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Can Value Properties Earn Their Keep?: the Metaphysics of Value

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CAN VALUE PROPERTIES EARN THEIR KEEP? THE METAPHYSICS OF VALUE

By

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ABSTRACT

Supposing they exist, what work are value properties supposed to do? What difference do they make? What is the difference between a world in which they exist and a world in which they do not?

One obvious answer invokes the claim that evaluative properties make a causal difference. While this is an interesting topic, it is well-covered elsewhere by Gilbert Harman and Nicholas Sturgeon. But there are other possibilities put forth by moral realists that are independent of the question of causal explanation. In my dissertation, I examine a number of alternative possible jobs that value properties are thought to fulfill.

1) *Reference and supervenience* - Some argue that evaluative properties serve as the *referents* of evaluative *predicates*, or as the *extension* of supervening evaluative *concepts*. I consider arguments from McDowell and others to the effect that our ability to correctly sort evaluative cases into the correct categories requires the mapping of these concepts onto evaluative properties. My arguments show that these considerations alone cannot support evaluative realism, as there are alternative accounts of evaluative language that do not require separate value properties. For instance, a semantics grounded in *conceptual-role* can adequately account for the ability to think with and use evaluative concepts but nevertheless have natural properties serve as the extension of these concepts.

2) *Resemblance* - One might think that, as Russ Shafer-Landau and David Brink argue, the resemblance of items belonging to the same evaluative category needs to be explained given the manifest differences in their *non-evaluative* properties. Stealing candy from a baby, cheating on one's spouse, and refusing to tell the police where a perpetrator is hiding all belong to the same moral category (the category of wrong actions), but they share little in common from the view of physically manifested behavior. I offer two alternative methods for explaining evaluative categorization that do not require accepting the existence of distinctly evaluative properties, thus showing the inference that distinct value properties are necessary to explain resemblance to be unwarranted. I claim that the way we *think* about value is enough to ensure correct categorization – there need not be some further existent to explain this.

3) *Qualitative Character* - Last, I consider the view that evaluative properties possess a distinctive and irreducible *qualitative character*. I address the purported qualitative natures that value properties are thought to possess and argue that understood in one way, we would have justification for accepting that they exist. This interpretation has it that evaluative qualities are literally perceptible – their qualitative characters are of the same general sort as the properties *redness* or *pain*. I argue, that there is no need to posit distinct value qualia, at least not if qualia are necessarily representational, since we can have the same phenomenology of value whether or not we are directly perceiving an evaluative episode – we can have the same phenomenology just by

considering or imagining the relevant episode. I offer a model of value perception which captures this important point.

Though my arguments might appear to push one toward anti-realism, they are all compatible with the truth of (suitably qualified versions of) 1), 2), and 3) after all is said and done. My goal is not to undermine arguments for evaluative realism, but I do intend to show that there is no master argument for it; any argument for realism must delve into thorny and often distinct metaphysical questions. Furthermore, I emphasize the role that metaphysical preconceptions and their implications play in many debates in value theory and the need to be clear and consistent with regard to these implications.

PREFACE

Metaethics is the attempt to synthesize aspects of metaphysics (about which there is little agreement), philosophy of language (about which there is little agreement), epistemology (about which there is little agreement) and apply them to highly charged issues in ethics. I have come to the conclusion that about the best one can do is to lay all of one's cards on the table and see where they lie. I have tried to expose just about every implicit presupposition, explicit intuition, and well-developed theory regarding value properties I know of in order to determine how these properties are put to use.

My central aim has been to discern what reason we have to suppose value properties exist. Since this question is squarely metaphysical, I try to say something about the metaphysics of properties without committing to any particular view. Allan Gibbard writes:

> **"**Metaethics by now is a subject that brings together two tribes of philosophers: specialists in ethics and specialists in the 'core areas.' Since most of us can't do both with a specialist's degree of sophistication, this makes for tensions. The ideal in metaethics must be to combine experience and sensitivity in both areas. (Gibbard, 2004, 320-321).

In attempting to heed this wise advice, I have tried to raise questions more often than provide answers. For instance, I have attempted to avoid presuming a narrow conception of what it takes to exist. As will become clear, many theorists have had many "tests" for existence of varying degrees of strictness. I have done what I can to give more relaxed tests a fair shot. Here I want to explain my approach to these issues and also to provide a rationale for some of lines of reasoning I do not address in the pages to come.

Metaphysics of Value

There are different approaches one might to take to the metaphysics of value properties. One approach, call it the progressive approach, begins with the thought that we

can study value properties in isolation from other sorts of properties. Proponents of this sort of view emphasize the uniqueness of the evaluative, for instance by endorsing the commonly held view that evaluative properties are *sui generis*, though one need not accept this view to be a progressive. This approach sometimes, though not always, leads to the view that the ontological tests or methods we apply to other sorts of entities whose existence is in dispute do not apply to the evaluative realm.

A second perspective, the conservative approach, attempts to incorporate an account of the metaphysics of value properties within a larger metaphysics of properties generally. This is the approach I pursue in the dissertation. It takes to heart the following the advice from Gibbard (2004):

> [M]etaethics fits awkwardly into philosophical subdivisions. Its central questions concern meaning and concepts, and how to treat these in general is a question not for the peripheral subfield of philosophy that ethics is, but for the 'core areas'; these are questions for the philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, along with metaphysics and epistemology (320).

The conservative approach does not deny that there might be important metaphysical differences between evaluative properties and other sorts of properties. However, it does give credence to the work that has already been done in the "core areas" that seems, *prima facie*, to be relevant to the metaphysics of value properties.

The Deontic versus the Evaluative

A distinction that is not always emphasized, but upon which I place a lot of weight, is that between the deontic and the evaluative. Typical deontic notions include "ought," "reason," "obligation," "permissibility," "right," and "duty." Common evaluative notions include "good (goodness)," "beauty," "value," "cruelty," "wicked." I do not pretend to have an account of either class of notions, nor do I think there is always a clear boundary between them ("irrational" is perhaps an example which does not fall squarely into either category). In fact, I am confident that a full account of these notions would involve close conceptual ties between the two realms.

This dissertation cleaves, to the extent possible, to issues regarding the evaluative and not the deontic. This is contrary to much of the literature in metatethics. It seems to be a

common assumption that all moral or normative properties stand or fall together; if a realist conception of *goodness* is viable, then so is a realist sense of *ought*, *reason, obligation, wickedness*, and so on. But it is not clear to me that there are not important *metaphysical*, and not merely ethical, differences between the two categories. For instance, many apparent value properties are monadic and can be borne by objects independent of some of the contextual factors which necessarily apply in some cases of the deontic. What one ought to do depends on many factors, such as what one *can* do at a particular given time, that do not apply, or do not obviously apply, in the case of many purported value properties. This is in part due to the fact that deontic properties seem to be much more closely tied to agency than value properties. This is not to deny that value properties have some connections to agency. Nonetheless, deontic properties raise separate metaphysical questions than value properties. Since I believe I have a better grasp on the issues related to value, that is what I address in the dissertation.

Normative Authority

Many theorists appeal to the irreducible "authority" of value or reasons. The notion of normative authority remains as enigmatic as it is alluring. Though many theorists might think that any talk of value properties begins and ends with characterizing authority, I rarely address it. Since it is central to many theorists' views, I should say something about why I do not tackle it in great detail here.

There is a famous joke that I think originates with Woody Allen complaining about a restaurant – the food is terrible and the portions are too small. I have a somewhat similar attitude toward the notion of normative authority. I am skeptical that there is much of metaphysical import, yet at the same time I would like to hear much more. And so I think were I to tackle normative authority in this work, I would spend a lot of time and words trying to get something that I do not understand very well. If there are important metaphysical ramifications (I have no argument that there are not!) that derive from normative authority, I do not think I am in a position to properly assess them. This is in keeping with the conservative approach I described above. There is no doubt that evaluative properties will be different in some ways than other sorts of properties, and I do not doubt that there is much of interest to

learn about those differences, including whether clear and compelling sense can be made of the notion of normative authority. But it seems to me to be a good idea to try to see what they may or may not have in common with nonevaluative properties, as well, so that is the question I have pursued.

Arguing into *Aporia*

Many of the arguments to follow might give the appearance that I am pessimistic about the possibility of showing that evaluative properties exist, or even that we have no good reason to believe that they do. Though taken as whole this dissertation offers many arguments to this effect, I am not particularly pessimistic about realism's chances. It is just that I think the realist must do better. Rather than do the hard work of developing that better argument, I take the easy way out - criticizing others. What I aim to show with my arguments is that the realist arguments I consider are not conclusive, not that they do not have true conclusions. Furthermore, I do not aim to show much of the work which many theorists propose for evaluative properties is not, in fact, done by those very properties. For instance, though I am critical of many arguments which rely on the intuitive thought that evaluative properties serve as referents for evaluative predicates, for all I say, evaluative properties might in actuality play that role. My claim is merely that it has not been conclusively shown that evaluative properties play these roles. For this reason I am often left concluding that things may be one way or may be another, with no firm positive or negative conclusion. That seems to me to be a result of the nature of the questions under investigation. Until we can be sure about a lot more metaphysics *generally*, it would appear that we cannot be sure about *evaluative* metaphysics.

Notation

When property terms are mentioned, but not used, they are italicized. When feasible, I have italicized property mentions among quotations from other authors when they have not done so. When concepts are mentioned, but not used, they will be in all caps and in brackets. All concept terms are names and should not be read as structural descriptions. Terms and sentences are marked by single quotation marks.

CHAPTER ONE

Work for Evaluative Properties

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is an inquiry into the ontological status of evaluative properties. The central question pursued is: what work do evaluative properties do, such that we are warranted in believing they exist? There are many arguments that rely on the existence of evaluative properties, but the question of what they do is rarely, with some notable exceptions, addressed directly. There are, however, some explicit attempts and some obvious ones that I shall address in this chapter. Toward the end of the chapter, I preview the main arguments I address in the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

1.1.1 Truthmaking

One seemingly obvious answer might be that evaluative properties serve as truthmakers for evaluative claims or propositions. If the proposition *Torture is cruel* is true, proponents of this answer will say it is true because of the presence of the property *cruelty*, among others.

To accept this view without some further theory of the nature of evaluative properties is to put the cart before the horse. Error theorists deny that there are any evaluative truths. They would claim that there is no truthmaking work for evaluative properties to do – at the very least not for second-order evaluative questions,[1] which are still the sorts of questions which indict evaluative properties or the lack thereof.

The error theorist's point becomes obvious when we look at an example. As of this writing, there is still some uncertainty about whether or not the Higgs boson exists. Imagine the parody argument:

[1] Mackie (1977) draws a distinction between first-order questions which do not depend upon a commitment to metaphysical moral properties and second-order questions which do on pp. 19-20. I am not sure such a distinction can rightfully be made, but I defer this issue to another time.

we can know the Higgs boson exists because there are truths about Higgs boson which must be made true somehow. We can infer the existence of the Higgs boson because it makes statements about Higgs bosons true.

This argument is unpersuasive, since it is not clear that there are any pertinent truths to be had. The error theorist presses the case that even the realist should not be so confident as to disregard entirely the possibility of there being no evaluative properties to make evaluative claims true. Notice that if it turns out that the Higgs boson exists, then it will presumably be the truthmaker for truths about the Higgs boson. But we can at best be agnostic about whether or not the Higgs boson plays this role. Similar remarks apply to evaluative properties.

The problem with taking the truthmaker shortcut is that our confidence in truthmakers depends upon *independent* evidence for existence.[2] For instance, people do not believe in "phlogiston properties" on the basis of them making "phlogiston claims" true (e.g. The reason I am so cold is because I have not generated enough phlogiston today.) though at one time many believed they were. Why is this? Is it because we do not believe that phlogiston claims are true and we therefore infer that there are no phlogiston properties? Or is it because we do not believe that there are phlogiston properties and thus that no phlogiston claims are true? The latter seems obviously to be the case. Once scientists developed a better theory to describe the relevant perceived effects that did not appeal to phlogiston, there was no independent reason to infer that it exists. At that point, there was no resistance of the form "on the other hand, what else makes true phlogiston claims true?" Whereas figuring into the best scientific theory does provide independent warrant for inferring an entity's existence, truthmaking simply is not an independent diagnostic tool for questions regarding what exists.

There are good reasons, even if ultimately unconvincing, to suppose, as many irrealists have, that evaluative properties do not exist at all and that there are no evaluative truths that need to be made true.[3] To disregard this possibility (perhaps an epistemic possibility, only) is to deny that error theory is even a coherent position. I believe that the strength of irrealist arguments with regard to evaluative properties in combination with their alternative explanations for why we make the evaluative

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[2] The question I am not raising is *how* are evaluative truths made true – that the dispute is over what are the truthmakers for what we can all agree are evaluative truths. This is a very interesting issue, but I think that if we suppose that there are such truths then there does seem to be any barrier to think at least one evaluative property plays a truthmaking role apart from broader ontological commitments, for example a commitment to nominalism.

[3] Or that some minimalist thesis about these issues is satisfied. In that case, arguments from indispensability are redundant – we can infer that evaluative properties without appealing to indispensability to a scientific theory, but this fact will be trivial.

judgments and claims we do in fact make are strong enough to engender a healthy humility with regard to our confidence in the truth of evaluative claims.

While, ultimately, it could be the case that evaluative properties serve as the truthmakers for evaluative truths, the question is idle unless there is some independent access to evaluative properties to settle the matter.

1.1.2 Indispensability?

Some philosophers have argued that in special cases we can be certain that a type of entity exists in virtue of its indispensability to other truths about which we are certain. For instance, some have argued that abstract mathematical objects must exist for there to be mathematical truths, and that mathematical truths are essential for statements in various scientific theories to be true. This view is controversial.[4] But notice that without an indispensability argument to support mathematical "factualism" (i.e. the view that there are mathematical truths) the prospects of proving numbers (or sets) would be gloomier. However, even if we suppose indispensability arguments work in the case of mathematics, it is not easy to extend the reasoning to apply to evaluative properties, at least not at this point in time. The case for the indispensability would be something along the following lines. Some non-evaluative truths which are part of, or entailed by, a respectable theory depend essentially upon the truth of at least one positive evaluative claim.[5] Thus, the basis for inferring the existence of evaluative properties is their role in making other verifiable statements true.

The strength of this argument is that it provides an independent purchase on the truthmaking role evaluative properties are purported to play. Whereas it remains an open question, at least theoretically, whether or not positive evaluative statements are true (or robustly true), the presence of statements with a more certain status would sidestep that particular concern. One could then leverage the esteemed truths to support the truth of evaluative statements, whose independent status is less certain.

There are problems for this approach when it comes to evaluative properties, however; even more so than for numbers. Typically, it is claimed that one cannot conjure a satisfactory theory of physics without numbers. But there is no similarly prestigious science which accords evaluative

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[4] Cf. Cian Dorr (2010) and Hartry Field (1980).

[5] I distinguish between positive claims and negative claims to rule out possible truths of the following sort: "There are no evaluative properties."

properties the same role numbers play in physics. According to many, we already have the evidence we need for the existence of numbers. But in the case of the evaluative, we are given a promissory note. Perhaps when we have arrived at a Theory-Of-Everything we will need to appeal to evaluative properties. But it would be premature to infer their existence on this basis.

There are of course some who will claim to be absolutely certain of some evaluative truths – as certain as they are of any mathematical truth. Perhaps they believe certain evaluative truths to correspond to so-called "Moorean facts," facts about which one can be so certain that no contrary theoretical considerations can in any way undermine that certainty. I admit to finding evaluative realism intuitively compelling. But we must separate the question of certitude about evaluative truths given a background of auxillary hypotheses and theorizing from the more specific question of certitude about evaluative truths even if nothing more can be said about evaluative properties than that they serve the truthmaking role for evaluative claims. I find evaluative realism compelling in part because I believe that there is a plausible theory of evaluative properties that is consistent with other features of the world. If I came to be convinced that evaluative properties were inconsistent with this picture, I would become less convinced that there were any evaluative truths. This is the other side of the coin of an indispensability argument – if evaluative truths, made true by the existence and particular natures of evaluative properties, are necessary for other truths, then these other truths had better be compatible with the evaluative truths. One's "Moorean" certainty must at least be consistent with other theories or else it cannot be related to indispensability arguments.[6] Suppose that Mackie were right and that evaluative properties must categorically induce motivation in an agent when she comes to some evaluative judgment.[7] Such a property would rightly be called "queer" and ought to make us less certain that our evaluative judgments correspond to evaluative truths. In this way, evaluative truths do not seem insulated from the nature of the evaluative properties that would make them true.

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[6] Perhaps claims of Moorean certainty are not intended to be related to indispensability. However, this seems to me to be a mistake. Certainty about Moorean facts is not best understood as the view that we can be certain about various statements without being able to explain our justifications for believing. To take a famous case from Moore, one might think one can be certain that one has hands, even in the face of a countervailing argument from the external world skeptic. But one does not have this certainty regardless of any justificatory basis; rather, one's justification seems to be immediately compelling – one can *see* one's hands, grasp and manipulate objects with them, and so on. This justification is thought by Moore to be more compelling than the justification any theoretical argument one could muster for the skeptical conclusion. Certainty deriving from perceptual justification is certainly not the same thing as certainty regardless of anything else. Similarly I am supposing that the reason one can appeal to Moorean certainty about evaluative properties must be on the basis of some compelling justification, a justification that is more immediately compelling than the justification for skeptical arguments. The problem I am raising here is that it very much matters what evaluative properties are like if it is to be at all plausible that they are indispensable for the truth of statements in an esteemed theory.

[7] Macke, J.L. (1977)

Finally, a view which appealed to indispensability *via* truthmaking of some sort could necessitate an intimate connection between evaluative truths and evaluative properties of the following objectionable sort. If the sole role of evaluative properties is to serve as truthmakers, it appears that there would have to be an isomorphism between evaluative predicates, or perhaps propositions, and evaluative properties. If evaluative properties are individuated by the propositions that they make true, then it is plausible to suppose there will be a one-to-one correspondence between proposition and property. How else to individuate the properties? But there are noted difficulties with proposition/predicate-property isomorphism. This issue will be further addressed in the next chapter.

In the absence of a compelling case for indispensability, we do not have good reason to appeal to evaluative properties as truthmakers, and will need to specify other sorts of work for evaluative properties to do. I canvass some options in the next section.

1.2 Some Options

It is unavoidable – we must say something about the work that evaluative properties do if we want to defend a realist position. Though many times some implicit work is assumed in many theorists' positions, little has been said explicitly detailing what that work is. The aim in this dissertation is to lay out the most plausible contenders. We have seen that while evaluative properties might serve as truthmakers for true evaluative claims, this cannot plausibly be thought to be all that they do.

A number of positions can be found in the literature on properties. One theme of this dissertation is that we are well-served by working evaluative properties into a framework of properties in general; it is better to start with the assumption that evaluative properties are similar in many theoretical respects to any other sort of property with only some interesting differences. If evaluative properties are truly *sui generis*, the ways in which this is so can only be properly understood by articulating some contrasting aspects evaluative properties have that other sorts of properties do not. We should not assume that *sui generis* evaluative properties are *nothing* like others sorts of properties. Understood in this way, theorizing about evaluative properties benefits from both paying attention to the literature on properties and also by articulating the implicit theories of properties that are assumed regarding evaluative properties in particular.

What work do properties, in general and perhaps evaluative ones in particular, do? Here are some non-exhaustive options:

1. Causal powers – properties are identical to or confer causal powers on the particulars which instantiate them
2. Qualitative experience – perceptual or sensational experience is commonly held to be the experience of properties, e.g. the experience of sweetness or of seeing the blueness of the sky
3. Explain resemblance – similarity or resemblance among particulars is due to shared properties
4. Duplicates – counterparts of objects at different worlds, if they are to be duplicates, must share at least the same intrinsic properties (but not necessarily extrinsic properties, such as the spatio-temporal location of the object)
5. Laws of Nature – laws of nature are sometimes claimed to be relations (e.g. necessitation) between properties
6. Truthmaking – true statements are thought to be made true by corresponding reality, some of the constituents of which include properties
7. Referent of predicates – predicates can be used referentially, and hence need a referent; this job is best played by properties
8. Fundamentality – it is often argued that there is a hierarchy of reality or at least of the reality available to scientific study – typically physics at the "bottom", at the next level chemistry, then biology, and so on; this hierarchy might be thought to be determined by the fundamentality of the resident properties
9. Change – objects seem to be different at different times; one way to explain these differences is to appeal to the difference in the properties the object instantiates at those times

Note that it is plausible to suppose that properties do several compatible kinds of work.

Some of these items have little bearing on issues in metaethics (broadly understood) as far as I can tell. For instance, I do not believe it can be credibly claimed that evaluative properties are fundamental. But some make a big difference. In fact, one might argue that there is work that evaluative properties do that other sorts of properties do not do – that there is a distinctly evaluative work that only evaluative properties do. I believe that there must be some distinctive work for them to do; otherwise we have no reason to postulate their existence. The sorts of work I am most interested in are the ones that help to inform us what difference evaluative properties make. Why think evaluative properties exist at all?

In the remainder of this chapter, I have two aims. The first is to address one of the, in my view, best answers to the question of what work properties do. The second is to demonstrate that laying one's cards on the table about this question frames further pursuits into the nature of evaluative properties.

Many authors have thought properties confer *dispositions* or *causal powers* on particulars, or that they are identical to dispositions. [8] The details of whether or not the particular or the property itself have or are causal powers do not matter at this point, though this detail could perhaps be important for other disputes. What is of present significance is that these authors all agree that if an entity does not make some causal difference, then it does not exist. This thesis has come to be known as the *Eleatic Principle*. Armstrong (1997: 41) puts it this way:

> *Eleatic Principle*: Everything that exists makes a difference to the causal powers of something.

The upshot of adopting this principle is that anything that does not make a *causal* difference does not exist. If one endorses this principle and one portends to me an evaluative realist, then evaluative properties had better make a causal difference.

Many balk at this principle and, perhaps for independent reasons, the thought that evaluative properties make a causal difference. Nonetheless, an evaluative realist who endorses it has laid her cards on the table and can set about articulating what evaluative properties must be like given that they satisfy the principle. I view this as theoretical progress even if it is ultimately untenable – at least the untenability would be explicit and public. To that end, let us look at what sense we can make of evaluative properties that satisfy the principle.

1.2.1 Causal Work for Evaluative Properties?

There is of course a valuable dialectic on the topic of whether or not moral facts or properties have a role to play in causal explanations emanating from the work of Gilbert Harman and Nicholas Sturgeon, among many others.[9] This is not the issue I would like to pursue here. Rather, I am interested in discussing how best to make sense of evaluative properties making a causal difference if we take a starting assumption that that, at the very least, is what they do.

Starting with this innocent looking assumption along with a commonly held view about the supervenience of the evaluative on the natural, I believe we are led to the radical-to-some conclusion that evaluative properties are straightforwardly identical to natural properties.

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[8] Shoemaker (1980), Heil (2003), Ellis (2001), Bird (2007), Armstrong (1997), Martin (2008), Molnar (2003), Mumford (1998)

[9] For starters, see Harman (1973) and Sturgeon (1984).

1.2.1.1 Supervenience

It is commonly held that evaluative properties and states of affairs weakly supervene on natural properties and states of affairs.[10] Put informally, this means that any set of properties at this world that do not differ with regard to their natural properties do not differ in their evaluative properties either and, furthermore, that any changes amongst evaluative properties or states-of-affairs guarantees changes in natural properties or states-of-affairs at this world as well. Many ethicists accept the strong supervenience of the evaluative on the natural. They believe the relation involved in weak supervenience is not satisfied merely contingently at this world in some cases but instead is necessary and so holds at all worlds, globally. Call this view the evaluative supervenience principle (ESP).

There are two general ways to explain why ESP is true.[11] Either evaluative properties are identical to natural properties, and thus supervenience is trivial, or evaluative properties are "higher-level" properties – properties that depend upon but are irreducible to properties at a lower ontological level. It is difficult to precisely identify what sort of dependency and what sort of irreducibility is at stake.[12] What is clear is that it is distinctly ontological – those who are committed to higher-level properties are not making a claim about language, explanation, complexity, composition, or ordering (though there are implications for these other concerns).

In particular, it seems evaluative non-naturalists who accept the evaluative supervenience principle must be committed to something like "higher level" properties. The combination of the non-naturalist's commitment to ESP along with her commitment to sui generis (or irreducible, or autonomous, etc.) evaluative properties amounts to a commitment to higher level properties as I have defined them.[13] However, non-naturalists are not alone. David Brink endorses a view that posits higher level evaluative properties. He contends that evaluative properties are "constituted by, but not identical to, natural properties."[14] But there is potentially a problem with accepting the combination of doctrines I have discussed in the last few sections – higher level properties, supervenience, and the Eleatic Principle. I discuss this issue in the next section.

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[10] I will not discuss local, or regional as it is sometimes called, supervenience due to concerns related to those raised by holists and particularists.

[11] That is, there are two ways for realists about evaluative properties. I say a bit about how irrealists must account for supervenience in Chapter. 3.

[12] The way that some authors use the term 'constitution' and its cognates seems to fit the bill. However, there does not seem to be a canonical use of the term as far as I can tell.

[13] Cf. McDowell (1973) and Shafer-Landau (2003), for instances.

[14] Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. (Cambridge: 1989)

1.2.1.2 An Argument for Identity

An evaluative realist who accepts ESP and the Eleatic Principle must illustrate how higher level evaluative properties can earn their keep. I think it cannot be done. Here is a semi-formal argument for why not. For the sake of the argument, I introduce a term 'happening' to cover all instances of cause and effect. Some might think of them as events or facts, or what have you, but it is intended to cover a strictly metaphysical phenomenon, and so is distinct from less obviously metaphysical items such as explanation.

Against Higher Level Evaluative Properties (Assuming the Eleatic Principle)

(P1) Both lowest level properties and evaluative properties play a role in pertinent causal happenings (By assumption: Eleatic Principle)[15]

(P2) Evaluative properties are "higher level" properties – they are dependent, in their entirety, upon, but irreducible to, "lower level" natural properties. (By assumption: Higher Level properties)

(P3) The presence of particular sets of instantiations of lower level natural properties in every case determines, in their entirety, the instantiation of the supervening higher level evaluative properties, and these lower level happenings thus determine the happenings among higher level properties. ((P2) & ESP)

(P4) Higher level properties do not causally interact with lower level properties, at the very least not in a way which violates the strict lower level laws

(C1) Higher level evaluative properties are therefore causally dispensable; whatever causal happenings there are (have been, or will be), are accounted for by appeal only to lower level natural properties, in the sense that the arrangement of properties instantiated, both lowest and all levels higher, is determined by the lower level properties and happenings. ((P3) & (P4))

(C2) Contradiction: Higher level evaluative properties both play a role in pertinent causal happenings and yet are causally dispensable if existing at "higher level" ((P1) & (C1))

[15] For the sake of argument I presume there is a lowest level. The thesis that there is no lowest level, if true, would not manifestly affect the argument in any important way.

The argument is a *reduction ad absurdum*, and so if it is sound, some premise must be rejected. But people might disagree which ought to go. Those who are eliminativists about evaluative properties might view this argument as providing reason to disbelieve evaluative properties exist at all.

Others of a realist variety, however, will accept a further argument that takes it that there are no higher-level evaluative properties but nevertheless evaluative properties exist and make a causal difference. They will simply view evaluative properties as *identical* to natural ones. They might accept something like the following argument:[16]

> Argument for Identity:
> (P1) Evaluative property, *e*, has causal role *r* (Realism & Eleatic Principle)
> (P2) Natural property (-ies),*n*, has (in combination have) causal role *r* (ESP & Eleatic Principle)
> (P3) Properties with identical causal roles are themselves identical (Causal Role Identity Claim)
> (C1) Therefore, *e* is identical to *n*

It is open to be skeptical about the Causal Role Identity Claim, but for many it has seemed plausible, particularly in the philosophy of mind.

Whatever you believe are the merits of these arguments, the striking ramifications are apparent. At the very least, someone with the commitments noted above must offer a sophisticated argument defending the view that higher level properties "make a causal difference to something" in light of this contrary argument. In my view, this is progress! We are taking our commitments seriously and seeing where they lead.

1.3 Ockhamism and Difference-making

The immediately preceding discussion is intended to be an illustration of how being explicit about the work that evaluative properties are thought to do can have far-reaching consequences. Before we move on to a more thorough discussion of evaluative properties, I would like to make explicit one further thesis under which the rest of the dissertation operates. The position I am emphasizing appeals to parsimony of a particular variety – one that is in some ways less controversial than other varieties. I believe we are justified in appealing to Ockham's Razor in its strictly ontological form: we ought not multiply entities beyond necessity. How I cash this out is this: if there is no work for an entity to do, no role or function for it to fill, etc. then we are not justified in believing it exists. If something exists, it ought to make *some* difference. I do not insist the difference must be causal, but there must be

[16] Compare Stephen Mumford's argument for the ontological identity of categorical with dispositional properties on p. 146 in his (1998).

some difference it makes – it must do some work beyond what can be done without it (careful of the modality here – lots of things can do work but don't, or don't do work but can, some might think)

There are three important points to keep in mind. The first is that the parsimony I am appealing to is intended to be ontological in nature only. Some explanations are thought to be simpler than others in the sense that they include fewer variables, formulae, etc. The virtue of simplicity in this sense is its elegance or beauty, and some have argued that this simplicity in itself provides reason to believe in the truth of the proffered explanation.[17] This is not the sort of parsimony I am interested. I take no stand on the matter of whether or not truth conduciveness is a virtue of simpler explanations.

One extension of this view is that purported entities whose existence conditions are limited to cases of overdetermination of some sort will fail to survive Ockham's Razor. Note that I do not say causal overdetermination although I am unsure if there are any arguments to the effect that there is any other interesting kind. Thus, epiphenomenal mental states, for instance, *could* survive as long as they are understood as making a difference to the qualitative states of the conscious experiences of an agent. But imagine one were to argue, strangely enough, that all experienced epiphenomenal qualitative states are accompanied by further states, qualia*, that are also experienced as identical qualitative conscious states that make no causal difference, and these states are never instantiated in any other instance besides these times of conscious experience.

Certainly we have no reason to think qualia* exist. But it is quite difficult, perhaps impossible, to provide an argument against them that does not depend in some way on an appeal to ontological parsimony. Qualia* would make no difference. Their work is sufficiently carried out by normal everyday qualia. In my view, ontological parsimony is enough. We are justified in not believing qualia* exist as they, as a type, do not survive Ockham's Razor.

The second point to make is that the ontological parsimony I am pursuing is *qualitative*, not *quantitative*. We ought not to multiply *types* of entities; the number of instances of entities is not of interest. In a qualitative sense, it is incorrect to assert that the group of three leprechauns and four unicorns is more parsimonious than the group of ten leprechauns. Though there are quantitatively fewer entities in the first group, the second group has fewer kinds of things. The latter is the sort of parsimony of interest.

Third, there is a question as to which is the correct attitude to take toward purported entities that do not survive Ockham's Razor. It is sometimes stated, as Armstrong does in his support for the Eleatic principle, that we have no reason to believe in an entity that does not meet the appropriate

[17] Swinburne, (1997).

qualifications. In other words, the claim is an epistemic one – what reason do we have to believe in *x* if *x* does not make a causal difference? In the absence of a good answer, we ought not to believe *x*'s exist. Alternatively, sometimes the point is put in terms of rational acceptability.

I would like to make a stronger claim. If a purported entity makes no difference at all, it is true that we have no reason to believe it exists. But it also seems to me we have sufficient reason to believe it does not exist. (There is a separate question as to whether we can ever *know* that the purported entity makes no difference. Perhaps this is where skeptical agnosticism is appropriate.) For instance, in the case of qualia*, I believe we should say that they, as a type, do not exist and not merely that we have no reason to believe or rationally accept that they exist.

Though I would like to make this stronger claim, I do not know of a good way to argue for it. Fortunately, the weaker claims are good enough to achieve my objectives in the dissertation. I will often put the point, as I have above, in terms of what we are justified in believing, with the implication being that we are in no epistemic position to assert something exists under certain conditions. But, for the record, I must state that I believe we are in the stronger position of being justified in asserting that it does not exist unless certain conditions are met.

This raises the question of which conditions need to be met! To start, I propose to introduce a principle which reflects the respect for ontological parsimony in the spirit of Ockham's Razor. While the Eleatic Principle is controversial, I propose the following less controversial principle as a place to start:

> Difference Maker Principle (DMP): Everything that exists makes a metaphysical difference.

I cannot provide a precise definition of what it is to make a distinctly "metaphysical" difference in part because I am not sure a precise definition is possible. By appealing to metaphysical differences, I mean an ostensive definition – we have an idea of some uncontroversial metaphysical differences things can make as provided in Section 2. The DMP claims that everything that exists makes a difference of a sort *like those*. It is intended to be quite liberal in its accommodations; the main argumentative task is to examine proposals one by one. Almost no view on what counts as a metaphysical difference is intended to be ruled *a priori*.

The DMP is less controversial than the Eleatic Principle in at least the following respect – it does not explicitly draw a contrast between the concrete and non-concrete (i.e. abstract) realms.[18] I do not presuppose at the outset that evaluative properties must fit into the causal/space-time nexus in order to

[18] Baker (2003).

be real. Though I ultimately believe that the best case for believing evaluative properties exist is to place them into the causal nexus, I do not presume this at the outset.

1.3.1 A Trivial Principle?

The DMP has the look of a trivial principle. It might very well express a necessary truth. That is, it could be that the concept EXISTENCE and "making a difference" are conceptually linked such that one cannot satisfy one concept without satisfying the other. It might therefore seem that DMP is not a substantive principle and thus is of little interest.

I disagree with this sentiment. While I do not claim that DMP is a substantive principle (I do not claim to know what is conceptually entailed by our concept of EXISTENCE), it is sometimes helpful in inquiry to ask questions in different ways – even if the substantive matter expressed by these question remains the same!

Suppose Tom spends $10,000 on his fiancé's wedding ring. Is this an appropriate amount? Because we will naturally fill in some background information about Tom, we might be inclined to answer affirmatively. But if we are cautious we might ask a further question. Suppose Tom spent one ten-thousandth of his yearly income on the ring. Not nearly enough! But saying Tom spent $10,000 and saying he spent one ten-thousandth of his yearly income is saying the very same thing if Tom's income is one hundred million dollars per year. Even if it is true that according to a final theory, no further information is added by asking two analytically equivalent questions, in the midst of inquiry further relevant information can appear more salient by asking one question rather than the other. By asking what difference evaluative properties make if they exist, I hope to bring out information that is often taken for granted or implicitly assumed. In this way, a trivial principle might be helpful.

1.4 Work for Evaluative Properties

What difference do evaluative properties make? In this dissertation, I draw out three main contenders from the literature apart from the ones quickly canvassed earlier in this chapter. They are:

1) Referent of predicates/Subvenience base for evaluative concepts
2) Explaining resemblance
3) Qualitative nature

I will now say more about each of these views.

1.4.1 Referents of Predicates/Subvenience Base for Evaluative Concepts

A challenge John McDowell raised for ethical anti-realists has come to be known as the "pattern problem."[19] The pattern problem is offered as a challenge for theories that attempt to reduce or eliminate higher level evaluative properties. The problem for anti-realists is to provide an account of our current categorizations of what appear to be supervenient properties using only the vocabulary used to ascribe lower level subvenient or base properties. For example, there is a fairly common notion of injustice that we often invoke in legal, moral, political, economic, etc. situations. It would seem that when we invoke the notion of injustice, as many anti-realists suppose we do, we are picking out some relevant moral properties that inhabit the world. But, according to one popular understanding of evaluative anti-realism, there are no such properties – according to some, it is necessarily the case that such properties could not exist.

Proponents of the pattern problem claim that it is simply an impossible task to categorize the correct subvenient properties independently of the irreducible notion of injustice. If the conceptual tools we may use to organize the world into categories is limited to that of physics (or physics plus chemistry or physics plus biology or whatever) we simply will not be able to correctly organize cases of *injustice*. Therefore, the argument goes, a necessary element of classifying properties in the way we do is an understanding of supervening higher level properties, such as injustice. Armed with the irreducibly moral notion of injustice, the task of categorizing the correlative subvenient properties is much more manageable. The patterns take shape once we accept these irreducible higher level properties.

From the preceding considerations, we can extrapolate the following view. We are capable of correctly organizing relevant actions, states-of-affairs, character traits, etc. into appropriate evaluative categories. Thus, evaluative properties make a difference – they serve as the basis for correctly organizing these things. This work could not be done without evaluative properties.

1.4.2 Resemblance

One might think that even if the pattern problem can be solved without supposing that there are higher level evaluative properties to serve as a subvenient base for evaluative concepts, there is

[19] "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following" *Mind, Value, and Reality,* (1998).

further work along these lines for evaluative properties to do. Namely, evaluative properties explain the *resemblance* of the objects of evaluation, be they events, actions, states-of-affairs, etc. Some have argued that belief in universals is, at least in part, justified by the role they play in explaining similarities among objects. One might argue that, questions about repeatable entities aside, evaluative properties are needed to explain evaluative similarities.

This idea is related to the idea that evaluative properties serve as referents for evaluative predicates. Those who find the pattern problem pressing might very well at bottom be pressing on the need for something to explain not just the very fact that we can correctly categorize objects of evaluation, but also what it is about these objects that determines the patterns we find. Ultimately, such a project might rest on judgments of similarity and resemblance.

If the similarity of objects of evaluation are similar with respect to evaluative categories depends essentially on the nature of evaluative properties instantiated, this consideration might vindicate evaluative properties. But before we can properly assess this claim, there needs to be an account of what it looks like when properties are shared by distinct objects of evaluation that determines that they belong to the same evaluative category.

We are supposing that the evaluative supervenes on the natural. If so, then any time there is some resemblance among objects of evaluation in virtue of their evaluative properties one might suppose there is some corresponding resemblance among subvenient natural properties. But this supposition is too quick in light of considerations relating to the pattern problem – natural properties might not be so well organized though organization emerges at the evaluative level. If that is right, then there is a case to be made that evaluative properties are multiply realizable – disparate natural properties or sets of natural properties can "realize" the same evaluative property. Natural properties at the ground level are messy and disorganized, but they on occasion realize patterned and organized evaluative properties. We then have a tidy explanation for why we need distinctly evaluative properties to explain similarity among objects of evaluation.

At least one ethical non-naturalist (Shafer-Landau, 2003) and one naturalist (Brink, 1989) have argued that the multiple realizability of evaluative properties favors the view that evaluative properties must be "higher-level" properties – properties that hold "in virtue of" other properties.[20]

[20] I provide a fuller characterization of higher-level properties in Chapter 2.

1.4.3 Qualitative nature

Some authors in the philosophy of mind have contended that functionalism – in overly simplistic terms, the view that mental states are simply causal inputs and outputs – does not adequately capture the nature of mental states. This is because mental states have an irreducible (and perhaps non-causal) *qualitative nature*.

One might argue that an analogous case can be made for evaluative properties. Evaluative properties cannot be given a proper analysis if one does not include the distinct *evaluative qualitative aspect* of these properties. The claim is that evaluative properties have perceivable qualities. The difference evaluative properties make, according to this view, is not a causal difference. Hence, evaluative properties would fail to satisfy the Eleatic Principle. But the Eleatic Principle would be resisted on this front just as it is by those that think properties of consciousness are perfectly real but whose nature cannot be analyzed as causal. But evaluative properties under this characterization do satisfy the DMP; nothing else but evaluative properties have this evaluative qualitative character and this character cannot be given a naturalistic analysis.

Just what the proposed evaluative character of evaluative properties is is a tricky issue. We will look at an essay from Robert Audi (2010) to the effect that moral perception is both qualitative and representational. In that case, it is natural to suppose there is something in reality to ground the representational content of one's moral perception. The argument could then be that evaluative properties are indispensable in accounting for evaluative perception, of which specifically moral perception is a kind.

1.5 Non-naturalism

Providing the correct answer to what evaluative properties do, if they do anything at all, is a task for any theorist interested in metaethics. It would appear that those who endorse evaluative non-naturalism are sure to have particular interest in this question. But there does not seem to be any settled consensus about what, exactly, a non-naturalist position in metaethics amounts to. A place to start is to view it as a negative position: evaluative non-naturalists believe there are evaluative properties (or facts, or true evaluative propositions), but deny that these properties are natural. But, supposing that we have some grasp on what natural properties are like – we do not, but we can pick out

paradigmatic examples such as *mass* or *solubility* – the task remains to better understand *sui generis* non-natural properties.

Many ethical naturalists have found ethical non-naturalism mysterious or "spooky." In 1963, William Frankena wrote that "properties which are of a peculiar non-natural…sort…are hard to defend in the present climate of opinion" (Ethics, 86-7). Non-naturalist positions are held with suspicion still. For instance, Peter Railton claims that "moral reality certainly would be intolerably odd if moral facts were held to be *sui generis*" and Terence Cuneo writes that "One can't help but wonder whether the term ['moral nonnaturalism'] is empty or – more cynically – if it is primarily a term of disapprobation reserved for a range of positions that some philosophers find disagreeable."[21] Ethical non-naturalists can rightly complain that these sorts of claims amount to a hand-waving dismissal and thus are nearly impossible to refute. In due course I shall try to fortify the naturalists' suspicions by shedding light on some metaphysically unsound commitments to which non-naturalists (and some self-proclaimed naturalists!) must appeal. My aim is to be as specific in these criticisms as possible so as to give weight but also form to the charges of "spookiness" leveled against non-naturalism. Non-naturalists might welcome my effort, since it will provide them with something of substance to respond to and it may help them sharpen their views.

Apart from the "spookiness" of non-naturalism, any value realist who has appealed to supervenience, the constitution relation, or higher level properties to solve various puzzles in value theory must subject her theory to honest ontological assessment; if the solution to a puzzle depends upon unacknowledged but problematic ontological assumptions, then the solution fails or at least needs to be amended. Likewise, if evaluative properties are being put to some theoretical work, we must be certain that this represents work that manifests somehow in the metaphysics.

The next chapter details a few theses about properties in general. The literature on properties is unsurprisingly massive with many unresolved disagreements. Fortunately, we do not need very many of them to be solved in order to take seriously the implications of the many divergent views. For our purposes, it will be helpful to merely have the distinctions and implications in mind. This is not to say no substantive positions will be pursued. Some will be. But for the most part the substantive positions staked out will be agreed upon by those parties that give evaluative properties work to do.

[21] Railton (2003), 9; Cuneo (2007), 851.

CHAPTER TWO

Evaluative Properties

2.1 Introduction

In the following chapters, a number of arguments are going to depend upon some characterization of properties or other. For the most part, this dissertation will remain as neutral as possible with regard to many of the substantive debates over the nature of properties. Neutrality has its virtues, but it leads to the problem of describing clearly and concisely a broad range of related possible views regarding properties generally and on one's view of evaluative properties specifically. I have found that the best, though by no means perfect, way to do this is to introduce a number of positions available in many debates over the nature of properties in this early chapter so that I may assume familiarity with them when I come to relevant points in specific arguments later on. This method has the virtue of saving later arguments about the nature of evaluative properties from getting bogged down in questions about the nature of properties generally, but suffers from the vice of covering ground that will be very familiar to some all in one place. Along the way, I try to establish contact points that are relevant to arguments in later chapters. Many of the issues are given only a cursory treatment. Each issue deserves further consideration, but there is simply too much to do and I do not want to tax the reader's attention span. Those with an interest in the debate over naturalism versus non-naturalism in ethics might be particularly interested in Section 3.4 where I offer a substantive argument for a particular view of what demarcates properties as "natural."

2.2 Sparse versus Abundant Properties

According to some views, properties are easy to come by. They are variously described as "pleonastic," (Schiffer, 2003) "abundant," (Lewis, 1983 & 1986) "shadows of predicates," (Blackburn, 1998), and "minimalist" (Timmons, 1999). However, it has seemed to some to be important to distinguish these sorts of entities from a second kind of property. This second sort are "sparse" and have distinct roles to play (Lewis, 1983). Some theorists have thought these sorts of properties are the only sort of entities deserving the name, as the abundant sort seem to be too shallow or to lack any ontological heft. Some philosophers have argued that the fact that it would be so easy to prove such entities exist is a clear sign that their existence could not be the subject of ontological debate.[22]

I believe most philosophers interested in the realism/irrealism debate, the natural/non-natural debate, and others take themselves to be having a serious ontological discussion, and thus that they are arguing about the existence of properties that are to some degree sparse. (Though see Timmons, 1999). In the remainder of the dissertation, the use of the term 'property' and its cognates will refer to properties that are to some extent sparse.

The degree to which they are sparse will be some matter of debate. For instance, one might think that properties are not pleonastic, but still think that any predicate ('good', 'beautiful', etc.) that can be used as a noun can be viewed as a referring term, and thus each predicate refers to a distinct property. This would make properties far less sparse than those that think the only properties are those that are, for instance, described by a final theory of particle physics. There will be many places to draw the line in between, but some are less arbitrary than others. When it comes to evaluative properties, the options are narrowed even further. Much of what comes in the next sections and chapters turns on how sparse one thinks evaluative properties are, and how best to characterize the nature of evaluative properties that are to some degree sparse. To start, I turn to the issue of property/predicate isomorphism.

2.2.1 Against Isomorphism

If evaluative properties are sparse, then the case against the view that properties and predicates are isomorphic becomes particularly pressing. There are reasons for thinking that there are predicates that do not correspond to distinct properties, and for thinking that there are properties which possess

[22] Hofweber, (2005).

no corresponding predicate, nor will they ever.[23] If predicates are not in one-to-one correspondence, or in any other algorithmic relationship, then we cannot simply determine which properties exist simply from looking at the terms we use.[24]

Those who argue for isomorphism typically have one of two sets of commitments that lead them to this view. The first, nominalists or "property internalists," are skeptical of the existence of properties in a robust sense and argue that property terms are merely linguistic devices to expand the logical power of our vocabularies, particularly in cases where we do not have exact extensional knowledge.[25] In those cases, it is useful to quantify over property terms.

> [P]roperties are mere "shadows of predicates," as the metaphor goes, and quantification over them is a device that increases our expressive power in a certain purely logical or metaphysically thin way: quantification over properties is nothing but a generalization over the instances. According to this view such quantified statements will be truth-conditionally equivalent to infinite disjunctions or conjunctions of the instances. The expressive power we get from adding quantification over properties to our language is thus equivalent to a certain infinitary expansion of our language. Thus when I say that there is a property such that F then what I say is truth-conditionally equivalent to the infinite disjunction over all the instances in my language. (Hofweber, 2006: 158).

For instance, suppose I can remember that Herbert Hoover, Bill Clinton, Jimi Hendrix, and Babe Ruth all have something distinctive in common, but I cannot now recall what it is exactly. (The answer is that they are all left-handed.) It appears that there is some entity that I am claiming is instantiated by these four individuals, namely *left-handedness*. Since I seem to be quantifying over *something* and property terms appear to be referential, some deflationary story is needed. The property internalist argues that while there appears to be some ontological commitment here, it is actually only a shallow one, or as Hofweber says, "thin." The property internalist might claim that all properties are useful fictions, that they are mind- or language-dependent, or something along these lines.

The second group takes some properties to be language-dependent (and *ipso facto* mind-dependent) and for similar reasons as the property internalist. However, this group does not believe *all* properties are useful fictions or merely mind- or language-dependent. Instead, they think some

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[23] Many have made this case. For a succinct, and in my view compelling, account, see Molnar, 2003: 25-26.

[24] Note that one might think there might be important differences among kinds of properties while maintaining that predicates and properties are isomorphic. The thesis of property/predicate isomorphism in this context is the thesis that for every property there is a predicate and vice versa (or some algorithmic function among properties and predicates). This is compatible with a commitment to the existence of sparse properties, since one might argue that some subset of properties do some metaphysical work apart from being the shadow of a predicate.

[25] See Hofweber (2005)

properties are relatively cheap to come by, but they need not all be this way. They claim that there is a natural division in sorts of properties (this may or may not correspond to the division between sparse and abundant properties, depending upon whom one asks). The thought is that there can be properties by *stipulation* (Fodor, 1987: 33, 39). These sorts of properties will typically be relational, or pure "Cambridge," properties. Here is a colorful example from Fodor (1987: 33)

> I define 'is an *H*-particle at *t*' so that it's satisfied by a particle at *t* iff my dime is heads-up at *t*. Correspondingly, I define 'is a *T*-particle at *t*' so that it's satisfied by a particle at *t* iff my dime is tails-up at *t*. By facing my dime heads-up, I now bring it about that every particle in the universe is an *H*-particle…thus! And then, by reversing my dime, I change every particle in the universe into a *T*-particle…
>
> What is wrong with this egomaniacal fantasy? Well in a certain sense, nothing; barring whatever problems there may be about simultaneity, 'is *H* at *t'* and ís *T* at *t*' are perfectly well defined predicates and they pick out perfectly well defined (relational) properties of physical particles.

Though Fodor does not argue for isomorphism, it is clear that he is committed to it. He claims that one can create properties on a whim as long as one's definition meets some minimal standards of reasonableness (e.g. non-contradictory). But though these sorts of properties are cheap, you get what you pay for. Fodor argues that these stipulated properties are irrelevant to a property-bearer's causal powers and hence useless for many explanatory tasks (1987; 33-40). Presumably, there is other work some properties do that stipulated properties cannot. Even for those who accept them into their ontology, these properties do not carve nature at its joints, so to speak.

I see problems for both of these views in the context of some big-picture metaethical debates. The first group has special, though not insuperable, challenges describing the typical position with respect to supervenience and non-naturalism. These doctrines are usually characterized as depending on some substantive notion of properties. I do not know if one generates the sorts of problems I am interested in when the proper translation is completed. Would it make sense to ask what work properties do if they are all mind- or language-dependent? I simply do not know.

Both groups face the following problem. It is very difficult to see how to distinguish evaluative realism from irrealism if these views are correct. One traditional way of doing so is to claim that realists but not irrealists are committed to the existence of evaluative properties. But, all parties agree we use property concepts and terms in our evaluative thought discourse. If these practices by themselves are

enough to generate evaluative properties, then that characterization of the difference between the two views is useless.[26] Both sides will be committed to the existence of evaluative properties.

One might argue that isomorphism holds, but that to be a realist one must claim that evaluative properties simply are not of the stipulated, "Cambridge" variety. Irrealists accept evaluative properties, but only ones of the stipulated variety. The difference, then, between the realist and the irrealist is the nature of evaluative properties (and, in my terms, the work that the properties do).[27] In that case, it is something of a misnomer to label the view "irrealist," but I see no obvious way to rule out this position without significant argumentation. In later chapters, I will sometimes refer to the realist position as the one that accepts that there are evaluative properties. If one accepts the reality of internalist properties, one can translate my views into nominalist terms. If one accepts the reality of Fodorian stipulated properties, then one can interpret my claims about properties as claims about non-stipulated properties.

As I stated above, I am inclined to think that isomorphism does not hold and that we are well-served by a position that takes evaluative properties, or at least the conception of evaluative properties if one is an irrealist, to be, to some degree, sparse. How does this picture look? It recognizes that when we conceptualize the world using disparate vocabularies in disparate realms of discourse, it may occur that we have two or more ways of talking about the same thing, or that one way of talking about some phenomena develops antecedent to another, though there was nothing essential about this ordering. The Evening Star and the Morning Star both pick out a single object by a different name or description. There simply can be multiple ways of picking out the very same entity. These remarks are breezy and there is much more to say to properly defend such a view.[28] Obviously, there is more to say about the relation between predicates or concepts on the one hand and properties on the other – particularly in the evaluative realm. I pursue the issue further in the next chapter. For now I delve further into the state of play in theories of properties. In no particular order, here are some distinctions to keep in mind.

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[26] I am not the first to note this problem. See Huemer (2005), Dreier (2004), Fine (2001) and Wright (1994).

[27] Indeed, if I understand his positive view correctly, Dreier argues for a view along these lines. The work that realists, but not irrealists, think evaluative properties do is that of explaining our evaluative judgments or propositions. See pp. 39-42.

[28] But a lot has already been said. See Armstrong (1997), Dyke (2007), Ellis (2001) Heil (2003), Martin (2008), and Molnar (2003) for instances.

2.3 Repeatable Versus Particular Entities

In this dissertation, I will attempt to remain neutral on the question of whether properties are repeatable entities - capable of being wholly instantiated in different regions of space simultaneously – or particulars (or tropes or modes, etc) – entities that belong to their objects, so to speak. It is an interesting question as to whether or not properties are universals or particulars, but I, provisionally, do not see how this question makes a difference to the difference evaluative properties make.

One consideration which might seem to favor the view that evaluative properties are universals is that they could best explain the similarity between separate instances of a particular value. This is one of Armstrong's central considerations in favor of universals.[29] If one thinks that Armstrong is right, then one might think evaluative properties must be universals. But if one thinks there are other ways to account for similarity (or simply takes similarity to be metaphysically primitive), then it seems that no special considerations relating to evaluative properties would lead one to think otherwise. When it comes to evaluative properties, I am happy to take an agnostic position until I see reason to take a stand.

2.4 Higher-Order, Higher-Level

If one is content with real abundant properties, one will probably be content with *higher-order properties*, properties whose bearers are themselves other properties. Take the property *redness*. It is a property instantiated in an apple and it is also bears the property of *being the referent of the fourth word in the previous sentence*. Higher-order properties need not be so obviously gerrymandered, nor are they constrained to being linguistic properties. One popular account of the properties of consciousness has it that they are properties instantiated by some but not all instantiations of neural properties. For instance, certain views of qualia have it that conscious states bear further purely experiential states. Other doctrines which sometimes appeal to higher-order properties include the view that properties can themselves possess modal or historical properties. The property *being-a-statue* is sometimes thought to have different modal properties than *being-a-lump-of-bronze*, as the statue can persist through changes that a lump of bronze cannot and *vice versa*.

Higher-*order* properties are conceptually distinct form higher-*level* properties. Higher-level properties do not take other properties as their bearer; instead they are properties borne by an object

[29] Armstrong (1978), (1997) and elsewhere.

in virtue of the instantiation of other properties. They are properties an object instantiates which depend for their instantiation on the instantiation of other properties. Determinable properties, if there are any, provide good examples. The paint is a determinate shade of red – *crimson*. But, *in virtue of* it being crimson, it possesses the property of *redness*. Note, the *crimsonness* of the paint does not itself bear the property *redness* as it must if it is to be higher-*order*; it is the paint that bears it. (More about determinables and determinates in Section 3.3).

As we shall see, higher-level or higher-order properties are appealed to in the evaluative domain, as well. For instance, David McNaughton and Piers Rawling claim that normative facts are second-tier facts – they are facts dependent in some sense upon first-tier natural facts. (I propose for the moment to gloss over the otherwise important distinction between facts and properties. See Section 2.4). David Brink also seems to endorse the view that moral properties are higher-order properties, at least on one interpretation. This is because he argues that moral properties could be realized by natural properties or by supernatural properties. Depending on how one interprets his remarks, he could be taken to be arguing that there are different *ways* for moral properties to be: either natural or supernatural. Brink's view can easily be extrapolated further into the debate between naturalists and non-nonaturalists generally. If the evaluative properties themselves are seen as possessing different possible ways they could be, then, as objects can be certain ways (scarlet, have a mass of 10 grams, have a charge of -1), properties might bear the further property of *being non-natural*. Last, some who accept the supervenience of the evaluative on the natural seem to accept that evaluative properties are all higher-level or higher-order.

Those who believe that evaluative properties supervene on, but are not identical to, natural properties must take evaluative properties to be either higher-order or higher-level. Furthermore, those who argue that evaluative properties are non-natural ought to be explicit about how they understand this doctrine – do evaluative properties possess the higher-order property of *non-naturalness* or do actions and states-of-affairs possess the property of *non-naturalness* in virtue of some further property? Analogous demands apply to those who argue that evaluative properties are natural if it is possible for them to be otherwise (non-natural or supernatural perhaps).[30]

In the next chapter we will look at McNaughton's and Rawlings' account and in Chapter 4 we will look at Brink's.

[30] If the naturalist thinks it is impossible for there to be any properties that are not natural, there is less to explain. It will not be a *feature* of any individual that it is natural, as there will be no other way for it to be.

2.5 Relations and Relational Properties

No discussion of properties can be complete without touching on relations and relational properties. They are of vital importance to ethics and normativitiy. It is commonly taken as a truism in deontic logic that 'ought's refer to a relation of some sort – perhaps a relation between agents and actions, or perhaps agents and propositions.[31] Though relations and relational properties play a prominent role in normative inquiry, it is not clear that the *metaphysical realism* of these items matters much as a matter of pure logic. It is not clear what is lost from a theory of deontic logic if metaphysically respectable relations that link agents and actions do not actually exist. Still we will want to say there are conceptual connections between agents and actions which formalize normative thought and normative discourse. To put the point another way, one may be an irrealist about evaluative and normative properties and yet still subscribe to some system of deontic logic or other. Indeed, what seems most absurd would be to argue that we may eliminate our concept of OUGHT and any correlative system of deontic logic or thought altogether due to the lack of a corresponding metaphysically respectable relation. We might then wonder what work the *ought* relation does if it is not needed to anchor or act as truthmaker for our concept of OUGHT or a system of deontic thought.[32] That is the very question at issue in this dissertation and there seems to be no special distinction in this respect between relations and relational properties on the one hand and monadic properties on the other. There are areas where questions about value properties thought of as relations or as monadic might matter. For instance, response-dependent theories of value might have special interest in this question (If value properties are response-dependent, are they best thought of as relations between an agent and an object, event, or state-of-affairs? Can it make sense to claim that a response-dependent property is monadic? I think the answer is "yes," but I will not argue for it here). But these questions presuppose that the Difference Maker Principle is already satisfied by value properties generally, and we have determined that value properties are somehow earning their keep. At that point, distinguishing between relations, relational properties, and monadic properties can be of considerable interest. But for my purposes, it does not matter. In keeping with this local apathy, any time I use the term 'property' I mean to include relations and relational properties as well as monadic properties.

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[31] See Schroeder, (2011) on the differences between these two options.

[32] I hasten to add that, as before, I am not claiming that the *ought* relation does not play this truthmaking role. I am merely claiming that we can be certain it does only after we have determined that it does other indispensable metaphysical work.

2.6 Events and States-of-Affairs

I have been focusing on properties, but it is members of other ontological categories that we evaluate, or that are relevant for making evaluative judgments based on the evaluative properties they instantiate. For instance, actions themselves are open to evaluation (torturing someone is cruel act; giving one's own fair share to someone else is generous one), but actions are not properties; they are events. Likewise states-of-affairs (or facts) seem open to evaluation. For instance, consequentialists hold that we ought to evaluate competing entire states-of-affairs – some states-of-affairs are better or worse than others. So, one might wonder why I am focusing on evaluative *properties* rather than evaluative *states-of-affairs* or evaluative *events*. My hope is that little of importance in my arguments depends upon which of these ontological categories is the object of evaluative assessment in any particular case.

A common definition of events is that they are instances of an object or substance exemplifying a property at a time.[33] States-of-affairs are commonly understood as the structured instance of an object instantiating a property or two objects or properties instantiating a relation.[34] No one I know of has argued that an event or a state-of-affairs qualifies as evaluative – or, for that matter, non-naturalistically evaluative – due to the nature of the objects or substances involved. The distinguishing feature shared by evaluative events or evaluative states-of-affairs is typically taken to be the nature of the sorts of properties associated with them.[35] Thus, we evaluate giving one's own fair share to someone else positively because the property *fairness*, or some related property, is instantiated and not because it is merely an instance of the action-token of giving. Similarly, states-of-affairs may be evaluated based on the evaluative properties instantiated (say pleasure versus pain) and not due to the "thin" particulars that instantiates these properties. If I am right, then, evaluable actions and evaluative states-of-affairs are simply those that exemplify or instantiate evaluative properties. Thus, puzzles about evaluating events and states-of-affairs are derivative upon puzzles about value properties.

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[33] See, for instance, Kim, (1993) "Events as Property Exemplification."

[34] See Armstrong, (1997).

[35] Two further possibilities for what determines whether or not an event or state-of-affairs is evaluative (or non-naturalistically evaluative) that I will not pursue are 1) that it is the nature of the instantiation relation itself, or some closely related relation, or 2) that it is the compositional structure of the event or state as a whole.

2.7 Abstract Properties

Some philosophers argue that properties are *ante rem*, i.e. exist outside of space and time, and do not figure into the causal nexus of the concrete universe. By contrast, some argue that properties must exist *in rebus* – that is, all properties that exist must be instantiated by concrete individuals, and that the properties themselves are *embedded* in the concrete world (perhaps playing a more direct role in causal relations, as well). There is, however, a strand of argument that supports the view that evaluative properties, like numbers or propositions, are best thought of as *ante rem*.

One of the principal considerations in favor the view that properties exist *ante rem*, very much simplified, is that we can be certain that some properties exist though the natural laws and contingent order of the physical world do not conspire to instantiate them. Consider the claim that some truths involving evaluative properties are necessary truths. Derek Parfit (2011; 608) writes

> Fundamental normative truths are not about how the world happens to be. In any possible world, pain would be in itself bad, or *prima facie* to be relieved rather than perpetuated. Similarly, even if the laws of nature had been different, rational beings would have had reasons to do what would be needed to achieve their rational ends or aims.

Parfit argues that the fact that pain is bad is necessary fact. That means that even in worlds where no creature has felt pain, pain is still bad in that world, as it is in *every* world (and we can know this). To fix intuitions, suppose that there is a world, W_Z of qualia-less "zombies" – creatures who are functionally like us in every respect but do not experience the qualitative aspects of consciousness.[36] In W_Z, the zombies will participate in the same evaluative discourse and thought that we do up to and including grimacing in pain when undergoing bodily damage.

Furthermore, they will utter that pain is bad and ought to be "relieved rather than perpetuated." These zombies, by stipulation, will have never experienced pain. Yet, according to the view of *ante rem* evaluative properties, their utterances will nonetheless be *true*! They would be correct to utter that pain ought to be relieved. Furthermore, one would be correct to assert in the actual world that pain is bad in W_Z. The metaphysical backing for this view might consist in the thought that the very

[36] I draw, of course, from Chalmers, (1996). Some will be inclined to suppose that such a world is impossible and some will be inclined to argue that such a world is not conceivable in the first place. Perhaps they are right, but I nonetheless think the example helps draw attention to the relevant points I am trying to get at – it is useful as a heurstic. Nothing of substance rests on the example.

same property of *badness* (or some correlative property) exists necessarily and need not be instantiated in a particular world to exist there as well.[37]

This argument provides some reason to think that an *ante rem* conception of properties is particularly appropriate when it comes to evaluative properties even apart from the standard arguments regarding properties generally. I do not take a stand on the issue of whether or not evaluative properties are *ante rem* or *in rebus* here, but I do think there are important implications that follow based on which view one adopts. For instance, while I do not think Parfit's consideration that pain is necessarily bad in all possible worlds establishes the view that evaluative properties are *ante rem* (nor does he argue that it does, either), the view has a simple and satisfying explanation for why it is true. Those who disagree must find a satisfying explanation of their own. However, as I mention later in Section 4, it is difficult to square a conception of *ante rem* properties with naturalism.[38]

2.8 Dispositional Versus Categorical Entities

Many theorists accept a conceptual divide between the *dispositional* on one hand and the *categorical* on the other. It is matter of heavy debate how to make this distinction or if it can even be made at all. However, it is helpful to point to a possible distinction in order to sort out intuitions when it comes to evaluative properties. This is yet another case where just knowing that there is a (possible) distinction to be made can be helpful for value theorists even if the issue remains unresolved in detail.

Dispositions, such as fragility, conductivity, or solubility, are tightly linked to stimulus and manifestation conditions. If the glass vase possesses the disposition of fragility, this means that characteristically, when the glass is struck by a sufficient force, it will shatter into many pieces. The stimulus condition for fragility then is something along the lines <struck with a significant force> and the manifestation condition is <shatter into many pieces> or something similar.

Categoricals, such as the microstructure of a glass vase, the composition of a copper wire, or combination of the chemical compositions of water and salt, are typically thought to lack a conceptual tie to conditionals or stimulus and manifestation conditions. The microstructure of the glass vase remains the same regardless of environment.

Some authors have argued that the dispositional and the categorical is not merely a conceptual condition, but that it marks an ontological divide. There are dispositional properties (or properties that

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[37] I do not know if Parfit would assent to such a view, as he attempts to set metaphysics to the side in his discussion of his view. See pp. 594-606.

[38] But see Linsky and Zalta (1995). Bird, (2007) also might disagree. See pp. 51-55.

confer dispositions to their objects) and there are categorical properties, or that there are only dispositional properties, or that there are only categorical properties, or that all properties are both essentially dispositional *and* categorical (if this distinction is not taken to be conceptually impossible i.e. in the case that the categorical is not *defined* as simply the "non-dispositional"); I will refer to these views, respectively as 'dispositionalism', 'categoricalism', and 'the hybrid view'.

Though I think a complete account of evaluative properties accepts one or another of these views, the particular arguments I consider regarding the differences properties make do not hinge on doing so now. This is because the candidates for difference-making I consider are (arguably) consistent with each kind of property regardless of their exact nature. For instance, there is a debate over whether or not the causal roles properties play is best explained by their being dispositional or their being categorical.[39] Whichever of these views wins out, there will be a readymade account which can accommodate evaluative properties. The same reasoning applies for questions about reference, resemblance, and supervenience. The details change depending upon which view is correct, but they can all be accommodated without much fuss. However, there is a somewhat closely related distinction that will play a large role in later arguments. It is the distinction between functional and qualitative properties.

2.8.1 Functional Versus Qualitative Properties

In Chapter 4 and especially Chapter 5 characterizations of mental states as dispositional – or *functional* – or as *qualitative* provide useful analogues for thinking about the nature of evaluative properties. Typically, functional and qualitative properties have added connotations that are not essential to the dispositional/categorical divide. For instance, while functionalism shares with dispositionalism a focus on the causal profile of the properties in question (i.e. the actual and potential causal relations associated with those properties) the former takes mental states and resulting behaviors to be the relevant relata. Furthermore, both functional and qualitative states and are tightly bound to the concept of consciousness.[40] As we shall see, though the question of whether evaluative properties are best thought of as dispositional or categorical is the interesting question from the perspective of pure metaphysics, the analogies from the metaphysics of philosophy of mind are sometimes used to shed light on the nature of evaluative properties.

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[39] For a sample, see Armstrong (1997); Bird, (2007); Mumford (1998); Prior (1982); Prior, et. al (1982), and others.

[40] Some argue the interesting aspects of consciousness belong to qualitative states only. See Chalmers (1996).

John McDowell, for instance, has drawn upon his views regarding qualitative mental states (secondary properties) to explicate his views regarding value properties. One of the aspects they share, in McDowell's view, is a lack of causal efficacy. "Now it is, if anything, even more obvious with values than with essentially phenomenal qualities that they cannot be credited with causal efficacy" (McDowell, 2002: 142).[41] Yet they are nonetheless real. Our subjective experience of value grounds the reality of evaluative properties and also explains our knowledge of value properties. He continues:

> To press the analogy is to stress that evaluative "attitudes"…are like (say) colour experience in being unintelligible except as modifications of a sensibility like ours. The idea of value experience involves taking admiration, say, to represent its object as having a property that (although there in the object) is essentially subjective in much the same way as the property that an object is represented as having by an experience of redness – that is, understood adequately only in terms of the appropriate modification of human…sensibility (143).

So, like qualitative phenomenal states, we can determine the reality of evaluative properties due to the non-causal difference they make to our evaluative sensibilities independently of any causal role other properties are thought to have.[42]

If he is right, then those who view properties as essentially functional, or dispositional, will have unwarranted skepticism regarding the viability of a proper account of evaluative properties. We cannot assume at the outset that evaluative properties must satisfy the Eleatic Principle, as a dispositionalist would have it. On the other hand, one who adopts this view owes a proper accounting of what it can mean for evaluative properties to have non-causal qualitative natures. This is the topic of interest in Chapter 5.

2.9 Evaluative Properties: Determinables, Determinates, Both?

W. E. Johnson first distinguished "determinable" predicates from "determinate" predicates.[43] The distinction is easy to grasp intuitively, though articulating precise necessary and sufficient conditions is challenging. A stock example is the predicate 'red'. 'Red' covers a range of different yet more or less similar shades of color. For instance, scarlet, vermilion, and ruby are all shades of red to which the predicate 'red' is appropriately applied. Furthermore, 'red' applies to each particular shade in this range

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[41] Others reject the notion that qualia are causally inefficacious since they are the cause of the experience or judgment of the experience. McDowell is claiming that qualia cannot cause the experience or judgment of experience because it is an aspect of that very experience or judgment of experience.

[42] I discuss a number of possibilities for non-causal difference-making in Ch. 1.

[43] Johnson, (1921).

but does not pick out any particular shade all on its own – there is no particular shade of red picked out by the term 'red'. 'Red', then, is a determinable predicate, while 'scarlet' and 'vermilion' are examples of determinate predicates relative to 'red'.

Some philosophers believe that properties, too, can be divided into determinates and determinables. A ruby is both determinately ruby red but also instantiates the property *redness* in virtue of its instantiating that particular shade. There are a number of important conditions to keep in mind in thinking about determinate and determinable properties. First, if a property-bearer possesses a determinable, then it necessarily possesses some determinate or other. An object cannot be red without being some particular shade of red, though there is not any one shade it must necessarily be. Second, assuming that there are both determinates and determinables, then the possession of a determinate ensures the possession of some determinable. The ruby, the patch of paint, and the blood splatter are each a different shade of red, but they all possess the determinable *redness*. Third, a property-bearer cannot possess two determinates at the same level.[44] The ruby cannot be both ruby red and blood red. Fourth, the determinates that fall under the determinable must resemble each other to varying degrees and must share in this resemblance in a way such items that do not fall under the determinable do not. All of the determinate shades of red resemble each other to some degree in a way that all the determinate shades of blue do not.[45]

This distinction is sometimes but rarely recognized by many working on evaluative properties. But frequently a stance can be extrapolated from other things these authors say about the nature of evaluative properties. For instance, T. M. Scanlon (1998) argues that the property of goodness and other value properties are "the purely formal, higher-order properties of having some lower-order properties that provide reasons of the relevant kind" (97).[46] According to Scanlon, these higher-order properties can have a variety of determinates. He claims that "many different things can be said to be good or to be valuable" and, tellingly, that "the *grounds* for these judgments vary widely. There does not seem to be a single, reason-providing property that is common to all these cases" (97-98, emphasis added). The picture Scanlon presents is this. Goodness is instantiated when any of a range of properties, similar in that each is reason-providing, is instantiated. But goodness is not itself a member

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[44] There are levels of determinates and determinables. For instance, *redness* is a determinable in comparison with *ruby redness*, but it is a determinate in relation to *colored*.

[45] The first four conditions follow Armstrong (1997) and Gillette and Rives (2005) closely. See Funkhouser (2006) for some overlap.

[46] It is unclear to me if Scanlon's view is best described using higher-order or higher-level properties according to the terminology of Section 2.2.

of this group of reason-providing properties. Goodness, then, appears to be a determinable property with various "shades" of reason-providing properties as determinates.[47]

Contrast this conception of the property of goodness with G.E. Moore's contention that goodness is a simple and unanalyzable property possessed by each and every good thing.[48] It seems to me to be eminently reasonable to assume that Moore did not take the property of goodness to be determinable. Moore, like Scanlon, thought that multiple things can be said to be good or to be valuable. But it is clear that Moore did not think that possessing the property of *goodness* guarantees (or "entails" as Armstrong puts it) the possession of some further, more determinate property of which *goodness* is a determinable. To put it informally, Moore believed there were no "shades" of goodness – goodness is as determinate as it gets.[49]

This issue becomes particularly salient when we examine the role evaluative properties might play in grounding similarity in our evaluative judgments. If similarity is grounded in identity, then it matters what, exactly, is the property shared by distinct objects of evaluation.[50] Given the diversity of evaluations and of their grounds, it is easier to conceive evaluative properties as determinables rather than determinates. Color provides a good analogy. Many things are red, but few things are the exact shade of red as a polished ruby. Similarly, the intuitive view seems to be that many objects of evaluation are good, but the *ways* in which they are good are indefinitely many. An action can be good because it is courageous, or because many people will benefit, or because it respects someone's fundamental rights. In that case, it is difficult to see how any determinate shade of *goodness* could be manifested in each and every case. (Of course, if one views *goodness* as a *sui generis* property of the sort Moore envisions, then one will think otherwise. But then *goodness* will be a special property that does not mesh well with at least one intuitive picture.) However, if *goodness* is viewed as a determinable property, it is much more plausible that actions that instantiate determinate shades of *goodness* – e.g. courage, beneficial outcomes, respect for persons – instantiate the very same *determinable* property.

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[47] Frank Jackson (1998) and Bart Streumer (2008; especially p. 547) seem to be commited to the view that normative properties are determinables.

[48] Moore (1993).

[49] It would take more argument than I have provided to definitively show that Moore thought of *goodness* as determinate. But I believe the point regarding the difference in thinking *goodness* is determinate versus thinking it is determinable has been made.

[50] I say more about the relation between similarity and identity in Ch. 4.

2.10 Natural versus Non-Natural Entities

Most of the previous distinctions will find a way directly into arguments I cover in the remaining chapters. I would like to make one digression that while not directly relevant to later chapters, will remain lurking in the background. I intend to wade into the debate between evaluative naturalists and non-naturalists with respect to evaluative properties.

The preceding topics are cases in which I do not here take much of a stand. However, in my view, there are better and worse ways to characterize the divide between natural and non-natural properties and I try to make that case in what follows. I do not here argue for the naturalist position, though I am very much sympathetic to it. Instead I focus on the narrow issue of how best to characterize what it is to be a natural property in the context of this debate.[51]

The first thing to note is that the natural/non-natural classification schema is a purely theoretical device that does not find much grounding in ordinary thought and language. The same is not true of the natural/supernatural distinction. Many people find it intuitive to suppose that there is more to the world than what the sciences, or even reason perhaps, can explain. But the natural/non-natural divide is a technical apparatus built to accommodate the previously vague thought that the evaluative, normative, or moral is simply unlike the descriptive or natural. Since this is the case, we cannot appeal to common sense or ordinary language to settle the question of how best to characterize natural and non-natural properties. Instead, we must assign a definition that best captures the work we want this distinction to do.

Before we look at a number of accounts one finds in the literature in some detail, note that both avowed naturalists and avowed non-naturalists are committed to some conception of the distinction.[52] It is obvious why naturalists must be so committed, but there are times when non-naturalists place the burden on naturalists to provide the correct account. However, non-naturalists must have some notion of natural properties in order to make the claim that evaluative properties are *sui generis*. In what way

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[51] I should note that I do not here advocate in favor of naturalism nor for non-naturalism. I merely offer a criterion for distinguishing between them.

[52] Some theorists are happy to elide the distinction – they are comfortable having their view labeled naturalistic or non-naturalistic depending on one's definition. These theorists will mostly be inclined to assert that what is important about their view is maintained whatever one thinks of naturalism or non-naturalism in other domains. For instance, a realist about evaluative properties might be more committed to realism than naturalism defined in a particular way, and so if one were to argue for a type of naturalism which excluded evaluative properties, this theorist might think of herself as a non-naturalist. This would not necessarily mean she has argued *in favor* of naturalism.

are they unique? How can this question be answered without some conception of what the ordinary type of property is essentially like?

Several characterizations of what it is to be a "natural" property can be found in the literature. It behooves us to have some criteria for a successful characterization. The first criterion I propose is that the correct definition must have the right scope. We need a definition that is wide enough to encompass an enormous variety of the features of the natural world that are not in dispute, but that is narrow enough to include only these features. Second, the correct characterization should be informative. We will see that there is a tendency to appeal to some indirect indication of a property's naturalness that is not straightforwardly helpful in providing a method for fixing the correct extension of natural properties. The third and last criterion is that we ought not define natural properties in a way that implicitly (or explicitly) makes 'natural' synonymous with 'non-evaluative' or 'non-normative'. This would beg the question against evaluative naturalists, who believe evaluative properties are both natural and evaluative.

The characterizations in the literature fall into three broad camps: the language camp, the methodology camp, and the metaphysics camp. I address them in order.

Some authors claim that natural properties are those that are referred to by descriptive (i.e. non-normative) predicates. For example, Bart Streumer claims that "a descriptive property is a property that can be ascribed with a descriptive predicate."[53] Similarly, Michael Huemer takes "'natural properties' to include all properties (including relational properties) that can be referred to using non-evaluative terms."[54]

The singular strength of the language approach is that, if correct, it would allow us to know whether a property were natural or not just by knowing how to talk about it. If we know the nature of our terms, we know the nature of the property.

The disadvantages of the language approach are in my view decisive. There is an ambiguity in this sort of characterization. Does the nature of the term (descipritve or normative, evaluative or non-evaluative) determine the nature of the property, or does the nature of the property determine which terms may be used to refer to or ascribe it? Either reading is compatible with both Streumer's and Huemer's definition, and each invites its own difficulties.

The problem with the first reading (naturalness of term determines naturalness of property) is that it seems incorrect to say that the nature of the terms we use to represent the world and its

[53] Streumer (2008, p. 538). I take Streumer's use of the term 'descriptive' to be synonymous with how I am using the term 'natural'.

[54] Huemer (2005, p. 66).

properties could determine the nature of those properties, if what we have in mind are properties that are to some degree sparse. As I have characterized it, the sparseness of properties just is the view that properties are not merely mind- or language-dependent properties. If that is right, then language alone does not determine whether a property of interest is natural or non-natural. It is better to say that the naturalness of a property belongs to that property regardless of how it is represented.

The problem with the second reading is that it is no longer a useful way of characterizing natural properties if we do not already know what a natural property is. According to the second reading, there is an isomorphism between natural predicates and natural properties, but it is the properties that determine which type of predicates are appropriately applied. But in that case, we are no further in understanding how to distinguish natural properties from non-natural ones. Thus, the second criterion is not satisfied as this account would not be informative. A second disadvantage is that we need an account of what the difference between natural and normative terms is. One nice way to do that is to claim that it is something about the properties that determines the difference in language – that we tailor language to match reality, and not the other way around. A property's naturalness determines whether or not it is appropriate to refer to it with a non-evaluative term. Given these significant difficulties, I believe the language approach is untenable.

The second broad camp thinks the naturalness of a property is determined by the methodology by which we come to know and talk about these properties. There are at least two approaches in this camp. Following David Copp, we can call the first the ostensive approach. Frank Jackson and possibly David Brink endorse such a view.[55] According to this view, we start by noting exemplars of natural objects (tables, mountains, etc.). We then attempt to generate a complete account of the world that would encompass all the properties had by these natural objects. Copp's objection to this view is a good one. A non-naturalist can easily grant that we ought to account for all the properties possessed by natural objects in the world but still object that we will not have a complete account of every property in the world until we include non-natural properties – especially in the evaluative or normative realm. But in that case, we ought to acknowledge that we are no longer merely tallying natural properties via ostension. Instead, we need to determine a method of proper demarcation.

A second view within the methodology camp is David Copp's, which he calls "empiricalist." Though his view is nuanced, for our purposes we can boil it down to the following thesis:

[55] Copp (2007, p. 37).

(N) A property is natural if and only if any synthetic proposition about its instantiation that can be known, could only be known empirically.[56]

He includes the bit about synthetic propositions because he believes the naturalist can grant that there are analytic moral truths that we can know *a priori*. In my view, this definition has the advantage of carving up the moral epistemologies most frequently associated with moral naturalists and non-naturalists. As Copp notes, many ethical naturalists such as Peter Railton and Richard Boyd have emphasized the similarities between the sciences and ethics. On the flip side of the coin, non-naturalism and intuitionist epistemology have traditionally come packaged together. A simple summation of intuitionist epistemology is that it claims that moral knowledge is gained through *a priori*, non-inferential reflection on moral cases or moral propositions. Copp's empiricalist view nicely captures these contrasting views.

The empiricalist account does not make room for a theoretical possibility – that we learn about *non-natural* evaluative properties empirically. It is true that many have thought that non-naturalism about evaluative properties and intuitionism regarding moral epistemology come together in a package. But there is conceptual space for a view which rejects intuitionism, but nonetheless has it that evaluative properties are non-natural. To take an analogous case, while some believe that it is rational to believe that God exists based on non-empirical justification, others have argued that there are empirical reasons to believe in God, such as the *a posterori* knowledge we have of the orderly universe. Here we have a case of a supernatural metaphysics but empirical epistemology coinciding. Similarly, one might think that non-natural property might be capable of interacting with natural properties in such a way as to make empirical investigation a possibility, and yet be unlike natural properties in some important way. The empiricalist account does not allow for this possibility.

A further complaint about the empiricalist view is similar to my complaint about the language approach – even if we leave the possibility of an empiricalist non-natural value theory aside, I believe that to the extent that natural properties are discoverable empirically, our ability to learn about them in this way is *due* to their naturalness and not definitive of them. While an empiricalist account may arrive at the correct extension of natural properties, what explains this fact will be something about the nature of those properties, and not directly with how we *learn* about them.

This brings us to the third camp which classifies properties as natural based on their metaphysical or physical status. We will look at two accounts that fall within this camp. The first is the

[56] Copp, 39. This formulation is not Copp's official view; see p. 43. However, it captures the essence of the view and my criticisms do not depend on the subtleties introduced in his official definition.

causalist account. According to this account, a property is natural just in case it is causally efficacious. I believe this view is implausible, since it would count supernatural properties with causal profiles, say through divine intervention, as natural properties, and this definition is too wide. I address it here because I believe that there is an intuition behind causalism that is on the right track and that this leads nicely into what I believe is the most perspicuous view.

The second account is more successful. In my view, a good case can be made for identifying natural properties, following Armstrong, as those that are embedded in space-time.[57] A spatio-temporal account of natural properties nicely binds the causalist intuition and the empiricalist intuition. Even if we allow for the possibility of causation involving supernatural properties, we ought not allow for these supernatural properties to be regulated and connected nomologically in the same way the properties inhabiting the spatio-temporal world are. So the spatio-temporal account captures what seems right about the causalist account without having the consequence of counting God's properties as natural. Since spatio-temporal properties are governed by laws, and the sciences are well suited for studying law-governed phenomena, they also are of just the right sort of property to be studied empirically. Thus, the spatio-temporal approach inherits the advantage of empiricalism but gets the direction of dependence correct – the naturalness of properties determines the way we find out about them.

Copp argues that such a view will not do. He writes, "on various...conceptions of properties, *properties* are not in space-time, and this ought to be compatible with the thesis that there are *natural* properties."[58] This raises the thorny question of what relationship abstract objects can have to a naturalist picture or stance regarding reality. As I mentioned in Section 3.1, I believe it must be antagonistic. There are puzzles about the exemplification relation between *ante rem* properties and the objects that possess them and about how we could have knowledge of these properties were we to have it. There does seem to be any possible solution which is naturalism-friendly. I am quite comfortable with classifying *ante rem* properties as non-natural, and hence do not find Copp's objection to the spatio-temporal account of naturalness of compelling. However, I can see how reasonable people might disagree. Quine, Lewis, and other naturalistically inclined philosophers have accepted some abstract entities into their ontologies and that does provide some reason to think some amount of Platonism is compatible with naturalism. Copp's empiricalism serves well for those who accept both Platonism about properties and a naturalistic picture of reality.

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[57] Armstrong (1997), pp. 5-6.

[58] Copp, 38.

It would be nice to be able to define *non-natural properties* as whatever properties are not capture by the spatio-temporal/nomological account. However, the task requires more care to distinguish *non-natural* properties from other sorts of properties that violate my account, namely *supernatural* or, as Moore put it, *metaphysical* properties.[59] It is unclear how much explication of and account of purported *sui generis* properties allows for, so I will simply say that two necessary conditions for a property to be non-natural are that its instances do not participate in spatio-temporal nor nomological relations, and it is not divine, mystical, spiritual, or in any other way directly related to theological or religious notions.

2.11 Conclusion

It is important to have one's ontological house in order when theorizing in metaethics. It is easy to think one is having a discussion about realism versus irrealism only to learn much later that it was really about whether properties must have causal profiles or not in order to warrant belief in their existence. There are many divergent views when it comes to properties so it is no surprise that some of them have an impact in metaethics. By discussing them explicitly in this and later chapters, I hope to avoid confusion about which distinctions matter and in which way. Having addressed these issues, it is time to look at some arguments regarding the difference evaluative properties make.

[59] Moore (1993, 16).

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Work: Good versus Good-making

3.1 Introduction

In earlier chapters, I made the case for thinking that we are owed an argument for the existence of evaluative properties which illustrates what difference they make. If they do not make a difference that depends upon their existence, we are not warranted in believing they exist. One obvious role for properties to play is to be the referent of predicates. Suppose one claims "The ruby on your ring is red." This view takes it that there is some entity *redness* whose instantiation is part of the truth conditions for the utterance – the utterance is ascribing the instantiation of some entity, namely a property. One might argue that similar reasoning applies to evaluative predicates and properties as well – perhaps 'beauty' ascribes the property *beauty*, 'good' *goodness*, 'cruel' *cruelty*, and so on. This chapter holds this intuitive thought up to critique.

3.1.1 The Pattern Problem

One motivation for thinking evaluative properties must exist is that we cannot adequately account for our evaluative thought, language, and, consequently, practices without them. If we can rely for a moment on an intuitive divide between the evaluative and the descriptive, it is a platitude that we can appropriately sort descriptive phenomena – actions, events, character traits, and the like – according to their appropriate evaluative "kinds." Supposing full awareness of the relevant descriptive facts, we have a tendency to count physical abuse of a dog, withholding food from a hungry infant, and putting a prison inmate in permanent solitary confinement as cruel. Someone who overcomes his fear of speaking in order to give an important presentation, someone who runs toward enemy fire to save a fallen comrade, and someone who asks a stranger out on a date each demonstrates courage. From the perspective of pure description, the actions in the two respective groupings have little in common, and yet there is wide agreement about their evaluative status. I have provided only a few examples. There

are indefinitely many descriptive phenomena that could fall under the category of cruelty. The same is true of courage, as well. There are also indefinitely many recognizable evaluative categories.

The ability to appropriately categorize evaluative kinds might seem uninteresting if it were the case that we were taught some formal or implicit rules for correctly categorizing them and from then on relied on rote memory to get things right. But this is not the case. In actuality we are adept at handling new cases. There are as yet undiscovered or yet to be enacted forms of cruelty as there are of acts of courage and kindness. When we come across them, we will know what to say about them (again, supposing all the relevant descriptive facts are known). Furthermore, we can imagine them now and have an opinion about them. We can even imagine farfetched or even perhaps physically impossible cases, such as a conflict among gods perhaps, and still have some idea of how they stack, evaluatively speaking. The question arises of how best to explain this capability.

One way – the straightforward way – is to posit that our evaluative concepts and terms can successfully refer to evaluative properties where they are instantiated.[60] (This is compatible with the possibility of defective cases where reference is unsuccessful. The *aim* will still be successful reference.) These properties would, according to most, supervene on the descriptive properties. But the presence of the relevant descriptive properties and our knowledge of them would not in themselves be enough to explain our ability to correctly categorize them at the evaluative level for the reasons just mentioned. Instead, the view goes, there must be some appropriate evaluative fit between our attitudes, concepts, and language on the one hand and the reality of the irreducibly evaluative properties on the other.

This intuitive account would then have a three-part explanation for the ability to correctly categorize descriptively disparate items. The first part is that there is that there is an external reality comprised in part of evaluative properties with which evaluative terms and concepts are in correspondence. The second is that this external reality has a particular structure; there are natural categories in evaluative reality. Last, our language and concepts correspond to this structure (or perhaps ought to, or tend to, or are disposed to, to account for the possibility of correspondence failure). This is how to account for the ability to categorize correctly with our evaluative terms and concepts. There must be a match between language, thought, and reality.[61]

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[60] There are perhaps other ways to go about it. I offer some suggestions regarding an alternative explanation in the next chapter.

[61] The inspiration for the pattern problem arises primarily from John McDowell's work. The account provided in this and the previous paragraph sound very *unlike* McDowell, however. McDowell's work on rule-following and his view that value properties are not secondary qualities strongly suggests that he would be skeptical of the notions of correspondence and external reality in play and that he would not endorse this account.

Things are trickier if one disallows the possibility of supervening evaluative properties and kinds, as an eliminitavist or nihilist might, or sees them as subjective projections spread upon the descriptive world, as the projectivist or quasi-realist might (cf. Blackburn, 1993). In that case, one must explain getting evaluative categorizations right without appeal to an objective fittingness between our attitudes and the properties themselves. The only pieces of the puzzle in this case are our contingent attitudes and purely descriptive properties. The question then becomes how we can be sure someone who does not share the same attitudes will, or even can, categorize actions, events, character traits, and the like into the same evaluative kinds (i.e. the correct kinds). Someone who does not share the same attitudes might possess qualitatively identical beliefs about the presence of the relevant descriptive properties, and yet come to wildly different evaluative conclusions depending upon her psychological constitution. Jack and Jill might agree that much pain and suffering is caused, but differ in opinion as to whether or not that is a good or bad thing. And what to say about how to handle new cases? Getting the categorizations "correct" on this view amounts to consistency and advocacy, not to recognition.

But correct categorization is only the first part of the challenge. The second part is to square all of the preceding with a commitment to supervenience. In the case of the irrealist, the relevant supervenience will not be between evaluative properties and descriptive properties *per se*, but between evaluative judgments, concepts, or thought on the one hand and descriptive properties on the other. Presumably, the irrealist will point towards the pressure for rational consistency among judgments as part of the explanation for why our judgments respect supervenience.

According to one sort of realist, the mouthpiece for the argument we are here considering, evaluative predicates carve at the joints of evaluative reality, evaluative properties constitute these joints, and furthermore, pretender predicates would not carve so well. The picture is that it is not arbitrary or accidental that placing an inmate in permanent solitary confinement is cruel. The resultant suffering plays an essential, non-accidental role in determining the supervening property of *cruelty*. This picture is simple and powerful, and it is little wonder why it is so commonly held.

John McDowell has offered skepticism that the irrealist can offer an adequate alternative. According to him, the irrealist must claim that:

> The extension of the associated term, as it would be used by someone who belonged to the community, could be mastered independently of the special concerns that, in the community, would show themselves in admiration or emulation of actions seen as falling under the concept. That is: one could know which actions the term would be

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The intuitive account on offer is not intended to be faithful to the totality of McDowell's work – it is a generic realist account of the relation between evaluative thought, language, and properties.

> applied to, so that one would be able to predict applications and withholdings of it in new cases – not merely without oneself sharing the community's admiration…but without even embarking on an attempt to comprehend their special perspective (201-202)

What McDowell finds most implausible is the thought that we might "disentangle" the descriptive properties of the world and our evaluative judgments as cleanly as the irrealist suggests. His suggestion is that without a particular sort of sensibility, it is impossible to apply evaluative concepts in the way that we, in actuality, do. Correctly applying evaluative concepts seems to require more than familiarity with the colorless descriptive realm. At the same time, it is also not simply arbitrary projections of our minds – the coloring must stay inside the lines. So the correct application of evaluative concepts requires a sensibility that can adroitly recognize the evaluative patterns which are constituted by heterogeneous mixes of descriptive properties. This predicament gives rise the so-called "pattern problem." McDowell (1998) puts it the following way:

> It does not follow…that the set of items to which a supervening term is correctly applied need constitute a kind recognizable as such at the level supervened upon. In fact supervenience leaves open this possibility, which is just the possibility my skepticism envisages: however long a list we give of items to which a supervening term applies, described in terms of the level supervened upon, there may be no way, expressible at the level supervened upon, of grouping such items together. Hence there need be no possibility of mastering, in a way that would enable one to go on to new cases, a term that is to function at the level supervened upon, but is to group together exactly the items to which competent users would apply the supervening term. Understanding why just those things belong together may essentially require understanding the supervening term. (202)

The picture is this: there are recognizable evaluative patterns that emerge from highly heterogeneous mixtures of descriptive properties. These patterns would be unrecognizable if one focused narrowly only on the mixtures of descriptive properties, just as it is impossible to detect the holistic visual image on a television when one is too close to the screen – all one sees are a number of colored pixels. It is important to remember that according to this view, evaluative patterns are not simply the arbitrary projections of our own minds spread upon the natural world. In fact, evaluative concepts are "projectible" – they can be applied naturally to novel cases without a change in their meaning or content. This aspect is what I take McDowell to find the most compelling about the pattern problem.

The negative argument against irrealism the pattern problem raises can be flipped into a positive claim regarding the existence of evaluative properties, one I have been hinting at. It might go

something like the following. Evaluative properties do indispensible work. The work they do is to serve as referents for evaluative terms as well as the grounds for correct application of evaluative concepts. In essence, the pattern problem is a variant on the argument from indispensability I addressed in Chapter 1, only here evaluative properties are thought to be indispensable for the practice of evaluative thought and discourse and not straightforwardly for explaining *truths*.

3.2 The Pattern Problem Argument

Part of McDowell's solution to the pattern problem is to postulate that there are "levels" of properties and states-of-affairs. There are subvenient natural properties that when organized in particular ways realize higher-level evaluative properties. These higher-level evaluative properties are indispensable in that they serve as the referents for evaluative terms and the extension of evaluative concepts. It is important to note that the levels here are distinctly *ontological* levels; they are not merely levels of complexity, explanation, or organization. Evaluative properties would not simply be complexes of natural properties arranged in certain patters or organized in such-and-such a way; they must be distinct ontological entities.

The argument might look like the following:

Conceptual Version of the Pattern Problem Argument

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing these objects correctly is impossible using only lower-level descriptive concepts. It requires higher-level projectible evaluative concepts.
3. Therefore, higher-level projectible evaluative concepts exist.

This argument expresses a view that I am inclined to accept. But it does not get us to any ontological conclusions – not directly, anyway. The conclusion merely states that evaluative concepts, and *ipso facto* evaluative thought, is to some extent autonomous – any attempt for a complete reduction to naturalistic or descriptive concepts and terms will be found wanting. These premises alone do not warrant any ontological conclusion. And indeed, there is no easy path to any straightforwardly ontological conclusion by either adding or perhaps disclosing suppressed premises.

To obtain an ontological conclusion (and McDowell and others have seemed to think that some ontological conclusion or other is supported by considerations stemming from solutions to the pattern problem), the argument must look something like the following:

Schema for the Ontological Version of the Pattern Problem Argument

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing these objects correctly is impossible without projectible evaluative concepts.
3. ???
4. Therefore, higher-level evaluative properties exist.

The rest of this chapter and much of the next are devoted to considering attempts to fill in this schema.

3.3 A Selective Isomorphism?

Filling in the third premise seems easy to some. But appearances can be deceiving. For instance, the following might seem a perfectly natural way to complete the enthymeme above:

Argument from Selective Isomorphism

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing these objects correctly is impossible using only lower-level descriptive concepts. It requires higher-level projectible evaluative concepts.
3. The lower-level descriptive/higher-level evaluative conceptual divide marks an isomorphic lower-level descriptive/higher-level ontological divide. For every concept, there exists its correlative property.
4. Therefore, higher-level evaluative properties exist.

Many seem to take premise 3 for granted, but there are problems when one attempts to justify it. It is not a simple conceptual truth and I have argued in Chapter 2 that we cannot, without strong argument, accept a general isomorphism for predicates and properties. The same reasoning applies to purported concept/property isomorphism. One indication that it is a mistake to presuppose that premise 3 holds for evaluative properties in particular is that if true it would mean that Allan Gibbard's stated view is outright incoherent.

> There is indeed a property that constitutes *being good* – perhaps a natural property. There are no specially queer properties laden with *to-be-doneness*; there are just plain old properties and relations. Or at least, we don't *need* queer properties to explain reasoning what to do. There are, though, special *concepts* that figure in planning and decision – such as the concept of *being the thing to do*. *Being the thing to do* might be

> the same property as *being pleasure-tending*, for anything I'll be arguing, but the concepts are different. (Gibbard, 2003; 7. Italics for properties added.).

Though Gibbard accepts that some property serves as the extension of normative concepts and grounds normative judgments, he argues that this property is *natural*, or "prosaic," to use his term. The property serves a role in our normative thought, but does not have some special ontological status; it is not in itself non-natural. If premise 3 above is true, then there is simply no logical space for such a view. But it seems like a reasonable if ultimately incorrect view, so premise 3 needs a defense and cannot be assumed.

Philip Stratton-Lake provides an intriguing argument for thinking that while generally speaking it is a mistake to suppose that there is a one-to-one correspondence between properties and our concepts of them, it does not follow that there cannot be one-to-one correspondence in certain specific domains. He offers this argument in support of evaluative non-naturalism, but this aspect of his argument can be set aside for now. The claim of interest is that while there are many cases in which our thoughts and the world are not in one-to-one correspondence, when it comes to the evaluative realm, they are.

Stratton-Lake is sensitive to the concerns I raised regarding property-predicate/concept isomorphism in Chapter 2. He recognizes that:

> A naturalist might…deny that we can make any inferences about the way the world is from the fact that we think about it in certain ways. For the way in which we think about the world is determined by our understanding of the concepts we use to describe it, and we cannot reliably infer that the world is a certain way from the fact that we conceive of it in a certain way. To think that one can make such inferences is to confuse words or concepts with properties, analytical identities with synthetic identities (Stratton-Lake: 8).

He offers the cases of heat and water to buttress this point. Many have thought the folk concepts of [HEAT] and [WATER] are distinct from their scientific counterparts, though there is only one property, respectively, conceptualized in distinct (folk versus scientific) ways. Stratton-Lake concurs with this commonly held view.[62]

However, he claims that while property-concept isomorphism cannot generally be assumed, it might be the case that evaluative properties and concepts do not follow this rule. He claims that:

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[62] Is there an argument to support the common view? Questions of property individuation are tricky, but relevant. One thing that speaks in its favor is that there is no pressure to accommodate multiple realization of either property if it is a necessary truth that water is H_2O. This is a case of necessary co-instantiation at any possible world. We would need some motivation to suppose there is something about *being water* and *being* H_2O that marks a relevant difference to deny the purported identification.

> [Non-naturalists] need not, however, rest their view about the property of goodness on a general thesis about the relation of concepts and properties. All they need do is identify what it is about *certain* concepts, like the concepts of water and heat, that provides us with reasons to think that the corresponding properties are different, and then argue that these reasons do not apply to the concept of goodness (Stratton-Lake: 9).

The claim seems to be that, some concept-property pairings are uniquely suited to breaking isomorphism. Natural kinds, for instance, often have surface properties but also important compositional properties that can only be discovered using more rigorous scientific methods and technologies. It is no surprise then that we develop separate concepts for these kinds and properties – one concept served to pick out the kind water, for instance, before Lavoisier's experiments established that water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen molecules.[63] Afterward, we are able to establish the identity of the kind but are left with separate concepts to pick out that kind. So, Stratton-Lake claims, there is something special about these sorts of property-concept relationships that explains why there is no isomorphism in these cases.

Stratton-Lake's conclusion seems to be that, if we can show that evaluative properties and concepts are not like the special cases of water and heat, we can take isomorphism for granted. However, there has been an illicit dialectical shift. All parties can agree, for reasons independent of issues in metaethics, that property-concept isomorphism does not hold across the board. It would seem then that without some reason otherwise, we cannot be sure if there are any domains where it does hold. So, it would seem, we would have to investigate into the particular domain of interest to determine whether or not isomorphism holds and that requires saying something informative about that particular domain which provides support for isomorphism. But Stratton-Lake does not do this, nor does he argue that there is reason to think that one does not need to look into the domain of interest. Instead, he presumes that isomorphism holds unless there is some reason to think otherwise. But that is a presumption which is squarely at issue. Even if Stratton-Lake's arguments showing that evaluative properties and concepts are unlike natural kind concepts and properties succeed, one is still not justified in thinking isomorphism holds unless one is also justified in thinking natural kind concepts and properties are the only domain in which isomorphism does not hold.

One might think that Stratton-Lake is justified in presuming that while in some cases predicate/property isomorphism breaks down, it is legitimate to suppose that in the absence of contrary evidence, one may suppose that isomorphism is satisfied. So, one might argue that showing that the

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[63] I discuss the relationship between kinds and properties in the next chapter.

evaluative domain is importantly different from the domain of natural kinds is enough to justify the presumption that isomorphism holds, that is, unless there is a good reason to think otherwise. After all, it would seem that the opposite presumption, that predicate/property isomorphism does not generally hold, is problematic. It might appear to be very difficult to determine which predicates pick out unique properties and which do not.

There is something to this thought, but I have been at pains in the previous two chapters to indicate that there are ways to separate ontology from language and that there are methods for determining whether a questioned property truly exists – determine what difference it makes. The very issue I am raising is that we cannot presume that serving as a referent is the sort of work that can by itself warrant an existence claim of a sparse property, the sort of property the realist needs to distinguish herself from the irrealist. This is the very question at issue. Furthermore, there are alternative methods for determining property existence which are uncontroversial – or at least *less* controversial – such as having a role in causation or being an experienced quality of consciousness. Since we have a workable method to determine property existence, we need not be at the mercy of looking to language alone.

What the Argument from Selective Isomorphism really needs is a positive argument to the effect that the combination of metaphysics, epistemology, and language of the evaluative domain is particularly well-suited for isomorphism. Stratton-Lake offers some arguments for supposing that natural kind concepts and properties are *not* well-suited. To give the Argument from Selective Isomorphism a full run for its money, let us look at Stratton-Lake's reasons for thinking natural kind concepts and properties are particularly ill-suited for isomorphism and see how they stack for and against the evaluative domain's prospects for isomorphism.

Stratton-Lake offers the following two justifications for thinking that moral properties are unlike water and heat related properties. The first is that unlike in the case of water and heat, our grasp of *goodness* (for example) is deep and not at all confined to the surface experiences or instrumental use of the property. The second is that water and heat seem like paradigmatic natural properties. They are just the sort of properties that seem best suited for empirical study. For this reason, we should not presuppose that *a priori* reflection using our concepts of [HEAT] or [WATER] can settle the matter as to what the nature of these entities or substances are like.

I do not exactly grasp the difference between "metaphysical depth" and its lack, so my arguments concerning Stratton-Lake's proposal are sketchier than I would like. Here is his account of

the ways in which our grasp of the concept [GOODNESS] is in fact deep, unlike concepts of some natural kinds and properties:

> This concept does not seem to be metaphysically superficial or incomplete…When we think of something as good, we do not think of it merely as having certain effects on us, or as picking out certain surface properties the property of goodness has, but think of it as having a distinctive characteristic (10).

This account alone seems to me to shed little light on what exactly it is about the concept of [GOODNESS] that is deep whereas the concepts of WATER and HEAT are shallow. But Stratton-Lake says a bit more:

> A.C. Ewing, for example, maintained that the characteristic we have in mind when we think of something as being good is the property of *being the fitting object of a pro-attitude*. If this, or something like it, is correct, then the concept of [GOODNESS] does not merely describe certain properties *goodness* has, but aspires to tell us what goodness is. It does not, therefore, call for a metaphysically deeper account from some other source in the way that the concept of [WATER] or [HEAT] does (*Ibid*, stylistic changes to concept terms added).

Here, he seems to be claiming that one can have a deep grasp on the [GOODNESS] since one can provide an *a priori* analysis. Again, I must note that even if he is right about the concept, he cannot reach his desired conclusion. Showing that some concepts, on their surface, call for deeper analysis, but that evaluative ones do not simply does not show that there is a property corresponding to every evaluative concept nor do much to support the view. Recognizing the deep analysis of a concept alone does not guarantee that there is one and only one property in that concept's extension. The ability to analyze the deep structure of a concept *a priori* would only be one piece of the puzzle; there remains the question of whether or not something in reality matches the analysis.

Even so, the argument can be criticized on its own merits. To take Ewing's proposal, for example, the analysans of [GOODNESS] is "the property of being the fitting object of a pro-attitude." There are a number of problems with this view. First, it is controversial. Many theorists do not accept it, and believe there are serious problems with it. It is difficult to see how we can be sure there is one and only one corresponding property for the concept when the analysis is itself in dispute. Perhaps, even if the concept is coherent, there is no corresponding property or perhaps there are many.

As to the second justification, that our concept of [GOODNESS] does not seem to us to be particularly conducive to empirical study, I will only note that it is a hotly debated issue and so hardly seems the sort of thing one can use as a premise in a argument for the existence of evaluative

properties. Since there is no consensus on this matter, it seems premature to rule out the possibility that the nature of *goodness* might best be empirically studied.

3.4 Division of Labor: "Good" versus "Good-making"

If we cannot assume evaluative concept/property isomorphism, and indeed have good reason to suppose it does not obtain, what other grounds does the pattern problem argument provide for concluding that evaluative properties exist? Some authors point to supervenience as the key. As we have noted, the evaluative supervenes on the natural, but evaluative concepts do not *reduce* to naturalistic concepts. One might then plausibly emphasize the delicate metaphysical balance of such a view. There is something about which natural properties are instantiated that determines which evaluative properties get instantiated and yet that is not *all* there is to the story.

The preceding considerations often motivate the view that we ought to be careful to distinguish the property of *goodness* from the "good-*making*" properties that make the thing good. A similar distinction applies with regard to all evaluative properties generally.

C.D. Broad and T.M. Scanlon have both emphasized this important point in different ways. Broad (1942) discusses it directly. In criticizing G.E. Moore's argument that *goodness* is not an intrinsic property and is therefore non-natural, he writes:

> I find it most difficult to follow or accept this. I am inclined to think that the fact which Moore has in mind here is that *goodness*…is always dependent on the presence of certain non-ethical characteristics which I should call "good-making." If an experience is good (or if it is bad), this is never an ultimate fact. It is always reasonable to ask: "What *makes* it good?" or "What *makes* it bad?" as the case may be (60).

I should note that Broad does not draw this distinction only in service of clarifying Moore's attempts to characterize *goodness*. He endorses it as well and argues that not to recognize it is a mistake. He writes:

> If anyone were tempted to identify goodness with…psychological characteristics, I think that he would be doing so through the following confusion. What he really believes is that there is one and only one good-*making* quality of experiences, e.g., pleasantness. He then fails to notice the distinction between *goodness itself* and the one and only *good-making quality* which he recognizes (Broad: 64).[64]

[64] Broad, C.D. (1942).

Such a person "believes that "good" and "pleasant," e.g., are just two names for a single characteristic" (*ibid)*. Broad is skeptical that this view can be plausibly maintained. He claims:

> I do not think that the belief that "good" and "pleasant" (e.g.) are two names for one characteristic would survive after the distinction between *goodness* itself and a good-making characteristic had been pointed out. And similar remarks would apply to any other simple psychological quality which one might be tempted to identify with the characteristic denoted by "good" (*ibid*).

Supposing the preceding considerations are correct, what are the prospects for *goodness* being a natural property? He does not think it plausible that *goodness* is a simple natural property – in his view, *pleasantness* is an example – and he is doubtful any complex natural property could do the job, either.

Though Scanlon (1998) does not use the same terms, he argues for a similar conclusion. In his view, "we judge things to be good or to be valuable because of other properties they have" and not because they possess the property of *goodness* in itself (96). This is in part because he thinks *goodness* and other value properties do not in themselves provide reasons for action or for adopting the appropriate fitting attitude. I would like to set this consideration aside for now. The aspect of Scanlon's view I am presently interested in is the division between the properties that prompt us to judge things to be good when they *are* good and the property of *goodness* itself.

Scanlon writes:

> What…are the relations between these natural properties, the property of *being valuable*, and the reasons that we have for behaving in certain ways in regard to things that are valuable? There seems to be two possibilities. The first is that when something has the right natural properties it has the further property of *being valuable*, and that property gives us reason to behave or react in certain ways with regard to it…The alternative, which I believe to be correct, is to hold that *being good*, or *valuable*, is not a property that itself provides a reason to respond to a thing in certain ways. Rather, to be good or valuable is to have other properties that constitute such reasons (97).

Like Broad, Scanlon argues that properties cannot have the double-duty of both *making* something good and *being* its good.[65] In his view, this division marks the distinction between natural properties – the "good-makers" – and evaluative ones – the "being goods" (96). He is even more explicit a bit further on:

> [W]hen I consider particular cases it seems that these reasons are provided by the natural properties that *make* a thing good or valuable. So for example, the fact that a resort is pleasant is a reason to visit it or to recommend it to a friend, and the fact that a

[65] In making the remarks quoted in the above passage, Scanlon is intending to make a point about the so-called "buck-passing" account of reasons, according to which evaluative or normative properties do not themselves provide reasons; they instead "pass the buck" of providing reasons onto relevant natural properties. He is not intending to make a point about good versus good-making, *per se*. However, his remarks strongly indicate he would make this distinction, and this conclusion is confirmed by the next passage I quote in the text.

> discovery casts light one the causes of cancer is a reason to applaud it and to support further research of that kind (emphasis added, 97).

Here he explicitly uses the language of *making* something good.

In my view, those who argue for the distinction between good-making properties and *goodness* itself can provide some backing for those who endorse the ontological version of the pattern problem. The distinction is a powerful weapon to wield against the naturalist or the reductionist about evaluative properties. The reason it is so effective is because it attempts to differentiate the purported properties involved by what they do. On the one hand, some properties *make* their bearers good, beautiful, pleasant, or whatever and on the other hand there are the properties *goodness, beauty, pleasantness* or whatever. But there must then be multiple properties involved – one sort is in the business of making and one sort is in the business of being! Using the Pattern Problem Schema, an argument using this distinction might look like the following:

Argument from Division of Labor

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing these objects correctly is impossible without projectible evaluative concepts.
3. A given object of evaluation falls into its evaluative kind *in virtue* of the natural properties it instantiates, but
4. There is a distinction between what makes an object of evaluation fall into an evaluative kind and its actually *being an instance* of that kind.
5. If a property is instantiated *because* of the instantiation of some other property, there must be at least two properties instantiated. Or, the properties instantiated by an object of evaluation which determine its correct categorization cannot be identical to the property of *being in* or *belonging to* its respective category (-ies). These are logically different sorts or work. Properties with logically different sorts of work to do cannot be identical.
6. Therefore, higher-level evaluative properties exist.

McNaughton and Rawling (2003) make the case for something like the Argument from Division of Labor. They accept the prevailing view that the evaluative supervenes on the natural, but do not accept that normative properties are themselves natural, nor could they be.[66] They claim that there is an important relation between evaluative properties and their subvenient natural ones that is often overlooked, namely that truths about the instantiation of evaluative properties obtain *because* some assortment of natural properties is instantiated, and though they do not explicitly say so this relation is presumably asymmetric – no natural property holds *because* an evaluative property holds. They

[66] They oppose normative properties against descriptive properties, but it is clear this is merely a terminological difference with regard to 'descriptive' and 'natural'.

conclude that "whatever putative identities the reductive [naturalist] sends our way will fall prey to the same complaint: at best the relevant [evaluative] property will hold because of, and thus be distinct from, the [natural]."[67] Without an argument similar to the Argument from the Division of Labor, to claim that there are evaluative properties distinct from natural ones based on one sort holding because another sort holds would presume what is at issue – that there are two distinct kinds of property involved at all. I am suggesting that the implicit reasoning undergirding the claim involves something like premises 4 and 5 above.

3.5 Criticisms

Though it appears that we have plausible support for Argument from Division of Labor, this is only a surface appearance. I have so far only handwaved at the notions of "good-making," "being good," and of one property "holding because" of another. I shall argue that no analysis of these notions I have seen or can think of can do the work needed to support this premise.

Let us start with explicit proposals. Scanlon has been admirably clear on this front. He claims that the properties like *goodness* are "purely formal, higher-order properties of having some lower-order properties that provide reasons of the relevant kind" (97). These properties are similar to mathematical properties in that they are abstract and thus are not a part of the spatio-temporal world (2003:8).[68] He believes the property of goodness is a higher-level abstract or formal property whose essential feature seems to be its signaling of some further normative considerations; the property of *goodness* is instantiated whenever there are lower-level properties that provide reasons to act in some way or to have an appropriate attitude or take the appropriate action.

The work that the property of *goodness* does under this conception is dispensable. It bears much in common with *abundant* or *stipulated* properties (see last chapter for some remarks on these categories). What is the difference between an object possessing the properties that provide a complete explanation one has and having some further property that indicates that the object has those properties?[69] Scanlon himself seems to find no consequential difference: "natural properties provide a

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[67] McNaughton and Rawling (2003), 33. Though their primary focus with the "because argument" is Frank Jackson's (1998) proposed reduction of normative properties, they claim that it applies to any attempt to identify any normative property with any descriptive or natural property.

[68] Scanlon takes himself to be a non-naturalist, cf. 1998, pp. 96-97.

[69] Again, in this context, I mean to include objects, events, states-of-affairs and the like under the label 'object'.

complete explanation of the reasons we have…It is not clear what further work could be done by special reason-providing properties of goodness and value, and even less how these properties could provide reasons for action" (Scanlon, 1998: 96). He believes that metaphysical questions cannot shed light on the central feature of moral judgments, namely their "normative" or "practical" character (1998: 2; 2003: 9).[70]

The picture that emerges is that the purported value properties are simply present when one has reasons, and perhaps serve as referents to evaluative predications and serve as truthmakers for evaluative statements, as well. But this is too light a workload – we can do much if not all of the same work without them. First, mere presence does not seem to qualify as work at all. A property must do more than simply be supposed to simply dangle in order to merit a case for its existence. *Goodness* on this conception is an ontological "free-rider," a mere label or conceptual tag attached to various groupings for natural properties. Such a property cannot pull its own weight.

Second, it is plausible to think that not every predication refers to a distinct entity, even within the evaluative realm. This seems to be a case where we need not posit a property though predication is appropriate. Under this conception, it is plausible to think that there need be no separate entity referred to by evaluative terms in order to get true evaluative statements. Think of what Scanlon takes to *make* the statements true. By his own lights, it is the natural or first-level properties that provide the complete explanation of our reasons. So, what makes it true that *S* ought to *φ* will be some confluence of natural properties. If that is all that is needed to make the ought claim true, then it would appear that there is simply no need to posit a further property.

Note that if Scanlon had provided an account which gave evaluative properties some other sort of work to do, I would have no grounds for complaint. The problem I am raising is not due to the mere fact that evaluative properties are thought to hold in virtue of some other properties, it is that the work they are thought to do can be done without them.

Broad is skeptical that a property like *goodness* exists. Though he argues for a conceptual divide between "being good" and "good-making," he never budges from speaking about the property *goodness* in hypothetical terms. At separate times, he argues that *if* there is such a property, it is possible that it is (i) non-natural – either simple or complex, (ii) natural but only if complex, (iii) not natural even if complex, and (iv) if non-natural, then not simple. [71] These are all conditional on such a

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[70] Scanlon (2003).

[71] *If* in uttering such a sentence he is ascribing a characteristic to the experience in question and is not merely evincing a certain kind of emotion towards it, and *if* that characteristic is simple, *then* it is pretty certainly

property existing, but he is not certain it does. It is impossible to tell what he might say about the view that though evaluative concepts might be irreducible, the properties might be reducible or non-existent. These options both seem compatible with the main tenets of his argument.

What of McNaughton and Rawling and the Because of Argument? The problem with this argument is that no case has been made for the metaphysical bearing of the "because of" relation. Rather, the "because of" work seems to me to be capable of being understood as epistemological, conceptual, or both, while not necessarily being understood as metaphysical, though that is surely what McNaughton and Rawling intended.

To take the epistemic "because" first, It seems to me to be true that in order to know if an action is wrong, we often need to know at least some naturalistic properties or states-of-affairs that will be instantiated by the action. We need to know whom, if anyone, will be harmed, whose trust will be broken, how many will gain a benefit, etc. When we know these facts, we will be in a much better position to know the value properties in play. In fact, it might be the case that apart from analytic or conceptual entailments (e.g. a cruel act is *pro tanto* wrong) some knowledge of the relevant natural properties instantiated is a necessary condition for knowing which evaluative properties are instantiated.

What this means is that when one claims "Holding the prisoner in solitary confinement for too long is cruel because it results in undeserved suffering and misery" one could be expressing an inference one has made along with one's supporting evidence. There need not be two properties involved, one holding *because of* another. No metaphysical conclusion need be drawn. One would simply come to an evaluative conclusion based on one's evidence. [72]

Another way to understand the relevant "because of" is conceptual. Evaluating an action or state-of-affairs is a matter of seeking justification or its absence. Naturalistic concepts in themselves seem non-justificatory; they simply are not in the game of justifying or failing to justify. That is what evaluative concepts are for. However, in assessing an action or state-of-affairs, we attempt to determine which relevant natural properties are instantiated, and make our determinations based on these properties. (This is compatible with thinking there are times when the status of an evaluation is

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epistemologically non-natural. But it is by no means certain in his mind that the antecedents of this conditional proposition are fulfilled (274-276).

[72] McNaughton and Rawling (2011) argue that reasons are not equivalent to evidence, particularly that evidence that one ought to φ is not itself, nor provide one with, a practical reason to φ. That is compatible with what I am claiming. I am not claiming that we can analyze practical reasons or justifications as something epistemic. I am claiming that in asking what makes it the case that holding the prisoner in solitary confinement wrong, we are asking for information, we might well be asking an epistemic question.

readily apparent – some actions just seem immediately *wrong*. There are many times when we look to natural properties e.g. weighing consequences of going into war, weighing the consequences of allowing a prescription drug to go on the market, etc.) In claiming that *φ*'ing is good or *ψ*'ing is bad, we are engaged in a practice of justification. The relevant "because of" in this case is the conceptual one of offering, receiving, or coming to a conclusion about justification. There need be no metaphysical relation.

To make the point another way, I suppose that McNaughton and Rawling would accept that there is a conceptual complement to the metaphysical *because of* relation – the move from an assortment of natural properties to forming an evaluative judgment base on those properties. What I am claiming is that given an account of this conceptual machinery, we have done all the work we need to do. There is no need for an externally real relation with which the conceptual machinery needs to correspond, just as there does not need to be an externally real property to correspond with every evaluative term.

The irrealist can claim that we can have concepts whose function does not include correspondence with external reality, but instead are "purely practical." The possibility of irrealism, though denied by McDowell and perhaps others, is something of a specter lurking near any argument that relies on a short cut from concepts to extra-conceptual reality. The problematic assumption seems to be that the function of concepts in all cases is to represent reality. This assumption cannot be maintained, however, and once it is jettisoned there is more room for naturalism and irrealism of various sorts.

3.6 The Functions of Evaluative Concepts

I characterized the central argument of the chapter as an attempt to show that evaluative properties perform the job of serving as referents for evaluative predicates and the extension of evaluative concepts. The guiding intuition seemed to be that correspondence between language, thought, and reality is necessary for correct evaluative categorization, and that evaluative properties are necessary to achieve this correspondence.

I have argued that this neat package of views requires further justification than has so far been provided. In particular, one weakness is that concepts need not in all cases have the purpose of representing reality. As non-cognitivists in metaethics have emphasized, evaluative concepts especially seem to have a distinct role in our mental economy which purely descriptive concepts do not. As a

rough approximation, we can say that evaluative concepts essentially possess a commendatory or disapprobative element. The non-cogntivitist and cognitivist disagree about whether or not this element is *all there is* to evaluative concepts.

It is clear that not all concepts' role is to correspond to or represent reality. For instance, the concepts of [CONJUNCTION] or [ENTAILMENT] are simply not the sort of things that are meant to reflect or represent reality. These concepts and others are better understood as providing guidelines or sanctions for maneuvering amongst other concepts.[73] The irrealist will claim that we should understand evaluative concepts in much the same way, though often with a more practical application. As others have noted, non-cognitivists can emphasize that there are other roles for evaluative concepts and terms to play in evaluative thought and language.[74] In some cases, this is obviously true. For instance, imperatives, such as 'Close the office door.', and requests, such as 'Please pass the salt.',have a function other than representing reality.

A realist can accommodate the view that there are evaluative properties, and even that they serve as the extension of evaluative concepts, even while maintaining the view that serving in this role does not alone warrant belief in their existence. To show this, suppose for now that we had some independent reason to believe that evaluative properties existed, say, because they figure in uncontroversial causal relationships. One thing that cannot be determined *a priori*, and in fact my judgment of prior probability is very low, is that the independently verified properties which play a role in causal relationships will each have one and only one predicate for which each serves as a referent. The analogous point applies to evaluative concepts. In the case that this isomorphism does not hold, but that we have independent warrant for believing evaluative properties exist, we can still accommodate the view that evaluative properties serve the role of referent for evaluative predicates.

These remarks do not in themselves allay the worry that something is left out of the account, namely that in cases where we have two concepts [BEING GOOD] and [MAKING GOOD] which seem to simply be about different things. My reply is that the realist can benefit from taking the non-cognitivist's emphasis on the different roles for evaluative and descriptive concepts seriously. The non-cognitivist thinks that the only role for evaluative concepts is to commend or condemn and the naïve

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[73] I do not mean to be making a claim about the *meaning* of the terms and so make no claim about conceptual-role semantics.

[74] Cf. John Hawthorne and Huw Price point out that an anti-realist positions "characterize a linguistic *function*, or *category*, in terms of which the non-cognitivist may claim that the disputed sentences *serve a different function from*, or *belong to a different category to*, other parts of language (and, in particular, to paradigmatic causal-explanatory parts of language)." (O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price, 1996, 276).

realist described above thinks the evaluative concepts must in all cases reflect external reality. The sophisticated realist argues that concepts can have two roles, or that two different concepts can share a single property as their extension. (I do not have a stake in which is the correct account of concept individuation.) One element of the concept (or one concept in its entirety) has a commendatory or disapprobative function, the other element (or the other concept) represents external reality. What is good and what makes something good might then be the same thing conceptualized in different ways.

A simple hedonic utilitarian, for instance, will claim that the instantiation of *pleasure* both makes things good and *is* what is good about good things. An action *is* good (and thus has something to recommend it) if and only if it generates the most net pleasure, and what *makes* it good is its generation of that pleasure. Thus, she makes room for a distinction between "being good" and "making good," but only at the conceptual level, and not at the ontological one. More sophisticated views will require a more sophisticated treatment, yet they might still maintain the core point that the division of labor comes at the level of concepts and not necessarily at the ontological level.

3.7 Conclusion

There is no need to posit an asymmetric ontological dependency of the evaluative on the natural which can justify premise 5 of the Argument from the Division of Labor. The division of labor can come at the level of concepts and need not be ontological in nature. Thus, we are still left with the needed premises to complete the distinctly ontological version of the Pattern Problem Argument. In the next chapter, we turn to another attempt to do so.

CHAPTER FOUR

Evaluative Categorization

4.1 Introduction

I have been arguing that the reach of the arguments regarding the pattern problem extends only to the realm of evaluative concepts and not far enough to touch evaluative properties in themselves. But perhaps this is too quick. In the last chapter, I claimed that many theorists have accepted something like the following argument schema, but conspicuously have not supplied a feasible third premise:

Schema for the Ontological Version of the Pattern Problem Argument

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing these objects correctly is impossible without projectible evaluative concepts.
3. ???
4. Therefore, higher-level evaluative properties exist.

I extrapolated a number of assays at providing the crucial premise for the argument to work from these theorists, but found them wanting. This chapter is devoted to assessing the viability for a third premise that seems to me to be the most promising.

The proposal is this: something about our evaluative categorizations cries out for explanation. While perhaps it is true that the original formulation of the pattern problem only addresses evaluative concepts, we still may infer that there is something about the intentional targets of our concepts that guides our practices of categorization – there is something about the world that provides a standard for *correct* categorization.

In the last chapter, I discussed that one part of an intuitive answer to this question appealed to *correspondence* between language and ontology. The arguments in this chapter emphasize categorization. How could there be so much agreement, and so much seemingly

correct agreement, in classifying natural phenomena in this way unless there was something about the natural phenomena themselves that lend them to be so classified? It could not be due to mere guesswork or coincidence. It appears that restricting ourselves to concepts simply will not do; we must venture into the properties of the world.

To be more specific, one might want an account of the *similarity* or *resemblance* among the properties instantiated by natural phenomena that determines their evaluative classificatory status. The problem is that the distinctly natural or descriptive properties we have to work with cannot accomplish this goal, since they are too heterogeneous or variegated to do it properly. To take examples we shall return to, there seems to be not much at the purely descriptive level of properties which is shared by donating to Oxfam on the one hand and fulfilling your promise to pick up your friend at the airport on the other. The former includes things like pressing a button on one's keyboard, electronic transfers among banks, perception of computer monitors, etc. The latter includes awareness of other vehicles on the road, the feel of the steering wheel, and a sense of obligation to be punctual. Yet both action-types are typically thought to be good, helpful, or (inclusively) right things to do in certain contexts. The natural question to ask is: what, if not the natural or descriptive properties involved in these action types, accounts for them both to fall into the categories "good," "helpful," or "right"? The only plausible answer, it might appear, is that there are distinctly evaluative (i.e. not descriptive only) properties instantiated by these action types over and above the instantiated but disparate descriptive properties. Our categorizations represent these instantiated evaluative properties, and that explains why donating to Oxfam and picking one's friend up from the airport belong to the same category (in some evaluative respect).

I take this to be a very serious challenge for certain forms of evaluative naturalism. Some naturalistic views have it that evaluative properties are identical to descriptive or natural properties and there are no further properties over and above them. It would be hasty to presume that enough similarity can be found among natural properties to adequately satisfy the cohesiveness found among the purported evaluative properties which are thought to ground evaluative categorizations of "good," "bad," "just," "unjust," "beautiful," "ugly," etc; an argument to that effect is needed. The available options seem to be these four:

1) There is no actual cohesiveness among evaluative categorizations, but only the appearance of cohesiveness, and thus no work for higher-level properties to do in terms of evaluative categorizations.

2) Higher-level evaluative properties supervene on heterogeneous natural properties and similarity among these higher-level evaluative properties ground appropriate evaluative categorizations.

3) There is enough similarity among natural properties to ground the cohesiveness of evaluative categorizations – the heterogeneity of natural properties is overly exaggerated.

4) Similarity among properties, whether lower-level or higher-level, is unnecessary for appropriate evaluative categorizations.

I have argued in Chapter 3 that the first option is a non-starter; our use of evaluative language and our rational behaviors, including our judgments, predictions, and coordination with other rational agents – seem to simply require relatively tidy evaluative categories and the ability to discern them. The rest of the chapter is devoted to evaluating arguments for the remaining three options. To preview, I argue that option 2) – positing higher-level properties – is rife with metaphysical mystery and ought to be rejected if there are at all viable alternatives. I then argue that there is some truth to both options 3) – similarity among natural properties and – 4) – ontological similarity is unnecessary for appropriate categorizations. If I am right, then I claim that, at minimum, we have not been given sufficient reason to accept option 2) and no ontological conclusions can be drawn from the pattern problem without further argument. I am inclined to go further and claim that we have all the theoretical support for how we make evaluative categorizations we need without positing higher-level evaluative properties and that the matter is settled. But I am happy if at least the minimal conclusion is found reasonable.

4.2 Option 2 – Similarity among Higher-Level Evaluative Properties Is Necessary for Evaluative Categories

Option 2 might come closest to being popular opinion in philosophical circles with regard to a number of problems, including the mind/body problem and explaining the autonomy of the

social sciences (Fodor, 1974). It also is the only option that can serve to justify an ontological conclusion from pattern problem considerations. The schema for the ontological argument might then be filled in in the following way:

Argument from Dependence on Ontological Similarity (Argument from Similarity)

1. We categorize objects of evaluation into the correct kinds.
2. Categorizing objects of evaluation correctly is impossible without projectible evaluative concepts.
3. The categorization involved in Premises 1 and 2 is impossible without a notion of *similarity* among objects of evaluation.
4. The relevant similarity among objects of evaluation cannot be found among heterogeneous nonevaluative (or purely descriptive or natural) properties, but can only be found among distinctly evaluative properties.
5. Therefore, higher-level evaluative properties exist.

As stated above the central consideration motivating this solution is that correct evaluative classifications requires an ontological grounding. This grounding must come in the form of similarity among properties of the objects of evaluation, and there is not enough similarity among descriptive or natural properties to do the required work. The absence of ontological grounds for correct evaluative categorizations among the descriptive or natural is sometimes put in terms of the evaluative "shapelessness" of the nonevaluative. I will say a bit more about my views on the shapelessness near the end of the chapter.

4.3 Similarity

In order to comprehensively assess this argument, some notion of similarity among properties is required. There are three distinct positions to which the proponent of the Argument from Similarity might appeal. One might adopt the view that similarity among properties is 1) primitive, 2) reducible to partial identity, or 3) due to shared possession of a multiply realized property.

According to the primitive similarity account, similarity is simply a brute relation which cannot be further analyzed. This account is sometimes endorsed by nominalists and trope theorists to explain the appearances of universals (for instance, exact similarity accounts for the

appearance of identically colored ties on the rack at the store). There is nothing internal to the view to which I can object. But in the context of justifying the Argument from Similarity, appealing to similarity as a primitive smacks of begging the question. After all, the argument depends essentially upon discriminating among properties' similarities (among evaluative properties) and dissimilarities (among non-evaluative properties), and to suppose that no rationale can be made for the relevant choices is, at this point, tendentious. Unless there is conclusive evidence, or at the very least consensus, for the degree of similarity or dissimilarity among natural properties, appeal to primitive similarity will hardly provide compelling ground to accept one conclusion or the other, so I will set it aside.[75]

According to the partial identity account two complex properties are similar to the extent that one or more entities among their respective component parts (the simpler properties which compose the complex properties) are shared (cf. Armstrong, 1997; pp. 50-53). Red is more similar to purple than to blue. On this approach, this statement is made true by the fact that purple has an element of red and blue, but red does not have an element of blue, nor blue red. Similarity, then, reduces to shared element.

This approach to similarity does not support positing higher-level entities as Option 2) would have it. If the idea is that similarity among properties is required to account for correct evaluative categorizations, this account has it that the properties and their similarity reduces to identity of simpler elements of complex properties. Thus, even if we were to suppose there were higher-level evaluative properties, any similarity among these evaluative properties would reduce to some individual or set of properties at the level of natural properties. But the Argument from Similarity is an attempt to show that higher-level evaluative properties are *necessary* to account for similarity – they cannot be mere free riders, instantiated whenever the

[75] One might worry that a partial identity account ultimately results in an appeal to brute similarity, as well. That is because the difference between two properties that are very similar might be small but still very real. For instance, one might think *dark blueness* and *light blueness* are very similar in that they are both blue, and that this difference cannot be explained by appealing to a further property. Armstrong's view depends upon the similarity among properties to be at the level of complex properties. There is not much consensus about the nature of color properties, but if we can suppose for the sake of argument *dark blueness* is a complex property consisting in part of *blue* in combination with some other color (perhaps red) and that *light blueness* consists of blue and white, then the property they share is *blueness*. One might well wonder, though, how Armstrong can accommodate similarity among simples. (Cf. Heil, 2003, pp. 157-159) If color properties are simple, then it is unclear if Armstrong's account can adequately explain their similarity.

relevant natural properties, if they are to be responsible for similarity. They must be what *grounds* the relevant similarity. I will return to this account of similarity below, however, when it is time to look at Options 3) and 4).

Last, according the multiple realization account, the properties that fall into appropriate evaluative categories do so because they realize the very same evaluative property. Multiple realization accounts typically take the higher-level property to be specifiable independently of the lower level realizing properties, such as is the case with some accounts of functionalism in the philosophy of mind. An overly simply functional account has it that characteristic bodily and mental input-output relations (e.g. barking one's shin followed by a wince) are necessary and sufficient conditions for defining the property *pain*. The molecular composition or constitution of the unfortunate creature experiencing it is not determinative of the creature instantiating *pain*. Thus, two distinct instantiations of *pain* can occur though the lower level properties which realize *pain* are dissimilar. For example, a silicon-based creature and a carbon-based creature (like us) might both instantiate *pain* on this view, as long as the appropriate input-output relations are satisfied. So, according to this account, though the relevant lower-level properties are dissimilar, the two cases of injury are similar in that they are both instances of a single property, *pain*.[76]

The multiple realization account is the approach I suggest is intimated in the Argument from Similarity. As we shall see, some authors hint that this is the conception they have in mind, but it also makes for the most perspicuous case for the relevant premises in the Argument from Similarity. The multiply realized property is at a higher-level, and its instantiation is responsible for the boundary of the pertinent evaluative category.

So, if we accept the view that multiple realization grounds similarity, the Argument from Similarity claims that for any projectible evaluative category, there is a corresponding evaluative property (or group of properties) that is instantiated by groups of heterogeneous natural properties and that it this multiply realized evaluative property that accounts for why

[76] To reiterate, I am not expressing a commitment to universals by claiming that a "single" property is instantiated in this sort of case. The trope theorist will claim that exactly similar properties are instantiated, and the claim will be that exactly similar tropes can be realized by different sorts of base properties. I will continue to use universal-friendly locutions because they tend to be more economical.

certain groups of natural properties fall under that category while others do not. Since we are assuming for the sake of argument that the natural properties are not adequately similar, we can therefore conclude that there is no shared natural property which can do the required work. We then infer that there must be some higher-level evaluative property to explain the relevant evaluative similarities. We could then explain why clicking one's mouse (thereby donating to Oxfam) and speeding down the highway (to pick up a friend from the airport) both fall under the category of "good acts." This is the Argument from Similarity in a nutshell.

4.4 Multiple Realizability in Ethics

Ethicists have made use of multiple realizability, but there is no real coherent theme to its metaphysical applications. Philosophers who want to defend evaluative non-naturalism have raised the issue of the multiple realizability of evaluative properties. For instance, Russ Shafer-Landau has emphasized structural similarities between non-reductive physicalism in the philosophy of mind and his own version of evaluative non-naturalism – particularly the view that evaluative properties are constituted by, but not identical to natural (he prefers the term 'descriptive') properties. One of the primary considerations that supports this view is that for at least many evaluative properties, the instantiation of any given particular evaluative property *E* there seem to be many distinct natural properties, or sets of natural properties, correlated with the instantiation of *E*. If we suppose, as all parties in the discussion do, that the correlations are not accidental, but that in some sense the relevant natural properties *determine* – non-causally – that *E* is instantiated, then we can see the grounds for thinking that while there is some determining relation between E and any of the multiple realizers of *E*, this relation is not as stringent as identity, as there may be many distinct (i.e. non-identical) realizers of the very same property *E*.

As an example, Shafer-Landau uses the distinctly moral property *of moral rightness*.[77] He claims that *moral rightness* may sometimes be instantiated in cases where, for example happiness is maximized, but there are reasons to suppose that the property of *moral rightness*

[77] The example comes on pp. 71-72.

is not identical to the complex property of *maximized happiness*. Perhaps *moral rightness* is instantiated in cases where happiness is not maximized and vice versa. If so, then the property of *moral rightness* is not type identical to the property of *maximized happiness*, but maximizing happiness sometimes constitutes *moral rightness*.[78]

Shafer-Landau endorses this picture by saying that moral properties are "exhaustively constituted" by, but not reducible to natural properties. According to this view, there "is nothing to a case of generosity, or viciousness, or dutiful action, other than the natural features that constitute such properties. Something exemplifies a moral property entirely in virtue of its possessing certain natural features."[79] I believe that Shafer-Landau's claim that non-naturalists can agree with certain sorts of naturalists that there is "nothing more" to moral properties than the possession of certain natural features cannot be maintained if we are being precise.[80] If moral properties exist and are not identical to natural properties, then they are best understood as *something* more, even if we remain non-committal on the question as to what that something is. Furthermore, Shafer-Landau claims that he is being "pluralistic" about properties – the view that there are more types of properties than just natural properties – so there is reason to think he thinks the evaluative properties are distinct properties, even if, in his view, they are not distinct entities. This is probably a verbal dispute – he implicitly assumes properties are not entities, but I assume they are. In any case, Shafer-Landau endorses a view similar to Option 2, due to concerns about multiple realizability.

Shafer-Landau argues against the view that the only relation that can play the appropriate role between the instantiation of natural properties and the instantiation of evaluative properties is that of the identity relation. The problem of the multiple realizability of moral properties arises. If we do not appeal to multiply realized, higher-level evaluative properties, Shafer-Landau claims that

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[78] Shafer-Landau does not discuss a token realization or token identity theory. This issue will come up again a bit later on in the chapter.

[79] Shafer-Landau, 75.

[80] He writes, "Non-naturalists, as well as classical naturalists can endorse this picture. If moral properties are identical to natural ones, then moral facts will be identical to natural ones. So classical naturalists will find such a picture quite congenial." William FitzPatrick characterizes Shafer-Landau as a *naturalist* on the basis of this claim (cf. FitzPatrick, 160).

> the fact of Jane's generosity could not have been realized by another set of natural facts. If generosity were identical to some natural property, then it would be (at the least) a metaphysical impossibility for generosity to be realized in any way other than via the instantiation of that very property.
>
> Those (like me) who find this an unduly narrow conception of moral possibilities will still be able to take on the 'exhaustive constitution' story. The difference between the non-naturalist and the reductive naturalist, on this view, is a modal one. Non-naturalists can, and reductionists can't, allow for the possibility of a moral property's exemplification by means of some natural property other than the one whose instantiation, at a time, has in fact subserved it" (75).[81]

So Shafer-Landau claims that without higher-level evaluative properties, we cannot accommodate the view that generosity can be instantiated in many different ways.

Shafer-Landau's argument narrowly construed seems flawed to me, as it does not allow for token identity as opposed to type identity. A token identity theory would argue that particular instances of distinct sets of natural properties can instantiate token instances of generosity and there seems to be no real issue. However, if we understand it more broadly, and adopt it for the ends of the present chapter, we can see that this move to token identity gives rise to the problem of explaining how very different actions, which involve the instantiation of different sets of natural properties, can all instantiate *generosity*. If there are so many differences at the natural level, what is it that makes generous acts a coherent and organized group? And how can we tell? It is here that someone with Shafer-Landau's commitments might claim that only if we are supposing that the *same* property is instantiated with each distinct set of natural properties does it make sense to claim they have something in common. But that undermines token *identity* – the property that unifies generous acts has its own work to do, work that the natural property or properties cannot do.

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[81] Shafer-Landau casts the possibility of multiple realization of evaluative properties as a dividing issue for naturalists and non-naturalists, but there are better, more perspicuous places to draw the conceptual boundaries. Typical candidates for multiple realization include intentional states. Shafer-Landau agrees (cf. 73). However, there is no recognizable distinction between naturalists and non-naturalists on this issue. Similarly, it would be a mistake to suppose that those who think there are multiply realizable properties in the special or hard sciences are all non-naturalists. Given these considerations it seems that the possibility of multiple realizability does not by itself support non-naturalism over naturalism.

To expand on just this point, the idea is that evaluative properties have a separate modal profile than the natural properties which realize them. This is taken to be sufficient reason to suppose that they are not identical. A particular evaluative property *E* can be instantiated in cases where disparate, and perhaps even mutually exclusive, natural properties N_1 and N_2 are. Similarly, there might be cases where N_1 and N_2 might be instantiated without realizing *E*. Shafer-Landau (and others, as we shall see) indicates that a difference in modal profile is sufficient for individuating properties. My contention is that to put real bite into the multiple realizability argument, some work for the higher-level property ought to be explicated, and that a plausible candidate is that the higher-level properties ground categorization.

David Brink supports something like Option 2, though in his view it is a defense of naturalism. He claims that moral facts "are nothing more than familiar facts about the natural, including social, world" and that "moral facts *are* natural and social scientific…facts" (156-7). But the use of 'are' here is not one of identity. Instead, it is the 'are' of constitution. He writes of two properties "F" and "G,"

> F can be G even if the property (or properties) designated by 'F' is not (or are not) the same as that (or those) designated by 'G'. If G actually composes or realizes F, but F can be, or could have been, realized differently, then G constitutes, but is not identical with, F (157).

In this way, Brink thinks he has articulated the view that moral properties can be classified as natural. He argues that it is a contingent fact that moral properties are constituted by natural properties in the natural world. In another possible world, it could be supernatural properties, for example those instantiated in God's commands, that constitute *the very same* moral properties. Since it is possible for some moral property to be constituted by natural properties in one world but also possible for the very same moral property to be constituted by supernatural properties in a different world, the moral property cannot be identical to any natural property or properties. This is the argument from moral multiple realizability.

Brink uses the example of injustice to explain his view. He writes,

> Both the property of injustice and particular instances of injustice, in whatever social and economic conditions they are actually realized, could have been realized by a variety of somewhat different configurations of social and economic properties and property instances. Moral properties could have been

> realized by an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of sets of natural properties (158).

Since the same property, injustice, can be realized by many distinct distributions of goods among a population, Brink believes the property of injustice is distinct from any particular distribution or even any set of distributions. However, the existence of injustice depends essentially on *some* particular distribution of goods among a population and thus some particular arrangement of natural properties, and so injustice cannot "float free" of their constitutive natural properties. Thus, Brink thinks a moral property (and its instances) such as injustice is a property that is non-identical to any natural property or properties but that is also not an entity in itself, "over and above" the relevant natural properties.

Brink and Shafer-Landau offer similar reasons for thinking ethical properties (and one can suppose evaluative properties generally) are multiply realizable; their accounts of the metaphysics of the relation between ethical properties and the determinative natural properties are very similar. It isn't interesting to ask whether such an account is best categorized as "naturalistic" or "non-naturalistic" and I do not think the central points of contention between the two families of views derive directly from questions concerning multiple realizability. However, both accounts align well with the considerations behind the multiple realizability account of similarity. There is reason to think that particular evaluative properties are realized but not identical to lower-level natural properties, and we can tell this due to the differences among modal profile. The fact that there is independent support for the multiple realizability of evaluative properties strengthens the case for option 2) and the Argument from Similarity.

In fact, there are analogous claims that seem to rest on just this point. Here are two cases. In making a point expressing skepticism about metaphysical analyses, Fodor and LePore (1992, p. 130 italics added) claim that:

> If there are no definitions, then there are no facts about which are the defining properties of airfoils. But, of course, it wouldn't follow that there are no airfoils or that there are no laws about airfoils or that there is no science of airfoils or that there is no principled difference between being an airfoil and not being one. (A striking difference between *being an airfoil* and not being one is that the

former is a property that all and only airfoils can have. Why should this difference not count as principled?)[82]

In a second case, Debbie Roberts writes:

> It may be the case that many nonevaluative predicates that apply in virtue of the application of other nonevaluative predicates (e.g. 'animal') are shapeless at the base level. However, that is not sufficient to make these predicates shapeless in the sense that is being discussed here, for the concepts expressed by such predicates do have a nonevaluative shape: the real resemblance or unifying feature between different instances of the concept[']s application is nonevaluative. In the animal case, the shape is the nonevaluative property of *animalhood*.[83]

In both of these cases, the relevant assertion is that a multiply realized property unites sets of dissimilar base properties, and provides boundaries for categories of a sort, the category airfoil in the former case and the category animalhood in the latter.

Now that we have seen a reasonable rationale for the multiple realization account of similarity and some idea of what it might look like in practice, it is time to examine it critically.

4.5 Multiple Realizability and Similarity

What can one say in response to Fodor and LePore's question? Does possessing the property *being an airfoil* provide a principled distinction between airfoils and non-airfoils? And does the property *animalhood* provide shape for the category of animals? If multiply realized higher-level properties really play this designated role, it is fair game to inquire into their natures. They will either be properties like any other, or, if not, they will be *sui generis*. As elsewhere, it is a theoretical virtue to be able to explain as much as possible with as few unexplained primitives as possible, and to that extent we should see if we can avoid brute appeal to *sui generis* existents, keeping it in mind that in the end we might find no reasonable alternative. In that spirit, let us inquire directly into the nature of evaluative properties under this proposal. To do so, we will necessarily need to delve into the metaphysics of properties. This is the reason Chapter 2 is devoted to that topic, and readers are encouraged to reference that chapter for details.

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[82] One might ask why the defining property of airfoil, then, Is not *being an airfoil* if it "is a property that all and only airfoils can have? Probably because it is not informative, but then we need a debate about which are the plausible criteria of metaphysical or conceptual definitions, which is best avoided.

[83] In her (2011), pp. 489-520, p. 505, footnote 36., italics added.)

First, it is reasonable to suppose that though functional accounts of properties such as *pain* might serve a role in elucidating the view a proponent of the Argument from Similarity might have in mind, it is clear that either this cannot be the right account for evaluative properties or else they do metaphysical work besides grounding similarity. Functional accounts of properties appeal to causal relations (cf. Shoemaker, 1980) – structural damage to one's shin sends signals to the mind/brain and a wince and groan are the output. Are the higher-level properties posited by Option 2 integrated with causal relations in the same way? If so, then there ought to be an independent argument for the Argument from Similarity's conclusion; evaluative properties will do causal work and can play the key role for an argument for their existence, as I noted in Chapter 1. On this account, we would have a deeper, unifying explanation for how we determine evaluative categories. Instantiated evaluative properties would have causal profiles. We then categorize according to these profiles. Furthermore, this account would allow for structured empirical investigation due to the detectable causal regularities inherent in such an account.

Apart from these considerations, many theorists who have appealed to higher-level evaluative properties do not view them as solely functional (in the causal sense). Russ Shafer-Landau, for instance, utilizes the analogy with functional properties such as *pain* but explicitly claims that it is not essential to evaluative properties that they be causally efficacious (though he leaves open the possibility that they are (cf. 2003, pp. 98-114)). So I propose relegating the combination of the Argument from Similarity and a functional account of evaluative properties to the side or discussed elsewhere.

So, supposing that the higher-level properties posited by the Argument from Similarity are not essentially causal, what else might we say about their nature? The best bet given present assumptions is that these higher-level properties are categorical in nature.[84] Further qualifications are in order. Many take categorical properties to be the causal base for an object's dispositions. For instance, the microstructure of salt crystals in combination with the chemical composition of water are the respective bases for the salt's disposition to dissolve when in water. Given the issues raised in the previous two paragraphs, I will assume that higher-level evaluative categorical properties of the sort posited by Option 2 will not play this role.

Furthermore, higher-level evaluative categoricals would be unlike many paradigmatic examples of categorical properties in that they would not be the structural base for macroproperties.

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[84] As I mentioned in Chapter 2, some philosophers have suggested that evaluative properties have a non-causal qualitative nature, similar to color properties, according to some views. I scrutinize this view in the next chapter.

Paradigmatic examples include the microstructure of a salt crystal as in the example above and the microstructure of glass which makes it fragile. Evaluative properties will, presumably, be neither micro- nor macroproperties as these are commonly understood. They will be supervenient properties essentially and wholly distinct from the properties upon which they supervene.

4.6 Problems for Higher-Level Properties

The central problem with the view of evaluative properties as categoricals proposed in the last section is that the presence or absence of a higher-level property cannot provide a principled distinction between categories all by themselves. The examples raised by both Fodor and LePore and Roberts are apt examples with which to make this point. Start with Fodor and LePore on airfoils and the proposed distinguishing property *being an airfoil*. As they make clear, airfoils are functional kinds (115). They claim that, roughly speaking, "you are an airfoil if you are a…rigid object passing through a liquid or gaseous environment in such a fashion that the operation of Bernoulli's law generates lift at one or more of your surfaces" (*ibid*.). What is striking is that we are given a rough formula for the boundaries of what is to count as an airfoil without appealing to the property *being an airfoil* at all. We need only appeal to lower-level properties, i.e. If an object has such-and-such a structure, or if an object exhibits such-and-such a disposition in such-and-such circumstances.

As Fodor and LePore note, they are not claiming that they can provide necessary and sufficient conditions to draw a perfect boundary which includes all and only airfoils. But the problem of finding perfect boundaries is not one that is solved by appealing to higher-level properties in any case. Perhaps a problem case is one where an object which was once indisputably an airfoil gets a large hole punched in it, and so it no longer generates much lift. Does such an object deserve to be called an airfoil? Must functional kinds retain functional efficacy at all times? This is surely a difficult question, and I will not make an attempt to answer it here. But it is important to note that a singularly unwise approach to solving it would be to investigate into whether the property *being an airfoil* is instantiated.

Roberts appeals to the natural kind of animals. She claims that what all the members of this extremely heterogeneous group have in common is that they all instantiate the property *animalhood*. But it would be incredible to suppose that biologists make use of such a property in determining the taxonomy of life forms. Biologists appeal to metabolic traits, locomotion, perhaps reproductive mechanisms, and so on to draw the boundaries around the class of animals. These are again structure such-and-such or dispositional such-and-such type properties. For problem cases, it would be absurd to

try to determine whether or not the property *animalhood* is instantiated. Rather, the salient questions are about the structural and dispositional properties directly, or about their combination.

Analogous remarks apply to evaluative properties and categories, as well. *Cruelty* will be instantiated in cases where *pain* or *confinement* and the like are as well. One key difference, many will note, is that in order for *cruelty* to be instantiated, there must be a sense that the relevant pain or confinement is in some sense *unmerited* or *excessive*. Similar remarks apply to positive evaluative categories – courage is the overcoming of fear, but only to the right extent and the right circumstances. The extent and the circumstances will be a matter of evaluation, and not merely structural or dispositional properties.

This complication will not save Option 2, however. Taking higher-level evaluative properties seriously requires viewing the properties of merit, desert, or fitness as non-monadic; they are relational in that they cannot be explicated without appeal to relata (e.g. it does not make sense to simply say "S merits" without specifying both what is merited and who merits it). The relata at stake will be often be lower-level properties, as in "Sean merits a gold star because he completed his homework assignment." Actions, rewards, and punishments can be specifiable at lower-levels, and so it appears one does not need to appeal to higher-level properties.

Still, it might be maintained, the relation *itself*, rather than the corresponding relata, might be a higher-level property, and it is the relation which defines the boundaries of evaluative categories. To take a non-evaluative example, it might be argued that the property *motherhood* unites all mothers though it is a relation. But this example belies the impotence of appealing to a relation to provide contours for all and only mothers. God need only create a female who gives birth to an offspring and *motherhood* comes for free. In other words, we can very well determine the boundaries of motherhood without appealing to the relation *motherhood*. Similarly, those who accept the supervenience of the evaluative on the natural are committed to the natural providing the boundaries for the evaluative, though one might not be able to *discern* what those boundaries are without appeal to evaluative concepts and terms.[85,86]

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[85] "Metaphysical" properties, as Moore calls them, play the same role as natural properties here, so will not aid Option 2, nor the Argument from Similarity.

[86] Here I disagree with Dancy (1993). Dancy claims that there is an important difference between "resultance" – an indefinable relation according to which "a property of an object exists 'in virtue of' of another or some others" (73), what I called "higher-level" properties in Ch. 2, and supervenience. According to Dancy, supervenience can tell us the relationship between whole classes of properties only, and not about particular cases of properties (78). I do think resultance is an unproblematic notion – I am arguing against the view that such a relation holds in this very section. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for a theorist to claim that the mental property *pain* supervenes on some restricted class of physical or neural properties. This is partly how the notion of

The point of these arguments is that even if the relevant property is instantiated in these cases, there is no reason to think that that instantiated property is doing the work of grounding similarity. To tell whether or not something is an airfoil, we do not look for the property *being an airfoil* to be instantiated. The same is true with *animalhood*. Though I am making the point in epistemic terms, the point is that the categorization of airfoils and animals is determined by other properties apart from the former. *Airfoilhood* and *animalhood* seem to simply be along for the ride. I am urging that when it comes to Option 2 of the present argument, higher-level properties are in the same boat.

To be clear, my arguments are not meant to show that there can be no multiply realizable properties in these cases. For all I have argued, *being an airfoil*, *animalhood*, and *cruelty* might be multiply realizable by heterogeneous properties of base properties. What my arguments show is that higher-level properties are not *indispensable for grounding similarity and thus correct evaluative categorization*. In this case, that is enough to undermine the support for Option 2, namely that higher-level properties are needed to account for similarity of evaluative categories.

I take these arguments to show that higher-level properties are not indispensable for grounding similarity among functional (e.g. airfoils) and natural (e.g. animals) kinds. I have indicated that they are not indispensable with regard to evaluative categories, either. But in fact I think the evaluative raises even more challenges to the higher-level property view than either of the former kinds. This is because the instantiation of some purported evaluative properties is highly contingent and cannot justifiably be thought to carve a stable "kind" in the sense that functional and natural kind properties do. In discussing alternative views below, I develop this criticism and provide a diagnosis for why it arises.

4.7 Option 3

If Option 2 is unsupported, one might wonder what can be made of the alternative options. I will offer some preliminary remarks regarding Options 3 and 4 which attempt to account for correct evaluative categorization without appealing to higher-level properties. Accepting either option would amount to viewing the Argument from Similarity as an invalid inference, a conclusion I have been urging. Option 3 is the view that lower-level (i.e. natural or "metaphysical" in Moore's sense) properties are similar enough to account for correct evaluative categorization, and hence denies the need for higher-

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supervenience came about – it is not a doctrine about all mental properties relate to all physical properties only. If Dancy's distinction is meant to apply to token property *instances*, then there is no quarrel, since I am discussing categories in general, and not whether some particular instance of a property or state-of-affairs falls into some particular category.

level properties but shares the assumption that similarity is required for correct categorization. Option 4 denies that properties are needed to account for correct evaluative categorization. Option 3 is the subject of this section, Option 4 the next.

Recall that according to the partial identity account, similarity reduces to identity of elements of complex properties. I argued above that it therefore does not support the view that higher-level evaluative properties are essential for concepts of evaluative categories, since the lower-level properties are doing the work of grounding similarity in that case. However, a crack might be opened for what I labeled as Option 3, namely that, contrary to one line of thought, there is enough similarity among natural properties to ground evaluative categories. For clarity's sake, I will first make the strongest case for this view that I can, and only add caveats and qualifiers afterward. The hope is that when the merits are in view, the limits will be, as well.

This view will seem plausible to some, but utterly implausible to others. It is impossible to canvass all potential views of value in order to make the case for similarity among natural properties on an individual basis. However, one can appeal to some generalities and hope that the outline of the case is clear. For instance, basic hedonists about value might claim that there is a single property whose instantiation unifies all instances of *goodness*, namely *hedonic pleasure*. If we grant that *hedonic pleasure* is a natural property, then there can be no question that the problem of similarity among natural properties is solved.

Many find hedonism implausible (I count myself among them), but there is more to say. Often things that are good will be so as a result of causing affective states of various sorts: pleasure, comfort, security, reducing anxiety, self-esteem, a feeling of trust, empathy, and so on. Ostensibly, there are a finite number of the relevant affective states related to *goodness* in this way. Likewise, pain, anxiety, fear, grief, and a finite number of other affective states of this sort are often connected with *badness*. Many evaluative episodes involve instances of these affective states. It seems there is fertile ground here to develop a view according to which natural properties provide boundaries for evaluative categories. For instance, courage is the overcoming of fear through an act of will. The boundaries for courageous acts can then be given by natural properties. Many of the virtues, in part due to their thickness (understood as having both descriptive and evaluative or normative content or aspects) seem amenable to this sort of account.

Those who have more sophisticated accounts of the virtues, according to which an action is not courageous, for example, unless it is an overcoming of fear through an act of will *for some just purpose*, say, will not find this account satisfactory. (McDowell, (1979) is one of those who would be unsatisfied

with the basic account.) But I want to set aside whatever problems that might arise from providing the details of such a view and look at one big problem which in my view cannot be overcome. The problem is that the purported instantiation of many evaluative categories depend on extreme contingencies with little unity among their instances. If *goodness* is an evaluative property with ties to *better* and *best* (some argue that *goodness* reduces to *better/best*, cf. Gibbard, 2003, p. 142), we ought not to expect that it will correlate to a kind analogous to natural kinds.[87] Similar remarks apply to discourse involving reasons (i.e. "most reason," "better reasons," etc.) That is because what is "best" in a particular context is radically different based on indefinitely many contextual factors. Consider, sending a birthday card, betraying one's best friend, telling a lie, being honest, imprisoning someone, causing someone intense pain, killing someone's beloved pet, etc. can all be what is "best," or what one has most reason to do, given a certain set of circumstances, strange as they may be.[88] But in that case it would seem that natural properties alone are not enough. Causing an inordinate amount of pain might be the best thing to do, if the other possible actions open to one would cause even *more* pain. Since what is best can change though the *kinds* of relevant natural properties instantiated remain the same, it is reasonable to think that all evaluative kinds are stable and can be grounded in stable kinds of natural properties.

It is important to be clear about this point, as it guides the discussion for what follows. A parallel example might help. Take the kind: the ten tallest individual oak trees in the world. This is a coherent category – we can roughly conceive of what the members of the categories are like, we have a way of determining what its members are, and this category is surely satisfied (as there are at least ten oak trees on the planet). However, the boundaries of this category are not provided by the instantiation of any single property; in other words, there is no property shared by the members of this category that grounds categorization, not even *tallness*. *Tallness* is neither necessary to be a member of the category (we might cut down all oak trees over three feet tall) nor sufficient (many oak trees instantiate *tallness* but are not among the top ten tallest).[89]

Though *better/best* are comparative properties like *tallness* is, the comparative aspect is not the central point. Neither is the fact that both properties are relational. These contribute to the problem in

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[87] I am granting for the sake of argument that *goodness*, *best*, *most reason*, etc. are properties, the sort that an account devoid of higher-level properties is least equipped to handle. In other circumstances I would argue against this assumption, but to do so here would lead to far astray. Suffice to say that if one does not think "thin" evaluative properties exist, one will not have been moved by the Argument from Similarity in the first place.

[88] Jonathan Dancy (2004) has emphasized the radical contingency attendant to considerations of "oughts" and "reasons."

[89] A cheap objection might be that the estimable trees all share the property *being one of the top ten tallest trees in the world*. See the previous section for my reply to this objection.

their respective cases, but they are genera of a species of the problem. What matters for these purposes is the instantiation of many of these properties is highly contingent, context dependent, or in some sense *ad hoc*. The highly contingent nature of these instantiations undermines the view that they can ground similarity or unify a stable kind in any way analogous to a natural or even functional kind.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to characterize the relevant contingencies and context dependence at work in these cases. For the oak trees case, the members of the category depends as much upon the properties of other oak trees as it does on the properties of the members. Parallel considerations apply in the evaluative domain, as well. What it is best to do in a particular situation can be pretty bad if no decent alternatives are available.[90] For example, running an innocent person over with a trolley is bad, regardless of other contextual factors. Whether it is best to do depends on other factors, such as whether or not the trolley will run over five innocent people if you do anything else.

The case of the evaluative can go one step further than tallest oak trees category in one respect, however. In the case of the oak trees, though there is no single property unifying the category, the properties relevant to the correct categorization are still fairly natural and mind-independent. *Tallness* by itself does not provide the boundaries for the category, but the relevant properties that go into the category will not be mind-dependent. The same cannot necessarily be said of evaluative properties such as *better/best*. That is because mind-dependent properties are directly relevant to the determination of when an action is best. For instance, an agent's epistemic status, interests or goals, or the interests or goals of her loved ones all can play a part in determining what is best.

Cognitive scientists and developmental psychologists offer evidence that we sometimes cognize in terms of goal-driven and "*ad hoc*" categories such as "what to pack for a winter picnic" and "costumes for Halloween," along with more stable and mind-independent categories, such as natural kind categories (Barsalou; 1983). Such categories are not stable kinds and their members may not have much in common apart from their usefulness to achieve the relevant goals. For instance, a scarf and a thermos would not seem similar in any interesting way if not provided the context of packing for a winter picnic.

Notice, however, that there is no difficulty in supposing that there is a "correct" answer to the question of the extension of these categories. It is an objective matter as to which oak trees are tallest. When it comes to the category of what to pack for a winter picnic, there will be more diversity in appropriate answers, but some (e.g. a ceiling fan) are clearly ruled out. That is not to say there are no

[90] I elide over the important distinction between what is subjectively versus objectively best. That is because if they are properties, which I am granting for the sake of argument, each will have to be accounted for in some way. One or perhaps both of them will be contingent in the ways I discuss in the text.

conditions under which one might conceivably bring a ceiling fan to a winter picnic. Rather this possibility underscores the contingent nature of *ad hoc* categories; they are contingent on the interests and goals of the participants, and typically these do not include a ceiling fan in these circumstances. What matters is that though there will not be a shared property to ground similarity, correct categorization is still possible.

I am claiming that some, but perhaps not all, evaluative categories are in some sense *ad hoc*, contingent, or (inclusively) mind-dependent in such a way as to undermine the view that their boundaries "carve at nature's joints," so to speak.[91] Since what is good, best, provides most reason, right, etc. often depend upon contingencies (e.g. which other actions are possible given an agent's background), interest or goals, and/or subjective epistemic states it is implausible to suppose there is some independent property or cluster common to all the members of these categories. In other words, some evaluative categories are not defined by the presence of some shared property or cluster of properties – at least not a mind- or language-dependent property. In that case, Option 3, which takes it that similarity among lower-level properties grounds categorization, fails, and furthermore that we have found no support for the Argument from Similarity.

The crucial assumption of the Argument from Similarity which needs to be more carefully considered is the view that our concepts and categories mirror external reality *and nothing more*. That is, that for any categorization we use successfully there is a metaphysical category carved into nature, as well. In many cases, this picture might well be correct, but it is easy to take it too far, as part of conceptualization is not merely passive reception, but also active processing, categorizing, etc.[92] I take it that many are happy to concede this point for non-evaluative categories, but might balk when it comes evaluative ones. This hesitance might be due to the belief that it would undermine the objectivity of values. In the next section, I discuss the indisputable fact that we make do with categories whose members are not objectively metaphysically similar, and make a case that some evaluative categories

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[91] I do not have an illuminating account of the sort of mind-dependence at play, but here is an example to help demonstrate. One instantiates the evaluative property *thoughtfulness* if one gets one's spouse flowers for a special occasion, but not if one's spouse despises that particular species of flower (and one should know this). The boundaries of *thoughtfulness* will in part depend on the flower preferences of one's spouse. The same is true when it comes to what is *best* to do in one's flower shopping. I am claiming that there could not be a stable kind to account for these preferences. After all, one's spouse might change his or her mind and one ought to get that very species of flower next year.

[92] It is also easy to take this too far in the other direction – I am not claiming that all evaluative categories are "social constructions" or that categorization is "in the mind of the beholder." Rather, it is plausible to think there is a representation to some degree and construction to some degree in evaluative categorization.

belong to this class of categories. The Argument from Similarity required objective similarity grounded in properties. Option 4 challenges that view.

4.8 Option 4

According to Option 4, evaluative categorization does not in all cases depend upon objective similarity grounded in a shared property or cluster of properties. It is not as radical as Option 1, which denied the notion of correct evaluative categorization, yet it runs counter to some intuitive strands of thought about categorization. At issue is the question of whether or not evaluative properties are needed to make correct evaluative categorization. In the last section, I indicated that evaluative categories are based on too many contingent, mind-dependent, or (inclusive) generally *ad hoc* factors to reasonably suppose that their membership is determined by a unique property or cluster of properties instantiated by each member. There is evidence that we often categorize the world in this way.

In *Wandering Significance*, Mark Wilson provides a number of examples where a categorizing predicate which seems to apply uniformly in fact covers a disparate range of phenomena. For instance, 'hardness' might naturally be thought to pick out the property *hardness*. We know when something, like oak wood, is hard and when something else, beech wood, is not. And it would seem to be quite natural to suppose that oak wood instantiates *hardness* while beech wood does not. But upon deeper inspection, the differences in the way the term 'hardness' is aptly applied belie this intuitive picture.

To demonstrate, suppose that instead of comparing two pieces of wood, we instead attempt to compare the hardness of oak wood with the hardness of the glass of the windshield of an automobile. It is perfectly natural to describe both materials as "hard," and yet there is a lot of discrepancy between their qualities. Wilson emphasizes that the way we *test* the hardnesses of various objects and materials shows that we are aware of these discrepancies. He writes:

> in everyday contexts we adjudicate the "hardnesses" of various materials, both comparatively and absolutely, through a wide variety of comparatively easy to apply tests…we instinctively appraise a wood by rapping upon it, a rubber by squeezing, a metal by attempting to make a small imprint; a glass or ceramic by rapping lightly or scratching (Wilson, 338).

Oak wood is a member of the category of hard materials, but not because it is difficult to make a small imprint in it using a hard metal ball bearing. The differences in microstructural properties give rise to different macrostructual properties, and we go about testing and using

these properties in different ways and for different purposes. When it comes to testing techniques, Wilson writes that the "exact nature of these refinements in technique typically depend on not only the *type* of material under consideration, but the *circumstances* in which an evaluation of "hardness" is likely to be required (338-339), and that "if we attempt to discuss the comparative hardness of materials…we can become startled by the disparity in standards locally applied" (345). Furthermore, the factors that provide the best way to determine hardness will be those whose presence or absence is relatively easily detectable and assessed;

> we should observe that these tendencies towards local specialization are always constrained by the restraints of practicality, for manufacturing often requires traits that can quickly be evaluated 'on the fly.' (341)

The category of hard materials is determined by a number of different substances with large discrepancies in their properties which we investigate and classify based on our interests. The categorization of hard materials is not something which resides apart from us, but which we passively mirror with our concepts and terms; it is not clear that hardness, as a category, carves at nature's joints, at least not apart from human interests.[93]

As I mentioned in the previous section, I do not think this account of hardness undermines the view that there can be objective truths about statements regarding the hardness of a material. Oak wood is harder than beech wood, objectively. The view I am advocating is that objective truths about categorization do not in all cases require a metaphysical entity shared by all members to draw the boundaries of the category.

What reason is there to think that evaluative predicates and categories are similar to 'hardness'? Take 'goodness' as an example. There does not seem to be any universal standard for goodness as is there is for, say, tallness. Take just about any two objects which admit of talk of tallness and we will have a way, in principle, to compare them according to some common metric. This is not true with goodness. What it is to be a good thief is incomparable with what it is to be a good singer. The lack of a common standard hearkens back to the lack of such a standard for hardness across

[93] One might claim that we can "thin-slice" the relevant concepts and categories. Instead of supposing there is one category of hardness for all materials, each type of material has its own separate category of hardness. So steel is $hard_1$ while steel is $hard_2$ and these cannot be compared. First, it just isn't true that we do categorize hard materials in this way, so I take it there is no need to make this move. Second, there is a question as to which degree of fineness is appropriate for categorization. If we go too fine, we cannot make the comparisons we do, in fact, make. So there will have to be a principled point of fineness, and I bet Wilson could show that there are relevant discrepancies at any reasonable degree of fineness.

materials – we will have different tests or standards for goodness depending on what sort of thing or activity we are interested in at the time. The case of a good thief shows that 'goodness' can be defined in terms of its commendatory force *simpliciter*, thus undermining the view that 'goodness' is univocal in this way.

These considerations have led some theorists to conclude that 'good' is a predicate modifier rather than a predicate in itself.[94] 'Fake' is an example of such a modifying term. A fake judge is not a particular type of judge, namely one that is fake. A fake judge is not a judge *at all*. 'Fake' necessarily modifies a complement predicate and affects the meaning of the predicate it modifies. This is in opposition to predicates such as 'tall'. Tall judges are members of the "judge" category. Though it is permissible in ordinary speech to utter phrases which make use of predicate modifiers but do not contain the complement predicate ("He's a fake!") it is commonly understood that some complementary predicate is in these cases implied by context (pointing at the man in a judge rental costume). Thus, 'fake' is not a predicate on its own. Similarly, according to this argument, 'good' necessarily modifies a complement predicate and is not a predicate by itself, even if the complement is sometimes only implied (by "He's no good," we mean he is not a good *person*).

The distinction between thinking that 'good' is a predicate modifier and not a predicate by itself is not an idle one, as it indicates that some of our ways of understanding and talking about the evaluative realm are not meant to represent an external metaphysical reality exclusively. For instance, Zoltán Gendler Szabó draws just this conclusion. He writes, "one certainly cannot hold a theory according to which the semantic value of 'good' is the class of good things. There may be nothing in common to all good things" (Szabó, 104).

Szabó has nicely emphasized Geach's appeal to the *inferential role* of the term 'good' which demonstrates the claim that there is not some property *goodness* instantiated by each member of the category of good things. He uses the example of a good dancer and a good pianist. The qualities that go into making one good at the one activity are different from what go into making one good at the other, and it would be a mistake to infer one's goodness as a pianist from one's goodness as a dancer.

[94] Cf. Geach, (1953), Thomson (2001, 2008). In previous chapters, and in Chapter 3 especially, I did not take issue with the understanding that 'goodness' is a predicate so as not to distract from the central argument of that chapter. Even if 'goodness' is not a predicate, some other evaluative terms are, and the same points apply to those terms.

Szabó (98) illustrates the illicit inference by translating it from natural language English into a formalized extensional first-order language as follows:[95]

(1) Susan is a good dancer	(1') dancer(Susanne)& good(Susanne)
(2) Susan is a pianist	(2') pianist(Susanne)
(3) Susanne is a good pianist	(3') pianist(Susanne) & good(Susanne)

It is plain that such an inference is unjustified. *Goodness* in this case is not something one can prize apart from its complement activity, and the standards and traits that determine what is good for any given activity are very different. But then on what grounds are we to suppose that there is a standalone property doing the work of providing the boundaries for the category of good things?

As I mentioned above, one might object that there is something common to all things correctly categorized as good. There is something commendatory about the action or object regarded as good. One who holds this view needs to grapple with the fact that the example of the good thief shows that the nature of the commendation is not the same in all cases. I take it that when 'good' applies, it indicates that there are standards of some sort with which to evaluate some object.[96] This, however, says nothing about which properties must exist for evaluations to take place.[97]

4.9 Shapelessness

Some might balk at the gesture towards a positive account of what is required for correct evaluative categorizations in the previous section. It is common to read that the non-evaluative is "shapeless" and it might appear that I argued otherwise. Though there is a considerable literature regarding the "shapelessness" of the non-evaluative, I have for the most part neglected putting my discussion in the terms commonly used in this discussion. That is largely due to the fact that it is not always clear to me what the charge or its disavowal amounts to. If it is a claim about the content of concepts or the appropriate use of predicates, then the suggestions of the previous section do not run afoul of the shapelessness considerations. The suggestions concern ontological questions about

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[95] *Problems of Compositionality* (Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, NY), 2000, I have changed the numbering for the premises and conclusion. Note that this analysis of the concept [GOOD] and its accompanying term does not apply equally well to [HARDNESS]. That is due to the fact that [GOOD] is multitrack and [HARDNESS] isn't. If a material is hard, it is necessarily hard in one way. But things can be good in many different ways.

[96] 'Object' is to be understood as including events, character traits, activities, and so on.

[97] *Pace* William FitzPatrick's "Ethical Non-naturalism and Normative Properties." *New Waves in Metaethics*. Ed. Michael Brady. (Palgrave MacMilan, New York, NY), 2011.

similarity and categories, and are compatible with the view that value concepts and terms are autonomous and not reducible to naturalistic concepts and terms. If the charge of shapelessness applies ontologically, in that emergent, multiply realized properties are required for evaluative "shape," then it is true that my suggestions are guilty. However, this charge seems particularly stringent and would require a lot of argument. Most likely, any naturalist account, or any account that denies the possibility of strong emergence of this sort, and any account that rejects the possibility of the multiple realizability of properties will be guilty, as well. I will not respond to such a view here, but suffice to say a stiff challenge can be mustered. And if the shapelessness thesis is that one can infer from the autonomy of value concepts and terms from naturalistic ones that there must be a corresponding autonomy of value properties, then this is the very inference I have been striving to show is unsupported.

Sometimes the shapelessness of the non-evaluative is taken to be relevant to questions of particularisms or holisms of various sorts. I will not discuss these issues in detail, but I believe that those like me who endorse Option 4 for at least some evaluative categories can accommodate both views. The nature and degree of contingencies and dependencies that go into determining what is best or most reasonable might or might not be codifiable for I all say here.

4.10 Upshot

I have argued that higher-level evaluative properties are not necessary for marking the boundaries of evaluative categories, and that means that the proposed Ontological argument derived from the pattern problem remains unfulfilled. I have no *a priori* argument that it *cannot* be completed, but I am inclined to think it is not an enthymeme, but that it is simply an invalid inference to move from pattern problem considerations to an ontological conclusion. The ontological burden in the conclusion simply goes beyond the support that derives from the pattern problem alone.

Along the way, I pointed out that some categories do not have a substantive independence from our minds, interests, goals, etc., and therefore ought to be viewed with suspicion, from the ontological perspective. I can grab the pen, notebook, sticky notes, and computer currently on my desk top, toss them in a bag, declare that each item in the bag is now named "Jim" and thereby create a category, namely the category "things I named Jim that are in this bag". However, nothing ontological follows from this, no new property related to the naming act is created, at least if I am right that properties should do some work if we are to be warranted in asserting their existence.

But one might push back: some mind-dependent properties *do* seem to do some work. For instance, so-called secondary properties, such as colors or aural tones are contingent and lack substantive independence, and yet are indispensable for giving a full picture of the world. Many philosophers have noted an analogy between evaluative properties and secondary perceptual properties. In the next chapter, I examine the view that evaluative properties can be modeled after perceptual properties.

CHAPTER FIVE

Qualitative Character for Evaluative Properties

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, I have been pressing the case that often presumed rationales for positing evaluative properties, especially irreducible evaluative properties, fail to hold up to increased scrutiny. This chapter continues the trend. Some philosophers have claimed that moral agents possess a faculty of "moral perception." We will delve into moral perception more deeply in what follows, but the immediate relevance is this: perception is often tied to intrinsic qualitative states. *Redness* (or better, the determinate *crimson*) is a perceived property, as is *bitter*. It is sometimes argued that it would be absurd to claim that these qualities do not exist though it seems extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prove their existence from "the outside," as it were. They seem manifestly present to us, and their recognition is all the proof one can provide yet is all the proof one rationally needs.[98] One might argue in this context that evaluative perception, if taken literally, provides access to evaluative qualities (i.e. properties) in the very same way, and that the proof of their existence is undeniable for the same reasons. If so, then this could be the metaphysical difference evaluative properties make. Realists could claim that irrealists cannot adequately account for the first-person *experience* of value.

Many theorists have argued that the experience of value is at least analogous to other sorts of perception. Thus, John McDowell writes:

> The idea of value experience involves taking admiration, say, to represent its object as having a property that (although there in the object) is essentially subjective in much the same way as the property that an object is represented as having by an experience of redness – that is, understood adequately only in terms of the appropriate modification of human…sensibility (1985, 143).

Similarly, the literature regarding so-called response-dependent views of value often appeal to this analogy. As we will see below, the closeness of the analogy, or whether it is intended to be analogical at all, are important details when it comes to the questions I am raising. The more distant the analogy, the fewer ontological commitments come in its tow. If the analogy is very tight, or if the experience of value

[98] McDowell, but also Galen Strawson (2006) and Thomas Nagel (1974), among others.

is simply another case of perception along with that of color and sounds, the more firmly committed the view becomes to the existence of unique perceptual value properties.

I see no good reason to suppose that evaluative properties are intrinsic qualities of experience, nor, alternatively, that they are the perceived qualities of evaluative experience.[99] I will attempt to justify these claims via a positive argument bolstered by a negative argument. First, I provide a "how possibly" account of what some people call evaluative perception,[100] according to which irreducible evaluative properties are not the objects of experience, nor are they intrinsic qualities of experience. If this account is on track, then there is no reason to think evaluative properties are indispensable to account for evaluative experience. Then, I argue that one ought to expect this conclusion based upon the particular nature of the supervenience of the evaluative on the natural. But first, it is important to clarify the positions one can take with respect to evaluative perception.

5.2 Evaluative Perception: Two camps

Typically, philosophers take the experience of *qualia* to be a feature of perception (or sensation, if the category of sensations is not a proper part of the category of perception) through one of the sense modalities - vision, hearing, smell, etc. But there are, arguably, other *qualia*-laden experiences which are not directly perceptual. For instance, nausea and embarrassment carry distinct and irreducible qualitative "feels" – sickening and unsteady queasiness in the case of the former, apologetic timidity in the latter.

I do not know of any fully determinate yet non-question-begging way to discriminate between distinctly perceptual versus distinctly affective (or otherwise experiential) processes. So for a first and very rough characterization we can simply define evaluative perception, as opposed to just any sort of evaluatively loaded experiential process such as a pang of guilt, as the perception of evaluative qualities through one of the recognized sense modalities – sight, hearing, etc. We will see shortly enough that this characterization is inadequate; but it seems a good enough place to initially get situated in the debate.

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[99] The difference between the two views depends on one's view of conscious properties – on whether or not there is "mental paint" or if conscious experience is purely representational. In either case, the central thesis that needs to be maintained in order to support the view that we are warranted in thinking that evaluative properties exist due to evaluative perception requires a view of qualitative consciousness that is at least partly representational.

[100] I hedge for reasons that will become clearer later on. In my view, my account is not really an account of perception, but merely non-inferential judgments.

With this initial characterization in hand, we can disambiguate three ways of understanding talk of "evaluative perception":

1. Talk of evaluative perception is purely metaphorical. Some authors' appeal to "moral vision" or "moral perception" is simply a short-hand and metaphorical way to ascribe virtuous moral judgment or moral wisdom.[101] For example, one might claim to admire Ghandi's unwavering "moral vision" or to wish one had clearer moral perception of a particularly murky moral dilemma.

2. Talk of evaluative perception is to be understood broadly, as is the case when one might claim that we can "perceive that other people are in pain, that it's time to water the plants, or that Fred told a joke" (McGrath, 221). The claim is that we can attain evaluative knowledge *non-inferentially* (i.e. without reasoning through premises which justify a conclusion) – perhaps ultimately talk of evaluative perception is to be taken metaphorically, but it is not straightforwardly recognized as such, particularly by the speakers who use the phrase. Or perhaps 'evaluative perception' might be a technical phrase, and so is not meant to be metaphorical in the sense of 1. above.

3. Talk of evaluative perception is to be understood narrowly, as a further species of typical sensory perception. This view has it that an essential aspect of evaluative perception is the presence of an experiential quality (i.e. *qualia*) that is distinctly evaluative *and* also *representational* of a distinctly evaluative property.

I am interested in those who take positions 2 or 3, and so will leave straightforwardly metaphorical talk of evaluative perception aside.

Those who endorse either 2 or 3, agree about the following thesis:

(K): It is possible to attain evaluative knowledge *via* intrapersonal (i.e. apart from testimony) non-inferential processes.[102]

(K) is not uncontroversial. For instance, some have argued that (virtually) all moral knowledge must derive from deductive inferential reasoning, typically with a major premise containing a universal moral principle or rule, a minor purely descriptive premise describing the details of a scenario of interest, with the conclusion following from the premises serving as the bit of resulting moral knowledge (Cf. Hare, 1963).

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[101] Most theorists talk about morality rather than value more generally when it comes to this topic. Throughout, I will treat morality as a subset of the evaluative domain, and thus suppose that what is said about moral perception to apply to value perception more generally. It should be noted that in other contexts, I do not consider all of morality to be a subset of value, since I think deontic notions are a part of morality but require separate treatment from value notions.

[102] It is useful to talk about "knowledge" rather than mere "belief." However, one ought to avoid reading this realistically in the sense that knowledge is, at least, justified true belief, and that to attain evaluative knowledge requires being justified in believing some evaluative truth. Every instance of 'knowledge' the author uses is meant to understood neutrally between a realist, expressivist, prescritpivist, etc. position on the conditions for evaluative knowledge.

Though it is not universally accepted, I want to, for the most part, set aside the discussion of why we ought to accept (K). In my view, Sarah McGrath has provided compelling reasons to believe that inferential processes are not required to attain evaluative knowledge.[103] The sort of evaluative knowledge that is acquired will not be about general principles or about second-order questions about evaluative properties. It will be about individual, concrete cases. She draws on an analogy from color perception:

> No doubt color hypotheses *do* explain color judgments (and experiences): that this snowball is white explains my spontaneous judgments (and experience) that it is white. But I do not believe that this snowball is white *because* that hypothesis would explain why I judge that snow is white…whether there is some inference to the best explanation of our color judgments seems irrelevant to the question of what justifies my belief that the snowball is white" (McGrath, 214).

One does not reason from premises about color or appearances to the conclusion that the snowball is white; one is justified in forming this judgment without reasoning from premises at all. One simply recognizes it as white and that's it.

There are two important points to add that help to clarify a commitment to (K). First, notice the use of the definite article in last clause: "*the* snowball is white." McGrath is arguing that whatever the reasoning that provides for the justificatory status for color judgments as a class turns out to be, the discrete judgment that a particular snowball is white does not depend upon it. One simply sees the snowball and given one's background acquaintance with colors and color language, judges it to be white. Second, importantly, the claim is *not* that one cannot come to the same conclusions using inferential processes or even that one would be unjustified in doing so, it is merely the existence claim that one needn't – there are cases of non-inferential first person knowledge of a moral event.

McGrath argues that the same considerations are in place when it comes to morality. When one observes hoodlums burning a cat, one judges it to be wrong. If any moral claims are justified, and the observer's perceptual evidence is not defeated, then the observer has moral knowledge – knowledge that what she sees is wrong. She need not conceptualize it as such. She is more likely to cognize the demonstrative – "*That*'s wrong!" upon perceiving the burning cat. If this view is correct, then evaluative perception is closely bound up with something like (K).

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[103] The notion of inference relevant here is a normative one – about a reasoning process from premises which support or justify a conclusion. This is in contrast to a non-normative notion of inference familiar in the philosophy of cognitive science and mind which includes any syntactic operation over an intentional state. This notion of inference is compatible with (K).

Robert Audi assents to (K), but goes one step further. He claims that in some cases of evaluative perception, the resulting evaluative judgment is accompanied by an experiential or phenomenal quality of a distinctly evaluative sort. In support of (K), he claims that one:

> might know [moral] facts from memory or testimony. Conceivably, there could even be a subliminal detection capacity by which someone non-inferentially knows some such facts more directly (90).

However, he goes beyond (K) by claiming that "An experience constituting a moral perception, by contrast, must have a phenomenal element" (90). We can put this commitment as the following:

> (Q): Some, though not necessarily all, cases in which an agent attains evaluative knowledge *via* intrapersonal non-inferential processes are accompanied by distinctly evaluative *qualia*.

We can break those proponents of the possibility of evaluative perception into two camps; those that endorse (K) but not (Q) and those that endorse both (K) and (Q). (These two camps correspond to 2 and 3 above.) Setting aside questions about the strict meaning of the term 'perception' for now, I aim to show that there is no need to accept (Q).

5.3 My Model

In this section, I present a sketch of a model for evaluative perception, broadly understood so as to accommodate (K). If the essentials of this model are close to a satisfactory account, then we have a further reason to discard claims about the existence of moral *qualia*; we will have explained everything that needs to be explained without them.

In my view, an analogous capacity for "moral perception" is that of facial recognition.[104] In order to recognize someone's face, one must first have been acquainted with the other's face and placed it into memory. However, once this process occurs, then it is clear that when one turns a corner and observes a friend, one does not go through an *inferential* process, reasoning from premises to conclusion, to determine that one observes one's friend. That is, one does not reason so:

1. Perceptual input
2. The perceptible features that I currently perceive resemble those of F.
3. Therefore, I am perceiving F
4. Conclusion: Judgment: "That is F"

[104] Audi (91-92), too, appeals to facial recognition, but strangely, in my view, seems to take there to be attendant facial-recognition-*qualia* even apart from the visual *qualia* attendant to perceiving the colors, textures, shapes, etc. of faces.

Notice that whatever the content of the premises and conclusion, this is simply not the process through which we arrive at the judgment (and come to have knowledge) that "That is F."

Similar considerations apply in the case of evaluative perception. Here is my model: there is some evidence that we make proto-value judgments beginning at a very young age. These judgments seem to be reactionary and quickly formed *via* an innate or early developing mental mechanism. I qualify from labeling them value judgments since it is not clear that infants have the conceptual sophistication required to make value judgments; it is a mistake to conflate value judgments with reflexive responses to stimuli. Infants and young children need to develop the capacity to make judgments about what are good or bad (in a broad sense of evaluation) consequences, motives, etc. And to make these sorts of judgments, the infant needs to develop a sense of what consequences are likely to follow from what sorts of actions, along with a theory of mind, and other sorts of evaluative and non-evaluative knowledge. What is needed is a background theory.

In claiming that an agent needs a background theory to make value judgments, I do not mean that she must be consciously aware of a structured set of complete and consistent axioms, theorems, propositions, and the like that constitute theories in various scientific or mathematical contexts. Instead, they must possess and/or be committed to certain platitudes and principles that carve the boundaries of evaluative thought.[105] For instance, one must accept "ought-implies-can," distinguish pro-social/anti-social actions and attitudes, understand standards of assessment in particular domains, etc.[106] Along with these commitments, the agent must have a theory of mind and physical knowledge. In some sense, the specifics of value, are, at least in part, learned. The development of one's background theory may involve many inferential processes. Indeed, it might be that creatures like us must necessarily use inferential processes to develop the *capacity* to obtain non-inferential evaluative knowledge. However, once we possess these attributes, it seems correct to say, as Sarah McGrath has pointed out, that we can, when confronted by states or events which exhibit evaluative valence or portent, non-inferentially recognize the relevant properties instantiated by them, and come to have evaluative knowledge.[107]

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[105] I do not mean to preclude moral particularism by appealing to principles. The principles might be morally loaded ("Don't steal") or quite obviously in need of hedges ("Don't hit people").

[106] Notice I am not claiming that these platitudes provide an analysis of individual moral terms, as analytic functionalists like Frank Jackson (1998) and Michael Smith (1994) would have it. I am only claiming that in order to possess distinctly moral concepts, as opposed to pro-social concepts, one must surely have some grasp of a number of substantive basic theoretical presuppositions – e.g. "ought implies can".

[107] To reiterate, this characterization of non-evaluative knowledge should be read neutrally with regard to various metaethical positions in the realism/irrealism debate.

My working hypothesis is this: within stored memory and habit are the acceptance of platitudes and some easily accessible (though not necessarily consciously) substantive doctrines to which the observer is committed. Upon perceiving the instantiation of certain physical facts, for instance hoodlums burning a cat, the associative mental "nodes" in the background theory boxes, both physical and evaluative, fire and memory interacts with perception of the instantiated facts, and that this process results in an evaluative judgment being formed.[108] This judgment is not the result of reasoning through serial premises. If the judgment and facts correspond, the observer achieves evaluative knowledge.

It would be nice to be able to specify exactly the working relations between perception, moral evaluative, and physical concepts, but this is a supremely complex empirical question and at this point the best one can do is put to evidence that there is some interaction. The sort of interaction I have in mind would be quite similar to that involved in facial recognition – causal interactions between perception modules, memory modules, and some sort of central processor to make sense of all the relevant inputs.

I call this a recognitional capacity. I think McGrath and others provide a strong case for thinking that many of us have it. In a broad sense, I think we can say that we are capable of evaluative perception. Some might object to this broad characterization, however, as Audi does. This is a fair point, and personally, I am inclined to think that the concept of [PERCEPTION] brings with it the presupposition of sensation or *qualia*. But it is perhaps not an essential feature; after all the phenomenon of *blindsight* seems to be a case where perception occurs but no subjective qualitative experience of vision. Nevertheless, I think use of the term 'perception' carries a certain connotation that I would rather avoid. I would rather call this capacity non-inferential recognition (I lose points on elegance). Whatever the semantic point may be, I think there is a good case to be made for (K) – we have a capacity for non-inferential evaluative knowledge. I have not appealed to evaluative qualia, or principle (Q), in order to account for this sort of knowledge. In the next three sections, I critically examine an alternative account provided by Robert Audi which incorporates (Q).

5.4 Qualia Model

There are a number of ways to work *qualia* into a model of evaluative perception. At the extreme, one might claim that we possess a distinct "evaluative organ" that provides the biological

[108] 'Physical' here, as in Harman's (1973) discussion, is a catchall term for all the facts that can be described in scientific terms.

correlate for a distinctively evaluative sense modality, and that moral properties are perceptible by this organ. Or one might claim that the typical sense modalities (e.g. sight, smell, etc.) are capable of perceiving distinctly evaluative properties – that evaluative properties are available, so to speak, to commonly recognized senses. These approaches have not often been defended, and for good reason, in my view. In either case, one would need to identify both a neurological or otherwise biological sensory system *and* identify the physical vehicles for the relevant evaluative properties and correlative *qualia*, as light wavelengths serve for vision and compression waves serve for sound. It would be surprising if there were such things.

These views are extreme, however, and Audi's is more plausible. Audi commits to the view that phenomenal experience is an essential aspect of evaluative perception, and thus (Q). He claims that even apart from other non-inferential methods of attaining moral knowledge such as memory or testimony (more on this below), evaluative perception requires an experiential aspect. He claims that

> there could even be a subliminal detection capacity by which someone non-inferentially knows some such facts more directly. An experience constituting a moral perception, by contrast, must have a phenomenal element (90).

Furthermore, all perception, in Audi's view, is representational as well – perception is "factive," implies "truths" and represents both its objects and the attendant properties and *that* an object possesses a property that cannot be directly perceived (82).[109] Audi claims that only observable properties, such as shape or color properties, are ever directly perceptible in the sense that they have associated qualitative aspects. Nevertheless, we can perceive non-observable properties *via* perception of observable properties. For instance, we can see wind blowing in the trees, though of course we never directly perceive wind *qua* rapidly moving air. Or we can see the sturdiness of the oak chair in contrast to the flimsiness of the plastic lawn chair, though of course sturdiness and flimsiness are not directly observable. One way of making Audi's point is that we often perceive more than meets the eye.

This requires Audi to, by his own admission, stretch the boundaries a bit on what typically counts as a perceptual representation. He claims that "the theory of perception I have outlined can accommodate moral perception by incorporating a distinction between perceptual representations of

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[109] Compare with McDowell (1985): "we can say that colours and shapes figure in experience, not as the representational significance carried by features that are…indifferently subjective…but simply as properties that objects are represented as having" (138-139). McDowell makes an analogy with evaluative properties on this basis and claims that "The idea of value experience involves taking admiration, say, to represent its object as having a property that (although there in the object) is essentially subjective in much the same way as the property that an object is represented as having by an experience of redness" (143). McDowell is pressing the point that evaluative perception is only possible if there is some property being represented in that perception.

an ordinary sensory kind and perceptual representations of a richer kind" (91). The type of perceptual representation involved in evaluative perception is, for instance, a "phenomenal representation constituted by a (richer) *response* to injustice. The sense of injustice, then, *as* based on, and phenomenally integrated with, a suitable ordinary perception of the properties on which injustice is consequential, might serve as the experiential element in moral perception" (89). Thus, my original characterization of evaluative perception as the product of the typically recognized senses is exposed as unduly restrictive. I do not know of an obvious good reason to deny that perception can be rich and reactive in the way Audi asserts, and it is probably a mistake to presume the matter of what counts as perception as closed. So let us allow for this sort of response to be perceptual.

Unfortunately, Audi does not go into much detail into the character of the experience of injustice. He provides an example of the indignation one would feel from seeing a man slap a woman for no good reason (79-80). This example seems like it might be useful, but merely gesturing to a familiar moral emotion does not do much to elucidate the much narrower claim about the nature of evaluative *qualia* specifically. One thing he makes clear is that the experience need not be affective; he claims that "Moral perceptual seemings, moreover, may or may not be partly emotional, as where indignation figures in them" (91).[110] This is important to keep in mind for later.

5.5 Objection to Qualia Model

Audi's proposal raises a number of problems, but for present purposes I want to focus on just one. To lay the groundwork for my objection, note that perception, whether evaluative or non-evaluative, is necessarily an online process. If the object, perceiver, or the vehicle between the object and perceiver is interrupted, then so is perception. Thus, if the observer closes her eyes, she no longer perceives the burning cat. Similar considerations apply if the hoodlums knock out the street light, or if they move the cat behind a nearby building.

One can still imagine or perhaps remember what it was like to perceive the burning cat when perception is interrupted. But neither imagination nor memory are perception. Audi recognizes this point by claiming that one ought not to conflate:

> perceptual with intellectual seeing…The distinction may not be sharp, but it is clear enough to enable us to distinguish intellectual moral seeing from the apparent moral

[110] I take no stand on whether emotional states can be representational. Audi allows for the possibility, and McDowell (1985) is committed to there being actual cases, such as admiration.

> perceptions that concern us. We must also set aside seeing in the mind's eye. That is best treated as a case of visual imagination" (80).

There is no doubt that there it is something it is like, understood in a very broad sense, to witness a morally charged event. However, there is also something it is like to hear or read a report about a morally charged event, or to imagine it. And these can be the same what-it-is-likes. Note that I am not claiming that subjective experience of witnessing a morally charged event and hearing a report about it later are always the same, but the possibility of sameness means that there is no *unique moral qualitative experience type dependent upon perception*.

My central objection to Audi's view is that the experiential response one is subject to in a case of evaluative perception can be exactly replicated in cases where *there is no perception*. An example helps to guide discussion. The following is an account provided by Sergeant Michael Bernhardt recounting the events of the so-called "My Lai Massacre," in which members of the U.S. army killed between 350-500 Vietnamese civilians, many of them young children and women, though there was no provocation and no attempts at resistance. There are reports that many of the victims were raped and/or beaten, and some of the bodies were mutilated.[111] Sgt. Michael Bernhardt was one of the first responders to the scene – here is an excerpt from an interview with Seymour Hersh recounting what he saw:[112]

> "They…were doing a whole lot of shooting up there, but none of it was incoming—I'd been around enough to tell that. I figured they were advancing on the village with fire power.
>
> "I walked up and saw these guys doing strange things. They were doing it three ways. One: They were setting fire to the hootches and huts and waiting for people to come out and then shooting them up. Two: They were going into the hootches and shooting them up. Three: They were gathering people in groups and shooting them.
>
> "As I walked in, you could see piles of people all through the village. ... all over. They were gathered up into large groups.
>
> "I saw them shoot an M-79 (grenade launcher) into a group of people who were still alive. But it (the shooting) was mostly done with a machine gun. They were shooting women and children just like anybody else.
>
> "We met no resistance and I only saw three captured weapons. We had no casualties. It was just like any other Vietnamese village—old Papa-san, women and kids. As a matter

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111 PBS.org, (2005). (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/trenches/my_lai.html)

112 Hersh, Seymour. "Hamlet Attack Called "Point-Blank Murder." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 20, 1969

> of fact, I don't remember seeing one military-age male in the entire place, dead or alive. The only prisoner I saw was about 50."
>
> An Army communique reporting on the operation said that Medina's company recovered two M-I rifles, a carbine\ a short-wave radio and enemy documents in the assault. The Viet Cong body count was listed as 128 and there was no mention of civilian casualties.

I expect any decent reader is experiencing a number of responses to this disgusting and reprehensible event. *But you are not perceiving it*. You are perceiving something (letters on a page), but you are not perceiving the massacre itself. If no difference can be discerned introspectively between the response to a recounting of the event and the perception of the event itself, then *ipso facto* there can be no subjectively qualitative difference between them at all. And if so, then whatever the standing of moral perception generally, there are no *evaluative qualia* of the perceptual sort Audi envisions, and (Q) is false.

Note that it is not enough for Audi to claim that there is a still a possibility of evaluative perception even if I am right that we have indiscriminable responses. For the point was that the properties could not be experienced via other processes (remember his point about mental imagining or intellectual seeing). Unless evaluative *qualia* add something distinctive, we have no reason to suppose they exist.

One obvious response to my objection is to point to the tremendous difference in the magnitude of the response Sgt. Bernhardt must have experienced versus the relatively mild response we experience afterward in reading an account of the event. Certainly this is true, and very often the impact of first-hand experience of events provides a stronger response than second-hand knowledge.

It would be too quick to suppose that a difference in magnitude equates to a difference in qualia, however. It is of course true that Sgt. Bernhardt does not experience what we experience if what we mean is quantitative identity of experience. But this is, in part, an artifact of the example and does not really address the point at issue. We can appeal to a milder example. Suppose you are a first-hand witness to impolite gossip – say that Ken spends too much time admiring his haircut in the mirror. If one were to later hear the witness recount the event, one might experience disapprobation of a very similar magnitude as the witness experienced in perceiving the event directly. Differences in magnitude are simply irrelevant to the question at hand. What matters is the qualitative experiential *type*, and I think there is no unique aspect to perception along these lines.

5.6 Evaluative Phenomenology

In this section, I shall attempt to forestall two objections to my claim that the perception of an evaluative event does not in any case involve an experiential quality that cannot be replicated in contexts outside of perception. It will occur to many, and rightly so, that, as I mentioned earlier, there is something-it-is-like to have moral experiences. For instance, Audi is right that many feel a sense of indignation at a perceived injustice. (Both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements attest to the universality of this experience.) It can be harrowing to be under an obligation one is not sure one will be able to keep; the ensuing guilt if unsuccessful can be gut-wrenching and crushing.

I do not deny these important claims, nor the associated claim that the what-it-is-likenesses involved in these cases are constituted in part by what qualify as *qualia*. I accept that the essentially subjective, first-personal experience of moral indignation, felt moral obligation, and guilt are experiential aspects of the respective phenomena. So am I not committed, after all, to the existence of evaluative *qualia*? And is my model not therefore incomplete?

Importantly, Audi denies that the response that serves as the phenomenal representation of moral properties need be affective. He claims that "moral perceptual seemings, moreover, may or may not be partly emotional, as where indignation figures in them" (91). He is arguing that many of us have a capacity for straightforward phenomenal representation of distinctly evaluative properties unmediated by morally relevant emotions, at least not in all cases.[113] But such an inference is not warranted if evaluative seemings are mediated by affective responses in all cases of evaluative perception that involve first-personal experiences, particularly since these responses can be generated even in cases where no moral perception occurs, as I argue above.

This difference is absolutely crucial for my overarching concern: what work do evaluative properties do that warrants belief in their existence? For if the experience of evaluative properties is necessarily mediated by evaluative emotions, the door is opened for the emotions to do all the relevant work without the independent existence of the properties, as the projectivist or eliminativist might assert. Certainly, it would take significant argumentation, which I do not provide, for the projectivist or eliminativist to show exactly what this looks like. Nevertheless, there would be no *metaphysical* reason to think it could not be done. To do the relevant work, and to justify the inference from evaluative

[113] The view is complicated if emotions themselves reduce, in some sense, to perceptual episodes (Cf. Prinz, 2004). Even if this is the correct view, what is perceived will be internal states of the body ("Emotions are states that appraise by registering bodily changes" (78), and not directly properties in the external world. This view does nothing to support the view I am criticizing.

experience to the reality of evaluative properties, they must be like Audi claims they are – qualitatively irreducible, or *sui generis*.[114] If I am right, then the realist must go back to the drawing board.

A second objection might arise due to the view that experience allows for essentially first-personal access. As I mentioned above, one argument Audi might appeal to which I cannot definitively refute is the argument from *introspection*. If one were to adamantly insist that one subjectively experiences distinctively evaluative *qualia*, there is little one can say to dissuade this thought. But given the plausibility of a model of the sort I have explicated above, and the lack of a need to appeal to sensory-like evaluative experience to explain non-inferential evaluative knowledge, we must be wary of making the mistake of what Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons call "introspective confabulation." In their words:

> Generally speaking, it is easy to 'read into' one's phenomenology what is not really there. For Instance, I see a saguaro cactus that strikes me (based on how it looks) as being about 45 years old…but here it would be implausible to suppose that the property of being roughly 45 years old is something that is introspectively presented to me in my visual experience. Rather, the more intuitively plausible thing to say here is that based on my cacti experience, I'm able to reliably form beliefs about the age of cacti based on what is presented to me in my visual experience. Were I to introspect and conclude that my visual experience presents me with the property of being 45 years old, I would be guilty of introspective confabulation (35).

I think that exactly parallel remarks apply just as well to the evaluative case. Introspection can sometimes be too coarse-grained a method to distinguish spontaneous non-inferential knowledge resulting in part from the perception of sensory inputs from the experience of further sensation. The fact that this further sensation does no work that cannot be accounted for in another way provides support for the view that a proponent of the argument from introspection would be making this mistake.

5.7 Evaluative Zombie World

I have offered a model for "evaluative perception" which does not appeal to evaluative intrinsic qualities of experience. Now I would like to develop a train of thought about the relation, or better lack thereof, between qualia and the nature of value properties which suggests two important conclusions. First, many of the characteristic features of qualitative experience do not apply in the case of evaluative

[114] See Horgan and Timmons (2008) for a fuller account of moral phenomenology that does not presuppose ontologically objective moral properties.

properties, suggesting that evaluative properties cannot simply be a subset of qualitative properties. Second, that the important differences between evaluative properties and qualitative experience indicate a surprising conclusion regarding the relation between evaluative properties and natural properties, namely that the conceptual connections between evaluative and natural properties are much stronger than those between conscious properties and physical properties. This consideration goes some way toward undermining the view that evaluative properties just could not be reducible to natural properties due to their apparent differences.

I will say much more about these two points below, but first we must look at a prominent thought experiment in the philosophy of mind which involves the possibility of qualia "zombies."[115] Zombies are creatures which talk, act, and even have many of the intentional attitudes that humans in the actual world do. Unlike humans, however, they do not experience qualia. To put a fine point on it, the thesis is that there is a possible world that is a duplicate to the actual one in every physical respect, but in which human duplicates (zombies) do not experience qualia. The possibility of qualia zombies is used as a premise in an argument to the conclusion that intrinsic qualities of experience are distinct in kind from the functional and structural properties often studied by the sciences, such as charge and mass.

A key premise in the zombie argument, at least in Chalmers' version of it, is that there are conditions under which what is conceivable (an epistemic notion) is possible (a metaphysical one). I want to raise the question of whether or not there are conceivable worlds which are duplicates in every natural respect, but which are different in any evaluative respect. The intention behind raising this question is two-fold: first, to determine whether or not value properties could be a subset of all qualitative properties, and second, to determine if value properties, like the properties of perceptual and sensational consciousness, are different in kind from the natural properties often studied by the sciences. Are there conceivable (thus possible, according to some) worlds that are natural duplicates but differ in their evaluative properties?[116]

It is commonly supposed that the evaluative supervenes on the natural (see Ch. 1, Section 2.2.1), and if so, the apparent answer is "no." In Chapter 1, I introduced the evaluative supervenience principle (ESP) informally as the view that "this means that any set of properties at this world that do not differ with regard to their natural properties do not differ in their evaluative properties either and, furthermore, that any changes amongst evaluative properties or states-of-affairs guarantees changes in

[115] Cf. Chalmers (1996), Kirk (1974).

[116] Incidentally, Chalmers thinks that there are not. See his (1996; pp. 83 and footnote 7 on pp. 371-372).

natural properties or states-of-affairs at this world as well," and that this holds necessarily.[117] Because many theorists hold this view, I did not spend much time explicating the possible implications of this principle. However, for present purposes, the details of the supervenience thesis are particularly important. There is more packed into the ESP than it might first appear, for there are weaker versions of supervenience principles on offer. A weak form of the supervenience thesis involves mere co-variation: for any change in the evaluative there must be *some* change in the natural. This minimalist supervenience thesis does not specify any particular metaphysical relation between the co-variants; it does not indicate any metaphysical relations (e.g. determination, constitution, identity, etc) between the two sets of properties. According to this supervenience thesis the fact that 2+2=4 supervenes on the color of Bill Clinton's shirts. That is because there is no change in whether 2+2=4 so supervenience is satisfied trivially. This sort of supervenience thesis is typically not the one adopted by ethicists. That is at least in part because of the absence of any important relationship between algebraic formulae and an ex-president's wardrobe. 2+2=4 supervenes on just about everything, and it seems like there is nothing interesting about so weak a supervenience thesis.

The ESP adds the constraint that any two worlds alike in their natural properties will be alike in their evaluative properties. This constraint is actually quite strong. In essence, it says that the instantiation of certain natural properties *bring the instantiation of particular evaluative properties with them*. Which evaluative properties are instantiated is non-accidental. Not only do changes in instantiated evaluative properties guarantee some change among natural properties, but, assuming strong supervenience, the instantiation of any particular set of natural properties guarantees the instantiation of a corresponding set of evaluative properties in each and every world. The particular natures of a particular set of natural properties instantiated *determine* whether any evaluative properties are instantiated, and if so *which* evaluative properties are instantiated. According to the ESP, it is not the case that different evaluative properties could be instantiated at different worlds given the same natural properties. In G.E. Moore's words:

> [I]f a given thing possesses any kind of intrinsic value in a certain degree, then not only must that same thing possess it, under all circumstances, in the same degree, but also anything *exactly like it*, must under all circumstances, possess it in exactly the same degree. Or, to put it in the corresponding negative form: It is not *possible* that of exactly two exactly similar things one should possess it and the other not, or that one should possess it in one degree, and the other in a different one (1922, p. 261).[118]

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[117] As before, the least controversial supervenience thesis will be *global* and not merely local.

[118] Moore was most interested in analyzing the concept of "intrinsicness." This concept is not my primary interest, but in doing so Moore made his commitment to a stronger type of supervenience clear.

This consideration is important for the "evaluative zombie world" argument.

If we accept the ESP, then there cannot be worlds that are natural duplicates and yet differ evaluatively. There can be no "evaluative zombie world." Recall that the guiding idea behind the zombie argument in the philosophy of mind is that there is no functional or structural explanation for why red appears as the exact hue that it does. There could be nothing it is like to experience red's reflectance properties and yet we would still be able to discriminate red things from blue things. A similar line of thought has it that the light reflectance properties that manifest *redness* for creatures like us could just as easily manifest *blueness*. If that is the case, then qualia must float free or be importantly independent from the properties upon which they supervene. So the reasoning goes, at least. Along these lines, many have found the possibility of an inverted spectrum plausible, according to which the functional aspects of color experience can be identical though the qualitative aspects of experiencing color differ. Two people could see a tomato, both think and claim aloud that it is red, and yet one have the experience blue qualia while the other experiences green qualia. [119] Qualia, therefore, are often viewed as essentially different from all functional and structural properties. Evaluative properties, on the other hand, do not have this kind of independence from natural properties. *Ceterus peribus*, harming an innocent person is bad, and the instantiation of *badness* could not just as easily have been an instantiation of *goodness* without a change in which natural properties are instantiated .[120] An inverted evaluative spectrum is impossible, as is a scenario in which no evaluative properties are instantiated in the case of harming an innocent person, the zombie world scenario.

If these considerations are correct, two important points follow. First, the case for a view that posits properties with purely qualitative evaluative character on par with other experiential qualia is radically weakened. Second, the conceptual impossibility of an "evaluative zombie" world indicates that it is not part of the concept of evaluative properties that they could not be natural, or in other words, that it is not essential to the concept of evaluative properties that they must be *sui generis* properties. I discuss these points in turn.

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[119] The "Mary" argument is relevant here, as well. Mary knows all the information one can learn about color from a textbook yet has never experienced red first hand. It is claimed that upon encountering a red tomato, she learns new information. Thus, there is some non-physical information related to qualia, according to this argument. This scenario does not have an analogue when it comes to evaluative properties. Learning about all the natural properties, their circumstances, evaluative concepts, and the relationships among them is all the information there is to learn.

[120] The *ceterus paribus* clause is necessary to rule out cases where harming an innocent person might be a good thing, say in giving her a life-saving vaccine via hypodermic needle. Some might quibble about what counts as a harm and what counts as good, but there are likely to be exotic cases which necessitate some sort of qualifier.

First, and most relevant to the narrow argument of this chapter, if there is no analogous case for "evaluative zombies," then it would seem that evaluative properties do not make a metaphysical difference to evaluative perception. If a zombie world is conceivable, whether or not it is metaphysically possible, for the qualitative properties instantiated via perception and sensation, but such a world is not possible for evaluative properties, then it would follow that evaluative properties are not themselves qualitative properties experienced through perception.[121] This coheres with my model for moral perception provided earlier in the chapter.

The second point is broader and perhaps more surprising. The tight conceptual connections between natural and evaluative properties – that the instantiation of sets of natural properties determine, in some strong sense, the instantiation of *particular* (not just any) evaluative properties – indicate that we do not have an obvious reason to suppose that evaluative properties are altogether different in kind from natural properties. Recall that the underlying lesson for zombie arguments is that the possibility of duplicates in one metaphysical respect differing in another, supervening respect is thought to show that properties can supervene and yet be of a fundamentally different kind than the properties which comprise the subvenient base. That there does not seem to be a possibility for differences among duplicates in the case of the evaluative and the natural undercuts this line of attack for the evaluative domain.

One way to think about it is as a case of contraposition: if a class of properties, *C*, are such that they are different in kind from the class of properties they supervene upon, *S*, in the actual world, then there are conceivable zombie worlds where the subvenient properties obtain but *C* do not. But this means that if it is not the case that zombie worlds where *S* obtain but *C* do not, then it is not the case that *C* are different in kind from *S*. Now, I would add a few caveat*s* to this simplistic presentation of the argument. Some theorists do not accept that zombies are conceivable and many also think that they are conceivable but not possible. Furthermore, the fact that zombie arguments do not work well in the evaluative realm does not by itself lead directly to the conclusion that evaluative properties are not different in kind from natural properties. Rather, it challenges the intuition that evaluative properties and natural properties are apparently very different – just *too* different for evaluative properties to be *reducible* to natural ones.

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[121] I have been assuming throughout that such a world is possible, but only for the sake of argument. Some dispute qualia zombies are possible, often because they believe qualia essentially posses or are causal powers (c.f. Perry, 2003), and thus not *purely* qualitative. If all qualitative properties, including evaluative ones, are thought to be causally powerful, then they can make a causal difference. I have addressed (inclusively) causal difference-making for evaluative properties in Chapter 1.

The evaluative and the natural have a tighter conceptual link than some claim qualia consciousness and the physical share. However, I have claimed that there is a conceptual distinction between the evaluative and the natural of some sort. The arguments based on the pattern problem discussed in the previous two chapters show that evaluative concepts and terms are not reducible to natural ones. This indicates that there are at least two degrees of strength of conceptual separability, weak and strong. Concepts of the natural and of value are weakly separable in that value concepts have conceptual connections that natural concepts do not. However, concepts of the natural and the evaluative are *not* strongly separable, according to which there are no conceptual conceptions between the two realms at all. It is inconceivable for there to be duplicate worlds instantiating the same natural properties and yet instantiating different evaluative properties. It is not the case that there are no conceptual connections between the evaluative and the natural.

Evaluative concepts and terms are not fully reducible to naturalistic concepts and terms. Knowing that an action is good tells one something that a purely naturalistic description of the action would not. It tells you that there is something commendable about the action – that it is to be encouraged or admired. These are evaluative connotations that do not follow from purely naturalistic descriptions. This is the insight which the pattern problem brings to the surface, and it suggests that the evaluative and the natural are weakly conceptually separable.

The considerations arising from the combination of the pattern problem and the impossibility of the evaluative zombie argument offer constraints on value concepts. On the one hand, the connections among evaluative concepts are distinct from natural ones. On the other, they cannot be so different as to float entirely free from natural concepts.[122] I believe that the best way to reconcile these considerations is to accept a view according to which there are two fundamentally different ways of thinking about natural properties, and not that there are two separate sets of fundamentally different properties.

One final caveat: I do not take the evaluative zombie argument to provide positive support for this view. To say that the evaluative is conceptually inseparable from the natural in the weak sense of b) above does not lead to the conclusion that evaluative properties are natural properties in any straightforward way. After all, the irrealist will take the very same evidence as grist for the view that

[122] McNaughton and Rawling (2003) grapple with similar issues. In their view, reasons in themselves are reducible to (i.e. identical to) natural states-of-affairs. This secures a tight connection between the evaluative and the natural. Yet there are further *irreducible* facts that are somehow related to the natural states-of-affairs that account for normativity distinctly. They argue that there must be a metaphysical distinction between the two types of facts or states-of-affairs. I address their arguments in Chapter 3.

evaluative properties do not exist at all (at least not in a non-minimalist sense of existing). However, it does undercut the view that evaluative properties are so very different from natural properties that it is inconceivable that they reduce. Many people have, at least half-heartedly, taken the real lesson of Moore's Open Question Argument to show just that conclusion. If I am right, however, we ought to recognize that the differences are not so fundamentally stark as one might at first think. Arguments used to show the fundamental differences of other sorts of properties do not apply as well to the evaluative and the normative.

5.8 Conclusion

A further attempt to account for the difference evaluative properties make is found lacking. As in previous chapters, I do not claim to have shown that evaluative properties do not exist, or that evaluative properties *could* not make a perceptual difference. Instead, I have argued that we have not been given sufficient reason to think that they do exist based on the purported role they play in perception – that they are not, in any apparent way, *indispensable* to account for how we can come to have non-inferential evaluative knowledge.

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