What is Non-Naturalism?

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Metaethicists often specify non-naturalism in different ways: some take it to be about identity, while others take it to be about grounding. But few directly address the taxonomical question of what the best way to understand non-naturalism is. That's the task of this paper. This isn't a merely terminological question about how to use the term "non-naturalism", but a substantive philosophical one about what metaphysical ideology we need to capture the pre-theoretical concerns of non-naturalists. I argue that, contrary to popular opinion, non-naturalism is best characterized not in terms of identity or grounding, but in terms of essence. First, I lay out some desiderata for a good characterization of non-naturalism: it should (i) speak to and elucidate the non-naturalist's core pre-theoretical commitments, (ii) render non-naturalism a substantive, local claim about normativity, and (iii) provide the most general characterization of the view possible (iv) in a way that best fits the spirit of paradigm non-naturalist views. I then argue that identity characterizations fail to satisfy the former two desiderata, while grounding characterizations at best don't satisfy the latter two. So, I propose a new essence characterization of non-naturalism and argue that it does a better job of satisfying all four desiderata. Moreover, I argue that this essence characterization has important implications for both metaethical and metaphysical theorizing.

THE literature on non-naturalism is plagued by a lack of consensus about what it is for normative properties to be non-natural in the first place. Some take non-naturalism to be the claim that some normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties (e.g., Jackson 1998; Shafer-Landau 2003; and Parfit 2011), while others suggest it's the claim that some normative facts are not fully grounded in non-normative facts (e.g., Schroeder 2007; Chang 2013; Dunaway 2015; Scanlon 2014). But very few parties to the naturalism-non-naturalism debate address the taxonomical question of which is the best way to characterize the view. Most avoid this question altogether by simply stipulating what they

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take non-naturalism to be, and then arguing for or against that claim. While this is dialectically convenient, it has created a confusing literature wherein it's unclear to what extent there's genuine disagreement.

For example, consider Shafer-Landau's (2003) defense of non-naturalism. He argues that non-naturalists can explain why the normative supervenes on the non-normative by claiming that, while normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties, they are nonetheless fully constituted by descriptive properties (just as a statue is not identical to, but fully constituted by, a lump of clay). But on this view, the normative facts are presumably fully grounded in the non-normative, descriptive facts (just as facts about the statue are fully grounded in facts about the lump of clay). So, while Shafer-Landau's view is non-naturalist by his own lights, he doesn't actually disagree with naturalists who think of naturalism in terms of grounding.

To avoid talking past one another, then, we need to quit indulging in stipulative definitions and meet the taxonomical question head on: what is the best way to characterize non-naturalism? That's the task of this paper. The question at hand is not about how to use the term "non-naturalism" nor is it simply about how to interpret the views of non-naturalists in the literature. It's a substantive philosophical question about what metaphysical ideology is best suited for carving up the conceptual landscape into views that capture the pre-theoretical concerns of non-naturalists.

The answer to this question has significant upshots for both metaethical and metaphysical inquiry. First, how we carve up the conceptual landscape is important for understanding what resources are available to non-naturalists in defending their view (e.g., how a non-naturalist can explain supervenience). And what metaphysical ideology is best suited to capture the dispute between non-naturalists and their opponents has implications for what ideology we should adopt for metaphysical theorizing, more generally. For example, grounding enthusiasts like Fine (2012), Rosen (2010), and Schaffer (2009) claim that we should adopt the ideology of grounding precisely because it's ripe for characterizing the naturalism-non-naturalism debate (and the physicalism-non-physicalism debate in the philosophy of mind).

But I argue here that, contrary to popular opinion, non-naturalism is best characterized not in terms of grounding or identity but in terms of essence. First, I lay out some desiderata for a good characterization of non-naturalism in §1. Then, in §2, I argue that identity-characterizations either render non-naturalism trivial or fail to elucidate the non-naturalist's view. In §3 I argue that grounding-characterizations either fail to render non-naturalism a substantive, local claim about normativity or they don't fit well with some paradigm non-naturalist views and fail to include some conceptually possible views that seem to capture the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments. So, in §4, I propose a new characterization of non-naturalism in terms of essence and argue that this

characterization does a better job of meeting these desiderata. Finally, in §5 I discuss the important upshots of this essence-characterization for metaethical and metaphysical theorizing.

1. The Desiderata

The first desideratum for a good characterization of non-naturalism is that it be

> ILLUMINATING: It speaks to and elucidates the pre-theoretical claims that non-naturalists endorse and take to be at stake in the debate with their opponents.

What are these pre-theoretical claims? The first claim is that normative properties and facts are entirely of their own kind (*sui generis*). Shafer-Landau (2003: 55) says that his view, following Moore, is that "moral facts are different in kind from any other." And Parfit (2011: vol. 2, pt. 6) and Scanlon (2014: ch. 2) claim that normative truths are "irreducibly normative". So, the issue that concerns non-naturalists is not just whether normative properties and facts are *natural*—or as Enoch (2011: 134) says, whether they're the same "kind of stuff our best science says (or will shortly say) that there is." The issue is whether normative properties and facts are different in kind from *any* other kinds of stuff there might be. Non-naturalists are thus equally at odds with *supernaturalists* like Divine Command Theorists, who claim that normative properties are supernatural properties like *being commanded by God* (McPherson 2012: 210).

The non-naturalist's claim that normative properties are *sui generis* is mysterious, though, because it's not clear what kind-talk for properties amounts to. One might think that two properties are entirely different in kind if and only if they don't share any second-order properties. But any two properties share some arbitrary property: *being good* and *being an electron* share the property of *being a property* and *being normative or physical* (Leary 2017: 79, fn. 12). Instead, one might appeal to the notion of *elite* properties to distinguish between metaphysically significant and arbitrary properties. According to Lewis (1983), some properties are more elite than others in the sense that they make for more objective similarity and are more explanatory, and so, the concepts and terms that refer to more elite properties better carve reality at its joints.[1] So, one might take the claim that normative properties are entirely different in kind to amount to the claim that natural properties and supernatural properties (and whatever other

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1. Lewis calls such properties 'natural' properties, but I use the term 'elite' to avoid confusion in this context.

kinds of properties there might be) each have something in common that makes for a high degree of objective similarity, but which normative properties lack. But since natural properties are so diverse (e.g., *having negative charge*, *being in pain*, *being a toaster*, *being a city*, etc.), the assumption that they all have something in common that makes for a high degree of objective similarity seems highly implausible. So, what makes normative properties of the same kind or different in kind from any other sets of properties can't be a matter of sharing or lacking objective similarities with those properties. An ILLUMINATING characterization of non-naturalism should thus elucidate the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical claim that normative properties are of their own kind by explaining what such kind-talk amounts to in precise metaphysical terms.

A related pre-theoretical claim that non-naturalists are committed to, which aligns them with supernaturalists, is that countenancing normative properties is incompatible with an entirely scientific view of reality. Enoch (2011: 135) and Scanlon (2014: 19) point out that non-naturalism is logically consistent with our best scientific theories, since these theories do not explicitly claim that there are no non-natural normative properties or contain an "and that's all there is" clause. But so long as non-naturalists take normative properties to be different in kind from all the "stuff of science", they are committed to claiming that there is some sense in which science cannot provide a complete account of reality.[2] An ILLUMINATING characterization of non-naturalism should thus also clarify in what sense the sciences fail to provide a full account of reality.[3]

Moreover, a good characterization of non-naturalism should also be

SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL: It renders non-naturalism a non-trivial, local claim about normativity.

FITTING: As much as possible, it classifies paradigm non-naturalists as genuinely non-naturalist in a way that best captures the spirit of their views.

GENERAL: As much as possible, it provides a characterization of non-naturalism that encompasses the widest spectrum of views that speak to the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical claims.

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2. Even Parfit's (2011) quietist non-naturalist view seems committed to this claim, so long as we take reality to encompass everything that exists in what Parfit calls the "wide sense" of 'exists'.

3. I originally specify the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments in this way in Leary (2017). Sometimes it's assumed that non-naturalism requires denying that normative properties are causally efficacious and knowable *a posteriori*. But McPherson (2012) points out that non-naturalists need not deny this, since those who believe in non-natural entities like God and spirits often take those entities to have causal powers (e.g., causing plagues and floods) and to be knowable *a posteriori* (e.g., through divine revelation and testimony).

I'll explain each of these in turn.

SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL is straightforward. Non-naturalism is not trivially true or trivially false, and it's a view about normative properties and facts in particular. So, a good characterization of non-naturalism cannot be a trivial claim nor one that can be easily settled by general metaphysical considerations that have nothing to do with normative properties in particular.

FITTING and GENERAL require more explanation. Since non-naturalism is often stipulatively defined in the literature, a good characterization of non-naturalism need not classify all self-proclaimed non-naturalists as genuinely non-naturalist. Sometimes philosophical progress will result in a recategorization of people's views. But a good characterization of non-naturalism should at least aim to classify paradigm non-naturalists like G. E. Moore as genuinely non-naturalist. And it should also aim to do so in a way that best captures the spirit of the view. Consider an analogy: suppose that all the vegans in my class think wearing leather is disgusting, but everyone else in my class likes to wear leather. I could correctly taxonomize my vegan and non-vegan students as those who don't like to wear leather and those who do. But this taxonomy doesn't capture the spirit of my vegans' view: they don't have a clothing preference, but instead an underlying moral view that it's wrong to consume animal products. So, a better taxonomy is along these lines. For any taxonomy, then, we should aim to classify paradigm parties to the relevant debate in a way that best captures the spirit of those parties' views. That's FITTING.

But when we're trying to specify what a philosophical view P amounts to, we're not just interested in the contingent, historical question of what paradigm defenders of P have in common. We're also interested in a further conceptual question: what is it that all possible views that capture the spirit of P have in common? This is what makes taxonomical questions substantive and interesting. They're not just about categorizing existing literature, but they're about carving up the conceptual space of views into certain families that share the same concerns, including those spaces that are not occupied by anyone thus far (perhaps even for good reason). So, a good characterization of non-naturalism should aim to not only correctly classify paradigm non-naturalists in the literature, but also to offer the broadest characterization that captures all possible views that speak to the pre-theoretical concerns of non-naturalists. That's GENERAL.

But both FITTING and GENERAL involve "as much as possible" clauses, which serve two important functions. First, it makes these two desiderata inherently comparative: whether a characterization is FITTING or GENERAL depends on whether there are alternative characterizations that do a better job of classifying paradigm non-naturalists or providing a more general characterization of the view that captures their pre-theoretical concerns. Second, these "as much as possible" clauses signal that each desideratum needs to be weighed against the

other desiderata. It may be that the only characterization of non-naturalism that is ILLUMINATING and SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL provides a slightly less general characterization of the view than alternative characterizations or requires recategorizing some paradigm non-naturalists from the literature. If so, that would still be the best characterization of the view. So, the idea here is that the best characterization of non-naturalism is the one that strikes the best balance amongst all four of these desiderata.

Of course, it could turn out that there is no single best characterization of the view: there could be multiple characterizations that each do an equally good job of meeting the desiderata and different characterizations might better fit different paradigm non-naturalists. My methodology here does not rule out this possibility. But I will ultimately argue that there is one characterization that is best: I argue that an essence-characterization does a better job of meeting these desiderata than identity or grounding characterizations.

But before I get there, one more disclaimer: notice that these desiderata ignore how well the resulting taxonomy fits with paradigm naturalists. This is because, since non-naturalism has been poorly defined since it was first presented by Moore, I suspect the naturalist reaction to Moore may have been motivated by very different pre-theoretical concerns. So, if we try to specify the debate in a way that captures the pre-theoretical concerns of naturalists, we may end up with a different taxonomy. If so, that would show that naturalists and non-naturalists have been talking past one another all along. I remain neutral about this here and am simply making the first step in diagnosing the debate by focusing on what non-naturalism amounts to.

2. Identity Characterizations

One might think that non-naturalism is just the following claim:

> *Non-Identity* Normative properties and facts are not identical to any other kinds of properties and facts.

But the problem is that there's no way of specifying the "other kinds of properties and facts" in such a way that makes Non-Identity SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL and ILLUMINATING.

If we specify "other kinds of properties and facts" as *non-normative* ones, where these are properties and facts that are metaphysically distinct from normative properties and facts, Non-Identity is trivially true. A property cannot be both metaphysically normative and non-normative. This is why Jackson (1998) and Shafer-Landau (2003) instead specify the "other kinds of properties and

facts" as *descriptive* ones, where this is metalinguistic rather than metaphysical. That is, descriptive properties and facts are just any properties and facts that are referred to by descriptive, non-normative terms and normative properties and facts are those referred to by normative terms. Non-Identity, thus understood, states that normative predicates don't refer to the same properties as descriptive predicates.

But this metalinguistic characterization renders Non-Identity trivially false. As Jackson (1998: 119, fn. 10) himself notes, if I'm thinking about rightness, 'the property that I'm thinking of right now' is a descriptive predicate that may refer to the same property that 'right' refers to. In order to avoid Non-Identity being trivially false, then, Jackson seems to restrict the set of descriptive predicates relevant to Non-Identity to only those that don't have that sort of form ('the property such that . . . '). But Dunaway (2015: 632) points out that the descriptive predicate 'is actually being thought about by me' lacks this form but may still refer to the same property as 'right'. So, Dunaway suggests that we restrict the set of descriptive predicates relevant to Non-Identity to those that do not merely *accidentally* refer to some property because they involve indexicals like "I", "actually", and "now".

But even with these restrictions, Non-Identity still seems false because there are other descriptive predicates that don't involve indexicals or have the relevant form but nonetheless seem to refer to the same properties as normative terms. For example, 'plays a central role in deliberation about what to do, praising and blaming practices, and reactive attitudes' seems like a descriptive predicate that refers to normative properties. And we can even imagine a simple descriptive predicate that refers to a particular normative property. Consider Eklund's (2017: 75) hypothetical aliens who, when learning English, have an "unspecific or mistaken idea of what ['right'] might stand for" and introduce the term 'thgir' into their language to refer to what we refer to with our term 'right'; but 'thgir' doesn't play the sort of conceptual role for them that is characteristic of our term 'right' ('thgir' doesn't have a strong connection to their deliberation, motivation, and reactive attitudes). Because of its different conceptual role, 'thgir' seems like a descriptive predicate rather than a normative one, but it plausibly refers to the same property as 'right'. So, just by reflecting on how we can use language, we see that it's false that normative predicates don't refer to the same properties that descriptive predicates refer to. Non-Identity, understood in this metalinguistic way, is thus trivially false.

Moreover, it seems misguided to construe non-naturalism metalinguistically in the first place. What Eklund's 'thgir' example shows is that normative and descriptive terms have different conceptual roles but may nonetheless refer to the same property. Many naturalists accept this and claim that normative terms may refer to natural properties, even if normative terms don't

have the very same meaning as natural terms. But even non-naturalists should be able to accept that normative terms and descriptive terms can co-refer—to *non-natural* normative properties. This is because the non-naturalist's central pre-theoretical concerns are about metaphysics and not about language: whether normative properties and facts are *sui generis* and something beyond the "stuff of science". Whether we can refer to that same *sui generis* stuff with descriptive language seems beside the point. Non-Identity, understood metalinguistically, is thus not only false but doesn't capture the pre-theoretical concerns of non-naturalists.[4]

This suggests that we need a metaphysical specification of the "other kinds of properties and facts" in Non-Identity. But how do we avoid making it trivially true? We could simply list all the other kinds of properties and facts there are and specify non-naturalism as the claim that normative properties are not identical to anything on the list:

> *Non-Identity*$_{List}$ Normative properties and facts are not identical to natural, supernatural, or . . . properties and facts.

But the problem with Non-Identity$_{List}$ is that it presupposes, rather than elucidates, the notion of properties being of the same kind. For example, it presupposes that certain properties are *natural*—that is, of the same kind as paradigmatic scientific properties—and states that normative properties are not identical to any of those properties. But Non-Identity$_{List}$ does not tell us what makes *having negative charge*, *being in pain*, *being a toaster*, and *being a city* natural properties.

So, consider a view according to which every normative property is identical to some long disjunction of paradigmatic scientific properties (Jackson 1998). Is this a view according to which Non-Identity$_{List}$ is true or false? To answer this, we need to know whether a long disjunction of scientific properties is a natural property. But Non-Identity$_{List}$ doesn't give us an answer. Of course, it may seem obvious that a disjunctive property is of the same kind as its disjuncts. But this simply presupposes the pre-theoretical notion that we are trying to elucidate and Non-Identity$_{List}$ doesn't help. So, for Non-Identity$_{List}$ to be ILLUMINATING, we need a supplemental account of what it is for properties to be of the same kind.

One candidate account is in terms of *grounding*: perhaps what makes *having negative charge*, *being in pain*, *being a toaster*, and *being a city* natural properties is

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that all facts involving these properties are ultimately fully grounded in paradig-matic scientific facts. And since all facts involving disjunctions of those natural properties are also ultimately fully grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts, those disjunctive properties are natural too. This is a currently mainstream pro-posal to which we'll now turn.

3. Grounding Characterizations

While the grounding terminology is relatively new, it's meant to capture an old, familiar idea. We often say that certain facts obtain *in virtue of* other facts, where this "in virtue of" talk is not about causation, logical entailment, or semantics. For example, I might say that I'm identical to the five-year-old in that photograph in virtue of the fact that we're psychologically continuous, or that Michelangelo's David has a six-pack in virtue of the fact that the hunk of marble is S-shaped. I'm not saying that the fact that I'm psychologically continuous with the pho-tographed five-year-old caused us to be identical or that it logically entails or literally means that we are. Nor am I saying that the hunk of marble's shape caused David to have a six-pack, or that it logically entails or literally means as much. In each case, I'm saying that some fact metaphysically determines and explains another fact in a non-causal sort of way. Grounding is that non-causal metaphysical determination.

There are many controversial debates about grounding, but we can mostly ignore them here.[5] I assume that grounding is a relation that holds between facts, but everything I say here could be translated to accommodate other views. I also assume that grounding is typically transitive: if x grounds y, and y grounds z, then x grounds z (perhaps with a few exceptions). And I assume there's *full* and *partial* grounding: the fact that there's stuff in my glass is fully grounded in the fact that there's beer in it, whereas the fact that the beer is cold and hoppy is par-tially grounded in the fact that it's cold and partially grounded in the fact that it's hoppy. These minimal assumptions suffice for my purposes.

As suggested earlier, grounding seems apt to elucidate kind-talk for prop-erties. We can think of properties being of the same kind insofar as their instan-tiations are all fully grounded in the same set of facts: if all facts involving F are fully grounded in facts that involve properties G, H, and I, then F is of the same kind as G, H, and I. So, we can define *natural* properties as follows:

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5. Fine (2012) takes grounding to be a sentential operator, whereas Rosen (2010) takes it to be a relation between facts, and Schaffer (2009) takes grounding to be a relation between entities of any ontological category. Most take grounding to be transitive, asymmetric, irreflexive, and to involve metaphysical necessitation, but the literature abounds with potential counterexamples (e.g., Rodriguez-Pereyra 2015; Skiles 2015).

For any F:

(i) If F is a paradigmatic scientific property, F is natural.
(ii) If all the F-facts are fully grounded in facts involving only paradigmatic scientific properties, then F is natural.

The naturalist's claim that all normative properties are natural is thus the claim that all normative facts are either identical to or fully grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts. The supernaturalist denies this, insisting that normative facts are either identical to or at least partially grounded in facts involving supernatural entitles like God.

What unites the naturalist and the supernaturalist, though, is that they both endorse

> *Full Ground* All normative facts are *fundamentally non-normative*: they are either identical to or fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts.

Whereas the non-naturalist endorses

> *Anti-Full-Ground* Some normative facts are not *fundamentally non-normative*: they are neither identical to nor fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts.

On this grounding-characterization, what it is for normative properties to be *sui generis* is for their instantiations to not be fully metaphysically explained by the instantiations of paradigm non-normative properties[6]. So, countenancing normative properties is incompatible with a purely scientific view of reality that says that all facts are fully metaphysically explained by scientific facts. Anti-Full-Ground thereby speaks to and elucidates the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments—it's ILLUMINATING.

I argue in §3.1, however, that Anti-Full-Ground is not SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL.

3.1. *Against Full Ground*

The argument I present here is the normative analogue of an argument that Dasgupta (2014) attributes to Sider (2011) against using grounding to characterize

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6. Schroeder (2007), Chang (2013), Dunaway (2015), and Scanlon (2014) are at least suggestive of this way of thinking about non-naturalism.

physicalism. First, suppose that the fact that an action A is right is fully grounded in the fact that A maximizes happiness. Now, consider that very grounding-fact:

> GROUND The fact that A maximizes happiness grounds that A is right.

GROUND itself is a normative fact because it involves the normative property *rightness*. So, Full Ground is true only if GROUND is fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts.

But what grounds GROUND is plausibly some further fact that involves *rightness*. On Fine (2012) and Rosen's (2010; 2020) *essentialist view*, what grounds grounding-facts are facts about the essence of the grounded property. So, GROUND is grounded in

> ESSENCE It's essential of *rightness* that if A maximizes happiness, A is right.

And on Wilsch's (2015) *nomological view*, what grounds grounding-facts are general metaphysical laws concerning "construction relations" like realization, constitution, set-formation, and so on. So, GROUND is grounded in

> LAW It's a metaphysical law that *maximizing happiness* realizes *rightness*, and that, if Fa and F realizes G, then Ga.

Since both ESSENCE and LAW involve *rightness*, they are normative facts. So, they must themselves be fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts for Full Ground to be true.

The only view in the grounding literature according to which GROUND is not grounded in a further normative fact is Bennett (2011) and DeRosset's (2013) "boot-strapping" view. On their view, if Fa grounds Ga, the fact that Fa grounds Ga is itself grounded in Fa. So, GROUND is grounded in

> MAX A maximizes happiness.

But, as Dasgupta (2014: 572) argues, MAX seems like a worse explanation of GROUND than ESSENCE or LAW. The mere fact that A maximizes happiness does not explain why A's maximizing happiness metaphysically determines that A is right. On the other hand, if it's part of the very nature of *rightness* that right acts maximize happiness or it's a law of metaphysics that *maximizing happiness* realizes *rightness*, this explains why such a metaphysical connection holds. This is just a general point about second-order explanations: a good explanation for why X explains Y must reference both X and Y. So, since grounding involves

metaphysical explanation, a good account of what grounds GROUND must be some fact that involves both *maximizing happiness* and *rightness*. Consequently, whatever fact grounds GROUND will be a further normative fact.

And that further normative fact must itself be fully grounded in non-normative facts for Full Ground to be true. But, again, this can't be. Suppose ESSENCE grounds GROUND. Either ESSENCE is just a brute fact about *rightness* and thus has no ground at all, or ESSENCE is itself grounded in some further fact that involves *rightness*, since no fact that doesn't involve *rightness* could explain why *rightness* has the nature that it does. So, if ESSENCE has any ground at all, it must be grounded in a further normative fact. Similarly, if LAW grounds GROUND, then either LAW is just a brute metaphysical law or LAW is grounded in some further fact involving *rightness*, since no fact that doesn't involve *rightness* could explain why maximizing happiness realizes rightness. Either way, metaphysical explanation must bottom out in some brute normative fact involving rightness: Anti-Full-Ground must be true.

But the above argument has nothing to do with normative properties in particular. The exact same argument could be given to show that the biological facts or the mental facts are not fully grounded in the fundamental physical facts. So, the above argument doesn't show that non-naturalism is true. It shows that Anti-Full-Ground is not SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL, and thus isn't a good characterization of non-naturalism.[7]

3.2. *Rosen's Restricted Grounding-Characterization*

There are two natural responses to the above argument. First, one might claim that a fact's involving a normative property like *rightness* is not sufficient to make it a normative fact. So, although GROUND, ESSENCE, and LAW involve the property *rightness*, they are not normative in the same way that first-order normative facts are normative. Second, even if GROUND, ESSENCE, and LAW are normative facts, one might insist that non-naturalists and their opponents are simply not concerned with them. The sorts of normative facts that naturalists and non-naturalists are preoccupied with are facts like the fact that my migraine is bad or that my donating to Oxfam is right—normative facts of the form *Fa*. They do not debate whether facts about what explains that *a* is bad are themselves natural or non-natural.

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7. Likewise, Sider's (2011) argument is not an argument against physicalism, but an argument that physicalism should not be understood in terms of grounding. Väyrynen (2013) offers a stronger argument that *no* normative fact is fully grounded in non-normative facts, but I think the weaker argument outlined here is less controversial.

Both of these responses suggest that we should understand the non-naturalist's opponents as endorsing a more restricted grounding claim:

> *Full Ground$_{Fa}$* For all normative properties F and for all entities a: if Fa, then Fa is identical to or fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts.

And we should understand non-naturalism as

> *Anti-Full-Ground $_{Fa}$* For some normative facts Fa, Fa is neither identical to nor fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts.

This is Rosen's (2017: 157) characterization of the debate. Since Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ doesn't concern facts like GROUND, ESSENCE, and LAW, it's not settled by general metaphysical considerations and can only be established by thinking about what grounds normative facts in particular—it's SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL.[8]

But is Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ FITTING and GENERAL? Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ does fit nicely with contemporary non-naturalists like Enoch (2011) and Scanlon (2014) who claim that particular normative facts (e.g., the fact that my migraine is bad) are partially grounded in particular natural facts (e.g., the fact that my migraine is painful) together with fundamental general normative principles (e.g., that pain is bad)—what Rosen (2017: 163) calls *Bridge Law Non-naturalism*. And Bader (2017) and Fine (2002; 2012) claim that particular normative facts are not metaphysically grounded at all, but only *normatively grounded* in non-normative facts, where normative grounding is alleged to be a non-metaphysical, distinctly normative in-virtue-of relation.

But Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ does not fit so well with *the* paradigm non-naturalist: G. E. Moore. Moore's primary concern was whether *goodness* can be defined. To clarify the sort of definition he has in mind, Moore (1903/2004: 8–9, sec. 8, 10) uses the analogy of defining a horse:

> We may mean that a certain object, which we all of us know, is composed in a certain manner: that it has four legs, a head, a heart, a liver, etc., all of them arranged in definite relations to one another. It is in this sense that I deny good to be definable. I say that it is not composed of any

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8. One might wonder whether this debate concerns only particular normative facts of the form Fa (e.g., my donating to Oxfam is right) or also general facts of the form Fa (e.g., maximizing happiness is right). The answer turns on whether general normative facts are metaphysical grounding-facts (see Berker 2018b). If so, Full Ground$_{Fa}$ and Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ only concern particular normative facts, since grounding-facts are supposed to be irrelevant.

parts, which we can substitute for it in our minds when we are thinking of it. . . . "Good," then, if we mean by it that quality which we assert to belong to a thing, when we say that the thing is good, is incapable of any definition.

While Moore fails to distinguish concepts and properties, his analogy with defining an object in terms of its parts and his statement that he's concerned with the "quality which we assert to belong to a thing, when we say that the thing is good" suggests that he is concerned with whether the property *goodness* has a *real definition* (and not just whether the concept of good can be defined). That is, a real definition of x states the nature of x in the following form: "To be x is to be φ," where φ is a "complex condition not containing [x]" (Rosen 2017: 154). Moore thinks there is no such condition φ that defines what it is to be good.

Nowhere does Moore (1903/2004) seem concerned with what *explains* that something is good. And in Moore's (1942: 588) reply to his critics, he seems to even claim that the fact that something is good is always fully explained by some non-normative fact:

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

The sense in which Moore takes normative facts to follow from natural facts cannot be logical or semantic entailment, since Moore thought that it's always an open question whether something is good, given its non-normative features. And Moore presumably doesn't mean that a thing's natural properties cause it to be good. The most plausible interpretation, then, is that Moore takes a thing's natural features to ground its being good. And since he doesn't claim that its normative features follow from its natural features together with fundamental normative principles or any other facts, Moore's claim seems to be about full, rather than partial, grounding.[9]

Of course, one could interpret Moore's reply here in a way that makes his view compatible with Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$. Perhaps Moore was assuming that

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9. I offer this interpretation of Moore in Leary (2017).

fundamental normative principles play a partial grounding role, even though he doesn't explicitly say so. Or one might argue that Moore is making a claim about normative grounding, rather than metaphysical grounding. But while these alternative interpretations allow Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ to classify Moore as a non-naturalist, Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ still doesn't capture the real spirit of Moore's view. This is because, for Moore (1903/2004), what makes *goodness* of its own kind has to do with *what it is* to be good, rather than what metaphysically *explains* that something is good. So, even if we can interpret Moore's view in a way that is compatible with Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$, Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ just doesn't capture the way in which Moore thinks normative properties are *sui generis*.

Furthermore, regardless of what Moore's view is, it's reasonable to distinguish between *what some property is* and what it is *in virtue of which* something has that property. Even if the property *goodness* is primitive and indefinable, what it is *in virtue of which* something is good may be specifiable in non-normative terms. So, it's at least conceptually possible that basic normative properties like *goodness* have no real definition, even though all normative facts of the form Fa are fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts. And this view speaks to the pre-theoretical commitments of non-naturalism: if basic normative properties have no real definition, they are not "built up" out of any other properties, including scientific ones, and thereby seem *sui generis* and incompatible with the purely scientific view that all features of reality are ultimately "built up" out of "the stuff of science".[10] Regardless of how Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ fits with Moore's view, then, it may not provide the most general characterization of non-naturalism because it doesn't make room for this conceptually possible view that captures the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical claims.

This discussion, thus far, doesn't immediately show that Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ isn't FITTING or GENERAL or that it's not the best characterization of non-naturalism. It depends on whether there's an alternative, more general characterization of non-naturalism that provides a better fit with Moore's view (and other non-naturalists), while still fulfilling the other desiderata. I argue in §4 that an essence-characterization does precisely that. But before turning to that argument, I consider another restricted grounding-characterization inspired by Dasgupta (2014) and argue that it has the same costs as Rosen's.[11]

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10. Of course, one might reasonably ask what could possibly explain why the normative facts are fully grounded in non-normative facts, if basic normative properties like *goodness* have no real definition? This is the supervenience challenge to non-naturalism. But that's a worry about whether such a view is plausible, not about whether such a view is conceivable and genuinely non-naturalist. So long as the view is coherent and speaks to the non-naturalist's core pre-theoretical claims, our taxonomy should make room for it, regardless of its plausibility.

11. Dasgupta (2014) is primarily interested in giving a grounding-characterization of physicalism, but I carry over his view to the metaethical debate.

3.3. *Dasgupta's Restricted Grounding-Characterization*

Dasgupta argues that grounding-facts like GROUND (the fact that A's maximizing happiness grounds that A is right) must be grounded in *brute connective facts*: facts like ESSENCE or LAW that explain the connection between the grounded and grounding properties, but which are themselves ungrounded. According to Dasgupta, though, these brute connective facts are ungrounded not in the sense that they're fundamental, but in the sense that they're simply not the sorts of facts that can, in principle, have grounds. He makes an analogy with causation: the fact that $2 + 2 = 4$ has no cause, but not in the sense that the Big Bang is uncaused. The fact that $2 + 2 = 4$ is simply not the sort of thing that could, in principle, be caused. So, just as it's inapt to ask what caused $2 + 2$ to equal 4, the question of what metaphysically explains why a certain property has the essence that it does or why some metaphysical law holds "does not legitimately arise".[12] No metaphysical explanation can, in principle, be given. Dasgupta thus distinguishes between *substantive* facts, for which the question of what grounds them does legitimately arise, and *autonomous* facts, which are the sorts of facts that cannot, in principle, be grounded.

So, according to Dasgupta, it's only the substantive facts with which naturalists and non-naturalists should be concerned. Naturalists should endorse

> *Natural Ground*$_{Sub}$ All substantive normative facts are either identical to or fully grounded in paradigm scientific facts or autonomous facts.[13]

This requires that all normative facts of the form Fa and normative grounding-facts like GROUND are identical to or fully grounded in paradigmatic scientific facts or autonomous facts like ESSENCE or LAW. For example, suppose that every normative fact Na is grounded in some natural fact Da, and the fact that Da grounds Na is itself grounded in the autonomous fact that it's essential of N that if x is D, x is N. On this view, there's nothing more to the nature of the normative properties than that which underwrites naturalistic explanations of them, which Dasgupta (2014: 584–85) thinks captures the spirit of naturalism. A supernaturalist, on the other hand, presumably takes substantive normative facts to be identical to or at least partially grounded in supernatural facts about God's commands.

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12. Dasgupta (2014: 576–80).

13. This is the normative analogue of what Dasgupta (2014: 581) calls "Weak Physicalism". Dasgupta takes physicalists to also claim that "all autonomous facts help underwrite the kind of grounding explanations required by Weak Physicalism", since physicalists also want to rule out an autonomous God. But since naturalism is a local claim about normativity, compatible with the existence of God, it doesn't require this addendum.

What both the non-naturalist's opponents endorse, on this characterization, is

> *Full Ground$_{Sub}$* All substantive normative facts are identical to or fully grounded in paradigm non-normative facts or autonomous facts.

Whereas the non-naturalist endorses

> *Anti-Full-Ground$_{Sub}$* Some substantive normative facts are neither identical to nor fully grounded in facts that are non-normative or autonomous.

Unlike Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$, Anti-Full-Ground$_{Sub}$ allows for a non-naturalist view according to which all normative facts Fa are fully grounded in non-normative facts, which is arguably Moore's view. Anti-Full-Ground$_{Sub}$ is true on such a view so long as normative grounding-facts like GROUND (which are substantive normative facts) are *fundamental* in the sense that they're not grounded, but not because they're autonomous. But this diagnosis of why Moore's view may count as non-naturalist is an even further cry from Moore's own thinking. Moore is concerned with *what goodness is*, not with what *makes* something good, let alone with whether something *makes something make* something good. So, Anti-Full-Ground$_{Sub}$ doesn't capture the spirit of Moore's view any better than Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$.

In fact, the spirit of Moore's view is actually compatible with Full Ground$_{Sub}$. Suppose some normative properties are primitive in Moore's sense that they lack a real definition. This is compatible with the view I propose in Leary (2017): that there are some *hybrid* normative properties, whose essences involve both natural properties and primitive normative properties, which thereby explain grounding connections between the natural facts and the primitive normative facts (see Figure 1).

For example, while *badness* may be a primitive normative property, it may be essential of *being in pain* that (i) if one's C-fibers are firing, one is in pain, and (ii) if one is in pain, one is experiencing something bad (Leary 2017: 98). *Being in pain* would then be a hybrid normative property whose essence explains why C-fiber-firing-facts (non-normative facts) ground pain-facts (hybrid facts) which ground badness-facts (primitive normative facts). Regardless of how plausible this hybrid property view is,[14] it's at least coherent and in the spirit of Moore's view. But Full Ground$_{Sub}$ is true on this view: all the substantive normative facts (the primitive normative facts, the hybrid normative facts, and the normative grounding-facts) are fully grounded in facts that are either non-

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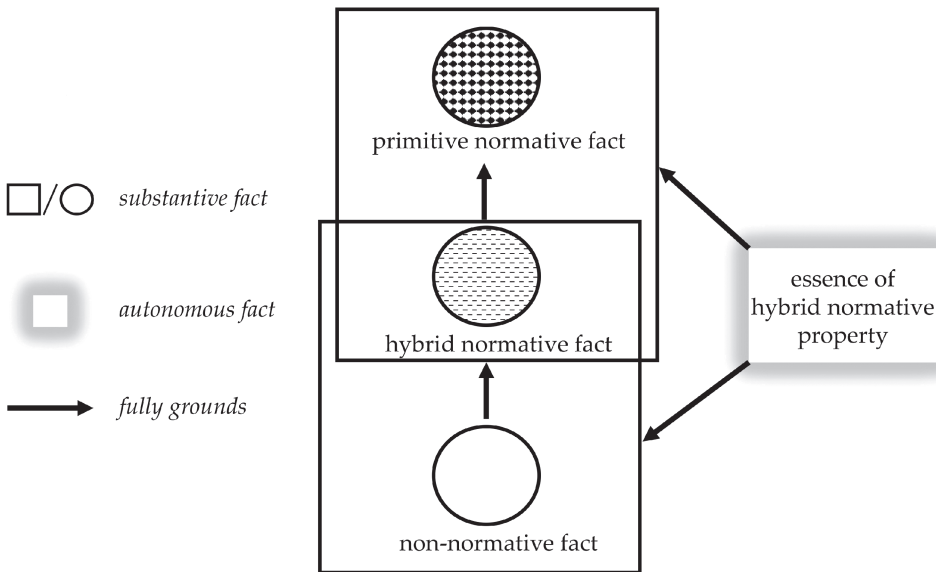14. See Faraci (2017) and Toppinen (2018) for criticisms.

Figure 1. Hybrid Property View

normative or autonomous. Even Natural Ground$_{Sub}$ may be true on this view: all the substantive normative facts may be fully grounded in paradigm scientific facts or autonomous facts. So, just like Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$, Anti-Full-Ground$_{Sub}$ rules out some conceptually possible views that seem to capture the spirit of non-naturalism.

So, the main question now is whether there's an alternative characterization that is more general and better fits Moore's view (and other non-naturalists) than these grounding-characterizations, while still satisfying the other desiderata. And the above discussion of Dasgupta's grounding-characterization suggests that characterizing non-naturalism in terms of essence may do the trick. What made Natural Ground$_{Sub}$ originally seem to capture the spirit of naturalism is considering the view that every normative fact Na is fully grounded in some non-normative fact Da because it's essential of N that if x is D, then x is N. If that's all N's essence amounts to, then there's nothing more to the nature of N than that which underwrites naturalistic explanations of it, which does sound like naturalism. But then we considered the hybrid property view on which every normative fact Na is fully grounded in some non-normative fact Da but there are still some primitive normative properties N whose essences cannot be specified in non-normative terms, which sounds like non-naturalism. These are claims about essence—not about grounding.

4. An Essence Characterization

In light of the above discussion of Moore, one might think we should simply characterize non-naturalism in terms of real definition. Rosen (2017) rejects this idea because it doesn't allow room for a non-reductive naturalist opponent. He notes that some physicalists in the philosophy of science claim that higher-level scientific properties are not definable in terms of fundamental physical properties, and that an analogous naturalist view about the normative should be intelligible. But recall that it's an open question whether naturalists and non-naturalists share the same pre-theoretical concerns. So, if the characterization of non-naturalism that best meets our desiderata ultimately doesn't allow room for a non-reductive naturalist opponent, that's reason to think that so-called "non-reductive naturalists" are not engaged in a genuine disagreement with non-naturalists after all. It's not reason to reject the characterization.

Regardless, though, my proposal here is that we characterize non-naturalism using the related but broader notion of *essence*, which does make room for a non-reductive naturalist opponent.[15] The essence of x is simply the set of propositions that directly state the nature of x (Fine 1994)[16], whereas a real definition of x is a proposition that directly states the nature of x in a particular form: "To be x is to be φ", where φ is a complex condition not containing x (Rosen 2017). Essence is thus broader than real definition because the essence of x may contain some proposition that directly states the nature of x, but which cannot be put in the form of a real definition. For example, consider disjunction: we cannot define what it is for p or q to obtain in terms of a condition not containing "or", but it nonetheless seems to be essential of disjunction that disjunctive facts are grounded in their disjuncts (Rosen 2010: 131). So, while x's real definition is always at least part of x's essence, x's essence (or part thereof) may not be a real definition; and x may even have an essence, without having a real definition at all.

We can now distinguish between two different views on which normative properties have no real definition. On the first, while basic normative properties lack real definitions, they nonetheless have essences that include propositions that specify natural sufficient conditions for their instantiation. For example, on this view, the essence of *goodness* may include that, if x is pleasurable, x is good, but since *goodness* is multiply realizable, being pleasurable does not define what it is to be good (nor is *goodness* merely the disjunction of its realizers). On the

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15. McPherson (2013) characterizes the naturalism-non-naturalism debate in terms of real definition and elite properties, and he attempts to make room for a non-reductive naturalist position as well. But I don't have room to discuss his proposal here.
16. Fine (1994) distinguishes between different senses of essence. This is what he calls "immediate constitutive essence".

second view, basic normative properties not only have no real definitions, but their essences also don't include propositions that specify non-normative sufficient conditions for their instantiation. The former view captures the spirit of non-reductive naturalism, whereas the latter view captures the spirit of Moore's view.

So, we can use essence to characterize the non-naturalist's opponents as follows. First, since essences are just a set of propositions, let's say F is *involved* in the essence of G just in case F is a constituent of some proposition contained in the essence of G. Next, let's say that a property F is *of the same kind* as the A-properties just in case the essence of F *ultimately involves* the A-properties, which amounts to satisfying a recursive definition in terms of the A-properties. For example, F is *natural* just in case its essence ultimately involves paradigmatic scientific properties like so:

(a) If F is a paradigmatic scientific property, then F is natural.
(b) If the essence of F involves only paradigmatic scientific properties, then F is natural.
(c) If the essence of F involves paradigmatic scientific sufficient conditions for being F, then F is natural.
(d) If the essence of F involves only natural properties or natural sufficient conditions for being F, then F is natural.

The naturalist's view that all normative properties are natural thus amounts to the claim that they satisfy this recursive definition.[17] Whereas the supernaturalist claims that the essences of some normative properties involve supernatural properties, thereby denying that they are natural.

Now we can specify what the non-naturalists' opponents have in common. First, we can define the *essentially non-normative* properties—those properties that ultimately involve (and are thus of the same kind as) paradigm non-normative properties—as follows:

For any property F:

(i) If F is a paradigmatic scientific property, supernatural property, or . . . (filling in whatever other paradigm non-normative properties there might be), F is essentially non-normative.
(ii) If the essence of F involves only paradigmatic scientific properties, supernatural properties, or . . ., then F is essentially non-normative.

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17. A reductive naturalist claims, moreover, that for any normative property N, its essence contains a complex natural condition φ not containing N that *defines* N, whereas a non-reductive naturalist denies this.

(iii) If the essence of F involves paradigmatic scientific, supernatural, or . . . sufficient conditions for being F, then F is essentially non-normative.

(iv) If the essence of F involves only essentially non-normative properties or essentially non-normative sufficient conditions for being F, then F is essentially non-normative.

Then, we can formulate the non-naturalist's opponents' view as simply

> *Essentially Non-normative* All normative properties are essentially non-normative.

And so, the non-naturalist's view is

> *Essentially Normative* Some normative properties are not essentially non-normative.

The non-naturalist thus insists that some normative properties fail to satisfy (i)–(iv) above: they are neither identical to nor have essences that ultimately involve paradigm non-normative properties.

This characterization of non-naturalism makes the non-naturalist's property-kind-talk precise. The basic idea behind the recursive definition of essentially non-normative properties is that normative properties would be of the same kind as paradigm non-normative properties if they were ultimately "built up" out of such properties. But if a normative property is *not* ultimately built up out of such properties, then it's something "over and above" all other properties. And since paradigm non-normative properties include scientific ones, this implies that there is some feature of reality that is not ultimately built up out of scientific features. Essentially Normative thus speaks to and elucidates the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical claims that normative properties are *sui generis* and incompatible with a purely scientific worldview—it's ILLUMINATING.

Essentially Normative is also SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL. Whether all normative properties ultimately involve paradigm non-normative properties is a non-trivial question that must be settled by theorizing about normative properties in particular, and not by general metaphysical considerations.

Moreover, this characterization allows for the sort of non-naturalist view that is arguably Moore's view according to which basic normative properties lack a real definition, but all normative facts of the form Fa are fully grounded in natural, non-normative facts. And it offers a diagnosis of why this view counts as non-naturalist that is very similar to Moore's own thinking, since essence is a close cognate of real definition. Essentially Normative thus classifies Moore's view as genuinely non-naturalist for reasons that capture the spirit of his view better than Rosen and Dasgupta's grounding-characterizations.

Essentially Normative is also compatible with my hybrid property view on which all normative facts of the form Fa are fully grounded in non-normative facts and the normative grounding-facts themselves are fully grounded in autonomous facts about essences (specifically, the essences of hybrid properties). What makes this view non-naturalist, on my characterization, is that the primitive normative properties, which are grounded by hybrid normative properties, are *not* essentially non-normative.[18] So, Essentially Normative also provides a broader characterization of non-naturalism than both Rosen and Dasgupta's grounding-characterizations.

But Essentially Normative fits well with other non-naturalist views too. First, consider Fine's view according to which there are *no* metaphysically necessary connections (including grounding connections) between normative and non-normative properties whatsoever. Fine (2002: 271) claims that the reason why there can't be metaphysically necessary connections between these properties is that there are no essential connections between them:

> There would appear to be nothing in the identity of the naturalistic or normative features that demands that they be connected in the way they are. It is no part of what it is to be pain that it should be bad, and no part of what it is to be bad that it should include pain. There is a striking difference between the connection between being water and being composed of H_2O, on the one hand, and the connection between being a pain and bad, on the other. For the identities of the respective features require that the connection holds in the one case, though not the other.

So, Essentially Normative captures the spirit of Fine's view well too, since he takes the primary issue to be about essence.

One might worry, though, that Essentially Normative does not fit as well with Bridge Law Non-naturalists like Enoch (2011) and Scanlon (2014) who claim that all contingent, particular normative facts of the form Fa are partially grounded in some non-normative fact Ga together with a fundamental normative principle connecting F and G. These non-naturalists rarely explicitly talk about essences.

But Enoch (2019: 14) expresses some sympathy toward appealing to essences and doing so would help the Bridge Law Non-naturalist's view. As I point out elsewhere, it's unclear what makes the normative *sui generis* on this view, since some derivative natural facts plausibly have a similar grounding structure (Leary 2017: 92). For example, the fact that there's a statue may be partially

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18. The hybrid normative properties are essentially non-normative because they satisfy condition (iii) or (iv) of the recursive definition. So, they are not *sui generis* normative properties, but they're normative properties because their essences involve *sui generis* normative properties (Leary 2017: 97–98).

grounded in the fact that there are particles arranged in such a way that compose a statue together with the metaphysical law that if F composes G, then if F exists, G exists. So, what makes the normative facts *sui generis*, but not statue facts? One might think it's simply the content of the normative laws: they involve normative properties. But this assumes that there's something distinctive about normative properties to begin with. And in order to substantiate that assumption, it seems natural to appeal to essences. The Bridge Law Non-naturalist may claim that what makes normative properties *sui generis* while *being a statue* is not, even though normative facts and statue facts are grounded in the same way, is that normative properties are *essentially normative*, while *being a statue* is *essentially non-normative* (in the sense defined above).

So, Essentially Normative is both GENERAL and FITTING: it provides a characterization of non-naturalism that encompasses a wider spectrum of views that speak to the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments and it provides a better fit with paradigm non-naturalist views (including Moore's) than the alternative characterizations. The central claim held by non-naturalists is that the essences of some normative properties do not ultimately involve paradigm non-normative properties (as defined above). But this leaves open downstream metaphysical questions about which non-naturalists may disagree, which gives rise to a variety of non-naturalist views (see Figure 2).

One objection one might have to this characterization, though, stems from the worry that debates about essences are irresolvable. Fine (2002) claims that it's obvious that the nature of *being in pain* and the nature of *badness* don't involve one another, but others may just as easily claim that the nature of *being in pain*
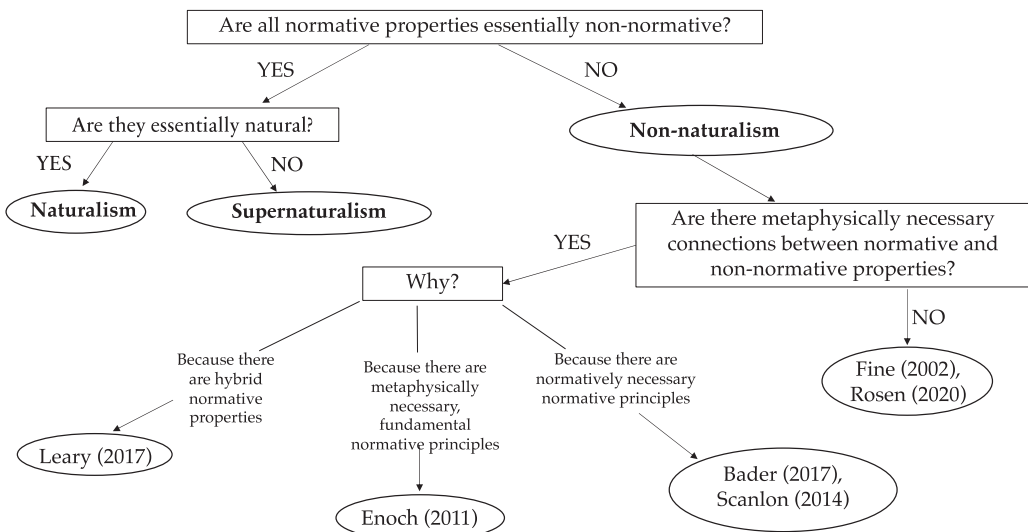

Figure 2. Varieties of Non-naturalism

involves *badness* (Leary 2017) or that *badness* involves *being in pain*. If there's no clear method for resolving such disputes, then even if Essentially Normative provides the most fitting and general characterization of the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical concerns, perhaps this is not what we *should* be concerned with. In other words, one might think that another desideratum for a good characterization of non-naturalism is *tractability*: it should characterize non-naturalism as a thesis for which there is some clear methodology for determining whether it's true.

But the alternative grounding-characterizations are not more tractable. Consider Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$. Most contemporary non-naturalists agree that all normative facts of the form Fa are at least partially grounded in non-normative facts. So, the main issue relevant to the truth value of Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ is whether all such normative facts are also partially grounded by fundamental normative principles. But what's the methodology for answering that question?

It's particularly mysterious how we could answer that question without appealing to overly general metaphysical considerations, which would thereby render Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ not SUBSTANTIVE & LOCAL. For example, Berker (2018a) offers a dilemma for the view that normative principles play a partial role in grounding particular normative facts, which stems from reflecting on first-order normative theories like utilitarianism. Berker claims that either the utility principle is a grounding-claim (necessarily, an action is right if and only if, and *because*, it maximizes happiness) or it's just a necessary biconditional (necessarily, an action is right if and only if it maximizes happiness). If it's a grounding-claim, Berker argues, it can't partially ground a particular act A's being right because this would involve redundant circular grounding, since the very principle states that an act's maximizing happiness is by itself sufficient for its being right. But if the utility principle is a necessary biconditional, Berker argues that it's implausible that it partially grounds a particular act's being right because other facts are not grounded in this way: the fact that x is red is not grounded in the fact that x is red and round together with the fact that, necessarily, if an object is red and round, then it's red (Berker 2018a: 912). But this argument generalizes: the very same argument could be used to argue that bridge laws can't play a partial role in grounding particular mental or biological facts. So, if Berker's argument is correct, it would actually show that the debate about Anti-Full-Ground$_{Fa}$ is not sufficiently local, and thus not the right way to think of non-naturalism.

So, while Essentially Normative may be difficult to get traction on, it is not less tractable than grounding-characterizations of non-naturalism. The lesson to be learned here is simply that it's much more difficult to answer metaphysical questions about particular kinds of properties and facts than it is to answer more general, structural metaphysical questions. So, relative intractability is an unavoidable feature of the naturalism-non-naturalism debate. I suspect that the

only way to resolve the debate, then, is indirectly and in a holistic way. We need to ask which view is better at vindicating realism, explaining how we can think about and refer to normative properties, explaining supervenience, and so on.

5. Conclusion and Implications

I've argued that an essence-characterization of non-naturalism does a better job than identity or grounding characterizations at meeting four desiderata: it speaks to and elucidates the non-naturalist's pre-theoretical commitments, while also rendering non-naturalism a substantive, local claim about normativity (unlike identity-characterizations) and it also provides the broadest characterization that fits best with the spirit of paradigm non-naturalists (unlike grounding-characterizations). I take this to show that, contrary to popular opinion, non-naturalism is best specified in terms of essence, rather than grounding or identity.

I've admitted that, even on my essence-characterization, non-naturalism is an unavoidably difficult view to evaluate directly. But this admission should not be taken to undermine the importance of the taxonomical task addressed here. This is because the essence-characterization of non-naturalism has significant implications regarding non-naturalism's overall merits.

The most important implication concerns non-naturalists' resources in explaining why the normative supervenes on the non-normative, which has been one of the most longstanding challenges to the view. The supervenience challenge is to explain why there are metaphysically necessary connections between the normative and the non-normative even though the normative is *sui generis*. There's an apparent tension here because the non-naturalist's claim that the normative is *sui generis* requires that normative properties are metaphysically distinct from non-normative properties, while explaining the metaphysically necessary connections between these properties requires that they are somehow intimately metaphysically related. But if the non-naturalist's claim that normative properties are *sui generis* amounts to a claim about the essences of normative properties, which is compatible with a wide range of views about how normative facts are grounded, the non-naturalist has a wide selection of explanations for supervenience available to her.

For example, consider my hybrid property view according to which some basic normative properties like *goodness* and *badness* are essentially normative (in the sense defined in §4), but there are hybrid normative properties whose essences involve both normative and non-normative properties and thereby explain why certain non-normative facts ultimately fully ground facts about what's good and bad. Hattiangadi (2018: 603) claims that this view is not genuinely non-naturalist because it's a view on which all particular normative facts are fully grounded in

non-normative facts. But this presupposes that non-naturalism is about grounding. If non-naturalism is instead about essence, as I've argued here, my explanation for supervenience is a genuinely non-naturalist one.

But the essence-characterization also supports other potential non-naturalist explanations for supervenience. In Leary (2017), I considered two alternative views that take general normative principles to play some role in explaining why the normative is grounded in, and thus supervenes on, the non-normative. The first is Enoch's Bridge Law Non-naturalist view according to which the general normative principles are metaphysical laws that themselves partially ground particular normative facts together with the particular non-normative facts. The second view is one according to which the normative principles are metaphysical laws that don't partially ground the particular normative facts, but instead ground the very grounding relations between non-normative facts and normative facts. I rejected both of these explanations for supervenience in favor of my hybrid property view in part because on both views it was unclear what makes the normative facts *sui generis*, since some derivative natural facts plausibly have the exact same grounding structure: for example, contingent facts about statues may be grounded by contingent facts about the arrangement of particles with the help of metaphysical laws about composition (Leary 2017: 92). So, my criticism of these alternative explanations for supervenience (like Hattiangadi's criticism of mine) was that they are not obviously non-naturalist. But the essence-characterization of non-naturalism that I've presented here shows that my earlier criticism of these alternative explanations for supervenience is wrong: what makes the normative *sui generis*, while derivative natural facts that plausibly have the same grounding structure are not, is that normative properties are *essentially normative*, while derivative natural properties are *essentially natural* (in the sense defined in §4).

So, here's the important upshot: because non-naturalism is a view about the essences of normative properties, this allows non-naturalists to appeal to metaphysical explanations for supervenience according to which the particular normative facts have the exact same grounding structure as derivative natural facts and are even fully grounded in natural facts. And there are a variety of explanations to choose from. This doesn't completely resolve the supervenience challenge because there may still be reasonable debate about which non-naturalist explanation is better or whether these explanations are worse than naturalist ones. But it goes a long way to diffusing the apparent tension that motivates the challenge: there is no inherent incompatibility between the non-naturalist's view (about essence) and the claim that there are metaphysically necessary connections (even grounding connections) between the normative and the non-normative.

Finally, my argument in favor of an essence-characterization of non-naturalism also has significant implications for metaphysical theorizing, more generally.

Within metaphysics, it's controversial whether we need the ideology of essence for metaphysical theorizing. But if my argument that essence is best suited for characterizing what non-naturalists take to be at stake in the debate between them and their opponents, this provides some justification for adopting the ideology of essence in the first place. After all, it shows that the ideology of essence is useful for capturing a significant first-order metaphysical debate.

Acknowledgements

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