Normative Functionalism
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In *The Pittsburgh School of Philosophy*, I use the expression "normative functionalism" to describe an important dimension of the views of Wilfrid Sellars, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom. Although I say a little bit there about why this label is apt, more can be said about it.

I use it to describe their views of the *acts* of assert*ing* and believ*ing*, and their views of the *content* or *meaning* of what is assert*ed* and believ*ed* in such acts. Roughly, an act of asserting should be understood in terms of its function or role in a norm-governed social practice; it alters the normative standing of the person performing the act, what she should (not) or may (not) do. In turn, acts of believing should be understood in similar terms, as altering the normative standing of a person in that very same social practice. That basic idea should then be extended to other speech acts (such as requesting or commanding) and other mental acts (such as intending or perceiving). And it is not just *acts* of assert*ing* and believ*ing* that should be understood this way, but also the *contents* of what is assert*ed* or believ*ed*. Roughly, what is asserted in asserting 'That is red' should be understood in terms of its function or role in a norm-governed social practice; roughly, the meaning of 'That is red' should be understood in terms of what rationally supports it (e.g., 'That is crimson') and what it rationally supports (e.g., 'That is colored').

I used "normative functionalism" to describe that dimension of their views for a couple reasons. Mainly, I wanted to highlight a connection between their views and an important and familiar view in philosophy of mind and language: functionalism. Here is a representative statement of functionalism in the philosophy of mind: "Functionalism is the doctrine that what makes something a thought, desire, pain (or any other type of mental state) depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function, or the role it plays, in the cognitive system of which it is a part. More precisely, functionalist theories take the identity of a mental state to be determined by its causal relations to sensory stimulations, other mental states, and behavior" (Levin, §1). Understood that way, functionalism focuses primarily on the individual organism or subject; and it conceives functions of mental states in primarily causal terms. But that is really just one species of functionalism. Instead, it can and should be seen in more generic terms. Roughly, in generics, functionalism about X would be the view that "what makes something [an X] … depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function" in some system of which it is a part. Sellars, McDowell and Brandom can then be seen as functionalists about mind language, emphasizing the social relationships of individual organisms (humans) and the norms governing those relationships, not just the causal connections between internal states of organisms and their environment, or between individual organisms.

I also used "normative functionalism" because I wanted to make contact with existing discussions and literature on "the Pittsburgh School". I believe the expression was used to describe this dimension of Sellars's, McDowell's, and Brandom's view well before it was used in print. I use it in my dissertation which was written in 2007. I learned it from Mark

Lance, who directed my dissertation. However, the first time he used in print was 2008. James O'Shea used it to describe Sellars in his book on Sellars (2007). Although Brandom comes close to using it in *Making It Explicit* (1994), his first use of it in print appears to be in 2009. Furthermore, it seems to me that this use of the label is insinuated by other philosophers, who if not members of "the Pittsburgh School" are at least actively engaged with them. It is suggested by John Haugeland (1982; 1990/1998; 1995/1998), who was a long-time colleague of Sellars, McDowell and Brandom at Pitt; Danielle Macbeth (1994), who was a student of Haugeland, McDowell, and Brandom; and Jay Rosenberg (1974), who was a student of Sellars and interlocutor of Brandom and McDowell. One very interesting aspect of Haugeland's work is that it seems to recommend a normative functionalist approach to metaphysical questions more generally; he finds a basis for such a view in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Haugeland 2013). Arguably, Sellars should be seen as recommending something similar (Kraut 2010).

Of course, I did not have to use "normative functionalism". First, that label can and does accurately describe other things; for instance, in sociology, it is sometimes used to describe the views of Talcott Parsons and Emile Durkheim (Giddens 1979) (Turner 1993). Second, the dimension of Sellars's, McDowell's and Brandom's views that I describe with that expression is sometimes described with other labels, such as "Neo-Pragmatism" or "Normative Pragmatism", or — maybe more provocatively — "Neo-Hegelianism" (Redding 2007) (Bernstein 2010). Still, "normative functionalism" seems to me a helpful term for thinking about the views of Sellars, McDowell and Brandom.

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