

Leary's "Non-Naturalism and Normative Necessities"

Metaphysics Seminar, April 6th, 2016

Preview: Leary thinks that non-naturalist normative realists need to explain why normative properties metaphysically supervene on yet are distinct from natural properties. Unlike Bader, Leary does not think we can offer this explanation by replacing the supervenience thesis (merely) with theses concerning ground. Instead, Leary offers an explanation involving both essence and ground.

1 The Explanatory Burden of the Non-Naturalist Normative Realist

1.1 The Non-Natural Normative Realist's commitments

1. Normative properties are "of their own kind" They are different in kind from scientific properties and any other kind of properties.
2. Countenancing normative properties and facts is incompatible with a purely scientific world view.
3. Here is the supervenience thesis that the NNNR should find plausible (F-quantifier ranges over normative properties, the G-quantifier over natural properties, A picks out the family of normative properties, B picks the family of natural properties, and $\Box m$ is metaphysical necessity):

Strong Supervenience $(\forall F \text{ in } A)(\forall x)(Fx \supset (\exists G \text{ in } B)(Gx \text{ and } \Box m (\forall y)(Gy \supset (Fy)))$

1.2 The Explanatory Burden

Leary thinks that metaphysical necessities between distinct properties typically have explanations (being extended-being colored, being an elephant-being self-identical). So if the supervenience thesis holds, the NNNR should be able to explain in virtue of what there are necessary connections between normative and natural properties.

2 Grounding Explanations

2.1 Fundamentalist Non-Naturalism

Leary considers grounding-based versions of Scanlon and Enoch's responses to this issue. Perhaps we can explain the necessary connections between normative properties and certain natural properties as follows:

(F) The fact that some state s^1 has normative property N is partially grounded in: The fact that s has some natural property D and partially grounded in the fundamental law that all states with natural property D have normative property N.

Leary Response: This just moves around the metaphysical necessity without explaining it. Before we needed to explain the necessary connection between normative and natural properties. Now we need to explain why the fundamental law is metaphysically necessary.

2.2 Grounded Non-Naturalism

Grounded Non-Naturalists will claim the following:

¹This doesn't have to be a state. This could be an action, etc.

(G) The fact that *s* has normative property *N* is fully grounded in the fact that *s* has natural property *D*.

Leary's Response:

"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." (12)

Leary offers alternative in the vicinity: Lawfully Grounded Non-Naturalism.

2.3 Lawfully Grounded Non-Naturalism

Perhaps the grounding fact (G) is itself fully backed by a "normative law of metaphysics." (Compare with causal explanations). (Wilsch 2015)

(H) (G) is grounded in the law of metaphysics (If *x* has *D* then *x* has *N*)²

1. Problem. Recall our objection to the Fundamentalist Non-Naturalist though: what explains why the law is metaphysically necessary? Perhaps we can solve this problem: Laws of metaphysics determine metaphysical necessity in the same way laws of nature determine nomological necessity.
2. Problem. This view doesn't account or normative properties being of a different kind than natural properties. Response: Perhaps one can claim that normative laws of metaphysics underwrite normative grounding relations. "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." (15)

But then why are the normative laws metaphysically necessary? And if they aren't metaphysically necessary, we've given up on the supervenience thesis.

3 Essentially Grounded Non-Naturalism

3.1 Some facts about essence that Leary takes on board

- According to Fine (1994b), "the essence of an object/property is the set of propositions that are directly definitive of that object or property." "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." (Here I'm just quoting Leary on Fine, 16)
- The essence of the property *being a bachelor*: "if *x* is a bachelor then *x* is unmarried."
- Essences determine metaphysical possibilities/necessities.
- Essence facts explain grounding facts (Leary's example of the rock show).
- Essences are autonomous in that they are neither grounded nor fundamental.

²I think it's a little up in the air what the form of the law is supposed to be

3.2 Essential Non-Naturalism

Essential Non-Naturalism: The essences of some normative properties:

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

This essentialist preserves the NNNR's pre-theoretical commitments 1 and 2 above. a and b show that normative properties are of a distinct "kind" than natural properties.

3.2.1 Developing This Account:

Leary will accept (G) above, and she will claim that facts involving essence will ground (G). But which essence facts are doing the work? Facts about the essence of N or facts about the essence of D? Neither, sort of. Leary thinks that the grounding structure is better illuminated as a fact involving two instantiations of the grounding relation as follows:

G*: The fact that s has normative property N is fully grounded in the fact that s has *hybrid normative property* E, which in turn is grounded in the fact that s has natural property D.

Leary thinks the essence of E is what fully grounds the grounding facts in G*. In particular, the essence of E fully grounds the fact [s has D grounds s has E] and fully grounds the fact [s has E grounds s has N].

Example with the property *being in pain*:

D: c-fiber firing

E: being in pain

N: badness

The essence of E involves both (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.

So essence facts are supposed to accommodate the NNNR's pre-theoretical commitments as well as accommodate the supervenience of the normative on the non-normative. Remember that the essence facts are supposed to determine what is metaphysically possible/necessary. So if it's part of the essence of E that a natural property D suffices for it, and it's part of the essence of E that E suffices for N, then it must be the case that whenever there's D there's N. And there you have it!

3.2.2 Questions

1. Why (b)?
2. Do we need to give up on something like completeness (essentialists may want to give up on this across the board—not unique to Leary)?
3. Are we surrounded by secret-agent normative properties everywhere?
4. Could there be other properties that satisfy (a) and (b) of Essential Non-Naturalism above.