
Naturalism & Virtue


5.7 – Natural Good & Freedom

Team 6:

Angela Zhou, Derrick Li, Jose Romero, Koey Chan, William Barber



Natural Good and Freedom (5.7)

- Rejecting what is instinctual has precedent in Christianity (original sin)
 - Just following instinct is not natural: rejects natural rationality of humans (“radical freedom” (page 57))
 - We can choose to reject a “scientifically grounded account of the natural way of life for [humans]” (page 57)
 - Non-human animals lack natural rationality: will follow instinctual life.
 - Will not choose to reject a lifestyle: they simply follow their environment and what is presented to them
 - Following our instinct, rather than our rationality, would mean letting “essence determine existence” (page 57)
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Naturalism and Human Nature

- Human nature may not be compatible with naturalism
- Claim: Naturalism diminishes human freedom and choice
- Zookeeper analogy
 - Animals can thrive if cared for under natural conditions
 - Humans have the ability to make decisions, think and choose
 - Human nature necessitates choice, including to reject what is provided
 - A human in a “natural environment” is not properly so unless given the choice to leave



Where Does “Natural” End?

- Our lives today are “hijacked” by instincts that formerly would’ve enabled our survival
 - Sex addiction, overeating, screen time
- Should we abide by our stimulating instincts?
- Should we restrict ourselves to what was routine to our hunter-gatherer ancestors?



Veganism

Appeal to Nature: Humans are by nature omnivorous – but if we simply abide by our animalistic instincts, we're ignoring our freedom to choose

Since we have the morals and faculties to make that choice, is it our obligation to make the conscious choice to reduce animal suffering and reject our “nature”?

Do we need a reason to reject our instincts?

- i.e. Veganism = Less suffering for animals
- Could it be justifiable to reject nature without a reason?



Freedom of Choice

- Humans must have the choice to pick their own path (i.e. cannot be forced into a “natural” life)
 - Because rationality is natural for humans
- Natural = What leads us to flourish
- If we choose something that detracts from flourishing, can that be a good choice?
 - Choice for the sake of choice?
 - If not, what choice do we really have?

