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Author meets critics: Matti Eklund's *choosing normative concepts*

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1. Introduction

Eklund's book is very rich, and I have enjoyed thinking through the profound thoughts expressed therein. The primary goal of Eklund's book is to explore underexplored metaethical questions and theories and map out important connections between them and existing questions and theories. Eklund explores whether alternative normative concepts are possible, and the challenge that they would pose for a position he calls 'ardent realism'. Ardent realism is meant to be the most serious of normative realisms: the ardent realist not only thinks that there are mind-independent objective normative truths about non-natural normative properties, but additionally thinks that the normative concepts with which she states her normative theories are the best concepts to employ – in some hard to pin down sense of 'best'.

If alternative normative concepts aren't possible, then it's trivial that the ardent realist's concepts are the best normative concepts. But if they are possible, then what makes the ardent realist's concepts the best? Does the world somehow mandate these concepts rather than their alternatives?¹ As an ardent realist who has long been inchoately troubled by similar worries, Eklund's book spoke to me personally, and I found it incredibly helpful to think through.

Here is the plan for my commentary. In §2, I focus on normative referentialism, which is a metasemantic theory about how normative

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¹In McDaniel (2017), I defend a version of ardent realism according to which some thin normative properties are metaphysically fundamental, and this is a clear sense in which they are 'best'. But whether the ardent realist requires qua ardent realist that her normative properties are metaphysically best is not clear. Nor is it clear what she said say if the sense in which her normative properties are best comes apart from metaphysical fundamentality. Thanks to Olle Risberg for helpful discussion here.

predicates are assigned semantic values, and whether its adoption is necessary and sufficient for the ardent realist to solve the problem of alternative normative concepts. I will argue that it is neither necessary nor sufficient. In §3, I discuss this bi-conditional: *P* is a normative property if and only if *P* is the (possible) semantic value of a normative expression. I think Eklund's arguments against this bi-conditional succeed, but I think it is worth drawing out a few subtleties that Eklund does not explicitly discuss. Doing so will set the stage for the discussion in §4 of *presentationism*, which is the view that normativity resides in our representations rather than in the world itself. While ardent realism is meant to be the most hardcore of normative realisms, presentationism is a view that is barely a form of normative realism.

2. Normative referentialism

Because Eklund is focused much more on exploring rather than defending specific theses, some of the key notions are understandably and deliberately characterized somewhat impressionistically. Given Eklund's goals, this was a reasonable decision. In what follows, I will offer more precise definitions of some of Eklund's key expressions. I do this not because I think that these must be the best ways to refine Eklund's ideas, but rather because I don't see a good way to clearly ask the questions I want to ask without first doing this.

One key expression is 'normative role'. Eklund borrows this concept from Wedgwood (2001). I will present an admittedly cumbersome but hopefully transparent definition.

I'll first define the expression 'rule for the use of a concept': the rule for the use of a concept is a set of ordered pairs, the first of which consists of a set of possible beliefs that employ the concept and the second of which consists of set of possible non-doxastic states or events (such as desires, preferences, emotions, or actions), such that it is not *rational* to have the beliefs in the first set but not instantiate or perform the items in the second set. Informally, the rule for the use of a concept is a function that takes a set of beliefs employing a concept and yields a set of preferences, emotions, actions, or whatnots (henceforth: *non-doxastic occurrences*) that are rationally required given those beliefs.² A rule of use for a concept is a representation of the *practical consequences* of having beliefs that involve that concept.

²An alternative way of defining 'rule for the use of a concept' appeals to what is fitting or correct given certain beliefs rather than what is rationally required. I thank Daniel Fogal for this suggestion.

In some cases, the rule for the use of a concept might be very sparse. Perhaps the rule for the use of the concept *is intrinsically better than* is the set of ordered pairs: $\langle \text{believe } x \text{ is intrinsically better than } y, \text{ intrinsically prefer } x \text{ over } y \rangle$. Presumably other normative concepts have more complicated (and hence more difficult to state) rules for their use.

I assume that a *successful* normative concept – that is, a concept that has rather than lacks an instantiated property as a semantic value – is *consistent* in the following sense: for every set of beliefs employing the concept such that it is consistent to have all of them, the rule yields a set of non-doxastic occurrences that one can have given those beliefs without being irrational. This assumption might be questioned by Eklund.³ But it will be useful to make it in order to characterize what it is for two concepts to be *conflicting alternatives*.

Say that two concepts C1 and C2 have *compatible rules* R1 and R2 if and only if for all sets of belief S1 and S2 such that (i) S1 is the first member of some ordered pair in R1, (ii) S2 is the first member of some ordered pair in R2, and (iii) it is consistent to believe all of the members of the union of S1 and S2: it is rational to simultaneously exemplify *all* of the non-doxastic occurrences that are rationally required given S1 and given S2. If two concepts do not have compatible rules, then they are *conflicting alternatives*.

The normative role of a concept is an abstraction from the rule for its use. Let us say that two concepts C1 and C2 have *the same normative role* if and only if (i) for every set of beliefs B1 employing C1 there is a corresponding set of beliefs B2 exactly like it except that the beliefs in B2 employ C2 rather than C1 and (ii) for any set of non-doxastic occurrences *N*, the rule governing the use of C1 contains $\langle B1, N \rangle$ if and only if the rule governing the use of C2 contains $\langle B2, N \rangle$.

Note that this definition characterizes what a normative role is normatively because a normative role is defined in terms of a normative rule, which in turn is defined in terms of what is rationally required. In this respect, my explication of a normative role follows Wedgwood (2001), in which normative role is also characterized normatively. We will discuss whether there is a way to define 'normative role' (or something like this) without using a normative expression later in this section.

A position Eklund (10) extensively discusses is a meta-semantic view about normative predicates that I will call *normative referentialism*, according to which what determines which property a normative predicate refers to is the normative role of its associated concept. Given normative

³Compare with Eklund (46–9, 89).

referentialism, normative predicates that have associated concepts with the same normative role are co-referential. A predicate whose associated normative role suffices to determine its reference is a *referentially normative predicate*.

According to Eklund (205), ardent realism is true only if normative referentialism is true. But I think that this is not quite right: the ardent realist can reject normative referentialism.

Consider two distinct linguistic communities, each populated by ardent realists. The members of the first community have evaluative concepts like *intrinsically better than* but lack deontic concepts like *is obligatory*, while the members of the second community have the deontic concepts but lack the evaluative concepts. Consider the concept *maximizes intrinsic value* and the concept *is obligatory*, and assume a version of ardent realism in which these concepts are necessarily equivalent, i.e. a version of ardent realism in which ideal consequentialism is true. These two concepts are not identical with one another. Yet perhaps the normative role the first concept plays in the first linguistic community is the same as the role that the second concept plays in the second community. Suppose that this is so. It is still not obvious that the properties that these concepts refer to are identical. Perhaps the property of maximizing intrinsic value has a kind of internal complexity lacked by the simpler property of being obligatory. But even if they are not identical properties, ardent realists in neither community should feel that their ardent realism is threatened. This is because (given the assumptions we just made) although these two concepts are different and refer to different properties, the concepts are not conflicting alternatives in the technical sense defined earlier. Each community can embrace the other's concepts without fear of inconsistency or irrationality.

What the ardent realist requires is not normative referentialism. Rather, what the ardent realist plausibly requires is that there are no other normative concepts that are conflicting alternatives to her own in the sense I defined above. Note that for two normative concepts to conflict it is not necessary that they have the same normative role – my notion of conceptual conflict is appropriately broader than Eklund's. I think that Eklund would agree that we need a broader notion of conceptual conflict, for Eklund (55–59) suggests that the ardent realist should worry if the normative roles of alternative concepts are similar enough even if they are not identical. That's right – but this is because the ardent realist should worry if there are conflicting alternative normative concepts, regardless of how similar their normative roles are.

To see this, momentarily suppose that there is a concept *is intrinsically shmetter than* such that (i) it is true that undeserved pain is intrinsically shmetter than deserved pleasure and (ii) the normative rule of use for *is intrinsically shmetter than* is the set of pairs: <believe x is intrinsically shmetter than y , equally prefer x and y unless x is substantially shmetter than y , and in that case, prefer x to y >. Given this supposition, the concept *is intrinsically shmetter than* is a competing alternative to *is intrinsically better than*. This supposition is a disaster for the ardent realist, even though the normative role of *is intrinsically shmetter than* is very unlike the normative role of *is intrinsically better than*. In fact, we don't have a normative concept whose normative role is the same as the alleged normative role of *is intrinsically shmetter than*. Given this, normative referentialism cannot help the ardent realist eliminate this putative conflicting concept.

The lessons that I draw from these reflections are (i) that the ardent realist needn't embrace normative referentialism, because there seem to be possible harmless cases of alternative concepts that share the same normative role and (ii) if there are other normative concepts that conflict (in my sense) with our normative concepts, this is a problem in itself regardless of whether these concepts have the same (or similar) normative roles as our normative concepts.

So what does the ardent realist need to do? Perhaps they should deny that there are normative rules for use for problematic putative concepts like *is intrinsically shmetter than*. Recall that the concept of a normative rule for use was defined in terms of rationality. Why should I believe that I am rationally committed to having bizarre preferences about deserved pleasures and undeserved pain simply because I have beliefs about the intrinsically shmetter than relation, which for all that has been said could be necessarily coextensive with the intrinsically worse than relation?

Alternatively, perhaps the ardent realist should claim that some normative roles fail to determine instantiated properties. By analogy, there seems to be an inferential role for 'tonk' – from P , infer P tonk Q , and from P tonk Q , infer Q – but there is no logical connective that behaves in this way (See Prior 1960). Perhaps this is because there is a word 'tonk' and an associated inferential role, but this is insufficient to ensure that there is a corresponding logical connective. Similarly, there might be certain normative roles that fail to determine concepts that successfully refer to properties.

If there is a conflicting alternative to rationality itself – shmatationality perhaps – then the next fight will be over whether we should use concepts whose reference are determined not by their normative role but rather by their shnormative role, which in turn is defined via shmatationality rather

than rationality. But why should the ardent realist grant that shmornative roles can determine properties? Consider this analogy: I think that causation plays a role in determining reference; I am open to believing that there are other causation-like relations; it is not at all clear though why I should think that these other relations play a role in determining reference.⁴

Let's return to the question of whether 'normative role' must itself be defined normatively.⁵ Perhaps instead of talking about which non-doxastic occurrences are rationally required given certain beliefs, we could talk about our preferences for some pairs of sets of beliefs and sets of non-doxastic occurrences over other pairs of sets of beliefs and sets of non-doxastic occurrences. Or perhaps it would be better to speak of our dispositions to have such preferences. Or perhaps it would be better to talk instead about the preferences we would have under ideal conditions, provided that these ideal conditions can be specified without using normative expressions. Any of these would give us different (and probably non-equivalent) notions of a normative rule for use of a concept – although I would prefer to call them 'preferential rules' given that the rules are not understood in terms of anything normative. And we could then in turn define a notion of preferential role as that which preferential rules have in common. I suspect though that it will harder to characterize what it is for two concepts to be conflicting alternatives without a normative notion like rationality.

Preferential roles so understood aren't bound by substantive rational constraints. So while the ardent realist could deny that putative alternative normative concepts had normative roles, it will be much harder for her to deny that they have preferential roles. So how should the ardent realist respond?

I think she has two independently plausible responses. First, she could claim that a necessary condition on being a normative property is that there is a normative rule of use for some concept corresponding to that property. (She needn't and probably shouldn't claim that this necessary condition is partly constitutive of what it is to be a normative property.) These alternative concepts might exemplify preferential roles, but if they fail to also exemplify a normative role, they do not correspond to alternative *normative* properties. Second, she might deny that merely specifying a

⁴Perhaps they determine some alternative to reference; see Eklund (chapter 3.6) for a discussion of reference pluralism.

⁵Some remarks by Eklund (chapter 2.5) suggests that Eklund prefers a non-normative account of 'normative role'.

preferential rule of use for a concept is always sufficient for there to be a corresponding instantiated property. Recall 'tonk', which is an expression accompanied by a specification of a pattern of inferences but which lacks a corresponding logical operator. Note that it would be irrational to infer in accordance with this pattern – and perhaps the very fact that it would be irrational to infer in this way is part of the explanation for why 'tonk' fails to correspond to a logical operation.

3. Normative expressions and normative properties

So what makes an expression a normative expression and what makes a property a normative property?

Eklund (chapters four and five) presents several successful arguments against the claim that a property is normative if and only if it can be ascribed by a normative predicate. Here is an example that Eklund (71–72) profitably uses. Let 'Favorite' name God's favorite entity, which happens to be the first infinite cardinal. 'First infinite cardinal' is a mathematical expression while 'Favorite' is not, despite the fact that they co-refer. So we shouldn't say that an expression is a mathematical expression if and only if it refers to a mathematical entity. Similar considerations show that we shouldn't say something is a normative expression if and only if it refers to a normative entity. (Suppose that God's favorite entity had instead been the property of being intrinsically valuable.)

Eklund's argument is decisive. But let's take a step back. I suspect that what makes an expression a mathematical expression is that it belongs to a class of expressions whose function is to be used to state mathematical truths. Similarly, what makes an expression a biological expression is that it belongs to a class of expressions whose function is to be used to state biological truths. In both cases, speakers share (often implicit) intentions to communicate about a specific subject matter, and the relevant expressions are those whose collective purpose is to enable communication about it. 'Favorite' is not a mathematical expression because it lacks this function of being used to state mathematical truths.⁶ (Perhaps, however, it is a theological expression.)

Similarly, what makes an expression a *normative expression* is that it belongs to a class of expressions whose function is to be used to state

⁶Similar remarks apply to Eklund's (75–77) example of 'thgir': although 'thgir' and 'right' co-refer, and the speakers who coined 'thgir' did so with the intention that it co-refer with 'right', since these speakers lack the requisite intention to speak about normative matters, 'thgir' was not imbued with the function necessary for it to be a normative expression.

normative truths. This answer is inconsistent with versions of non-cognitivism that say that the semantic function of normative expressions is to aid in expressing emotions, commands, or plans rather than to aid in asserting truths. But there should be no presumption that an explanation of what makes an expression normative should be neutral with respect to other meta-ethical issues. If non-cognitivism is false, then it is bad methodologically improper to object to this account of what makes expressions normative by worrying about its incompatibility with non-cognitivism.

On my view, what makes an expression normative, mathematical, biological, etc., is not primarily that it refers to a corresponding kind of entity. Moreover, what makes an expression normative, mathematical, biological, and so forth is not determined by *how* it refers to entities, but rather by the function it has to express truths about specific topics.

Eklund's (64) preferred view is that what makes an expression normative is that it is conventionally associated with a normative role. I am not sure that a cognitivist, let alone an ardent realist, should prefer this view to the one that I suggested above. A non-cognitivist presumably should prefer Eklund's view to the one that I suggested, but this is not to say that they should believe Eklund's view. I suspect that a non-cognitivist will prefer a view on which normative vocabulary is individuated by its characteristic semantic function (e.g. that it is used to express certain emotions, stances, or injunctions) rather than by its conventional association with a normative role, especially if, for them, the notion of a normative role itself requires a non-cognitivist treatment.

Let's turn to the question of what makes a property a normative property. Eklund (64) leans towards the view that a property is a normative property if and only if it can be ascribed by some referentially normative predicate; call this biconditional *the connector*. As Eklund (99–101) notes, the connector by itself doesn't tell us about the nature of normative properties. But it might be that normative properties qua normative don't have an interesting nature, and if this is the case, it's reasonable to say that a property is a normative property *in virtue* of being the possible referent of a referentially normative predicate. (We'll return to this idea in §4 when we discuss presentationalism.) But it might also be reasonable to say that a property is a normative property simply in virtue of being what true normative propositions are about, provided that there is an independent way to characterize what makes something a normative proposition.

However, I think the ardent realist might have a reason to reject the connector. In §2, I argued that the ardent realist needn't accept normative

referentialism. And if normative referentialism is false, there are normative properties that are not possibly ascribed by some referentially normative predicate. But let me set this aside and focus instead on the *in virtue of* claim, which the ardent realist should definitely reject. Given ardent realism, the normative realm is not only normatively important – it's trivial to claim that it is, I suppose – but it is also metaphysically important: some normative properties are normative independently of how they can or must be referred to.

The ardent realist has a choice of metaphysics but I will briefly discuss only the two theories of what it is to be a normative property that are briefly discussed by Eklund. The first metaphysics is that the thin normative properties form a genuine metaphysical kind or have a primitive and metaphysically deep property in common. To be a normative property simply is to be a member of this kind or to instantiate this property. We glom on to the kind itself via acquaintance with paradigmatic members, such as the relation *is a reason that favors*. This doesn't mean that what it is to be a normative property is *analyzed* in terms of *is a reason that favors*, but rather merely that this is our route to grasping the kind. Arguably, a similar metaphysics is apt for answering the questions of what it is to be a mathematical entity or to be biological entity. In both cases, there is a real kind of thing to be grasped via understanding paradigmatic exemplars of the kind. Our grasp of the kinds in question does leave open questions about what other entities fall under them.

Eklund (98) considers this first option and concedes that it might be correct. But he also worries that if we are primitivists about what it is to be a normative expression or concept and primitivist about what it is to be a normative property, then we will be unable to explain or even say what the relation is between them. I agree that this would be worrisome, but for the reasons suggested earlier, the ardent realist needn't accept primitivism concerning what it is to be a normative expression or concept: to be a normative expression is to have the function of serving to express normative truths, and a normative truth is a true proposition about normative properties. For this ardent realist, the connection between normative expressions and normative properties is relatively straight-forward.

The second metaphysics briefly discussed by Eklund appeals to the notion of real essence. Eklund (97) writes, '... one can say that some properties *F* are such that it is an *essential* feature of *F* that if something is *F*, then it is good (bad), while others fail to be such even though *necessarily*, if something is *F* then it is good (bad)'. On this view, normative properties are those properties whose essences imply the possession of evaluative

properties. I understand the view and I can see that it or something like it is attractive. But I do not understand Eklund's criticism of it. Eklund (97) writes,

Even if [this view or a suitably revised version of it] is extensionally adequate, ... that ... [it] succeeds in spelling out what it is to be normative may be regarded as being too beholden to an overly minimalistic view on what it is for properties to be normative. For any property *F*, we can define a notion of being *F*-ish such that a property *G* is *F*-ish if and only if (it is an essential feature of ψ that) something's being *G* necessitates its being *F*. That does not mean that the notion of being an *F*-ish property carves out any interesting class of properties. Moreover, it will be trivial that *F* is *F*-ish.

I think what Eklund has in mind is this: a property *G* is *F*-ish if and only if there is some entity such that it is an essential feature of that entity that its being *G* necessitates its being *F*. I grant that you can define a predicate 'is *F*-ish' in this way once you specify the relevant values for '*F*' and '*G*'. And I grant that a notion of being *F*-ish probably wouldn't necessarily carve out any interesting class of properties. But I don't see why I should automatically grant that anything could be *F*-ish. Not every idea we have corresponds to a real essence that something possibly could have. There might be pairs of properties that satisfy this schema, but many pairs will not. It is also not trivial that being *F* is *F*-ish.⁷

Eklund (98) also worries that competing alternative normative expressions might fail to ascribe normative properties on both of these metaphysical views. This strikes me as a consequence that ardent realists should welcome rather than eschew, since it is another way for an ardent realist to be reject conflicting alternative concepts. Perhaps normative properties form a natural kind or have distinctive essences while alternatives to them do not. The ardent realist can reasonably claim that some properties have distinctively normative essences while denying that any property has a distinctively shnormative essence (where shnormative properties are allegedly conflicting properties). Eklund (30) might protest that forming a natural kind or having a distinctive essence is not normatively relevant. That might be so – but in this context, what matters to the ardent realist is explicating the thought that her normative concepts are the 'best'.

What else might the ardent realist care about? Presumably that her moral concepts are not self-effacing in this sense: it is not the case she

⁷I presume that the relevant notion the ardent realist should use here is *constitutive essence* rather than *consequential essence*. See Fine (1994) for discussion of this distinction.

all things considered shouldn't use her own normative concepts. Whether her concepts are self-effacing in this sense is to be settled only by doing normative theory. But if the ardent realist's concepts are not self-effacing and they correspond to metaphysically fundamental properties with distinctive essences lacked by their competitors, it is hard for me to see what else she qua ardent realist could possibly want. This would be enough for me.

4. Presentationalism

Presentationalism is the view that normativity resides in representations rather than in the world. According to presentationalism, there are normative representations (expressions, concepts), but there are no normative properties. Eklund persuasively argues that presentationalism is an important meta-ethical position. My goal here is to supplement Eklund's discussion by distinguishing four versions of presentationalism and indicating some of their respective strengths and weaknesses.

But first a minor complication. The presentationalist rejects normative properties. But what do they take that rejection to amount to? In the previous section, I discussed two metaphysical accounts of what it is to be a normative property, and the presentationalist might adopt either of them while denying that anything satisfies them. I also mentioned in the previous section the view that a property is normative in virtue of being the object of a possible referentially normative predicate. I think that the presentationalist should be able to accept this view, but if she does, she needs to qualify her rejection of normative properties. What the presentationalist is committed to is that there is no other respect in which a property is a normative property. Eklund (110) profitably compares presentationalism with representational theories of vagueness, and here I will follow suit in order to illustrate this. The epistemic theory of vagueness (defended, for example, by Williamson 1994) is, roughly speaking, the view that a predicate is vague if and only if it is a sorites susceptible predicate that has sharp boundaries of which we cannot have knowledge. According to the epistemic theory, vagueness resides in representations rather than in the world. Yet nothing stops the proponent of this theory from saying that a property is vague if and only if (and because) it is the referent of a vague predicate.⁸ That said, in order to avoid excessively qualifying what I will say in this section, I will set aside the claim that

⁸Compare with Eklund (112–113).

something is a normative property if and only if (and because) it is the referent of a possible referentially normative predicate.

In what follows, I will focus on thin normative expressions. With respect to these, the presentationalist can either endorse or reject normative referentialism. Either way, the presentationalist does think that thin normative expressions correspond to (non-normative) properties. These properties are either 'naturalistic' properties (such as biological or psychological properties) or they are non-naturalistic properties. Accordingly, there are four different kinds of presentationalism. In Eklund's (114–115) presentation of presentationalism, he seems to assume that presentationalism implies that the properties corresponding to normative predicates are naturalistic properties, but strictly this does not follow from the view itself.

Consider first the view that combines normative referentialism with the claim that the properties referred to are naturalistic properties. This combination is not incoherent. But it might be problematic in other ways. Consider the problem of moral twin earth, in which a community there appears to systematically hold different normative beliefs than we do (See Horgan and Timmons 1992). Because normative referentialism is true, they are talking about the same properties that we are. But these properties are ordinary naturalistic properties, and normative referentialism does not guarantee or even imply that it is likely that these ordinary naturalistic properties are instantiated in their environment (or in ours).

Instead, normative referentialism is entirely silent on which naturalistic properties correspond to normative expressions. Consider the predicate, 'is intrinsically good'. There are a number of naturalistic properties that it might refer to, such as the property of being a satisfied intrinsic desire, or the property of being pleasant, or the property of being excruciatingly painful. Normative referentialism seems to leave it entirely open which of these properties 'is intrinsically good' refers to. Of course, we know that 'is intrinsically good' does not refer to the property of being excruciatingly painful, because excruciating pain is not intrinsically good. But we know this via ethical reflection, not via any assistance from the meta-semantics. It seems odd that a predicate can refer to a naturalistic property but the only way to know which property it refers to is by doing ethics.⁹

Consider next the view that combines normative referentialism with the claim that the properties referred to are non-naturalistic properties. This view might avoid the moral twin earth problem just mentioned, since its proponent might be able to claim that the non-naturalistic properties

⁹I thank Çağla Çimendereli for calling to my attention this oddity.

are exemplified in both environments. Yet it still faces many of the problems that face standard versions of the view that normative properties are non-naturalistic. The presentationalist presumably still wants to say that the properties referred to by normative expressions supervene on naturalistic properties. But then on this combination of views, we have a mysterious supervenience between non-naturalistic non-normative properties and ordinary naturalistic non-normative properties.¹⁰ We might also have epistemic worries about how we know these properties exist. (Normative referentialism guarantees that normative expressions with the same normative role co-refer, but, as far as I can tell, does not guarantee that they succeed in referring.) As an ardent realist, I think that these problems can be solved, but one thing initially attractive about presentationalism was that it seemed to avoid them altogether.

Similar problems face the version of presentationalism that denies normative referentialism but holds that the properties referred to by normative predicates are non-naturalistic. Perhaps there is the additional question of how we manage to refer to these non-naturalistic non-normative properties.

Consider now the version of presentationalism that denies normative referentialism and says that the properties referred to by normative predicates are ordinary naturalistic properties. One might reasonably wonder how this version of presentationalism differs from ordinary naturalistic normative realism. Typically proponents of ordinary naturalistic normative realism claim that the properties normative predicates refer to are both naturalistic properties as well as normative properties.¹¹ But what do they mean? Is it part of their view that normative properties *qua normative* form a natural kind? Do some naturalistic properties have an aspect of their essence – for example, that it implies something about goodness or reasons – that is revealed only by way of ethical theorizing? I suspect that, for many ordinary naturalistic normative realists, all that is meant when they say that there are normative properties is that normative predicates succeed in referring to properties; I suspect that they endorse the fairly minimal conception of normative properties as those that are the referents of these predicates. And if this is so, ordinary naturalistic normative realism really just is a form of presentationalism, as Eklund (111) suggests it might be.

¹⁰Pace Eklund (114–115).

¹¹Compare with Eklund (111, 120).

The novel versions of presentationalism are interesting but problematic. The best version of presentationalism is just a version of ordinary naturalistic normative realism. That said, seeing some versions of ordinary naturalistic normative realism as versions of presentationalism is itself clarifying.¹²

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