

Non-naturalism and Normative Necessities

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One of the most common complaints raised against non-naturalist views about the normative is that, unlike their naturalist rivals, non-naturalists cannot provide a metaphysical explanation for why normative properties supervene on natural properties. That is, while most naturalists and non-naturalists agree that there cannot be a normative difference between two entities (e.g. states of affairs, actions, people, and so on) without there being a natural difference between them, naturalists have a ready explanation for this, whereas non-naturalists do not. After all, according to naturalists, normative properties *are* natural properties, and so, the normative supervenes on the natural simply because everything supervenes on itself. But according to non-naturalists, the normative is distinct and significantly different in kind from the natural. And many meta-ethicists argue that the non-naturalist is thereby committed to claiming that there is no metaphysical explanation for the supervenience of the normative on the natural, which is a significant cost of the view (e.g. Blackburn (1971), Dreier ((1992), (MS)), Horgan (1993), Mackie (1977), and McPherson (2012)). This is the so-called *supervenience objection* against non-naturalism.

Most non-naturalists respond to the supervenience objection not by attempting to offer a metaphysical explanation for why the normative supervenes on the natural, but instead by arguing that one need not offer such an explanation in the first place. For example, Parfit (2011) seems to think that he need not offer a metaphysical explanation of supervenience because, on his non-naturalist view, normative properties do not exist in a robust metaphysical sense; and Kramer (2009) and Stratton-Lake & Hooker (2006) argue, respectively, that the supervenience of the normative on the natural can be given a conceptual or ethical explanation, rather than a metaphysical one. More radically, in order to preserve their non-naturalist commitments, Fine (2002) and Rosen (MS) deny that the normative metaphysically supervenes on the natural in the first place.

These responses to the supervenience objection suggest that many non-naturalists agree with their naturalist opponents that non-naturalism is incompatible with any metaphysical explanation for why the normative supervenes on the natural. They only disagree insofar as they deny that this is a problematic feature of their view. In this paper, however, I show that non-naturalists can offer a metaphysical explanation for why the normative supervenes on the natural by adopting the sort of *essentialist* metaphysics developed by Fine (1994), Rosen (2010), and Dasgupta (2014). Specifically, I argue that non-naturalists may claim that there are certain *hybrid* normative properties whose essences determine both naturalistic sufficient conditions for their instantiation and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of other *sui generis* normative properties, and that this explains why the normative is determined by, and supervenes on, the natural.

Before offering my positive proposal, though, I first argue (in §2 and §3) that two alternative metaphysical explanations for supervenience fail. According to the first, the normative supervenes on the natural because there are general normative laws, which state that if something has certain natural properties, then it has a certain normative property, and these normative laws together with the contingent natural facts determine the contingent normative facts. And according to the second

explanation, the normative supervenes on the natural because the contingent normative facts are fully determined by the natural facts alone. I argue that the first explanation for supervenience fails to respond to a more general worry that motivates the supervenience objection, and the second explanation fails to yield a metaphysical picture of the normative that is clearly non-naturalist. Seeing the problems with these alternative explanations is instructive and helps motivate my positive proposal (in §4) because the essentialist explanation for supervenience I offer succeeds where these others fail.

Before discussing these explanations for supervenience, though, I first need to specify what exactly the explanatory demand posed by the supervenience objection amounts to and what the core commitments of non-naturalism are. So, in the following section, I do just that.

1. Non-naturalism and the Supervenience Objection

The non-naturalist view that I am concerned with here is the sort of view defended by Moore (1903) and his followers.¹ Specifying what this view amounts to, though, is a notoriously difficult task. This is because, even within their own camps, both naturalists and non-naturalists alike characterize the view in different ways. Many describe non-naturalism as the view that normative properties are not *identical* to the sort of descriptive properties and facts that are investigated by the natural and social sciences (e.g. Jackson (2000), Parfit (2011), Shafer-Landau (2003)). But, more recently, some characterize non-naturalism as the view that normative properties and facts are not fully *grounded* in such scientific facts (e.g. Chang (2013), Dunaway (forthcoming), Enoch (2011), Scanlon (2014), Schroeder (2007)). So, in order to avoid this taxonomical controversy, I will simply identify two pre-theoretical claims that seem to be the core commitments of non-naturalism and assume that a non-naturalist view is any metaphysical view about the normative that captures those claims.

The first pre-theoretical claim that seems to be a core commitment of non-naturalism is that normative properties are *of their own kind*. When naturalists insist that normative properties are *natural* properties, they are claiming that normative properties are of the same kind as paradigmatic scientific properties; and when non-naturalists claim that normative properties are *non-natural*, they are asserting that normative properties are distinct and significantly different in kind from paradigmatic scientific properties. But Moore and his followers claim, even further, that normative properties are *sui generis*: that they are different in kind from not just scientific properties, but also from supernatural properties and any other kinds of properties there may be. For example, Shafer-Landau states:

It appears that moral values are something very different in kind from anything else that we are familiar with. Faced with this appearance, we have three basic choices. We could take it at face value, and introduce into our ontology a *sui generis* category of values. Or we could seek to discredit the appearances...we might retain a belief in the evaluative realm, but eliminate

¹ Throughout this paper, I thus use the term ‘non-naturalism’ to refer to the Moorean non-naturalist view, rather than the broader category of non-naturalist views that also includes *supernaturalist non-naturalist* views like the Divine Command Theory.

the mystery by denying its distinctness. On this line – that of *ethical naturalism* – moral facts are a species of scientific facts... I am in the first camp. I think that moral facts are different in kind from any other.²

Parfit (2011) and Scanlon (2014) also insist that normative truths are “irreducibly normative”, which suggests that they, like Moore and Shafer-Landau, take the normative to be something that is entirely of its own kind.

The claim that normative properties are of their own kind is a bit mysterious, though, because it's not clear what kind-talk for properties amounts to.³ And one might think that in order to understand what non-naturalism amounts to, we need to make this claim more precise. But there may be multiple, equally good ways of specifying this claim in more precise metaphysical terms, and I do not want to take a stand on this issue here. So, instead of clarifying this pre-theoretical claim, I simply assume that a non-naturalist view must be a metaphysical view of the normative that captures this pre-theoretical claim in some way, while remaining neutral about whether this uniquely identifies a particular metaphysical view.

The second pre-theoretical claim that I take to be a core commitment of non-naturalism is that countenancing normative properties and facts is incompatible with a purely scientific worldview. Since non-naturalists claim that normative properties are distinct and significantly different in kind from scientific properties, non-naturalists thereby take science to provide an incomplete account of reality.⁴

This second pre-theoretical claim is also a bit vague, though, since it's not clear what compatibility with a purely scientific worldview amounts to. Enoch (2011) and Scanlon (2014) explicitly point out that the existence of non-natural normative properties is at least logically consistent with our best scientific theories, since our best scientific theories do not claim that there are no non-natural properties, nor do they contain an “and-that's-all-there-is clause”. So, the non-naturalist does not take countenancing normative properties and facts to be incompatible with a purely scientific worldview in the sense that it is logically inconsistent with our best scientific theories.

But there are other ways of specifying what this claim amounts to. For example, one might take a purely scientific worldview to require not just logical consistency with our best scientific theories, but also the methodological commitment to not countenance any ontology or ideology that is not involved in those theories. One might thus interpret the non-naturalist's claim that

² Shafer-Landau (2003) p. 55.

³ One might think that two properties are of the same kind just in case they share a second-order property. But any two properties share a second-order property: e.g. all properties share the property *being a property*. So, in claiming that normative properties are of their own kind, non-naturalists cannot mean that normative and non-normative properties don't share any second-order properties.

⁴ When I use the term ‘reality’ here, I mean to refer to everything that exists in any sense of ‘exist’. Parfit (2011) claims that science does provide a complete account of reality, since reality comprises only those things that exist in an “ontological sense”, and on Parfit's non-naturalist view, normative properties only exist in a “non-ontological sense”. But Parfit would nonetheless presumably agree with the claim that science does not provide a complete account of reality, when using ‘reality’ in this broader sense, which includes everything that exists in any sense.

countenancing normative properties is incompatible with a purely scientific worldview as the claim that countenancing normative properties requires a further ontological or ideological commitment beyond that of our best scientific theories. But, again, this may not be the only way to capture this second pre-theoretical claim, and I do not want to take a stand on this issue here. So, again, I simply assume that a non-naturalist view must capture this second pre-theoretical claim in some way, and I remain neutral about whether this uniquely identifies a particular metaphysical view.

In sum, then, I take classical non-naturalism to endorse the following two pre-theoretical claims:

- (i) Normative properties and facts are *of their own kind*: they are different in kind from scientific properties and any other kind of properties.
- (ii) Countenancing normative properties and facts is incompatible with a purely scientific worldview.

Even understanding non-naturalism in these broad strokes allows us to see why the supervenience of the normative on the natural presents a problem for non-naturalists. If there cannot be a normative difference between two entities (e.g. an action, state of affairs, or an individual) without there being some natural difference between them, then for any x that has some normative property F , there is *some* natural property G (perhaps a very complex conjunctive property) that x has such that any y in any metaphysically possible world that is G is also F . So, where A is the family of normative properties, B is the family of natural properties, and \Box_M is metaphysical necessity, the following seems to hold:

$$\text{Strong Supervenience } (\forall F \text{ in } A)(\forall x)[Fx \rightarrow (\exists G \text{ in } B)(Gx \ \& \ \Box_M(\forall y)(Gy \rightarrow Fy))]]^5$$

Strong Supervenience states that, for example, if Vince is a virtuous person, then there is some natural property G that Vince has such that anyone in any metaphysically possible world who has property G is a virtuous person.⁶ Strong Supervenience thus states that there are metaphysically necessary connections between normative and natural properties. And since non-naturalists take normative properties to be distinct and very different in kind from natural properties, non-naturalists must admit, given Strong Supervenience, that there are metaphysically necessary connections between distinct and very different kinds of properties.

This puts some pressure on non-naturalists to give a metaphysical explanation for why there are metaphysically necessary connections between normative and natural properties. This is because metaphysically necessary connections between seemingly quite different kinds of properties typically do have

⁵ cf. Dreier (1992), (MS).

⁶ This does not imply that *being virtuous* is necessarily coextensive with N_1 . For example, Vera may be a virtuous person even though she lacks G . But Strong Supervenience requires that there is some other natural property G^* that Vera has such that anyone who has G^* is virtuous.

metaphysical explanations.⁷ For example, consider the properties of *being colored* and *being spatially located*. Although these seem like quite different kinds of properties, it is nonetheless metaphysically necessary that, if *x* is colored, then *x* is spatially located. And this metaphysical necessity has an obvious metaphysical explanation: in order for something to be colored, it must reflect or emit light, and in order for something to reflect or emit light, it must occupy some volume in space. Or consider the seemingly quite different properties of *being an elephant* and *being identical to oneself*. Although these are very different properties, it is nonetheless metaphysically necessary that if *x* is an elephant, *x* is identical to itself. But this, too, has an explanation: it's metaphysically necessary that if *x* is an elephant, *x* is identical to itself because everything is necessarily identical to itself, and any conditional with a metaphysically necessary consequent is itself metaphysically necessary. The fact that necessary connections like these have an explanation suggests that there is probably some metaphysical explanation for why there are necessary connections between the normative and the natural.

Moreover, naturalists have a ready explanation for why there are metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative: it is because normative properties just are natural properties. This puts additional pressure on the non-naturalist to offer an alternative explanation for these necessities. For, if non-naturalists cannot offer any explanation for why there are metaphysically necessary connections between the normative and the natural, but naturalists can, then this seems like a reason to prefer naturalism over non-naturalism.

And one might think that non-naturalists cannot, in principle, offer an explanation for why there are necessary connections between natural and normative properties. This is because any explanation for why there are metaphysical necessities involving the natural and the normative must posit some fairly intimate metaphysical connection between the natural and the normative. But positing such a connection seems to be in tension with the non-naturalist's claim that the normative is entirely distinct and deeply different in kind from the natural. There is thus some reason to think that the very commitments of non-naturalism force non-naturalists to regard the metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative as simply brute.

This way of stating the supervenience objection is more modest than the way it is typically formulated. Most take the supervenience objection to rely on some version of Hume's dictum that either prohibits brute necessary connections between distinct entities altogether or states that a commitment to such brute necessities is at least a significant cost of a view.⁸ But the way that I have formulated the supervenience objection above does not rely on any version of Hume's dictum. It simply assumes that, since many metaphysical necessities between seemingly different kinds of properties have an explanation, explaining such necessities is a

⁷ From now on, I will use the terms 'necessity' and 'explanation' to refer to metaphysical necessity and metaphysical explanation. I assume here (contra Kramer (2009) and Stratton-Lake & Hooker (2006)) that in order to explain the metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative, the non-naturalist must give a metaphysical explanation, rather than a conceptual or ethical explanation. I do not have room to defend this assumption here, but see McPherson (2012) and Dreier (MS).

⁸ McPherson (2012) proposes the latter formulation of the Humean thesis.

virtue of a theory. And so, if some theory does not explain such necessities, but its rival does, then this is a reason to prefer the rival theory.

Formulating the objection in this more modest way makes it less controversial and more challenging. After all, it's not clear that there is a strong theory-neutral argument for banning brute metaphysical necessities between distinct entities, or even for thinking that a view's being committed to brute metaphysical necessities is always a significant theoretical cost.⁹ It is more clear that having explanations for the types of things that typically do have an explanation is a virtue of a theory. Even someone who denies the above Humean principles should nonetheless accept this general principle about theory choice. Formulating the supervenience objection in this modest way thus makes it harder for non-naturalists to dismiss the supervenience objection simply by denying these Humean principles.

Now that we have a better understanding of what non-naturalism and the supervenience objection amount to, we may turn to the prominent non-naturalist explanations for Strong Supervenience that have been offered in the literature thus far. But there are two main points from this section to keep in mind while moving forward. First, since the supervenience objection is motivated by a more general worry about explaining metaphysical necessities between the natural and the normative, the challenge for the non-naturalist is not just to explain Strong Supervenience, but to explain the metaphysically necessary connections between normative and natural properties, more generally. And second, the challenge is for the non-naturalist to offer a metaphysical explanation for these metaphysical necessities while clearly maintaining her pre-theoretical commitments that normative properties are *of their own kind* and incompatible with a purely scientific worldview. I emphasize these two points here because, in §2 and §3, I argue that the two main ways that non-naturalists have attempted to explain supervenience thus far fail to meet at least one of these challenges.

2. Fundamentalist Non-naturalism

The first non-naturalist explanation for supervenience is defended by Enoch (2011) and Scanlon (2014). Enoch (2011) explains why the normative supervenes on the natural by making an analogy with drinking eligibility and age. What it is to be eligible to drink, Enoch claims, is not simply for one to be above a certain age, but drinking eligibility supervenes on age (within a jurisdiction) because the law (within that jurisdiction) states that only people above a certain age can drink. Similarly, Enoch claims that normative properties supervene on natural properties even though they are not reducible to natural properties because there are *normative laws* that specify that if something has certain natural properties, then it has certain normative properties. For example, if act utilitarianism is true, then it is a normative law that an act is right if and only if it maximizes happiness. And Enoch insists that these normative laws are brute: there is no explanation for why the normative laws are what they are.

Similarly, Scanlon (2014) distinguishes between *mixed* and *pure* normative facts. Mixed normative facts, like the fact that giving to Oxfam is morally right, are

⁹ See Wilson (2010) for a discussion of why we should be skeptical of Hume's dictum.

contingent normative facts that vary, depending on certain non-normative facts (e.g. that Oxfam distributes money in certain ways). But pure normative facts, Scanlon claims, are not contingent and do not depend at all on any non-normative facts: e.g. the fact that, if doing A would relieve suffering, then the fact that doing A would relieve suffering is a reason to do A. Scanlon then notes that it is the *mixed* normative facts that supervene on the natural facts, and that they do so because the mixed normative facts are determined by the contingent non-normative facts together with the non-contingent, pure normative facts.

In order to better understand Enoch and Scanlon's explanation for Strong Supervenience and how it differs from the other two explanations that I discuss later on, I suggest that we understand Enoch and Scanlon's view in terms of *grounding*. Many contemporary metaphysicians (e.g. Bennett (2011), Dasgupta (2014), DeRosset (2013), Fine (2012), Rosen (2010), and Schaffer (2009)) introduce the notion of grounding into their metaphysical theorizing precisely in order to make sense of what metaphysical explanations like these amount to. According to these grounding enthusiasts, when we offer metaphysical explanations by saying that some fact y obtains *because of* or *in virtue of* some other fact x, where we do not mean that y is *caused* by x, we are implicitly taking there to be a non-causal kind of determination relation between x and y.

For example, one might say that the man exiting the transporter is Spock *because* he is psychologically continuous with Spock, where one doesn't mean that the man's being psychologically continuous with Spock *causes* the man exiting the transporter to be Spock, but rather, that the fact that the transported man is psychologically continuous with Spock *makes it the case* or *determines* (non-causally) that the man is Spock. Similarly, one might take Goliath the statue to be distinct from Lump1 the lump of clay, but nonetheless claim that Goliath's bellybutton has a certain shape S *because* a particular region of Lump1 has a dent that is S-shaped. In saying this, one means not that Lump1's dent *causes* Goliath to have an S-shaped bellybutton, but that the dent *makes it the case* or *determines* that Goliath's bellybutton is S-shaped. The notion of grounding is intended to capture this non-causal determination relation.

Characterizing grounding in more detail is hard to do without stepping into controversial terrain.¹⁰ But the idea that there is a non-causal determination relation that underwrites non-causal metaphysical explanations like those above is intuitive enough for our purposes. I will thus use the notion of grounding here to explicate the different potential metaphysical explanations for supervenience, while remaining as neutral as possible about these debates.¹¹ Because it is important for understanding these explanations, however, I do assume here that grounding involves metaphysical necessitation: if x grounds y, then in any metaphysically

¹⁰ For every formal feature that is traditionally used to characterize the grounding relation (e.g. transitivity, irreflexivity, asymmetry, and necessitation), there are some metaphysicians who deny that grounding has that feature.

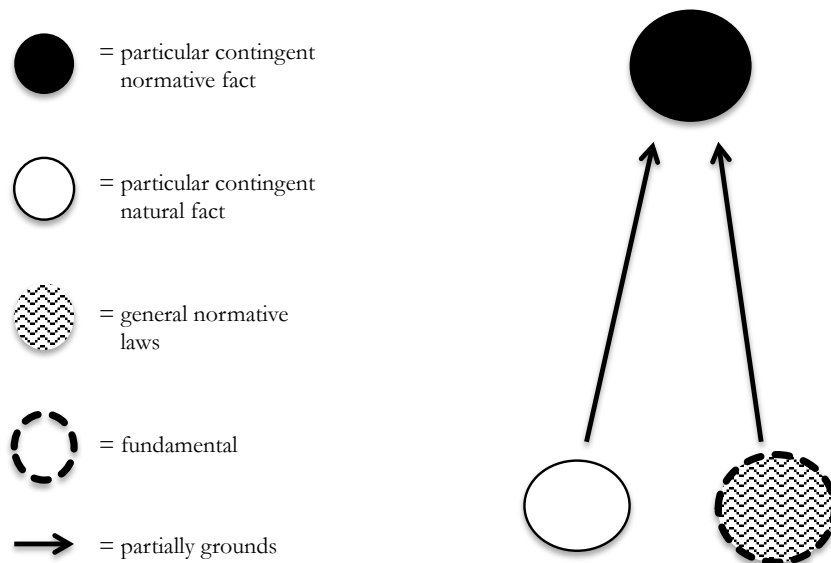
¹¹ For ease of exposition, though, I assume here that grounding is a relation that holds between facts. This is controversial: some grounding enthusiasts argue that grounding is best understood as a relation that holds between entities of any ontological category (e.g. Schaffer (2009)), and some argue that grounding is best understood as a sentential operator on facts (e.g. Fine (2001)), rather than a relation between facts (e.g. Rosen (2010)). Everything I say here, however, could be rephrased to accommodate these alternative views.

possible world where x obtains, then y obtains. But this does not suggest that, if x grounds y, then in every metaphysically possible world where y obtains, x obtains. This is because a fact may have multiple possible grounds. For example, the fact that a particular truck is red may be grounded in the fact that it is crimson, but the truck could have been red in virtue of being scarlet or cherry red instead. The fact that x grounds y thus does not imply that x *necessarily* grounds y.

It's also important for our purposes to distinguish between *full* and *partial* grounding. If x *fully* grounds y, then x's being the case by itself determines, and thus fully explains, y's being the case: for example, the fact that the truck is crimson fully grounds the fact that the truck is red. But if x only *partially* grounds y, then x's being the case together with some other fact(s) determines y's being the case, and so, x only partially explains y. For example, the fact that the truck is red partially grounds the fact that the truck is a red Chevy (together with the fact that the truck is a Chevy).

With grounding in our theoretical toolbox, we may now offer a more precise formulation of Enoch and Scanlon's explanation for supervenience. Both Enoch and Scanlon claim that all particular contingent normative facts (e.g. the fact that a particular act A is right, the fact that a particular person P is virtuous, and so on) are partially grounded in the particular contingent natural facts (e.g. the fact that A maximizes happiness, the fact that P is functioning well, and so on) and partially grounded in general normative laws (e.g. if an act maximizes happiness, then it is right, or if a person is functioning well, then that person is virtuous, and so on). Moreover, Enoch and Scanlon both insist that these general normative laws are *fundamental*: they are not grounded in any further facts. Enoch and Scanlon thus offer the following metaphysical picture of the normative, which I call *Fundamentalist Non-naturalism*.

Diagram 1: Fundamentalist Non-naturalism



Importantly, Fundamentalist Non-naturalism explains Strong Supervenience only if the fundamental normative laws are metaphysically necessary. If there are

some metaphysically possible worlds where the normative laws are different from the normative laws of our world, then there would be two metaphysically possible worlds that are different in their normative respects, but identical in their natural respects, which would violate Strong Supervenience. Indeed, Enoch (2011) recognizes this and insists that the fundamental normative laws are metaphysically necessary.¹²

But recall that the general worry that motivates the supervenience objection is that the non-naturalist owes an explanation for the metaphysically necessary connections between natural and normative properties. Fundamentalist Non-naturalism does not explain these metaphysically necessary connections. It simply states that there are some — the normative laws. Fundamentalist Non-naturalism thus does not respond to the general worry that motivates the supervenience objection. (To be clear, the problem with Enoch and Scanlon's response to the supervenience objection is *not* that they take the normative laws to be fundamental. The problem is that they offer no explanation for why these fundamental normative laws are *metaphysically necessary*.)

Enoch admits that this explanation for supervenience ultimately posits some unexplained metaphysical necessities involving the normative and the natural, and thus still incurs some theoretical cost. But he understates the problem here. His view doesn't just face *some* theoretical cost. It faces the *very same* theoretical cost that he began with. That is, Enoch's response to the supervenience objection does not saddle him with a new explanatory burden. It fails to address the original explanatory burden.

One might think, however, that claiming that the relevant metaphysical necessities that involve natural and normative properties are fundamental provides a way for the Fundamentalist Non-naturalist to avoid the original explanatory demand. After all, it seems plausible that the most basic principles of logic and mathematics are both fundamental and metaphysically necessary, and that there is no explanation to be offered for why the fundamental mathematical and logical facts are metaphysically necessary. The Fundamentalist Non-naturalist may thus argue that, by claiming that the necessary normative principles are fundamental, she likens them to fundamental mathematical and logical principles and thereby relieves herself of any pressure to explain why the general normative principles are metaphysically necessary in the first place.

But recall that the relevant explanatory burden for non-naturalists arises because they are committed to metaphysical necessities *between very different properties*. Fundamental mathematical and logical principles do not involve very different properties: the fundamental logical principles like $\sim(p \ \& \ \sim p)$ involve only variables and logical constants, and fundamental mathematical principles involve only variables and mathematical operators. So, even if fundamental mathematical and logical truths are metaphysically necessary, and brutally so, this does not show that the non-

¹² Scanlon (2014), on the other hand, holds the Finean (2002) view that, in addition to metaphysical and nomological necessity, there is a distinctly normative kind of necessity with which the fundamental normative laws hold. But if normative necessity and metaphysical necessity are distinct, the claim that the normative laws are *normatively necessary* does not explain why there are metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative, and why the normative *metaphysically* supervenes on the natural. Scanlon's claim that the normative laws are normatively necessary thus fails to explain Strong Supervenience.

naturalist need not give any explanation for why the fundamental normative principles are metaphysically necessary.

Fundamentalist Non-naturalism thus fails as a response to the supervenience objection because, although it does explain Strong Supervenience, it does not explain the metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative more generally.

3. Grounded Non-naturalism

The second prominent explanation for Strong Supervenience is offered by Shafer-Landau (2003), and may also have been endorsed by Moore (1942). Shafer-Landau takes himself to be a non-naturalist, but he nonetheless insists that the normative is fully grounded in the natural facts alone. He claims,

A pencil's length or weight at a time is fixed and constituted by a particular molecular composition, though the same length or weight may, at other times, be realized differently... So, too, the admirability of an action or motive may be realized by different sets of descriptive facts, but on any given occasion, the moral features are fixed by the descriptive ones that compose them at that time.¹³

Here Shafer-Landau states that certain contingent natural facts necessitate certain contingent normative facts (e.g. that act A is admirable), but that those same normative facts could be necessitated by different natural facts. This is entailed by the claim that the contingent natural facts fully ground the contingent normative facts. So, while Shafer-Landau does not explicitly talk of grounding, it seems reasonable to interpret him as stating that the contingent normative facts are fully grounded in the natural facts.

Shafer-Landau takes his view to be inspired by Moore, who makes similar claims:

I should never have thought of suggesting that goodness was 'non-natural,' unless I had supposed that it was 'derivative' in the sense that, whenever a thing is good (in the sense in question) its goodness (in Mr. Broad's words) 'depends on the presence of certain non-ethical characteristics' possessed by the thing in question: I have always supposed that it did so 'depend,' in the sense that, if a thing is good (in my sense), then that it is so *follows* from the fact that it possesses certain natural properties, which are such that from the fact that it is good it does *not follow* conversely that it has those properties.¹⁴

Moore is claiming here that there is an asymmetric entailment-like relation that holds between a thing's natural features and its normative ones. But, presumably, Moore does not mean that a thing's being good is caused by its having certain natural features, nor does he mean that a thing's being good logically follows from its having certain natural features (since he claims that it is always an open question whether something is good, given that it has certain natural features). Moore is thus best interpreted as claiming that a thing's having certain natural properties non-causally

¹³ Shafer-Landau (2003) p. 76-77.

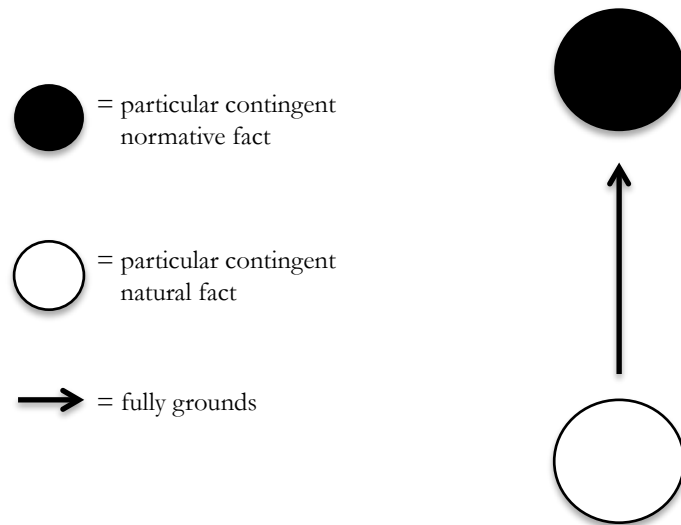
¹⁴ Moore (1942) p. 588.

determines that it has certain normative properties. And Moore does not claim here that it follows from the fact that a thing has certain natural properties *together with some other facts* that it has certain normative properties. So, it seems that Moore, too, took contingent normative facts, like the fact that x is good, to be fully grounded in the contingent natural facts.

The claim that all contingent normative facts are fully grounded in the contingent natural facts suffices to explain Strong Supervenience. If for every normative property F and any x, the fact that x is F is fully grounded in some natural fact, then in every metaphysically possible world where x is F, there is some natural property G such that the fact that x is G grounds the fact that x is F. And since grounding involves necessitation, if the fact that x is G grounds the fact that x is F, then in every metaphysically possible world where x is G, x is F. So, if all normative facts are fully grounded in natural facts, for any normative property F, if something is F, then that thing has some natural property G such that, in every metaphysically possible world where something is G, then it is F (i.e. Strong Supervenience).

This explanation for supervenience offers the following metaphysical picture of the normative, which I call *Grounded Non-naturalism*:

Diagram 2: Grounded Non-naturalism



Whereas the Fundamentalist Non-naturalist takes all particular contingent normative facts to be partially grounded in the particular contingent natural facts and partially grounded in general normative laws, the Grounded Non-naturalist takes all particular contingent normative facts to be *fully grounded* in the particular contingent natural facts.¹⁵

¹⁵ How the general normative facts are grounded on this view is a bit unclear. The Grounded Non-naturalist might say that the general normative facts are grounded like most universal generalizations — by their instances. But this does not seem plausible because general normative facts seem true independently of whether there are any actual instances of those general normative facts: e.g. even if there were no instances of happiness-maximization, it could still be true that all acts that maximize happiness are right.

Like Fundamentalist Non-naturalism, however, Grounded Non-naturalism does not seem to respond to the general worry behind the supervenience objection. After all, the Grounded Non-naturalist claims that, whenever some normative fact obtains, there is some particular natural fact that grounds it, and thus metaphysically necessitates it. But without some explanation for why certain natural facts ground certain normative facts, even though normative properties are significantly different in kind from natural properties, Grounded Non-naturalism seems to merely assume, rather than explain, these metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative.

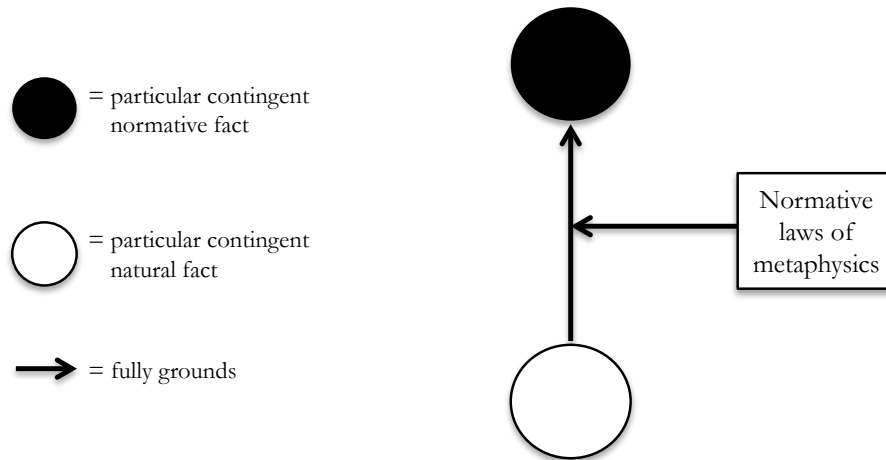
But the Grounded Non-naturalist may turn to the grounding literature for an explanation for why certain natural facts ground certain normative facts.¹⁶ For example, Wilsch (2015) argues that grounding facts about specific objects and properties (e.g. the fact that my firing C-fibers grounds my being in pain) are explained by general laws about which properties give rise to which other properties (e.g. it is a law that if x has firing C-fibers, then x is in pain), just as specific causal facts (e.g. the fact that the ball's hitting the window caused the window to break) are explained by general laws about which events cause which other events (e.g. laws about fragility and force).¹⁷ This view is a metaphysical analogue of a conception of the laws of nature according to which the laws of nature do not themselves cause particular events, together with earlier events, but rather, the laws of nature *underly* the causal relations between particular events at different times. Similarly, on Wilsch's view, there are *metaphysical laws* that underly the grounding relations between particular facts at different levels of fundamentality.

The Grounded Non-naturalist may adopt this view and claim that the particular grounding facts involving natural and normative properties are all explained by metaphysical laws. For example, the Grounded Non-naturalist may claim that the fact that I am having a painful experience grounds the fact that I am experiencing something bad because it is a metaphysical law that if x is painful, then x is bad. This view, which I call *Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism*, offers the following metaphysical picture of the normative:

¹⁶ Bennett (2011), DeRossett (2013), Dasgupta (2014), Fine (2012), Rosen (2010), and Wilsch (2015) all discuss what grounds the grounding facts.

¹⁷ This oversimplifies Wilsch's view. He takes the metaphysical laws to be more general than this and to involve various "construction relations" such as composition, realization, set-formation, etc. For example, on his view, what explains the fact that my having firing C-fibers grounds that I am in pain (if physicalism is true) is (i) that it's a law that under circumstances C, *having firing C-fibers* realizes the property *being in pain*, and (ii) that it's a law that if x has F and F realizes G, then x also has G.

Diagram 3: Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism



Like Fundamentalist Non-naturalism, this view takes there to be general normative laws that ultimately explain the particular normative facts. But according to Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism, the normative laws do not themselves ground the particular normative facts directly (with the contingent natural facts). Instead, the normative laws underly the grounding relations between particular contingent natural and normative facts.

One might worry that, like Fundamentalist Non-naturalism, the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist has no explanation for why the normative laws are metaphysically necessary, and thus still has not addressed the general worry that motivates the supervenience objection. But Wilsch (2015) suggests an explanation for why any metaphysical law is metaphysically necessary. Namely, Wilsch suggests that the laws of metaphysics determine the metaphysical possibilities in the same way that the laws of nature determine the nomological possibilities. That is, the metaphysically possible worlds are simply the set of logically possible worlds in which the laws of metaphysics hold (just as the nomologically possible worlds are the set of logically possible worlds in which the laws of nature hold). So, if it is a metaphysical law that *p*, and the metaphysically possible worlds are those worlds in which the laws of metaphysics hold, then in every metaphysically possible world, it is a law that *p*. And since the metaphysical necessities are those facts that hold in every metaphysically possible world, the law that *p* is metaphysically necessary. The Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist thus has a ready explanation for why the normative laws are metaphysically necessary.¹⁸

By adopting Wilsch's view of the grounding facts and metaphysical possibility, then, the Grounded Non-naturalist can explain not just Strong Supervenience, but all the metaphysical necessities involving the natural and the

¹⁸ Enoch and Scanlon could claim something similar in order to explain why their fundamental normative principles are metaphysically necessary: that those principles are fundamental laws of metaphysics, and thus necessary simply because the metaphysically possible worlds are the logically possible worlds where the laws of metaphysics hold. But Enoch and Scanlon's explanation for supervenience would then face another problem that I soon bring up for Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism (see fn 19).

normative: on this view, the metaphysically necessary connections between normative and natural properties are ultimately explained by the laws of metaphysics, which themselves are metaphysically necessary because they are precisely what determine the metaphysical possibilities.

But Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism faces a new problem. Namely, it is unclear whether this metaphysical picture provides a genuinely non-naturalist view of the normative. This is because the view implies that normative properties metaphysically relate to paradigmatic scientific properties in exactly the same way as certain derivative natural properties do. For example, consider the derivative natural property *being a mammal or a rock*: this is not a paradigmatic scientific property. But *being a mammal or a rock* is nonetheless a natural property — it's *of the same kind* as paradigmatic scientific properties. And facts about what things have this property are grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts: e.g. the fact that Ellie the elephant is a mammal or a rock is grounded in the fact that Ellie is a mammal. Moreover, according to the background metaphysics that Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism relies upon, what explains why the fact that Ellie's being a mammal grounds that Ellie is a mammal or a rock is the fact that it is a metaphysical law that if x is F , then x is F or G , for any G .

According to Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism, then, the normative facts relate to paradigmatic scientific facts in exactly the same way that mammal-or-rock-facts do: both the particular contingent normative facts and the particular contingent mammal-or-rock-facts are numerically distinct from, but fully grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts, and facts about which scientific facts ground which normative or mammal-or-rock facts are grounded in the metaphysical laws. But then it's not clear why normative properties are nonetheless significantly different in kind from paradigmatic scientific properties and why countenancing them is incompatible with a scientific worldview. After all, *being a mammal or a rock* is obviously *not* significantly different in kind from scientific properties and countenancing this property is obviously compatible with a scientific worldview. Without some explanation for why normative properties are non-natural, but *being a mammal or a rock* is natural, then, it's not clear that this is a genuinely non-naturalist view.

In other words, in order to maintain that normative properties are *sui generis*, the non-naturalist must be able to point to some way in which all derivative natural properties and facts relate to the paradigmatic scientific properties and facts, which is a way that normative properties and facts do *not* relate to the scientific properties and facts. But it's not clear that there is anything for the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist to point to.¹⁹

¹⁹ Similarly, if Enoch and Scanlon claim that the fundamental normative principles are metaphysical laws, it's not clear how they can maintain their non-naturalist commitments, since the metaphysical structure of the normative facts is exactly the same as that of certain derivative natural facts. For example, consider facts about tables. If metaphysical laws are fundamental and ground the contingent derivative facts together with the contingent fundamental facts, then table-facts are grounded in the same way as the normative facts: e.g. the fact that there is a table is grounded in the fact that there are particles arranged table-wise and the fundamental metaphysical law that if there are particles arranged table-wise, then there is a table. So, it's not clear on this view why tables are the same kind of stuff as paradigmatic scientific stuff and are compatible with a scientific worldview, while normative properties are not.

The Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist might claim as Bader does (in this volume), that just as the laws of nature are a distinct set of laws from the metaphysical laws, which underly *causal relations* between events, the normative laws are a distinct set of laws that underly *normative grounding relations* between particular facts (where normative grounding is distinct from metaphysical grounding). The Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist may then claim that what makes the normative *sui generis*, while derivative natural properties like *being a mammal or a rock* are not, is that, unlike derivative natural facts like mammal-or-rock facts, the normative facts are governed by a distinct set of laws, so that they are only normatively grounded (and not metaphysically grounded) in the scientific facts.

But by claiming that the normative laws are distinct from the metaphysical laws, and that the normative facts are thus only normatively grounded in the natural facts, the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist undermines her response to the supervenience objection. If the normative laws are distinct from the metaphysical laws and govern a distinct kind of grounding relation, then the question of why the normative laws are *metaphysically necessary* reopens. In fact, the claim that the normative laws are distinct from the metaphysical laws just as the laws of nature are seems to suggest that the normative laws are *not* metaphysically necessary, just as the laws of nature are not metaphysically necessary. So, the above attempt to secure that the normative is *sui generis* on the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist picture not only undermines this view's explanation for Strong Supervenience, but seems to even deny Strong Supervenience altogether.

Grounded Non-naturalists thus face a dilemma. In order to fully respond to the supervenience objection, they must appeal to some general view about what grounds the grounding facts that discharges (rather than shifts) the burden of explaining the metaphysically necessary connections between natural and normative properties. But appealing to a general view about what grounds the grounding facts makes the metaphysical structure of the normative facts mirror that of certain derivative natural facts and thereby threatens her non-naturalist commitments that the normative is *sui generis* and incompatible with a scientific worldview.

In the following section, however, I argue that, by adopting the ideology of *essence*, the Grounded Non-naturalist can provide a metaphysical picture of the normative that explains all the metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative, while also clearly capturing the pre-theoretical commitments of non-naturalism. So, I show that Grounded Non-naturalists can ultimately find their way out of this dilemma, if they adopt my essentialist proposal.

4. Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism

I have argued that the metaphysical explanations for supervenience considered thus far either fail to respond to the general worry that motivates the supervenience objection or fail to provide a metaphysical view of the normative that clearly respects the core commitments of non-naturalism. In this section, however, I argue that an alternative version of Grounded Non-naturalism that adopts an *essentialist* view about what explains the grounding facts can succeed where the others fail. That is, instead of claiming that the grounding facts are explained by metaphysical laws, one might hold (as Dasgupta (2014), Fine (2012), and Rosen

(2010) suggest) that the grounding facts are explained by facts about the *essences* of the properties involved. And I argue that, by adopting this view, the non-naturalist can offer an explanation for Strong Supervenience that both explains all the metaphysically necessary connections between the natural and the normative, and also clearly captures her non-naturalist commitments.

In what follows, I first briefly explain Fine's (1994a/b) account of essence and the essentialist view of grounding in more detail, and then I explain how the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments can be captured in terms of essence. Next, I argue that this non-naturalist view is compatible with an essentialist explanation for why the normative is grounded in, and thus supervenes on, the natural. Finally, I defend this explanation against McPherson's (2012) charge that it simply shifts the non-naturalist's explanatory burden.

Fine (1994b) takes the essence of an object or property to be the set of propositions that are directly definitive of that object or property, which thereby describe the very nature of that object or property.²⁰ For example, it's directly definitive of *being a bachelor* that, if *x* is a bachelor, then *x* is unmarried. So, the proposition *if x is a bachelor, then x is unmarried* is part of the essence of *being a bachelor*. Or, if it is directly definitive of you that you originated from a particular ovum and sperm pair OS, then the proposition *you originated from OS* is part of your essence. For the essence of *F to involve G* is thus simply for *G* to be a constituent of some proposition that is directly definitive of *F*. For example, the essence of *being a bachelor* involves *being unmarried* and your essence may involve *OS*.

Moreover, Fine (1994a) takes essences to determine the metaphysical possibilities, and thereby explain metaphysical necessities. According to Fine, the metaphysical possibilities are the logical possibilities that are compatible with the essences of all things. The metaphysically necessary truths, then, are those truths that follow from the essences of things. For example, the fact that it's part of the essence of *being a bachelor* that if *x* is a bachelor, then *x* is unmarried, explains why it's metaphysically necessary that all bachelors are unmarried; and the fact that it's part of your essence that you originated from OS explains why any metaphysically possible world where you exist is a world in which you originated from OS.

Dasgupta (2014), Fine (2012), and Rosen (2010) suggest, moreover, that essences explain grounding facts.²¹ To illustrate, suppose event *e* is a particular rock show, played by a few different classic rock bands. The fact that *e* is a rock show is presumably grounded in the fact that *e* consists of people acting in a certain way *W* (e.g. playing guitars, bass, and drums in a classic rock sort of way before an audience, and so on). According to an essentialist view of grounding, what explains this grounding fact is that it is part of the essence of being a rock show that an event is a

²⁰ Fine (1994b) distinguishes between many different senses of essence. In this paper, I am exclusively concerned with what Fine calls *constitutive immediate* essence.

²¹ I gloss over some differences between Dasgupta, Fine, and Rosen's views here. Whereas Dasgupta takes essences to explain particular grounding facts, Fine and Rosen claim, instead, that essences explain general patterns amongst the grounding facts. Moreover, whereas Dasgupta and Rosen take the kind of explanatory relation that holds between essences and grounding connections to be the grounding relation, Fine takes it to be a distinct explanatory relation that is unique to essence explanations. But these differences amongst their views do not matter for my purposes. So, I simply describe the essentialist view along the lines of Dasgupta (2014) in what follows.

rock show if it consists of people acting in way W. But since there are many different ways to rock (e.g. punk rock, folk rock, shoegazer rock), there are many different ways of playing different instruments that suffice for a rock show – let’s call these ways of acting $W_1, W_2 \dots$. So, the fact that e_1 is a rock show is grounded in the fact that e_1 consists of people acting in way W_1 and the fact that e_2 is a rock show is grounded in the fact that e_2 consists of people acting in way W_2 , and so on. On the essentialist view, all of these grounding facts are explained by the essence of being a rock show: they are explained by the fact that it is part of the essence of being a rock show that an event is a rock show if it consists of people acting in way W_1 , or if it consists of people acting in way W_2 , and so on.

Dasgupta (2014) argues, moreover, that essences are *autonomous* in the sense that they are neither grounded nor fundamental, but simply not the sorts of things that can, in principle, have a metaphysical explanation. It seems like the question of why, for example, *originating from OS* is involved in your essence is akin to asking why H_2O and water are identical. The answer in both cases seems to be that that’s just what *being you* and *water* are, and the request for any further explanation seems inapt. This suggests that facts about essence, like facts about numerical identity, are just not the sorts of facts that can, in principle, have a metaphysical explanation. On the essentialist view, then, it seems plausible to take essences to be facts that impose grounding structure on the world, but are not themselves the sorts of facts that can, in principle, have grounds.

Given the ideology of essence, we may interpret classical non-naturalism as follows:

Essentialist Non-naturalism: the essences of some normative properties

- (i) cannot be specified entirely in non-normative terms and
- (ii) do not specify any non-normative sufficient conditions for their instantiation.

That is, a non-naturalist may presumably admit that it’s part of the essence of *being right*, for example, that if x is right, then x is an action. Non-naturalism is thus compatible with the claim that the essences of *sui generis* normative properties involve some natural properties, and even that they specify some naturalistic necessary conditions for their instantiation. And the non-naturalist may also admit, for example, that it’s part of the essence of *being right* that if x produces the most good, then x is right. The non-naturalist may thus admit that the essences of *sui generis* normative properties specify *normative* sufficient conditions for their instantiation. But the non-naturalist must insist that the essences of some normative properties involve something irreducibly normative, which cannot be specified in non-normative terms, and that their essences do not specify naturalistic or any non-normative sufficient conditions whatsoever for their instantiation.

Essentialist Non-naturalism seems sufficient to capture the non-naturalist’s pre-theoretical claims. First, if the essences of some normative properties involve something that cannot be specified in any non-normative terms whatsoever and they do not specify non-normative sufficient conditions for their instantiation, then the very nature of those properties involves something entirely unlike any other kind of properties. So, this view seems to capture the non-naturalist’s pre-theoretical claim that normative properties are of their own kind. Second, if the essences of some normative properties cannot be specified entirely in non-normative terms, including natural terms, then there is something about the nature of reality that ultimately

cannot be described by science. Essentialist Non-naturalism thus seems to imply that countenancing normative properties is incompatible with a scientific worldview in this sense.

Moreover, as I will argue below, Essentialist Non-naturalism is compatible with an essentialist explanation for why all particular contingent normative facts are fully grounded in, and thus supervene on, the particular contingent natural facts. Since the Essentialist Non-naturalist claims that the essences of some normative properties do not specify any non-normative sufficient conditions for their instantiation, she cannot take the metaphysical explanation for all particular contingent normative facts to have the exact same structure as the metaphysical explanation for facts about rock shows. That is, the Essentialist Non-naturalist cannot claim that the essences of the grounded properties — the *sui generis* normative properties — explains why the normative facts are grounded in the natural facts. But she may claim, instead, that the essence of the grounding properties explains why the normative is grounded in the natural.

Fine (2012) and Dasgupta (2014) both assume that, if the fact that *a* is *F* grounds the fact that *a* is *G*, this grounding fact is explained by the essence of *G* — the grounded property. This seems plausible for certain canonical examples of grounding facts. For example, the fact that Socrates exists grounds the fact that the singleton set {Socrates} exists not because it's part of the essence of *Socrates* that, if Socrates exists, {Socrates} exists, but because it's part of the essence of {Socrates} that {Socrates} exists if and only if Socrates exists. Similarly, the fact that the ball is red grounds the fact that the ball is red or green not because it's part of the essence of *redness* that something is red or green, if it is red, but because it's part of the essence of *disjunction* that something is red or green, if it is red.

But some canonical examples of grounding facts suggest that grounding facts may be explained, instead, by the essences of the grounded properties, rather than the grounding properties. For example, the fact that the ball is red grounds the fact that the ball is colored, and the fact that the ball is 2 kg grounds the fact that the ball has mass. It seems plausible that what it is for something to be red involves *being colored*, and that what it is for something to be 2 kg involves *having mass*, rather than the other way around. So, it seems plausible that the essence of *redness* and *being 2 kg* are what explain, respectively, these two grounding facts.

The Essentialist Non-naturalist might thus attempt to explain why all particular contingent normative facts are grounded in and supervene on the particular contingent natural facts by claiming that the essences of certain *natural* properties specify sufficient conditions for the instantiation of *sui generis* normative properties. Indeed, Wedgwood ((1999), (2007)) presents a view along these lines: he claims that the essences of certain *mental* properties involve normative properties, and that this explains why the normative supervenes on the natural. But, as Rosen (MS) points out, this does not actually explain why normative properties supervene on natural, non-normative properties. This is because, within an essentialist framework, we should adopt the following recursive definition for *non-natural normative properties*:

For any property *F*:

- (i) If the essence of *F* cannot be specified entirely in non-normative terms and does not specify non-normative sufficient conditions for its instantiation, then *F* is a (*sui generis*) non-natural normative property.

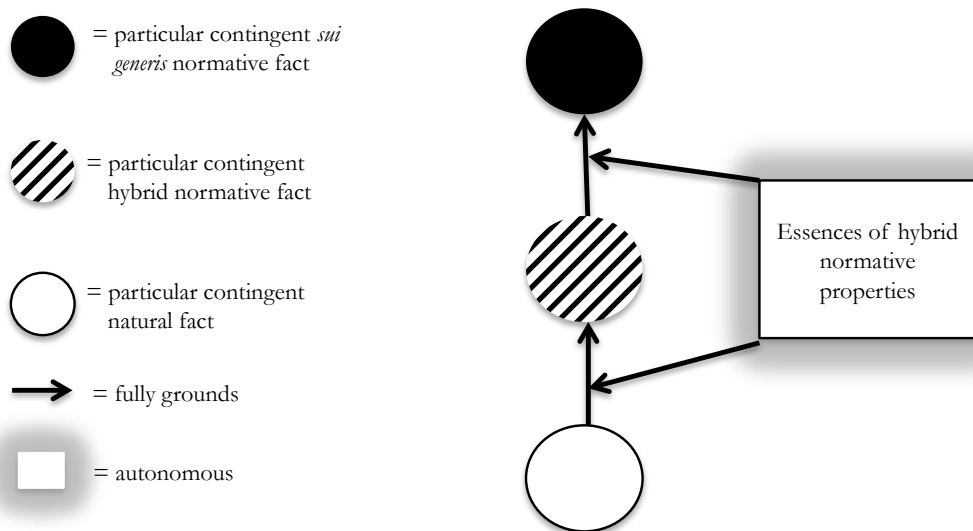
- (ii) If the essence of F involves a non-natural normative property N, then F is a non-natural normative property.

Wedgwood's claim that certain mental properties involve non-natural normative properties in their essence thus implies that mental properties are non-natural normative properties. So, his view explains why non-natural normative properties supervene on *other* non-natural normative properties. But it fails to explain why non-natural normative properties supervene on natural non-normative properties.

My proposal, however, is for the Essentialist Non-naturalist to claim, instead, that there are *hybrid properties* whose essences involve both natural non-normative properties and *sui generis* normative properties. For example, one might claim, along Wedgwoodian lines, that the essences of certain *mental* properties involve both physical and non-natural normative properties: that it is part of the essence of *being in pain* that (1) if one's C-fibers are firing, then one is in pain, and (2) that if x is a painful experience, x is bad. Since the Essentialist Non-naturalist takes *badness* to be a *sui generis* non-natural normative property, (2) implies that *being in pain* is a non-natural normative property (given the above definition); but so long as the essence of *being in a C-fibers-firing-state* does not involve *being in pain* or any other non-natural properties, *being in a C-fibers-firing-state* is a natural non-normative property. Now, the Essentialist Non-naturalist may claim that (1) explains why pain-facts are grounded in C-fiber-firing facts, and (2) explains why badness-facts are grounded in pain-facts. This view thus does explain why non-natural normative facts (e.g. badness-facts) are ultimately grounded in, and thus supervene on, natural non-normative facts (e.g. C-fiber-firing facts).

More generally, the explanation for supervenience that I am proposing, which I call *Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism*, has the following structure:

Diagram 4: Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism



The Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist takes some normative properties (e.g. *being right*, *being good*, *being a reason*) to be *sui generis* in the sense mentioned earlier: their

essences cannot be specified entirely in non-normative terms and do not specify any non-normative sufficient conditions for their instantiation. She also takes some normative properties to be not *sui generis*, but *hybrid* in the sense that their essences specify naturalistic sufficient conditions for their own instantiation and sufficient conditions for the *sui generis* normative properties. The Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist then claims that the essences of the hybrid normative properties thereby explain (1) why all particular contingent normative facts involving *sui generis* normative properties are fully grounded in particular contingent normative facts involving hybrid normative properties, and (2) why all particular contingent hybrid normative facts are fully grounded in particular contingent natural facts. The hybrid properties thus act as a double-sided tape that sticks the *sui generis* normative facts onto the natural facts.²²

The Wedgwoodian view described earlier is just one variation of this general sort of explanation for supervenience. Instead of taking the hybrid normative properties to be mental properties, one might take them to be so-called “thick” normative properties like *being courageous*, *being a promise*, *being a friend*, and so on. For example, one might claim that it’s part of the essence of *being a promise* that if certain natural conditions C obtain, then A promised B to do x, and that it’s also part of the essence of *being a promise* that if A promised B to do x, then A has a reason to do x (and so on for other thick normative properties).²³ Alternatively, the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist might take *being a reason* to be the single hybrid normative property: that the essence of *being a reason* specifies all the naturalistic sufficient conditions for R’s being a reason for someone to do A and sufficient conditions for the *sui generis* normative properties.

All of these variations of Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism respond to the supervenience objection in the same way. Like Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism, Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism explains Strong Supervenience by claiming that all the normative facts are fully grounded in the natural facts, but it explains why certain normative facts are grounded in certain natural facts by appealing to essences rather than metaphysical laws. And essences are plausibly autonomous in the sense that they are not the sorts of things that can, in principle, have a metaphysical explanation. So, the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist has no burden to explain why the essences of the hybrid normative properties involve the natural and non-natural normative properties that they do. Moreover, like the metaphysical laws, the *metaphysical necessity* of essential truths can be explained simply by the nature of metaphysical possibility. Since the metaphysical possibilities are the logical possibilities that are compatible with the essences of all things, any essential truth is true in every metaphysically possible world, and thus metaphysically necessary. The Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist thus seems to explain all metaphysical necessities involving the natural and the normative.

Moreover, as we have already seen, Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism captures the non-naturalist’s pre-theoretical commitments. The reason why Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist succeeds here, where the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist fails, is that the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist has more fine-grained theoretical tools at her disposal — the notion of essence — in order to

²² Thanks to Tobias Wilsch for suggesting this metaphor.

²³ This view requires that thick normative properties are more fundamental than thin normative properties like *being a reason*, *being good*, and so on.

make distinctions between properties that have similar grounding structures. Although the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist, like the Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalist, claims that normative facts are ultimately grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts just like derivative natural facts are, the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist has the resources to explain why some normative properties are nonetheless *sui generis* and incompatible with a scientific worldview, whereas derivative natural properties like *being a mammal or a rock* are not: it is because the essences of those normative properties cannot be fully specified in terms of scientific properties (or any other non-normative properties whatsoever), whereas the nature of derivative natural properties *can* be fully characterized in terms of scientific properties.

While this particular explanation for Strong Supervenience has not been developed in the literature thus far, McPherson (2012) anticipates a similar essentialist response to the supervenience objection. He considers whether the non-naturalist can explain why the normative supervenes on the natural by claiming that some normative properties are conjunctive properties that essentially involve both natural and irreducibly normative properties. For example, he considers a view according to which *being a reason* is the conjunctive property *playing justifying role R and being realized by B*, where B is some natural property. But McPherson argues that, while this explains why *being a reason* supervenes on B, in order for this view to explain why all normative properties (including *playing justifying role R*) supervene on natural properties, it must implicitly assume that *playing justifying role R* and B are necessarily coinstantiated. So, it assumes that nothing can have the property of *playing justifying role R and being not-B*, and that nothing can have the property of *being B and not playing justifying role R*. But McPherson claims that the non-naturalist has no explanation for why *playing justifying role R* is necessarily coinstantiated with B. More generally, then, McPherson claims that the essentialist view that takes some normative properties to be conjunctive properties that involve both natural and *sui generis* normative properties to posit a brute metaphysically necessary connection between the natural and normative *conjuncts*.

But the essentialist explanation for supervenience that I have offered here differs in important ways from the essentialist explanation that McPherson considers. Namely, on my proposal, the hybrid normative properties are *not* conjunctive properties. And unlike the conjunctive property view, which suggests that the conjunctive normative facts (e.g. the reason facts) are grounded in their normative and natural conjuncts (e.g. the fact that x plays justifying role R and the fact that x is B), on the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist's view, the hybrid normative facts are fully grounded by the natural facts, and fully *ground* the *sui generis* normative facts. So, if the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist claims that *being a reason* is the sole hybrid property whose essence involves (1) that if x is a reason, x plays justifying role R and (2) that if x is a reason, x is B, her view is that the justifying-role-R facts are grounded in the reason facts, which are grounded in the B facts. Unlike the conjunctive property view, then, this view explains why it's metaphysically necessary that if x is B, then x plays justifying role R. It thus explains why nothing can have the property of *being B and not playing justifying role R*.

Moreover, the background metaphysical framework that the Essentially Grounded Non-naturalist relies upon also explains why, according to the above view, it's metaphysically necessary that if x plays justifying role R, then x is B. On the essentialist framework, no grounding facts are fundamental: all grounding facts are

themselves grounded in essences. And so, no derivative property F can be instantiated by something unless that thing has some more fundamental property G and there is an essential connection between *being F* and *being G*. This explains why, for example, nothing can have the property *playing justifying role R* unless it has some more fundamental property whose essence involves *playing justifying role R*. And if *being a reason* is the only hybrid property that involves *playing justifying role R*, and it also involves B, then this explains why it's metaphysically necessary that if something has the property of *playing justifying role R*, then it is B. So, this view explains why nothing can have the property of *playing justifying role R and being not-B*.

More generally, then, Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism, unlike the conjunctive property view that McPherson considers, does explain the metaphysically necessary connections between the *sui generis* normative properties and natural properties that are constituents of the hybrid normative properties. First, Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism explains why it's metaphysically necessary that if x has certain natural properties, it has certain *sui generis* normative properties. And the background metaphysics that this view relies on also explains why the *sui generis* normative facts are *necessarily* grounded by hybrid facts, and thus why it's metaphysically necessary that if something has some *sui generis* normative property F, then it has some natural property G that is involved in the essence of the hybrid property that involves F. So, by adopting the particular essentialist response to the supervenience problem that I have offered here, the non-naturalist can avoid McPherson's charge of smuggling in some unexplained metaphysically necessary connections between natural and normative properties.

5. Conclusion

The essentialist response to the supervenience objection that I have offered here thus succeeds where others fail. Unlike Fundamentalist Non-naturalism, Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism has the resources to explain not just Strong Supervenience, but *all* the metaphysically necessary connections between natural and normative properties, and unlike Lawfully Grounded Non-naturalism, it also clearly captures the non-naturalist's core pre-theoretical commitments. Essentially Grounded Non-naturalism thus shows that, contrary to popular opinion, the fact that the normative supervenes on the natural is not a reason to prefer naturalism over non-naturalism.²⁴

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²⁴ Thanks to Ben Bronner, Ruth Chang, Andy Egan, Daniel Fogal, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Tristram McPherson, David Plunkett, Gideon Rosen, Pamela Robinson, Jonathan Schaffer, Ernie Sosa, Peter van Elswyk, and Tobias Wilsch who provided valuable feedback on previous drafts of this paper, and to the participants at the 2015 Chapel Hill Metaethics conference for all of their helpful questions and comments.

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