

CAN MOOREAN REALISM SHOULDER ITS EXPLANATORY BURDEN?

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Abstract

Moore famously held that moral properties are “autonomous”—distinct from properties of any non-moral, “natural” kind. Modern non-naturalists typically maintain some version of this “autonomy” thesis, often with respect to normativity more generally, rather than just morality. Standard complaints about this kind of “Moorean realism” include its inability to plausibly explain our *epistemic* access to the “queer” normative facts the view posits, the *metaphysical* relationship between the normative and the non-normative, and how our normative terms succeed in *referring* to normative properties. In this paper, I assess the Moorean’s ability to shoulder these burdens. The good news for the Moorean, I conclude, is that insofar as he can meet or deflect the metaphysical challenge, the epistemic and semantic challenges pose no additional threat (at least in principle). This is important, as it means Mooreans can focus their energies on the metaphysical issues, rather than worrying that they have special problems with knowledge or reference. The bad news, however, is that the story the Moorean has to tell in response to the metaphysical challenge is highly controversial, and may ultimately represent a bullet that is simply too large to bite.