
Critical Notice

J.L. MACKIE, *Persons and Values*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1985.
Pp. vii + 256.

TED HONDERICH, ed., *Morality and Objectivity*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1985. Pp. viii + 228.

I. Introduction

J.L. Mackie, who died in 1981 at the age of sixty-four, wrote on a wide variety of topics. In six books (written between 1973 and 1981) and over 90 articles (written from 1947 onward) he has written on: truth and the logical paradoxes, induction, confirmation, causation, primary and secondary qualities, arguments for and against the existence of God, ethics, Hume's moral theory, personal identity, philosophy of law, and sociobiology.

The two books under review concern Mackie's work on moral philosophy. *Persons and Values* is a collection of his articles on the subject (it is the companion volume to *Logic and Knowledge*, a collection of his articles on metaphysics and epistemology), and *Morality and Objectivity* is a collection of articles on moral philosophy written in his honor.

Seven of the nineteen papers in *Persons and Values* have not been published before. All but two were written after 1970. The volume contains articles on personal identity, responsibility, rights and utility, the relevance of sociobiology to moral theory, Dworkin's philosophy of law, aesthetics, and retribution. Although many of the articles are insightful, none of them is, or will be, as influential as Mackie's work in the first chapter of his book *Ethics*¹ on the topic of moral realism. It would have been worthwhile to have that chapter included in the collection.

Because the articles in the collection deal with a very wide variety of issues, none of which represents Mackie's main contribution to moral

1 J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin 1977)

philosophy, I shall focus my attention in the remainder of this notice on Mackie's work on moral realism.

Morality and Objectivity contains nine essays written as a tribute to Mackie. Five of these address the issue of moral realism. Simon Blackburn, R.M. Hare, S.L. Hurley, John McDowell, and Bernard Williams each have essays on that topic. The remaining four essays address other issues. Philippa Foot defends the significance of the do/allow and intend/foresee distinctions for morality. Steven Lukes criticizes Mackie's account of the object and conditions of morality. Amartya Sen defends the view that morality should be concerned with promoting people's capabilities. And David Wiggins clarifies the notion of need and defends the importance of need satisfaction for morality. There are also two short memorial addresses in honor of Mackie.

The two most interesting contributions to this second volume are, I think, those of Blackburn and McDowell. I shall discuss these below.

II Mackie's Error Theory of Morality

With respect to his work in moral philosophy, Mackie will be best remembered for the articulation and defense of the now current *ontological* form of moral anti-realism. Prior to the publication of his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* the only form of moral anti-realism that was systematically discussed was *non-cognitivism*, which is the *semantic* thesis that there are no objective moral concepts or propositions (i.e., no moral concepts or propositions the satisfaction or truth of which is independent of the attitudes and practices of mental beings). According to moral non-cognitivism moral utterances do not express propositions, make claims, or describe the world. The role of moral utterances is rather to express attitudes, evoke attitudes, issue commands, or some other non-descriptive activity. Non-cognitivism is a very strong form of moral anti-realism, for it claims, not only that there are no objective moral facts, but also that it is impossible to even *purport* to describe such facts. It claims, that is, not only that no objective moral proposition is true, but also that there are no objective moral propositions at all. The very idea of there being objective moral facts is, it claims, profoundly confused.

The appearance in 1977 of Mackie's *Ethics*, and of Gilbert Harman's *The Nature of Morality*,² fundamentally changed the moral realism debate. Instead of focusing on the semantic form of anti-realism (i.e., non-

2 Gilbert Harman, *The Nature of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press 1977)

cognitivism), they focused on the ontological form, which denies only that there are objective moral facts, without denying that there are objective moral propositions. Both Mackie and Harman present anti-realist arguments that claim that the best explanation of moral phenomena (that people have moral views, feel guilt etc.) will *not* postulate any objective moral facts, and conclude that there are no such facts. Unlike non-cognitivism, this defense of anti-realism does not rest solely on armchair conceptual analysis. It depends on what assumptions will in fact best explain the empirical phenomena.

Mackie argues in favor of an 'error theory' of morality, according to which we have genuine beliefs in objective rightness and wrongness, but all such beliefs are false. He accepts the non-naturalistic semantic thesis that the ordinary meaning of moral utterances involves a claim to the existence of objective and intrinsically motivating moral facts, but he denies that there are any such facts. Given that there is widespread belief in such facts, he obviously owes us an account of how these false beliefs came about. He claims that the acquisition of beliefs in objective rightness and wrongness is best explained in terms of various psychological and sociological factors rather than in terms of the apprehension of objective moral facts. It seems plausible, he suggests (following Hume), that people have a tendency to objectify their moral attitudes by attributing moral features to the world on the basis of these attitudes. Just as we have a tendency to attribute an ontological uncertainty to the outcome of a roll of a die on the basis of an epistemic uncertainty, we also have a tendency to attribute objective rightness and wrongness to actions on the basis of our positive and negative moral attitudes. The objectification of our moral attitudes increases the apparent authority of our moral norms, and thereby facilitates the social regulation of individual conduct.

In a nut shell, Mackie argues that there are objectively prescriptive moral propositions and concepts (and that therefore non-cognitivism is false), but denies that in our world there are any corresponding moral facts (all such propositions are false). Just as the best explanation of god phenomena (beliefs in gods, etc.), or witch phenomena will not posit gods or witches, so too the best explanation of moral phenomena will not, he argues, posit objectively prescriptive moral facts.

III Inference to and from the Best Explanation

On the face of it, resting the case against moral realism on the largely empirical question of what is entailed by the best explanation of the empirical phenomena is the only reasonable stance to take. The earlier non-cognitivism rests on an excessively narrow conception of what

it takes to be descriptive (some sort of verificationism). There are, however, some problems lurking here.

First, there is a question concerning the epistemic relevance of appeals to what is, or is not, entailed by the best explanation. In the philosophy of science, the principle of inference *to* the best explanation – i.e., the principle that we should believe *all* those propositions entailed by the best explanation of the empirical phenomena – is a hotly debated principle. In general, scientific realists accept it,³ and strict empiricists reject it.⁴ Strict empiricists hold that the only propositions we should believe are those that are directly supported by observational evidence. The mere fact that a proposition is part of our best explanatory theory is, they claim, no reason to believe it – although it may be useful to treat it as if it were true.

In moral theory it is the converse of the principle of inference to the best explanation that is debated. This principle – call it ‘the principle of inference *from* the best explanation’ – asserts that we should believe *only* (as opposed to *all*) those propositions that are entailed by the best explanation. According to this principle, one should not believe any proposition the negation of which is entailed by the best explanation, nor any proposition on which the best explanation is silent (neither it nor its negation being entailed by the best explanation). It does not, however, tell us to believe all propositions entailed by the best explanation.

Most moral anti-realists accept this principle, but many moral realists (e.g., Thomas Nagel⁵) deny it. One needs to be careful here, because the status of the principle of inference from the best explanation depends crucially on the criteria deemed relevant for assessing explanations. Many moral realists, for example, might deny the relevance for normative matters of the best *scientific* explanation (judged in terms of predictive power, simplicity, etc.⁶), but might accept the relevance of the best *interpretive* explanation (judged in terms of empathy, ‘*verstehen*,’ and the like).

3 See, for example, Richard Boyd, ‘Observation, Explanatory Power, and Simplicity: Toward a Non-Humean Account,’ in Peter Achinstein and Owen Hannaway, eds., *Observation, Experiment, and Hypothesis in Modern Physical Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1985).

4 See, for example, Bas van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1980).

5 Thomas Nagel, ‘The Limits of Objectivity,’ in S. McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lecture on Human Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980), 114

6 Of course, the scientific criteria are relatively vague and not uncontroversial, but that is not of immediate relevance here.

So, there is the question of whether inference from the best explanation of *some sort* (scientific or otherwise) is an appropriate way to settle the moral realism issue. Even if it is, there is the further question of what sort of criteria for explanations – scientific or other – are relevant for the issue. These are deeply controversial epistemic issues. In what follows I shall simply assume the appropriateness of appealing to the principle of inference from the best *scientific* explanation, and examine its implications for the moral realism issue.

IV Non-Naturalistic Realism

Moral realists claim that there are objective moral facts. But exactly what sort of facts are these supposed to be? *Naturalistic* moral realists claim that there are objective *natural* moral facts, whereas *non-naturalistic* moral realists claim that there are objective *non-natural* moral facts. The distinction between natural and non-natural facts is not perfectly clear, but for the present purposes let us understand natural facts to be facts that play, or are reducible to facts that have, some sort of *causal role*.

In the above sense of naturalness, the best scientific explanation *cannot* entail that there are non-natural facts. A good scientific explanation is ontologically parsimonious (invokes Occam's razor), and posits only facts that have a causal role.⁷ Thus, any fact posited by the best scientific explanation is ipso facto a natural fact. No matter how weird, or unlike anything that *current* science posits, if the best scientific theory of human behaviour ends up explaining moral phenomena in terms of the apprehension by means of a weird, special moral faculty of weird objective moral properties, then those properties are natural properties, and the apprehension is a causal process.

So a person who accepts the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation – i.e., the epistemic principle that it is rational to believe a proposition only if it is entailed by the best scientific explanation – *cannot* consistently have an open mind about the possibility of there being non-natural moral facts. The only form of moral realism open to those who accept that epistemic principle is naturalistic moral realism. Contrapositively, non-naturalistic moral realists must reject the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation. To a very large extent, then, the debate about non-naturalistic moral realism is,

7 What about numbers? Will they be posited by the best scientific explanation? Do they have a causal role? This is a controversial issue, but I would argue in the negative to both questions. The best contemporary discussion of this issue is, of course, Hartry Field's *Science Without Numbers* (Princeton: University Press 1980).

or at least should be, a debate about the status of the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation.⁸

Mackie's rejection of non-naturalistic moral realism, we can now see, follows directly from his acceptance of the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation. His claim that the best scientific explanation of the moral phenomena will not posit objective moral facts is *irrelevant* to the non-naturalism debate. Good scientific explanations never postulate non-natural facts – no matter what the phenomena are like. Mackie's claims about what sorts of facts will be postulated by the best scientific explanation are rather (although Mackie was not clear about this) part of an argument against *naturalistic* moral realism. According to Mackie, objective moral facts – even of the naturalistic sort – are queer (unlike anything current science recognizes). Since he holds that moral phenomena can be adequately explained without invoking such facts, he denies that there are any. As we shall now see, however, it is not obvious that objective moral facts are weird.

V Naturalistic Realism

Because we are here assuming (without argument) the appropriateness of the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation, we are left with two options: moral anti-realism and naturalistic moral realism.⁹ Both agree that there are no non-natural moral facts. They disagree, however, as to whether there are any objective natural moral facts.

It is uncontroversial, of course, that there are some kind of natural moral facts. People have moral views, communities have moral practices, and so on. But these are subjective and intersubjective facts. The controversial issue concerns the question of whether there are any *objective*, natural moral facts, i.e., natural moral facts that in some

8 For further discussion of this point, see: Gilbert Harman, 'Is There a Single True Morality?', in David Copp and David Zimmerman, *Morality, Reason, and Truth* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld 1984); Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, 'Moral Theory and Explanatory Impotence,' forthcoming in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*; and Warren Quinn, 'Truth and Explanation in Ethics,' *Ethics* 96 (1986), 524-44.

9 Defenses of naturalist moral realism have been given by: Gilbert Harman, *The Nature of Morality*, ch. 4; Nicholas L. Sturgeon, 'Moral Explanations,' in David Copp and David Zimmerman, eds., *Morality, Reason, and Truth* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld 1984); Peter Railton, 'Moral Realism,' *The Philosophical Review* 95 (1986), 163-207; and John Campbell and Robert Pargetter, 'Goodness and Fragility,' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (1986), 155-65.

appropriate sense are independent of the beliefs, desires, practices, etc. of mental beings.

Here we need to distinguish between two different naturalistic notions of moral properties and facts. On the *primary quality model*, possession of a moral property does not conceptually entail anything about how mental beings would be affected by its presence – just as having a certain shape does not *conceptually* entail anything about what subjective states it would produce if placed in front of us. On the *secondary quality model* possession of a moral property just consists in (is conceptually equivalent to) the disposition to produce certain specified sorts of subjective states in specified sorts of beings under specified conditions – just as being red just consists in (is conceptually equivalent to) having the disposition to produce certain sorts of perceptions in those who view it under ‘normal’ conditions. On the primary quality model for any specified subjective response, any sort of being, and any specified conditions, it is conceptually contingent whether possession of the moral property would bring about the specified response from the specified sort of being under the specified conditions. For the secondary quality model, on the other hand, there are certain responses, sorts of being, conditions (etc.) for which it is conceptually necessary that the response would be brought about in beings of the specified sort under the specified conditions. On the secondary model, that is just what it is for something to have the property.¹⁰

Primary quality model states of affairs are *strongly objective*, in the sense that whether or not they obtain is conceptually independent both of what responses people *actually have* and of what responses they *would have* under hypothetical conditions (as governed by the laws of nature). Secondary quality model states of affairs, on the other hand, are only *weakly objective*, in the sense that whether or not they obtain is not determined by what responses people *actually have*, but is determined by what responses they *would have* under specified conditions. The possibility of universal mistake under the actual conditions is the element of objectivity in the secondary quality model.

In his paper ‘Values and Secondary Qualities’ John McDowell criticizes Mackie for not giving serious consideration to the secondary quality model. Mackie assumes, McDowell points out, that secondary

10 Note that for the present purposes it doesn’t matter whether my characterization of the distinction between the two models captures the historical distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Nor does it matter whether shape facts and color facts are primary quality model and secondary quality model facts respectively. All that matters is that there is a genuine distinction between the two models.

qualities are mere creations of the mind, and not really in the world.¹¹ Consequently Mackie thinks that the secondary quality model is not a viable option for a moral realist. As McDowell notes, however, the mere fact that something is a disposition to produce certain subjective states does not entail that it is not real. Colors are just as real as shapes. The mere fact that we could explain our color experiences without appealing to colors as ontological categories in no way undermines the reality of colors. Indeed, when combined with an understanding of colors as dispositions to produce certain sorts of experiences, our best explanatory theory will *entail* that there are colors. McDowell's point about the reality of secondary qualities is correct, but it does not undermine Mackie's argument against moral realism. For Mackie only argues against the sort of moral realism implicit in *ordinary* moral claims. And that sort of realism asserts that there are strongly objective moral facts (i.e., facts that are conceptually independent of both our actual and our hypothetical responses). The secondary quality model is not a viable option for 'ordinary' moral realism, because it does not yield the requisite strong objectivity. So, Mackie's argument against ordinary moral realism stands.

Still, this leaves the question of whether some weaker form of moral realism is plausible. As McDowell points out, the secondary quality model is much more promising for the moral realist than the primary quality model. To be distinct from moral anti-realism, the moral properties posited by primary quality model realists must be quite unlike anything that current science recognizes (for moral anti-realists recognize such properties). Furthermore, since primary quality model moral realists hold that moral properties do, as a matter of fact – but not of conceptual necessity – have a disposition to produce moral attitudes, they must also posit a receptive mechanism that apprehends such moral facts. Thus, both primary quality-like moral facts and the corresponding receptive mechanism will be weird, in that they will be unlike anything that current science recognizes.¹² Of course, that is no guarantee that there are no such things. Science is constantly positing new and initially quite weird entities and properties (e.g., electrons, positrons, and quarks). The weakness of the primary quality model is not that

11 McDowell takes Mackie's views about secondary qualities from Mackie's *Hume's Moral Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1980), 51-2, and from Mackie's *Problems from Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976), 15-20.

12 The receptive mechanism might, but need not, involve input channels other than the usual five senses. Either way, the manner in which the mechanism processes its input would be totally unlike anything currently posited by science.

we couldn't have good scientific reasons to believe in moral facts and faculties of that sort, but rather that we *currently* have no reason to believe there are such things. As Mackie argues, it seems highly plausible that we can, and will continue to be able to, adequately explain moral phenomena solely in terms of familiar sorts of biological, psychological, and sociological factors.

On the naturalistic secondary quality model, on the other hand, there is no need to posit weird properties or receptive mechanisms. Moral properties on this model just are certain sorts of dispositions (of actions, etc.) to produce certain sorts of responses in certain sorts of beings under certain sorts of conditions. For example, on a clearly inadequate, but nonetheless illustrative analysis, to say that an action is morally wrong is conceptually equivalent to saying that given full and vivid empirical information about the action and the circumstances a homo sapiens would on careful reflection disapprove of the action. On the secondary quality model a moral property is a functional property: it is the property of instantiating *whatever* non-functional property fills a specified functional (e.g. causal) role. Consequently, although it is a contingent matter as to which properties fill the specified role, no special receptive mechanism is required to answer that question. It is simply a matter of empirically investigating which nonfunctional properties (such as social welfare maximization), if any, fill the specified role.¹³

So far we have been considering the *causal* secondary quality model, according to which a moral property is a property of instantiating whatever non-functional property plays a specified *causal role* in bringing about moral phenomena. McDowell, however, wants to defend the *normative* secondary quality model, according to which a moral property is whatever non-functional property plays a specified *normative role* with respect to moral phenomena. For example, moral wrongness might be the property of instantiating whatever non-functional property *merits* a certain sort of disapproval (i.e., for which a certain sort of disapproval is *appropriate*). Because McDowell holds that only the normative model can make suitable sense of moral activities, he holds that only it can provide a satisfactory explanation of moral phenomena, and he therefore rejects the causal model.

Thus, although the causal model may be used to defend a realism about some sorts of moral facts, it may be reasonably objected that such

¹³ Campbell and Pargetter defend at length the secondary quality model (although not under that title) in 'Goodness and Fragility.' Gilbert Harman's functional account in ch. 4 of *The Nature of Morality* is also a secondary quality model.

facts are not the sort of facts under dispute. The relevant sorts of facts, McDowell claims, are normative model facts. Here we must distinguish between naturalistic and non-naturalistic normative models.

If merit and appropriateness are understood naturalistically, that is, as being relative to standards accepted by individuals or communities, it is uncontroversial that there are such facts. A naturalistic normative model might, for example, equate wrongness for X with the property of being whatever first-order property is necessary and sufficient according to the standards accepted by X to merit a certain form of disapproval. This, however, is extremely close to the causal model. For, to say that a property is necessary and sufficient to merit a certain form of disapproval according to the standards accepted by X is roughly to say that it is necessary and sufficient to produce a reaction of disapproval in X under certain sorts of conditions. Something merits a certain reaction according to one's standards roughly just in case one would have that reaction under certain sorts of conditions. For brevity I shall therefore ignore the naturalistic normative model.

If, on the other hand, appropriateness and merit are understood non-naturalistically, then the existence of normative model facts is highly controversial. Those who accept the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation will deny that there are any such facts. Thus, the non-naturalistic normative model is not an option for those who accept the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation.

Not surprisingly, although McDowell seems to accept the principle of inference from the best explanation *of some sort*, he explicitly denies that the only relevant criteria for assessing explanations are the (narrow, causal) scientific criteria. A satisfactory explanation of moral phenomena must, he holds, help us 'understand ourselves' and 'make sense' of our activities (118-20). Once again we come back to the status of the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation. Given that we are assuming the appropriateness of this principle, we must part company with McDowell and reject the non-naturalistic normative secondary quality model.

The strength of the naturalistic secondary quality model is that it takes the weirdness out of moral realism. Of course, as Mackie has argued, the ordinary meaning of moral statements has a non-naturalistic component. So, any naturalistic understanding of moral properties is a *reforming* conception. This is not an objection to the naturalistic project, as long it is properly understood. If – as the scientific world-view tells us – there are no non-natural moral facts, then we should turn our attention to related natural moral facts.

In his paper 'Errors and the Phenomenology of Value' Simon Blackburn argues against the secondary quality model of moral facts on the

grounds that there are important differences between moral facts and secondary quality facts. He correctly points out the following differences between *color* facts and moral facts: the receptive mechanisms of color facts are reasonably well known, but there do not seem to be any special receptive mechanisms for moral facts; our color detecting abilities can deteriorate overnight, but not our moral status detecting abilities; we become immediately aware of any changes in our color detecting abilities, but not so for our moral status detecting abilities; and there is species wide agreement on what things are what colors, but not for what things have what moral status. These *are* differences between *color* facts and secondary quality model moral facts, but they in no way undermine the model. The secondary quality model claims *only* that moral facts are like color facts in that they both just consist in certain sorts of dispositions to produce certain sorts of subjective responses under certain sorts of conditions. None of the above differences cast doubt on that similarity. They only show that there are important differences between color facts and moral facts – not that moral facts are not of the secondary quality model type.

Blackburn goes on to claim that it is conceptually necessary (a criterion of linguistic competence) that moral facts supervene on natural ones, but not conceptually necessary that secondary qualities (such as colors) supervene on primary qualities. I disagree. At a common sense level *neither* supervenience thesis, I would argue, is conceptually necessary. And at a reflective level, *both* supervenience theses, I would argue, can be understood in an important way that makes them conceptually necessary. Indeed, the secondary quality models of moral facts and of color facts I have suggested do just that. In any case, even if there were differences in this regard between moral facts and color facts, it would in no way undermine the secondary quality model of moral facts. Again, the claim is not that there are no differences between color facts and moral facts, but only that moral facts can be usefully understood as naturalistic secondary quality model facts. So understood, the supervenience of moral facts on natural facts is conceptually necessary, as Blackburn says it is. Admittedly, such a conception is reformist (diverges from the common sense understanding), but that has already been recognized.

Finally, Blackburn claims that morality is intrinsically motivating in the sense that it is not conceptually possible for someone to be indifferent to the apprehended moral status of things. He argues that the secondary quality model of moral facts is inadequate because it does not capture this feature of morality. The claim that the apprehension of moral facts is intrinsically motivating is, however, a highly controversial claim. It is the core of the debate between internalists

and externalists.¹⁴ And even if we grant that intrinsic motivation is part of our *common sense* understanding of morality, it may be an aspect of morality that is illusory, and therefore best abandoned by a reforming conception. In any case, the secondary quality model *is capable* of making moral facts intrinsically motivating. Moral properties simply have to be understood as whatever first-order properties produce under certain conditions *a certain sort of motivation* (and other sorts of reactions) in certain sorts of beings.

Blackburn's criticism of the secondary quality model, I conclude, fails to refute it.

VI Naturalistic Secondary Quality Model Moral Realism

Where are we then? We are assuming the appropriateness of the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation. This precludes any form of non-naturalistic realism. We have distinguished between two types of naturalistic moral realism: the primary quality model and the secondary quality model. Mackie has effectively – but not conclusively – argued against there being objective moral facts on the primary quality model. This leaves us with the secondary quality model. The question, then, is: Are there any objective moral facts of the causal secondary quality model type?

Before this question can be addressed, we need a careful specification of the exact roles that are supposed to be constitutive of moral properties. Clearly, the plausibility of secondary quality moral realism's claim that there is some first-order property that plays a certain role depends on the role in question. It may be relatively uncontroversial, for example, that *for each individual* there is some first-order property that is causally necessary and sufficient under certain conditions to produce a certain form of disapproval in that person. It is highly unlikely (or at least highly controversial), however, that there is a first-order property that for *all 'cognitively normal' homo sapiens* is causally necessary and sufficient to produce under certain conditions a certain sort of disapproval. There is just too much variability among cultures – and among people within cultures – for any one first-order property to have this effect on all *homo sapiens*.

If this is right, then some forms of secondary quality model moral realism are true, and others are not. It all depends on the sorts of

¹⁴ See, for example, William Frankena, 'Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy,' in A.I. Melden, ed., *Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 1958).

beings, conditions, and responses that are specified by the model. Of course, non-naturalistic moral realists will think that such issues, although not without some interest, are but minor moral issues compared with questions about the nature of non-natural moral facts. But, if, as we have assumed, we accept the principle of inference from the best scientific explanation, we must deny that there are any non-natural facts, and so natural moral facts are the most important moral facts there are.

VII Conclusion

The principle of inference from the best scientific explanation, which leads to a rejection of non-naturalistic moral realism, is not an uncontroversial principle. Given that it plays a central role in the moral realism debate, it deserves more explicit attention than it has been given. Independently of whether it is accepted, however, *some* form of naturalistic secondary quality moral realism is plausible; but non-naturalist moral realists are not likely to be impressed by the existence of such mundane facts. The task confronting the naturalistic, secondary quality model realist is to formulate a clear model, show that there are such facts, and to convince us that we should care about them.¹⁵

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