

## CONCEPTUALIZING QUEERNESS

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J. L. Mackie (1977) famously claims that there can be no objective values—no objective moral properties or facts—in part because such properties would be objectionably “queer.” Mackie discusses two aspects of this queerness. The first—a “to-be-pursuedness” that he takes to be “built into” moral properties—seems to be an overwrought relative of the more plausible (though still controversial) thesis of Judgement Internalism: that we are necessarily motivated to act in accordance with our moral judgements (adding, on some versions, “at least insofar as we are rational”) (Mackie 1977, 40). The second is the thesis of Moral Supervenience—that the moral supervenes on the non-moral (or the natural, or the descriptive), that there can be no moral difference without a non-moral one.

Though the precise formulation of both theses is controversial, many agree that they capture distinctive features of morality or, in fact, of normativity more generally (to which I will continue to refer).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, few follow Mackie in taking these features to provide reasons to embrace normative (or moral) error theory. Instead, most react in one of two ways: Those in the first camp reject the assumption that normative discourse is committed to the existence of objective normative properties and offer a competing explanation that accommodates the discourse’s distinctive features (e.g., expressivists). Those in the second camp accept this assumption (or one quite similar) but deny that normativity’s features are decisive against the existence or instantiation of objective normative properties.

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<sup>1</sup> For relevant discussion concerning the extension of Mackie’s queerness worries to normativity in general, see Bedke (2010).

Some in the latter camp hold that the features in question aren't really that "queer" after all—maintaining, for example, that some naturalistic reduction can capture all of normativity's distinctive features without taking on any special metaphysical burdens. But some theorists—so-called "non-naturalists"<sup>2</sup>—bite the bullet. They agree with Mackie (and Moore (1903)) that normative properties are *sui generis* or autonomous—that they really are "utterly different from anything else in the universe" (Mackie 1977, 38). But, they say, normativity is too important to give up; if positing queer non-natural properties is the only way to have it, then so be it.

Most everyone agrees, I think, that if naturalism could work, it would be theoretically advantageous, since there surely is a bullet—or perhaps a munitions depot—for non-naturalists to bite here. But given that every naturalistic proposal thus far has been highly contentious (to put it mildly), some who wish to resist non-naturalism—*without* having to defend naturalism first—have turned to more direct assaults on the non-naturalist's ability to accept queerness in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

Consider one such argument: Tristram McPherson (forthcoming) proposes the "modest Humean" (MH) thesis that positing brute necessary relations between metaphysically distinct entities counts significantly against a view.<sup>4</sup> McPherson then notes that because of their commitment to the

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<sup>2</sup> I will continue to employ this label, though this should be understood stipulatively, in recognition of the facts that some self-avowed non-naturalists would take issue with aspects of this characterization and that nothing about this characterization necessitates a commitment to normative properties being non-natural as such. The *locus classicus* of non-naturalism as understood here is Moore (1903). He is followed, in the contemporary literature, by Enoch (2011), Fitzpatrick (2008) and Huemer (2006), among others. As for accepting Mackie's "queerness" charges, while not all non-naturalists accept Judgement Internalism, all accept Moral Supervenience, and thus embrace at least some part of that queerness.

<sup>3</sup> Some important naturalistic accounts can be found in Boyd (1988), Railton (1986) and Schroeder (2007). Arguably the most famous general objections to naturalism are Moore's (1903) "Open Question Argument" and Horgan and Timmons' (e.g., 1991) "Moral Twin Earth."

<sup>4</sup> This is a weakened—and, I think, eminently more plausible—relative of "Hume's dictum" that there can be no metaphysically necessary relations between distinct entities. See Hume (1739), Book I, Part III, Section VI.

*sui generis* of the normative, it seems that non-naturalists must accept that normative properties and their supervenience bases are, in fact, metaphysically distinct. Thus, were non-naturalism committed to supervenience's being brute, this would count significantly against it as the correct metanormative view. This is not a *refutation* of the view, but it does imply that non-naturalism is in trouble if it cannot explain supervenience. And indeed, McPherson goes on to argue, non-naturalists can offer no such explanation.

It is not hard to see how McPherson's point generalizes. Suppose we ask why normative properties have *any* of the various distinctive, "queer" features we take them to have. Insofar as these features posit necessary relations between the normative and the non-normative, and insofar as we accept MH,<sup>5</sup> the non-naturalist owes us an explanation. And, indeed, it seems many of the features we would typically call "queer" *do* posit such relations. Assuming Judgement Internalism is a thesis about the nature of normativity itself (as opposed to simply about normative judgement<sup>6</sup>), it seems to posit a necessary relation between the normative and our motivations. To take just one further example: Consider the widely accepted claim that "ought implies can" (OIC), which might well be included among normativity's queer features. This, too, posits a necessary relation between

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, one way out of all of this is to reject MH. I will not argue for it further here, but I believe that MH is plausible enough that it is worth exploring the non-naturalist's prospects for meeting the explanatory challenges it presents. Indeed, at least one non-naturalist has explicitly admitted MH's plausibility; see Enoch (2011, 147–148). In addition, even if we don't accept MH, surely there is *some* theoretical advantage to being able to explain relations between the normative and the non-normative. If this is an advantage that non-naturalists can be shown to lack, this may make a difference in our weighting of the various metanormative options.

<sup>6</sup> Wedgwood (2004) argues that Judgement Internalism is really a claim about the relation between normative *judgement* and motivation, not between normative *properties* and motivation. If that is the case then (contra Mackie) it would seem that this is not really a queer feature of normativity itself (though it may be a queer feature of normative *discourse*). Whether Judgement Internalism posits a necessary relation between the normative and the non-normative is, in any case, beside the point. What matters is that insofar as it *does*—which it indeed does on some views, as discussed in §3—it is subject to the challenge posed by MH.

the normative and the non-normative: It holds that, necessarily, normative properties are instantiated such that only possible actions are obligatory. Thus, from McPherson's argument, we can glean a general challenge to non-naturalism—a challenge to explain why normative properties are related to non-normative properties in various distinctive ways. Call this challenge Queerness Revenge.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, I am interested in the viability of a particular kind of response to Queerness Revenge: that the relevant relations between the normative and the non-normative are *conceptually* necessary. In what follows, I consider McPherson's own reasons for rejecting this conceptual move. However, I argue that the non-naturalist may have a way of resisting McPherson's objections. I draw on work by Mark Schroeder (on reduction) and Ralph Wedgwood (on Judgement Internalism) to show how this might be accomplished. Finally, I discuss a rejoinder from the anti-non-naturalist camp. I conclude that, in this conceptual move, the non-naturalist has a potential response to Queerness Revenge, but that its success is highly questionable.

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<sup>7</sup> Of course, someone might wish to apply the label of “queer” to features of the normative that do *not* involve relations between the normative and the non-normative, and thus do not fall under the purview of MH. I suspect that there will be no such features (consider, for one, that *intranormative* relations such as one between ‘right’ and ‘good’ don’t seem like troublingly “queer” in the same way). Even if there are, though, this makes little difference. First, you can just think of Queerness Revenge as a problem that only applies to a subset of normativity’s queer features. Second, and more importantly, as long as there are *some* features of the normative that involve these relations (and, minimally, this surely includes supervenience), there is a problem here that the non-naturalist must grapple with.

## 1. McPherson on Supervenience

McPherson begins with a formulation of the thesis of normative supervenience that, he believes, can be universally endorsed<sup>8</sup>:

Call a property [*normatively*] *involving* if it either is a sui generis [normative] property, or its real definition ineliminably mentions sui generis [normative] properties. Finally, call any property a *base property*, unless it is an [normatively] involving property. This machinery permits us to formulate an improved version of the supervenience thesis:

SUPERVENIENCE      No metaphysically possible world that is identical to a second world in all base respects can be different from the second world in its [normative] respects. (McPherson forthcoming)<sup>9</sup>

With SUPERVENIENCE in hand, it is easy to see the problem for non-naturalism: SUPERVENIENCE represents a necessary relation between normative and non-normative properties. These properties are, as McPherson puts it, “metaphysically discontinuous”—an implication of the *sui generis*ity of the normative. Given this discontinuity (or distinctness, as I described it above), it seems there can be no causal connection between the normative and the non-normative,<sup>10</sup> nor can there can a reduction of one to the other. Without these, it is difficult to see how the necessary connection could be explained.

In the remainder of his paper, McPherson considers and rejects explanations of three sorts: normative, metaphysical and conceptual. Again, my interest is his discussion of the conceptual. Before turning to that discussion, one note of clarification: SUPERVENIENCE is a *general* claim about the kinds of relations that necessarily hold between normative and non-normative properties. This is

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<sup>8</sup> McPherson develops this formulation of the thesis in response to Nick Sturgeon’s (2009) charge that supervenience’s status as a point of general agreement is an illusion, that there is no one supervenience thesis everyone would agree to. I am inclined to agree with McPherson that his formulation belies Sturgeon’s claim.

<sup>9</sup> McPherson talks in terms of the “ethical,” rather than the “normative,” but the points are essentially the same.

<sup>10</sup> Given that these are necessary truths, a causal explanation seems unlikely anyway.

distinct from *specific* claims about what relations in fact hold—i.e., about which normative properties supervene on which non-normative ones. There are, of course, connections between these two ideas. For instance, if we knew that a certain set of specific supervenience relations held, we might arrive at SUPERVENIENCE inductively. The idea under consideration, however—that SUPERVENIENCE is a conceptual truth—is clearly about the more general claim. Few people—even fewer among non-naturalists—accept that there are any conceptually necessary *specific* supervenience relations.

It is interesting to note that Enoch’s own discussion of McPherson’s arguments comes in his discussion of specific supervenience.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Enoch acknowledges the validity of McPherson’s argument: He is committed to some brute relations between the normative and the non-normative, and, because of MH, this loses him a few “plausibility points.” Indeed, it seems that the two disagree only on the strength of the objection. [Enoch writes: “I think I am willing to accept this modestly Humean thesis (though I may have doubts about the ‘significantly’ here)” (Enoch 2011, 147).]

Despite this apparent agreement, it is not clear that Enoch really takes McPherson’s point to heart. For while Enoch accepts that some specific supervenience relations between the normative and the non-normative will be brute, he does *not* accept that SUPERVENIENCE *itself* is brute. Rather, he says, it is a conceptual truth:

The general supervenience thesis states that normative properties supervene on *some* natural ones . . . Can it be explained consistently with [non-naturalism]? . . . The modality relevant to the general supervenience of the normative is, it seems safe to say, conceptual. It is conceptually impossible for there to be a normative difference without a natural one. (Enoch 2011, 149)

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it is Enoch himself who draws the general/specific distinction. For the relevant discussion, see his (2011, chap. 6)

It is somewhat surprising, however, that Enoch finds this “safe to say,” given that it is one of the proposals that McPherson explicitly addresses and rejects. We do not, McPherson says, get to “stipulate” necessary connections between distinct properties:

We don’t get to stipulate, for example, that “all Fs are Gs” is analytic, while holding fixed the antecedent meaning of ‘Fs’ and ‘Gs’. This point can be illustrated by *reductio*. Suppose that I were permitted to stipulate that I was adding to my idiolect a term ‘kats’ such that ‘kats’ refers to cats, but also that ‘all kats wear hats’ is analytic, while holding fixed the ordinary English meaning of the rest of my language. *If it were successful*, this stipulation would allow me to truly make the claim that ‘all kats wear hats’. But this is absurd, since there are evidently cats that do not wear hats. This example suggests a constraint: given an allegedly analytic connection, there needs to be something in the metaphysics that can explain why this connection is necessary. (McPherson forthcoming)

Enoch does not address McPherson’s complaint. And, indeed, the complaint does seem quite worrisome. I am not convinced, however, that the non-naturalist has nothing left to say. In the next section, I consider two cases—one involving the non-normative, the other the normative—where philosophers have made claims analogous to the claim that SUPERVENIENCE, though a feature of something real, is conceptually necessary.

## 2. Conceptualizing Queerness

According to SUPERVENIENCE, there can be no two worlds that are non-normatively identical yet differ normatively. Assuming McPherson is right (as he surely is) that we cannot stipulate necessary relations between distinct properties (at least objective ones), we must ask whether, for the non-naturalist, SUPERVENIENCE involves such stipulation. Certainly, it is easy to see how it might be taken to. In McPherson’s example, we use the term ‘kats’ to refer to cats but also specify something necessary about kats—that they wear hats. Similarly, it might seem that we use the term ‘good’ to refer to a particular non-normative property—The Good—and then stipulate something necessary about it—that it supervenes on some non-normative property(ies).

But this is not, I think, the only way to read this claim. To see the alternative, consider an example from Mark Schroeder's (2005) discussion of metaphysical reduction: Schroeder invites us to suppose that someone has proposed that God is the strong nuclear force. (She comes to this conclusion because she is told that we need God to explain why the protons in a nucleus don't repel each other and then finds out that it is the strong nuclear force that explains this.) As Schroeder points out, we would most likely classify this person as an atheist. This is because her claim that God is the strong nuclear force flies in the face of certain important conceptual truths about God. The strong nuclear force might explain why protons do not repel each other in the nucleus of an atom; but the strong nuclear force is not omnipotent, omniscient or omnibenevolent, and the strong nuclear force did not create the universe. Yet these are all things that are necessarily true of God; and the relevant modality is apparently conceptual.<sup>12</sup>

Consider, now, the claim that it is conceptually necessary that God created the universe. One way to understand this claim is as stating that we have independently fixed the referent of God—He's *That Guy*—and then stipulated that, as a matter of conceptual necessity, He created the universe. In other words, we could read this claim as being analogous to McPherson's example about karts wearing hats. In that case, it seems we would indeed be making a grievous error. Surely, we do not have the power to stipulate that *That Guy* created the universe.

But another—indeed, I think, the natural—way to read this claim is as constraining which things 'God' could turn out to refer to. So, for example, if there were a being out there that was incredibly powerful and intelligent and even very, very nice, we might well say that this being is not God unless it also created the universe.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, if God exists, these features are also metaphysically necessary, but this is beside the point.

<sup>13</sup> This assumes that the creator aspect of our God-concept is non-negotiable. That might not be the case. But if not, we could presumably fix on some other aspect of our concept, or of some other concept, to make the point.



The relevant suggestion, then, is that something similar is going on in the normative case. It's not that the non-naturalist points to a set of non-natural properties and stipulates that *those* *supervene*. Rather, the non-naturalist maintains that among the various properties out there, only (though presumably not all) those that supervene get to count as normative properties.

Interestingly, this is precisely the sort of move that has been advocated in the case of another aspect of queerness: Judgement Internalism. Ralph Wedgwood (2004) argues that we have reason to accept:

- NJI    (1) Necessarily, if one is rational, then, if one judges 'I ought to  $\Phi$ ', one also intends to  $\Phi$ . . . .
- (2) Necessarily, if one judges anything of the form 'I ought to  $\Phi$ ', then one also has a general disposition to intend to do whatever one judges that one ought to do. (Wedgwood 2004, 407, 409)

Wedgwood then argues that, contra what many (like Mackie) have supposed, NJI is not in conflict with non-naturalism (or normative realism more generally).

Why do so many see a tension between NJI and realism? Wedgwood's diagnosis is simple: Being cognitivists, realists cannot explain NJI by appealing to the kind of attitude involved in normative judgement (it's just a regular old belief). Their natural supposition, then, is that NJI must be explained by the *content* of normative beliefs. But if that content is a proposition, and a proposition is (say) a set of possible worlds, it's hard to see how it could motivate us.

However, Wedgwood continues, this cannot be the whole story about beliefs. If it were, we would run straight into Frege's (1892 and 1918) puzzle about intensionality: We would be unable to make sense of the fact that I can believe P and fail to believe Q, even if P and Q express the same proposition. The solution to Frege's puzzle, Wedgwood says, will also explain how realists can accept NJI.

Wedgwood considers a number of relevant solutions. Some of these solutions avoid Queerness Revenge altogether, because they involve denying that NJI tells us anything about normative properties at all; it is only a thesis about normative *judgements*. One relevant proposal he considers, however, is that beliefs *are* just relations between attitudes and propositions, and propositions *are* just sets of possible worlds, but that *ascriptions* of beliefs can vary in such a way that one can be ascribed the belief, says, that Superman is from Krypton without also being ascribed the belief that Clark Kent is. Here is what Wedgwood says about what this proposal would mean for NJI:

If propositions are just sets of possible worlds, then it does indeed seem that it cannot be an essential feature of any normative proposition that whenever it is believed it is accompanied by a corresponding motivational disposition. Nonetheless, it may still be an essential feature of the meaning of normative sentences that in every world in which a sentence is used with that meaning, the sentence expresses a proposition that is accompanied by such a motivational disposition whenever it is believed in that world. In effect, it may be that the reference of the term 'ought' is fixed in part by the constraint that in any world, the term must refer to some relation R such that in that world, agents have a general disposition to intend to do whatever they believe themselves to be related to by relation R. In that case, a version of NJI would be true: in every possible world, every agent has a general disposition to respond to judging the proposition that she could express in that world by uttering a sentence with the same meaning as 'I ought to  $\Phi$ ' by having a corresponding intention to  $\Phi$ . (Wedgwood 2004, 419)

It is not hard to see how one might adapt this solution to explain SUPERVENIENCE. It is an essential feature of the meaning of normative predicates, we might say, that those predicates are instantiated uniformly in keeping with SUPERVENIENCE. In effect, it may be, for example, that the reference of the term 'good' is fixed in part by the constraint that if 'good' extends to some property P in world W, it must extend to property P in all worlds that are non-normatively identical to W. Somewhat less formally, the idea would simply be that SUPERVENIENCE is true because it is a constraint of our language that a property can be named by a normative predicate only if that property supervenes.

It is important to clarify what this response does and does not do. Recall that, in the previous section, I pointed out that there are really two things at issue: the truth of the general claim, SUPERVENIENCE, and the actual necessary supervenience relations (whatever they are) between the normative and the non-normative. On the view under consideration, our concepts explain why SUPERVENIENCE is true—they explain why something can only be a normative property if it supervenes. But they do *not* explain the metaphysical fact that (assuming nihilism is false) some normative properties do, in fact, supervene on some metaphysically distinct non-normative ones.

What this indicates, then, is that the conceptual response to Queerness Revenge leads us back to the *original* queerness challenge: The non-naturalist is claiming that properties can count as normative only if they violate MH—they must bear necessary, metaphysically inexplicable relations to metaphysically distinct non-normative properties. If positing such necessary relations counts against a view, then this is a reason to believe that no such properties (at least as conceived by the non-naturalist) are instantiated.

The bottom line is that the conceptual move above explains SUPERVENIENCE, but in such a way that it really just sidesteps the challenge posed by MH—the challenge to explain the actual relations that, for the non-naturalist, SUPERVENIENCE guarantees. Nevertheless, this may shift the dialectic in a way that favors the non-naturalist. Suppose the non-naturalist has some fairly persuasive argument for the existence of non-natural normative properties. McPherson will point out that non-naturalism's violation of MH counts against it. But the strength of the positive argument may well carry the non-naturalist through. What's more, his *commitment* to SUPERVENIENCE has been shown not to be at odds with his non-naturalism; he is just deploying the same concepts as the rest of us.

While this may be true in principle, I worry that MH still poses a challenge whose force is not fully recognized by most non-naturalists. Enoch (2011, chap. 3) offers one of the few offensive

non-naturalist arguments in the literature; an argument *for* the existence of non-natural normative properties (as opposed to *against* other kinds of normative properties). In brief, Enoch's argument is that non-natural normative properties are indispensable for deliberation. Enoch maintains that we are thus justified in believing in their existence in just the same way as we are justified in believing in the existence of various descriptive properties because *they* are indispensable (in this case, for description, rather than deliberation).

Detailed discussion of Enoch's argument must be left for another time. What matters here is simply that it relies heavily on the idea that an indispensability argument for normative properties is precisely analogous to an indispensability argument for descriptive ones. Notice, though, that if SUPERVENIENCE is a conceptual truth, this is not the case. An argument for non-natural normative properties is an argument for properties that have a distinctive feature: They violate MH and thus come along with a metaphysical cost that, say, table properties likely do not carry.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that this conceptual move is the best, and quite likely the only<sup>14</sup> way for the non-naturalist to respond to Queerness Revenge. SUPERVENIENCE is true because it is conceptually necessary: Properties can count as normative only if they supervene. Or (for OIC), perhaps an action can only fall within the extension of 'right' if it is possible to perform.<sup>15</sup>

Even if it is the best option, this conceptual move may still not be good enough. I have already mentioned one reason why: MH places an additional burden on non-naturalism, not in terms

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<sup>14</sup> Given what I take to be the force of McPherson's arguments against normative or metaphysical explanations of SUPERVENIENCE.

<sup>15</sup> Obviously, the conceptual move can also be used, as Wedgwood suggests, to deal with NJI. However, I am tempted to agree with Wedgwood that there are better solutions, ones which would avoid these problems by denying that NJI has any implications about the nature of normative properties themselves—that it is, instead, about the relation between normative *judgement* and motivation. I am not sure if this really works; I worry that it may eventually lead to similar problems as those I am about to raise. But it nevertheless seems to me more plausible.

of explaining why SUPERVENIENCE itself is true, but in terms of arguing for the existence of properties that apparently violate MH as a matter of conceptual necessity. In the final section, I consider one further reason for doubting the force of the conceptual reply to Queerness Revenge. Before moving on, however, I sum up what has been accomplished to this point.

First, I have suggested that there is an important set of challenges to non-naturalism that consists in (apparently reasonable) demands to explain why normative properties bear certain necessary relations to non-normative ones. These relations represent at least some distinctive features of normativity—hence my framing the challenge in terms of “queerness.” This is important, for it allows us to see connections between arguments against non-naturalism that may otherwise appear distinct—such as those concerning SUPERVENIENCE, on the one hand, and Judgement Internalism (at least on some readings of it) on the other. One, if not the only, kind of explanation open to the non-naturalist is a conceptual one. While our concepts cannot explain the metaphysical relations themselves, the non-naturalist may make dialectical progress insofar as he maintains not (as McPherson reads him) that our concepts constrain the nature of normative properties, but rather that our concepts constrain which properties get to *count* as normative properties, much as our concepts constrain what gets to count as God.

### 3. A Rejoinder

According to non-naturalism, there is some distinctive feature normative properties possess that no natural property can. This feature captures the essential *normativity* of the normative. Of course, what this feature actually is is highly contentious. For the sake of argument, though, suppose—not wholly implausibly, I think—that this feature is represented by the following claim:

MISTAKE      The *normativity* of the normative consists in the fact that, for any normative property P, for some  $\Phi$ , P explains why an agent makes a mistake *simply as such* by failing to  $\Phi$ .<sup>16</sup>

Here is the worry: For all we've said, it seems possible that the supervening properties would merely be a *subset* of the properties characterized by MISTAKE. Let us call such properties—characterized by MISTAKE, but lacking other of normativity's queer features—shnormative properties. The shnormative property of quasi-rightness might instantiate itself in an action in one world, but not in another, though the worlds are otherwise identical. It might sometimes be instantiated in impossible actions (contra OIC). There might (referring back to the Wedgwood quote above, and contra NJI) be a shnormative relation R such that no agents are ever motivated by their beliefs that they bear relation R to something, even though relation R in fact explains why some agent has made a mistake as such. You get the idea.

The general point is this: Non-naturalists believe that the distribution of properties characterized by MISTAKE is an independent, objective fact about the world. It does not depend in any way on our normative concepts. This is, of course, part of the point of McPherson's objection: We cannot stipulate facts about kats if we are using 'kats' to pick out cats. Similarly, it seems we cannot stipulate further facts about normative properties if we are using them to pick out properties characterized by MISTAKE.

At this point, the non-naturalist has a simple and obvious reply: This rejoinder begs the question against his view. He holds that SUPERVENIENCE is a conceptual truth. If it is, then shnormative properties must be conceptually impossible! Either MISTAKE does not fully capture

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<sup>16</sup> An anonymous reviewer proposed that I need to add "independently of that agent's contingent desires." I'm not entirely certain about this, so I'll mention it here and allow the reader to decide. Anyway, again, this formulation is not a genuine proposal; it's just here to frame discussion in a way that is (I hope) plausible enough not to see like a change of subject.

what is distinctive of normativity, or MISTAKE *does* fully capture what is distinctive of normativity but MISTAKE entails SUPERVENIENCE (etc.).

Of course, it is perfectly possible that MISTAKE is false or incomplete. I offered it as an unargued-for characterization of one of the most notoriously difficult things to characterize: normativity. But this doesn't get the non-naturalist off the hook. What the non-naturalist must maintain is that *whatever* unique feature makes something normative—it justifies, it explains mistakes, it guides, whatever—it must be conceptually impossible for there to be properties that have this feature but don't supervene. Yet, I suspect that to many this will sound rather implausible. At least at first blush, it seems perfectly possible to conceive of properties that speak in favor of things willy-nilly, or that entail that it was a mistake to  $\Phi$  or justify  $\Psi$ -ing in one possible world but not in its (non-normative) doppelganger. And if those things *are* conceivable, then so is the shnormative, and it seems we should wonder why it is that the possibility of these shnormative properties is something we are justified in disregarding.

At this point, it seems to me, the non-naturalist's only recourse is to point out that some conceptual truths aren't so obvious. We are no strangers to discovering that we believed ourselves capable of conceiving of things that turn out to be incoherent at the end of the day.<sup>17</sup> Just to showcase the possibility, I close by considering a (not wholly implausible, I think) argument along these lines for OIC.

Suppose the non-naturalist proposes that OIC is a conceptual truth. His opponent replies that he can perfectly well conceive of a shnormative property that speaks in favor of an impossible action. So it seems the non-naturalist is unjustifiably disregarding a possible set of properties that speak in favor of action.

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<sup>17</sup> Free will is an example, on some accounts.

Perhaps, though, the non-naturalist can still make his case. Suppose he argues that, in fact, MISTAKE is true, so normative properties are those that explain why an agent makes a mistake *as such* in various cases. He then argues (again, I think, not implausibly) that it is a conceptual truth that something can be a mistake only if it is avoidable. If that's true, then one cannot make a mistake by failing to do the impossible. It follows that the properties captured by MISTAKE would never be instantiated such that impossible actions are called for— MISTAKE entails OIC. So OIC turns out to be a conceptual truth, even though it may seem, at first blush, that we can imagine it to be false.

If there is some story like this that can be told in the case of SUPERVENIENCE and other queer features of normativity, then perhaps the non-naturalist can, after all, respond to the challenge to explain them. The non-naturalist would still be responsible for the costs of violating MH, but he may well have softened that blow.<sup>18</sup> Insofar as no such story is available, however, it seems that Queerness Revenge may well be devastating for the non-naturalist. The normative properties are out there. They are real. To paraphrase David Lewis (1996, 307): Why should the normative properties care about us? The sanction is that if they do not, they will fail to deserve folk theoretical names. It is hard to imagine why this should constrain them at all.

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<sup>18</sup> One reason to think the blow is softened is this: McPherson's challenge from MH remains. But there is another issue that may make MH seem more powerful still: It sometimes seems hard to understand why non-naturalists would believe things like SUPERVENIENCE in the first place; it seems at odds with their insistence that the normative properties are *out there*. If they have arguments for SUPERVENIENCE's being a conceptual truth, this secondary worry evaporates.



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