy' (SLA) – the thesis that no amoral proposition entails a moral proposition. SLA is trivially false as any proposition follows a contradiction, according to the principle of explosion. A second attempt follows Charles Pigden (1989, 2010) to get what Maguire calls 'Non-Vacuous Logical Autonomy' (NVLA) – the thesis that "no non-ethical propositions entail a non-vacuous ethical proposition," where a proposition is vacuous in an argument if and only if any substitution of its non-logical constituents fails to change the truth-value of the proposition that is composed of the consequence of the conclusion from the argument's premises.

4.2 On deriving 'ought' from 'is'

Maguire gives three syllogistic counterexamples to Hume's Dictum. The first by Arthur Prior (1960), the second by Toomas Karmo (1988), the third by Stephen Maitzen (2010). What they have in common is a reliance on logical inference rules, such as the principle of explosion or disjunctive introduction or modus ponens, to form valid deductions of normative conclusions from descriptive premises. What they fail to accomplish is to provide syllogisms whose descriptive premises explain their normative conclusions, that

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[21] This example was inspired by 204d-206a of Plato's *Symposium*.
[22] As is the case with Charles Pigden's (2010) anthology *Hume on Is and Ought*.

is, in the metaphysical sense of 'explain,' where the conclusion would obtain in virtue of the premises.

Say that whenever pleasure is optimal rightness is instantiated. To the Moorean ear, the optimization of pleasure does not explain why something is right, only if or when things are right. To the naturalist's ear, there's nothing left to explain. Needless to say, disputes over whether an argument's descriptive premises metaphysically explain its normative conclusion will need further explication before progress can be made towards their resolution. The intuition that there is an explanatory gap between the normative and the descriptive motivates Maguire's usage of the grounding relation to characterize his autonomy theses.

Maguire claims that NVLA accommodates Prior's syllogistic counterexample to Hume's Dictum, but fails to accommodate Karmo's and Maitzen's. Or, to put it better, if the best way to construe Hume's Dictum is as NVLA, then Prior's syllogism is not a counterexample, but Karmo's and Maitzen's syllogisms are. I shall present these syllogisms in reverse order.

Maitzen's syllogism is as follows: (1) at least one ethical proposition is true; (2) if at least one ethical proposition is true, then torturing innocent children is impermissible; (3) therefore, torturing innocent children is impermissible. (1) is descriptive, (3) is normative, and (2) is putatively descriptive.

Karmo's syllogism is as follows: (1) everything that Alfie says is true; (2) Alfie says that it is impermissible to starve the Irish; (3) therefore, it is impermissible to starve the Irish. (2) is descriptive, (3) is normative, and (1) is putatively descriptive. Notice the hidden disquotational premise (1.5) 'p' is true only if p, which gets us from (2.5) to (3), for (2.5) 'it is impermissible to starve the Irish' is true. However, these hidden premises

are not of much interest as it is quite hard to argue that facts about which propositions are true are themselves normative even in the widest sense of 'normative' as 'not-descriptive.' Facts about which propositions are true describe how the world is, if anything does.

Prior's syllogism is the most complicated (which was why it was reserved for last), and proceeds as follows. Suppose that propositions R and M are such that R is not ethical and M is ethical. (1) R entails (R v M); (2) [(R v M) & ~R] entails M; (3) either (R v M) is ethical or not; (4) if (R v M) is ethical, then (1) derives an ethical proposition from a non-ethical proposition; (5) if (R v M) is not ethical, then (2) derives an ethical proposition from a non-ethical proposition; (6) therefore, Hume's Dictum is false. (1) follows from the first supposition by disjunctive introduction. (2) follows from the conjunction of the suppositions by disjunctive introduction and a series of distributions. This proceeds as follows: (a) M & R, by supposition; (b) [M v (R v ~R)] & [R v (M v ~M)]; (c) [(R v ~R) v M] & [(R v ~M) v M)]; (d) [(R v ~R) & (R v ~M)] v M; (e) ~[(R & ~R) v (M & ~R)] v M; (f) [(R v M) & ~R)] → M. My purpose in going through this derivation is to show that we Prior's second premise derives a normative proposition from a descriptive proposition just in case the conjunction of a normative and descriptive proposition (R & M) is itself descriptive. Just as it is unclear what the normativity of a disjunction is, as is the case with Prior's third premise, so too with conjunctions. Maguire's point is that while figuring out which logical operations preserve ethicality (or more generally normativity) is one project, drawing the mark of the normative is quite another.

4.3 Metaphysical autonomy theses

Maguire gives his autonomy theses as follows.

- Metaphysical Autonomy about Ethics (MAE): No ethical fact is fully grounded just by non-ethical facts (Maguire, 2015, p. 194).

- Converse Metaphysical Autonomy (CMAE): any fact partly grounded by an ethical fact is an ethical fact (Maguire, 2015, p. 195).[23]

As I contrast the normative from the descriptive in an attempt to cut at the joints of normativity, rather than cut across naturalism, we can reformulate these theses to obtain the following four theses.

- Metaphysical Autonomy about Normativity (MANN): no normative fact is fully grounded by descriptive facts.

- Converse Metaphysical Autonomy about Normativity (CMANN): no descriptive fact is partly grounded by normative facts.

- Metaphysical Autonomy about Normativity (MANS): any fact fully grounded by descriptive facts is a descriptive fact.

- Converse Metaphysical Autonomy about Normativity (CMANS): any fact partly grounded by a normative fact is a normative fact.[24]

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[23] Jack Woods (2015) proposes multiple putative counterexamples to CMAE as well as Taxonomic Essentialism. For reasons that I do not have time to further elaborate upon here, I believe most if not all of his hypotheticals constitute counterexamples to CMAE and not CMANN or CMANS. I attempt to remain neutral as to whether Taxonomic Essentialism is true. If so, it simplifies drawing the mark of the normative at the line of supreme ethical principles, that is, once any tradeoffs between the moral and other normative considerations have been sorted out. If not, then it complicates an already complicated picture and perhaps devastates the entire project of using grounding to draw the mark of the normative.

[24] Both MANN and MANS as well as CMANN and CMANS are classically equivalent. However, the logic of grounding is not classical and hence I have distinguished necessity conditions from their classically equivalent contrapositives, their sufficiency conditions.

Maguire tersely summarizes what he takes grounding to be, but I shall reproduce only the relevant bits here (Maguire, 2015, pp. 197-200). Grounding is a metaphysical dependence relation between facts (and not propositions), as grounding is factive; if F grounds G, then F and G obtain. Grounding is an intra-world relation, never relating facts at different worlds. Grounding is a relation that may come in parts or wholes such that facts $F_1, \ldots, F_k$ partly ground G if and only if $F_1, \ldots, F_n$ ground G and $\{F_1, \ldots, F_k\}$ is a subset of $\{F_1, \ldots, F_n\}$. The F's wholly ground G if and only if $k = n$.[25]

Grounding is a necessary relation in that grounds necessitate what they ground. Maguire is ambivalent as to what the modal strength of this necessity is, such as whether the kind of necessity that holds between pure ethical principles and their instances is that of metaphysical or normative necessity (Maguire, 2015, p. 199). Following Knut Skarsaune (2015), Maguire reduces principles to facts attributing properties to kinds, which in the case of ethical principles is moral kinds, so an ethical principle is "pure" when it attributes properties only to moral kinds. Maguire's hesitancy to endorse whether the grounding of impure ethical facts by pure ethical facts and non-ethical facts has metaphysical or normative necessity likely originates from Rosen's argument against Strong Supervenience, yet we need not follow this as we've already rejected Rosen's argument for failing to establish that the normative does not globally supervene over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity, only that local supervenience fails with metaphysical necessity.

Maguire does himself a disservice with such ambivalence insofar as each kind of necessity produces in turn different kinds of autonomy theses that feature different kinds

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[25] Maguire's notion of grounding is following Fine (2012), Rosen (2010) though suitably modified by a predicational approach as advanced by Correia (2010). Correia is Maguired preferred approach, though it lacks the advantage of ontological neutrality as to whether there are facts (Maguire, 2015, p. 197).

of grounding relations. There would be a metaphysical grounding relation, a natural grounding relation, and a normative grounding relation to correspond with each kind of necessity that Maguire inherits from Fine (2002) to form three ways in which the normative may be autonomous.[26] It is far from clear whether they would not cut across one another. As a simplifying assumption and given our rejection of Rosen's argument, we'll take the grounding relation to hold only with metaphysical necessity.

Maguire evades the putative counterexamples to Hume's Dictum and as such stands as the best construal of the 'no ought from an is' slogan. Though the conclusions of the arguments are deducible from the premises, they are not grounded by them should the premises be true. Recall that false propositions do not ground and are not grounded by anything; only facts (true propositions) stand in grounding relation.

Disjunctive facts are grounded by their disjuncts. Disjunctive facts with only one true disjunct have as their normative status whatever the disjunct is. So in worlds in which descriptive R is true and normative M is false, the disjunctive fact (R or M) is descriptive by MANS. But in worlds at which both R and M are true, the disjunctive fact (R or M) is normative by CMANS. The same applies to conjunctive facts as well.

Prior's argument only constitutes a counterexample to Maguire's autonomy theses if normative facts are not only entailed by descriptive facts but are grounded by them. This would be a counterexample to MANN for those keeping score. Any counterexample to any of the above autonomy theses is enough to cause trouble for Maguire, though. Maguire contents himself with arguing that neither of Prior's first two premises' antecedents ground their consequents (Maguire, 2015, pp. 201-202). As for

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[26] Normative grounding as corresponding to a kind of necessity, normative necessity, is distinct from what other authors such as Pekka Vayrynen (2013) take normative grounding to be.

Karmo's and Maitzen's arguments, I flagged the relevant premises as "putatively descriptive" for the very reason that CMANS classifies them as normative, and as such both arguments contain normative propositions for conclusions as well as among the premises.

4.4 Problems with demarcating at fundamental ethics

Maguire's playing a dangerous game here and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. The rhetorical strategy to evade putative syllogistic counterexamples to Hume's Dictum by reclassifying one of their premises as expressive of a normative proposition is a double-edged sword that comes at the heavy theoretical cost of including too much under the umbrella of the normative. It also dichotomizes the normative from the descriptive without analyzing thick concepts.

Maguire's autonomy theses provide constraints upon which facts are normative or descriptive and as such are greatly helpful in the project of drawing the mark of the normative. We can generated a procedure by which to draw the mark of the normative at any possible world. Given a fact, identify its grounds. Do the same for the grounding facts until you get to the ungrounded grounders, the fundamental. From among the fundamental facts of that world, decide which are normative and which are descriptive. It is likely that both Rosen and Maguire believe that no such decision need be made if there's only one candidate normative fact at the fundamental level, the supreme law of morality that holds for that world. You have thereby determined whether any given fact at that world is normative or descriptive. Thus, the mark of the normative is drawn at that world.

The issue remains open as to whether the mark of the normative has been drawn for every world once drawn for one world. One might think that the normativity of a

proposition varies by world with its grounds such that what is normative at one world is descriptive at another (as was the case with disjunctions). If so, then invariances must be found across the closest worlds at which the normativity of the proposition in question remains unchanged in order to track exactly at which worlds its normativity does change.

Under Rosen (2014) and Maguire (2015), these invariances are and only are the fundamental ethical principles that prevail at all and only those worlds at which the proposition is true. From CMANN and CMANS, we get that (thick) propositions with both normative and descriptive parts will only change in normativity whenever their normative parts fail to obtain at a world. Thus, if there's only one fundamental moral fact for any world at which there are moral facts, then this fact, the supreme ethical principle of that world, is exactly what tracks the normativity of all propositions across the worlds which share in it. Furthermore, if there are no morally nihilist worlds, that is, worlds at which no moral fact obtains, then the normativity of a proposition across any two worlds is tracked exactly by whether or not those two worlds have the same fundamental moral facts (the same supreme ethical principle).

Even when it is granted that all moral facts at any possible world are ultimately grounded in one fundamental moral fact, the supreme ethical principle, which presumably constitutes the moral law for a world and in accordance with which worlds and their counterfactual proximity relations can be classified, there still are problems. There's at least two. The first concerns whether the normativity of a proposition varies with its grounds. The second concerns whether the moral accounts for all that is normative. I will close the chapter by briefly discussing these two problems.

Maguire calls 'Taxonomic Essentialism' the thesis that "the taxonomic category of a fact varies with its grounds," which he breaks up into two theses: (1) a proposition's taxonomic category is contingent; (2) a proposition's taxonomic category is contingent upon the ground relations it stands in (Maguire, 2015, p. 206). As I do not consider other taxonomic categories than the normative and the descriptive (such as continuants and occurrences), we may restrict our attention to what I may call 'Normative Essentialism.' This just specifies the domain of consideration to the normative and the descriptive such that the normativity of a proposition does not vary by world without a variance in its grounds. It rules out cases of propositions being normative at one world but descriptive at another as impossible, which allows us to draw the mark of the normative for all worlds at which the fundamental normative facts are invariant.

If there's only one fundamental normative fact per world, a supreme ethical principle, then this simplifies the task. However, if the prudent or the aesthetic propositions at some worlds are not fully grounded in the fundamental ethical principle of that world, then the picture quickly becomes more complicated with additional bridge principles and the like. For instance, if at a world what we always have most reason to do is ever in conflict with what is prudent, then the moral cannot ground all of what is normative at that world. Invariances in the normativity of facts across worlds yields sameness of normative laws, but not moral ones.

In conclusion, in this chapter I argue that attempting to draw the mark of the normative with the pen of grounding fails provided that either taxonomic essentialism is false or there is more than one kind of fundamental normative fact. I discuss Maguire's (2015) recent work on metaphysical autonomy theses concerning ethicality, which helps us in our demarcation project. Maguire is motivated to save Hume's Dictum from its

usual counterexamples by reinterpreting it as a metaphysical thesis and not as a merely logical thesis. I rehearse the syllogistic counterexamples and explain how Maguire's proposed autonomy theses evade these counterexamples. I present Maguire's own autonomy theses and attempt to augment them with my own formulations. The rhetorical strategy Maguire utilizes involves reclassifying the premises of the arguments such that what were previously thought to be descriptive premises that validly deduced normative conclusions had in fact contained at least one normative premise, which follows from his CMAE. This problematically yields false positives, but even if it not, there remains at least two far deeper problems. Firstly, it is far from clear that taxonomic essentialism is true and that the normativity of a proposition varies with its grounds. One and the same proposition may be normative or descriptive independently of its grounds, or if normative may be normative essentially regardless of whether it is grounded. Secondly, and perhaps more deeply, it is far from clear that it is metaphysically necessary that there is one and only one fundamental ethical fact, the supreme ethical principle of a world, which accounts for the normativity of all propositions at that world, whether they be moral, prudential, aesthetic, etc. Drawing the mark of the normative at the level of the fundamental cannot be done if there are more than two fundamental kinds of normative facts, at least under the autonomy theses as they currently stand. Thus, the mark of the normative remains undrawn.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I started this project with the question, what is normativity? I attempted to answer this question by identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for when a proposition is normative. This alone may not constitute an answer but at the least is a good step towards one.

In chapter 2, I argued that the proper contrast class to frame the debate was between the normative and the descriptive, and not the ethical and the natural. Whether ethical facts are natural is itself an interesting debate, yet falls outside the scope of my current project as drawing the mark of the normative at the line of the natural forecloses on the (epistemic) possibility that the ethical is natural. I discussed thick concepts and propositions as problem cases for demarcating the normative from the descriptive as they are partly both.

Next I turned to Fine (2002) and Rosen's (2014) proposal that normative facts are normative necessities, which if true would do the work my project is aimed at as it would provide necessary and sufficient conditions for when a proposition is normative. Namely, a proposition is normative if and only if it is normatively necessary, a kind of necessity strictly weaker than natural and metaphysical necessity. In order for this proposal not to be circular, more needs to be said about when propositions are normatively necessary, which Rosen (2014) accounts for as "fact-independence," that is, a proposition is normatively necessary if and only if it is fact-independent. I reject this characterization as it remains circular, is objectionably arbitrary insofar as there's nothing peculiarly normative about it, and further it fails to account for modal features normative proposition do peculiarly enjoy, namely, the fact that normative propositions

are deontic and many are non-alethic. I next discuss several constraints Rosen adopts to rule out strange patchwork worlds and radically counter-moral worlds, which I attempt to delineate whether such constraints are upon the normativity of a proposition or its metaphysical impossibility. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of several kinds of normative propositions with various modal strengths. Insofar as the normative propositions at a world do not share a uniform level of modal strength, Fine and Rosen's approach cannot draw the mark of the normative with the pen of necessity, however restricted.

In chapter 3, I begin with a discussion of reduction and reductive relations, drawing upon the work of Schroeder (2005) and Maguire (2012) to distinguish between different kinds of reductive relations with supervenience being the most permissive. If the normative fails to supervene over the descriptive, than any attempt at reducing them is likely to also fail. To the contrary, if the normative eliminatively reduced to the descriptive, then there would not be anything to draw as it would be a distinction without a difference. However, Rosen (2014) offers an argument against the supervenience of the normative over the descriptive with metaphysical necessity (what he calls "Strong Supervenience" or what I call SLS), endorsing the weaker claim that it supervenes with normative necessity. Although we have already rejected his characterization of normative necessity as fact-independence, I did not foreclose on Rosen's project should a better candidate be in the offing.

Rosen (2014) argues that Strong Supervenience, Finean Essentialism and Ethical Non-Naturalism form an inconsistent triad. As he already endorse the latter two, he rejects the first and seeks to revise it. Before evaluating his argument, I discuss in detail exactly what these latter two theses comes to, criticizing Finean Essentialism in the

process for failing to reduce metaphysical necessity to essence. Finally, I come to Rosen's argument against Strong Supervenience, which I argue only rejects Strong Local Supervenience and not Strong Global Supervenience. I could agree with everything Rosen (2014) says and yet consistently believe that two metaphysically possible worlds are descriptively identical only if they are normatively identical. The same action may share all the same descriptive properties yet differ in its normative profile between worlds at which it occurs, but this is a local failure of supervenience, not a global one. Thus, we are not compelled by Rosen's argument to reject SGS, only SLS, and as such we are furnish with one additional constraint (SGS) by which to rule out normatively crazy worlds as metaphysical impossibilities.

In chapter 4, I discuss Maguire's (2015) recent work on metaphysical autonomy theses concerning ethicality, which helps us in drawing the mark of the normative with the coarse-grained pen of grounding. Maguire is motivated to save Hume's Dictum that you cannot get an 'ought' from an 'is' from its usual counterexamples by reinterpreting it as a metaphysical thesis and not a thesis about which kinds of logical relations obtain between ought-statements and is-statements. I rehearse the counterexamples of syllogisms in which ought-statements are validly deduced from is-statements and explain how Maguire's proposed autonomy theses evade these counterexamples. I present Maguire's own autonomy theses and attempt to augment them with my own formulations, which contrast the normative from the descriptive, instead of the ethical from the natural, as he does. The rhetorical strategy Maguire utilizes involves reclassifying the premises of the arguments such that what were previously thought to be descriptive premises that deduced normative conclusions had in fact contained at least one normative premise. This follows from Maguire's converse autonomy thesis that any

fact partly grounded by an ethical fact is itself an ethical fact, and when supplemented with some additional grounding principles, we get the happy result that the disjunctions, material implications, and embedded contexts are actually normative propositions. But does this prove too much?

I close the chapter with some problems, suggesting that the test has false positives, but even if it can be suitably modified to rule out the false positives, there remains at least two far deeper problems. Firstly, it is far from clear that taxonomic essentialism is true and that the normativity of a proposition varies with its grounds. One and the same proposition may be normative or descriptive independently of its grounds, or if normative may be normative essentially regardless of whether it is grounded. Secondly, and perhaps more deeply, it is far from clear that it is metaphysically necessary that there is one and only one fundamental ethical fact, the supreme ethical principle of a world, which accounts for the normativity of all propositions at that world, whether they be moral, prudential, aesthetic, etc. Drawing the mark of the normative at the level of the fundamental cannot be done if there are more than two fundamental kinds of normative facts, at least not easily.

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