This chapter is about whether Quasi-Realism gains any advantage over Robust Realism with respect to a certain well-known problem: the problem of explaining supervenience. The simplest way it might have an advantage is by having an explanation for the phenomenon that Robust Realism cannot explain. That, I believe, is the traditional view of the dialectic situation. But, there are other ways. A Quasi-Realist might deny the claims of supervenience. Or, Quasi-Realism might have no explanation for a claim it endorses, but have a more satisfactory story about why there is no explanation.

I will start with a summary of what the supervenience problem is supposed to be (section 11.1). I will only be able to lay out the varieties of supervenience and give some reason for thinking that a particular one, a kind of Strong Supervenience, holds between the moral and the natural.

In section 11.2 I will mention a few recent worries about supervenience, but I will not try to address the worries in great detail. The point of this chapter is not to work out exactly what to think about the seriousness of the supervenience problem, but only to see how the prospects for Quasi-Realists differ from the prospects for Robust Realists.

Section 11.3 recounts the history of expressivist thinking about supervenience. The gist is that the supervenience problem was a challenge raised by expressivists (or their intellectual ancestors) against Robust Realists, with the idea that expressivism had an excellent explanation of the phenomenon and realism had none. This explanation involves what I will call the “expressivist sidestep,” a favorite maneuver of expressivists by which they avoid answering the traditional questions of metaethics and give satisfying answers to different questions—questions that arise when we look at the same phenomena “side on”—instead.

Section 11.4 explains what Quasi-Realism is supposed to be, as I see it, and how (again, according to me) it is distinguished from Robust Realism; clear thinking about these questions brings the big problem out in the open. The big problem is that Quasi-Realists have not provided any explanation at
all for the phenomenon of supervenience. They are, it appears, in the same boat as Robust Realists, with respect to this problem (and, as I’ll explain, some other similar ones).

Section 11.5 maps out the possible paths for Quasi-Realists to travel in pursuit of Quasi-Explananda, and gives what I think are some reasons to be optimistic, but does not run the quarry to ground. I end with a suggestive analogy and a synopsis of the state of the dialectic.

11.1 THE SUPERVENIENCE PROBLEM

When something has a moral property, it also has a natural property whose possession necessitates the moral one. This is a kind of supervenience of the moral on the natural. The supervenience relation comes in a number of strengths and versions. I will lay out a crash course in the varieties, and settle on one for our purposes, and along the way settle a few other details. Then I will say why the supervenience of the moral on the natural is supposed to be a problem for a certain kind of moral realism. To end the section, I will mention some doubts and worries about the supervenience of the moral on the natural and try to say why they are not of great concern here, but I will not address them seriously.

Supervenience is a relation between families of properties. Properties of one kind supervene on properties of another kind when there cannot be a difference of the first kind without there being a difference of the second kind. Cannot, because supervenience is a relation of necessitation. In 1952, R. M. Hare (1991) introduced metaethics to the supervenience of the evaluative on the natural, or as he often put it on the descriptive. A pair of paintings, hanging side by side, could not differ in their goodness without differing in their non-evaluative description. It is a somewhat vexed question whether the moral supervenes on the natural—whether supervenience holds between the family of moral properties and the family of natural properties—not least because it is hard to delineate the family of natural properties. For our dialectical purposes it won’t be important to specify the family that is subjacent, as Hare (1984) put it. We will suppose that there is a family of natural properties, that it includes the properties studied in the sciences, and that it is closed under Boolean combination (so that, for example, if P is in the family and Q is, then so is P&Q).

Hare plainly had in mind a wider class than the moral; his paintings were to be evaluated in aesthetic terms, for instance. And nowadays metaethics seems not to be a very natural subject if its explananda are restricted to the moral realm proper. Philosophers tend to think the mysteries and problems
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of accounting for moral language, thought, and phenomena are shared by
the normative in general, or at least the practically normative. What needs
explaining, it now appears, are the categorical oughts and unconditional
goods, whether moral, aesthetic, prudential, or whatever. Still, I will stick in
this chapter to the supervenience of the moral. The aim is to make trouble
for moral realism, and then for quasi-realism. If, as most suspect, moral
realism comes together with normative realism, as a package, then there will
be trouble for normative realism too, and then for its quasi counterpart. In
any case, there is likely to be as much trouble delineating the family of the
normative as there is in marking out the family of the moral.

As I said, supervenience comes in a number of varieties. For most of
them it has seemed helpful to speak in terms of possible worlds. One kind
of supervenience, in fact, is about worlds. A family, α, globally supervenes
on another family, β, just in case there is no pair of possible worlds that
differ in some α respect without differing in some β respect. Some people,
myself included, worry about modal intuitions that can be evoked only by
quantification over possible worlds. Our home concepts are concepts of
necessity, possibility, and impossibility, and our philosophical discussions of
possible worlds are derivative from those home concepts. We are on more
solid ground if we can recover from any talk of possible worlds the natural
idiom that we grasp in common sense. For this reason I prefer to avoid
using global supervenience in an argument.

The other varieties can be captured by variations in the following formula.

$$\square(\forall F \in \alpha)(\forall x)(F x \rightarrow (\exists G \in \beta)(G x & \square(\forall y)(G y \rightarrow F y)))$$

This is Strong Supervenience. If we omit the second necessity operator we
have Weak Supervenience. (See Kim 1984 for some canonical formulations
and articulations.) And we can adjust strengths by interpreting the opera
tors in different ways: nomic necessity, metaphysical necessity, conceptual
necessity.

We will be taking α, the supervening class, to be the moral properties,
and β, the subjacent class, to be the natural. The first operator, with widest
scope, will be interpreted as conceptual necessity, and the second as meta-
physical necessity. I believe this is the strongest relation that in fact holds
between the moral and the natural. What matters dialectically is whether it
does hold, not whether there is anything stronger that holds, so let me give
a couple of examples to try to convince you that it does.

First, here is a way of grasping what the formula says when interpreted
as I’ve just suggested. It says that a certain claim holds as a matter of con-
ceptual necessity. What claim? This one: that when something has a moral
property, it also has a natural property that necessitates the moral one. That
necessitation is expressed in the formula, by the subformula consisting of the
metaphysical necessity operator and the conditional formula in its scope. Necessitated conditionals express necessitation.

Now the examples. Jackie Robinson was a good man, on the whole. Now consider his complete naturalistic description, including all of his relational (natural) properties, and bundle their conjunction together and call it “D” (Robinson’s description). Suppose someone thinks that another man could have lived just as Robinson did, satisfied his every description, borne the property D, while being rather less good than Robinson was. What would we think of this suggestion? With Hare, I believe this evaluator would have to be confused. We could ask, “In what way do you think this other man would be worse? What is it about him, as you imagine him, that makes him worse?” Our supervenience-flouter can give no answer. There is nothing else about the imagined Robinson counterpart in virtue of which he is (or would be) worse, according to the evaluator. But surely this makes no sense. It is not just an odd ethical perspective, as if someone thought that another man just like Jackie Robinson in all respects but with very slightly shorter hair would have been a worse man. That would be an odd view, but perhaps intelligible. To be an employment of our concept of moral goodness, though, surely something has to be said about the respects in which a man could fail to be as good as Jackie Robinson was.

What about me? Could I have lived a worse life than I in fact have? No doubt; and I could have lived a better one, morally better. I remember telling a lie I should not have told. I could have lived a better life had I not lied on that occasion. Could I have lived a better life in no natural respect different from my actual life? I don’t see how. I don’t even see what someone could be thinking, who thought I could have. And the “could” here is not really an ability modal, as it might appear—I could have lived a better life by finding a cure for arthritis, even though I never had the ability to find a cure for arthritis. I could have lived that better life if I had been able to find the cure.

I think these examples support Strong Supervenience. My life could not have been better had it not been naturalistically different. No one could be worse than Jackie Robinson without being different in some natural way. And these couldn’ts, which express metaphysical necessity, seem to be true of conceptual necessity, in that we would meet with confusion and not moral opprobrium if we were to insist otherwise.

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1 But perhaps not; see Foot (1958) for examples showing how doubtful it is that a person has a moral view at all when the content of the view comes apart too far from familiar ones.
11.2 THE EXPLANATORY CHALLENGE FOR ROBUST REALISM

Robust Realism is just my name for non-naturalist moral realism. It was Moore’s view. And although it was unfashionable for most of the twentieth century, it is now shared by Shafer-Landau (2003), Huemer (2005), Cuneo (2010), and Enoch (2011), among others. Moral facts and properties, according to Robust Realists, are mind-independent, not constructed from our perspectives, and they are not natural facts and properties nor reducible to natural facts and properties.

Robust Realists have a problem explaining why the moral supervenes on the natural. For they think these are distinct families of properties—that is, the properties in the moral family are wholly distinct from the properties in the natural family. They are not constructs of the natural properties, they are not combinations of or reducible to the natural properties. But supervenience is a necessary relation. It says that each morally good action has a natural feature that necessitates its goodness, and each unjust institution has an underlying descriptive nature that necessitates its injustice, and so on. The question is, how can the items in the one class necessitate the items in the other, if they are distinct families of properties?

The matter is different for Naturalist Realism. Constructivists like Street (2012) have an explanation par excellence of why moral features are necessitated by natural features: they are nothing but constructs of the natural features themselves. They necessitate their consequential evaluative properties as parts together necessitate the whole they compose. And naturalistic rationalists like Smith (1994) and so-called Cornell realists like Sturgeon (2006) likewise provide smooth explanations, according to which logic, analysis, or identity can explain the necessity that pins the moral to the natural. The problem arises only for metaethical theories that take the moral realm to be distinct from the natural one; or maybe it’s better to say that the question of explanation arises for all theories, but has a clear and easy answer for naturalist views.

2 I think it is not as clear as often supposed exactly what Moore’s view was; see Dreier (2006) for my best try at working it out. Still, Moore serves as a good paradigm for the kind of view I have in mind.

3 Perhaps including Parfit (2011) and Scanlon (2014), but there is some question of whether it’s correct to use “Robust” to describe their realism. I won’t take a stand on the interpretive question here. If these new realists are not robust, we might consider whether they can end up with a better explanation of supervenience, or whether instead they just end up in the same boat, as I argue is true of Quasi-Realism.
So this was the state of the dialectic for some decades since Blackburn (1971), or maybe even since Hare (1991). Robust Realism has an explanatory burden, which it will have trouble discharging, and other theories thereby gain an advantage if they have no such trouble. But in recent years some new doubts have arisen. The next section describes these problems and offers my response. It is too brief to be satisfying, I am sorry to say, but a full exploration will have to await a separate occasion.

11.3 WORRIES ABOUT MORAL SUPERVENIENCE

Matthew Kramer (2009) has suggested that supervenience is not a metaphysical fact or conceptual truth at all, but rather a substantive, if quite plausible, moral doctrine. It therefore requires a specifically moral explanation, and the work to be done is work for first-order moral theorizing. Kramer proceeds mainly by looking deeper into what R. M. Hare said about which kinds of combinations of claims are ruled out by supervenience, and arguing that what would be wrong with someone who insisted on such combinations would be a fault of fairness, or a kind of moral arbitrariness or partiality. Kramer may be quite right about at least some of Hare’s claims. But as my examples (of Jackie Robinson and myself) seem to show, there is also a basic conceptual truth, deriving from the shape of the concept of a moral property, that in turn entails a relation of metaphysical necessitation connecting the natural with the moral. Someone who insisted that my life could have been better—that there is a metaphysical possibility of its being better, even with no natural difference from my actual life—seems to be confused, and not merely unfair. Even if Kramer is right that some similar-sounding claims can be given a substantively moral account, there is also the metaphysical relation to be explained.

A second worry is that once the family of natural properties is expanded enough to ensure that Strong Supervenience is indeed a conceptual truth, it will be also a trivial truth, a kind of theorem of modal logic. Note first that we have to decide whether spatio-temporal relations and locations are in the natural family. On the one hand, they had better be. Someone who holds that temporal proximity matters to moral decision and evaluation is not merely confused about the concepts. It is a substantive moral claim that we owe as much to distant future generations as we owe to next year’s population, or that we have no duties to our neighbors that we don’t have to men and women half way around the world. But then on the other hand, if spatio-temporal relations and locations are included, then supervenience seems trivial. No two persons or actions can share all natural
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properties without sharing all moral properties, but for the trivial reason that no two persons can share all natural properties! You and I differ in our spatio-temporal location ... and necessarily so.

Strong Supervenience is not trivialized by this observation, in fact. For although no two actual persons share a location at a time, there are certainly two distinct possible persons, each of whom could have been right here, right now (though not together, in the same possibility). Strong Supervenience says that these distinct persons do not share all natural properties unless they also share all moral properties. And that is not trivial. For instance, you yourself could have been right there, where you are and when you are, even though you had the name “Rumpelstiltskin.” (Other naturalistic, relational properties of yours would have had to differ, of course.) The worry can be pressed further, but the threat of trivialization can be held at bay by clear thinking.

The third problem is also a kind of trivialization worry. I will call it the Concept Defense. And I have to give a somewhat longer treatment of it, because the upshot of my response to this problem will be important in the sections to follow. The Defense arises in the context of Tim Scanlon’s non-naturalism about reasons, and specifically the view that moral and other normative features of our world are non-natural because the property of being a reason is non-natural. Brad Hooker and Philip Stratton-Lake (2006) have suggested that the supervenience of this normative non-natural property, being a reason, needs no metaphysical explanation, because it has a purely conceptual explanation. There is something plausible about this idea. After all, Strong Supervenience is a conceptual necessity. Conceptual necessities are explained by the nature of concepts. So it is hard to see how there can be a special problem for metaethicists with a particular view of the metaphysics of moral properties. Whatever kind of explanation there is available to other metaethical views should presumably be available to Robust Realists. Hooker and Stratton-Lake are discussing Scanlon’s view that the fundamental normative notion is the notion of being a reason. They write, “We do not see a difficulty here. It is a conceptual truth that if you have a reason to care about A, then there must be something that provides the reason. This something is what the reason supervenes on” (Hooker and Stratton-Lake 2006: 164). Their way of putting it is somewhat indirect—the issue is not what the reason supervenes on, but what the property of its being a reason supervenes on—but the point is that it is a feature of the concept (of being a reason) that it supervenes on the non-normative features of the situation and the agent. In the context, Stratton-Lake and

4 Thanks to Krister Bykvist for making all of this clear to me.
Hooker are urging the advantages of Scanlon’s approach over Moore’s, but I think they are mistaken. A Robust Realist who took *goodness* or *wrongness* or some other moral concept as the basic one, or who took no particular moral concept as more basic than any other, could surely offer the same explanation of supervenience: these concepts have built into them that their properties supervene on the non-moral ones.

Russ Shafer-Landau (2003: 86) made a similar point:

Assume for now that it is a conceptual truth that moral facts/properties/relations are supervenient ones. The problem, then, would be that competent speakers of a language can conceive of a world in which the base properties that actually underlie particular moral ones fail to do so. But there is no mystery here, since people can conceive of many things that are not metaphysically possible. If certain base properties *metaphysically* necessitate the presence of specified moral properties, then the conceptual possibility that they fail to do so reveals only a limitation on our appreciation of the relevant metaphysical relations. There is no deep explanatory puzzle resisting resolution here.

The main idea is that apparently metaphysical necessities can often be explained conceptually. Consider Planet–Star Necessity:

**Planet–Star Necessity**

It is necessary that every planet orbits a star. (This really is a matter of stipulation, since the International Astronomical Union changed the definition of “planet” in 2006 by fiat, and ordinary speakers seem to defer to expert panels like the IAU.) And all planets are massive, round bodies. But if someone complained that we cannot by our words make it necessary that all those massive round bodies orbit the sun, they would be missing the point. The necessity is conceptual: to count as a planet a big round thing has to orbit a star.

The IAU did not have to first check to be sure that the planet–star connection really is necessary. Why, then, should we think that once the conceptual truths of moral attribution are made fully explicit, there is any remaining necessitation to explain?

Here again is Strong Supervenience:

\[ \Box (\forall F \in \alpha)(\forall x)(F_x \rightarrow (\exists G \in \beta)(G_x \& \Box (\forall y)(G_y \rightarrow F_y))) \]

Hooker and Stratton-Lake were, I think, distracted by the first necessity operator. Keep your eye on the second one. Suppose it is a conceptual truth that the \( \alpha \) properties are necessitated by the \( \beta \) properties. Still, we would need an explanation for *why* they are. Necessitation seems to require an

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5 For a thorough discussion, see Olson (2004).

6 I think I first got this analogy, in a different context, in conversation with Jon Tresan.
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To see this, consider the concept of an Anankat, which I have just made up.7

Anankats

An anankat is a cat that is necessarily on a mat. When you see a cat on a mat, you may suspect it is an anankat, but unless it is on that mat with metaphysical necessity, it is not an anankat.

There are no anankats. But suppose Archy is convinced that there are some. They are generally identifiable, he thinks, by their stripes. Spying Mehitabel on a mat and observing her stripes he concludes that she is an anankat. Archy may still wonder how it can be true that anankats are on mats with metaphysical necessity. What prevents them from hopping up? Whence the metaphysical glue? How do anankats determine mats? Archy’s situation seems very similar to ours, if we are Robust Realists about morality. We think there are instances of moral injustice, and we think injustice is determined, metaphysically, by underlying non-moral properties. We should wonder as Archy does. It is no answer to Archy’s question if we point out that just as a matter of the concept of an anankat, all of them are on their mats with metaphysical necessity.

Likewise, it is a bad answer to the question, “How does the property underlying the very-goodness of St. Francis necessitate his very-goodness?” to tell us that it is a moral property and so it’s conceptually necessary that a non-moral property necessitates it. The parallel to the story of Cain and Abel is exact, except of course that the necessity there was causal and here metaphysical.

Finally, some new arrivals on the non-naturalist scene seem puzzled by the demand for an explanation of supervenience. I think both Parfit (2011) and Scanlon (2014) fit this mold, but I’ll use the latter to articulate the attitude. Scanlon thinks there are some fundamental reason facts, facts about what a person would have reason to do in various specific circumstances, which are necessary facts. The covariation between the natural and the moral, then, is explained by these fundamental necessities, along with the particular circumstances that particular persons are in as matters of contingent fact. The reason anyone in your exact circumstances shares your moral reasons is simply that your circumstances necessitate your having the reasons you have.

So much is clear enough. But is there any explanation of this necessitation? Your circumstances are fully natural (we may suppose), and completely characterized by your natural properties. The further property of

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7 Inspired by McPherson (2012), and also by Marquis (1990).
your having a reason to read carefully, or to pay your taxes, or whatever, is non-natural, according to Scanlon. And these properties are necessarily connected, though fully distinct. How? Scanlon has no answer to this question. But he thinks he needs none. As Scanlon sees the issue, it is entirely obvious and a part of common sense that having reasons is necessitated by the fine enough details of our circumstances, and it is fully consistent with his non-naturalist view. Why does it need any explanation?

The Supervenience Challenge is not supposed to be a refutation of Robust Realism. It is not supposed to show an incoherence in the view or an entailment that common sense tells us is obviously false. It is supposed to show that there is a feature of morality, of our moral experience, that Robust Realism cannot explain. That is a cost of the metaethical view. For other views can explain it. Metaethical theories are supposed to explain the interesting, striking features of moral thought and talk. Of course, not everything is explicable. Some things are brute facts. So, it is not a decisive objection to a metaethical theory that there is a feature of morality that it cannot explain. But, it is a cost. And a theory had better not posit too many brute, inexplicable facts, or it is simply a failure as a philosophical theory.

So here is the upshot of the supervenience of the moral on the natural. It comprises a metaphysically necessary connection between moral properties and natural properties. Some metaethical theories have excellent explanations of this necessary connection. Robust Realist views seem to have a problem. It may turn out that there is a good explanation to be provided by Robust Realism, but there is a prima facie problem, at least. There is something to be explained, and some theories explain it, and it is not clear how Robust Realism can give a good explanation. In the next section, I will set out the traditional understanding of how expressivism conceives of the fact of supervenience, and what expressivists have said by way of explaining it.

11.4 THE EXPRESSIVIST SIDESTEP

After Hare, the most influential deployment of the supervenience argument is Simon Blackburn’s, first offered in his “Moral Realism.” I won’t bother with the further details of how Blackburn used supervenience against moral realism. According to Blackburn, and thence the conventional wisdom, his own expressivism (not yet so-called) had a completely satisfactory explanation of supervenience:

8 See Dreier (1992) for my sorting out of that argument; I still think most of the argument in that paper is correct.
If we turn again to the anti-realist explanation of (S), we can see that an attitude—the attitude of moral approval—is said to have certain properties, and this by itself is the truth of which (S) is ... a propositional reflection. Thus, the moral attitude is said to be necessarily held because of the naturalistic properties of its objects, and the statement of supervenience, made in terms of which differences entail which others, is a realistic-appearing way of putting the view that difference in moral attitudes to two things must, logically, be justified by differences in beliefs about them.

(Blackburn 1971: 120)

In moral language, according to Blackburn, we express our moral attitudes—complexes of emotion and commitment. The supervenience constraint, then, is really a constraint on how we “moralize.” Part of the language game of moral discussion involves maintaining like attitudes toward like cases—we approve or disapprove or resent things for their natural properties, so the reappearance of those same natural properties calls again for the same attitudes. Someone who flouted this constraint would show that she did not understand the game, and so did not possess the concept. The “propositional reflection” is Blackburn’s characterization of the form of language we use in our moralizing. We speak in declarative sentences when we express our moral attitudes, and the sentences have a grammar that suggests—but perhaps misleadingly—that we are talking about some independently existing moral reality. The conceptual supervenience constraint shows up in this propositional reflection as a necessary connection between that apparent independent reality and the natural world. But really the only necessity involved is the institutional, conceptual necessity of our practice.

Later Blackburn put it like this:

[W]e could say that in the moral case as well, when we deal with analytically possible worlds, we are dealing with the beliefs we have about competence: in this case the belief that the competent person will not flout supervenience. But this belief is explained only by the further, anti-realist nature of moralizing. If moralizing were depicting further, moral aspects of reality, there would be no explanation of the conceptual constraint, and hence of our belief about the shape of a competent morality.

(Blackburn 1985: 64)

Blackburn’s account of supervenience here exemplifies what I’m calling the Expressivist Sidestep. Here’s how it works.

We might be puzzled about the nature of morality, and seek out a seasoned professional to set us right. “What is moral wrongness?” we ask. Some metaethicists have a “straight” answer, but expressivists have none. “There’s nothing helpful I can say about that,” they reply. “If you want to
know what makes things morally wrong, you’ll have to ask a normative moral theorist, and if you’re asking me about the moral properties themselves, I’m afraid you are just laboring under a mistaken presupposition.” How disappointing. “But I can tell you something else that will let you understand what’s really going on here. I can tell you what we are doing when we call things ‘wrong’. And I can tell you what we are thinking when we think that things are wrong, and when we disagree with others, and so on.” And they proceed to do so. Expressivists think there is nothing much to say about the nature of the moral realm and its elements, except of course by moral theory. They think the illuminating way to understand our life of moral talk and thought is by stepping off to the side and looking at the phenomena from there. Instead of thinking about wrongness, we think about thoughts and talk of wrongness. Everything we wanted to explain turns out to have a much clearer explanation from this side-on vantage.

Here is the formulation of supervenience in Gibbard (2003: 90):

Two acts in two possible situations differ in being okay or not only if they differ, somehow, in their prosaically factual properties. That is to say, for any two possible situations \( s_1 \) and \( s_2 \), we have the following: only if act \( a_1 \) in \( s_1 \) differs factually from act \( a_2 \) in \( s_2 \), will it be okay to do \( a_1 \) in \( s_1 \), though not okay to do \( a_2 \) in \( s_2 \).

Gibbard’s view works like this. People make plans, which in Gibbard’s technical sense means that they form intentions or preferences for what to do and how to feel (and, indeed, what to believe) in various circumstances. These contingency plans they can then express in normative language, and that’s what normative language is for. For you think that in Sherlock’s situation one ought to pack one’s bags to prepare to escape Moriarity is for you to plan to pack your bags if in that situation. For you to think it is “not okay” to pack in Sherlock’s situation is for you to have plans that rule out packing in that situation. What can be okay or not okay is an act in a situation, as the quotation above suggests. In *Thinking How to Live*, Gibbard gave his own explanation of the supervenience constraint. He showed that the constraint is a kind of *theorem* of the conceptual apparatus he develops, in two stages.

First, Gibbard shows that (in his semantics) each person is committed to all claims that would be true in each maximal specification of her plans and beliefs together. The idea is that the plans of ordinary human beings like us are incomplete and underspecified. We may, if we’ve been reflecting on the Sherlock Holmes stories, have formed a contingency plan for what to do if in Sherlock’s situation; but many people have not, of course, and there is little practical cost to having no view about what to do if pursued by Moriarity. Similarly we may have no belief about whether the number...
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of stars in the Milky Way is odd or even. But we can imagine maximally opinionated superhumans who have definite opinions about all “matters of prosaic fact,” like how many stars there are in which galaxies, and so have doxastic states that can be represented by particular, individual possible worlds. And we can imagine maximally opinionated hyperplanners, too, who have perfectly detailed hyperplans for what to do when in each and every imaginable situation. What you are committed to, in your planning, is not just what you explicitly plan but what you would plan in every hyperplan that fully specifies your actual plans. These might be commitments that haven’t occurred to you, because you haven’t worked out all the implications of your plans. So that is the first step: we are committed to everything planned and believed by the maximally opinionated hyperplanners whose plans are further specifications of what we’ve already planned and what we already believe.

Second, Gibbard shows that each hyperplanner is committed to supervenience. This is not too hard to see. It is of the nature of plans that the contingencies for which they are plans are features of the situation that are at least in principle recognizable.

A planner, after all, must identify acts in terms of their prosaically factual properties: a plan, say, always to do whatever is the thing to do is no plan at all. A hyperplan can take the infinite form, in situation $S_1$ do the act with property $P_1$, in situation $S_2$ do the act with property $P_2$, and so on. From this we can construct the grand property, having the property $P_1$ in $S_1$, $P_2$ in $S_2$, and so on. Call this property $P_n$; the plan, then, is in any possible situation, to do something with this grand property $P_n$. In a hyperdecided state, this shows, one accepts that there is a property that constitutes being okay to do—namely $P_n$. And this property is constructed, finitely or infinitely, out of factual properties.

(Gibbard 2003: 96)

Since the hyperdecided planner, no matter what her plans, accepts that there is a natural (“factual”) property that constitutes being okay to do, she accepts supervenience. Each of us must be committed to whatever all hyperplanners accept, since we are committed to whatever all hyperplanners who completely specify our own plans are committed to. So, each of us is committed to supervenience.

This is a more elaborate and more rigorous explanation than Blackburn’s, but it is in the same mode. To explain supervenience, we do not try to find a metaphysical relation between properties. We look for features of the logic, the concepts we deploy in our moral talk and thought, that account for the a priori nature of our commitment to supervenience. That’s the Expressivist Sidestep.
11.5 THE SAME BOAT: QUASI-REALISM GETS NO ADVANTAGE OVER ROBUST REALISM

The expressivist “side-on” accounting of supervenience looks good. I thought it was good, for a long time, and that it was one of the important respects in which expressivists had an advantage over Robust Realists. But I now think I was mistaken. There is no advantage, and the theoretical situation has been misunderstood. I will begin by laying out my understanding of the Quasi-Realist program. Then I’ll rehearse a fairly familiar worry that arises if Quasi-Realism is successful, namely, that it becomes difficult to distinguish it from Robust Realism. I’ll offer my own answer to this worry, which I call the Explanation Explanation. At that point it will be easy to say why the traditional expressivist accounts of supervenience give the view no advantage over Robust Realism.

Quasi-Realism, named by Simon Blackburn, is the program of starting with expressivist foundations and reconstructing the realist-sounding language of ordinary moral talk.

I call the enterprise of showing that there is [no mistake in ordinary moral language]—that even on antirealist grounds there is nothing improper, nothing ‘diseased’ in projected predicates—the enterprise of quasi-realism. The point is that it tries to earn, on the slender basis, the features of moral language (or of other commitments to which a projective theory might apply) which tempt people to realism. (Blackburn 1984: 171)

The essays in Blackburn (1993) elaborate on the project, particularly the introduction and “Attitudes and Contents.” I want to say just a bit about why one might think a Quasi-Realist approach is useful, and that will help me explain what its extent should be. So first, the point of the program, as I see it, is that many metaethicists want to avoid an error theory. They think the conclusion that nothing is morally right or morally wrong is too dramatic, that it sounds like a nihilistic moral view, as on some interpretations Nietzsche espoused. Such conclusions are beyond the purview of metaethics, according to a kind of pragmatic tradition that fits well with expressivist theorizing. So the completion of the expressivist view should leave our main moral thoughts and assertions largely as they were; it should explain what we are up to, but also insofar as possible it should vindicate our practice, not, certainly, by offering up a justification for our actual moral views but by making sense of our methods, by showing how when we are mistaken, we are mistaken in an ordinary moral way and not because of some enormously false presupposition of everything we ever think or say. Since our
ordinary talk contains many realist-sounding elements, the completion of the expressivist explanation of moral language must be Quasi-Realist.

Notice that the project is not, as is sometimes said, to mimic everything that a Robust Realist says. There is no reason for an expressivist to try to do that. According to expressivists, Robust Realists have a metaethical, metaphysical philosophical view, and much of it is not true. So the idea that they would want to mimic everything Robust Realists say is pretty strange. No, the point is to vindicate ordinary moral thought and language, not to vindicate heavy-duty metaphysical theorizing. There are some things Robust Realists will say that Quasi-Realists will deny, then.

But what, exactly? Here are a few suggestions. Maybe Robust Realists assert and Quasi-Realists deny that moral statements have truth-values. But that would be to abandon the program. For ordinary talk is quite committed to some moral judgments’ being true and others false—for example, it is true that slavery is unjust, and many of the moral judgments asserted by televangelists are false. If some are true and some are false, then of course they have truth-values. So maybe Robust Realists assert and Quasi-Realists deny that there are moral facts. But it is true that slavery is unjust. And if it is true, surely, it is a fact that slavery is unjust. What else is there to facts? So Quasi-Realists agree that there are moral facts.

Talk of truth and of facts admits of a minimalist account. Minimalism about truth, as for instance advanced by Horwich (1998), tells us that we know everything there is to know about truth once we have in our possession the collected instances of the schema

\[ \text{“S” is true iff } S \]

and know how to work out their implications. Expressivism tells us how to use normative sentences; it has some hard tasks to execute if it is to succeed, but that’s the program. So insofar as it is successful in these tasks, it can bring minimalism on board, and vindicate all our talk of truth in ethical contexts.

Minimalism about propositions says that the collected instances of the schema

\[ \text{“S” expresses the proposition that } S \]

likewise equip you with all you need to know about propositions. The expression “the proposition that” serves as a logical-grammatical device to form noun phrases out of sentences, helpful for generalizing. Since ethical sentences are meaningful (and embed grammatically into that clauses), there are, trivially, ethical propositions. And as we noted, facts come free, without further metaphysical cost, with true propositions.
We can add minimalism about properties. The collected instances of the schema

\[ x \text{ has the property of being } F \text{ iff } x \text{ is } F \]

together embody all there is to know about properties. There is a property for each intelligible predicate, but no ontological commitment involved in accepting these minimal, deflated properties. Once we understand that “wrong” and the like behave logically and grammatically as predicates, there is no further question of whether there is a property of being wrong.⁹

These elements of minimalism are, on the one hand, very helpful for Quasi-Realism. They show how to vindicate fully our ordinary talk of truth, facts, properties, propositions, perfectly consistent with expressivist scruples, or as Blackburn said, “on the slender basis.” But, on the other hand, all this minimalism also threatens to make Quasi-Realism indistinguishable from Robust Realism. The main things we thought Robust Realists might say, to distinguish themselves from Quasi-Realists, it turns out that Quasi-Realists endorse too. Or, if you prefer to see the burden placed on the other side, the main things we thought Quasi-Realists would deny, to distinguish themselves from the Robust kind, are things they shouldn’t deny after all.

So that’s the problem.¹⁰ Here is how I suggest it can be solved. We want to focus not on the things we might say when we are morally engaged (like that slavery and apartheid share a moral property), but on the sorts of things we want to say when we are specifically engaged in metaethics. And, I think, what we do in metaethics is to provide explanations. So to distinguish Quasi-Realism from Robust Realism, we should focus on the kinds of explanations the theories offer.

Suppose Julia believes that the experience of pleasure is intrinsically good. What is it about Julia in virtue of which this is true of her? The kind of explanation I want to focus on is this in virtue of kind. And here we will find a difference between Robust Realism and the Quasi-kind. The Robust Realist will advert to intrinsic goodness, in providing the explanation of the facts about Julia in virtue of which she believes the experience of pleasure is intrinsically good. There is some kind of doxastic relation that she bears to intrinsic goodness and to pleasure, and these together constitute and explain, in the in virtue of sense, her belief. But the Quasi-Realist does not agree. Julia’s state of mind, according to Gibbard, is fully constituted by her

⁹ Perhaps. I in effect deny this claim in “The Normative Explanation of Normativity,” a work in progress.

¹⁰ I spell this out more fully, and elaborate on the answer that follows in the text here, in Dreier (2004).
“prosaic factual” beliefs (which have no normative contents) along with her plans. Goodness has no explanatory role to play.\footnote{Unfortunately, matters have become much more complicated with the publication of Gibbard (2012). I try to address this complication in “The Normative Explanation of Normativity.” I just ignore these complications in what follows.}

I’ll call this the Explanation Explanation. What distinguishes Quasi-Realism from Robust Realism is that in the latter, but not the former, the properties and facts that form the subject matter appear in the best explanation of our beliefs and assertions with that subject matter as content. The moral facts and properties are part of the explanation for what it is about us in virtue of which we have moral beliefs and make moral assertions, according to Robust Realism; according to Quasi-Realism, on the other hand, although we certainly do make moral assertions and have moral beliefs, and these are sometimes true, and factual, and so on, the moral facts and properties play no role in explaining what it is about us in virtue of which we count as saying these things and having such thoughts.

So far, so good. But now it will be easy to say why the standard story, according to which expressivism has a satisfying account of supervenience and Robust Realism has none, must be wrong. Quasi-Realists will, naturally, agree that the moral supervenes on the natural. They agree that there could not have been a man just like Jackie Robinson in all naturalistic respects, but a little worse, or a lot better, or morally different. Because of their minimalism about property talk, they agree that Robinson had a property, perhaps hard to specify precisely, of being good to some degree, and that this property is one that he could not have lacked unless he lacked some natural property he did in fact have. So, they must agree that he had a property that is necessitated, metaphysically, by his natural properties. Okay, so what? Quasi-Realists are happy to say these things, perhaps. But then we ask for the explanation for this metaphysical necessitation. What shall they say?

Will they give us Gibbard’s story about why all planners are committed to supervenience? Or Blackburn’s story about why we regard it as constitutive of competence with moral concepts that we respect the rule that we always apply like moral concepts to naturalistically like cases? They are entitled to offer these explanations. But they explain the wrong thing. These explanations are explanations of why we accept supervenience, or why we are committed to it. They do not explain supervenience itself. They do not explain the metaphysically necessary connection; they explain why we are all constrained to believe it.

Well, that’s how the Expressivist Sidestep works, after all, and on the whole it has seemed to be a very promising strategy. Why is it no good here? It’s no good because the problem that supervenience poses for Robust
Realists is a problem of explanatory deficit. The problem is that the moral supervenes on the natural, that they are connected by a metaphysical necessity, and the Robust Realist has no good explanation of this connection. But now it turns out that the Quasi-Realist has no explanation of the connection. Of course, the Quasi-Realist has an explanation of something else. Quasi-Realism has an explanation of why we are committed to supervenience. That is something conceptual. Quasi-Realism has an explanation of why supervenience is a kind of conceptual truth, something to which we are committed no matter what our moral outlook. But, recall, some Robust Realists make the same claim. That was the gist of the Conceptual Defense: the supervenience of the moral on the natural is a conceptual truth, requiring only a conceptual and not a metaphysical explanation. We rejected the Conceptual Defense (and I noted that our reasons for rejecting it would be more important than our reasons for rejecting the other challenges; this is why). The Quasi-Realist and the Robust Realist are in the same boat. They recognize the relation of supervenience, of metaphysical necessitation between the moral properties and the natural ones, and they have no explanation of it. Quasi-Realism gains no advantage over Realism on this score.

Contrast an older view, R. M. Hare's, in the same broad camp as expressivism. Hare never accepted supervenience as I have formulated it. He accepted a formal mode counterpart, a principle about what it is intelligible to say. Hare seems to have held the Quinean view that all necessity is linguistic or conceptual. So Hare is in good shape with his explanation. He has an explanation, in the same vein as Blackburn's and Gibbard's, of why we follow the linguistic rule and hold others to it, and he doesn't need any explanation of the material mode statement of supervenience, because he just denies it. Hare is not a true Quasi-Realist. He just denies that there are any moral (or other evaluative or normative) properties at all; no moral facts, no moral truths. The Same Boat verdict derives from the full-scale Quasi-Realism that embraces minimalism.

11.6 THE WAYS FORWARD

When challenged to explain something in a philosophical domain, I think we have some options. The most straightforward, of course, is to offer an explanation. Naturalists, including many constructivists, do offer an explanation of moral supervenience, so it's not as though we can't even imagine what could count as an explanation. But the prospects for a Quasi-Realist expressivist explanation of supervenience itself—not its formal mode
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analogue of commitment to following the rule that accepting supervenience embodies, but the necessary connection between the families of properties—does not look very good. Quasi-Realists, it appears, cannot offer the explanation embraced by naturalists. For naturalists explain supervenience by positing identity between the particular naturalistic properties in question—the ones doing the necessitation—and the moral properties. And Quasi-Realists, like Robust Realists, do not accept any such identity.\textsuperscript{12} At any rate, it is, I have argued, no better than the prospects for a Robust Realist. As far as the project of offering a straight explanation of supervenience is concerned, Quasi-Realists are in the same boat with Robust Realists. They gain no advantage on this score.

Another option, though a disappointing one, is the quietist line of admitting that there is no explanation, but resting content with internal consistency and agreement with common sense. As I said above, it is not fatal to a theory to admit failure in one explanatory project. Here, again, Quasi-Realism might just be in the same boat with Robust Realism. The cost of explanatory failure might just be borne, if the theory is otherwise good enough. But these options do not distinguish Quasi-Realism from Robust Realism.

There is a third way. We might, when challenged to explain something, confess that we cannot but offer a kind of higher-order explanation. Maybe Quasi-Realists cannot explain supervenience, but can instead say something persuasive about why it needs no explanation; why the apparent explanatory deficit is no deficit at all, or not a troubling one. It is this option that seems most promising, to me at least, for Quasi-Realists. After all, what distinguishes Quasi-Realism, according to my own account, is the different role it assigns to the moral features of the world in our philosophical explanations. To put it glibly, moral facts and properties are explanatorily lightweight. Maybe that means the phenomena in which they participate do not require metaphysical explanations. We will have to spell this out more clearly.

This third path of explaining why no explanation is required itself bifurcates into two. One way of proceeding is to say that no explanation is needed because the phenomenon is a kind of illusion. We can’t explain,

\textsuperscript{12} Actually, this line is more complicated than I am making it out. Michael Ridge has suggested to me that there is a quite plausible Quasi-Naturalist line, according to which the expressivist account of the point and expressive function of moral language is correct, and no moral vocabulary need occur in the best explanation of our moral judgment, but a kind of identity or claim of constitution can still be embraced. Indeed, it may be that this is the best way of understanding Allan Gibbard’s view. I pursue a similar idea in “The Normative Explanation of Normativity,” but here I will leave it to one side and continue to assume that Quasi-Realism takes the form of Quasi-Non-Naturalism.
because there isn’t really anything to explain. When Quasi-Realists say that there are moral properties, and that they are necessarily correlated with natural properties, they mean nothing more than ... Something simple and undemanding—I will try to finish the thought in a moment. I am not optimistic about this fork, but some will find it more amenable than I do, and I’m not averse to it—if it turns out to work I will be pleased, not disappointed. The other fork in this path follows the idea that moral facts and properties are of a different kind from natural ones, and because of their nature they are particularly undemanding when it comes to explaining their superficially striking patterns. This line takes the robustness of Robust Realism seriously. There is an intelligible respect in which some properties are robust, and their metaphysical features and relations stand in need of explanations, while other properties are wispy and insubstantial and explanatorily undemanding. Let me now develop these two ways of trying to make good on the claim that Quasi-Realists can explain why supervenience needs no explanation.

My Explanation Explanation of the difference between Quasi-Realism and Robust Realism could be understood this way:

if we need F to explain what it is to believe that something is F, then (that’s evidence that) there is F-ness; otherwise we have other reasons to speak as if there were, but Strictly Speaking there isn’t.

Maybe we should understand it this way. Then the interpretation of Quasi-Realism is that according to it, there aren’t really any moral properties, even though it is fine to speak as if there are. There are some contexts in which this makes perfectly good sense. It is fine to speak, in certain contexts, as if there were a Santa Claus, even though there isn’t; and perhaps it is fine to speak as if there were an average American woman, even though there isn’t one. Some ways of thinking about ontology encourage this sort of distinction. Quine suggested that the items in our true ontology are the ones we are prepared to quantify over when we are in a serious philosophical mood, and not simply speaking with the vulgar. Those who like Quine’s approach might then think of Quasi-Realists as metaethicists who are happy to speak with the vulgar, and who (at least claim to) have shown that there is no harm in doing so, but who do not really believe in moral properties. In that case, it is perfectly sensible also for Quasi-Realists to deny that there is, really, any metaphysical necessitation to explain, when it comes to moral supervenience. They could think of supervenience as articulating a rule, but not a truth. And they can give an explanation for why we do and should follow the rule, but be content to have no explanation for what they could say only a Robust Realist believes.
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Here is why I am not very happy with this suggestion. Ask a Quasi-Realist whether slavery is unjust and there is no doubt what answer you’ll get. Of course slavery is unjust, what a question! We’re not error theorists! We’re fine upstanding moralizers!

Now if we can use the minimalist schema

\[ x \text{ has the property of being } F \text{ iff } x \text{ is } F \]

we can conclude that slavery has the property of being unjust. No further premise is needed—just the premise that slavery is unjust along with the minimalist schema. A Quasi-Realist could try taking it back. He could deny that slavery is unjust, or at least decline to assert it. But this looks like the abandonment of Quasi-Realism. So instead, the Quasi-Realist could wait until a serious philosophical moment, when he’s wearing his serious metaphysicians hat, and then take it all back. “Slavery is not really unjust, you know—I mean, at least, it is not the case that slavery is unjust, not to say that it is just, either. It’s just okay to speak like that, with the vulgar.”

But again, this looks like the abandonment of the position in favor of error theory. (Most error theorists think it’s fine to say the false things that so many ordinary moralizers say.)

So, finally, a Quasi-Realist could decline to use the minimalist schema. And that might not be so bad. She could say, “The minimalist schema is fine for non-committal talk of properties, but do not mistake that talk for serious metaphysical talk of serious metaphysical properties. It takes more than the use of a grammatical predicate to commit us to the serious metaphysical properties.” I must admit that I sometimes think this is right. Oh, you meant, properties; I thought you just meant properties. Only I have the sinking feeling that we don’t know what this means. What, exactly, is the difference? What else is the robust metaphysical sort of property, besides what we are committed to just by the minimalist schema along with the use of the grammatical predicate?

Well, my own Explanation Explanation might answer that question. It might be that the robust metaphysical properties are precisely the ones that pull their own weight in certain kinds of explanations. They are the ones that appear in the best explanation of the beliefs and assertions that have them (the properties) in their contents. Then Quasi-Realists are distinguished precisely by their view that moral properties are not robust and metaphysical in exactly this sense. That would be gratifying.

But now we are no longer taking the first fork I mentioned. We are taking the second fork. The criterion for a property’s being metaphysically significant and robust is the role it plays in the explanation of our beliefs about it. So, there are just two kinds of properties. The claim is now that the lightweight kind have some especially undemanding status when it comes
to explanations. The claim is no longer that these properties do not really exist. Of course they exist!

That is why I am not comfortable on the first fork. But my reasons are far from decisive, and the first fork should still be regarded as potentially open. Now I’ll turn to the second fork. On this fork, the interpretation of my Explanation Explanation would be this:

the criterion for whether a property is (say) robust is whether it is needed to explain beliefs that involve it. Only robust property match-ups demand explanations.

This idea seems very close to a satisfying answer to our question. When a property is not robust, call it lightweight. What makes a property lightweight is that it does not participate in a certain central sort of explanation. It is, so to speak, a loose cog in the metaphysical explanatory machinery. So it is not too surprising that its correlations and necessitations don’t themselves have any metaphysical explanation. Interactions between the flickering images on the cinema screen typically have storyline explanations when those images are taken to be (or represent) characters in a narrative, but they do not really interact with one another causally. And lightweight properties may be necessarily correlated with robust natural ones, but in the spirit of minimalist property talk we might feel that they do not really bear metaphysical relations to one another.

Suggestive, but not really satisfying, I think. What we know about lightweight properties is that they play no role in the best explanation of what it is to have beliefs about them. Why should this entail that necessary connections between them and robust properties need no explanation? We are in the right neighborhood for an explanation (for why there is no explanation) but I don’t see how to reach the destination. Yes, lightweight properties (by definition) do not carry explanatory weight of a certain kind, but why don’t their striking necessary match-ups with moral properties need an explanation?\(^\text{13}\)

I am afraid I do not have anything conclusive to say about the overall problem. I do have a suggestive and I think interesting analogy, so I will close with that.

\(^{13}\) I reached just this point, too, in Dreier (2012). That paper is also about the issue of explaining the quasi-real, the case in point being what Sharon Street calls the cosmic coincidence between our normative beliefs and the normative truth. A good and satisfying answer to the problem raised in this essay would, I am confident, give a fully satisfying answer to the problem raised in that one.
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11.7 EXPLANATIONS IN FICTIONS: AN ANALOGY

In Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels, the hero frequently finds himself in a perilous, almost hopeless situation. Swimming a tank of killer sharks, strapped to a table with the prospect of being split in two by a laser, his chances of escape are slim. And yet, he escapes, each time. Over and over he needs a great stroke of luck, or each of a series of events to fall just his way, if he is to get out of the deadly jam, and over and over he just manages to pull it off. What an astounding sequence of coincidences! There must be some explanation. I wonder what it could be. Do the gods smile upon 007? Are there unseen forces guiding the apparently random events? No, of course not. It is no part of the stories that he is protected by supernatural forces. Of course, Bond possesses unusual physical prowess, unrivaled will power, and a steely constitution. But his skin-of-the-teeth escapes are still largely a matter of luck, which is to say, they have no overall explanation.

Or do they? Maybe there is this explanation: Ian Fleming needs Bond for the next novel. And his books would be dull if Bond never got into apparently impossible jams. So, Fleming’s devices require this cosmic coincidence of escapes. Maybe that explains them.

No, that’s not right. Ian Fleming’s literary (and commercial) needs do not explain Bond’s narrow escapes. Fleming does not even exist in Bond’s world! It is easy to confuse two questions, but they really are two separate questions. One is a question about James Bond and his predicaments. The other is a question about the existence of stories of a certain kind. If we use “[F]” as the in the fiction operator, as e.g., in Lewis (1978), we can distinguish the questions as follows:

1. [F] why does Bond escape?
2. Why [F] does Bond escape?

The first question can’t be answered with facts about Ian Fleming, since Fleming does not exist in the fiction and so cannot be part of any explanation. Facts about Fleming can answer the second question, of course. The first question, presumably, has no answer at all. It’s just luck. (I suppose that’s an answer; I mean, there is no explanation for Bond’s amazing series of escapes.) The second question gets an answer which, properly understood, helps us feel better about the lack of any answer to the first question.

Sometimes it is very important to a story that a series of odd events turns out to have a satisfying explanation. Suppose you read a detective story saturated by strange clues, like the fact that each victim was wearing a striped hat, that the banks were robbed only on Tuesday mornings, or
that the sergeant in charge of the case and the butler’s sister each grew up in Swansea and later moved to Market Basing. In the end, it turns out that these coincidences have no significance at all. They were just coincidences. This is a terrible detective story. But, that’s because of the conventions of detective fiction—silly red herrings are not playing fair. As a general rule, there can be pure unexplained coincidences in stories if they advance the plot or add entertaining elements.

Perhaps the analogy is clear enough. The fictional world of James Bond is like the “projected” world of moral facts, according to Quasi-Realism. Things happen in this image created by our words and thoughts; the things themselves do not depend in any ordinary causal or counterfactual way on us (we don’t even exist in most fictional worlds), but the structure of the stories does. There is no explanation for Bond’s escapes, or the necessary connection between the moral and the natural. There is an explanation for why there is a story in which Bond is so lucky, and there is an explanation for why we have an expressive practice in which our moral property attributions are tied to the natural properties of things. The explanations we get are not explanations of the object-level phenomena, of course, but maybe they can relieve us of the felt need for such an explanation.

Expressivists accuse Robust Realists of lacking an explanation for a striking metaphysical necessity, the one entailed by the supervenience of the moral on the natural. They seem to be right. But, it turns out, they are in the same boat. The explanations they can offer are explanations for something else, more like explaining why Ian Fleming wrote a story in a certain way than like explaining why a secret agent escaped. If they are Quasi-Realists, expressivists must admit the existence of the explanandum. They can claim that it is a quasi-explanandum, but then the question is why this is supposed to help. Why do quasi-explananda need no real explanation? Because being Quasi-Real is not a way of being real? Or because Quasi-Properties are explanatorily lightweight, in that they do not bear explanatory weight, and so are explanatorily undemanding, in that their connections do not need explanation? I have unfortunately been unable to resolve this complicated question. I hope I have at least made it look like a serious question.

References

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