The grounding argument against non-reductive moral realism

Ralf M. Bader
Merton College, University of Oxford

ABSTRACT: The supervenience argument against non-reductive moral realism threatens to rule out the existence of irreducibly normative properties by establishing that for every normative property there is a corresponding non-normative property that is necessarily co-extensive with it. This paper first considers but rejects the suggestion that one can address the supervenience argument by insisting that normative properties only supervene with normative but not metaphysical necessity. It then establishes that the standard response to the supervenience argument, which consists in rejecting necessary co-extension as the criterion for property identity, does not suffice for defending non-reductionist views of the normative. In particular, it identifies a hyperintensional analogue of the supervenience argument that threatens non-reductionism even within a hyperintensional setting. This grounding argument against non-reductive moral realism threatens to rule out the existence of irreducibly normative properties by establishing that for every normative property there is a corresponding non-normative property that has the very same grounds and is, accordingly, hyperintensionally equivalent. It is then argued that non-reductionism can nevertheless be salvaged by distinguishing the different grounding relations that are involved in grounding the normative property and the corresponding non-normative property. Non-reductionist versions of moral realism thus turn out to be committed to there being irreducibly different grounding relations.

1 The supervenience argument

Strong supervenience of normative properties on non-normative properties implies that for every normative property there is a corresponding non-normative property that is necessarily co-extensive with it, given that certain closure conditions apply to the set of non-normative properties, in particular given that this set is closed under infinitary disjunction and conjunction (cf. Kim: 1993, chapter 3; Jackson: 1998; Streumer: 2008).[1,2] This puts pressure on non-reductionist versions of moral realism, since normative properties would seem to end up being identical to non-normative properties, thereby ruling out the existence of irreducibly normative properties.[3,4]

1.	normative properties supervene on non-normative properties
2.	the set of non-normative properties is closed under infinitary disjunction and conjunction
∴	for every normative property there is a non-normative property that is intensionally equivalent
3.	intensionally equivalent properties are identical
∴	every normative property is identical to a non-normative property

2 Normative supervenience

This argument can be challenged on the basis that premise 1 can be be construed in two ways, namely as either positing a normative supervenience relation or a metaphysical supervenience relation and that the latter is required for the argument to succeed but that only the former is warranted.

If normative properties only normatively supervene on non-normative properties, such that the supervenience claim only holds with normative necessity, but

[1] Kim's proof appealed to B-maximal properties that presuppose infinitary Boolean closure, which is rather problematic since closure under complementation is highly implausible for the set of non-normative properties and cannot be assumed without begging the question against the proponent of irreducibly normative properties. Yet, as van Cleve has shown, Kim's result can be established by means of fewer resources. In particular, closure under infinitary disjunction and conjunction is sufficient, since we only need to appeal to B-natures and not to B-maximal properties (cf. van Cleve: 1990).

[2] When concerned with the supervenience of the evaluative on the non-evaluative, one is primarily concerned with the instantiation of evaluative properties by particular value bearers (e.g. action x is good), i.e. with particular facts rather than with general facts such as ϕ-ing is good.

[3] As Streumer has pointed out, this terminology may be somewhat confusing, given that a reductionist view will then be categorised as one whereby normative properties are identical to non-normative properties (cf. Streumer: 2013, p. 312). Non-normative properties are thus to be understood not negatively as not being normative properties, but positively as being descriptive properties.

[4] Analogous arguments can be run against irreducibly normative facts or truths.

not with metaphysical necessity, then normative properties will only be necessarily co-extensive with their non-normative counterparts when it comes to normative modality. That is, for each normative property there will be a non-normative property that has the same extension in all normatively possible worlds. This, however, does not suffice to establish the conclusion that normative properties are identical to non-normative properties. This is because metaphysical necessity needs to be at issue if necessarily co-extensive properties are to be identical, given that the identity and distinctness of properties is a metaphysical matter.

The situation is then analogous to the case of dispositions, where dispositions nomologically supervene on categorical properties. Whenever an object has a dispositional property D, it has this disposition in virtue of having certain categorical properties $C_1 \ldots C_n$. On the face of it, it would seem that we can conjoin these categorical properties and then disjoin the various possible bases to form a disjunctive property that is necessarily coextensive with D. Since it is plausible that a disjunction of conjunctions of categorical properties is itself a categorical property, it would seem that we end up being committed to dispositional properties being identical to categorical properties.

This conclusion, however, would be misguided since identity requires (at a minimum) necessary co-extensiveness across all metaphysically possible worlds. The supervenience of dispositional on categorical properties, however, only holds with nomological necessity. The same categorical properties can give rise to different dispositions if the laws are different, such that an intrinsic duplicate of a fragile object in a world with different laws need not also be fragile. In this way, laws genuinely add something and make a difference, which ensures that the supervenience/grounding claim involves the wrong modality for establishing reductionist conclusions.

By insisting on a normative rather than metaphysical supervenience claim, one would thus seem to be able to defend the distinctness and irreducibility of normative properties in a manner that is analogous to how dispositional properties turn out to be distinct from and not reducible to categorical properties, given that the former only supervene nomologically but not metaphysically on the latter.

The idea that normative properties are distinct because they only supervene normatively has briefly been considered by Streumer, who rejects it on the basis that this would bring with it an objectionable commitment to saying that "it is possible for an object to gain an additional normative property without this object or any other object gaining any additional descriptive property" (Streumer: 2008, p. 559). Merely having normative but not metaphysical supervenience would, in this way, seem to allow for objectionably brute and unexplained variation in normative properties.

Whilst a brute difference in normative properties would indeed be problematic, normative supervenience allows us to invoke differences in normative laws in

order to explain variation in normative properties. When x in w_1 has normative property N_1 whilst y in w_2 has some other normative property N_2, even though these worlds are completely indiscernible in terms of descriptive properties, then this difference is not brute but unproblematic if this variation can be explained in terms of normative law L_1 holding in w_1, whilst a different law L_2 holds in w_2. There is thus an important difference between a failure of metaphysical supervenience, whereby one ends up countenancing a difference in properties that is unexplained and brute, and a case in which one can appeal to the normative laws to explain the differences in normative properties.

Although the differences in laws themselves will be brute, this is unproblematic since the non-reductive realist can consider these laws to be fundamental and irreducible. When construed as robust principles that govern grounding relations, they are to be understood as basic and not in need of explanation.[5] This means that, whereas normative properties are derivative properties and hence are such that something is required to account for differences in these properties, no underlying difference is required to account for differences in normative laws.[6]

A related objection to the idea that the supervenience of normative properties might not hold with metaphysical but only with normative necessity is that this is inadequate on the basis that "it seems impossible that another world might be identical to this one except that in that other world, a genocide otherwise identical to the actual Rwandan genocide differed solely in being ethically wonderful, rather than being an atrocity" (McPherson: 2012, p. 212). The thought is that a supervenience claim with merely normative modal force only ensures that such objectionable scenarios are normatively impossible, since they are not compatible with the actual normative laws, but allows for these scenarios to be metaphysically possible.

The suggestion that metaphysical supervenience is required to preclude the possibility of such objectionable scenarios is, however, problematic. This is because the rejection of metaphysical necessity does not imply that anything goes. Accepting that normative principles can be metaphysically contingent is not to say that anything could have been good or right, in the same way that saying that the laws of nature could have been different does not imply that anything could have caused anything (or for that matter that there could be uncaused events).

In fact, there can be robust constraints (such as consistency and universalis-

[5] If the laws themselves were to supervene on the descriptive facts, then it would not be possible for worlds that were indiscernible in terms of non-normative properties to differ in terms of laws. Likewise if the laws were merely to describe and summarise grounding relations, rather than governing them, then a difference in laws would presuppose rather than explain a difference in normative properties, thereby rendering normative variation across descriptively indiscernible worlds a brute fact.

[6] Analogously, differences in dispositional properties amongst objects that have the same categorical properties can be explained in terms of differences in laws of nature, whereas differences in laws of nature will be basic (for those who consider them to be robust governing laws).

ability requirements) on what the normative laws can be like, in the same way as there are substantive constraints on what systems of causal laws can be like. For instance, whilst it may be contingent what normative laws obtain, it may be necessary that some normative laws or other do obtain. That is, it might be necessary that there are laws without there being any necessary laws, thereby making it metaphysically impossible for there to be amoral worlds (in the same way as it may be metaphysically impossible for there to be acausal worlds). These constraints will hold with metaphysical necessity and will delimit the range of possible normative laws, potentially allowing one to rule out the possibility of the type of objectionable scenario suggested by McPherson.[7]

The real problem with addressing the supervenience argument by invoking normative supervenience is rather that normative modality may coincide with metaphysical modality. That is, the set of normatively possible worlds might turn out to be the same as the set of metaphysically possible worlds, in which case even normative supervenience would imply the existence of non-normative properties that are metaphysically necessarily co-extensive with normative properties. This happens, for instance, on certain objectivist views that countenance a unique set of normative principles.[8] On such views, normative supervenience will suffice for necessary co-extensiveness with respect to metaphysical modality and hence would seem to preclude the existence of irreducibly normative properties.

This is problematic for two reasons. First, the most plausible forms of moral realism look like they have this kind of commitment, insofar as they do not allow for variation in normative laws. Second, and more importantly, this response to the supervenience argument is inadequate, since it does not adequately capture the difference between normative and non-normative properties. In particular, the distinctness of these properties should not be contingent on how normative modality is related to metaphysical modality (i.e. it should not be dependent on the modal status of the normative laws). A theory that has to rely on the normatively possible worlds differing from those that are metaphysically possible does not adequately respect and capture the fact that these properties are different in kind and do not merely differ in extension across modal space. In short, it is the nature of these properties that should account for their distinctness (and that should also explain any differences in extensions across possible worlds), not the relation between normatively and metaphysically possible worlds.

[7] So far, all that has been shown is that the possibility of these scenarios might be ruled out by this type of constraint, and that a denial of metaphysical supervenience, accordingly, does not imply a commitment to their possibility. A fully satisfactory reply would require one to specify the precise nature of these constraints, showing how exactly they manage to preclude objectionable possibilities.

[8] These principles have, what Enoch calls, modally maximal jurisdiction (cf. Enoch: 2011, p. 145). Whether normative principles do vary across modal space is not a normative but a metaphysical matter (contra Scanlon: 2014, p. 41), i.e. the scope of these principles is a function of the metaphysical status of their source.

Accordingly, one needs an alternative theory that is hyperintensional in character, that generates a robust difference in kind between normative and non-normative properties, and that does not require normative modality to be restricted, in the sense of the normatively possible worlds forming a proper subset of the metaphysically possible worlds.[9]

An analogous problem arises in the case of dispositions when nomological possibility is taken to coincide with metaphysical possibility. Views that consider nomological possibility to be co-extensive with metaphysical possibility (such as certain versions of dispositional essentialism) will not be able to distinguish dispositional properties from their corresponding disjunctive categorical counterparts in terms of their extensions across modal space. The nomological principles connecting dispositional properties to their categorical bases will then hold in the same set of circumstances as the metaphysical principles connecting disjunctive properties to their disjuncts.

The problem then is that the difference between dispositional and categorical properties is meant to be a difference in kind that should not depend on the relation between these two types of modality (nor on the status of the laws of nature). In order to avoid reducibility and preserve the idea that categorical and dispositional properties are different in kind, one should not rely on the idea that the different modal strengths that are involved in nomological and metaphysical supervenience lead to different extensions across modal space. Instead, one has to bring in hyperintensional resources.

3 Hyperintensional differences

Thus, although it is possible to deny that these properties are necessarily co-extensive with respect to metaphysical modality by arguing for a restricted normative supervenience claim, this is not a particularly promising response that does not really get to the heart of the matter. Accordingly, it is preferable to find a response that succeeds even if (metaphysically) necessary co-extensiveness is granted.

A plausible alternative consists in rejecting premise 3 of the supervenience argument and denying that necessarily co-extensive properties need to be identical. The suggestion then is that non-reductionism can be salvaged by rejecting the idea that intensional equivalence, i.e. having the same extension across modal

[9] In fact, as we will see later on, it turns out that the very same commitments that a realist requires in order to justify scope restrictions (i.e. consider laws as holding in a restricted set of metaphysically possible worlds) also allow us to address the case where normative supervenience goes together with metaphysically necessary co-extensiveness. The restriction strategy thus turns out to rely on the very same hyperintensional resources that are employed in the defence of irreducibly normative properties that is provided later on and that does not require or involve any restrictions.

space, suffices for identity (cf. Shafer-Landau: 2003; Majors: 2005; Suikkanen 2010). Such a view would seem to avoid the commitment to reducibility by opening up room for the possibility that normative properties are distinct from non-normative properties, despite being necessarily co-extensive. In the same way that properties, such as triangularity and trilaterality, that are necessarily co-extensive can be distinct, so can normative properties be distinct from their non-normative disjunctive counterparts. This is, in fact, the standard reply given to the supervenience argument.

Instead of individuating properties intensionally, one thus has to adopt a hyperintensional account of properties that allows necessarily co-extensive properties to be distinct. However, simply denying that all necessarily co-extensive properties are identical and saying that property identity is a hyperintensional matter leaves much open. Though opening up room for the distinctness of normative properties from descriptive properties, it is far from being sufficient for a full-fledged defence of irreducibly normative properties. In order for this line of response to be substantiated, one needs to provide a fine-grained theory of properties that specifies the identity conditions of properties and that explains how hyperintensional differences can arise. What is required is a satisfactory account of the conditions under which properties are identical/distinct and that explains, in particular, which necessarily co-extensive properties are identical and which ones distinct.

One then has to show that the proposed theory yields the result that normative properties and their descriptive disjunctive counterparts in fact turn out to be distinct. In this way, one can explain what accounts for their distinctness and what thereby distinguishes these properties from other 'pairs' of necessarily co-extensive properties that are identical. Moreover, not only do we want normative and non-normative properties to be distinct, we also want them to be different in kind. This means that one should be able to account for the differences between these properties and explain how it is that they differ in kind, i.e. why one is normative whereas the other is non-normative despite being so intimately connected (in particular, despite being necessarily co-extensive and, as we will see later, despite having the very same grounds).

In order for such a theory to be satisfactory, it needs to be fine-grained without being too fine-grained. Importantly, this theory has to satisfy the requirement (which we can call the 'worldliness constraint') that it tracks worldly differences, rather than simply identifying differences in how we pick out properties and represent the world. In other words, the differences that it posits amongst properties must be ontologically robust. As Jackson puts it, the account has to ensure that a property is "an aspect of the world, not an aspect of our discourse or thought about it" (Jackson: 1998, p. 126). Otherwise, we will not end up with a real distinction but only with a merely nominal distinction.

This can be done by individuating properties in terms of their basic grounds

rather than in terms of their extensions across modal space.[10] One thereby recognises that properties can be had in different ways, assessing not only whether a property is had but also how it is had, allowing there to be properties that are instantiated by the same possibilia but that can be had in different ways due to being grounded differently. Such a theory provides a more fine-grained individuation than necessary co-extension, whilst satisfying the worldliness constraint. That is, we are not merely dealing with "a separation in modes of representation in thought" (Jackson: 1998, p. 26) but with a genuine separation in reality. It might then be thought that the crucial step of the supervenience argument, that moves from necessary co-extension to identity, can be rejected and that normative properties can, accordingly, be distinguished from non-normative properties, thereby avoiding a commitment to reductionism.

4 The grounding argument

Rejecting necessary co-extension as the criterion for property identity, however, does not suffice for defending a non-reductionist view of the normative. In particular, there is the problem that one can run an analogous grounding argument that functions as the hyperintensional analogue of the supervenience argument.

1′.	normative properties are grounded in non-normative properties
2′.	the set of non-normative properties is closed under infinitary disjunction and conjunction
3′.	disjunctive properties are (individually) grounded in their disjuncts;[11] conjunctive properties are (collectively) grounded in their conjuncts
∴	for every normative property there is a non-normative property that is hyperintensionally equivalent
4′.	hyperintensionally equivalent properties are identical
∴	every normative property is identical to a non-normative property

If one accepts that normative properties do not only supervene on non-normative properties but are grounded therein, then every normative property N will be such that one can form a disjunctive descriptive property D that is grounded in precisely the same non-normative properties as N, thereby threatening non-reductionism even within a hyperintensional setting. Merely claiming that prop-

[10] Given the set of fundamental properties $\mathcal{F}$ that contains all those properties that are ungrounded, we can construct the set of basic grounders $\mathcal{B}$, which consists of all compatible pluralities (including degenerate pluralities) of fundamental properties. We can then define the grounding set g(F) of a property F as that set that contains all basic proper and improper grounders of F, i.e. $g(F) = \{\Gamma \in \mathcal{B} : \Gamma \text{ grounds } F\}$. Two (non-fundamental) properties F and G are then identical iff $g(F) = g(G)$. The details of the resulting hyperintensional logic are developed in "Hyperintensional equivalence" (Bader: manuscript).

[11] If the disjuncts are compatible, then the disjunction can also be collectively grounded in them taken together.

erties can be distinct despite being necessarily co-extensive is thus not sufficient for defending irreducibly normative properties.

Premise 1′ is simply a strengthening of the claim that normative properties supervene on non-normative properties. This should be unproblematic, given that grounding relations are precisely the kinds of explanatory relations that supervenience relations are meant to model and in terms of which supervenience claims can ultimately be explained and justified.

On the one hand, the motivations and intuitions cited in favour of supervenience usually take the form of resultance intuitions, whereby the instantiation of normative properties is taken to be explained in terms of the instantiation of non-normative properties. This means that properly capturing these intuitions requires not only accepting the dependent-variation of normative on non-normative properties, but a commitment to a grounding relation connecting these properties.

On the other hand, even those motivated by broadly-speaking extensional considerations that are based on the thought that certain facts simply could not have failed to have the normative status that they do have (e.g. that genocide is wrong, cf. McPherson: 2012, p. 212), naturally end up endorsing a grounding claim. This is because by accepting a supervenience claim, one incurs an explanatory burden that needs to be discharged. One is to avoid a situation whereby the supervenience of one family of properties on another is a sheer coincidence. Such a coincidence would be particularly troublesome, given the heterogeneity of normative and non-normative properties endorsed by the non-reductive realist. Unless there is some dependence relation between them, it would seem that it should be possible to independently recombine them, which would undermine the supervenience claim. The necessary dependent-variation should, accordingly, not be brute but explicable.

This can be achieved by positing a grounding relation that ensures that the properties cannot be independently recombined but that there is dependent-variation of the grounded properties on the properties in which they are grounded. A grounding relation renders it unsurprising that that which is dependent, namely the normative, varies with that on which it depends, namely the non-normative. In particular, the grounding of normative in non-normative properties implies the supervenience of the former on the latter, thereby allowing us to discharge the explanatory burden that is incurred when positing the supervenience of the normative. The supervening set consists of evaluative properties $N_1 \ldots N_n$. Each such property N_i has instantiations $n_i^1 \ldots n_i^n$, whereby every instance n_i^j will be grounded in a collection of instantiations of descriptive properties $D_1 \ldots D_n$, such that the subvening set of base properties will consist of the union of these collections of descriptive properties for all instances of all normative properties.[12] The

[12] For some types of supervenience claims, the base will consist of the Boolean closure of this set rather than of the set itself.

fact that objects that do not differ non-normatively cannot differ normatively can then be explained on the basis that normative properties are resultant properties that are grounded in non-normative properties.

Premise 2′ is the same as in the case of the supervenience argument. This premise is very plausible, since it is difficult to see how combining non-normative properties in this manner could make it the case that the resulting property could fail to be non-normative. At any rate, the proponent of irreducibly normative properties (to whom this argument is addressed) should have no qualms with this premise, given that he considers normative and non-normative properties to differ in kind, and given that it does not seem to be possible that such a difference in kind could be straddled by simply conjoining or disjoining non-normative properties.[13]

Premise 3′ should likewise be uncontroversial. The grounding of disjunctive and conjunctive properties in their constituents is usually considered to be a paradigm case of grounding.

These premises imply that for every normative property, there will be a disjunctive property that has the very same grounds.[14] This is because every (actual as well as possible) instantiation n_i of a normative property N will be grounded in a collection of instantiations of non-normative properties Γ_i.[15] All the different pluralities $\Gamma_1 \ldots \Gamma_n$ that ground instantiations $n_1 \ldots n_n$ together constitute the basic grounders of N, i.e. the members of N's grounding set g(N). Out of these pluralities we can construct a disjunctive descriptive property D that has the very same grounds as N by disjoining the conjunctive properties that can be formed by conjoining the members of Γ_i for every possible instantiation n_i of N. More precisely, for any Γ_i we can form a conjunctive property $\wedge\Gamma_i$ (which equals $F_1 \wedge F_2 \ldots \wedge F_n$ for all F_i that are amongst Γ_i). By disjoining all such conjunctive properties one ends up with a property $D = \bigvee\{\wedge\Gamma_i \text{ for all } \Gamma_i \in g(F)\}$ that is not only necessarily co-extensive with N but that also has the very same grounds, since both have $\Gamma_1 \ldots \Gamma_n$ as their basic grounders, i.e. $g(D) = g(N)$.[16]

[13] The fact that the relevant closure conditions require infinitary property-forming operations turns out to be unproblematic, cf. Bader: 2012 contra Glanzberg: 2001.

[14] We are here making use of a broad notion of grounding that includes conditions and modifiers, which ensures that the grounds form a necessitation base.

[15] Given a commitment to amalgamation, one can simply use the maximal ground whenever N is overgrounded.

[16] The disjunctive property formed by disjoining the various grounds of N need not be identical to the disjunctive property formed by disjoining the B-properties on which the normative property supervenes, even when making use of a minimal supervenience base that does not include B-maximal properties that correspond to B-descriptions of the whole world but that only characterise the object's B-nature whilst leaving out irrelevant information. These properties can diverge where a property is overgrounded and where one basic ground is part of another, such that absorption principles fail. This divergence is due to the fact that, whilst grounding is characterised by a relevance constraint, supervenience will be subject to a more restrictive minimality constraint.

Given that the set of the relevant non-normative properties is closed under infinitary conjunction and disjunction, this implies that the disjunctive property D that is hyperintensionally equivalent to a particular normative property N will be a non-normative property. And given that hyperintensionally equivalent properties are identical, normative properties then turn out to be identical to non-normative properties.[17]

If properties are not only had by the same possibilia but are also such that the very same facts explain why these properties are had, then it becomes rather difficult to see on what basis they can be considered to be distinct. In particular, there would not seem to be anything in the world that would render them distinct. Accordingly, it becomes rather difficult to account for their distinctness in a way that satisfies the worldliness constraint, such that we do not merely end up with a distinction at the level of description or representation but with a genuine difference in the world.

Critics of the supervenience argument frequently appeal to the (supposed) distinctness of the property of being triangular and the property of being trilateral and suggest that the distinctness of normative properties and their disjunctive counterparts can be understood along the same lines. The fact that triangularity

[17]The reduction of the normative is thus not a matter of the 'vertical' relation between N and its various grounds, but is rather concerned with the 'horizontal' relation between N and D. That is, we do not reduce N to its grounds (whether taken individually or collectively), but to the disjunctive property D that has all the very same grounds as N. The reducibility of a normative property thus consists in there being a descriptive property D to which it is identical.

Schroeder has criticised the understanding of reduction as involving property identities on the grounds that "it makes reductive views out not to really be theses of metaphysics at all, but only in the philosophy of language or epistemology" (cf. Schroeder: 2007, p. 64), and has instead proposed the notion of a constitutive explanation as an alternative characterisation of reduction.

In response we can note, first, that pace Schroeder property identities are substantive metaphysical matters. On the one hand, there is the (relatively uncontroversial) issue of the closure conditions that apply to the set of descriptive properties, i.e. the disjunctive property D has to be in the set of descriptive properties if there is to be a reductive identity. On the other hand, as we will see in the next section, there is the issue of the nature of the grounding relation giving rise to normative properties, in particular whether the disjunctive property D is grounded in the very same way (that is, via the same grounding relation) as the normative property N. If the relevant closure conditions hold and if the same grounding relation is at issue, then D and N will be identical, where this is a substantive metaphysical claim that is established on the basis of metaphysical reasoning that allows us to find out something important about the nature of normative properties, namely how such properties are grounded, and not merely something about how we pick out properties.

Second, a 'vertical' understanding of reduction, such as one in terms of constitutive explanations, does not help us to settle the traditional dispute between reductive and non-reductive normative realists. This is because it is perfectly possible to hold that the normative is grounded in the non-normative, without incurring any reductionist commitments. The issue under contention is not whether normative properties are grounded in non-normative properties, but whether they are identical to non-normative properties. To say that there are irreducibly normative properties is to say that some property N, though being grounded in descriptive properties, is not identical to a descriptive property.

and trilaterality are distinct properties can, however, be explained in terms of these properties having different grounds. The former property is had in virtue of having three angles. The latter property, by contrast, is had in virtue of having three sides. This means that different features of the world account for and give rise to these properties, thereby rendering them distinct.

Yet, no such explanation appears to be available when it comes to distinguishing normative properties from their disjunctive descriptive counterparts. These properties have the same grounding sets. Whatever grounds the former also grounds the latter, and vice versa. There is no difference in terms of what grounds these properties, no difference in terms of the features of the world that explain and give rise to them. There would, accordingly, not seem to be any genuine worldly difference between them, but merely a difference in terms of how we conceptualise and represent them. In short, these properties are not only intensionally equivalent, but also hyperintensionally equivalent, and would thus seem to be identical.

A commitment to hyperintensionality, accordingly, does not suffice for avoiding reductionism, given that normative properties do not just supervene on but are grounded in non-normative properties. It would thus seem that in order to circumvent the grounding argument, one would have to deny not only that necessary co-extensiveness suffices for identity, but also deny premise $4'$, namely that hyperintensional equivalence suffices for identity. Doing so, however, would saddle one with an ultra fine-grained theory of properties that has no longer any claim to identifying genuine differences in the world. This is because any difference more fine-grained than hyperintensional equivalence understood in terms of sameness of basic grounders would not seem to satisfy the worldliness constraint. Moreover, any such theory would conflict with the idea that the identity conditions of non-basic entities are provided by and specified in terms of the basic entities on which they depend, in this case that non-fundamental properties are individuated in terms of the fundamental properties in which they are grounded.[18] Accordingly, it turns out that the problem runs much deeper and

[18] This is especially relevant for attempts to use Leibniz's Law arguments applied to properties in order to establish their distinctness (cf. Suikkanen: 2010, section 6; similarly Enoch appeals to the idea that normative properties play different roles than their descriptive counterparts in arguing for their distinctness, cf. Enoch: 2011, p. 140). In particular, attempts to argue that normative and non-normative properties differ in terms of their higher-order properties and are hence distinct face the problem that higher-order properties would seem to be determined either by the lower base properties or by the grounds of those properties. This, in turn, would seem to imply that any normative property N will have the same higher-order properties as its non-normative disjunctive counterpart D, on the basis of these properties having the same grounds.

This problem is analogous to the grounding problem regarding coinciding entities. In that context, the pluralist's appeal to Leibniz's Law is problematic, given that the differences in properties amongst coinciding objects that the pluralist invokes would seem to lack a ground, due to the fact that coinciding objects share the same supervenience base. Likewise, the sameness of grounds of these necessarily co-extensive properties makes it difficult to explain how they could

that simply adopting a fine-grained criterion for individuating properties does not suffice for addressing this challenge to non-reductionist forms of moral realism.

5 Normative grounding

Instead of rejecting hyperintensional equivalence as the criterion of property identity, one should respond to the supervenience/grounding argument by distinguishing the different types of grounding relations that are involved in grounding the normative property and the corresponding non-normative property. One can thereby make it the case that the two properties turn out to be hyperintensionally inequivalent after all. Whilst one can neither distinguish them in terms of their extensions across modal space, nor in terms of their grounds, one can nonetheless distinguish them in terms of the respective grounding relations that they involve.[19]

In particular, whereas the normative property is normatively grounded, the disjunctive non-normative property is metaphysically grounded. Premise 1′ then becomes 1*: 'normative properties are normatively grounded in non-normative properties', whereas premise 3′ becomes 3*: 'disjunctive properties are (individually) metaphysically grounded in their disjuncts and conjunctive properties are (collectively) metaphysically grounded in their conjuncts', from which one can

differ in higher-order properties. The task is thus to explain what accounts for the differences amongst them in terms of how these properties are grounded, rather than to presuppose there being differences amongst them and then appealing to these differences to argue for the distinctness of these properties. As we will see below, the differences that separate these properties cannot be explained by identifying different grounds (since they share the very same grounds), but instead by identifying different grounding relations via which these properties are grounded. In this way, Leibniz's Law arguments presuppose the explanatory account developed in this paper and can only succeed by means of a commitment to there being a plurality of robust grounding relations.

(A further similarity to the case of coinciding objects is that the pluralist needs to show that the differences in higher-order properties to which he appeals are genuine differences that cannot be explained away by means of predicational shifts (as Streumer attempts to do by invoking different modes of presentation, cf. Streumer: 2013, p. 327).)

[19] It might be suggested that normative properties have different grounds than their descriptive disjunctive counterparts because normative properties are not just grounded in non-evaluative properties but also in normative laws. However, to think of the laws as being grounds would involve a confusion of levels (cf. "Two levels of good-making", Bader: manuscript). It is important to distinguish good-makers (i.e. grounds) from makers of good-makers (i.e. grounding principles). Although normative laws do play an important role, they do so not by grounding normative properties but rather by governing the grounding relations connecting non-normative grounds to normative properties. This means that they are not to be included amongst the grounds but amongst the grounding principles. Rather than normative properties being metaphysically grounded in non-normative properties together with the normative laws, they are normatively grounded in the non-normative properties via these laws. Put differently, they modify the grounding relation rather than featuring as relata. There is hence no difference in terms of what these normative and descriptive properties are grounded in, but only a difference in terms of how they are grounded in the base that they share.

no longer derive the existence of a hyperintensionally equivalent non-normative property corresponding to any given normative property.

Hyperintensional equivalence, accordingly, has to be understood as requiring not only that the properties have the same grounds but also that they are grounded in the same ways, i.e. that the types of grounding relations that give rise to the properties in question are the same.[20] This modification ensures that we take into consideration not only the relata of the grounding relation but also the nature of the grounding relation. Since the relation connecting the grounds to what is grounded therein is a worldly matter, this refined condition still satisfies the worldliness constraint. The differences between properties that it identifies are thus genuine distinctions in the world that are either due to different aspects of the world accounting for the different properties or due to the properties being generated in different ways, i.e. via different grounding relations.

Normative properties and their disjunctive descriptive counterparts do not satisfy the conditions of hyperintensional equivalence once one distinguishes normative grounding from metaphysical grounding. Normative properties and their non-normative counterparts then turn out to be distinct, not because they have different grounds, but because they are grounded in the same grounds in different ways, namely via different types of grounding relations. This holds even if metaphysical and normative modality should turn out to be co-extensive, i.e. even if there is a unique set of norms that applies in every metaphysically possible world. Non-reductionist versions of moral realism thus require a commitment to there being irreducibly distinct types of grounding relations.[21,22]

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[20] Accordingly, one needs to supplement the theory that was sketched above by introducing a range of different grounding relations, such as metaphysical grounding (g_M), normative grounding (g_N), and nomological grounding (g_C). Identity then requires not only that properties are grounded in the same things but are also grounded in them via the same relations, such that (non-fundamental) properties F and G are identical iff $g_i(F) = g_i(G)$ for some grounding relation g_i.

In this case, the grounding set $g_i(F)$ does not have to contain basic grounders, i.e. it is not required that $\Gamma \in \mathcal{B}$ in order for $\Gamma \in g_i(F)$. Instead, it contains the (proper and improper) i-basic grounds of F that are the ultimate grounds in i-grounding chains giving rise to F, i.e. $g_i(F) = \{\Gamma : \Gamma \text{ grounds}_i\ F \ \wedge\ \neg\exists\Delta(\Delta \neq \Gamma \wedge \Delta \text{ grounds}_i\ \Gamma)\}$. This allows some non-fundamental properties to be individuated in terms of (pluralities of) other (more fundamental) non-fundamental properties, generating a recursive structure that ultimately terminates in basic grounders, i.e. in compatible pluralities of fundamental properties, where fundamental properties are i-basic with respect to every i-grounding chain.

(In case normative laws should be metaphysically contingent and should admit of variation across modal space, one would have to specify not only the type of grounding relation but also relativise grounds to sets of worlds (or better, to sets of norms), in which case grounding sets will have the following form: $g_N(F) = \{\Gamma_{|w_1 \ldots w_i}, \Delta_{|w_j \ldots w_k}, \Lambda_{|w_l \ldots w_n}\}$.)

[21] This commitment is analogous to, and in fact underlies, the commitment to there being irreducibly distinct types of modality, cf. Fine: 2005, chapter 7.

[22] The dispositional essentialist who considers nomological and metaphysical possibility to coincide can likewise distinguish dispositional properties from their disjunctive categorical counter-

In particular, one has to think of the normative grounding relations as being governed by robust grounding principles. This is because it is not possible to make sense of Γ normatively grounding N whilst metaphysically grounding D (which is required to address the supervenience/grounding argument) unless these are distinct grounding relations that operate in accordance with different principles. The differences between N and D are to be explained in terms of the differences in the relations giving rise to them. Normative grounding principles thus need to be distinct from those involved in metaphysical grounding and need to be prior to the grounding facts that they govern.[23] A commitment to moral realism thus implies that normative grounding principles cannot be mere descriptions of patterns of grounding facts but have to be doing substantive work and have to be appealed to in individuating grounding relations.

One can thus account for the fact that these properties are distinct in terms of them being grounded differently, where this does not involve being grounded in different things but, instead, being grounded via different grounding relations. This explanation satisfies the worldliness constraint, since there is something in the world that accounts for the distinctness of these properties, namely the different grounding relations that give rise to them. In this way, one can ensure that there are genuine worldly differences amongst them. The distinction between normative and non-normative properties then turns out to be a real rather than merely nominal distinction.

By accepting such different grounding relations, one can, moreover, explain how it is that normative properties differ in kind from their disjunctive descriptive counterparts. In particular, the difference in the nature of the grounding relation generates differences in the kinds of property being grounded. There is thus no need to reject the closure principles and the account can respect the fact that one cannot arrive at a normative property by simply putting together various non-normative properties. By disjoining and conjoining non-normative properties one only generates further non-normative properties. To end up with a normative property, one needs to do something else, namely bring in a normative grounding relation.

In this way, it becomes possible to explain the heterogeneity of these properties, whilst at the same time allowing that they are grounded in the same base. On the one hand, the fact that they are necessarily co-extensive is explained in terms of them having a common ground. On the other hand, the fact that they are radically heterogeneous is explained in terms of them being grounded via different types of grounding relations. Sameness of ground combined with difference

parts by arguing that the former are nomologically grounded, whilst the latter are metaphysically grounded.

[23] The situation here is analogous to the grounding problem regarding coinciding entities, which can be addressed by a commitment to mereological pluralism that recognises different types of composition relations that generate different objects in the same way that different types of grounding relations generate different properties.

in grounding relation thus explains necessary co-extensiveness, whilst preserving difference in kind and distinctness.

Relatedly, the commitment to there being normative grounding relations allows us to explain the distinctness of normative properties from their descriptive counterparts on the basis of a commitment that clearly has a good claim to constituting the "core metaphysical thesis of non-naturalism" and that genuinely classifies as "a substantial (and controversial) thesis about the metaphysics of the normative" (Dunaway: forthcoming, section 5). That there is an irreducibly different normative grounding relation clearly is such a metaphysical thesis. The property distinctness is thus explicable in terms of the very feature that makes non-reductive or non-natural normative realism the distinctive and controversial theory that it is. In this way, the proposed account satisfies Dunaway's desideratum that the denial of the property identity follows from the core commitment of non-naturalism and thereby distinguishes it from other cases, such as the case of triangularity and trilaterality, in which necessarily co-extensive properties are distinct but in which no analogous non-naturalist metaphysical commitments are incurred.

6 Plenitudinous idlers?

Addressing the supervenience/grounding argument by distinguishing normative grounding relations that are governed by normative grounding principles from metaphysical grounding relations, moreover, allows us to defuse Jackson's other arguments against the claim that ethical properties are distinct from their non-normative counterparts.

ETHICAL IDLERS

> Jackson objects that "it is hard to see how the further properties could be of any ethical significance. Are we supposed to take seriously someone who says, 'I see that this action will kill many and save no-one, but that is not enough to justify my not doing it; what really matters is that the action has an extra property that only ethical terms are suited to pick out'? In short, the extra properties would [be] ethical 'idlers'." (Jackson: 1998, p. 127)
>
> In response we can note that the good-making features are ethically significant only on the basis that they ground goodness and that their doing so is dependent on the normative grounding principles. What matters is that the action has the relevant non-evaluative properties that give rise to the ethical property in question, e.g. those that justify the action. Precisely which non-evaluative properties are relevant and account for the normative status of the action is determined by the normative grounding principles. It is they that allow us to select amongst the vast array of non-evaluative features those that are relevant, on the basis that they make it the case that

these features are good-makers that ground normative properties.

This means that non-evaluative features only have ethical significance when they fall under a normative grounding principle. That is, these properties do justify actions, but they only do so because they are imbued with normative significance by the grounding principle. In this way, the ethical significance of the non-evaluative properties is dependent on the grounding principle. Since the grounding principle is precisely what gets us to the normative property, we can see that what it is for good-making properties to have ethical significance is to give rise to a normative property. This property is hence not an ethical idler but is necessary for ethical significance. In other words, the significance and justificatory force of the non-evaluative good-making features lies precisely in the fact that they make things good. A full explanation of the normative status of the action in this way cannot remain at the non-evaluative level, but has to invoke grounding principles and go to the level of goodness.

That the significance of non-evaluative features is to be explained in terms of them giving rise to goodness is particularly clear in cases in which the good-makers only conditionally ground goodness, requiring enablers to be present and disablers to be absent. These cases show that the features that are to be selected at the non-evaluative level do not by themselves suffice for the grounding of goodness. Since they are only conditional good-makers, they only have normative significance conditionally. Accordingly, one has to appeal to the evaluative level to identify and explain the conditions under which these features are good-makers and do in fact give rise to goodness, namely when the enabling/disabling conditions are satisfied. This means that these non-evaluative features are only to be selected under certain conditions, where the selection is determined by the normative grounding principles.

Although one can fully specify in descriptive terms the necessitating base of the goodness, one cannot, without going to the evaluative level, partition this base into conditions and grounds (at least when it comes to enablers). That is, the non-evaluative features on which the goodness supervenes need to be distinguished into those things that are of ethical significance and those that merely constitute the conditions under which the former are of ethical significance. The explanation as to why these conditions need to be satisfied is precisely because they are required for the (conditional) good-makers to actually make something good, which matters since the ethical significance of the (conditional) good-makers is dependent on actual good-making. One can, accordingly, only explain the relevance of these conditions in terms of their effect on good-making. This means that goodness turns out to be explanatorily indispensable.

Thus we can see that, far from being idle, normative properties as well as their corresponding normative grounding principles are necessary for imbuing non-evaluative features with normative significance and for allowing us to adequately select the relevant non-evaluative features in the relevant circumstances.

PLENITUDE?

"The extreme view says that for every (contingent) descriptive way there is, there is a quite distinct, necessarily co-extensive non-descriptive – ethical as it might be – way there is. This extreme version is hard to take seriously. It seems an absurdly anti-Occamist multiplication of properties: for *every* descriptive property, we have a corresponding non-descriptive one! But if the idea is that the duplication only happens occasionally, where is the principled basis for saying when it happens and when it does not?" (Jackson: 1998, p. 127).

Normative grounding principles determine the conditions under which non-normative properties give rise to normative properties. In this regard they are like causal laws, which determine the conditions under which categorical properties give rise to dispositional properties. Dispositions are non-plenitudinous in that we do not have a dispositional way for every categorical way. It is only combinations of categorical properties that are law-governed that have corresponding dispositional properties. Analogously, only certain combinations of descriptive properties are governed by normative laws and have corresponding normative properties.

7 Conclusion

We can thus see that the standard reply to the supervenience argument is insufficient for vindicating non-reductive realism due to the grounding argument that functions as its hyperintensional analogue, and that what makes room for a non-reductive account of normative properties is that the grounding relation giving rise to these properties is normative in nature and as such distinct from the metaphysical grounding relation giving rise to the corresponding disjunctive descriptive counterpart. It is thus possible to accept that the normative is grounded in the non-normative, without ending up with a reductionist view, as long as the grounding relation is construed as involving normative rather than metaphysical grounding. Some will take this result as yet further reason to reject non-reductive versions of moral realism, whilst others will consider the idea of irreducibly distinct normative grounding relations to be a fruitful line of inquiry that is worthy of being pursued further. Yet, what is clear is that the fate of non-reductive realism is inextricably tied up with there being irreducibly different grounding relations.

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