

CONCEPTUALIZING QUEERNESS

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Abstract

J. L. Mackie believed that there could be no objective moral properties, in part because he believed that such properties would be objectionably “queer.” Non-naturalists hold that moral and, more broadly, normative properties exist, but typically agree with Mackie both that normative properties have certain “queer” features and that such properties are *sui generis*—as Mackie put it, “utterly different from anything else in the universe.” Many who reject non-naturalism follow Mackie in maintaining that the properties non-naturalists posit clash too harshly with our naturalistic view of the world. But there is another kind of response to the non-naturalist that has received comparatively less attention: The problem is not, some contend, merely that other views can accommodate the queer features of normativity just as well as non-naturalism can (and without the costs). Rather, it is that non-naturalism *itself* cannot accommodate these features. For example, Tristram McPherson argues that given their metaphysical commitments, non-naturalists must explain normative supervenience. But, he charges, they cannot. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: First, to reframe McPherson’s argument within the context of a broader queerness challenge: Instead of arguing (as Mackie did) that queer properties are impossible, this challenge accepts the possibility of non-natural properties, but requires the non-naturalist to explain why these properties must have the queer features we take them to have. The second purpose is to examine non-naturalists’ prospects for meeting this challenge by claiming that the normative has its queer features as a matter of conceptual necessity.