On "Normativity"

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> The way philosophers have practiced with the word "normative" in recent years seems to me lamentable.
>
> —Stanley Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?"

I want to begin by discussing the Latin word *norma*. And I will! But first: I am brought up short by the fact that Cavell would not begin in that way.

As evidence of this: when Cavell argues with Benson Mates about the use of English "voluntary," he says nothing about the Latin *voluntarius*. Long before English was a language, however, *voluntarius* was used in relevant ways. Cicero, for example, rejects Plato's assertion that philosophers, loving only truth, must be perfectly just:

> For [while] they attain one kind of justice, as they harm no one by inflicting injury, they fall into another; for, impeded by their zeal for learning, they desert those who ought to be protected. And thus, [Plato] does not suppose that they will even join in the Republic unless compelled. But it would be better if it were done willingly [*voluntas*]. For that which is rightly done is just [only] if it is voluntary [*voluntarium*]. (*De officiis* 1.9.28 [Cicero, 1994, 14,10–15])

Here Cavell might be expected to say that Cicero moves from a plainly appropriate use to one that, at the least, is no longer plainly appropriate. For, whereas *voluntas* appears in the penultimate sentence only in a context where there is some question of an act's being compelled, the final sentence uses

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voluntarius to classify all acts generally into those that proceed from the will and those that do not.[1] Cicero's works being, moreover, normative of Latin prose, the earliest users of "voluntary" must have had such examples in mind. That Cavell shows no interest in the history of the word is proof, then, that he would consider what follows at best irrelevant.

As my teacher, Cavell's methods are normative of my mine. And nevertheless.

1 Sources of "normativity"

To tell whether an angle is right (*rectus*), you can use what in English is called a carpenter's square, or in Latin a *norma*. A *norma* thus resembles that other piece of equipment: a *regula*, that is, a rule, used to determine whether a line is straight (again: *rectus*). The *norma* may be used to direct (*derigere*) the formation of an angle or to correct (*corrigere*) an angle already formed, or to check that an angle is correct (*correctus*).

But then by a metaphor found in many languages, our thought and conduct can also be called "right." Hence *norma*, like *regula*, can mean what measures the rectitude of thought and conduct. Cicero again:

> And first I will respond, concerning my duty, to Marcus Cato, who directs [*derigenti*] his life according to a certain norm of reason and most diligently weighs the importance of all duties. (*Pro Murena* 2.3 [Cicero, 1905, 246,8–10])

The Latin Church Fathers, too, as normative in their domain as Cicero in his, sometimes use *norma* as a synonym for *regula* = *κανών*.[2] In particular, *norma*, like *regula*, is used to declare that the Apostles' Creed, also called the *Symbola*, is, as we would say, "canonical," i.e. a rule or norm by which to measure the rectitude of belief ("orthodoxy").[3] Thus when *normativus* and its cognates began to appear, during the 17th century, one of their main uses was in Lutheran theology, in discussions of the canonical status of the Bible

[1] See (Mates, 1958, 66) and (Cavell, 1976, 6–8).

[2] The Greek equivalent of *norma* is *γνώμων*. But it was not widely used in the same metaphorical sense.

[3] See Rufinus, *Expositio Symboli* 2 (Rufinus, 1961, 134,7–14): *normam futurae sibi prius praedicationis in commune constituunt. . . . atque hanc credentibus dandam esse regulam statuunt*, and cf. Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis* 1.3 (Tertullianus, 1954, 1209,17–18); Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.9.4 (Irenaeus, 1993, 194,21–3).

and the lesser canonical status of *formulae* or *symbolae* (creeds, confessions, and catechisms): a distinction often expressed by saying that scripture is a *norma normans*, whereas those other texts are *normae normatae*.

Normativus found other uses, however, in German and Austrian legal contexts. Old legal digests, for one thing, list the date when a decree became "normative" or gained "normative force," i.e. the date when it took effect (became a norm). And there are other relevant uses. Concerning, for example, article 34 of the electoral capitulation of Emperor Joseph I, on the regulation of the Imperial Post, the German mathematician and jurist Friedrich Nitzsch argues that this *jus postarum* actually belongs to the reserved powers of the emperor, and adds:

> Thus also this Article is not *limitative* of the Royal power, but only *normative*, and such as to admonish the King of the Romans to do that by which the Imperial Posts might be rightly [*recte*] and well maintained. (Nitzsch, 1711, 553)

Here a norm is that by which rightness is measured, but not *enforced*: it counsels, but does not command. One of the earlier philosophical uses of English "normative" sounds a similar note:

> The categorical imperative of Kant appears as a norm or a regulative law which is of universal validity just as much as the norms of arithmetic or logic. All the rules of formal sciences have a normative, i.e., a regulative value. . . .
>
> The categoric imperative, however (not unlike the norms of the other formal sciences,) is more than a mere regulative law; it is a natural law which rules the development of the world and is the cause of all progress in the history of evolution. (Carus, 1889, 202)

A law *merely* normative (i.e., merely regulative) would, so to speak, admonish the world, but not oblige it.

Carus, however, probably picked up the term "normative," neither from the jurisprudence of the Holy Roman Empire nor from Lutheran theology, but rather from Wilhelm Wundt. Wundt, though not the first to use *normativ* in its current sense, was the one who made it popular, to the point where it was afterwards attributed to him, and especially in the characteristic phrase "normative science."[4] His most striking use of it was in formulating the

[4]See (Carus, 1887, 137), (Couturat, 1901, 257), (Lalande, 1926, s.v. "normatif," 521).

(Herbartian) doctrine that logic is "a *normative* science, similar to ethics" (Wundt, 1880, 1).[5] He treats the term "normative" more generally, however, in his *Ethik*, where he introduces it as follows:

> In the treatment of scientific tasks, two standpoints of consideration that diverge from one another have for a long time been prevalent: *explicative* and *normative*. The former has objects in view with reference to their *factual* respect.... The latter treats objects *with regard to determinate rules* which come to expression in them, and which it simultaneously applies as demands over against each singular object. (Wundt, 1886, 1)[6]

The discussion that follows already contains, not only "normative," but the whole gang of ideas that it now still shows itself with. Specific to the normative sciences, Wundt says, is that

> in them, certain states of the facts [*Thatbestände*] are distinguished from others via the moment of a particular *valuation* [*Werthschätzung*].... The opposition thus erected between *normal* and *contranormal* behavior leads to the distinction of *should* [*Sollen*] from is [*Sein*]. The norm is established in the form of a command over against every fact of the realm in question: [over against] the concordant facts, as a command that is followed; [over against] the conflicting facts, as a command that should be followed. (3)

The normative differs from the merely factual in that it involves an assignment of "value," concerns what *should* be or *ought* to be, rather than what is, and involves a command: an imperative, rather than an indicative. This same gang continues to be found together in, for example, the introduction to Korsgaard's *Sources of Normativity*.[7]

[5] Herbart's own formulation does not involve "normative": see (Herbart, 1816, §180, 138), cited by Husserl at (Husserl, 1975, §59, Hua 18:221,4).

[6] Carus (loc. cit.) translates the German *explicative* as "descriptive," for reasons not clear to me, though possibly important.

[7] "It is the most striking fact about human life that we have values.... Where do we get these ideas that outstrip the world we experience and seem ... to render judgment on it, to say that it does not measure up, that it is not what it ought to be? ... And it is puzzling that these ideas of world different from our own call out to us, telling us that things should be like them rather than the way they are, and that we should make them so" (Korsgaard et al., 1996, 1).

On its way from Wundt to Korsgaard, the gang passes through Husserl, who, characteristically, gives a clear and unblushing explanation of its structure. Each normative discipline is characterized, according to him, by a pair of value predicates (*Werthprädicaten*), which are examples of "good" and "bad," in the broadest sense of those terms. To say that a B "should" or "ought to" (*soll*) A is then to say that A-ing is a necessary condition of being a "good" B, in the relevant sense of "good": "There are as many species of talk of should [*Sollen*] as there are different species of evaluative attitude [*Werthhaltung*], thus species of — actual or supposed — values" (Husserl, 1975, §14, Hua 18:54,23–26). A normative proposition or judgment is one that expresses such a "should," (or one of the related modalities: "should not," "may," "may not"). In other words:

> With reference to a fundamental value attitude and the content, thereby determined, of the corresponding pair of value predicates, every proposition is called normative that expresses any necessary or sufficient or necessary and sufficient conditions for the possession of such predicates. (56,29–33)

It is, in other words, a "prescription" (*Vorschrift*).[8] And we may also say that every normative proposition expresses a "command" (*Befehl*) or "demand" (*Forderung*) (or permission, etc.) — but only in an extended, impersonal sense:

> As we speak, in a broader sense, of a demand where there is no one who demands, and maybe no one of whom it is demanded, so, too, we often speak of a "should" independent of anyone's wishing or willing. (53,26–30)

This impersonality was already visible in Wundt: when he spoke of "a command over against every fact of the realm in question," he cannot have meant that anyone actually issues all these commands, still less that there is always someone commanded by them.

One other habit of this gang, already implicit in Wundt, comes to greater prominence in Husserl, namely its indifference to content — what Husserl will call its *formality*.[9] This is manifest, first of all, in its readiness to occupy

[8]Husserl at first quotes this term from Drobisch (Husserl, 1975, §13, 49,33), but also goes on to use it himself (e.g., §41, 159,9).

[9]The remarks we are discussing belong to what Husserl later calls "formal practic" and "formal axiology." See (Husserl, 1976, §147, Hua 3.1:339–342).

any "realm" whatsoever — an expansionist tendency that makes it useful in our contemporary environment of doxographic scarcity.[10] More important is the way such realms are individuated. A *theoretical* discipline is unified, according to Husserl, by the belonging-together of its content "due to the inner lawfulness of the matter" (Husserl, 1975, §14, Hua 18:59,2–3). But the unity of a normative discipline is in itself rather already a product of "value attitude," namely of the "fundamental norm" (*Grundnorm*), "the normative proposition which imposes upon the objects of the sphere the universal demand that they should satisfy the constitutive marks of the positive value predicate to the greatest possible extent" (57,32–5).

Now this *Grundnorm*, although called a "normative proposition," does not meet the definition given above: it expresses, not necessary or sufficient conditions for possession of value predicates, but rather the content of those value predicates themselves. So Husserl says: it functions more like a *definition* — namely, like a definition of "good" and "bad" — in relation to normative propositions properly speaking (*eigentlich normirende Sätzen*). To put it in contemporary terms: "normative" and its gang always depend, for their realm of residence, on some prior "metanormative" determination as to what "good" and "bad" will mean. In fact, the examples Husserl gives of a *Grundnorm* are familiar examples of different types of "(normative) ethics," that is, of different answers to a "metaethical" question about the meaning of ethical terms:[11]

> The categorical imperative, e.g., plays this role in the group of normative propositions which make up Kant's ethics; and just so the principle of "greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number" in the ethics of the utilitarians. (Husserl, 1975, Hua 3.1:57,37–40)

[10] The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* appears to have (as of June 27, 2022) no entry on the normative–descriptive distinction as such. But Wikipedia, as usual a better and more reliable source, does have an article, "Normative" (Wikipedia contributors, 2022), which currently reads in part: "One of the major developments in analytic philosophy has seen the reach of normativity spread to virtually all corners of the field, from ethics and the philosophy of action, to epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science."

[11] Usage of the term "metaethics" today is somewhat confused. In the sense I am taking as basic, "metaethics" concerns the meaning of ethical terminology. In this sense, the term must be subsequent to Hilbert's original abuse of *μετα-*, so no earlier than 1920; I have not tried to pin down the exact origin. Some of the other uses of "metaethics" may have a distinct origin, for example as a translation of the French term *metamorales* introduced by Lévy-Bruhl (Lévy-Bruhl, 1903, 62). (The OED cites the latter as the origin.)

Similarly, he goes on to explain, if we adopt as *Grundnorm* that the "good" will be the generation, preservation, and increase of pleasure, then we obtain a discipline of "hedonic" which "is normative ethics in the sense of the hedonists" (58,27).

I dwell so much on Husserl partly because he displays this structure so clearly, but also because it was his sometime student, Carnap, who largely brought it into Analytic philosophy. Carnap may have heard the term "normative" in his childhood, since it occurs prominently in the ethical works of his maternal grandfather, Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld. But Dörpfeld uses the term in the old sense out of Lutheran theology,[12] whereas in Carnap we find it with the whole gang from Husserl and Wundt. Granted, Carnap uses it, from the *Logical Syntax* period on, only to explain why Husserl's "normative sciences" are impossible. A "normative ethics," Carnap says,

> is not an investigation of facts, but a pretended investigation of ... what it is right to do and what it is wrong to do. Thus the purpose of this philosophical, or normative, ethics is to state norms for human action or judgments about moral values.
>
> It is easy to see that it is merely a difference of formulation, whether we state a norm or a value judgment. A norm or rule has an imperative form, for instance: "Do not kill!" The corresponding value judgment would be "Killing is evil." ... The value statement, "Killing is evil," although, like the rule, it is merely an expression of a certain wish, has the grammatical form of an assertive proposition. Most philosophers have been deceived by this form into thinking that a value statement is really either true

[12] In particular, he takes up, from his own point of view, the old question about the normative status of the *symbola*. The purpose of scripture (i.e., the *norma normans*), he maintains, is to give "practical instructions," not a systematic exposition of theoretical truths. And for good reason: "Let us imagine," he says, "that, instead of the New Testament Gospels and Epistles, the college of apostles had gifted Christendom with a normative *systematic textbook of religion*, say in the way of the symbolic catechisms or the Augsburg Confession" (Dörpfeld, 1895, 98). We can conjecture how bad the results would have been, he continues, by considering what have been the results of the use — according to Dörpfeld, a *mis*use — of Luther's *Small Catechism* as a textbook in religious education, not to mention the far worse effects of similar education among Roman Catholics (where it is not supplmented by any direct reading of the Bible): *Katechismusunterricht*, left to itself, leads to "thought brought to a standstill, thought put to sleep, ... stagnation" (*Gendankenstillstand*, *Gedankenschlaft*, *Stagnation*) (99–100).

> or false. Therefore they give reasons for their own value statements and try to disprove those of their opponents. But actually a value statement is nothing else than a command in a misleading grammatical form. (Carnap, 1935, 23–5)[13]

This was hardly the first philosophical use of "normative" in English: we have seen it in Carus, and it also even occurs, albeit scare-quoted, in (Sidgwick, 1920, 24). But Carnap (in part via Ayer) was apparently the superspreader.

Carnap's own concern here is the misguided attempt to disprove one another's "value statements," which can lead only to endless and, at best, very useless wrangling. At worst, insofar as it serves to hide the real question — about the motives behind the imperative, whether it is to be read as command or as counsel — the result may be worse than useless, up to and including (and of what else could he be thinking, speaking in 1934?) violence, oppression, war. This is a concern, and a fear, familiar from Hobbes and Locke and Kant.[14] But in the schools, where wrangling was still rewarded as much as or more than ever, *that* concern was quickly dropped. The new way of talking was eagerly accepted, along with "emotivism" as just one of the many new positions it allowed us to take up and dispute, and in that form, stripped of Carnap's fear — closer, then, in spirit, to Wundt and Husserl — "normative" entered a phase of exponential growth.

2 Cavell's lament

Cavell expressly refuses, in "Must We Mean What We Say?" (Cavell, 1976), to spell out his lament over the use of "normative": "we cannot now embark," he says, "on a diagnosis of the ills which caused its current use, or those which it has produced" (22). This manner of imposing a task upon oneself and then, in the same moment, refusing it, characteristic of certain kinds of philosophical writing, is itself worth further consideration, but — I cannot now enter into it.[15] I will only note that, even within the ample spa-

[13]This book consists of lectures Carnap gave at the University of London in October 1934. Given Stevenson's citation of the passage in question (Stevenson, 1944, 265), we can guess that Cavell will have had it in mind.

[14]Cicero's view is somewhat different.

[15]I will even say *why* I cannot enter into it, namely that I don't yet know what to say about it. Other than, what may be important: that this self-imposition and refusal is related to, although not the same as, the customary announcement with which a philosophical *talk* now begins, that it is "part of a larger project," i.e. the disclosure of the

tiotemporal bounds of *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell never contributes more than scattered remarks towards the task in question. So I will be forced to reconstruct.

Cavell does say enough, though, to thoroughly reject the gang of ideas that have still shown themselves together since Wundt. He embarks on the exposure of two "confusions," namely

> the idea (1) that descriptive utterances are opposed to normative utterances; and (2) that prescriptive utterances are (typical) instances of normative utterances. (Ibid.)

Both of these points, we should note, are stated by use of the term "normative." Does Cavell accept, then, that "normative" has some valid job to do in classifying utterances or statements? If he does, it is only reluctantly. He excuses himself: "it is too late to avoid the word" (ibid.).[16] But, if he accepts it at all, the way, and the context, in which he admits its use, might be expected to constitute the *nervus probandi* in establishing his points (1) and (2). For that will seemingly require a determination that *this* is what we call (or "should call") a "normative utterance."

Yet there are no explicit Austinian "what we should say" statements about "normative" in "Must We Mean What We Say?". Nor does Cavell, in his own voice, ever describe an utterance as "normative." Here, in one passage, are two apparently different ways he does use the term:

> How *do* we establish (or justify or modify or drop) rules or standards? . . . the fact is that there are, in each case, different ways normative for accomplishing the particular normative tasks in question. (23–4)

Here a "normative task" is the task, in some particular case, of establishing (or justifying or modifying or dropping) norms. "Ways normative for accomplishing," on the other hand, are not ways that establish norms for accomplishing a task, but rather ways of accomplishing it in accordance with norms: regular, standard, *normal* ways of accomplishing it. If "normative

speaker as, in Heidegger's terms, thrown and projecting. In other words, the riddle of death, the mortality of Socrates that concludes the syllogism, is here improperly (*uneigentlich*) expressed ("someday, but not yet"). However, see (Heidegger, 1969, 61): "The following text belongs to a larger context." And see also (Stone, 2010, 262).

[16]Cf. Ryle: "The phrase 'in the mind' can and should always be dispensed with" (Ryle, 2002, 40).

utterance" were like "normative task," then, a normative utterance would be one that establishes norms; if like "ways normative for accomplishing," a normative utterance would be one uttered in accordance with norms. One might call these two alternatives the norming normative and the normed normative, *normativum normans* and *normativum normatum*.

In arguing for his point (2), Cavell supposes the former: "if a normative utterance is one used to create or institute rules or standards," he writes, "then prescriptive utterances are not examples of normative utterances" (22). In arguing for (1), on the other hand, he adopts the second:

> Descriptive statements, then, are not opposed to ones which are normative, but in fact presuppose them: we could not do the thing we call describing if language did not provide (we had not been taught) ways normative for describing. (22)

That is: no statement can be a description unless description is a use (a "job") for sentences to do, a job that normally proceeds (or: *must* normally proceed) according to norms. That there are descriptive utterances at all presupposes that there are utterances which describe *in accordance with* a norm, which are descriptive in a regular, standard, normal way. A descriptive utterance *is* (normally) a *normative* descriptive utterance, *normativus normatus*.

So which utterances should we call "normative," according to Cavell? Cavell has not come to reform the use of "normative," but to lament it. He is not, therefore, recognizing or proposing any particular way to use "normative" in classifying utterances, but rather, since it is too late to avoid the word, pointing out limits on what it might normally mean. It might, namely, connect an utterance with a norm in one of two ways, either qua *normans* or qua *normatus*. The lament then is that the practice of philosophers, in recent years, can be neither the one nor the other.

Can that be the basis of *lament*, however? When do we, or when should we, normally, unironically, call someone's complaint a "lament"? Not, one might think, when it is based on such a piece of pedantry as I have just displayed.[17] Although we may screw ourselves up into a jeremiad about the plural of "octopus," or about kids these days and how they call everything "awesome," the result will hardly bear comparison with the Lamentations of Jeremiah. And yet, to take first Cavell's point (2) above: there might be something to lament in a confusion between appeal to a norm, as in my

[17] Cf. (Bright, 2020).

utterance, "you ought to X," and establishment, or attempted establishment, of a norm, in comparison with which your X-ing will be right (*rectus*) and your not X-ing will be wrong. Lost in this confusion is, at least, that *appeal* to a norm will fail unless it is one you already accept.

> It is true that we sometimes appeal to standards which our interlocutor does not accept; but this does not in the least show that what we are there really doing is attempting to institute a standard (of our own). (23)

If we think otherwise — if we think, well, "you ought" must be *normans*, because I cannot assume, in general, that you already accept my norm, and so cannot or should not be so foolish as to found my attempt, via my utterance, to get you to X, on such uncertain ground — if we think that way, we will conclude that the function of "you ought" is fundamentally persuasive. Success in its use will then involve getting you to adopt my norm, and since that, on pain of infinite regress, cannot be done by appeal to any norm, it must be done by transference of, so to speak by infection with, value attitudes. But if "ought" had *that* job, it would be unsuited, not only for morality, but for any mutually respectful interaction.

> Sometimes people tell us what we ought to do when all they mean is that they want us to. But this is as much an abuse where the context is moral as it is where the context is musical ("You ought to accent the appoggiatura"), or scientific ("You ought to use a control group here"), or athletic ("You ought to save your wind on the first two laps"). Private persuasion ... is not the paradigm of ethical utterance, but represents the breakdown ... of moral interaction. (23)

If we think of "ought" as (normally, regularly, standardly) a device for *me* to institute a norm by which *you* will be measured and corrected, we are thinking of moral interaction as everywhere broken.

To head off a possible misreading: return for a moment to Cicero, and his description of Cato as directing his life *ad certam rationis normam*. Above I translated *rationis norma* as "norm of reason"; but try instead the translation "rational norm." The way a *norma* generally was constructed was by taking three *regulae*, two of them two feet long and the third two feet and two inches, "and joining them together by their extremities so as to assume the

form of a right-angled triangle."[18] Of course this works only approximately, since the square root of eight is irrational. But suppose we have *regulae* of length exactly three, four, and five feet: then upon joining them to make a triangle, we would be assured that the angle between the two shorter sides is exactly right. A *norma* thus constructed breaks the infinite regress one might imagine from one instrument to the next, using each in turn to check the last. *Nature itself*, one might say, supplies the absolute norm against which such a *rational* (3:4:5-ratio) norm is checked.

One who might say that would be Cicero. But another one might say: there is or was once a certain paradigm, involving both a more or less fully articulated theory (of geometry) and accepted methods for constructing and using various instruments. Under that paradigm, the above procedure *must* work. Given some actual closed arrangement of three straight sticks, the paradigm provides, so to speak, a series of theoretical, triangle-shaped boxes, into exactly one of which it *must* fit. To make it fit correctly is then a challenge (of straightening and flattening and of precise measurement). And so there is your absolute norm, if you like: not an absolute *norma* to measure the rightness of angles, but a metaphorical norm included in the paradigm, which measures the correctness of a given attempt to match theory with the use of instruments. This metaphorical norm is absolute in the sense that there is neither possibility nor need of appeal beyond it, as long as the paradigm holds. And is it found in nature itself? You could say that, and maybe you should, but then you must be prepared to say, after the paradigm shifts, that nature itself has changed.

"Must We Mean What We Say?" was written at a time when Cavell and Kuhn were very close.[19] And it is safe to say that Cavell has more in common here with Kuhn than with Cicero. When, in chapter 10 of *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell confronts Stevenson's *Ethics and Language* (Stevenson, 1944),[20] he has to meet a preemptive reply from Stevenson, beginning:

> So long as one's opponent is impressed (a hasty critic may suppose), one method is as good as another; for the whole purport of ethics is to sway attitudes. Where Plato and Kant sought eternal

[18] (Smith et al., 1890), s.v. *norma*, citing Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 19.18 (Isidore, 1995, 144).

[19] Cavell thanks Kuhn "for having read (and forced the rewriting of) two shorter versions of this paper" (Cavell, 1976, 42 n. 38).

[20] This book is already cited in passing in "Must We Mean What We Say?" (Cavell, 1976, 17 n. 15).

> principles of reason, are there merely the empty rules of rhetoric? After this one is likely to envisage disillusionment and chaos, and the many other disturbing "implications" which objective theorists so habitually attribute to their opponents. (Stevenson, 1944, 156; quoted in Cavell, 1979, 283)

Leaving aside Plato and Kant, we can certainly put Cicero on the list of those who seek eternal principles of reason, and envision chaos and disillusionment without them. But Cavell immediately distances himself: "I deny," he says, "any sense of such alternatives as Stevenson offers — between eternal principles and empty rhetoric, between something called 'objective' and 'subjective' attitudes" (Cavell, 1979, loc. cit.). What shocks Cavell in Stevenson is not the failure to appeal to eternal, natural norms, but the failure to appeal, in telling you what you ought to do, to a norm, or, if you like, to a value-attitude, of *yours*. The disillusionment, or discouragement, he envisages in Stevenson's views, come, he says,

> from being told that one man may treat me morally and yet act only in terms of his attitudes, without necessarily considering me or mine. If this is so, then the concept of morality is unrelated to the concept of justice. For however justice is to be understood ... *what* must be understood is a concept concerning the treatment of *persons*; and *that* is a concept, in turn, of a creature with commitments and cares. (ibid.)

Or as he puts it later on: "though Respect for The Law may not sustain moral relationship, respect for positions not our own, will" (309). But what if I can find no norm of yours to which to appeal? Then, as Kuhn might put it: moral recourse fails. Far from being the case where we see how the moral "ought" must actually function, this is a tragedy beyond the help of any "ought." "We can, too obviously, become morally inaccessible to one another; but to tell us that these are the moments which really constitute the moral life will only add confusion to pain" (Cavell, 1976, 23). A confusion that might well be lamented by a prophet. "One can face the disappearance of justice from the world more easily than an amnesia of the very concept of justice" (Cavell, 1979, 283).

But what untoward consequences can Cavell expect from the other confusion, opposed to his point (1)? Granted: if "You ought to A" is called "normative" in the sense, *normativus normatus* — as, namely, a normal, regular,

standard prescriptive utterance — then a descriptive utterance must (normally) be "normative," in that same sense. But why can't philosophers use "normative" otherwise, more or less just to mean "prescriptive"?[21] Recall Wundt's original formulation, that a norm for a given realm is "a command over against every fact of the realm in question: over against the concordant facts, as a command that is followed; over against the conflicting facts, as a command that should be followed." Assume, with Wundt, that "ought," "should," and "must" are all equivalent, and that all have the force of imperatives.[22] Then consider this example:

> Imagine that I am sitting in my counting house counting up my money. Someone who knows that I do that at this hour every day passes by and says, "You ought to do that." What should we say about his statement? ... Applying the formula, we compute: "He wouldn't say that unless he asks himself whenever he sees anyone doing anything, 'Ought that person to be doing that or ought he not?' ". (9–10)

This extraordinary passer by is, under the terms of the example, mad.[23] The sane philosopher, passing by, will not say or even think this. But, back in the philosophy house, the philosopher is thinking of actions in a way that would countenance such madness:

> what neither the Utilitarians nor their critics seem to have seen clearly and constantly is that about unquestionable (normal, natural) action no question is (can be) raised; in particular not the question whether the action ought or ought not to have been done. The point is a logical one: to raise a question about an action is to put the action in question. It is partly the failure to appreciate this which makes the classical moralists (appear?) so moralistic, allows them to suppose that the moral question is always appropriate. (Cavell, 1976, 8 n. 5)

[21] The *OED* definition of "normative," sense 1, is: "That constitutes or serves as a norm or standard; implying or derived from a norm; prescriptive." If a usage exists, a good dictionary will report it, no matter how untoward its effects.

[22] They are not and do not, as Cavell's examples show. "I must move the Queen in straight paths.... What would it mean to tell me that I *ought* to move the Queen in straight paths?" (Cavell, 1976, 28); and "Compare 'Open, Sesame!' with 'You must open, Sesame' " (31).

[23] We might invent some excuse for him. See (Cavell, 1979, 151–3).

To this "moralization of moral concepts" (Cavell, 1979, 254), Cavell opposes "Austin's discovery ... of normal action" (Cavell, 1976, loc. cit.), in particular Austin's discovery of "the principle that actions which are normal will not tolerate any special description" (37), i.e. that "a normal action is neither voluntary nor involuntary, neither careful nor careless, neither expected nor unexpected, neither right nor wrong ..." (13; ellipsis in the original). Because no one (normally) is in a position to put such an action in question — because the normal, regular, standard things you do are (normally) none of my business — no question can (normally) be raised about them, and a question that cannot be raised cannot be answered.[24] The current use of "normative," then, because it is *not* interpretable as "normal," i.e. as *normativus normatus*, involves thinking of the whole field of our actions as subject to prescription, i.e. involves imagining someone with the standing to put into question anything and everything we do.

Now, there *might* be someone with such standing. That person might be God, by whose grace alone, or by whose covenant with Noah, our world is allowed to take its normal course.[25] Or, as the counting house example suggests, that person might be Marx — or, for that matter, Nietzsche, or Socrates: a human judge of all the earth, under whose eye the normal course of our world seems indefensible. But, although Carnap and his grandfather might not be out of place around that trio, Wundt and Husserl and Mates and Stevenson do not belong, and neither, for the most part, do our contemporary users of "normative" (not even when, as all too often nowadays, they consider themselves Marxists). They do not and could not claim such standing. So who is the source of this "ought" that is supposed still to create or conserve our right to do what we (normally) do, and is then confounded with imperativity, such that the whole realm of what we (normally) do becomes an *imperium* in which all powers are reserved by the emperor, and every *factum* within it either is or ought to be the following of a command?

Husserl already gives the answer: *no one*. Recall what he says: that the *Sollen* which stretches over the whole realm of a normative discipline, over everything normed by a single *Grundnorm*, corresponds to "a demand where

[24]This shows a divergence between Cavell and Kuhn, for this is *not* why the activities of Kuhnian normal research are (normally) exempt from question. Our moral life is not puzzle-solving, and we are not, or need not be, addicted to it.

[25]Cf. Anscombe's determination that an ethics of divine law is what generates the concept of an ethical *obligation* (Anscombe, 1981, 30). Anscombe, incidentally, considers Stoicism and Judcaism as the only origins of such an ethics; but see *Apology* $23^{c}1$.

there is no one who demands [*wobei Niemand da ist, der fordert*], and maybe no one of whom it is demanded" (Husserl, 1975, §14, Hua 18:53,27–8). No one who *da ist*, no Dasein, demands. Or we might say: *one* demands, *man fordert*. And for Cavell, if not for Heidegger,[26] a condition of everydayness in which our obligations are, at bottom, the impersonal demands of *das Man* — this would represent, again, a lamentable amnesia of the concept of justice. This is really just the other side of a coin we have already seen: if justice must be understood as "a concept concerning the treatment of *persons*," that is, "creature[s] with commitments and cares," then the demands of justice cannot be issued impersonally. They can be issued only to me who cares and by you who cares (that is, to and by what *da ist*, and is hence a locus of *Sorge*):

> *one* property that makes a reason a moral one is that it is conceived in terms of what will morally benefit the person the speaker adduces his reasons *to*. Who's to say? Anybody who knows that person and cares enough about him to say, and can assume responsibility for saying it to him. (Cavell, 1979, 281)

One thing that makes the ordinary language philosophers (appear?) so moralistic is their constant offense (in common with Heidegger, Carnap, Locke, et al.) at the insignificant wrangling of the schools. The lament then is that philosophers' recent practice with "normative" is symptomatic of, and further enables, careless chatter, *sorglose Gerede*, about morality. Whereas it is there above all that saying cannot simply be trusted to mean something: *we* must mean what we say.

3 Interlude: on the history of words

Do I disagree with Cavell about this? In one sense, the answer must be no: for who would want to introduce a new principle of morality? But, as already noted, I am doing something Cavell would not. Why *does* Cavell show no interest in, for example, the ancient pre-history of "voluntary"?

Given Ryle and Austin's classical educations, they obviously know that "voluntary," for example, is a late arrival compared to *voluntarius*.[27] Both

[26] This touches on the most difficult interpretative questions about *Being and Time*.

[27] (Toulmin and Baier, 1952), on the other hand, who give a history of "description" in some ways similar to my history of "normative," seem genuinely unaware of the long

would, nevertheless, deny the relevance of my quote from Cicero to the consideration of "voluntary" as an ordinary English word — for different reasons, however. It will be instructive to compare them.

To take Austin first: he mentions "voluntary," or rather "involuntary," in a section titled "Trailing Clouds of Etymology," the thesis of which is that "a word never — well, hardly ever — shakes off its etymology and formation" (Austin, 1979, 201). But etymology is not the history of terminology. "In an *accident* something befalls" (ibid.) — indeed, but, this says nothing about the reasons why a chance event is said, by philosophers, to have only a *causa per accidens*. Etymology, strictly speaking, will not lead you to Aristotle's use of *συμβεβηκός* at *Ph.* 2.3.195^{a}33. And it should be clear why it's etymology that interests Austin: for him, the importance of ordinary language is that "our common stock of words" embodies distinctions that "have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest," and are thus likely "more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters" than those we "think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon" (182). Now, to draw a distinction made by Cicero or Porphyry is hardly the same as thinking one up of an afternoon. Moreover, it's not as if Austin is mostly bothered by specialized words that do not belong to our "common stock." More often, he specifically takes up words, such as "voluntary," that are *also* beloved of specialists, "some of the terms most favoured by philosophers or jurists," and calls attention to their use "in ordinary speech (disregarding back-seepage of jargon)" (191). So the units of selection are not words, but uses of words, and the real question must be, not whether or how long a use has been tested for fitness, but what *kind* of fitness has been selected for. The ordinary uses have been tested for fitness in matters that are ordinary and reasonably practical. In a technical

technical use of *ὑπογραφή* = *rasm* = *descriptio* (I thank Bradford Cokelet for drawing my attention to this article). See especially their discussion of Russell and Moore (29–30) and cf. Porphyry, *In Cat.* 2 (Porphyry, 1887, CAG 4.1:64,15–16, 72,34–74,2); Ammonius, *In Isag.* (Ammonius, 1891, CAG 4.3:54,5–55,2, 57,14–58,4); Philoponus *In Cat.* 1 (Philoponus, 1898, CAG 13.1:19,22–20,3); (Avicenna, 1960 5.8, 245,18–247,6); Ockham *Summa Logicae* 1.27 (William of Ockham, 1974, 89–90). How precisely this terminology reached Russell I don't know, but that it did is clear: Porphyry's examples of "Ajax, the son of Oileus, Locrian by birth" and "Ajax, the son of Telamon, Salaminian by birth" and Avicenna's of "Socrates, the religious philosopher who was killed in such-and-such a city on such-and-such a day" would be right at home in "On Denoting." Toulmin and Baier's history is also unsatisfying in that it fails to account for Carus's substitution, in 1887, of "descriptive" for Wundt's *explikativ*, and in addition does not mention Husserl. I conclude that the history of "descriptive" remains to be elucidated.

context like law or physics, the selection criteria will be different:

> In the law a constant stream of actual cases ... are brought up *for decision*.... Hence it is necessary first to be careful with, but also to be brutal with, to torture, to fake and override, ordinary language: we cannot here evade or forget the whole affair. (In ordinary life we dismiss the puzzles that crop up about time, but we cannot do that indefinitely in physics.) (186)

And as for philosophy, the implication is: history tests for the distinctions fittest to be dreamed up in an armchair. It follows that details of "etymology and formation," e.g. about what words meant in ordinary Latin, will often record some part of the relevant evolutionary history of English: the one in which the right kind of fitness was selected for; whereas terminological history of philosophy generally will not.

Ryle, on the other hand, in *The Concept of Mind*, far from ignoring the ancient history of the term, actually traces our current philosophical abuse of "voluntary" back to "Stoic-Augustinian theories of the will" (Ryle, 2002, 23). Moreover, although he does discuss extraordinary terminology, terminology such that "we have to study certain specialist theories in order to find out how it is to be manipulated" (62), as well as extraordinary modes of speech, "kinds of studied utterance ... that belong not to normal sociable conversations but only to more serious affairs," e.g. by "the physician, the judge, the preacher, the politician, the astronomer" (182), what he is really interested in is not "ordinary language," in a sense opposed to either of those, but the "ordinary" or "stock" use of a word, as opposed both to nonstock uses, "e.g., metaphorical, hyperbolical, poetical, stretched uses," and to uses merely "alleged, suggested, or recommended" (Ryle, 1953, 168). And while he acknowledges a special need to examine the stock uses of words like "cause," "mistake," and "ought," which "belong to the rudiments of all thinking, including specialist thinking" (171), he sees no reason philosophical investigation should stop there, suggesting for example that Berkeley was investigating the ordinary (technical) use of "infinitesimal" (170). He denies, moreover, that an investigation of the uses of words is an investigation of *words*, in the sense of items belonging to the lexicon of some particular language at some particular time, having a particular history and etymology:

> Hume's question was not about the word "cause"; it was about the *use* of "cause." It was just as much about the *use* of "Ursa-

> che." ... The job done with the English word "cause" is not an English job, or a continental job. (171)

Whatever is special, then, about the ordinary uses of words, it has nothing to do with etymology (the etymology of *Ursache* is nothing like the etymology of "cause"), nor, therefore, with the long evolutionary test that some word or other has survived.

Why then is the analysis of ordinary use in any way opposed to reliance on old or new philosophical jargon? What is wrong with the job that philosophers have for terms like "volition," or for the "trade-names of epistemology"? In "Ordinary Language," Ryle says that philosophers, unlike other specialists, have no real jobs to offer, and that this is why they, "unlike other professionals and specialists, are constantly jettisoning in toto all the technical terms of their own predecessors" (181): undisciplined by the demands of a true vocation, these terms "are apt, sooner or later, to start to rotate idly" (183). But, since this alleged phenomenon of constant jettisoning is wholly imaginary — we have seen, at least, how little it applies to "voluntary" or "normative" — we are better off with Ryle's answer in *The Concept of Mind*, that philosophical psychology consists of myth-ridden pre-scientific theories, such as he imagines phlogiston chemistry to have been:

> Chemists once tried hard to find out the properties of phlogiston, but, as they never captured any phlogiston, they reconciled themselves to studying instead its influences and outward manifestations. They examined, in fact, the phenomena of combustion and soon abandoned the postulate of an uninspectable heat-stuff. (Ryle, 2002, 322)

In context, Ryle is talking about the future of empirical psychology, but he appears to hold out a similar prospect for epistemology, as well: ditch the "Cartesian myth," and you may find that you have been, all along, preparing for a serious study. In particular, on the basis that "the great epistemologists, Locke, Hume and Kant, were in the main advancing the Grammar of Science, when they thought that they were discussing parts of the occult life-story of persons acquiring knowledge," he recommends a "restoration of the trade-names of traditional epistemology to their proper place in the anatomy of built theories" (318). The history of philosophical terminology, then, will not yield information about legitimate uses for the usual Whig-historian reasons:

terms like "phlogiston," in retrospect, never had any legitimate use to begin with.

In "Must We Mean What We Say?", Cavell sounds, unsurprisingly, more like Austin. He repeatedly emphasizes, for example, that he is talking about *English* words, and other resources that are, as a matter of contingent historical fact, provided by English (Cavell, 1976, 33). He even says that only a *native* speaker of English is authorized to speak as he and Austin do about "what we should say" (13). This last is stronger than anything in Austin, and, since no one is now a native speaker of Latin, it implies that it is now unknowable, or at least injudicable, whether Cicero's usage is or is not ordinary. For that very reason, however, it undermines Austin's case for treating philosophical or other technical terminology any differently than our common stock of words. The whole need for scientific (as opposed to "folk") etymology is that the history of words largely runs through extinct languages and/or extinct forms of our own. In either case our credentials as native speakers run out. How can we say which kind of evolution a given term has been through? And as for Ryle's reason, Cavell is too close to Kuhn to countenance that. Might we not be suffering from "Kuhn loss"? Might not *voluntarius*, word of a dead and learned language as it is, be precisely what we need to express something now become, normally, inexpressible? Might not Cicero, discussing why and when *promissa servanda sunt* (*De officiis* 1.10.32 [Cicero, 1994, 32,23–4]), express what is no longer expressible in our "queer" sounding "You ought to keep your promises" (Cavell, 1976, 30)?

> The heroic books, even if printed in the character of our mother tongue, will always be in a language dead to degenerate times; and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than common use permits out of what wisdom and valor and generosity we have. (Thoreau, 1992, 3.3, 68)

But in that case, Cavell's sense of "normal" would coincide, after all, with Kuhn's: not the way normally unquestionable because no one is normally in a moral position to question it, but rather the way protected from all question by rigid puzzle rules and a rigorous erasure of the past.

This line of thought contains, then, no positive solution to the problem, why philosophical terminology and its history is suspect, whereas "ordinary" words and their etymologies are not. And when Cavell addresses the problem most directly, he gives rather, so to speak, a negative solution. Who

says that "ordinary folks" — magistrates, coastguards, teachers, journalists, rhapsodes, tanners, generals, farmers, shopkeepers, marketers, consultants, management gurus, regular gurus, and all the rest — are immune from words gone idle; tortured, faked words; words that have no life in them, and require now to be repeopled? Not Thoreau, Heidegger, Socrates, or Wittgenstein — and not Cavell, either. That becomes abundantly evident in *The Claim of Reason*, and even more so in his later works,[28] but the thought is there in "Must We Mean What We Say?", as well. When Cavell puts ordinary language philosophy to its own test, asking: "When should we ask ourselves when we should (and should not) say 'The x is F' in order to find out what an F(x) is?", (Cavell, 1976, 21) and answers:

> When you have to. When you have more facts than you know what to make of, or when you do not know what new facts would show. When, that is, you need a clear view of what you already know. When you need to do philosophy. (Ibid.)

he then adds, as illustration: "Euthyphro does not need to learn any new facts, yet he needs to learn something" (ibid.). Euthyphro is in certain ways extraordinary: to prosecute one's father is no normal action. But he is not a philosopher. His predicament has special implications because of his special role as a would-be reformer of the state; but it is a predicament that could come upon any of us. *Would* come, in the face of Socrates.

I have now said most of what I can about why I will still shoulder these enormous tasks — enormous by Cavell's norm — of terminological history. When the baker, or the baker's marketer, says something like "The Quality You Expect at a Price You Can Afford!", I don't take it as obvious that they have found a better job for "quality" than our latter-day zombie metaphysicians have found for "qualia." To judge of that, you would need to know not about the word's descent from the PIE etymon $*k^{\underset{\sim}{u}}o$-, but rather about Socrates' introduction of the "extraordinary" (*ἀλλόκοτον*) noun *ποιότης* at *Theaetetus* 182[a], and the subsequent invention, by Cicero, of *qualitas* as a translation of *ποιότης*, *quod ipsum apud Graecos non est vulgi verbum, sed philosophorum* (*Academica* 1.7.25 [Cicero, 1885, 127]). And although I would rather buy bread from a baker than from a professor, and although I will happily wait for a bill from the grocer for my supply of potatoes (or for a bill

[28] See the question in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*: "Who are the native speakers of our tongue?" (Cavell, 1989, 94).

from the credit card for their supply by Instacart), I would rather, if I must be in debt for my words, that that debt still be held by Plato and Cicero, rather than securitized and sold in tranches to the folk.

But, meanwhile, I have not yet arrived at my lament.

4 My lament

Suppose Socrates comes around asking what gold is, or what "gold" means, and that, in reply, I take him out to my counting house and show him a pile of gold thalers. Since, as we all know, meaning ain't in the head, why should he not be satisfied with that?

Maybe he would be. It's hard to say, since, outside of the *Clouds* (and, I suppose, of the *Timaeus*) this type of question doesn't usually interest him. But, to be our paradigm of the Way of Words, he will need to balk at my reply, as he does at Meno's. I asked for one thing, he will say, and you gave me a whole pile! The one thing is the meaning of "gold," or the (nominal) essence of gold. So again, the question is: why does he want *that*? Our various authors will give different answers,[29] but, being done with them for now, I consider only two, that I will think up in my armchair on the spot.

I. That those things in your counting house are gold is a statement belonging to normative goldsmithery. Whereas the question I asked was a question of metagoldsmithery: what do you *mean* when, or rather if, you call something "gold"? These questions are so different that they belong to different specialties: if an editor of the *Journal of Smithcraft* receives a submission on metagoldsmithery, it would be wrong to send it to a normative goldsmith for review. A normative goldsmith does often proceed, explicitly or implicitly, with some fixed answer to the metagoldsmitheritical question in mind, but that is not necessary, since with very different answers, e.g., on the one hand, "a substance yellow, heavy, malleable, and soluble in aqua regia," and, on the other hand, "a chemical element of atomic number 79," one may arrive at virtually the same answer to the normative question, the one that makes a difference to your fortune. But, you will exclaim, the metagoldsmiths might decide anything! What if they say, for example, that gold is a substance pale greenish, semiliquid, minty fresh, and fluoridated? Will I have to count my money at the bathroom sink? Not to worry: we have al-

[29] See (Stevenson, 1944, 224–5), (Austin, 1979, 183 n. 1), (Ryle, 1966, 119), (Mates, 1958, 165–66), (Cavell, 1976, 20).

ready (never mind how) narrowed down metagoldmsithery to three possible answers: gold-consequentialism, gold-deontology, and virtue goldsmithery. Always check against all three, and your account will be safe.

II. Meaning may not be in the head, but the knowing, what we know, and what we do not, is in the breast. A fortune dependent on what some expert will say is not *your* fortune, and therefore not a fortune, or merely fortunate: not the *εὔδαιμον*, i.e. normal and natural, for human beings. I ask: what you mean, in order to determine how far you — a finite rational spirit — exist, and how far "you" are just a hat and a coat that conceal an automaton. If, in walking, as you do at this hour every day, through Harvard Yard, with its beautiful old elms, you should happen to meet Muir or Thoreau, and be forced to admit that you cannot tell an elm from a beech, they will say: "elm," in your mouth, is a mere noise. You are no better, in that respect, than a parrot — and perhaps worse, if we are to trust Irene Pepperberg or Prince Maurice. You don't know beans. You don't, to some extent, know where you are, don't know what world you are at (what are your worldmates), don't know who you are, don't know yourself. And so, to that extent, you think not, and are not.

Socrates II is Locke's Socrates. When he asks about "gold" or "elm," maybe his fervor, bordering on melodrama, seems excessive. But what if we turn from those natural kinds to "human," or, as Locke would say, "man"? For, when the Abbé de Saint Martin was born, not even the experts knew whether that word, "man," referred to him or not.[30] When this Socrates asks, in any case, as Plato's Socrates really asks, about "virtue," "piety," "courage," and "justice," we begin to see what he's getting at.

> *Wisdom, Glory, Grace,* &c. are Words frequent enough in every Man's Mouth; but if a great many of those who use them, should be asked, what they mean by them? they would be at a stand [this being Locke's translation of *ἀπορεῖν*], and not know what to answer. (Locke, 1706, 3.10.3, 414)

In these cases, at least, we see why this Socrates will not allow us to give words a "secret reference" (3.3.4, 348) to the ideas of some expert, but will confine their meaning to the ideas of the speaker. Perhaps I complacently own that I can't tell gold from pyrite, elm from beech, even man from monster

[30](Locke, 1706, 3.6.26, 386), citing (Ménage, 1695, 278).

— but surely I will hesitate to admit that I can't tell wisdom from folly. Still, this Socrates, Socrates II, will not let the matter rest at that. The reference, even of "gold" or "elm," to something other than my own ideas, is *secret*, he will say, precisely because I wish to cover up my ignorance — because, that is, I am a hypocrite: one who makes a show of good qualities, which he has not (2.22.2, 184). And if knowledge is, in a primary sense, the good (useful) quality for human beings,[31] then this is the primary form of hypocrisy.

Socrates I, on the other hand, is a metaethicist. Is the meaning of "piety," and the *ignorance* of its meaning among the ordinary folk, a matter of life and death both for him and for Euthyphro's father? That is a literary device, a mere occasion for Plato to ask whether "appealing to God" can "solve the metaethical puzzle posed by Euthyphro" (Sayre-McCord, 2014).[32] But this metaethicist Socrates is talking dangerous nonsense.

With "gold" and "elm," the danger is subtle and pervasive. The way we now live necessarily involves a certain emptiness of speech: the meanings in our heads have gone the same way as the gold in our counting houses. We have our words on credit, like our potatoes, and even our "cash" is only a bottomless bog of mutual credence, fiat currency that exists only as long as we agree to swallow whole one another's accounts.[33] The most that can be expected is that we *feel* the emptiness and the danger: feel the pain that, whether it seems to be in one extremity or another, is really always located at the interface between ghost and machine, between finite rational spirit and automaton. That we feel and reckon with it.

With "piety" and "virtue," the danger is more acute. No one, after all,

[31]See (Locke, 1706, Epistle to the Reader, first page [unnumbered]; 4.20.6, 596–7).

[32]It is not clear how to file such an appeal. The way Euthyphro does? The way Socrates does in the *Apology*? The way Locke advises in the *Second Treatise*? And it should go without saying that an appeal to God, however pursued, is not a fair way to solve a *puzzle*. (One is reminded of the Sydney Harris cartoon: "I think you should be more explicit here in step two.")

[33]See (Hobbes, 1651, 5.4, 19). The accounts are kept by the "master of the family," who is a man, for reasons Hobbes explains, though not very well (20.4, 102–3). But a woman normally orders the potatoes: *patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet* ([Thoreau, 1992, 7.13, 110], alluding to [Cato, 1962, 2, 9,20–21] — and indeed, Thoreau did sell five bushels of large potatoes, for $2.50). This probably explains why Hobbes imagines the master tempted to swallow certain accounts whole, i.e., to take them on faith (cf. [Hobbes, 1651, 32.3, 195]). It may also explain why the great women of Oxford in this period (Anscombe, Foot, Murdoch) are all deeply involved in the matters at hand. (My potatoes are borrowed from [Anscombe, 1958].)

will really invoke metasmithery in the counting house or metaarboriculture in the Yard. But metaethics exists, and people *do* worry about it and try to solve its "puzzles," because there is something in us that calls it forth. In this respect, "consequentialists" (like Locke) and "deontologists" (like Kant) and "virtue ethicists" (like Cicero) all accuse us of the same thing. We are at pains, they say, to *forget* what "good" and "right" and "virtue" mean, to get the ideas they express, their criteria of application, the *norm* for them, out of our heads or breasts and into literally anything else, because we are all, ordinarily (proximally and for the most part), engaged in evading the divine command, the command of the oracle, i.e., the norm of reason.

But that there must not be "metaethics" does not mean that there must be only "normative" ethics. Rather, the two are made for one another. If, the *Grundnorm* having been abstracted off for the entertainment of puzzle solvers elsewhere, we still speak of ethics, we are no longer recollecting one another to our duty, but rather valuing certain facts, and then displaying our values to each other. Or if we still speak of aesthetics, we are no longer calling attention back to the beautiful, but rather making a show of our taste. Or if we still speak of epistemology, we are no longer recalling the depth of our ignorance. "How can he remember well his ignorance — which his growth requires — who has so often to use his knowledge?" (Thoreau, 1992, 1.6, 3). All of this, however — and here is the lament — is involved in our use of "normative." When we say "X has normative force," we box up as a puzzle the issue of whence such "force" could derive, and then, taking the puzzle to be solved by someone, somewhere, preach X up or down in the name of their imaginary authority. So, as promised, in the end I don't disagree with Cavell: the problem with speaking, and writing, and thinking, this way, is that we appeal to commands, demands, and questions made or framed by no one, without standing, without care.

But, you may say: how else could we speak in these situations? I answer that Wundt's picture, picked up by Husserl and thereafter by Carnap and others, is not inevitable or philosophically neutral. One of the virtues of the *Tractatus* is that in it Wittgenstein says clearly what that picture comes to, in a way that allows its rejection. It is not philosophically neutral that we think of the world as a totality of facts — "facts" in the sense of *Sachverhälte*, that of which the true propositions are signs (Wittgenstein, 1921, §§1, 2, 3.11, pp. 199, 204).[34] It is not philosophically neutral that

[34]Cf. (Husserl, 1975, §36, Hua 18:128,5–7).

we think of the question, how to introduce ethics or aesthetics, as the question: how to prevent all propositions from being equi-valent, *gleichwertig* (Wittgenstein, 1921, §6.4, p. 260).[35] It is not philosophically neutral that we think this requires the imposition of a *Grundnorm* from outside the world (Wittgenstein, 1921, §6.41, p. 260).[36] I can't say whether the *Tractatus* itself already contains such a rejection. Wittgenstein's followers, at least, tend to reject it, whether (like Anscombe) they still value the *Tractatus* or whether (like Cavell) they do not. And Wittgenstein's offense at Carnap in Vienna, whether justified or not, at least shows that he feared the relapse of his clear articulation back into inarticulate presupposition.

Be that as it may: not being Cavell, I will appeal not to what we (qua native English speakers) say, but to authors normative of us (qua Western philosophers). For neither Kant, nor Locke, nor Cicero share this picture. Locke says, for example:

> That Men should keep their Compacts, is certainly a great and undeniable Rule in Morality: But yet, if a Christian, who has the view of Happiness and Misery in another Life, be asked why a Man must keep his Word, he will *give* this as a *Reason*: Because God, who has the Power of eternal Life and Death, requires it of us. But if an *Hobbist* be asked why; he will answer, Because the Publick requires it, and the *Leviathan* will punish you, if you do not. And if one of the old *Heathen* Philosophers had been asked, he would have answer'd: Because it was dishonest, below the Dignity of a Man, and opposite to Vertue, the highest Perfection of Human Nature, to do otherwise. (Locke, 1706, 1.3.5, 24)

Is this a metaethical dispute, over the meaning of "should"? Or do the three disputants (Locke, Hobbes, and Cicero) agree on what "should" means, and disagree only over why and when the "fact" of compact-keeping meets the implied criteria? But if it were either of those, it would not serve Locke's purpose in this context, namely to show, via counterexample, that even universal agreement as to what should be done need not evidence any innate practical principle. For on the first alternative, the dispute is over which principles are (to be called) "practical," whereas on the second alternative a shared practical principle underlies it.

[35] Cf. (Husserl, 1975, §31, Hua 18:114,17–18).

[36] Husserl, too, speaks of normativity as something *hineingetragen*: see (Husserl, 1975 §15, Hua 18:60,4–7; §41, 160,12–14; and especially §56, 212,6–14).

The dispute, rather, as Locke sees it, is not over how to value certain "facts"; it is over how to respond when one is asked: what ought I to do, or what is to be done: *quid faciendum*? A question to be answered before the fact, before something is *factum*. It can be answered, says Locke, only by calling your attention to your unhappiness, your dis-ease, your *pain*: the contradiction in your will. If that appeal succeeds, your deliberation will be at its end, and you will have, or be, the norm by which to direct your fact.[37] The question about innate principles is only whether this call is a *reminding*. It involves, then, not Locke's views about the meaning of "should," but rather his views about memory and personal identity. It is about that — about the conditions under which we may, with authority, personate ourselves — that Locke disagrees with Hobbes and with Cicero[38] and, for that matter, with Descartes and with Leibniz and with Kant. And with Hume, needless to say.

It may still be difficult to understand what I mean here. Not, obviously, that you ought to write neither theoretical nor practical philosophy: that the questions, "What can I know?" and "What should I do?" are bad, or are the same, or not independent, or somehow shade off through fringe cases into each other. Obviously: although none of that would be obvious if I were Wittgenstein, or Socrates, or even Cavell. I am not in their position, don't have their standing to raise a question about your practice. In fact, I don't say what you *ought* to do at all. This is not "metaphilosophy" (and not only because, *μετα-* having now received double for all its sins, it's time the cup passed on). To what *Grundnorm* could I appeal, on pain of infinite para-litigation? You are the norm. Compare "You ought to know yourself" with "Know thyself!".

But, you may say, still, what is your *argument*? Can you for once stop this parade of allusions and give us some premises and a conclusion? Even granted (what we are not so inclined to grant) that there is a place for authority in philosophy, surely this grave matter can't be settled with nothing but an enormous *sed contra*?

Respondeo dicendum: only thus is this now to be (re)settled. David Lewis's deep game, in which to win the argument is our disposable end,[39] although we know all along that philosophical arguments are never (or almost

[37]See Cicero, *De officiis* 1.29.101: "But every action ought to be empty of temerity and negligence, neither ought one to do anything, for which one cannot render a probable cause; for this is nearly a definition [*discriptio*!] of duty" (Cicero, 1994, 41,10–13).

[38]See *De officiis* 1.30.107, 1.32.115 (43,22–7, 47,13–15).

[39]See (Nguyen, 2020, 10–11).

never) knock-down — even if this game were well-advised in principle, we who lack Lewis's depth of irony are unable to play it. Argument-making has therefore become normal in Kuhn's sense: a temporally and teleologically endless exercise in puzzle-solving, kept going only by the artificial chains of peer review. When philosophy regains a state in which straightforward argument is generally to be offered over a question like the present one, you will know it because argument then again becomes generally fruitful. Until then, arguments are to be handled carefully, mostly masked and at a distance, mostly as texts to be interpreted rather than as responses to be tested against objections, let alone as proofs to be checked for soundness and validity. But whether we will ever regain that baseline, is more than I can tell.

5 Conclusion: significance of this paper

If you have made it this far, I must unfortunately admit, what you will already have concluded for yourself, that this paper is not a significant contribution to the literature on any topic. It is not meant to change the state of play in any field. J'adoube.

In better news: you are, therefore, hereby released from any duty to cite it. I am not in ten-thousandfold poverty, and would (I hope) not beg for that kind of "recognition" even if I were.

But I do appeal to your (re)cognition, or rather to your knowing, or rather to your conscience (the final court of appeal in this case). It is not too late to avoid this word in this sense. The norm, so far forth as *normans*, is not to be regarded *sub specie temporis*. It is never too late.[40]

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[40]I thank Eric Schliesser and Bradford Cokelet for useful hints. It should be obvious that this paper involves a good deal of "index-learning." I am grateful to the creators and maintainers of Logeion, Numen, the Oxford English Dictionary, the Patrologia Latina Database, the Perseus Project, Thesaurus Linguae Graeca, and, especially, those twin autumnal glories of our culture, Wikipedia and Google Books.

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