WHY THERE REALLY ARE NO IRREDUCIBLY NORMATIVE PROPERTIES

Bart Streumer

b.streumer@rug.nl

Abstract:

Jonathan Dancy thinks that there are irreducibly normative properties. Frank Jackson has given a well-known argument against this view, and I have elsewhere defended this argument against many objections, including one made by Dancy. But Dancy remains unconvinced. In this chapter, I hope to convince him.

WHY THERE REALLY ARE NO IRREDUCIBLY
NORMATIVE PROPERTIES

Jonathan Dancy thinks that there are irreducibly normative properties.[1] Frank Jackson has given a well-known argument against this view, and I have elsewhere defended this argument against many objections, including one made by Dancy.[2] But Dancy remains unconvinced. In this chapter, I hope to convince him.

This chapter consists of eight sections. In section 1, I distinguish normative properties from descriptive properties. In section 2, I present Jackson's argument. In sections 3 to 6, I discuss four objections to the argument and, in doing so, put forward two new versions of the argument. In section 7, I discuss three reasons why Dancy may remain unconvinced. In section 8, I conclude that, despite this, the argument does show that there are no irreducibly normative properties.

1. Normative and descriptive properties

To distinguish normative properties from descriptive properties, we first need to distinguish normative predicates (such as 'is right', 'is good' and 'is a reason for') from descriptive predicates (such as 'is square', 'is yellow' or 'is larger than').[3] We can then say that

A property is *normative* if and only if it can be ascribed with a normative predicate,

---

[1] See Dancy 1993, 2004a, 2004b, and especially 2005.

[2] See Jackson 1998, pp. 122-3, 2001, p. 655, and Streumer 2008. For Dancy's objection, see Dancy 2004a, 2004b, pp. 63-7, and 2005.

[3] I here follow Jackson 1998, pp. 120-121. Except in section 7 below, I use the term 'property' to cover both properties and relations.

A property is *descriptive* if and only if it can be ascribed with a descriptive predicate,

and

A property is *irreducibly normative* if and only if it is a normative property that is not identical to a descriptive property.[4]

These claims are not definitions. They merely give necessary and sufficient conditions for a property's being normative, descriptive, or irreducibly normative.[5]

Some philosophers think that we should not call properties 'descriptive', either because properties do not describe anything, or because they think that normative predicates describe the world just as much as descriptive ones do.[6] But the term 'descriptive' is merely a label. We could instead use the term 'non-normative', and say that

A property is *non-normative* if it can be ascribed with a predicate that is not normative.

But in that case a property could be both normative and non-normative, which would be confusing. I shall therefore continue to use the term 'descriptive'.

All philosophers who are realists about normative properties, including Dancy and Jackson, think that there are normative properties. But they disagree about whether there are irreducibly normative properties. According to non-reductive realists like Dancy, there are such properties. But according to reductive realists like Jackson, normative properties are identical to descriptive properties, which means that there are no irreducibly normative

---

[4] It may be objected that some predicates (such as 'is courageous' or 'is just') are both normative and descriptive. If so, we should say either that these predicates are equivalent to conjunctions of normative and descriptive predicates, or that they ascribe normative properties.

[5] In Streumer 2008, I did present these claims as definitions. This was a mistake.

[6] The first claim is made by Suikkanen 2010, p. 88 note 2, and the second claim has been made by Dancy in conversation. See also Dancy 2005, p. 142 note 1.

properties.

It may seem easy to show that there are no such properties. Suppose that, at time t, Fred is thinking about the normative property of rightness. In that case, we can denote the normative property of rightness with the descriptive phrase 'the property that Fred is thinking about at time t',[7] which means that we can ascribe the normative property of rightness with the descriptive predicate 'has the property that Fred is thinking about at time t'. But this does not show that there are no irreducibly normative properties. It merely shows that we should revise our claim about descriptive properties, and say that

> A property is *descriptive* if and only if it can be ascribed with a descriptive predicate that does not contain a descriptive phrase that denotes a normative property without ascribing this property.[8]

We should revise our claim about normative properties in a similar way. In what follows, I shall ignore these revisions, since they do not affect my arguments.

2. Jackson's argument

Inspired by a more general argument that was first given by Jaegwon Kim, Frank Jackson has given the following argument to show that there are no irreducibly normative properties.[9]

---

[7] See Jackson 1998, p. 119 note 10. A similar example is given by Williamson 2001, p. 629. See also Sturgeon 2009, p. 77 note 46.

[8] I say 'without ascribing this property' because a phrase like 'the property that Fred is thinking about at time t' denotes a property without ascribing it, whereas phrases like 'is yellow' or 'is right' both ascribe and denote a property.

[9] See Jackson 1998, pp. 122-3, Jackson 2001, p. 655, and also Jackson and Pettit 1996, pp. 84-5. For Kim's more general argument, see Kim 1993, pp. 68-71, 149-55. For discussion of Jackson's argument, see van Roojen 1996, Williamson 2001, Shafer-Landau 2003, pp. 89-98, McNaughton and Rawling 2003, Dancy 2004a and 2005, Majors 2005, FitzPatrick 2008, pp. 198-201, Streumer 2008 and 2011, Kramer 2009, pp. 207-12, Plantinga 2010, Suikkanen 2010, Brown 2011, and Enoch 2011,

Consider an action A_1 that has a certain normative property, such as the property of being right. Since anything that has normative properties also has descriptive properties, A_1 also has descriptive properties, which we can call $P_{A1\text{-}1}$, $P_{A1\text{-}2}$ . . . . And the objects O_1, O_2, . . . that are part of the same possible world as A_1 have descriptive properties as well, which for each object O_x we can call $P_{Ox\text{-}1}$, $P_{Ox\text{-}2}$, ...[10] Action A_1 therefore satisfies the following predicate, which we can call predicate D_1:

> 'has descriptive properties $P_{A1\text{-}1}$, $P_{A1\text{-}2}$, . . . and is such that O_1 has descriptive properties $P_{O1\text{-}1}$, $P_{O1\text{-}2}$, . . . , O_2 has descriptive properties $P_{O2\text{-}1}$, $P_{O2\text{-}2}$, . . . , . . .'.

Since a predicate that wholly consists of descriptive predicates is itself descriptive, predicate D_1 is a descriptive predicate.

Suppose next that actions A_1, A_2, . . . are all the right actions there are in all possible worlds.[11] Just as A_1 satisfies the descriptive predicate D_1, actions A_2, A_3, . . . satisfy similarly constructed descriptive predicates D_2, D_3, ... These actions therefore all satisfy the following predicate, which we can call predicate D^*:

> 'satisfies either predicate D_1, or predicate D_2, or . . .'.

As before, since a predicate that wholly consists of descriptive predicates is itself descriptive, predicate D^* is a descriptive predicate.

Now consider the following claim about supervenience:

> (S)   For all possible worlds W and W*, if the distribution of descriptive properties

---

pp. 137-40. My presentation of the argument in what follows assumes that the number of objects, properties and actions in all possible worlds is countably infinite, but I take this to be merely a matter of presentation.

[10] I use the term 'object' to cover anything that has properties, including actions. Objects are part of the same possible world as A_1 if and only if they are actual in the possible world in which A_1 is performed.

[11] I assume for simplicity that only actions can be right.

in W and W* is exactly the same, then the distribution of normative properties in W and W* is also exactly the same.[12]

If this claim is true, any object that satisfies predicate D* also satisfies the predicate 'is right'. For otherwise there would be two possible worlds W and W* that have exactly the same distribution of descriptive properties but that do not have the same distribution of normative properties, which would contradict (S). And any object that satisfies the predicate 'is right' also satisfies predicate D*. For objects A_1, A_2, . . . are all the right objects there are in all possible worlds, and these objects satisfy the predicates D_1, D_2, . . . , which means that they satisfy predicate D*.

This shows that the predicate 'is right' and predicate D* are necessarily coextensive. Given that

(N)   Necessarily coextensive predicates ascribe the same property,

this means that the normative predicate 'is right' and the descriptive predicate D* ascribe the same property. It therefore means that the property of being right is not irreducibly normative. And since the argument can be repeated for any other normative predicate, it shows that no other property is irreducibly normative either.

Non-reductive realists have made many objections to this argument. They have

---

[12] (S) is a claim about global supervenience. Williamson 2001, p. 627, Suikkanen 2010, p. 91 note 6, and Brown 2011, p. 210 note 10, suggest that Jackson's argument should instead appeal to the following claim about local supervenience: (S*) For all possible worlds W and W* and objects O and O*, if O in W and O* in W* have exactly the same descriptive properties, then O in W and O* in W* also have exactly the same normative properties. But as Jackson 2001, p. 655, points out, if we include the distribution of all descriptive properties in an object's possible world among this object's descriptive properties, as predicates D_1, D_2, . . . effectively do, we effectively turn (S*) into to (S). Moreover, contrary to what Brown 2011 suggests, (S*) is then just as uncontroversial as (S). For just as Dancy and other particularists do not deny (S), they also do not deny (S*) if we include the distribution of all descriptive properties in an object's possible world among this object's descriptive properties.

objected that (N) is false, that predicate D* does not ascribe a property (either because there are no disjunctive properties, or because disjunctive predicates do not ascribe properties, or because infinitely disjunctive predicates do not ascribe properties, or because there are no infinitely disjunctive predicates), that predicate D* does not ascribe a descriptive property (either because its formulation presupposes the existence of normative properties, or because it is necessarily coextensive with a non-disjunctive normative property), that the argument supports reductionism about all supervenient properties, that the argument depends on implausible definitions of normative and descriptive properties, that the argument does not apply to natural properties, and that the argument does not apply to normative relations.[13] I have elsewhere defended the argument against all of these these objections. In sections 4 and 7, I shall return to two of them. But I shall first discuss a new objection.

3. Two new versions of the argument

This objection has been made by Campbell Brown. Though Brown accepts the conclusion of Jackson's argument, he suspects that we cannot formulate predicate D* in English, since English does not seem to contain enough terms to name every object and property in every possible world.[14] In my earlier defence of the argument, I suggested that we can avoid this problem by formulating predicate D* in a language that combines English with a 'Lagadonian' language in which all objects and properties that are not named by English are

---

[13] For some of these objections, see Shafer-Landau 2003, pp. 90-92, Majors 2005, and Dancy 2004a and 2004b, pp. 63-7.

[14] See Brown 2011. More specifically, Brown claims that English may not be *descriptively complete*, where a language is descriptively complete if "for any pair of worlds that are descriptively different, there is at least one descriptive sentence (of English) that is true in one world but not the other", and that English may not contain *maximally specific sentences*, where a sentence ψ is maximally specific if "for any descriptive sentence χ, ψ entails either χ or its negation, $\sim\chi$, but not both" (Brown 2011, p. 207-8). For related worries about formulating (S) in terms of descriptive properties, see Sturgeon 2009, pp. 75-8.

their own names instead.[15] But I think we can also avoid it by formulating a version of Jackson's argument that does not rely on predicate D*. Brown himself presents one such version.[16] I shall now present two others.

The first is as follows. Suppose that the correct first-order view about rightness is a simple version of utilitarianism, according to which

> Necessarily, an action is right if and only if it maximises preference satisfaction.

If this view is correct, the normative predicate 'is right' is necessarily coextensive with the descriptive predicate 'maximises preference satisfaction'. If it is true that

> (N)   Necessarily coextensive predicates ascribe the same property,

this means that these predicates ascribe the same property. It therefore means that the property of being right is identical to a descriptive property.

Suppose next that equally simple first-order views are correct about all other normative properties. These views may say, for example, that

> Necessarily, a consideration is a reason for action if and only if it increases the probability that this action will maximise preference satisfaction.
> Necessarily, a consideration is a reason for a belief if and only if it increases the probability that this belief is true.
> Necessarily, a state of affairs is good to the extent that it contains satisfied preferences.
> . . . and so on.

---

[15] Streumer 2008, p. 547.

[16] Brown's version shows that irreducibly normative properties are what he calls *redundant*, in the sense that they "do no work in distinguishing possibilities" (2011, p. 210). This only shows that there are no irreducibly normative properties if there are no properties that are redundant in this sense.

If these simple first-order views are correct, all other normative predicates are also necessarily coextensive with descriptive predicates. If (N) is true, this means that each of these normative predicates also ascribes the same property as a descriptive predicate. This shows that

> (F)   If simple first-order normative views are correct, normative properties are identical to descriptive properties.

Now consider the following claim:

> (W)   Whether normative properties are identical to descriptive properties cannot depend on which first-order normative view is correct.

Of course, if normative properties are identical to descriptive properties, *which* descriptive properties they are identical to *does* depend on which first-order normative view is correct. For which descriptive properties normative properties are identical to depends on

> (1)   which objects have which normative properties

and on

> (2)   which descriptive properties these objects have,

and a first-order normative view is, in part, a view about (1) and (2). But (W) does not deny this. What (W) says is only that *whether* normative properties are identical to descriptive properties cannot depend on which first-order normative view is correct. That seems true, since whether normative properties are identical to descriptive properties seems to depend on the nature of these properties rather than on (1) and (2).

Suppose that normative properties would be identical to descriptive properties if simple first-order normative views were correct, but not if more complicated first-order normative views were correct. In that case, whether normative properties are identical to descriptive properties would depend on which first-order normative view is correct, which

would contradict (W). This means that if (F) is true and if (W) is true as well, normative properties are identical to descriptive properties *whether or not* simple first-order normative views are correct. In other words, it means that if (F) and (W) are both true, there are no irreducibly normative properties.

Non-reductive realists may want to reject (F). But they cannot reject (F) by saying that we cannot formulate predicate D* in English, since this version of the argument does not rely on predicate D* or on any other infinitely disjunctive predicate. They also cannot reject (F) by rejecting (S), the claim about supervenience that Jackson's version of the argument appeals to, since this version of the argument does not appeal to (S) or on any other claim about supervenience.[17] They can only reject (F) by appealing to the other objections to Jackson's argument that I listed at the end of section 2 or to the new objections that I shall discuss in sections 5 and 6. But I argued in my earlier defence of the argument that these other objections fail, and I shall argue in sections 5 and 6 that these new objections fail as well.

Non-reductive realists may instead want to reject (W). They could say that (W) follows from a generalised version of the claim that

> (W*)   Which metaethical theory is true cannot depend on which first-order moral
>   view is correct,

and they could point out that not all philosophers accept (W*). For example, Ronald Dworkin and others object to irrealist metaethical views that that these views contradict uncontroversial first-order moral claims, such as the claim that torturing innocent children for fun is wrong.[18] Since this objection assumes that (W*) is false, it may also seem to assume

---

[17] Sturgeon 2009, pp. 76-7, argues that claims about supervenience that are formulated in terms of descriptive properties are 'parochial', since it follows from some views about thick concepts that "there are natural (or supernatural) properties for which we lack descriptive terminology, and they seem to be properties that make an evaluative difference". I think we can defend (S) against such views by appealing to a language that combines English with a 'Lagadonian' language.

[18] See Dworkin 1996 and 2011. Similar views are defended by Nagel 1997 and Kramer 2009. For critical discussion of these views, see McPherson 2011 and Enoch 2011, pp. 121-33. Dworkin, Nagel

that (W) is false.

In fact, however, the objection does not assume this. For (W) does not say that *which metaethical theory is true* cannot depend on which first-order normative view is correct. (W) only says that *whether normative properties are identical to descriptive properties* cannot depend on which first-order normative view is correct. And unlike irrealist metaethical views, neither the claim that

Normative properties are identical to descriptive properties

nor the claim that

 Normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties

contradicts any first-order normative claim at all.

Non-reductive realists may also want to say that, though they themselves accept (W), reductive realists cannot accept (W) and therefore cannot appeal to it in order to reject non-reductive realism. For non-reductive realists may say that they themselves accept (W) because they think it is a necessary truth that normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties, which is something that reductive realists deny. But this overlooks the fact that reductive realists can accept (W) because they think it is a necessary truth that normative properties *are* identical to descriptive properties. Moreover, reductive realists do not themselves have to accept (W) to put forward this version of Jackson's argument. For the argument only aims to show that non-reductive realism is false, and therefore only requires that *non-reductive realists* accept (W), not that reductive realists do so as well.

Non-reductive realists may still want to reject (W).[19] If so, we can turn to a second

---

and Kramer partly defend this objection by arguing that metaethical claims are disguised first-order moral claims, and that this allows us to reject metaethical views if they are incompatible with the most plausible first-order moral view.

[19] Oddie 2005, chapter 6, gives an argument for the existence of irreducibly normative properties that entails that (W) is false. But Oddie does not give an independent argument against (W), and (W)

version of Jackson's argument that does not rely on predicate D*. Call normative truths that obtain independently of any descriptive truth *fundamental normative truths*.[20] Suppose that you are a non-reductive realist, and consider the complete list of what you take to be fundamental normative truths. Unless you are a particularist, this list will be finite. And if this list is finite, it will be possible to construct, for each normative predicate, a finitely disjunctive descriptive predicate that is coextensive with this normative predicate if the fundamental normative truths are as you take them to be.

Now consider again the claim that

(S)   For all possible worlds W and W*, if the distribution of descriptive properties in W and W* is exactly the same, then the distribution of normative properties in W and W* is also exactly the same.

If (S) is true, all fundamental normative truths are necessary truths.[21] For suppose that some were not. In that case, there would be at least two possible worlds that have different fundamental normative truths. If these worlds had the same the distribution of descriptive properties, their different fundamental normative truths would make it the case that they had different distributions of normative properties, which would contradict (S). Different possible worlds could therefore only have different fundamental normative truths if they had different distributions of descriptive properties. But then these different normative truths would not

---

seems to me more secure than the premises of his argument (see Streumer 2008, pp. 546-7 note 20).

[20] As Enoch 2011, p. 146 note 32, puts it: to reach these fundamental normative truths (or, as he calls them, "basic norms"), we "backtrack, so to speak, practical syllogisms to their major premises, until we reach such a major premise that is not itself the conclusion of a practical syllogism, or that is (roughly speaking) free of empirical content".

[21] Many non-reductive realists seem to agree that fundamental normative truths are necessary truths (see, for example, McNaughton and Rawling 2003, p. 33, Parfit 2011a, p. 129, and 2011b, pp. 307, 489-90, 747, and, more tentatively, Enoch 2011, p. 146). Dancy 2004b, pp. 146-8, claims that what he calls 'basic normative facts' are contingent, but this is because he takes these facts to depend on descriptive truths. Dancy's basic normative facts are therefore not what I here call fundamental normative truths.

obtain independently of any descriptive truth, and would therefore not really be fundamental.

If all fundamental normative truths are necessary truths and if the complete list of what you take to be fundamental normative truths is finite, it will be possible to construct, for each normative predicate, a finitely disjunctive descriptive predicate that is *necessarily* coextensive with this normative predicate if the fundamental normative truths are as you take them to be. If (N) is true, this commits you the conclusion that there are no irreducibly normative properties. Particularist like Dancy can perhaps escape this conclusion by claiming that the complete list of fundamental normative truths is infinite. But other non-reductive realists cannot escape it so easily.

4. Do necessarily coextensive predicates ascribe the same property?

The three versions of Jackson's argument that I have now presented all assume that

(N)　　Necessarily coextensive predicates ascribe the same property.[22]

Non-reductive realists often claim that (N) is false. Many of them think that there are counterexamples to (N). Others think that (N) is only plausible if we take properties to be sets of possibilia.[23] Though I discussed this objection in my earlier defence of Jackson's argument, I shall now discuss it again. I shall argue that if we take properties to be real

---

[22] It may be thought that Brown's version of the argument does not assume that (N) is true. But it does assume that there are no properties that are redundant in Brown's sense (see note 16), which entails that necessarily co-extensive predicates do not ascribe different properties. Brown defends this last claim by arguing that "necessarily coextensive predicates . . . don't denote any properties at all" (2011, p. 216). But that cannot be true, since, for example, the necessarily coextensive predicates 'is water' and 'is H_2O' clearly do ascribe at least one property. Brown will therefore have to defend the claim that necessarily co-extensive predicates do not ascribe different properties by defending (N).

[23] See, for example, McNaughton and Rawling 2003, p. 30. An account of properties as sets of possibilia is outlined by Lewis 1986, pp. 50-69, though Lewis allows that there are also other conceptions of properties.

features of objects rather than meanings of predicates, all apparent counterexamples to (N) fail. If that is so, it shows both that (N) is true and that (N) is compatible with a wide range of views about properties.[24]

Since triangles have both three sides and three angles, one popular counterexample to (N) is that

> The predicates 'has three angles' and 'has three sides' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.

Though these predicates clearly ascribe different properties, they are not necessarily coextensive, since an open figure can have three sides but only two angles. The example should therefore be revised to:
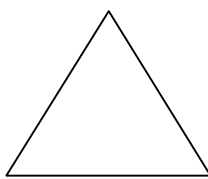
> The predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.[25]

But these predicates, I think, both ascribe the property of being a figure with the following

---

[24] Of course, it does not show that (N) is compatible with the view that properties are meanings of predicates. But the debate between reductive and non-reductive realists is not about whether sentences that contain normative predicates have the same *meaning* as certain sentences that only contain descriptive predicates, but about whether sentences that contain normative predicates have the same *truthmakers* as certain sentences that only contain descriptive predicates. Both sides in this debate therefore take properties to be real features of objects rather than meanings of predicates.

[25] Kramer 2009, pp. 210-11, claims that the predicates 'has three sides' and 'has three angles' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties when the class of things over which they range is implicitly narrowed to closed figures. However, if this class is implicitly narrowed in this way, it must be possible to make this narrowing explicit by reformulating these predicates as 'is a closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles', which Kramer agrees ascribe the same property. This suggests that if this class is implicitly narrowed in this way, the predicates 'has three sides' and 'has three angles' do ascribe the same property. Of course, if this class is *not* implicitly narrowed in this way, these predicates ascribe different properties. But in that case, as I argued in Streumer 2008 and as Kramer agrees, these predicates are not necessarily coextensive.

kind of shape:

For figures with this kind of shape also satisfy the predicate 'is a triangle'. And if the
predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles'
ascribed two different properties, why would the predicate 'is a triangle' not ascribe yet
another different property? If we take properties to be real features of objects, these
predicates clearly do not ascribe *three* different properties. But then the predicates 'is a
closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles' do not ascribe
two different properties either.

     Non-reductive realists may reply that the predicates 'is a closed figure that has three
sides' and 'is a closed figures that has three angles' ascribe different properties because these
properties consist of different parts: one consists of being a closed figure and having three
sides, they may say, and the other consists of being a closed figure and having three angles.
But this overlooks the fact that these predicates could both ascribe a single property that
consists of the same three parts: being a closed figure, having three sides, and having three
angles. Non-reductive realists who deny this seem to assume that we can read off the
composition of a property from the composition of a predicate that ascribes it. If we could do
this, the predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides', 'is a closed figure that has three
angles' and 'is a triangle' would again ascribe three different properties.

     Non-reductive realists may also say that the predicates 'is a closed figure that has
three angles' and 'is a triangle' ascribe the same property because these predicates are
synonymous.[26] But suppose that we introduced a new predicate 'is a △', not by defining it
but by pointing to a series of figures with the kind of shape that makes them satisfy the
predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides', 'is a closed figure that has three angles'

---

[26] As Enoch 2011 writes, "perhaps it makes sense to think of the property of being a triangle as
identical by definition to one of the other two (say, that of having three angles), and then we only
have here two properties after all" (p. 139, note 13).

and 'is a triangle'. Given how it was introduced, either the predicate 'is a $\triangle$' is not synonymous with any of these other predicates, or it is synonymous with all of them. Suppose that it is not synonymous with any of the other predicates. In that case, if necessarily coextensive predicates that are not synonymous ascribe different properties, the predicate 'is a $\triangle$' does not ascribe the same property as the predicate 'is a triangle', which is clearly false. Suppose next that the predicate 'is a $\triangle$' is synonymous with all of these other predicates. In that case, if necessarily coextensive predicates that are synonymous ascribe the same property, these four predicates all ascribe the same property, which supports rather than undermines (N). I therefore think that this counterexample fails.

Another popular counterexample to (N) is that

For any X, the predicates 'is X' and 'is X and is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.

If we take properties to be real features of objects, however, the predicate 'is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' does not ascribe a property. For being such that something else is identical to itself is clearly not a real feature of an object. This means that adding the phrase '. . . and is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' to the predicate 'is X' does not affect which property this predicate ascribes. It therefore means that the predicates 'is X' and 'is X and is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' ascribe the same property.

Non-reductive realists may reply that if the predicate 'is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' does not ascribe a property, neither does the predicate 'is such that O_1 has descriptive properties $P_{O1\text{-}1}$, $P_{O1\text{-}2}$, . . . , O_2 has descriptive properties $P_{O2\text{-}1}$, $P_{O2\text{-}2}$, . . .', which is part of predicate D*. But Jackson's argument does not require that the predicate 'is such that O_1 has descriptive properties $P_{O1\text{-}1}$, $P_{O1\text{-}2}$, . . . , O_2 has descriptive properties $P_{O2\text{-}1}$, $P_{O2\text{-}2}$, . . .' *by itself* ascribes a property. All that needs to be true is that predicate D* *as a whole* ascribes a property. And the mere fact that a predicate that is part of a larger predicate does not by itself ascribe a property does not make it the case that this larger predicate as a whole does not ascribe a property, as is shown by the fact that the predicates 'is X' and 'is X and is such that Socrates is identical to Socrates' ascribe the same property. Moreover, the other two versions of Jackson's argument that I have presented do not rely on predicate D*. I therefore think that this counterexample fails too.

A third counterexample to (N), which has been given by Derek Parfit, is that

> The predicates 'is the only even prime number' and 'is the positive square root of four' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.[27]

The sentence "Two is the positive square root of four" does not ascribe a property to the number two, however, but instead says that the number two is *identical to* the positive square root of four. For we can reformulate this sentence as "The positive square root of four is two", and we would normally formalise it as "$2 = \sqrt{4}$". Moreover, suppose that this sentence did ascribe a property to the number two. Since Parfit admits that the phrases 'the positive square root of four' and 'the only even prime number' both refer the number two, it is hard to see how he can deny that the predicate 'is the positive square root of four' ascribes the same property as the predicate 'is the only even prime number': namely, the property of being the number two. I therefore think that this counterexample fails as well.

A fourth and final counterexample to (N), which has been given by Alvin Plantinga, is that

> If divine command theory is true, predicate D* and the predicate 'is such that God commands all persons to perform it' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.[28]

These predicates are only necessarily coextensive, however, if divine command theory says that God could not fail to exist and could not fail to command that all persons perform the actions that satisfy predicate D*. More fully stated, therefore, Plantinga's example is that

---

[27] Parfit 2011b, pp. 296-7.

[28] Plantinga 2010, pp. 258-9, 262. Plantinga gives this example in the course of arguing that Jackson's argument fails to show that normative properties are not supernatural properties, which Plantinga takes to be properties that involve God or beings like God. But Jackson clearly does not intend his argument to show this. He only intends it to show that there are no normative properties that are not identical to descriptive properties, and the property of being such that God commands all persons to perform it is a descriptive property.

Predicate D* and the predicate 'is such that a being who could not fail to exist and who could not fail to command that all persons perform the actions that satisfy predicate D* commands all persons to perform it' are necessarily coextensive but ascribe different properties.

Though I have great trouble imagining such a being, I am inclined to think that these predicates ascribe the same property. Of course, Plantinga disagrees. But this is because he accepts the following criterion of property identity:

If someone can believe that an object is F without believing that this object is G, the predicates 'is F' and 'is G' ascribe different properties.[29]

If this criterion were correct, Moore's open question argument would be sound.[30] Non-reductive realists could then demonstrate that their view is true simply by noting that someone who believes that an action is right can intelligibly ask, of any descriptive property, whether this action has this property. But if we take properties to be real features of objects, we should clearly reject this criterion of property identity. I therefore think that this counterexample fails too.

Non-reductive realists could say that merely showing that some counterexamples to (N) fail does not show that *all* counterexamples fail. But I think that at least one of the following claims will be true of any apparent counterexample to (N):

(1)   There is a further predicate that is also necessarily coextensive with the predicates in the example but that clearly does not ascribe a further property.

(2)   A phrase that is part of one of the predicates in the example does not affect which property this predicate ascribes.

---

[29] Plantinga 2010, pp. 260, 264. Plantinga endorses what he calls the 'abundant' view of properties. He initially claims that defenders of this view will often accept this claim (p. 260), but then goes on to treat this claim as part of the abundant view (p. 264).

[30] As Plantinga 2010, p. 265, recognises.

(3)   One of the phrases in the example does not ascribe a property, but is instead part of an identity statement.

(4)   The example relies on a criterion of property identity that we should reject if we take properties to be real features of objects.

If that is so, the replies I have just given do show that all apparent counterexamples to (N) fail. And if these replies show this, they show both that (N) is true and that (N) is compatible with a wide range of views about properties.[31]

5. Can non-reductive realists appeal to Leibniz's law?

Non-reductive realists may now admit that (N) is true of descriptive properties, but deny that it is true of normative properties. They can only plausibly do this, however, if they can explain why (N) is not true of normative properties, in a way that is compatible with its being true of all other properties. I shall now discuss two new objections to Jackson's argument that can be seen as attempts to explain this.

The first objection, which makes use of Dancy's views, has been put forward by Jussi Suikkanen. Suikkanen thinks that non-reductive realists can explain why (N) is not true of normative properties by appealing to a version of

Leibniz's law: If there is a higher-order property that property p_1 has but property p_2

---

[31] Suikkanen 2010, p. 92, says that this defence of (N) leads to a "stalemate", with both sides "happy with their intuitions", and Enoch 2011, p. 139, similarly says that it leads to an "impasse". But if non-reductive realists want to say that the predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles' ascribe two different properties, as Suikkanen and Enoch apparently want to do, they will have to explain why this is so, in a way that does not entail that the predicates 'is a triangle' and 'is a △' ascribe a third and a fourth property. Enoch suggests that they can explain this by appealing to a general principle of parsimony (p. 139, note 13). But if so, why does this principle not also show that the predicates 'is a closed figure that has three sides' and 'is a closed figure that has three angles' ascribe the same property?

lacks, then p_1 and p_2 are not identical.[32]

As Suikkanen notes, Dancy and other non-reductive realists endorse the following claims:

> (1)   Our knowledge that an action is right is normally *a priori*, but our knowledge that an action has the property that is ascribed by predicate D* is normally *a posteriori*.
>
> (2)   The property of being right is what Dancy calls *resultant*, in the sense that an action has this property in virtue of a subset of its descriptive properties, but the property that is ascribed by predicate D* is not resultant in this sense.
>
> (3)   The fact that an action is right has what, following Dancy, we can call *intrinsic practical relevance*, but the fact that this action has the property that is ascribed by predicate D* does not have this kind of relevance.[33]

If these claims are true, the property of being right and the descriptive property that is ascribed by predicate D* have different higher-order properties. If so, it follows from Leibniz's Law that these properties are not identical. And if similar claims are true about other normative properties, it follows that these other normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties either.

   Suikkanen assumes that reductive realists can only answer this objection by denying

---

[32] As Suikkanen points out, this version of Leibniz's law is the application to properties and higher-order properties of a consequence of the indiscernibility of identicals, which is the uncontroversial part of what is normally called 'Leibniz's law'.

[33] Suikkanen 2010, pp. 101-3. For Dancy's view that knowledge about normative properties is *a priori*, in the sense of not being grounded in knowledge of empirical facts, see Dancy 2004b, pp. 146-8. For Dancy's notion of resultance, see Dancy 1993, pp. 73-77, 2004b, pp. 85-6, and 2005, p. 128. For Dancy's claims about the practical relevance of normative facts, see Dancy 2005, pp. 136-7 (I call this relevance 'intrinsic' because Dancy thinks that the practical relevance of normative facts is not a further fact about these facts). Suikkanen also considers two other higher-order properties that the property of being right may be said to have but the property that is ascribed by predicate D* may be said to lack: being supervenient and having a unified 'shape'. But he rightly doubts that non-reductive realists can appeal to these properties to reject reductive realism.

that normative properties have the higher-order properties that (1), (2) and (3) say they have, and he notes, rightly, that this denial will be hard to defend. But he overlooks a different reply that reductive realists can give to this objection. They can make a distinction between two modes under which a property can be presented:

A *normative mode*, under which a property is presented if it is ascribed with a normative predicate, such as the predicate 'is right',

and

A *descriptive mode*, under which a property is presented if it is ascribed with a descriptive predicate, such as predicate D*.

And they can then say that

(1*)   Our knowledge that an action is right is normally *a priori* if this property is presented under the normative mode, but normally *a posteriori* if it is presented under the descriptive mode.

(2*)   The property of being right is resultant, but this is normally only clear to us if this property is presented under the normative mode.

(3*)   The fact that an object has the property of being right has intrinsic practical relevance, but this is normally only clear to us if this property is presented under the normative mode.

If these claims are true, the property of being right and the descriptive property that is ascribed by predicate D* do not have different higher-order properties. If so, it does not follow from Leibniz's Law that these properties are not identical.

This shows that if non-reductive realists want to appeal to Leibniz's Law to explain why (N) is not true of normative properties, they will need to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) rather than (1*), (2*) and (3*). One difference between these sets of claims is that whereas (1), (2) and (3) presuppose that the property of being right is not identical to the property that is ascribed by predicate D*, (1*), (2*) and (3*) presuppose that these properties

20

are identical. But non-reductive realists cannot appeal to this difference to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3). For their explanation of why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) would then presuppose that (N) is not true of normative properties. And if their explanation of why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) presupposed this, they could not go on to appeal to (1), (2) and (3) to explain why (N) is not true of normative properties.

There are three other differences between these sets of claims that non-reductive realists could appeal to in order to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3). One is that (1*), (2*) and (3*) make assumptions about modes of presentation that are not made by (1), (2) and (3). But given that I have defined the normative and descriptive modes of presentation in terms of normative and descriptive predicates, these assumptions are very plausible. And non-reductive realists can only appeal to this difference between these sets of claims to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) if they can show that these assumptions are implausible.

A second difference is that whereas (1*), (2*) and (3*) say that the property that is ascribed by predicate D* has the same higher-order properties as the property that is ascribed by the predicate 'is right', (1), (2) and (3) deny this. But it is hard to see how non-reductive realists can show that the property that is ascribed by predicate D* does not have these higher-order properties, other than by saying that this property is not identical to the property that is ascribed by the predicate 'is right'. As before, if they said this, they could not appeal to this difference to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3). For their explanation of why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) would then again presuppose that (N) is not true of normative properties.

A third and final difference is that whereas if (2*) is true resultance is a form of entailment, (2) is compatible with resultance being what Suikkanen calls a "metaphysically robust, worldly making-relation".[34] But it is hard to see how non-reductive realists can show that resultance is such a worldly making-relation, other than by saying that normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties. Once again, if they said this, they could not appeal to this difference to explain why we should accept (1), (2) and (3). For their

---

[34] Suikkanen 2010, p. 102. See also McNaughton and Rawling 2003, pp. 32-3.

explanation of why we should accept (1), (2) and (3) would then again presuppose that (N) is not true of normative properties. I therefore think that Suikkanen's objection fails to explain why (N) is not true of normative properties.

6. Are irreducibly normative properties indispensible to deliberation?

A second objection to Jackson's argument that be seen as an attempt to explain why (N) is not true of normative properties has been made by David Enoch.[35] Enoch thinks that what underlies (N) is a

> *General principle of parsimony:* We should not posit the existence of a property without sufficient reason.[36]

Many philosophers believe that if a property plays an ineliminable role in our best causal explanations, this is a sufficient reason for positing the existence of this property. Enoch argues that this belief is justified because

(1)   This belief is indispensible to our project of *explaining the world*, in the sense that its falsity would undermine or greatly diminish our reason to engage in this project,

and because

(2)   The project of explaining the world is non-optional for us, in the sense that we are rationally required to engage in it.

---

[35] Enoch 2011, pp. 137-40; see in particular p. 140, note 15.

[36] Enoch 2011 outlines this principle (which he calls a 'minimal parsimony requirement' and applies to ontological commitments generally) on pp. 53-4, and suggests that this principle underlies (N) on pp. 139-40. See also Enoch 2007.

He then argues that the belief that there are irreducibly normative properties is justified for a similar reason. According to Enoch, this belief is justified because

> (1*)   This belief is indispensible to our project of *deliberating about what to do*, in the sense that its falsity would undermine or greatly diminish our reason to engage in this project,

and because

> (2*)   The project of deliberating about what to do is non-optional for us, in the sense that we are rationally required to engage in it.

He concludes that just as positing the existence of properties that play an ineliminable role in our best causal explanations does not violate the general principle of parsimony, positing the existence of irreducibly normative properties does not violate this principle either. And since Enoch thinks that this principle is what underlies (N), he thinks that this explains why (N) is not true of normative properties.[37]

Some philosophers may object that what underlies (N) is not the general principle of parsimony, but a more specific

> *Causal principle of parsimony:* We should only posit the existence of a property if this property play an ineliminable role in our best causal explanations.[38]

But like Dancy and other non-reductive realists, Enoch rejects the causal principle of parsimony. This principle can only be justified, Enoch thinks, if (1) and (2) justify the belief that if a property plays an ineliminable role in our best causal explanations, this is a sufficient

---

[37] Enoch 2011, pp. 50-84, 137-140.

[38] Enoch 2011, pp. 53-4 (Enoch calls this principle the 'explanatory parsimony requirement'). (N) seems to be a consequence of the causal theory of properties defended by Shoemaker 1980 (see pp. 213-4), though Sober 1982 disputes this.

reason for positing the existence of this property. But if (1) and (2) justify this belief, he thinks, (1*) and (2*) similarly justify the belief that there are irreducibly normative properties. And in that case the causal principle of parsimony is false, since irreducibly normative properties are causally impotent.[39]

Whether Enoch's objection explains why (N) is not true of normative properties depends on whether (1*) is true. Enoch defends (1*) by claiming that deliberation about what to do "is an attempt to eliminate arbitrariness by discovering (normative) reasons" which "is impossible in a believed absence of such reasons to be discovered", that such deliberation "feels like trying to make the *right* choice", and that its phenomenology is similar "to that of trying to find an answer to a straightforwardly factual question".[40] This may show that, when we deliberate about what to do, we form beliefs that ascribe normative properties. But it does not show that these beliefs ascribe *irreducibly* normative properties. Enoch argues that they ascribe such properties because we think that normative properties are too different from descriptive properties to be identical to them, a thought he calls the 'just-too-different intuition'.[41] But even if that is true, it does not show that engaging in deliberation commits us to the existence of irreducibly normative properties.[42] It merely shows that engaging in deliberation commits us to the existence of normative properties, and that we all happen to

---

[39] Enoch 2011, pp. 50-84. Clearly, whether this argument is sound depends on whether Enoch is right that the principle of explanatory parsimony can only be justified if (1) and (2) justify the belief that a property's playing an ineliminable role in our best causal explanations is a sufficient reason for positing its existence. If this belief can be justified in a different way, or if it does not stand in need of justification, Enoch cannot appeal to the similarity between (1) and (2) on the one hand and (1*) and (2*) on the other to argue that (1*) and (2*) justify the belief that there are irreducibly normative properties, and that we should therefore reject the principle of explanatory parsimony.

[40] Enoch 2011, pp. 72-4.

[41] Enoch 2011, pp. 100-109. Enoch admits that reductive realists do not seem to have this intuition, which weakens this argument.

[42] I here use the term 'commit' in the sense outlined by Enoch 2011, p. 74. Enoch 2011, pp. 100-109, also suggests that engaging in deliberation commits us to the existence of irreducibly normative properties because the questions we ask in deliberation cannot be answered with purely descriptive claims. But if so, that merely shows that deliberation commits us to the existence of properties that can be ascribed with normative predicates, which does not entail that these properties are irreducibly normative.

think that these properties are not identical to descriptive properties. That is not enough for Enoch's defence of (1*) to succeed.

Moreover, suppose that Enoch's defence of (1*) did succeed. In that case, engaging in our project of deliberating about what to do would commit us to the existence of irreducibly normative properties. But engaging in a different project, such as our project of explaining the world, may similarly commit us to the non-existence of these properties. For the concept of a property that we use in explaining the world may commit us to (N), and may thereby commit us to the claim that normative properties are identical to descriptive properties. If that were so, our concept of a normative property would be incoherent. We could then compare it to another concept that some philosophers think is incoherent: our concept of free will. Given that our concept of free will may be incoherent, we should not take the mere fact that engaging in deliberation commits us to the existence to free will to show that we actually have free will. Similarly, given that our concept of a normative property may also be incoherent, we should not take the mere fact that engaging in deliberation commits us to the existence of irreducibly normative properties to show that there actually are such properties. I therefore think that, like Suikkanen's objection, Enoch's objection fails to explain why (N) is not true of normative properties. I conclude that (N) applies to all properties, including normative ones.

7. Why non-reductive realists are unmoved by the argument

Though Dancy is clearly sympathetic to Suikkanen's objection to Jackson's argument, his own objection is different: it is that the argument does not apply to normative relations, such as the relation of being-a-reason-for and the relation Dancy calls 'right-making'.[43] In my

---

[43] See Dancy 2004a. Dancy actually says that "there is a worry that Jackson will be unable to capture the notion of a reason" (p. 233), and that "Jackson's descriptive metaphysics leaves him unable to capture the right-making relation" (p. 237). I take this to mean that he thinks that Jackson's argument does not show that the relations of being-a-reason-for and of right-making are identical to descriptive relations. Alternatively, he could also mean to say that the conclusion of Jackson's

earlier defence of the argument, I tried to show that the argument does apply to these relations.[44] Consider a fact F_1 that is a reason for an action A_1, and which thereby stands in the normative relation of being-a-reason-for to an action A_1. Fact F_1 also has descriptive properties, which we can call $P_{F1-1}, P_{F1-2}, \ldots$, and action A_1 also has descriptive properties, which we can call $P_{A1-1}, P_{A1-2}, \ldots$. And the objects $O_1, O_2, \ldots$ that are part of the same possible world as fact F_1 and action A_1 have descriptive properties as well, which for each object O_x we can call $P_{Ox-1}, P_{Ox-2}, \ldots$.[45] Fact F_1 and action A_1 therefore satisfy the following two-place predicate, which we can call predicate R_1:

'___ has descriptive properties $P_{F1-1}, P_{F1-2}, \ldots$, and ___ has descriptive properties $P_{A1-1}, P_{A1-2}, \ldots$, and both are such that O_1 has descriptive properties $P_{O1-1}, P_{O1-2}, \ldots$, that O_2 has descriptive properties $P_{O2-1}, P_{O2-2} \ldots, \ldots$'.

Suppose next that facts $F_1, F_2, \ldots$ are all the facts that are reasons for action in all possible worlds, and that actions $A_1, A_2, \ldots$ are all the actions that these facts are reasons for (with

---

argument is incompatible with the right-making relation being what Suikkanen calls a "metaphysically robust, worldly making-relation", in which case his objection would be similar to Suikkanen's objection. (It may be thought that Dancy could also reject Jackson's argument by appealing to particularism. But though he can reject the second version of Jackson's argument that I presented in section 3 in this way, the two other versions of the argument do not make any assumptions that are incompatible with particularism. It may be thought that (S) is incompatible with particularism, since according to particularism two actions A_1 and A_2 can have the same descriptive properties but different normative properties. But (S) is only about the distributions of descriptive and normative properties at complete possible worlds, and therefore does not entail that two actions A_1 and A_2 that have the same descriptive properties must also have the same normative properties. Particularists can therefore accept (S), and Dancy does accept (S).)

[44] As before, my presentation of the argument in what follows assumes that the number of objects, properties, facts and actions in all possible worlds is countably infinite, but I take this to be merely a matter of presentation.

[45] I use the term 'object' to cover anything that has properties or stands in relations, and I include the descriptive relations that these objects stand in to each other (and to F_1 and A_1) among $P_{Ox-1}, P_{Ox-2}, \ldots$.

fact F_1 being a reason for action A_1, and so on).[46] Just as fact F_1 and action A_1 satisfy the descriptive two-place predicate R_1, facts F_2, F_3, . . . and actions A_2, A_3, . . . satisfy similarly constructed descriptive two-place predicates R_2, R_3, ... These facts and actions therefore all satisfy the following two-place predicate, which we can call predicate R*:

'___ and ___ satisfy either the descriptive two-place predicate R_1, or the descriptive two-place predicate R_2, or . . .'.

We can use this predicate to formulate a version of Jackson's argument that shows that that the predicate 'is a reason for' is not irreducibly normative.[47] And we can formulate a similar version of the argument to show that the right-making relation is not irreducibly normative either.

As I have said, this reply has failed to convince Dancy. More generally, in my experience, most non-reductive realists remain completely unmoved both by Jackson's argument and by my replies to their objections to the argument. I can see at least three reasons for this lack of movement.

One is that many non-reductive realists seem, at least to some extent, to conflate properties with the meanings of the predicates that ascribe these properties. For example, Dancy writes that "the naturalist idea has to be that the subject matter of the fact that this action would maximize welfare could be the same as that of the fact that it would make the action right", and that "it just isn't true . . . that the fact that this action maximizes welfare (say) has the same subject matter as the fact that that fact would make the action right".[48] These claims about the 'subject matter' of facts seem to me to conflate facts with meanings of sentences, and thereby seem to conflate properties with meanings of predicates. And Parfit

---

[46] Of course, many facts stand in the relation of being-a-reason-for to more than one action, and many actions are such that there is more than one fact that stands in the relation of being-a-reason-for to them. These facts and these actions are included more than once in F_1, F_2, . . . and in A_1, A_2, ...

[47] Dancy 2004b, p. 65, objects to this that the relation of being-a-reason-for (or, as he calls it, the 'favouring relation') is necessarily asymmetrical, whereas the relation ascribed by predicate R* is not. I reply to this objection in Streumer 2008, p. 556.

[48] Dancy 2005, p. 140.

writes that the phrases 'is the only even prime number' and 'is the positive square root of four' ascribe different properties because "[b]eing the only even prime number cannot be the *same* as being – or be *what it is* to be – the positive square root of 4".[49] This use of 'what it is to be' also seems to me to conflate properties with meanings of predicates.

A second reason why non-reductive realists remain unmoved may be that they think that Jackson's argument is meant to show that reductive realism is true. Jackson does sometimes give the impression that he takes the argument to show this. In fact, however, the argument only shows that there are no irreducibly normative properties. In other words, it only shows that

> If there are normative properties, these properties are identical to descriptive
> properties.

This conclusion is compatible with the falsity of reductive realism, since it is compatible with the claim that

> If there are normative properties, these properties are *not* identical to descriptive
> properties.

The implausibility of reductive realism therefore need not stop Dancy and other non-reductive realists from accepting the conclusion of Jackson's argument.[50]

A third and final reason why non-reductive realists remain unmoved may be that they think that the most defensible alternative to non-reductive realism is an error theory according to which normative judgements ascribe non-existent properties, which is a view they cannot bring themselves to believe.[51] I agree that such an error theory is the most

---

[49] Parfit 2011, p. 297.

[50] I defend the claim that normative properties are not identical to descriptive properties in Streumer 2011.

[51] For the view that an error theory is the most plausible alternative to non-reductive realism, see, for example, Enoch 2011, p. 115.

defensible alternative to non-reductive realism. But I do not believe this theory myself, and I do not think that anyone else should believe it either. For I have argued elsewhere that we cannot believe this error theory, and that there is therefore no reason for us to believe it.[52] If that is so, non-reductive realists' inability to believe such an error theory should not stop them from accepting the conclusion of Jackson's argument either.

8. Conclusion

I have presented three versions of Jackson's argument against the existence of irreducibly normative properties, and I have argued that two existing objections and three new objections to the argument fail. I conclude, as before, that the argument shows that there are no irreducibly normative properties. I realise that Dancy may still not be convinced. But I hope he will at least agree that non-reductive realists have not yet come up with a wholly adequate response to the argument.[53]

References

Brown, Campbell. 2011. "A New and Improved Supervenience Argument for Ethical
Descriptivism". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 6*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dancy, Jonathan. 1993. *Moral Reasons*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Dancy, Jonathan. 2004a. "On the importance of Making Things Right". *Ratio* 17: 229-37.
Dancy, Jonathan. 2004b. *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---

[52] See Streumer forthcoming.

[53] For comments on earlier drafts of this paper, I am grateful to Campbell Brown, David Enoch, Margaret Little, and Jussi Suikkanen. I am also very grateful to Jonathan Dancy for helpful discussion of this argument over the years, and, more generally, for teaching me how to do philosophy when I was his PhD student at the University of Reading.

Dancy, Jonathan. 2005. "Nonnaturalism". In David Copp, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dworkin, Ronald. 1996. "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25: 87-139.

Dworkin, Ronald. 2011. *Justice for Hedgehogs*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Enoch, David. 2007. "An Outline of an Argument for Robust Metanormative Realism". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Enoch, David. 2010. "How Objectivity Matters". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 5*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Enoch, David. 2011. *Taking Morality Seriously*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzpatrick, William. 2008. "Robust Ethical Realism, Non-Naturalism, and Normativity". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Frank. 1998. *From Metaphysics to Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Frank. 2001. "Responses". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62: 653-664.

Jackson, Frank, and Philip Pettit. 1996. "Moral Functionalism, Supervenience and Reductionism". *Philosophical Quarterly* 46: 82-6.

Kim, Jaegwon. 1993. *Supervenience and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kramer, Matthew. 2009. *Moral Realism as a Moral Doctrine*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lewis, David. 1986. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Majors, Brad. 2005. "Moral Discourse and Descriptive Properties". *Philosophical Quarterly* 55: 475-94.

McNaughton, David, and Piers Rawling. 2003. "Naturalism and Normativity". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 77: 23-45.

McPherson, Tristram. 2011. "Against Quietist Normative Realism". *Philosophical Studies* 154: 223-240.

Nagel, Thomas. 1997. *The Last Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oddie, Graham. 2005. *Value, Reality, and Desire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parfit, Derek. 2011a. *On What Matters, Volume One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parfit, Derek. 2011b. *On What Matters, Volume Two*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Plantinga, Alvin. 2010. "Naturalism, Theism, Obligation and Supervenience". *Faith and Philosophy* 27: 247-72.

Shafer-Landau, Russ. 2003. *Moral Realism: A Defence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Shoemaker, Sidney. 1980. "Causality and Properties". Reprinted in his *Identity, Cause, and Mind* (expanded edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Sober, Elliott. 1982. "Why Logically Equivalent Predicates May Pick Out Different Properties". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19: 183-89.

Streumer, Bart. 2008. "Are there Irreducibly Normative Properties?" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86: 537-561.

Streumer, Bart. 2011. "Are Normative Properties Descriptive Properties?" *Philosophical Studies* 154: 325-348.

Streumer, Bart. Forthcoming. "Can We Believe the Error Theory?" To appear in the *Journal of Philosophy*.

Sturgeon, Nicholas. 2009. "Doubts about the Supervenience of the Evaluative". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Suikkanen, Jussi. 2010. "Non-Naturalism: The Jackson Challenge". In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 5*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Roojen, Mark. 1996. "Moral Functionalism and Moral Reductionism". *Philosophical Quarterly* 1996: 77-81.

Williamson, Timothy. 2001. "Ethics, Supervenience and Ramsey Sentences". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62: 625-30.