Why Care About Non-Natural Reasons?
(Forthcoming in *American Philosophical Quarterly*)

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Abstract

Are non-natural properties worth caring about? I consider two (related) objections to metaethical non-naturalism. According to the *intelligibility* objection, it would be positively unintelligible to care about non-natural properties that float free from the causal fabric of the cosmos. According to the *ethical idlers* objection, there is no compelling motivation to posit non-natural normative properties because the natural properties suffice to provide us with reasons. In both cases, I argue, the objection stems from misunderstanding the role that non-natural properties play in the non-naturalist's understanding of normativity. The role of non-natural properties is not to *be* responded to, but to "mark" which natural properties it is *correct* for us to respond to in certain ways.

Introduction

Metaethical non-naturalism is the view that there are *sui generis* irreducibly normative facts, in contrast (e.g.) to the naturalist thesis that normative facts are "nothing over and above" familiar natural ones.[1] Non-naturalism

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[1] Enoch (2011, 101). Like Enoch, I'm not too concerned about the various different ways of explicating this "nothing over and above" relation—"identity, reduction, constitution, and grounding"—but it is of course important not to define naturalism in terms of the mere supervenience of the normative on the natural, as non-naturalists may happily endorse such

may be motivated by the thought that the natural furniture of the world— whatever can be completely characterized in purely descriptive terms—just *isn't enough* to explain morality (or normativity more generally). Normativity is, intuitively, so fundamentally different in kind from natural phenomena that a reduction of the former to the latter may seem hopeless or even absurd. This makes it especially striking that several philosophers have tried to turn the tables by arguing that *non-natural* properties couldn't be normative. If such objections succeed, they don't merely cast doubt on the truth of the view, but undermine its very motivation.

In this paper, I will consider both positive and negative versions of this objection: that non-natural properties aren't sufficient for normativity (§1), and that they aren't even necessary (§2). In both cases, I argue, the objection stems from misunderstanding the role that non-natural properties play in the non-naturalist's understanding of normativity. In short: their role is not to *be* the reasons to which we should respond, but rather to *mark* which natural properties serve as such reasons.

1 The Positive Argument: Unintelligible Concerns

One might argue that non-natural properties, being utterly disconnected from the causal fabric of our lives, just aren't the sorts of things that it

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supervenience claims. An anonymous referee raises the concern that this definition neglects the possibility of "non-reductive naturalism", on which there are irreducibly normative facts over and above the familiar natural facts, but these additional facts nonetheless still qualify as "natural". This neglect is deliberate. The interesting metaethical question in this vicinity is whether there are sui generis irreducibly normative facts. The further question of how to classify the new properties—as 'natural' or 'non-natural'—strikes me as irrelevant book-keeping. It is an unfortunate side-effect of the traditional terminology that it invites such distractions. As I suggest in §1.2, a better label for 'non-naturalism' might be something like 'metaethical primitivism'.

makes sense to care about. As Korsgaard (1981, 10) writes:

> Why after all should we govern our lives, or anyway restrict our
> private interests, for the sake of the promotion or maximization
> of things possessing a non-natural property about the character
> of which we are able to say very little? Is it really enough to
> say that after all this is the *good* we are talking about, not just
> any old property? If it is a natural state or object, happiness or
> utility or pleasure or satisfaction [. . .] we might feel somewhat
> easier about the intelligibility of a commitment to it.

Put like that, the objection sounds rather compelling. After all, if asked
to list the things that really matter in life, we're apt to respond with a list
of descriptive goods: happiness, love, success in our central life projects,
etc. It would be odd to add the abstract property of *goodness* to that list—
and even odder to add some unfamiliar non-natural property Q. I agree
with Korsgaard about this, but don't take it to undermine non-naturalism.
Instead, I think there are a couple of more modest lessons to draw from this
observation. First, we should not fetishize normative properties. Second, we
should not think that normative properties have non-normative natures (or
can be characterized in non-normative terms) at all. Let's consider these in
turn.

1.1 Fetishizing the Normative

Smith (1994, 75–76) and Arpaly (2003) taught us that there's something ob-
jectionably "fetishistic" about being motivated by *de dicto* thoughts of moral

rightness rather than by the subvening features in virtue of which the act is right. Likewise, I think, for other normative properties. It is the *things* that are good, rather than *goodness* per se, that typically should feature in the contents of our desires. When an object is non-instrumentally good or desirable, that's to say that it's fitting or appropriate to non-instrumentally desire *that object*. For one to instead merely desire *the desirable*, and so to have merely derivative desires for the particular things that actually are desirable, is a subtly—yet significantly—different response from what is actually called for. It amounts to treating what's truly valuable—such as other persons—in an inappropriately detached or even instrumental way. Other agents should respect us in our own right, rather than treating us as mere constitutive means to some broader goal of acting morally or promoting value in the abstract (Chappell 2015).

This general fact about the proper response to value provides us with a principled answer to the worry that commitments to non-natural properties seem perverse or even unintelligible. The answer is: this is precisely what we should expect even if non-naturalism is true. For non-naturalism is not an account of which things are right and good, but rather an account of the normative properties of rightness and goodness themselves. The former are uncontroversially natural. So, given that we should be motivated by (consideration of) the things that are right and good, rather than the properties of rightness and goodness themselves, it is entirely to be expected that we should be motivated by (consideration of) natural rather than non-natural properties. To be motivated directly by the non-natural properties posited by metaethical non-naturalists would be a form of normative fetishism: car-

ing about properties like *being good* or *being a reason* rather than the things that possess these properties—the things that *are* good, or *are* reasons.

Returning to Korsgaard's formulation of the objection, one might ask: Is it not true that, according to non-naturalism, there's a sense in which we ought to "govern our lives... for the sake of... things possessing a non-natural property"? The accuracy of this claim depends on whether we read "things possessing a non-natural property" *de dicto* or *de re*. The claim is true, but unobjectionable, on the *de re* reading. There are things possessing a non-natural property—things like love, happiness, etc.—and we should indeed be governed by those things (i.e., considerations of love, happiness, etc.). After all, to claim that these things are desirable, or provide us with reasons, just is to claim that we should in some sense be governed (or motivated) by them. So it is only the *de dicto* reading—according to which we should be motivated by thoughts of non-natural properties as such—that is objectionable. But on that reading, the attribution of the claim to non-naturalists is inaccurate: Non-naturalists are not committed to claiming that we should be motivated by thoughts of "rightness" or "goodness" as such, let alone by thoughts that feature these normative properties explicitly in the guise of non-natural properties.

I should clarify that I am speaking of ordinary moral motivation here. While I take it that *typically* what matters are natural features of the world, I do not mean to present this as a strict universal claim. After all, normative properties plausibly have the further normative property of being *worthy of philosophical scrutiny*.[2] So I do not deny that there may be special cases

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[2] Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

when it is perfectly reasonable to take an interest in morality *de dicto*.[3] (Responding to moral uncertainty may be another such case.) My claim here is the more modest one that non-naturalism does not commit us to having non-natural properties take center stage in our moral lives. The special cases where normative properties are themselves of legitimate interest are precisely cases in which it no longer seems perverse or unintelligible to take a special interest in a non-natural property. There's clearly nothing unintelligible about taking a philosophical interest in non-natural properties, after all. (They raise all sorts of interesting questions!) The case of moral uncertainty may be less obvious, so let me discuss that a bit further.

Suppose you aren't sure whether it's wrong to painlessly kill happy chickens, as you are unsure whether the cognitive capacities that they possess (in particular, their limited degree of psychological connectedness from one moment to the next) are sufficient to ground a normative interest in continued (happy) survival. The question about which you are unsure is not an empirical one—we may suppose that you are fully aware of all the relevant empirical details concerning chicken psychology. You know what relations of psychological continuity and connectedness do and do not hold between the various chicken timeslices. You just aren't sure which relations are the ones that

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[3] An anonymous referee suggests that this may in fact be quite common, as when an unappealing action is motivated by saying that "it is the right thing to do." But I think that what is really going on in such a case is that the speaker is adverting to the *kind* of reason they have to perform the action, rather than asserting that the rightness is *itself* the reason. They are saying that the (not here specified) reason to perform the action is moral in nature, rather than (say) prudential or the like. There must be some underlying natural features of the act that *explain* why it is right, after all, and these would seem to provide the real normative reasons to which a well-motivated agent should respond. Or so I'm inclined to think, at least. You could disagree without it really affecting anything in the rest of the paper.

matter. Since you generally desire to avoid causing harm, you specifically desire not to kill the chicken if the relation binding together its temporal parts is one that matters (in the sense of giving it a normative interest in survival).

This seems a distinctively abstract sort of property that you are (quite reasonably) concerned with in this case. But then it doesn't seem any great problem if it turns out that the property in question is a non-natural one. Of course, it is not just any old non-natural property. And it is not an entirely free-floating concern, disconnected from all your other concerns. On the contrary, this property marks being normatively alike to other things that you rightly care about, and that uncontroversially matter. So perhaps this connection to other, more concrete, concerns can help to render this abstract concern more intelligible.

If we take for granted that adult humans have what matters in survival and that embryos do not, we may intelligibly wonder whether the most coherent systematization of our pattern of concern would mandate concern for chicken survival or not. This is not exactly the same as the question whether chicken survival matters, but from a first personal perspective (assuming that one is not in general morally misguided, etc.) they are at least closely related, as an answer to the one question may reasonably be taken to subjectively settle the other as well.

So I take this to be an intelligible concern, despite being relatively abstract in nature. It doesn't seem to make any difference to its intelligibility if it turns out to be a non-natural property that we are here concerned with. What would be objectionable is if non-naturalists were committed to replacing

our ordinary concrete concerns (such as those involving the hedonic states of pleasure and pain) with excessively abstract non-natural ones, but we have already put that worry to rest. Non-naturalism is perfectly compatible with ascribing significance primarily to natural properties. What we've now seen is that it may also ascribe some (secondary) significance to non-natural properties in a way that is also intelligible.

1.2 Capturing the Normative

If capturing practical normativity with purely natural properties seems difficult, trying to capture it with non-natural properties might seem all the more hopeless. As Darwall et al. (1992, 118) write:

> [The open question] argument came to bite the hand that first fed it, and, eventually, to count Intuitionism among its victims. For, it appears no easier to see how an appropriate link to motivation or action could be logically secured if we were to substitute [...] '*sui generis*, simple, nonnatural property Q' for 'naturalistic property R'.

Or, as Nowell-Smith (1954, 41) puts it:

> A new world [of non-natural properties] is revealed for our inspection; it contains such and such objects, phenomena, and characteristics; it is mapped and described in elaborate detail. No doubt it is all very interesting. If I happen to have a thirst for knowledge, I shall read on to satisfy my curiosity, much as I should read

about new discoveries in astronomy or geography. Learning about 'values' or 'duties' might well be as exciting [and as practically irrelevant] as learning about spiral nebulae or waterspouts.

Bedke (2014, 190) draws out an epistemic (rather than motivational) aspect to the objection as follows:

What things are like non-naturally is not relevant to our normative judgments in the way we would expect them to be if such judgments were beliefs about those sorts of properties. Non-natural properties would belong to a menagerie of curiosities if we could map and catalog them, but our deepest normative convictions do not hang on how they are arranged.

In short: mere descriptions of "what things are like non-naturally" seem at least as normatively inert as descriptions of how things stand in naturalistic terms. They bear no transparent connection to appropriate motivation or right action. To invoke Hume's famous "is-ought gap", adding non-natural properties to our ontology just seems to be a gratuitous addition to the *is* side of the ledger, and no help at all in getting us to a real conclusion about *oughts*.

These objections seem to stem from a mistaken picture according to which the properties posited by non-naturalists are, in some sense, non-natural *before* they are normative. Just as natural property R has a nature that can be completely characterized in non-normative terms, so, one might think, it must be for non-natural property Q. R has a descriptive naturalistic essence that makes it the property it is, and then metaethical naturalists come along

and posit that it can do double-duty as a normative property (*goodness*, say). Likewise, one might imagine, Q has some descriptive (perhaps spooky ectoplasmic) essence that makes it the property it is, and then metaethical non-naturalists come along and posit that it can do double-duty as the normative property of *goodness* (or whatever).

But that is not what non-naturalists claim. They do not reduce normative properties to some independently (i.e., descriptively) characterizable non-natural properties, as one might imagine of a certain kind of Divine Command Theorist. (The colloquially "supernatural" divine properties that DCT appeals to would instead count as "natural" in the broad sense that I'm using in this paper, viz. of being a *descriptive* property. Non-naturalists will agree that supernaturalistic reductions of normativity are in no better position than paradigmatically naturalistic reductions.) Rather, the view is that normative properties are *sui generis*: fundamental and irreducible.[4]

For this reason, the view might be better called metaethical "primitivism" or "purism". The central claim is that even after listing every descriptive property in the world—every property whose essence could, in principle, be captured in non-normative terms, whether you want to call it 'natural' or not—you have yet to list the normative properties, which nonetheless are also "out there" to be listed. That's what is really meant by calling normative properties 'non-natural': not that they have a descriptively "other-worldly" essence, but that they have no essence capable of being captured or adequately characterized in non-normative terms at all. They are, in

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[4] Compare the anti-physicalist about phenomenal qualia. Their view is that phenomenal consciousness is irreducible, not that it is reducible to some independently specifiable non-physical stuff.

this sense, *purely* normative properties: properties that are normative, and nothing else.[5]

This characterization of non-natural normative properties may make their metaphysical nature all the more puzzling or mysterious-seeming, but that is not my concern here. What I'm concerned to establish is that, given this understanding of normative properties as *purely* normative, it's clear that "open question"-style worries simply cannot arise. While one can always question the normative significance of a property (directly) characterizable in non-normative terms, it makes no sense at all to question the normativity of a purely normative property, for their normative guise is the only (direct) guise they have. The only way to directly pick out the property in question is via the corresponding normative concept, and so we cannot even bring the property into our thoughts except by thinking of it *as* normative.[6] So the common practice of assigning letter names to non-natural properties is deeply misleading, insofar as it falsely presupposes that they admit of descriptive characterization. One cannot really speak of "non-natural property Q" as

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[5] Is this true of *thick* normative properties like *courage* and *generosity*, which include descriptive constraints? If they are decomposable into separate normative and descriptive parts, then it might be misleading to describe the whole thick property as 'purely normative'. But it remains the case that their essence cannot be captured or adequately characterized using *solely* non-normative terms. In any case, I'm happy to bracket thick concepts and their corresponding properties here, as my primary concern is for such paradigmatically thin normative properties as *goodness*.

[6] One may, of course, *indirectly* refer to normative properties using an opaque description such as, "the non-natural property that Moore talked about a lot". This is *indirect* because we refer to the normative property only by way of some *other* property—the property of *being the non-normative property that Moore talked about a lot*—which is the one we actually have a cognitive grasp of when having this thought. It is *opaque* because there's no essential connection between the two properties: Moore might have talked a lot about something else, after all. So it's not very interesting that an opaque, indirect way of picking out the property doesn't make its normative significance clear. The relevant question, for getting the objection off the ground, is whether there's any direct and transparent way of grasping the normative property that leaves its normative significance open to question.

if there were a way to directly refer to the property of *goodness* without its normative guise. The only way to ask the question is to invoke the normative concept itself: "I see that this has the non-natural property of *being good*, but is it good?" But thus stated, the question trivially has an affirmative answer (cf. Parfit 2011, 416–17).[7]

2   The Negative Argument: "Ethical Idlers"

Even if purely normative properties thus cannot be dismissed as normatively irrelevant, perhaps they are *unnecessary*. So proposes Jackson (1998, 127):

> [I]t 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 ethical 'idlers'.[8]

Again, this objection assumes that in order to be normatively significant, purely normative properties must *themselves* feature in (correct) justifica-

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[7] Further, insofar as we are talking about *goodness* in the sense of *desirability*, or what we have impartial reason to want and to pursue, there is likewise a straightforward link between *judging something to have this property* and *rationally committing ourselves to being motivated accordingly*, as demanded by Darwall et al. (1992, 118). That is, if you are not motivated at all by what you judge to be good, then you are failing to respond to (apparent) reasons (by your own lights). It should not be surprising that this is a familiar experience given that we are, of course, far from perfectly rational agents. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this point.

[8] Gibbard (2003, 16) similarly writes, "I settle on helping, and I do so because of the natural features of the situation—because of what helping will do for the people I help, and despite the burdens. 'I see what to do,' I might say. Do I need to 'see' too, as a separate intuition, which act is exnat [has a non-natural property]?"

tions. Otherwise, Jackson claims, they are "ethical idlers". But this is too quick. It neglects the possibility that their role may instead be to serve as truthmakers for (or as reflections of)[9] the normative truths about which natural properties are normatively significant in which ways. One such normative truth is that the natural property of *killing many and saving none* is to be avoided—in contrast, say, to the natural property of *saving many and harming none*.

Those two natural properties differ drastically in normative valence. This normative difference is reflected, metaphysically, in their having different purely normative properties: One is to be avoided, the other is to be pursued. Insofar as we consider these normative properties to be robustly objective properties, and irreducible to any natural properties, we thus find an important theoretical role for non-natural, purely normative properties. Nevertheless, it is not these normative properties themselves that are the things to be avoided or pursued. Rather, the purely normative properties serve to (metaphysically) mark[10] which natural properties are normatively significant in these ways.

Following Parfit (2011, 279), the point can be explained as follows: Natural properties alone may feature in some of what may be called the normatively *important* facts—that acting so will kill many and save none, say. *That* natural (but normatively important) fact is the one that agents should

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[9] Here I mean to remain neutral on whether the normative properties or the normative truths are "prior", i.e., which explains the other. Whether the properties are truth-making or truth-reflecting, their role is in either case intimately connected with the normative truths *that* such-and-such natural properties are significant in such-and-such ways.

[10] I use "metaphysically mark" here as an abbreviated way of expressing the aforementioned disjunction of truth-making or truth-reflecting. No epistemic connotations are intended.

respond to, though it does not itself advert to purely normative properties. Nonetheless, there is a further, *normative* fact, namely the fact *that the aforementioned natural fact is a normatively important one* (or, more specifically, that it provides a decisive reason against so acting). It is in order to accommodate normative facts like this, non-naturalists think, that we need to posit purely normative properties. The normative fact is distinct—and, indeed, fundamentally different in kind—from the merely natural fact to which it attributes normative importance. We need purely normative properties, according to the non-naturalist, to vindicate this *attribution of importance.* This *importance* that we attribute to some natural properties (but not others) is a purely normative property. So that's the theoretical role that the non-naturalist's posited purely normative properties play: they are *what we attribute* when we attribute importance to some natural properties but not others. Thus they are not theoretically "idle".

Even so, we can all agree with Jackson that it is the natural properties to which this (direct practical) importance should typically be attributed.[11] The natural facts and properties *do* the justifying.[12] But this attribution of justificatory power is, for the non-naturalist, the attribution of a distinct, purely normative property.

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[11] Though FitzPatrick (2011, 19) suggests that normative concepts and properties nonetheless play "an *organizing and guiding role* in thinking about natural properties in the way we ought to think about them in deliberation, namely, in so far as they are significant in helping to make an action good or rational to perform" (original emphasis). This may well be right, but my argument here suggests that non-naturalists *needn't* think even this; whether or not they have a role to play in practical deliberation, the theoretical role of the properties is sufficient grounds for positing them. See also my discussion of intelligible interest in normativity as such, in §1.1.

[12] Thus Scanlon (2014, 51) writes of his reason relation R: "To claim that R(p, x, c, a) holds is precisely to claim that (for x in c) p justifies doing a; it is not to claim that p has some further property which does the justifying."

So much for the simple "ethical idlers" objection. But related explanatory challenges remain. As Bedke (2014, 197) presses the objection:

> [W]hat could you discover that would convince you that an action that causes intense pain for fun, and toward which you have strong negative conative attitudes, is *actually right*? It is hard to think that some non-natural property *could* have this effect. [...] Is it because they are causing it pain that the action normatively matters in the way it does, or because there is some non-natural property or relation at play? Surely the former.

A question like "Why is it wrong to cause gratuitous pain?" can be read in two ways. The most natural reading situates it as a question in first-order normative ethics. This is to ask: What are the wrong-making features of such actions? Which of the (natural) properties in this situation are the normatively significant ones—the ones that do the justifying (or that explain why a certain action is unjustified)? Here the non-naturalist can happily agree with Bedke that it's the *causing of pain* that's of central normative significance here, and that explains why "the action normatively matters in the way it does".

Non-naturalism is not a first-order normative theory, after all. It instead addresses the (more obscure) metaethical question: What does the wrongness of the action (or the badness of the pain) *consist* in? Simple answer: The wrongness of the act consists in the act's possessing the property of being wrong! Not a particularly informative answer, perhaps, but it's a central thesis of non-naturalism that normative properties are *sui generis*. This view

eschews the kinds of ambitious metaethical explanations offered by constructivists and others.[13] There is, on this view, no deeper explanation of *what wrongness is* to be offered.[14] The purely normative properties are bedrock, and the basic normative truths are *brutely* true. One may or may not like this aspect of the view, but the crucial point for now is just to note that it's compatible with any first-order normative explanations (of which acts normatively matter and why). The *constitutive* sense in which possessing the purely normative property of wrongness is what "makes" wrong acts wrong (in the sense that this is *what it is* for an act to be wrong) is distinct from, and not in competition with, the *normative* sense in which certain natural properties are "wrong-making" features.

One may have a residual suspicion that non-naturalism is susceptible to a kind of Euthyphro problem: Is pain bad *only because* it has a certain non-natural property, and if so, isn't that objectionably arbitrary? But again, once we recall the lessons of §1.2—that what the non-naturalist posits are *purely* normative properties, not characterizable in any other terms—this suspicion must fall flat. Consider: Is pain bad "only because" it has the (purely normative) property of badness? The answer may technically be

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[13] Cf. Prichard (1912)'s famous complaint that the question "Why be moral?" (or "Why do as I ought?") is ill-posed such that any attempt at a non-trivial answer—by suggesting that it's really in one's self-interest to act morally, say—amounts to changing the subject rather than establishing that morality itself has normative authority. Such a dismissal makes perfect sense for a non-naturalist like Prichard. If the only non-trivial explanations of moral facts are first-order normative explanations, seeking further explanation of the basic moral principles is a fool's task. But the task may be more feasible given other metaethical views, where non-trivial metaethical explanations may be offered.

[14] I pretend, for simplicity of presentation, that *wrongness* is normatively basic. It may instead be analysable in terms of some more basic normative notion such as *reasons* or *fittingness*, but the relevant point would then be that *those* normative claims are not susceptible to further explanation.

"yes"—trivially, X is F only if X has the property of F-ness—but then one feels that the stress on "*only* because" here is misleading. Furthermore, it's not as though non-naturalists treat badness as a merely contingent feature of pain, that could instead be transferred to some actually innocuous object. The basic goods and bads possess their respective normative valences *of necessity*.[15]

There remains the question of whether non-naturalists' moral beliefs should at least be sensitive to evidence about the distribution of non-natural properties.[16] Suppose a trustworthy oracle tells us that pain has no non-natural properties after all. One can't very well believe this testimony whilst also believing that non-naturalism is true and that pain is bad. So are we committed, in such a case, to concluding that pain isn't bad after all?[17] Only

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[15] Some may question non-naturalism's ability to adequately account for this supervenience of the normative on the non-normative. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to consider such objections here, but something along the lines of Fitzpatrick (2008)'s 'dual aspect view' strikes me as a promising avenue for the non-naturalist.

[16] An alternative objection involving considerations of "sensitivity", due to an anonymous referee, suggests that in order to truly qualify as *responding to reasons*, an agent must exhibit some sort of sensitivity to whether the natural features they're tracking *are* reasons. One way to do this would presumably be to have background beliefs involving the concept of a reason, and perhaps a second-order desire to have motivations that are well supported by reasons. That strikes me as an intelligible interest in (what happen to be) non-naturalistic matters of the sort discussed towards the end of §1.1. But it would seem over-intellectualizing to think this necessary: Children obviously respond to reasons before they acquire the concept of a reason, after all. I don't have a firm view about what exactly is involved in a young child's responding to reasons. Perhaps it has something to do with their viewing the relevant natural features in a valenced light (e.g., as attractive or repulsive), together with their being at least roughly reliable at tracking, behaviourally, when the feature in question constitutes a reason. In any case, it doesn't seem that the answer to this question depends on the metaphysical nature of reasons.

[17] Derek Shiller suggests to me a more moderate version of this challenge: Suppose the oracle tells you that (i) there is no [non-natural] property distributed exactly as you believe wrongness to be distributed, but (ii) there is a [non-natural] property that very closely matches what you take to be the extension of 'wrong'—but it yields a different verdict from what you antecedently accept about the Trolley case, say. Should you, on this basis, revise your moral judgment of the Trolley case? Here I'm inclined to think: maybe so! Presumably, you should revise your credences just to the extent that you think the property

if we are committed to retaining our belief in non-naturalism come what may. But we need not be so committed. It's perfectly consistent to assign high credence to non-naturalism (and to pain's possessing non-natural properties) whilst assigning very low credence to non-naturalism *conditional on* pain's lacking non-natural properties. That's just to say that coming to believe certain claims about the distribution of non-natural properties should perhaps lead one to rethink their commitment to non-naturalism. That's fine. In a similar way, learning that there are no non-physical properties would presumably lead mind-body dualists to rethink their dualism (rather than conclude that we're not really conscious after all). In neither case does the mere possibility of theory revision give us reason to actually revise or abandon our theories.

Conclusion

We've seen that two objections to the normativity of non-natural properties rest on a shared confusion. Both objections illicitly assume that the theoretical role of non-natural normative properties is to *be* the reasons to which we should respond. Given this assumption, non-naturalism looks to be in trouble: non-natural properties seem like a strange thing to care about, whereas the natural properties seem entirely sufficient to motivate a good-willed agent. In this paper, I've granted these claims about proper motiva-

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to which the Oracle alludes really is *wrongness*. And it wouldn't seem crazy to find that reasonably plausible in this case. But note that *properties* (non-natural or otherwise) aren't really doing much work here—presumably the Oracle case could be re-run in terms of "the extension of a concept you possess", for example. So the case strikes me as most fundamentally raising questions about ambiguously indirect testimony—testimony that may or may not be *moral* testimony.

tion, and argued that non-naturalists are not committed to any problematic claims to the contrary. For the real role of non-natural properties, on the best form of metaethical non-naturalism, is simply to mark[18] *which* (typically natural) properties are normatively significant (and in which ways). So it's true that non-natural properties are not the ones we, as moral agents, should (typically) directly care about. But that isn't a problem for non-naturalism.

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[18] Again, see footnote 10 for a clarification of my stipulated use of this term.

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