

METAPHYSICAL SUPERNATURALISM AND MORALLY WORTHY ACTIONS

BRUNO NIEDERBACHER SJ

University of Innsbruck

Abstract. This article is an attempt to solve the question whether there is a version of metaphysical supernaturalism that grants both: first, that moral facts depend in a metaphysical strong way on God, and second, that agnostics and atheists are nevertheless able to perform morally worthy actions. The solution that is developed in this paper builds on a distinction between the proximate and the remote goodmakers of actions. It is argued that the proximate goodmakers of actions can be cognized also by the non-believer and that such knowledge or justified belief of the proximate goodmakers might be sufficient to perform morally worthy actions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Metaphysical Supernaturalism in Metaethics is a position according to which moral properties depend metaphysically on supernatural properties and moral facts depend metaphysically on supernatural facts. Proponents of such accounts of moral properties often insist that their claims are sheerly metaphysical and pertain only to the nature of moral values. They claim that these metaphysical claims do not imply that agnostics or atheists would be unable to perform morally worthy actions or be unable to have justified true beliefs about which actions are right or wrong. William Alston writes:

What makes this table a meter in length is not its conformity to a Platonic essence but its conformity to a certain existing individual [footnote omitted]. Similarly, on the present view, what ultimately makes an act

of love a good thing is not its conformity to some general principle but its conformity to, or approximation to, God, Who is both the ultimate source of the existence of things and the supreme standard by reference to which they are to be assessed. [...] the view does not have the alleged epistemological implications. [...] The particularist is free to recognize that God has so constructed us and our environment that we are led to form sound value judgments under various circumstances without tracing them back to the ultimate standard. Analogously, we are so constructed and so situated as to be able to form true and useful opinions about water without getting so far as to discern its ultimate chemical or physical constitution, without knowing what makes it water. (Alston 1990: 320-322)¹

However, this thesis might be challenged. One might contend that, in order to act in a morally worthy way, one ought to act for the right reasons. Let us call this the Right Reasons View. Acting for the right reasons implies having some grasp of these reasons. Moreover, having some grasp of these reasons implies not only having justified true moral beliefs such as *I ought to keep my promise*, but also having justified true beliefs about, or even an understanding of, *why* one ought to keep one's promise; that is, one must have true justified beliefs about, or even understanding of, what makes the action morally right or wrong. In this sense Alison Hills writes that, in order to perform a morally worthy action, 'you need to act for the reasons that make your action right' (Hills 2009: 117). Thus, the Right Reasons View is a normative claim according to which an agent's action *a* is morally worthy if and only if

- (i) it is right to perform *a*;
- (ii) the agent has the justified belief that it is right to perform *a*;
- (iii) the agent has the justified true belief that, or even an understanding of why, *a* is made right by feature *F*;
- (iv) the agent acts because of (ii) and (iii).

Now, if it is a theistic fact that makes actions right or good, or if a theistic fact is an essential part of what makes actions right or good, it would follow that people who do not believe in this fact could not act in a morally worthy way. Thus, the challenger would say: If Metaphysical Supernaturalism is true, then a person can perform morally worthy

¹ See also Adams 1999: 355: 'The crucial point is that my theory [...] does not require us to know anything about God, as such, before we can have knowledge, or adequately grounded belief, in ethics.'

actions only if that person has some specific theistic beliefs. Metaphysical Supernaturalism plus the Right Reasons View would thus have strong epistemological implications.

Of course, the thesis that an agent must have a grasp of what we might call the ‘goodmaker’ of her action in order for that action to be morally worthy is contentious, at least when stated in this general way. However, in what follows I will – for the sake of argument – assume the truth of this thesis. And I will examine whether – given the Right Reasons View – there is a kind of Metaethical Supernaturalism which grants both: (i) that moral values depend in a metaphysically strong way on God, and (ii) that agnostics and atheists are nevertheless able to perform morally worthy actions.

II. PRESUPPOSITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

In what follows I will assume some version of Metaethical Cognitivism plus Moral Realism. I will presuppose that some moral utterances are moral assertions, that moral assertions are expressions of moral beliefs, that moral beliefs – or better: their propositional content – are truth-bearers, and that true moral propositions are made true by moral facts. Moreover, it might be helpful to introduce a few distinctions:

(1) I will distinguish first between (i) the ‘goodmaker’ of an action, (ii) the ‘truthmaker’ of a moral proposition, and (iii) the ‘justifiers’ of a moral belief:

- (i) The goodmaker of an action is the (non-moral) property or the set of (non-moral) properties of the action that make it morally good. For example, what makes Fred’s action of keeping his promise to Emma morally obligatory? One’s answer to this question will, of course, depend on the normative theory one favours. A Utilitarian would say: It is the property of maximizing pleasure on earth that makes the action morally obligatory. A Kantian would perhaps say: It is the property of regarding the other as an end and not merely as a means that makes the action morally obligatory. An Aristotelian Perfectionist might say: It is the property of contributing to human flourishing that makes the action morally obligatory. And a Divine Command Theorist might say: It is the property of being commanded by the loving God that makes the action morally obligatory.

- (ii) The goodmaker of an action has to be distinguished from the truthmaker of a moral proposition. What makes true the moral proposition that Fred's action of keeping his promise is morally obligatory? Proponents of Metaethical Naturalism think that Fred's belief is made true by a natural fact, say by the fact that keeping his promise maximizes pleasure, or contributes to human flourishing, etc. However, given that I favour a version of Non-Naturalism, I claim that Fred's belief that he ought to keep his promise is made true by the moral fact that he ought to keep his promise. The fact that his promise-keeping maximizes pleasure, or contributes to human flourishing, etc., is a different fact.
- (iii) The goodmaker of an action has to be distinguished, at least in principle, from the grounds or reasons that justify moral beliefs. What justifies Fred's moral belief that keeping his promise is morally obligatory? A foundationalist might say: Fred's moral belief that he ought to keep this particular promise to Emma is justified by, among other beliefs, his belief that one ought *prima facie* to keep one's promises, a belief that is self-evident for Fred. A coherentist might answer: Fred's moral belief is justified by cohering with his moral belief-system. And a virtue reliabilist could say: Fred's moral belief is justified by being generated by the reliable cognitive moral faculty traditionally called 'phronesis'.

The distinction between the goodmaker of an action and the epistemic ground or reason for a moral belief is sometimes overlooked. One reason for this is that the goodmaker of the action might feature in any beliefs which might feature in the justification of the target moral belief. For example, Fred's moral belief that he ought to keep his promise might be justified by his beliefs that

- (a) one ought to do whatever contributes to human flourishing;
- (b) keeping my promise contributes to human flourishing.

As one can see, the goodmaker of the action features in the beliefs that justify Fred's target belief. Nevertheless, the goodmaker of the action is not identical with the belief about the goodmaker.

The second reason why the distinction between the goodmaker of an action and the justifier of a moral belief tends to be overlooked stems from the fact that some normative views include the condition that the agent must have a justified true belief about what makes the action good among the necessary conditions for morally good actions. The Right Reasons View is such a view, saying that an action is morally good only

if the agent has justified true beliefs about, or even understanding of, the goodmaker and acts because of them. Thus, on the Right Reasons View, the belief or understanding about the goodmaker of the action is part of the goodmaker of the action.

(2) The Right Reasons View distinguishes between doing something right and doing something right for the right reasons.² Thus if Fred keeps his promise but does it for the wrong reasons, he would be doing something right. But he would fail to do it for the right reasons and thus his action would not be morally worthy.

(3) We must distinguish between the moral value of action-types and action-particulars. In what follows I will consider only action-particulars, such as Fred's action of keeping the promise he has given to Emma at a particular time under particular circumstances. Furthermore, I will restrict the talk to human action. I will refer to such a particular human action with the symbol 'a'.

(4) 'God' is here used in accord with the traditional monotheistic religions, which conceive of God as a singular, eternal, immaterial, transcendent, personal, loving, almighty, omniscient, and perfectly good entity who created and sustains the universe and reveals himself to human beings. A believer in such a God might be called 'theist'.

III. KINDS OF METAPHYSICAL DEPENDENCE

Metaphysical Supernaturalists could claim:

The action *a* has moral status *M* only if *a* bears the metaphysical relationship *R* with God (cf. Quinn 2006: 68).

The expression 'moral status *M*' can stand for a deontological status like *being obligatory, allowed, forbidden*; for an axiological status like *being morally good, morally bad*; or for a thick normative status like *being just, unjust, contemptible, pitiful, rude, kind, brutal, etc.*

The expression 'bears the metaphysical relationship *R* with God' can stand for *being commanded by God, being commandable by God, being in accord with/against God's command, being in accord with/against God's will, being what God/Christ would be motivated to do in like circumstances,*

² See: Hills 2009: 113: 'There is a well-known distinction between doing the right action and acting well or performing morally worthy actions. Your action is morally worthy only if it is a right action performed for the right reasons [...].'

or *being Godlike*, etc. I will not ask here which specification would be better, but will ask at a general level how the metaphysical relationship between what is stated on the left side and what is stated on the right side can be thought of. For the sake of simplicity I will abbreviate the expression on the left side with ‘M-expression’ and what it refers to with ‘M-property’, and the expression on the right hand side with ‘SN-expression’ and what it refers to with ‘SN-property’. Three claims about their relation can readily be stated:

- (1) The M-expression has the meaning given by the SN-expression.
- (2) The M-property is identical with the SN-property.
- (3) The M-property is grounded in the SN-property.

In what follows I will explore these claims. I will assess which of them is able to grant both (i) that moral values depend in a metaphysically strong way on God, and (ii) that agnostics and atheists are nevertheless able to perform morally worthy actions. For the sake of simplicity I will pick out in my examples the expressions ‘being morally obligatory’ and ‘being in accord with God’s command’.

3.1. The M-expression has the meaning given by the SN-expression.

Let us take the following two sentences:

- (1) ‘Fred’s action of keeping his promise is morally obligatory.’
- (2) ‘Fred’s action of keeping his promise is in accord with God’s command.’

According to the thesis under consideration, sentence (1) means the proposition expressed in sentence (2), and, if the sentences (1) and (2) are true, they state the same fact, namely the fact that Fred’s action of keeping his promise is in accord with God’s command. This is a metaphysically reductionist position which starts with the semantic claim that ‘morally obligatory’ is defined as being in accord with God’s command. Thus, the concept of God is thought to be part of the concept of moral obligatoriness. Let us call this position Analytical Supernaturalism, which has the following implications: First, the proponent of this view would have to think that someone who lacks the concept of God would not properly understand what ‘morally obligatory’ means. Second, the Analytical Supernaturalist would have to think that an atheist – who has the concept of God but believes that there is no God – would have to believe that the concept of being morally obligatory is empty, that there

are no actions that are morally obligatory (cf. Audi 2007: 122). And the Analytical Supernaturalist would have to think that an agnostic – who has the concept of God but refrains from believing that there is a God – could have no justified true belief that an action is morally obligatory. Thus, the Analytical Supernaturalist would have to think that atheists and agnostics can have no justified true belief about an action's being morally obligatory. Analytical Supernaturalism would thus have strong epistemological implications. And since atheists and agnostics could have no justified true beliefs about an action's being morally obligatory, they could not act because of such beliefs, and, *a fortiori*, they could not act for the right reasons. Thus they could not perform morally worthy actions.

It has been suggested to me that there is a version of a theory that grants both Analytical Supernaturalism as well as the possibility of atheists and agnostics performing morally worthy actions.³ Atheists and agnostics could have a justified belief of the following sort:

The action *a* would be morally obligatory if, counterfactually, there were a God.

Atheists and agnostics could act because of such a belief, and could thus perform morally worthy actions. This is a possibility, but a restricted one. It is restricted to supernaturalist theories that spell out the SN-property in terms of possibility instead of actuality; that is, in terms of *being commandable by God* or *being what God would will* or *being what would be in conformity with God*, etc. Moreover, I doubt whether actual atheists and agnostics act for such reasons. But I nonetheless do not doubt that many of them have justified true beliefs about which actions are morally obligatory, and that many of them perform morally worthy actions. Therefore, I think that this solution is not compelling.

3.2. *The M-property is identical with the SN-property.*

Let us take our two sentences again:

- (1) 'Fred's action of keeping his promise is morally obligatory.'
- (2) 'Fred's action of keeping his promise is in accord with God's command.'

According to the identity thesis, sentences (1) and (2) differ in meaning but state, if true, the same fact. Let us call this position Non-Analytical

³ I thank Katherine Dormandy for this suggestion.

Supernaturalism. There are two ways to understand the identity claim. The strong version understands it as a Constitutive Identity Claim. Proponents of this version often use analogies with scientific discoveries to make their point, for example: Water = H₂O;⁴ an example which is nearer to our purposes because it is not about natural kinds but rather about properties: being hot = having molecular kinetic energy. The idea is then the following: As the nature of water *is* H₂O, and as the nature of being hot *is* having molecular kinetic energy, in the same way the nature of being morally obligatory *is* being in accord with God's command.

The second, weaker, version understands the identity claim in terms of mere co-extensiveness. We can call it the Co-extensiveness Claim; it says that the M-expression and the SN-expression are co-extensive. However, we do not discover something about the nature of the property of being morally obligatory by understanding it in terms of being in accord with God's command. Think of proper names. Cicero is the same person as Tully. 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are co-extensive. However, we do not learn anything about the person's nature or character when we discover that Cicero is also called Tully (cf. Audi 2007: 122).

According to the Constitutive Identity Claim a person can, of course, justifiably believe that an action is morally obligatory without believing that it is in accord with God's command. After all, a person can know or justifiably believe perfectly well that some particular piece of iron is hot even if this person has no beliefs whatsoever about molecular kinetic energy. In a similar way, proponents of the Constitutive Identity Claim could say: A person can justifiably believe that an action is morally obligatory without having theistic beliefs. An atheist or agnostic can justifiably believe that his promise-keeping action is morally obligatory. Somebody favouring the Constitutive Identity Claim could conclude that atheists and agnostics can perform morally worthy actions because they can act on the basis of the belief that the action is morally obligatory.

However, there are two drawbacks to this account: First, it is obvious that on the Constitutive Identity Claim agnostics and atheists would not have true beliefs about the nature of the moral properties. They would not know what the true nature of being morally obligatory is and thus

⁴ Adams 1979/1999: 415: 'My new divine command theory of the nature of ethical wrongness, then, is that ethical wrongness *is* (i.e. is identical with) the property of being contrary to the commands of a loving God.' In Adams 1999: 29, he proposes the identity-thesis also for axiological properties according to which *being excellent* is identical with *being Godlike*.

would not know what ‘makes’ the action morally obligatory. Therefore, they could not act for the right reasons, if acting for the right reasons implies having some justified true beliefs about what makes an action good or bad, and the problem would remain.

Second, deeper problems lurk beneath the Constitutive Identity Claim. I think Derek Parfit is right when he says that such an important scientific discovery as

(i) Having molecular kinetic energy *is* being hot

states something about the relation among *several* different properties. This becomes clearer when we consider that ‘being hot’ expresses a complex concept, namely:

the property that can make objects have certain other properties, by turning solids into liquids or liquids into gases, causing us to have certain sensations, etc. (Cf. Parfit 2011: vol. II, p. 335)

Thus, claim (i) must be restated as: Having molecular kinetic energy is the property that can make objects have these other, different properties. If we apply this to our context we would have to say: Like ‘being hot’, the term ‘being obligatory’ expresses a complex concept, namely:

the property that makes an action have certain other properties, such as being a reason to act, having moral worth, being subject to praise, etc.

Thus, the claim

Being in accord with God’s command *is* being morally obligatory

states a relation between *different* properties. The claim has to be restated as: Being in accord with God’s command is the property that makes an action have these other, different properties.

If this reasoning is sound, the Constitutive Identity Claim would be in trouble. The Metaphysical Supernaturalist would have to find a different interpretation of the phrase ‘being in accord with God’s commands *makes* an action morally obligatory’, an interpretation that does not amount to property identity but rather to a sort of constitution without identity.

How does the Co-extensiveness Claim fare in this regard? Recall that it is the claim that whatever is morally obligatory is in accord with God’s command, and that whatever is in accord with God’s command is morally obligatory. One reading of this claim has been proposed by Robert Audi. He says:

Suppose initially that we take the property of being obligatory to be the same property as that of being divinely commanded. Instead of stopping there, however, we might take *‘both’* properties (i.e., the property expressed by the theological phrase ‘divinely commanded’ and the property expressed by the non-theological phrase ‘being obligatory’) to be (necessarily) consequential, in a strong sense, on non-moral, ‘natural’ properties belonging to the type of obligatory act in question [footnote omitted] [...] These natural (roughly ‘descriptive’) properties are the same ones central for understanding moral concepts and moral properties outside theological contexts. This is as it should be on the plausible assumption that properties *F* and *G* (as expressed by different terms, such as ‘commandedness’ and ‘obligatoriness’) are identical only if anything possessing them has them *in virtue of* the same property or set of properties [footnote omitted]. In rough terms, they are identically grounded. (Audi 2007: 123)

On this reading, agnostics and atheists can perform morally worthy actions because the goodmaker of the action is a natural property or a natural fact, and agnostics and atheists can have justified true beliefs about such facts. The price of this solution is, however, that morality – or at least a major part of it – does not metaphysically depend on God. Thus, the Metaphysical Supernaturalist will probably refrain from embracing this view and will instead look for a metaphysical reading of co-extensiveness which grants that the property of being obligatory depends metaphysically on God. A first step in his argument could be the negative claim that necessary co-extensiveness does not imply property identity. Let us take the following two terms: ‘being an equilateral triangle in Euclidean space’ and ‘being an equiangular triangle in Euclidean space’. Both terms are necessarily co-extensive, that is, every triangle which has the property of being equilateral additionally has the property of being equiangular.⁵ But why suppose that the two properties

⁵ Jackson, (forthcoming), writes: ‘But surely both properties are a certain shape, and we don’t have two shapes. That is, what is true is something like: being an equilateral triangle in euclidean space = shape S, and being an equiangular triangle in euclidean space = shape S. But then the transitivity of identity delivers the conclusion that being an equilateral triangle in euclidean space = being an equiangular triangle in Euclidean space. What we have aren’t two properties but two different ways of representing the same property.’ I think that Jackson’s argument shows only that the two triangles are identical but it does not show that the two properties are identical. They are properties of the same kind of triangle but not the same properties.

are identical? They are properties of the same kind of triangle but they are not the same properties. A second example: The terms ‘being the only even prime number’ and ‘being the positive square root of 4’ are necessarily co-extensive. Necessarily, they refer to properties that are had only by the number 2, but they do not refer to the same property.⁶ Thus, there is good reason to suppose that the necessary co-extensiveness of the terms ‘being obligatory’ and ‘being in accord with God’s command’ does not amount to property identity. The second step in the Metaphysical Supernaturalist’s argument could then be this: He takes up Audi’s idea of grounding, but in a different way. He claims that M-properties are grounded in the SN-properties; or to state it more precisely: He claims that the fact that the action *a* has an M-property is grounded in the fact that *a* has the corresponding SN-property. This is a kind of constitution without identity.

3.3. *The M-property is grounded in the SN-property.*

Let us take our two sentences again:

- (1) ‘Fred’s action in keeping his promise is morally obligatory.’
- (2) ‘Fred’s action in keeping his promise is in accord with God’s command.’

According to the claim under consideration – let us call it the Grounding Claim – the sentences (1) and (2) differ in meaning, and if true, they state different facts. The fact that Fred’s action is in accord with God’s command makes it the case that Fred’s action is morally obligatory. The fact that Fred ought to keep his promise is grounded in the fact that Fred’s keeping the promise is in accord with God’s command. There are two ways to understand this claim. The first way is in terms of causality. The fact that is stated by (2) causally explains the fact that is stated by (1). By commanding, God causes the action to be morally obligatory. The second way to understand the Grounding Claim is in non-causal terms.⁷ This is what recent literature generally understands with the word ‘grounding’: a non-causal metaphysical relation between facts.⁸

⁶ This example is given by Parfit 2011, Vol. II: 297.

⁷ See Wierenga 1983: 389, who holds that the formulation ‘makes it the case that’ does not express a causal relation but rather some other asymmetric relation of dependence. Quinn 2006: 70, leaves both options open because he does not know of a conclusive reason for preferring the one version to the other.

⁸ For detailed analyses of the concept of grounding see: Correia and Schnieder 2012.

In our talks we find many statements that express such relations, e.g., ‘What he did is punishable because it is against the law’ or ‘Complexes exist because simples exist’. The ‘because’ in these statements refers to a non-causal relation. It is not the case that the law causes the action to be punishable, nor is the case that the existence of simples causes the existence of complexes. In the same way, Metaphysical Supernaturalists might understand the statement: ‘Fred ought to keep his promise because doing so is in accordance with God’s command.’

Proponents of both ways of cashing out the statement might say that their version lacks strong epistemological implications. They might claim that a person can justifiably believe that an action is morally good without having beliefs about what makes it morally good. But of course this will fail to satisfy proponents of the Right Reasons View. Although one can justifiably believe the one without the other, one cannot act in a morally worthy way without having justified true beliefs about the goodmaker of that action. Let us assume that Fred keeps his promise to Emma because he believes that

- (i) it is morally obligatory to keep my promise to Emma; and
- (ii) it is morally obligatory because keeping the promise contributes to human flourishing.

Let us further assume that the Metaphysical Supernaturalist endorses the Right Reasons View. How could he evaluate Fred’s action? He could say that Fred is doing the right action for a wrong reason. Fred should have believed that

- (i) it is morally obligatory to keep my promise to Emma; and
- (ii*) it is morally obligatory because keeping it is in accord with God’s command.

Thus he would have to admit that Fred does not perform a morally worthy action. But our Metaphysical Supernaturalist might take a different route and not share the Right Reasons View entirely. He could accept degrees of moral worth and thus say: Fred performs a morally worthy action, but he does not perform a morally perfect action. Following the scholastic tradition, one could also say: In such a case, Fred’s action is good *secundum quid*, but not good *simpliciter*, that is, his action is good only under one consideration but not all things considered.

There are more plausible ways in which the Metaphysical Supernaturalist can embrace the Grounding Claim. One possibility is that the Supernaturalist could accept that there are two kinds of goodmakers of actions: proximate ones and remote ones. Fred’s belief (ii) would refer

to a proximate goodmaker of the action. This does not exclude that there is a remote goodmaker that makes the action finally good. Thus, it could still be the case that the remote or last goodmaker of the action is some theistic fact. But Fred does not have to have beliefs concerning this remote goodmaker in order to act in a morally worthy way.

At this point we must ask how the proximate and the remote goodmakers relate. I can think of two ways of spelling this relation out. First, the Metaphysical Supernaturalist accepts that moral properties are grounded in natural properties, such as being a means, being a constituent of human flourishing, etc. Thus he accepts that what makes an action morally good or bad are the action's natural properties. He accepts that Fred does the right thing for the right reasons when he acts from the beliefs (i) and (ii). The supernatural claim comes in as an explanation of the grounding relation. This claim offers an answer to the question: Why is the fact that the action *a* has certain particular M-properties grounded in the fact that the action *a* has the N-properties ('N' stands for 'natural') which it does? The Supernaturalist's answer would be: Because this relation is established by God, for example by wanting humans to flourish. On this view, Fred could have a justified true belief about what is morally obligatory, as well as a justified true belief about what makes the action morally obligatory. If Fred acted for these reasons, he would perform a morally worthy action. The only thing Fred would lack would be true beliefs concerning the explanation of why certain natural facts make actions good or bad.

However, there is a drawback to this account. If the relation between the two kinds of fact is understood as 'established by God', it seems that this account leads directly to the first horn of the Euthyphro dilemma: morality is arbitrary. It seems that it is entirely up to God's free will how he combines facts in the relation of grounding. Thus, although this account is coherent, it suffers from implausibility.

But the phrase 'being established by God' admits of another interpretation, and this interpretation evades the objection that morality becomes arbitrary. The idea is the following: God's wanting or God's commanding is an expression of God's essence. And God is essentially good. Therefore, God's wanting or commanding is not arbitrary. And so we can say: The fact that an action *a* is obligatory is grounded in the fact that *a* has a certain natural property, for example the property of contributing to human flourishing. The fact that *a* has the property of contributing to human flourishing is *a*'s proximate goodmaker.

For a person to perform morally worthy actions, it suffices that she believe, know, or understand this. She need not also have the additional theistic belief that the grounding relation between the two facts is established by an act of the essentially good God.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this article I examined whether there is a version of Metaphysical Supernaturalism which grants both (i) that moral values depend in a metaphysically strong way on God, and (ii) that agnostics and atheists are nevertheless able to perform morally worthy actions in the sense of the Right Reasons View. My result is that it is hard to find a version of Metaphysical Supernaturalism that grants both. The most promising candidate was the last version of the Grounding Claim. But even on this claim we must distinguish between a more or less detailed belief about, or a more or less complete understanding of, the goodmakers of the action. The Metaphysical Supernaturalist would have to say that theists' beliefs about, or understanding of the goodmakers of, actions would be more detailed or complete than atheists' or agnostics'. But this need not imply that atheists or agnostics could not perform morally worthy actions. For moral worth might require no more than knowledge or understanding of the proximate goodmakers of actions.⁹

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