Chapter 1

Introduction: Virtue, Reason, and Flourishing

"Men need virtues as bees need stings."

–Peter Geach, *The Virtues*

Thesis

Philippa Foot's version of neo-Aristotelian virtue theory aims to lay the foundation and built the outline of an ethical naturalism that Mark Murphy calls a "secular natural law theory" in that she identifies ethical facts or properties such as virtue, vice, right, wrong, good, and bad with straightforwardly natural facts or properties of the human species. Foot's theory is classified as a type of ethical naturalism. Jennifer Frey summarizes the "master thought" of this type of naturalism:

> The ethical naturalist's master thought is this: man needs the virtues just as much as a bee needs its sting. Such a thought is intriguing insofar as it takes the ethereal and elusive 'moral ought' and brings it back down to earth, by locating it within a wider structure of evaluation we already readily grasp and acknowledge as objectively valid.[1]

By bringing the 'moral ought' into closer contact with empirical disciplines, Joyce points out that ethicists can enjoy the fruits of modern science:

1. Jennifer Ann Frey, "The Will and the Good" (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2012).

> Key contributions can be made by social and developmental psychologists, experimental economists, neuroscientists, geneticists, primatologists, anthropologists, comparative ethologists, and evolutionary biologists.[2]

Foot's is not the only kind of neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism, however. John McDowell criticizes the kind of scientism that would seek to make ethics an empirical discipline. He (and others) object to the heavily "biologized" kind of theory arguing that virtues are perceptual sensitivities to "what a situation requires", understanding requirement as partially constituted by the rationality. In a word, his sort of ethical naturalism emphasizes "second nature", that is, human rational consciousness in so far as it is enculturated by language, custom, evaluation, habit, and a "way of seeing". Rosalind Hursthouse's *On Virtue Ethics* builds up Foots account and supplies many missing pieces; however, she agrees with McDowell in rejecting the search for an external, objective, scientific foundation for virtue ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre's early writings align more with McDowell in rejecting "Aristotle's metaphysical biology", but his later writings align more with Foot in a finding that "human identity is primarily, even if not only, bodily and therefore animal identity and it is by reference to that identity that the continuities of our relationships to others are partly defined."[3]

These internecine controversies are more than a war of words. They represent two or three substantially different "sorts of naturalism"[4]. One emphasizes biology, the other emphasizes rationality. Is there any way to unite the *rational/cultural/intersubjective* "second nature" aspect of ethics with the *empirical/biological/objective* "first nature" side of the same?

In this dissertation, I defend the broadly Footian/MacIntyrean project of aiming for a secular, scientific foundation for virtue ethics against various objections, such as the "is-ought gap" and cultural relativism. I attempt to carry the project forward a few steps by arguing that we must

2. Richard Joyce, "Ethics and Evolution," *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory, 2nd Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013)*, 2013, 1.

3. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8.

4. John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Hans Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 202–21. Both of these articles will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

develop accounts of nature, virtue, practical reason, and human flourishing all in dynamic relation with the others, and offering such an account of each.

Specifically, I shall defend the following thesis: **virtue is the plurality of acquirable excellent character traits (such as moderation, tolerance, and wisdom) that are necessary for human beings qua practical, rational animals, because virtue partly constitutes natural human flourishing.**

The main components of this thesis are virtue ('acquirable excellent character traits') human nature (our life form as 'practical, rational animals') and human flourishing. In the course of these chapters, I will defend this thesis in parts and as a whole. As Christopher Toner says, this kind of virtue ethics proposes a close tie between one's species or life-form and the flourishing that constitutes "the good life" for creatures like us: "human nature is normative, such that to be morally good is to fulfill one's nature."[5] Hence, it is clear that these three concepts are not only individually interesting but constitute a single schema, which I call the "virtue triangle."

The Virtue Triangle

Why are the concepts of virtue, humanity, and flourishing *together* greater than the sum of their parts? In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre persuasively argues that there are three necessary components entailed in the performance of any task – however menial or lofty: namely, a goal, a starting point, and the means from the starting point to the goal. Consider a simple action such as cooking dinner. Suppose my goal in this case is to reproduce what I see in the picture of a tasty meal from a cookbook; the starting point includes the raw materials at my disposal, such as the food in my fridge (and my cooking skills); the means to the end is a recipe, including a list of needed ingredients and instructions that I will enact to bring make a meal hopefully to that pictured in the cookbook. Similarly, one cannot make any mundane journey (say, leave for vacation) without knowing (a) where

5. Christopher Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism: Requirements for a Successful Theory," *Metaphilosophy* 39, no. 2 (2008): 221.

that destination is, (b) where one is at the moment, and (c) the directions — on foot, by car, or plane, or boat or what have you — to the destination. So, MacIntyre reasons, perhaps the same three necessary conditions exist for an intelligible moral system. One needs (a) a conception of human nature – including human rationality – as it is *prior* to deep self-reflection or moral effort; (b) a conception of some human flourishing or telos we can and *ought* to realize; and (c) a conception of the qualities, actions, attitudes, resources, laws, etc. that enable a human being to achieve his or her telos. The point of this astonishingly simple reflection is that we ought to demand that any moral theory supply all three components. A moral theory cannot simply offer one or two out of the three, and neglect the third. It needs *some* conception of individual or social well-being, *some* conception of what it means to be human (what kind of raw material are we working with?) and *some* conception of how one's moral duties and other obligations or other motivating factors connect humanity as it is with humanity-as-it-could-and-should-be. A moral theory without any one of these three formal constraints is bound to stultify. And many moral theories proposed lack one or two of the three.

At the same time, each of these three concepts are liable to misunderstanding in our modern context. Hursthouse puts the point this way (though her terms are slightly different): "Three of virtue ethics' central concepts, virtue, practical wisdom and eudaimonia are often misunderstood. Once they are distinguished from related but distinct concepts peculiar to modern philosophy, various objections to virtue ethics can be better assessed."[6] Objections fired at neo-Aristotelian ethical theories often hit a bullseye but on the wrong target.[7] A large part of my job is to stake out a conceptual space for virtue, practical reason (including its excellence, which I take to be practical wisdom), and natural human flourishing (which I take to be closely related to eudaimonia). My task is also to defend the trilateral form that relates them in a dynamic schema.

Whether the natural facts or properties in which ethical facts are located is some conception

6. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2013.

7. Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2011) gives a concise and clear account of all three.

of human biology, the human "life-form", our rational "form of life", the human characteristic way of life, or something else, the common point is clear: human beings need these qualities *because of who and what they are*, including a particular natural kind of flourishing defined by the natural normativity relevant to the species.

Chapter Outline

1. Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism
2. Natural Normativity
3. Virtue
4. Practical Wisdom
5. Flourishing
6. Natural Teleology Revisited
7. Conclusions

This chapter explains the assumptions, historical context, and methodological limits of my project.

Chapter % is the foundation of all the rest, in that it addresses and attempts to resolve the worry that ethical naturalism is impossible. If ethical naturalists cannot derive normative conclusions from merely descriptive premises, then indeed it is impossible. And if there are no fundamental natural norms, one cannot derive normative conclusions. But there are natural norms. A conception of nature wherein nature is inherently normative is shown to be scientific in the form of 'generic' truths about all organic life, including humans.

Chapter % builds on natural normativity and constructs a concept of *normative human nature*. All the generic truths about human beings can be synthesized in the two predicates of rational and animal: Human nature is to potentially be practical, rational animals. For practical, rational animals, some traits are excellent and others undesirable given the kind of thing such animals are. We are parts of nature that are aware of nature, including the natural fact that we are part of nature.

Chapter % offers a definition of virtue consonant with the natural normativity already defended. Virtues are acquirable excellent character traits human beings need as practical, rational animals and which partly constitute natural human flourishing. Examples discussed include mod-

eration, tolerance, and practical wisdom. These represent various kinds of 'self-regarding', 'other-regarding,' and 'object-regarding' virtues, sensitive to the intrinsic worth of self, others, and objects such as art, truth, beauty, etc. Virtues are also, among other things, necessary for the acquisition of more virtue, especially practical wisdom.

Chapter % explores practical reason in more depth, since practical reason is supposed to define our human life form and also is supposed to supply a means out of individual and cultural relativism. Practical reason is the capacity for resolving what to do, for "thinking how to live."[8] Practical reason is not a "value neutral" process instrumentally achieving one's ends but also a process of determining which ends are worthwhile. The excellence of practical reason is practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is, among other things, a commitment and skill in acquiring more practical wisdom. Realism about practical reason blocks cultural relativism about virtues, yet allows an acceptable pluralism consonant with tolerance and wisdom. Practical wisdom which is supremely important in that it is both an intellectual and a moral virtue. It is necessary for acheiving other moral virtues and sufficient for achieving some other intellectual virtues. Hence, once a human being has reached a level of practical wisdom certain kinds of well-being are secured.

Chapter % outlines an account of natural human flourishing, placing my virtue account squarely within the eudaimonist tradition but with important modifications. Flourishing for creatures like us is, among other things, the practical wisdom necessary to undergo the process of discovering human flourishing and the achievement of our humanity. We become what we truly are, even if our existence and identity end in death, and even if our species goes extinct. Human misery and failure is not just pain nor death but to fail to fully realize one's humanity.

Chapter % returns in earnest to the theme of strict, metaphysical naturalism. Several objections on behalf of science and scientifically-minded philosophers need further comment. I address the broader question of whether the kind of neo-Aristotelian naturalism I have defended is compat-

8. Allan Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live* (Harvard University Press, 2009). I borrow Gibbard's elegant phrase, but I take my view of practical reason in a far more realist direction than he would care to.

ible with 'naturalism' in any of the typical senses of the word. I argue that it is, and I suggest as a name for my theory Recursive Naturalism.

Chapter % draws conclusions and makes suggestions for further reasearch.

Chapter 2

Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism

"Not everything that is last claims to be an end, but only that which is best."

Aristotle, *Physics* 194a 32–33.

Neo-Aristotelianism

My thesis attempts to address issues that arise from the recent neo-Aristotelians. My primary sources are Philippa Foot, John McDowell, and Alasdair MacIntyre, who each in their own way address all three themes from "the virtue triangle."[1]

Who are the neo-Aristotelians? Rosalind Hursthouse provides an authoritative list: Anscombe,[2]

1. For example, McDowell, Foot, and MacIntyre can be seen using this schema: Cf. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62, no. 3 (1979): 331–50 and John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics'," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1980), 359–76; Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) and MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*. All three themes are, of course, important to Aristotle as well. But I shall reference historical sources such as Aristotle or Aquinas only occasionally and only for convenience; my primary purpose is not historical.

2. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19; G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Harvard University Press, 1957).

Geach,[3] Foot,[4] McDowell,[5] MacIntyre,[6] Hursthouse,[7] Nussbaum,[8] and Thompson.[9] I would only add the great Julia Annas[10] who is of course an ancient philosophy scholar but whose recent work has been largely devoted to contemporary ethics, and some more recent players in the movement such as Stephen Brown[11] and Jennifer Frey.

I also interact regularly with a broader set of virtue ethicists:[12] Peter Geach, Bernard Williams, and Iris Murdoch are responsible for gathering the kindling and setting the spark, so to speak, on contemporary discussions of virtue.

One could certainly construct a worthwhile project analyzing more of these authors for a different subset. Nevertheless, I consistently return to Foot, McDowell, and MacIntyre. Part of the reason is arbitrary. Every project must cut off somewhere. Another reason is that these three defend

3. Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1956.

4. Foot, *Natural Goodness*.

5. John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998); John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996).

6. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.

7. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics and Human Nature," *Hume Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 67–82.

8. Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics," in *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, ed. J.E.J. Altham and Ross Harrison (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 86–131; Martha C. Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (September 1988): 32–53; nussbaum1999virtue

9. Michael Thompson, "The Representation of Life," in *Virtues and Reasons*, ed. Lawrence Hursthouse Rosalind and Warren Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 247–96

10. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*; Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Julia Annas, "Morality and Self Interest," ed. Paul Bloomfield (Oxford University Press, 2009), 205–21; Julia Annas, "The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory," ed. David Copp (Oxford University Press, 2006), 515–36; Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing," in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 2004, 61–75.

11. R. Stephen Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature: A Defense of Ethical Naturalism* (Continuum, 2008); Stephen Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue," *Ethica* 4 (2005): 7–22.

12. The broader set includes Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998); Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Clarendon Press, 2003); Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 1992); Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Adams, Gopal Sreenivasan, Rachana Kamtekar, Talbot Brewer, and R. Scott Smith.

views that share enough similarities to illuminate many important themes while contrasting enough to motivate rich discussion.

Neo-Aristotelian naturalism of the sort I am defending strives to be ethical, naturalistic, scientific, and secular. This is a difficult project, attended by difficulties on all sides. I would like to say a bit more about each of these goals.

I. Ethics

Virtue ethics

My thesis is about virtue and so places this dissertation squarely within contemporary analytic virtue ethics. That said, I shall not devote excessive time to comparing my offering to those of other recent virtue ethicists. As Martha Nussbaum and others have pointed out, self-styled 'virtue ethicists' can differ as much as any other two ethicists. (Is there a tent big enough to include Plato, St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, and Benjamin Franklin?)[13]

That said, my overall aim *is* to contribute to the ongoing revival of virtue talk. It is difficulty to read any "old books" without noticing that virtue talk (in a great variety of theories and contexts) was once a normal part of cultural and intellectual life, (and not only in the west). But it is equally difficult not to notice that virtue talk has receded to the background or disappeared from academic discussions for two or three centuries. Its resurgence in the last 60 years has been well documented.[14] Not everyone is impressed by the alleged benefits accruing to 'virtue ethics', of course – Nussbaum is not the only one to find the designation unhelpful. Nevertheless, it would have amazed Elizabeth Anscombe if, more than 60 years ago, she could have known that in 2014 as many professional

13. Nussbaum argues that a more helpful taxonomy would distinguish between neo-Humean, neo-Kantian, and neo-Aristotelian theories; and that even more helpful would be to debate the substantive issues, such as the role of reason in morality as compared to the role of emotions and desires and other sub-rational psychological phenomena. Cf. Martha C Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics* 3, no. 3 (1999): 163–201

14. Cf. Roger Crisp, *How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

academic philosophers would identify as 'virtue ethicists' as identify as 'deontologists' – about 1/5th each.[15] So how might we explain the resurgance of a category of virtue ethics, however loosely defined?

There are a few reasonable options. Considering them will help frame my project. The first interpretation is that something went profoundly wrong in the series of modern moral philosophy. The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers turned away from tradition and religion in order to venture a universal, abstract, public, rational theory of morality. But perhaps something essential was lost as our ethical thinking had to adjust to advancements in modern science and changes in modern politics. Perhaps, for einstance, as science turned toward the natural or the cosmic (to the exclusion of the human), ethics and politics turned inward toward the human (to the exclusion of the natural or cosmic), it was inevitable that some would fall into Nietzschean subjectivism about morality, where no political or religious authority can correct the great individual, while others would fall into Hobbesian legalism, where know Great individual can correct the political and religious authorities.

Anscombe[16] takes this interpretation. She categorizes all the "English-speaking ethicists" from Sidgwick to "the present day" as consequentialists, and then diagnoses consequentialism as depraved. She argues that any secular theorist (such as Kantians) who appeal to an absolute, verdictive moral 'ought' are borrowing from a medieval divine law conception of ethics which is incoherent without the corresponding belief in a divine lawgiver. The alterative, she offers, is the Aristotelian 'ought' which critiques vice without blame and praises virtue without admonishment. In her view, virtue talk allows moderns to retain evaluative talk without a divine law by making it something closer to aesthetic talk.

McIntyre is another who takes this first interpretation. He argues that the fracturing of social and political bonds in modernity derives from the loss of a shared understanding of the good.

15. David Bourget and David J Chalmers, "What Do Philosophers Believe?" *Philosophical Studies* 170, no. 3 (2014): 465–500.

16. "Modern Moral Philosophy."

Though he is often classified as a virtual ethicist McIntyre indeed rejects the label. Even modern virtue ethics, he thinks, does not go far enough to restore the Aristotelian tradition of virtue which he advocates.

Regardless of the varying details, this first intrepretation of the rise of virtue talk pits virtue theories against their consequentialist and Kantian alternatives. It finds in the flexibility of Aristotle and the humanism of Confucius a refreshing alternative to the stolid rationalism of Kant or Mill.[17]

Rosalind Hursthouse disputes this interpretation. She thinks virtue ethicists presented their views as *rivals* to the dominant moral theories only because, in the early days, it needed to fight for a position at the table. Now that virtue ethics has a respectable place in our taxonomy of philosophical ethics, such rivalry is needlessly combative.

The second interpretation (which Hursthouse seems to favor) is that virtue concepts can augment, rather than replace, other theories. Nussbaum continues: " 'virtue ethics' so-called does not figure as a normative rival to utilitarian and deontological ethics; rather, its (fairly) recent revival is seen as having served the useful purpose of reminding moral philosophers that the elaboration of a normative theory may fall short of giving a full account of our moral life."[18] On this interpretation, one would look to virtue concepts to enrich their own theories, whatever they may be. Kant himself had a theory of virtue.[19] Some theorists have been working to articulate a theory they call "virtue consequentialism" or "character consequentialism."[20] Even more broadly, philosophers have even

17. This interpretation, of course, is a substantive moral thesis couched in the language of a historical thesis. So it is debatable whether this story is even true *as history*. I shall try to remain neutral about the history and discuss the substantive theory.

18. Rosalind Hursthouse, "How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues," ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford University Press, 1996), 19–33.

19. Anne Margaret Baxley, *Kant's Theory of Virtue: The Value of Autocracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

20. Ben Bradley, "Virtue Consequentialism," *Utilitas* 17, no. 03 (2005): 282–98; Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

found room for virtue talk in Humean[21] and Nietzschean[22] ethics.

In my view, there is some truth to each of these interpretations. While it is true that virtue talk is flexible enough to enhance non-Aristotelian theories, there is an identifiable core of western virtue theory. That core is part-and-parcel of a larger Aristotelian tradition that is in tension or competition with Enlightenment tradition. At the same time, certain features of the Enlightenment tradition – advances in modern science and changes in modern politics – can correct certain errors or contingencies in the Aristotelian tradition.

I would like to say a bit more about these mutal "corrections" (if they are corrections). Elizabeth Anscombe, Bernard Williams, Iris Murdoch and others have done us a valuable service by correcting certain myopic tendencies of modern philosophical ethics. The core I have in mind corresponds roughly to Nussbaums "common ground" underlying a wide variety of "virtue ethicists" – including Kant and Mill and Sidgwick.[23]

(a) **The whole action:** The first myopic tendency is that of focussing our attention on individual acts (e.g., "is X – abortion, lying, nuclear proliferation – right or wrong?"). Martha Nussbaum argues we cannot construct an ethical theory by discussing only "isolated moments of choice."[24] If morality is about individual actions, it seems to be the case that either moral rules are to be followed for their own sake or else they do not matter (for only consequences matter). If, on the other hand, obligations to be virtuous are only part of our ethical theory (the other two being concepts of human nature and human flourishing), then it is possible to see moral rules as neither arbitrary impositions nor as unaccountable, mere bolts of lightning from a clear sky.

(b) **The whole person**: The second myopic tendency is that of focussing on one aspect of moral psychology (such as motive, or emotion, or character traits) to the exclusion of others. She says, "Even though a concern for motive, intention, character, and the whole course of life was not in principle alien to Kantian and Utilitarian philosophy, it was certainly alien to most British and American Kantians and Utilitarians of the period."[25] The correction to this tendency is to include a role for both reason and the "passions." However, two groups display very different strategies in including the whole person. For

21. Michael Slote, "Sentimentalist Virtue and Moral Judgement Outline of a Project," *Metaphilosophy*, 2003, 131–43.

22. Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*.

23. Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics," 170.

24. Ibid., 174.

25. Ibid., 173.

Nussbaum, the first group consists of characteristically "anti-Utilitarians" who want reason to play a much larger role than Mill (or the typical Utilitarian) would wish; the second consists of characteristically "anti-Kantians" and want sub-rational psychological states to play a much larger role than Kant (or the typical Kantian) would wish. The first group defend the plurality of goods, rationality's role in deliberating about which ends to pursue and its role in organizing, ranking, and harmonizing that plurality of goods, the rational character of some emotions, and the need for a rational critique of the broader social and political setting in which "defective passions and judgments" are formed.[26] By this distinction, my theory is much more clearly "anti-utilitarian" than anti-Kantian. The emotions, desires, motivations, passions – the numerous variegated non-rational or sub-rational mental states of normal human psychology – can be made rational and/or can be accommodated within a life of reason. That is, any kind of plant can be part of a garden with a clear, purposeful, even beautiful blueprint, even if dead leaves and rotten petals may sometimes dot the floor.

(c) **The whole life**: A third myopic tendency is that of philosophizing about individual moral situations (especially moral dilemmas!) instead of the whole of life. Anscombe et. al., have reminded us that the first question of philosophical ethics is "How am I to live?" This question is not an optional one for normal, reflective, adults. This question is not an avoidable one for those who face major problems in life. We need to refocus our arguments in philosophical ethics from looking just at individual choices or actions (viewed from the outside, like a moral critic) to looking at the whole of life (viewed from the inside, like a moral agent). Bernard Williams has done as much as anyone to remind moral philosophers that questions of how to live are prior, and deeper, than questions of what is wrong. "Character ethics," rather than mere "quandary ethics" is what is really needed in the vast majority of circumstances.[27] That is not to say that moral quandaries are unimportant in life or unimportant in theory; quite the contrary, often times the moral quandary is the exceptional case that can provide a cutting counterexample to a nonsensical view. And moral dilemmas like those encountered in great works of fiction (*Othello*, *War and Peace*, *Gilead*) are real, if blessedly rare, occurrences in a normal human life. But for all this, ninety-nine parts of any given day present great dilemmas or great temptations to do evil. Rather, much of a given day is occupied by choosing between competing or conflicting goods that all seem worthwhile but cannot all be pursued. (Check email or grade papers? Write more or spend more time with my kids? Pursue a teaching job in state or out of state? Invest in this friendship or spend much-needed time alone?)

(d) **The whole of history**: A fourth myopic tendency that these virtue ethicists have corrected, I think, is an *ahistorical* approach that was fashionable in analytic ethics. Many neo-Aristotelians and others studied classics or history in addition to ethics, or prior to ethics. Long familiarity with cultures, places, and times other than one's own has a salu-

26. Ibid., 180.

27. Edmund Pincoffs, "Quandary Ethics," *Mind*, 1971, 552–71; Cf. also Gregory Trianosky, "What Is Virtue Ethics All About?" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1990, 335–44.

brious effect of helping one to see one's own culture and time. (For many people, "culture shock" occurs not when leaving one's home country, but when returning home from a very different foreign country.) Likewise, philosophers who have spent long hours conversing with Aristotle or Aquinas are likely to notice more easily the assumptions, biases, strengths, and weaknesses of our own modern context. Jack Weinstein observes that Alasdair Macintyre did for ethics what John Rawls did for political philosophy: where Rawls re-invigorated political philosophy, "inaugurating the dominance of late twentieth-century liberalism"[28], MacIntyre helped to re-invigorate analytic ethical philosophy (especially the ascendancy of late twentieth-century virtue ethics) by freshly examining ethical concepts in light of history.[29] MacIntyre argues that we can only responsibly use and evaluate practical concepts such as self, practice, telos, or virtue when we know our own history. Since *we ourselves* inhabit a tradition, we must know ourselves *as* inhabitants of a tradition with a past. We will return to these themes in later chapters.

These are corrections that virtue ethics can offer to other modern moral philosophies. What corrections can modernity offer to virtue ethics? the modern world is not the ancient world. Modern science, philosophy, and culture are not the same as their pre-modern counterparts. It is imperative that contemporary virtue ethicists pay due respect to what *has* changed.

(a) **Anti-dualism:** The modern "scientific" point of view (if there is *one* such view) is commonly supposed to be monistic or at least non-dualistic. Though not all are so confident,[30] there is a widespread preference – whenever it is possible – for ontological simplicity, epistemological parsimony, and aesthetic elegance. Eliminative physicalism is radically monistic but is unsatisfying in that it provides a clean explanation of "everything" only by leaving out some of the most important things (i.e., consciousness). The neo-Aristotelian project typically aims to avoid dualisms. It aims, rather, at a holistic picture of nature that includes humans and all living things within the cosmos and includes all parts of a human being (reason, emotion, desire, etc.). Margaret Atkins eloquently summarizes the holistic vision of these thinkers: "Anglo-American moral philosophy [has moved] beyond the limitations not only of A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson, but also of Hume's focus on sentiment, on the one hand, and Kant's focus on reason on the other. Contemporary ethics is about the whole human being, seen as biological, social and cultural, emotional and reflective."[31]

(b) **Scientific naturalism**: Relatedly, it is imperative that contemporary virtue ethicists clarify the relationship of their theories to modern science. This was the thrust of the original "naturalism" that became dominant in America in the early 1900s. As David

28. Jack Russell Weinstein, *On MacIntyre* (Wadsworth, 2003), 38.

29. Ibid., chap. 4.

30. John Dupré, "The Miracle of Monism," in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. David De Caro Mario & Macarthur (Harvard University Press, 2004), 36–58.

31. Margaret Atkins, "Morality Without God?" *The Heythrop Journal* 46, no. 1 (2005): 65–71.

> Papineau summarizes, "The self-proclaimed "naturalists" from that period included John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook and Roy Wood Sellars. These philosophers aimed to ally philosophy more closely with science. They urged that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing "supernatural", and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit" (Krikorian 1944; Kim 2003)."[32] The attempt to capture all that is good in both the Aristotelian and modern traditions leads me to neo-Aristotelian naturalism.

Ethics and Metaethics

Neo-Aristotelianism is a complete philosophical ethics, both aiming to provide detailed content about the kind of life one ought to live and the kinds of traits one ought to acquire and aiming to establish a ground of morality in moral metaphysics, moral psychology, moral epistemology, etc. That is, neo-Aristotelians (like Foot, McDowell, and MacIntyre) write about and defend views that combine normative and metaethical theses.

This may be worrisome to some. James Lenman's summary of neo-Aristotelianism is a good example of this worry:

> One important school of thought … [is] work is inspired by that of Aristotle. This view has its roots in the writings of G. E. M. Anscombe, P. T. Geach and the early Philippa Foot among others. Its contemporary representatives include the later Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, Martha Nussbaum and Judith Jarvis Thomson. As this list makes clear, this is very much the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics.[33]

Lenman seems bemused with neo-Aristotelian naturalism. A metaphilosophical confusion lurks behind statements such as the one that neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is "the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics." For when Foot, Hursthouse, McDowell

32. David Papineau, "Naturalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2015.

33. James Lenman, "Moral Naturalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2014. Lenman acknowledges that Thomson might need to be subtracted from this list and that John McDowell might need to be added.

are classified as virtue ethicists (a normative theory) *and* neo-Aristotelians (a metaethical theory), we might object. Aren't these two different projects?

One legacy of G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* has been the tendency to sharply distinguish primary ethical questions (about what things are good) from metaethical questions (about what 'good' as an evaluative predicate *means*). Of course, the questions that concern modern metaethicists were posed and discussed by prior thinkers. However, the *Principia* gave a distinctive form to these questions and suggested a distinctive range of possible answers. Moore argued that all previous ethical philosophers had failed to resolve their disputes for a failure to define their terms. The question of what the word 'good' *means* (and, possibly the same question, what 'good' *refers to*) is distinct from the question *which things are good?* The first question is a conceptual question that aims to define a category. The second question is a substantive or existential question that aims to bring other concepts within that category. Moore argued (or according to some critics, *assumed*) that 'goodness' was indefinable.[34] That is, the good could not be defined in terms of any other property. It is false that 'goodness is pleasure' or 'goodness is whatever is most real'. That we pursue pleasure is a psychological claim, not an ethical one; that we judge something to be real is a metaphysical claim, not an ethical one.

If the good is indefinable, then, necessarily, any attempt to define it will fail. Any attempt to reduce the concept to a concept of lesser intension, or to translate it it as a concept, commits the "naturalistic fallacy." Moore is clear that the naturalistic fallacy isn't *just* the error of defining the good as a natural property (such as the pleasant) but also the error of defining the good as a metaphysical or supernatural property (such as the Really Real, or the Divinely-Ordained).

The neo-Aristotelians are pretty universally critical of Moore's arguments here. Philippa Foot and others dispute his starting points, as we shall see.[35] So the first reply to Lenman as to

34. William K Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind*, 1939, 464–77. Frankena's classic essay makes this point best.

35. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chap. 1, "A Fresh Start?"; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 2, "The Nature of Moral Disagreement Today and the Claims of Emotivism".

whether normative ethics and metaethics are two different projects is that they are not *necessarily* the same project. One's choice of philosophical taxonomy will reflect one's substantive views about ethics. Alan Gibbard, no opponent of metaethics, admits that one's substantive views largely determine one's view of the relation between questions of substance and those of meaning:

> Moore stressed the distinction in ethics between questions of meaning and questions of substance, and thereby gave rise to a tradition in analytic philosophy of separating the two parts of ethical theory: the metatheory and the substantive, normative part. Some philosophers have rejected the distinction; some Kantians, for instance, think that if you get the metatheory right, substantive ethical conclusions fall out as some kind of consequence, so that metaethics and substantive ethics are not really separate. Then too, anyone who rejects Sidgwick's and Moore's indefinability claim and thinks that ethical terms can be given analytic, naturalistic definitions thinks that the two putative subdivisions are not really separate. Those who reject any systematic distinction between questions of meaning and questions of substance might likewise reject a sharp, separate subject of metaethics.[36]

I think Gibbard is right, here. To allow the seemingly innocuous point that procedural and formal questions of meaning are separable from material and substantive questions is to beg the question – perhaps unwittingly – against a range of answers to those questions.

Two observations may serve as evidence. First, we may point out that even philosophers who maintain that (first order) ethics and (second order) metaethics are separate projects betray conspicuous connections between their first-order ethical and second-order metaethical views; advocates of a supposedly "neutral" metaethics often ally with first-order consequentialism: G.E. Moore, J.L. Mackie, Frank Jackson, Richard Boyd, Peter Railton, Simon Blackburn, and Alan Gibbard all endorse consequentialism. (We might even echo Lenman and call moral naturalism the "official theory of a main current in contemporary consequentialism.") Secondly, even if a procedural, non-substantive approach to metaethics can be made neutral with respect to normative ethics, it is still admirably ambitious to construct a theory that pays attention to both. Darwall agrees. He summarizes the history of analytic ethics since Moore, and persuasively argues "that although metaethics

36. Allan Gibbard, "Normative Properties," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. S1 (2003): 320.

and normative ethics are properly focused on different issues, they need to be brought into dynamic relation with one another in order to produce a systematic and defensible philosophical ethics. This mutual dependence is owing to the fact that issues of normativity are at the center of the concerns of both metaethics and normative ethics."[37]

In sum, the answer to Lenman's confusion is that the ethical and metaethical dimensions of neo-Aristotelianism are inseparable. My thesis is squarely and ethical argument concerning what character traits are worth pursuing (e.g, intellectual and moral virtues) and what traits count as virtues (e.g., practical wisdom). However, an adequate defense of this thesis requires assessment of foundational metaethical considerations (e.g., is the human life form a sufficient grounding of moral facts? Are practical reasons motivating all by themselves?)

II. Naturalism

Ethical Naturalism

Another point of philosophical taxonomy: my thesis is a species of 'ethical naturalism', which is most often defined as a kind of moral realism that attempts to define moral facts (or more broadly evaluative facts) as natural facts, or that attempts to ground moral facts in natural facts. As James Lemnan says: "there are objective moral facts and properties and that these facts and properties are natural facts and properties."[38]

On this broad definition, neo-Aristotelian is a brand of moral or ethical naturalism, but of an odd sort. Hursthouse says that "Virtue ethics, or at least any form of it that takes its inspiration from Aristotle, is usually taken to be a form of ethical naturalism – broadly, the enterprise of basing ethics in some way on consideration of human nature, on what is involved with being good *qua* human being."[39] If we can say what a *good human being* is, we shall be well on the way to describing what

37. Stephen Darwall, "How Should Ethics Relate to (the Rest of) Philosophy?: Moore's Legacy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. S1 (2003): 1–20.

38. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism."

39. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 192.

kinds of actions are right and wrong, or what kind of character traits are admirable or blameworthy. Sociologist Amanda Maull summarizes this sort of ethical naturalism well:

> Drawing upon the works of philosophers such as Philippa Foot, Richard Kraut, and Martha Nussbaum, the claim is made that there are moral properties and facts that are natural (rather than occult or supernatural), which are derived from certain innate dispositions and capacities of living things (i.e., those associated with growth and self-maintenance as opposed to destruction or harm). Human beings have evolved as social creatures with special capacities for speech and reason such that specification of "human flourishing" is more complex and problematic than it is for plants or animals. For the human being, the idea of the "good life" goes beyond biological survival and pertains to potentially ambiguous concepts such as virtue, happiness, and "well-being.[40]

While controversial, this project seems fairly straightforward. So why does Hursthouse call neo-Aristotelian an "odd sort" of ethical naturalism?

Some critics of neo-Aristotelianism in particular exploit one or more horns of a dilemma,[41] questioning whether it is possible to construct a neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism that is both (a) genuinely *ethical*[42] and (b) genuinely *naturalistic*.[43] On the former horn, if ethics is naturalistic, then happiness seems to be simply a natural state, like health or pleasure, while the means to that end discernible through statistical analysis of causal relations between acts and their consequences. This seems hardly normative at all. (By 'normativity', I mean 'ought' talk and facts to which 'ought' talk refers).[44] On the latter horn, if ethics is really normative, then happiness is the kind of state we *ought*

40. Amanda Maull, "A Deweyan Defense of Ethical Naturalism," *Society* 50, no. 6 (2013): 577.

41. Cf. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism," *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013; Bernard Mauser, "The Ontological Foundations for Natural Law Theory and Contemporary Ethical Naturalism" (PhD thesis, Marquette University, 2011). Mauser describes the dilemma excellently in chapter 5.

42. Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue" concludes that neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is really naturalistic but is less ethical (i.e., normative) than might be wished.

43. Cf. William Rehg and Darin Davis, "Conceptual Gerrymandering? The Alignment of Hursthouse's Naturalistic Virtue Ethics with Neo-Kantian Non-Naturalism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 4 (2003): 583–600 . Rehg et. al., conclude that neo-Aristotelian naturalism is really ethical but not sufficiently naturalistic.

44. Cf. Peter Schaber, "Normative Facts," *Studies into the Foundations of an Integral Theory of*

to pursue whether or not we actually reach it — whether or not, in fact *anyone* has actually reached it. Virtues are those qualities that are acquirable and that we *ought* to acquire, whether or not anyone does or ever has acquired them. This sounds hardly naturalistic at all.

This dilemma, I think explains the innocent confusion about who actually deserves the title of "naturalists". Lenman, among others, is not sure who counts, pointing out in a footnote that Thomson probably shouldn't be on this list and that John McDowell probably should. He says "McDowell is certainly pervasively inspired by Aristotle and he describes himself as a naturalist. See especially his 1995. But I suspect many philosophers would find his use of the term 'naturalist' here somewhat Pickwickian."[45] The confusion arises because Lenman and others[46] are not sure that neo-Aristotelian "naturalism" is "really *naturalism*" at all.

I shall contend an affirmative answer to both questions: neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is both ethical and naturalistic (in senses to be defined).

While no one who reads this dissertation is likely to doubt my commitment to moral realism, some may doubt that I have succeeded in making it naturalistic.

Now, on the one hand, without further stipulation, questioning a theory's "naturalism" is empty, for there are many types of naturalism. The noun 'Naturalism,' like the adjective, 'natural', is a cognate of 'nature.' 'Nature' is the most ambiguous, multi-significant word in our language.[47] It seems that the only thing to be done is to stipulate a meaning and move on.

Practice and Cognition, 2005, 107–22; Gibbard, "Normative Properties," 321: "[Part] of what's special about morality is that it operates in the 'space of reasons;' it concerns justification and oughts. The term 'normative' is central to much current philosophical discussion. There's no agreement on what this technical term in our discipline is to mean, but it involves, in a phrase drawn from Sellars, being somehow 'fraught with ought'."

45. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism."

46. Rehg and Davis, "Conceptual Gerrymandering? The Alignment of Hursthouse's Naturalistic Virtue Ethics with Neo-Kantian Non-Naturalism"; John Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" *Ratio* 22, no. 3 (2009): 308–21; John Hacker-Wright, "Human Nature, Personhood, and Ethical Naturalism," *Philosophy* 84, no. 03 (2009): 413–27.

47. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

On the other hand, though, I think the question of naturalism is an important one, for there are substantive issues in the offing. It seems to me that the fault line between neo-Aristotelians and their critics is a line between two ways of understanding the difference between nature and normativity, between "facts and values."[48]

The assumption of Lenman (and others) is that nature is purely descriptive, with no "ought". But Aristotle and the broad Aristotelian tradition deny that the fact-value dichotomy is absolute. They conceive of *nature* as including everything that *is and ought to be.*[49] Briefly, for Moore nature as including everything that *is* but not what ought to be – all facts, no values. Moore and those influenced by him, both naturalists and non-naturalists, have agreed with the underlying assumption that "nature" is purely descriptive. But what if this assumption is mistaken? Surely we cannot let a deeply-held assumption stand without scrutiny. For Aristotle, nature is some facts, some values. So norms and prescriptions can be just as natural as facts and descriptions. If normativity (*what ought to be*) is natural too, then it might be possible that *human nature* grounds ethical facts. And this is just what virtue ethics says.

So let me stipulate: Mine is an ethical naturalism in the broadest sense, as defined by Hans Fink's admirable essay, which I shall discuss more in a later chapter.

1. As Fink says: "An ethical naturalist is someone who insists on a fundamental continuity between the ethical and the natural."[50] It follows, on this view, that humans are continuous with nature.[51] Pretty clearly, one could explain this fundamental continuity in a variety of (perhaps conflict ways), depending on how one explicates the 'ethical' and the 'natural." I warmly welcome what Hans Fink calls an "unrestricted conception of nature."[52] This conception expresses the idea, he continues, that "there is one world

48. Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact / Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2002).

49. As I understand it, the paradoxical notion of "that which really is what ought to be" is a good way of summarizing the notion of a natural law.

50. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 203. Compare with his later statement: "The philosophical impulse behind both [materialism and idealism] is to see the ethical in continuity rather than discontinuity with nature understood as that which is most primary in existence and most objective in experience. They just happen to disagree about what that is." (216).

51. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, 1–2. Brown stipulates his ethical naturalism in this way.

52. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 210.

only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be."[53]

2. I shall defend a conception of 'nature' or the 'natural' that includes all familiar objects and properties that exist in the cosmos today: people, stars, trees, penguins, bacteria, and their properties, like 'being an animal', 'bright,' 'green', 'being countershaded for camouflage,' and so on.
3. I shall propose to use only philosophical and scientific methods for identifying my premises.

The importance of these stipulations will become clear early on. And those who wish to challenge this stipulation will, I hope, receive a satisfying answer by a later chapter. Responding to this worry is the explicit theme of a later chapter, but is in the background of the whole discussion. Certainly, some critics will insist that normativity is not natural. I ask them to consider the alternative, as I shall consider both, and examine the case I make in a later chapter. We must aim first for clarity before agreement.

III. Scientific Naturalism

The Challenge of Teleology

Though my theory is a form of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, I hope I have set enough now about the components of the "virtue triangle" to frame the project and show how important all three components are (virtue, human nature, and teleology). Arguably, the unifying concept of the schema is not virtue but telos. If we cannot even perform a menial, intentional action without a goal, then *a fortiori* it would seem we cannot perform our highest moral duties without a goal. Defining that goal is, of course, the rub. But it seems apparent that strict moral rules without any notion of the kind of life that is to be lived are bound to degenerate into a kind of pointless legalism. If the teleological notion of natural human flourishing in particular is central to the project of virtue ethics, it would seem that developing a plausible modern virtue ethical theory would require rehabilitating a notion of natural teleology in general.

53. Ibid., 210.

The project of rehabilitating natural teleology may seem overly optimistic. The idea of teleology is a major stumbling block for modern thinkers, especially for the kind of naturalist whose worries I tried to allay above.[54] it may be felt, for instance, that teleology has simply been debunked by modern science and therefore has no place in a scientific worldview. After all, Francis Bacon intentionally excised final causation from natural science since he feared that empirical investigation into final causes "defiled philosophy."[55] On this view, teleological ethics is inherently pre-modern and therefore outmoded.[56] On this view, any attempt to revive virtue talk is guilty of being antiquarian and nostalgic until proven innocent.

Nevertheless, I think that the sort of realism about natural teleology requisite for neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics grounded on human nature is – and can be shown to be – perfectly respectable, modern, scientific, and naturalistic. I shall present the case for this optimistic conclusion in parts, first in a chapter on ethical naturalism and in a later chapter on telos itself. The conclusion I shall defend is a growing consensus that natural teleology is no more mysterious or magical than biological life, or consciousness, or rationality. And hence, the pursuit of virtues is no more obsolete than any other human activity, such as farming, or laughing, or studying astronomy.[57]

54. Arthur Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory" (PhD thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013).

55. Cf. Bacon, *New Organon*, Book I. XLVIII "Although the most general principles in nature ought to be held merely positive, as they are discovered, and cannot with truth be referred to a cause, nevertheless the human understanding being unable to rest still seeks something prior in the order of nature. And then it is that in struggling toward that which is further off it falls back upon that which is nearer at hand, namely, on final causes, which have relation clearly to the nature of man rather than to the nature of the universe; and from this source have strangely defiled philosophy."

56. "The idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is still to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave." Bernard Williams, in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 109

57. Compare with "Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing." (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.* Section 124).

IV. Secular

Methodological Agnosticism

Another reason many scientific naturalists are squeemish about teleology is a guilt by association; they feel that teleology is somehow religious. For this project, I wish to one side discussions about the possibility of the existence of God. I do not wish to *deny* that a divine mind is organizing the cosmos, but neither do I wish to *assume* it. Obviously, it would be morally relevant if a divine lawgiver were to reveal the way to live. But the conclusion of my arguments is that it is imperative upon all of us to become virtuous, whether or not any particular religious tradition is true.

In this way, my project may be seen as building on Philippa Foot's work to advance a kind of secular natural law theory. Mark Murphy says that "the paradigmatic natural law view [i.e., Aquinas] holds that (1) the natural law is given by God; (2) it is naturally authoritative over all human beings; and (3) it is naturally knowable by all human beings… Recently there have been nontheistic writers in the natural law tradition, who deny (1): see, for example, the work of Michael Moore (1982, 1996) and Philippa Foot (2001)."[58] It may also be seen as a kind of neo-Stoicism, if we follow Elizabeth Anscombe: "One might be inclined to think that a law conception of ethics could arise only among people who accepted an allegedly divine positive law; that this is not so is shown by the example of the Stoics, who also thought that whatever was involved in conformity to human virtues was required by divine law."[59] While I shall vigorously deny that normative ethics can survive in an aggressively reductive environment such as eliminative physicalism, I shall for present purposes remain neutral as to whether the "natural norms"[60] discoverable in nature are divine.

As a theist, I am perfectly willing to use the additional resources available to a religious

58. Mark Murphy, "The Natural 'Law Tradition in Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2011, 2011.

59. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 5.

60. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chap. 2.

ethicist. For this project, however, I see three good reasons for adopting methodological agnosticism. The first reason is sociological. There seems to be no clear consensus within my source authors regarding the divine or numinous. (There is a semi-established consensus, among philosophers more broadly, that God is dead.[61]) Some neo-Aristotelians are atheists, some Platonists, others Christians or some other sort of theist.[62] There *is* a consensus that ethics can be grounded, somehow, in human nature. That "somehow" is the focus of my project.

The second reason is philosophical. The plausibility of my thesis seems to me the kind of theory – like biological evolution or the view that diseases can be caused by microorganisms – one can be persuaded of with or without the resources of any particular religious tradition.[63] This indeterminacy will inevitably seem a weakness to some philosophers, but it seems to me a strength. The belief in natural teleology just like the belief in electrons or integers is *compatible* with the existence of a god but it does not *require* or *entail* the existence of a god. One of my limiting goals has been to construct a theory that allows both possibilities. I aim to allow that God might be directing all affairs to his purposes and guiding human beings by his commands – that, to (paraphrase Augustine), our hearts are restless until they rest in him. And I am to allow that human life is a brief and beautiful flash of consciousness in an otherwise cold, pitiless, and dead cosmos, and that even so we ought to pursue all the virtues before we go extinct – whether or not we "go gentle into that good night."

The third reason is pragmatic. The dissertation would have become too long. I hope in future to research the relationship between virtue theories and Christianity, or between virtue hand

61. Bourget and Chalmers, "What Do Philosophers Believe?"

62. The recent neo-Aristotelians seem to be a representative sample of a broader historical population: a survey of the living and the dead would feature theists, atheists, humanists, pantheists, and so on.

63. Compare with H Tristram Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford University Press, 1996). Engelhardt is a religious philosopher exploring the scope and limits of secular philosophy. While I shall end up agreeing with Engelhardt that secular moral philosophy (in the form of virtue ethics) remains fundamentally — and perhaps dangerously — pluralistic, I am a bit more optimistic than he about how far natural morality can go. Noah was not a Christian or a Jew was nevertheless "a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." (Gen 6:9) Even Abel somehow knew what sacrifice would be acceptable.

religion in general.[64]

Concluding remarks on the significance of neo-Aristotelian naturalism

Virtue ethics is, on my view, a very useful guide to action, in personal life, political life, bioethics,[65] business,[66] and education.[67] It would be an improvement to almost any area of human life if we were aware of our own vices and worked to expunge them, and if we understood the virtues and pursued them. Yet many obstacles from philosophical and social tradition stand in the way. My dissertation is part of an attempt to remove such obstacles and, in their absence, render not only palatable but desirable a pursuit of virtues.

As difficult as it is to consider seriously the project of restoring natural teleology to its proper place and using it as a basis for ethical theory that is tenable and useful, I am optimistic it can be done. Many are on the project – biologists, cosmologists, philosophers of science, mathematicians – but philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition are uniquely situated to make advances. That tradition promises the resources with which to construct an ethical system including all three elements of MacIntyre's schema while rehabilitating a form of natural teleology that is not only tenable in light of modern beliefs, but rationally commends itself in light of all we now know. The case presented in these chapters aim to show how it might be done, and to begin doing it. Virtue, practical reason, and flourishing are age-old themes. Nevertheless, they are significant themes. Treating them adequately is too much for one dissertation. As Glaucon said to Socrates, "The measure of listening to such discussions is the whole of life."[68] But my hope is that even an unworthy treatment of a worthy topic will attain some value.

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64. Especially Michael S Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press, 2005);

65. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

66. Ron Beadle, in *Handbook of Virtue Ethics in Business and Management* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2015), 1–9.

67. David Carr and Jan Steutel, *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education* (Routledge, 2005).

68. John Cooper, *Complete Works of Plato* (Hackett, 1997) *Republic* 450b.

Chapter 3

The Normativity of Nature[1]

"Biology cannot, or at least in practice does not, eliminate functions and purposes."

–Mark Perlman, "The Modern Resurrection of Teleology in Biology", 6.

The Is-Ought Gap

Rosalind Hursthouse argues that ethical evaluations (of humans) and non-ethical evaluations (of plants and animals) "both depend upon our identifying what is characteristic of the species in question."[2] In other words, *normative* evaluations depend on *descriptive* facts about a species. If true, this notion would be momentous: "is" statements would underwrite "ought" statements. The notion that natural, descriptive propositions can serve as premises in arguments with normative conclusions is central to the project of ethical naturalism. But many have posed an obvious challenge to this notion. We can put the challenge in this form:

Is-Ought Gap Challenge to Ethical Naturalism

1. Alternate title: Natural, Organic, and Practical Teleology: Natural Norms and Human Nature

2. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chap. 10, abstract.

1. If ethical naturalism is possibly true, then "ought" conclusions can be derived from "is" premises.
2. But no "ought" conclusions can be derived from "is" premises.
3. Therefore ethical naturalism is not possibly true.

The second premise seems to render hopeless the thought, articulated by Hursthouse, that we can evaluate things on the basis of what they are. Call this the "is-ought" gap.[3]

Simply put, the is-ought gap is the intuitive notion that one cannot learn anything about *what ought to be* simply by examining *what is*.[4] For example, suppose your friend Jim will be attending his first Oscar ceremony, but doesn't know what to wear. Suppose we observe that *most male celebrities wear black ties to the Oscars.* It simply does not follow from the premise that most men in fact wear black ties that *Jim ought to wear a black tie to the Oscars*. At least, it does not follow without additional, brutely normative premise such as that *He ought to wear whatever most people are wearing*. Even if we supply *that* normative premise, where did it come from? "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is not something supplied by *observation*.

More broadly, in ethics, the is-ought gap seems devastating. For even supposing we gathered a whole collection of reliable scientific truths about human bodies, cognitive-behavioral patterns and so on – from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and also biology, chemstry, physics – we would not be a wit closer to establishing any ethical truths. A detailed and scientific description of human nature could hope to supply a "descriptive ethics" that narrates what such-and-such a culture approves of or finds worthwhile compared to what they find worthless and reprehensible.

At its best, a descriptive ethics might identify universal moral approbations and disappro-

3. The major problem I shall address has various names, but the name I prefer is "the is-ought gap". G. E. Moore had a different name for this problem, but his name would just muddy the waters. If absolutely necessary, I shall only call Moore's version "The Fallacy That Shall Not Be Named."

4. Thus, Hume: "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence." (*A Treatise of Human Nature* book III, part I, section I).

bations. For example, while habits and attitudes toward drinking alcohol vary dramatically from culture to culture, there seems to be a universal (cross-cultural) disapprobation for continual drunkenness, even among cultures (like the Bolivian Camba) that drink regularly and drink heavily.[5] Such findings might be interesting, but the is-ought gap reminds us that they are a far cry from *ethical* insights.

The is-ought gap objection is fatal to some forms of ethical naturalism, but not to the neo-Aristotelian type Hursthouse and others are pursuing.[6] For there exists a second, and more promising way to underwrite "ought" statements. From basic, fundamental, scientifically respectable *natural norms*. Call this the the possibility of natural normativity.[7] We can put the challenge, in the following form:

Bald Nature Challenge to Ethical Naturalism

1. If ethical naturalism is possibly true, then some facts are genuinely both natural and normative.
2. But no facts are genuinely both natural and normative.
3. Therefore ethical naturalism is not possibly true.

This challenge parallels the first one in that everything depends on the second premise – on whether nature consists of *merely* non-normative facts.[8] If so, then it follows that normativity is either real but *non-natural* (or supernatural) or "naturalistic" but not real (i.e., not mind-independent). There would

5. "It is important to realize that drinking problems are virtually unknown in most of the world's cultures, including many where drinking is commonplace and occasional drunkenness is accepted." Dwight B Heath, "Sociocultural Variants in Alcoholism," *Encyclopedic Handbook of Alcoholism*, 1982, 426–40.

6. I suspect the is-ought gap has not been adequately overcome by Peter Railton's and Richard Boyd's theories. I do not have space here to explore the suspicision.

7. The concept of 'natural normativity' is indeterminate, which means I run the risk of unclarity; that indeterminacy is necessary for us to discuss these issues without begging the question in favor of the view that all norms are unnatural and all nature is non-normative. If natural norms could be discovered, then it would be *at least possible* that the is-ought gap is not a fatal problem for all types of ethical naturalism.

8. That nature consists of merely "natural" facts is, of course, a tautology. But whether all natural facts are non-normative facts is the question at hand. We cannot simply *stipulate* that natural facts are descriptive and not normative without begging the question. I will pick up this question again in a later chapter.

be no such thing as the paradoxical notion of a "prescriptive fact" or a "natural ought."[9]. Hume (and others) assume this. But if the second premise is not true – if some facts are genuinely both natural and normative – then ethical naturalism is at least *possible*. (There will be other challenges to address, of course.)

The candidates for natural normative facts I shall defend are natural formal and functional or teleological properties of organisms. Hursthouse, Philippa Foot, John McDowell, MacIntyre, and Stephen Brown are united in the thought that some natural formal or teleological facts – whether that is Hursthouse's "characteristic", or a "life-form"[10] or "form of life"[11], or "human nature" – are inherently normative. Rather than "bridging" the gap between "is" and "ought", they defy the opposition.

Natural, Biological Norms or Cultural, Rational Norms?

Although the neo-Aristotelians are united in the affirmation that some natural norms can serve as a grounding for ethical facts, there are two or three competing strategies as to which "norms" are up to the task. The strategies go under many names.[12]

The basic difference is between those who discover natural normativity in *human nature* – culture, or rationality, or practical agency – and those who hope to find natural normativity more generally in all organic life. As Thomas Nagel puts it, with the existence of life in the cosmos arises

9. Recall Mackie's beautifully expressed worry about the "to-be-pursuedness" of things
10. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 57
11. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 339.
12. Annas distinguishes two sorts of naturalism, one that emphasizes the biological nature of humanity (at the expense of the odd normativity of reason) and another that emphasizes the rational nature of humanity (at the expense of the mundane descriptivity of biology). Christopher Toner distinguishes between the "biological naturalism" of Thompson and Foot (and later MacIntyre) on the one hand from the "second naturalism" or "excellence naturalism" or 'culturalism' of McDowell and (early) MacIntyre, each of which has its strengths and problems. Cf. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism.; Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism.; Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism.; Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism?" in Stephen Mark Gardiner, *Virtue Ethics, Old and New* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

the existence of "beings of the kind.. for which things can be good or bad."[13] (The third group defends the view that natural normativity is intrinsic to the whole cosmos.) Let's examine each one a bit more.

Normativity of Human Nature On this option, something about humanity is naturally and inherently teleological. For example, perhaps one of the natural functions of being a practically rational creature is that humans construct for themselves goals and attempt to achieve them by various means.[14] On this view, ethical conclusions are irreducibly based upon human facts such as human rationality, human culture, or human excellence. Since these human facts are contrasted with broader natural facts, call this view "Social" or "Practical Teleology."[15] Pretty clearly, human cognitive and and practical behaviors are inherently end-directed or teleological: John goes to the gym *in order to get fit for his film role*; Jane practices her speech *to win the Iowa primary*. Humans *act on reasons* and in pursuit of ends.[16] This kind of social or rational teleology is certainly the safer of the two strategies, and is followed by McDowell, Hursthouse, and the early MacIntyre.[17]

Normativity of Organic Nature The second strategy is more ambitious and more risky.

13. Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 117.

14. Compare with Christine M Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Korsgaard's argument about the "Authority of Reflection" builds a case that human autonomy – the ability to be a law to oneself – is the source of normative authority. In other words, my own identity as a rational human agent obligates me to behave morally.

15. Compare with Marinus Farreira, "Reasons from Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism," 2011 calls this "excellence naturalism" as opposed.

16. The teleological nihilism (of say, hardcore determinists) says that not even human practices are teleological. There are no "purposes" or natural ends anywhere in the world *including* in human actions. Even our practices, behaviors, and lives are purposeless, even to ourselves. I discuss teleological nihilism below. Cf. Daniel C Dennett, "Darwin's Dangerous Idea," *The Sciences* 35, no. 3 (1995): 34–40.

17. Hursthouse appears to me to affirm both Foot's sort of naturalism and McDowell's. Jennifer Frey observes this as well: "On this issue, Hursthouse seems to be speaking out of both sides of her mouth. She wants to acknowledge to Aristotelian critics like John McDowell that naturalistic considerations do not convince anyone to change their basic moral beliefs or motivate them to action. But at the same time, she thinks that she can approach the Humean or the Kantian and argue for "the rational credentials" of our moral beliefs based upon a "scientific" and "objective" naturalistic account. It is unclear how she is supposed to satisfy both parties at once, and the tension remains unresolved in her own work." Cf. Frey, "The Will and the Good. 44, footnote 55.

It is to defend the view that other parts of nature (such as living creatures) are naturally and inherently teleological. For example, perhaps one of the functions of *being alive at all* is that plants and animals act to survive and perform whatever instinctual actions are necessary for them to grow and develop into the state of species-specific maturity. At least some natural entities – living organisms – have ineliminable, irreducible, normative properties. Call this view Natural Teleology. Natural Teleology is the preferred strategy of Foot, Thompson, and the later MacIntyre, and others.[18]

Normativity of the Cosmos I should mention a third – even more ambitious – sort of strategy is to defend the view that *all* of nature is teleological. This is the notion that everything – including stars and rocks – "has a purpose", as if the cosmos were somehow organized and *going somewhere*. Call this Cosmic Teleology. Though such natural normativity in the form of natural teleology has its recent defenders.[19] I shall not pursue this strategy.

Problems for the Social Teleology strategy

Each of these (first two) predominant strategies faces its major challenge. For example, even if the first strategy of *human* natural normativity could pre-emptively undercut the is-ought gap, the major worry is no such thing as a universal human nature from which we might derive normative conclusions. Even the singular noun phrase "human nature" is liable to sound mystical, like a platonic universal underlying all human beings.

18. Keith Ward, "Kant's Teleological Ethics," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 85 (1971): 337–51; Larry Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics: A Defense of Biological Teleology Against Biological Nihilism," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1988): pp. 173–229; Monte Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Philippe Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose: From Comparative Anatomy to the 'Adventure of Reason'," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37, no. 4 (2006): 649–74; Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*; Mariska Leunissen, *Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Bill Cosby, "The Modern Philosophical Resurrection of Teleology," *The Monist* 87, no. 1 (2004): 3–51; James Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology" (PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame; Web, 2011).

19. John Leslie, *Universes* (Psychology Press, 1996); Tim Mulgan, *Purpose in the Universe: The Moral and Metaphysical Case for Ananthropocentric Purposivism* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*; Peter Kreeft, *Summa Philosophica* (St. Augustine, 2012).

Scientific Facts Objection. Bernard Williams summarizes the antiquated worldview that many are suspicious of:

> The idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is still to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave.[20]

The problem, of course, is that if human beings are a "mess" (as Williams puts it) then the normative conclusions to be derived would be equally messy. Humans are occasionally irrational and always variable. Human beings posit themselves, create themselves, define their values, chart their destinies, and all in different ways.

Along similar lines, evolutionary biology tells us that genetically modern humankind is the latest in a series of species. This is prima facie in tension with the notion of fixed, stable human nature. Ernst Mayr puts the alleged tension between the flexibility of evolutionary species and a fixed human nature in this way:

> The concepts of unchanging essences and of complete discontinuities between every *eidos* (type) and all others make genuine evolutionary thinking impossible. I agree with those who claim that the essentialist philosophies of Aristotle and Plato are incompatible with evolutionary thinking.[21]

Like Williams' worry that we can no longer believe in an "appropriate way… to behave" that is "inherent in each natural kind of thing", Mayr's worry is that there may not even be natural kinds.

Problems for the Natural Teleology strategy

The second strategy has its own, even bigger, problems; not even all the neo-Aristotelians are optimistic about the strategy of grounding human ethics in natural normativity.

20. Cf. Williams, 109.

21. Ernst Mayr, *Populations, Species, and Evolution: An Abridgment of Animal Species and Evolution* (Harvard University Press, 1970), 4.

Teleological Nihilism Objection.[22] Even if natural normativity in the form of teleology in the non-human world *could possibly* underwrite normative conclusions about human ethics, how would we confirm the hypothesis that there is such a thing as natural normativity? Is the hypothesis scientific or not? For many, scientific naturalism just is the commitment to believe all and only the best deliverances of all the sciences.[23] But suffice many scientific naturalists do indeed think that the scientific conception of nature is incompatible with the kind of natural normativity found in Foot's brand of neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism. They think that the scientific picture of nature is the picture of "bald nature" (McDowell's phrase for non-normative nature) or the "Laplacian" picture.[24] Call "teleological nihilism" the view that there are no natural purposes *except* those in human actions, intentions, and societies, etc. On teleological nihilism, *social teleology* is not instances of a broader category that includes the tendency of an acorn to become an oak and the tendency of deer to survive and reproduce; human purposes are sui generis phenomena that spontaneously emerge out of our brains at a certain level of complexity. Final causation thinking is then projected out onto the world by us; we observe that the beaver gathered wood and that the beaver built a dam and we say "the beaver gathered wood *in order to* build the dam." But really the beaver did no such thing. This is what philosopher of biology Ernst Mayr calls "teleonomic" natural behavior, but not genuinely teleological.[25]

22. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."

23. Other ethical naturalists like Richard Boyd and Peter Railton would be quick to observe, at this juncture, that natural kinds themselves are part of the vocabulary of natural science. Cf. Richard Boyd, "Realism, Anti-Foundationalism and the Enthusiasm for Natural Kinds," *Philosophical Studies* 61, no. 1 (1991): 127–48; Richard N Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," *Contemporary Materialism*, 1988, 307; Peter Railton, "Moral Realism," *Philosophical Review* 95, no. 2 (1986). And indeed, part of my strategy for defending the truth and scientific credentials of Footian naturalism is to appeal to generic truths about natural kinds. But this objection is still considerable.

24. Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 84. Plantinga explains that the bald, disenchanted picture of nature that excludes all consciousness – both divine and human – should not be pinned on Newton, who was a pious Christian, but fits better with Pierre-Simon Laplace.

25. Ernst Mayr, "The Idea of Teleology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 1 (1992): pp. 117–35.

Irrelevance Objection.[26] Even if natural teleological facts are among those facts that can be hypothesized and confirmed scientifically, a set of objections threaten the idea of natural norms from two sides – one objection shows that natural norms don't prove enough, the other shows they prove far too much. On the one hand, natural norms do not prove enough. Which teleological facts are we to pick out? Suppose we can discover fifteen natural norms about humanity; are we obligated to fulfill all of them? Some? None? Empirically, some acorns become fully grown, mature oaks, but other acorns become stulted, sickly specimens. Most acorns never become anything other than acorns before they disintegrate into dust in the soil. So statistical majorities will not do the trick.

Similarly, humans behave in all sorts of ways and exhibit all sorts of biological and psychological traits. Which properties are we too pick out as the naturally normative ones? One cannot deduce from the anthropological fact that humans in all cultures wear clothing any normative conclusions to the effect that humans *ought* to wear clothing. We cannot settle a controversy among nudists by citing statistical generalities.

Pollyanna Objection. On the other hand, natural norms prove far too much. Norms can be discovered for both good and evil: Some animals protect their young while other animals abandon or even consume their young. Some humans are kind and gentle while others are vicious and cruel. Anscombe anticipates this worry when she says:

> The search for "norms" might lead someone to look for laws of nature, as if the universe were a legislator; but in the present day this is not likely to lead to good results: it might lead one to eat the weaker according to the laws of nature, but would hardly lead anyone nowadays to notions of justice.[27]

Lott calls this the "Polyanna Problem" in that virtue ethicists are liable to be naively optimistic about what such a search through nature might discover.[28]

26. Frey, "The Will and the Good." Her dissertation is a full-scale rebuttal of this objection. I shall review her arguments in a later chapter.

27. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 14.

28. Micah Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form," *Social Theory and Practice* 38,

Natural norms are subject to rational reflection and are not necessarily action guiding or normatively binding. I think this is the point of McDowell's discussion of the "rational wolf" who is able to step back and contemplate alternatives. Even though it is true that wolves hunt in packs (unless they are rabid), this hypothetical rational wolf can ask himself: to follow my nature or not to follow my nature, that is the question? McDowell finds in the fact that

Response

So what are we to make of these challenges? On the one hand, I think both strategies (social normativity and natural normativity) would work, and wish to defend them against ethical non-naturalists or ethical naturalists of different sorts.[29] On the other hand, I think natural normativity is the stronger of the two and is less subject to objections from cultural relativism. Hence, in the spirit of devil-may-care adventure seeking, I shall pursue the more ambitious strategy of defending natural normativity in all of organic nature, not just human beings.

However, in a later chapter I will examine the notion that human (and only human) normativity as a fail-safe. In the end, I do not think these two notions of normativity are *contradictory*. A "third type" of naturalism would combine and synthesize them.[30] For those who find the concept of natural normativity completely unpalettable, I hope to render it at least conceivable. For those who remain unconvinced, I shall hope to convince them that the facts of social or practical teleology are enough to ground the theory of virtue I develop in a later chapter. For now, I shall pursue the strategy according to which natural normativity in the form of natural teleology is sufficient to ground a theory of ethics in observations about human nature as practical, rational animals.

Here, I shall defend Foot's strategy of Natural Teleology against McDowell's strategy of

no. 3 (2012): 407–31.

29. Such as functionalists and the Cornell realists just mentioned.

30. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism.. The criteria for this third sort of naturalism are sketched brilliantly by Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism.. Such third kind of naturalistic theory would be comprehensive. It would provide an anti-dualistic account of first nature and "second nature", of biology and culture, of animality and rationality. But more of these things later.

Social or Practical Teleology. In doing so, I shall summarize and bolster her arguments, offering a more rigorous argument for the fundamental premise that some natural facts are brutely normative, teleological facts.

I. An Initial Case for Natural Normativity

Let's begin with Philippa Foot. Foot argues that human virtues are instances of a broader class of natural properties: 'natural goodness.'[31] to earn an audience for her argument, her first chapter (which she call a "fresh start") clears some shaky assumptions inherited from Hume and Moore. Instead of treating human valuations as sui generis, a miraculous new appearance in the cosmos that only appears with the existence of humans, hat we should expand our scope to examine our status as natural entities. She is well aware that her offering is likely to offend the ears of some listeners. Her defense is the thought (drawn from Wittgenstein) that crude beginnings are often a necessary first step on the way something refined.

The kind of "shaky assumption" she means is this: Moore assumed that "good" was the ultimate ethical predicate under review. By contrast, she argues that statements like "pleasure is good" are not good paradigms for philosophical reflection. Evaluation of human creatures and evaluation of plants and animals follow *the same logical pattern*. In such evaluations, good is good *for*. Contrast 'good' with other predicates like 'red' or 'beautiful.' In a statement such as 'the house is beautiful', the predicate 'beautiful' doesn't need a complement. The house is *beautiful* – full stop. But 'good' (like 'useful') has a different logical function. 'The house is useful' does need a complement – the house is useful *for a mom of six, or useful for an artist,* or what have you. Similarly, 'good' always means *good for someone* or *for something.* 'Good' always needs a complement. If this crude beginning is anywhere near to correct, we can distance ourselves from Moore's starting point and build on another starting point: the life-form of human beings.

31. Foot, *Natural Goodness*; cf. Sanford S Levy, "Philippa Foot's Theory of Natural Goodness," in *Forum Philosophicum*, vol. 14, 1, 2009, 1–15.

In this Foot agrees with Thompson's groundbreaking *Representation of Life*. There, he argues that the concept of "life" is not, as it may seem to some, a property of some beings where *being* is the fundamental concept; rather "life" is a fundamental concept.[32] Thompson reviews and refutes a variety of biological definitions of life such as reproduction, growth, metabolisis, etc., for these properties depend on a prior understanding of life. He says, "Vital description of individual organisms is itself the primitive expression of a conception of things in terms of 'life-form' or 'species', and if we want to understand these categories in philosophy we must bring them back to that form of description."[33] When we observe and examine living things we rightly employ some shared categories and our conclusions rightly share a logical structure. What is that common structure? Every individual living being is a member of a species or life-form. And different life-forms are subject to different normative appraisals.

Humans are certainly a unique *kind* of living being with a unique life-form. And we shall examine below what difference the differences make. As a preview, morality is (correctly) thought to be action-guiding. Hume and Moore (correctly) argue that moral principles cannot be merely descriptive; they must motivate us to act or refrain from acting. (Furthermore, moral theories must be able to retroactively explain *why* we acted or refrained from acting, and help us to evaluate actions or abstentions, in ourselves and others.) Call this the Practicality Requirement. But the Practicality Requirement is not necessarily best met by positing that moral reasons are inextricably tied to conative psychological states. Rather, the action-guiding facts in the case of natural goodness are facts humans, facts about objects in the world, and facts about our relation to those objects. But more on this below.

Foot concludes that:

> goodness and badness, and therefore about evaluation in its most general form; but we might equally have been thinking in terms of, say, strength and weakness or health and disease, or again about an individual plant or animal being or not being as it

32. Thompson, "The Representation of Life."
33. Thompson, *Life and Action*, 57.

> should be, or ought to be, in this respect or that. Let us call the conceptual patterns found there, patterns of natural normativity.[34]

Another way of putting this point is that some properties we can call 'goodness' are primary qualities of nature. Obviously, some will worry that this picture of nature is not "the scientific picture" of nature. The objection from McDowell bears some similarities.

II. A Novel Case for Natural Normativity from Generics

What is the hope for "identifying what is characteristic of a species" and deriving from such characteristics normative judgments? The odds are quite good, I think. My case for natural normativity depends on a minimal scientific realism and on a little-utilized feature of language and conceptualization called "generic propositions" – or simply "generics."

The Case in Brief

1. If some generic statements describing natural entities are true, then some facts are both genuinely natural and normative – there are "natural norms."
2. Some generic statements describing natural entities are true.
3. Therefore, some facts are genuinely both natural and normative – there are "natural norms."

The Special Logic of Generics

Michael Thompson is one of the first to work out "the special logic of judgments we make about living things, and then to indicate its application to ethics." That 'special logic' is variously called "Aristotelian categoricals"[35], "natural-historical judgements"[36] "norms"[37] "bare plurals"[38]. I prefer

34. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 38.
35. Ibid.
36. Thompson, "The Representation of Life"; Thompson, *Life and Action*.
37. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 14–15. Anscombe is not very optimistic about the project Thompson, Foot, and I are undertaking.
38. Greg N Carlson, "A Unified Analysis of the English Bare Plural," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (1977): 413–57.

the shorter and less adorned term 'generic.[39]

My postulate is this: **some generics about human beings are true.** If this is true then, I shall suggest, we have good hope of cutting up nature at the joints. When combined with a moderate scientific realism, generic truths from sciences such as biology, physics, and anthropology (and perhaps others) support a modest natural normativity which will be further articulated (in a later chapter) to indicate which traits are virtues or vices for human beings.

Generics are neither universal nor particular

Now, what are generics? "A fine question, but a difficult one," Andrew Baiely says. His recent paper provides a helpful introduction to the topic of generic statements:

> Start with this sentence: [all ducks lay eggs.] This first sentence is, let us suppose, true. So far so good. But is it equivalent to 'for every x, if x is a [duck], x [lays eggs]? 'ducks lay eggs' may be true even if not all ducks lay eggs, 'mosquitos carry dengue fever' may be true even if only a very few mosquitos carry that virus, and so on). We are now positioned to observe one curious property of generics: they admit of exceptions.[40]

Thus, generics are statements of the form "S is F" or "S has or does F" where S is not an individual but a class or natural kind. The logical form of "all S's ϕ" does not predicate ϕ-ing to all members

39. Cf. ibid., . Carlson's essay is an early attempt to account for a variety of linguistic forms under one concept of reference to kinds; Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Greg N Carlson, *The Generic Book* (University of Chicago Press, 1995); Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Generics: Cognition and Acquisition," *Philosophical Review* 117, no. 1 (2008): 1–47; Andrew M Bailey, "Animalism," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 12 (2015): 867–83 for a discussion of a specific generic: "we are animals" in metaphysics and philosophical anthropology; Andrei Cimpian, Amanda C Brandone, and Susan A Gelman, "Generic Statements Require Little Evidence for Acceptance but Have Powerful Implications," *Cognitive Science* 34, no. 8 (2010): 1452–82 for an experiment in cognitive psychology that seeks to quantify the prevalence levels at which subjects tend to agree to generics, i.e., how many birds have to lay eggs before we agree to the assertion that "birds lay eggs"? Manfred Krifka, "Bare NPs: Kind-Referring, Indefinites, Both, or Neither?" in *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, vol. 13, 2003, 180–203; Ariel Cohen, "On the Generic Use of Indefinite Singulars," *Journal of Semantics* 18, no. 3 (2001): 183–209.

40. Bailey, "Animalism," 869.

of the category S without exception, nor does it simply assert that some "S's ϕ", which is true but uninteresting.

Consider the statement "all wolves hunt in packs." Logically, the proposition expressed in this statement is neither strictly universal nor strictly particular. It is not a strictly true universal judgment (for some actual wolves hunt alone, and some don't hunt at all). Furthermore, it is true but trivial that *some wolves hunt in packs*. Confining ourselves to particular judgments like "Some reptiles lay eggs" would be radically unambitious science. We want to know – and can know – what is true of the class as a whole. If a biologist discovers an exception to the proposition "All reptiles lay eggs", then either it turns out that not all reptiles lay eggs *or* she has discovered a new species of reptile that does not lay eggs.

Generics refer to natural kinds

Generics do not refer *distributively to all* members of a category nor merely to *some* but to the category itself; they are statements about natural kinds. In this way, generics pick out what we might call formal facts, facts about the life form in question.

The statement that "wolves hunt in packs" is only interesting to scientists if it is an item of conceptual knowledge about wolves as a *kind*. A generic is interesting because it is, or we treat it as, a truth about forms, or species. The subject of the statement is not all S's nor merely some S's, but the "infama species."[41] As Leslie says:

> It is widely accepted that [definite] generics are singular statements which predicate properties directly of kinds. For example, "tigers are extinct" predicates the property of being extinct directly of the kind Panthera tigris, and would be true just in case Panthera tigris had the property of being extinct (Krifka et al. 1995).

41. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism," 222, quoting Thompson.

Generics are not statistical

As Leslie's point shows, generics are not merely statistical regularities. The members of extinct species do not exhibit any properties at all, yet it is still true in some sense that *the species* is extinct. Likewise, all the living members of a species might fail to exemplify its formal attributes. Consider the fact that "California condors can fly for hours without resting."[42] In 1987 there were only 27 known condors alive. One could easily imagine a scenario in which every living member of such an endangered species were too injured, old, or diseased to exemplify this attribute. It would be strictly false of the individual condors that any of them could fly for hours; nevertheless the generic would still be true that "condors" (as a class) *can* fly for hours.

McDowell calls this a "logical weakness" of generics, as if Aristotelian-categoricals were aiming for deductive certainty but falling short. He cites the example from Anscombe (and Aristotle) that "humans have 32 teeth", saying "there is a truth we can state in those terms, but from that truth, together with the fact that I am a human being, it does not follow that I have 32 teeth. (In fact it is false)."[43] McDowell rather misses the point. Generics are not half-hearted universal judgments; they are judgments of a logically different kind. That we do not know deductively whether any particular wolf hunts in a pack is rather a strength than a weakness; the generic truth that wolves hunt in packs sets in us a normative expectation we then bring to any particular wolf and by which we can judge whether it is exemplifying its life form.[44] Similarly, while anthropological generics such as "human beings wear clothes" admit of exceptions, they might, if true, set normative expectations.

42. Jeffrey P. Cohn, "Saving the California Condor," *BioScience* 49, no. 11 (1999): 864–68.
43. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 171–2.
44. Sandeep Prasada et al., "Conceptual Distinctions Amongst Generics," *Cognition* 126, no. 3 (2013): 3.

Generics are familiar

While there is much to be learned about the linguistic features of generics,[45] still, their use and acquisition is actually very familiar. Michael Thompson points out that: there is a "general and thoroughgoing reciprocal mutual interdependence of vital description of the individual and natural historical judgment about the form or kind."[46] Micah Lott's comment on this same point is that:

> At each stage of an empirical investigation, our observations are mediated by our current understanding of the life form whose members we are observing. At the same time, our observations of those individual members will in turn improve our understanding of the life form itself, which then makes possible even more accurate and extensive future observations.[47]

Generic truths are acquired via a normal scientific means of empirical observation, rational reflection, and discussion.[48] This familiar scientific process may not be easy or free of dangers, but it is at least *a familiar scientific process*. Scientists are continually correcting formerly established generics

45. Leslie distinguishes between indefinite generics such as "tigers are striped" which admits of the specification "that tiger over there is striped" and definite generics such as "domestic cats are common" which does not admit of specification, "that domestic cat is common". Indefinite generics are trickier: "Ducks lay eggs" is a true generic," while "ducks are female" is false, yet it is only the female ducks who ever lay eggs. "Mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus" is true, and "books are paperbacks" is false, yet less than one percent of mosquitoes carry the virus, while over eighty percent of books are paper backs." Leslie, "Generics.

46. Michael Thompson, "Apprehending Human Form," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 54 (2004): 52.

47. Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form," 414.

48. To use a silly example, suppose that someone from a warm and landlocked country has never heard of penguins before. This person visits a zoo and sees penguins for the first time. He notices that these astonishing creatures are called 'penguins', and appear to be birds (for they have beaks, feathers, lay eggs, emit squawks, etc.). He reflects that most – if not all birds – have many of these macro features. Fascinated, he consults encyclopedias, biology or zoology textbooks, and consult zoologist friends. All these sources confirm the categorization. Although I am not aware of when the first penguin was studied by a modern naturalist, we can easily imagine that it was from observations and reflections such as these that penguins long ago earned an entry in the annals of scientific knowledge. The biological community gave them a scientific name ('sphenisciformes') and began to fill in gaps with a detailed description of their evolutionary history, characteristics, genetics, environments, diet, predators, and so on. The scientific conclusion, upon initial observation, bolstered by reflection, underwrites the initial hypothesis: penguins are indeed birds.

(the notion that all mammals give live birth was thrown into crisis by the platypus) and working to distinguish between the normal and defective traits of a species.

Generics are teleological

While there is a kind of normativity in the mere idea of a life-form, we can make the case stronger. There is a related kind of normativity in the idea of the natural teleology of life-forms. And generics also illuminate natural, normative, teleological facts. I shall take the idea of a real, natural function to be roughly synonymous with a real, natural teleology. As Perlman says:

> Many objects in the world have functions. Some of the objects with functions are organs or parts of living organisms… Hearts are for pumping blood. Eyes are for seeing. Countless works in biology explain the "Form, Function, and Evolution of …" everything from bee dances to elephant tusks to pandas' 'thumbs'. Many scientific explanations, in areas as diverse as psychology, sociology, economics, medical research, and neuroscience, rest on appeals to the function and/or malfunction of things or systems.[49]

Barham clarifies the range of terms that denote identical or similar concepts:

> "By "teleology," I have in mind such words and concepts as "purpose," "end," "goal," "function," "control," and "regulation," as well as the real-world biological phenomena to which these words and concepts refer. This means that the word "teleology" should always be construed here in its internal or "immanent" sense—purposiveness existing in living beings themselves—and never in its external or "transcendent" sense of an overarching cosmic principle"[50]

With these concepts in hand, we can see why Chris Toner says that "natural-historical judgments readily admit of combination into teleological judgments."[51] Thompson, for example, cites the scientific observation that "flowers have blossoms of such-and-such type in order that such-and-such insects should be attracted and spread their pollen about."[52]

49. Cosby, "The Modern Philosophical Resurrection of Teleology," 1–4.
50. Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," 1.
51. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism," 222.
52. Thompson, *Life and Action*, 293–94.

This kind of combination of generic truths is very familiar. No sooner have I learned the formal facts about a penguin (that it is a bird, that it can swim, that it has a countershaded white belly and dark back etc.) do I learn that *penguins are countershaded in order to avoid predators from above and below.* A shark looking up may miss a penguin, because its white belly blends in with the sunlight surface waters; a shark looking down may miss a penguin, because it blends in with the pitch dark waters of the abyss. Since an individual penguin may fail to be countershaded in the way that expresses its form, it would be defective. This defect is not a judgment made by scientists and "imposed" as it were, from the outside, on the penguin; but a normative fact about the penguin. As Hursthouse says, "Wolves hunt in packs; a 'free-rider' wolf that doesn't join in the hunt fails to act well and is thereby defective."[53] We might add that some formal features *of a normal, mature* animal exist merely potentially before full maturation. For example, a female reptile that cannot lay eggs might be injured, ill, or simply young. Eyes that cannot see might be injured, ill, or simply developing. Eyes that have had enough time to develop *should* see, are *supposed to* see, *ought to* see. Hearts do not just "pump blood" but hearts are *for* pumping blood.

III. Three Paths Forward

In my overall argument, generic truths are intended to serve as a counterexample to premise 2 of the **Bald Nature Challenge** above. Recall, that challenge asserted that no facts are genuinely both natural and normative. Generics are both genuinely natural and normative: natural, in that a large percentage of scientific knowledge consists of scientists predicating generic truths of natural kinds; normative, in that the life-form in question is one which an individual may or may not "live up" to, and in that *some* generics pick out natural functional or teleological facts about life forms (that penguins are counter-shaded *to avoid* predators, that hearts are *for* pumping blood, etc.). On my view, accepting the straightforward, generic truths delivered by such sciences about forms and functions is quite simply the respectable thing to do. But it seems to me there are three paths forward: reject,

53. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 201.

reduce, or accept Natural Teleology.

Reject

The first path is to reject generic truths about species and their formal and functional characteristics. Probably, those who are tempted to reject natural teleology believe there are no *ends* (τελοι). They are teleological nihilists and teleological nihilism claims as its evidence "*modern science" as a whole.* Abandoning the search for natural teleology was a harbinger of modern science; Francis Bacon and others believed that the search for final causes corrupted science. So, if best science tells us that nature is *only* descriptive, natural normativity is dismissed out of court.[54] In fact, natural sciences and the experimental, empirical methods that advance them have progressed far more than anyone could have dreamed. In part, this success is the result of giving up magical thinking.

Reply to Teleological Nihilism

However, if we accept scientific realism of any form, we cannot deny that some generics are true. Even more strongly, if we accept *any* form of conceptual knowledge, we are probably implicitly already committed to the truth of some generics, for much of our conceptual knowledge consists in generics.[55]

Nevertheless, let's suppose for *reductio* that no generic statements are true. Then it would be false in some important sense false that 'wolves hunt in packs', and false that 'condors can fly for hours', false even that 'penguins are birds'. It is false, furthermore, that eyes see and humans are mammals. But such denials are, I think, absurdities. (That is not to say that the denial is not worth considering. It might well be true. My point in calling the denial 'absurd' is to say that if it is true,

54. Cf. Bacon, *New Organon*, Book I. XLVIII "Although the most general principles in nature ought to be held merely positive, as they are discovered, and cannot with truth be referred to a cause, nevertheless the human understanding being unable to rest still seeks something prior in the order of nature. And then it is that in struggling toward that which is further off it falls back upon that which is nearer at hand, namely, on final causes, which have relation clearly to the nature of man rather than to the nature of the universe; and from this source have strangely defiled philosophy."

55. Prasada et al., "Conceptual Distinctions Amongst Generics."

an absurdity is true. If it is true, then the truth is absurd. And reality itself might well be absurd. I don't think it is, but there have been many philosophers who have thought so, and such thoughts cannot be justly dismissed without consideration.)

In fact, to reject *all truths* about natural kinds, I contend, is to reject the best scientific deliverances of our best scientific evidence. As Perlman says, "It is surprising that analytic philosophers, with their strong focus on science, would reject a notion that is so central to some areas of science, most notably, biology and engineering sciences… Biology cannot, or at least in practice does not, eliminate functions and purposes."[56] The great cost of throwing out generics *as a class* threatens to throw out a huge percentage of scientific statements in biology, organic chemistry, anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics, anatomy, and medicine.

The notion that some of nature is normative – or that some norms are natural – is the simply best logical explanation (and best *scientific* explanation) of the natural phenomena of biology. Animals, plants, and all living things exhibit end-directed or teleonomic behavior: eyes see, hemlock trees offer shade to fish, stomachs digest, deer leap to avoid predators. Even when Kant denies natural teleology – the biological theory that the form of an organism causes the parts to grow and relate to each other in a particular way – he admits we *cannot help thinking so*.[57]

Reduce

The second path is to accept natural teleonomic behavior and even the appearance of natural teleology, natural functions, etc., but to *reduce* these phenomena to less intimidating, mechanical, Laplacian terms.

Arguing for or against teleoreductionism has become a cottage industry.[58] It is impossible to do justice to the complexity of the dialectic here. I will content myself to note, and critique, two

56. Cosby, "The Modern Philosophical Resurrection of Teleology," 6.

57. Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose."

58. Cf. Cosby, "The Modern Philosophical Resurrection of Teleology," sec. III; and Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," chap. 3.

popular forms of reduction: the first reduces biological functions to causal contributions to a system and the second reduces teleonomic biological functions to naturally selected effects. A proponent of the first reduction is Donald Davidson. A proponent of the second is Ruth Millikan. For example, Ruth Millikan argues that an organism's proper function simply cannot be "read off" its capacities at present but must be known via empirical history. Her theory entails the unpalatable conclusion that an organ that is otherwise physically identical to, say, a heart, that was magically apparated into existence would not have a "proper function". She bites the bullet on this.

Reply

James Barham argues that neither of these forms of reduction is very promising: "In a nutshell, the problem is that neither theory can explain the normative character of biological processes in a coherent manner."[59] The problem with the "causal-role" reduction of teleonomic phenomena is that in order to even posit a hypothesis about how some parts of a system contribute to the achievement of its end or purpose, we must identify *in advance* which parts of the organism play a role in bringing about the end or purpose. But if we already know the causal contribution of those parts, what more could we learn by positing the causal-role theory? James Barham elaborates:

> With respect to the "causal-role" theory, there is no way to distinguish between functional and non-functional parts of a biological system without presupposing the normative character of the overall system as a whole – which begs the question at issue.

As regards the second form, Thompson insists that judgments about natural teleology are made true from the form of life under question, not from "hypotheses about the past."[60] Barham agrees. He says:

59. James Barham, "Confessions of an Atheist Darwin-Doubter" (Web; Evolution News, 2012), `http://www.evolutionnews.org/2012/05/confessions_of059861.html`.

60. Cf. Thompson, "The Representation of Life," 293. Toner adds that judgments about natural teleological facts are made true regardless of the origin of the facts, "whether about creation or natural selection." (Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism. 223.) This seems right to me. It does not matter for present purposes *how* the function came to be, just whether or not it really *is* at present.

> With respect to the "selected-effects" theory, the problem is that selection history is conceptually irrelevant to the identification of function. True, it has a role to play in explaining how present-day functions have come to exist. But selection history cannot possibly explain what it is about a biological process that constitutes it as a function… The reason is that our concept of function in no way depends on evolutionary history. If it did, then biologists like Aristotle, Galen, Harvey, and innumerable others who lived long before Darwin would not have had the means to identify the functions of organs, which they of course did. Sometimes, they got it wrong, as when Aristotle placed the seat of perception and thought in the heart, instead of the brain (though some of his predecessors got it right). But Aristotle's mistake was due to his inadequate knowledge of physiology, not to his ignorance of evolution.

If neither forms of 'teleoreduction' are likely to account for the normativity of the biological function in question, then it is a fundamental truth not only that hearts cause blood to be pumped but that hearts *are for* pumping blood – that is their natural function. And that is just the hypothesis Barham argues is the most likely:

> In a series of important articles and books over the past decade or so [many authors]have cast grave doubt on the coherence of any reductive analysis of function. Some of these authors (e.g., Jacobs, Maund, Zammito) call explicitly for a reconsideration of the possibility that teleological phenomena in biology might be both objectively real and irreducible.[61]

Accept as is

The third option is to accept that some natural facts are intrinsically normative, irreducible, natural facts. Although the very word 'teleology' is liable to sound quaint to modern ears, Barham has argued that 'teleological realism' is a rationally permissible view to take on biology.[62] Teleological realism in biology is making a come-back. For instance, Arnhart persuasively argues that teleology

61. Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," 10. Barham cites: Bedau (1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993), Cameron (2004), Christensen & Bickhard (2002), Jacobs (1986), Manning (1997), Maund (2000), McLaughlin (2001, 2009), Mossio et al. (2009), Mundale & Bechtel (1996), Nanay (2010), Nissen (1997), Perovic (2007), Walsh (2006).

62. Ibid.

is assumed in medicine.[63] Zammito clarifies ongoing relevance in biology, since organisms seem to be intrinsically purposeful.[64]

Thomas Nagel is a third who has followed out the argument for natural teleology from a much broader, cosmic perspective, though he too denies that the cosmos is like an orchestra being played.[65] Though Nagel took a lot of heat for his argument, Michael Chorost's review of *Mind and Cosmos* reminds readers that natural teleology is not so scientifically heretical as it might first seem. He says:

> Natural teleology is unorthodox, but it has a long and honorable history. For example, in 1953 the evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley argued that it's in the nature of nature to get more advanced over time. "If we take a snapshot view, improvement eludes us," he wrote. "But as soon as we introduce time, we see trends of improvement."… [the furthermore] paleontologist Simon Conway Morris, at the University of Cambridge, has argued that natural structures such as eyes, neurons, brains, and hands are so beneficial that they will get invented over and over again. They are, in effect, attractors in an abstract biological space that pull life in their direction. Contingency and catastrophe will delay them but cannot stop them. Conway Morris sees this as evidence that not only life but human life, and humanlike minds, will emerge naturally from the cosmos: "If we humans had not evolved, then something more or less identical would have emerged sooner or later."[66]

If scientists can countenance natural normativity via natural teleology as respectable, we philosophers not do the same? Certainly natural teleology is out of fashion; but the winds of intellectual fashion blow hither and yon, and we may yet discover that Aristotle was right.[67] Either way, philosophers of various schools (metaphysicians and ethicists) would do well to dialogue with biologists and cosmologists to come to grips with the possibility that our best evidence suggests that nature is nor-

63. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."

64. John Zammito, "Teleology Then and Now: The Question of Kant's Relevance for Contemporary Controversies over Function in Biology," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part* 37, no. 4 (2006): 748–70.

65. Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*.

66. Michael Chorost, "Where Thomas Nagel Went Wrong," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2013. Chorost argues that Nagel did not "go wrong" in his thesis but in presenting it philosophically without engaging the support from relevant scientific literature.

67. Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology*.

mative.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to clear away objections and show that it is at least *possible* that generics might denote natural normativity and that, in the case of human animals, similar patterns might be used to establish ethical norms. The challenge we have attempted to rebut was this:

1. If ethical naturalism is possibly true, then some facts are genuinely both natural and normative.
2. But no facts are genuinely both natural and normative.
3. Therefore ethical naturalism is not possibly true.

And we have shown that indeed *some* facts – especially facts about living things – are both natural and irredicubily normative. Of course, I have not yet tried to show *which* true generics about humans can serve as the basis for an ethical theory. All I have tried to show is that *some* of these generics are true. By denying the consequent, we are not necessarily affirming the antecedent. That affirmation requires another step, namely, to apply the above argument to human beings.

The argument that will help us transition from generics about the biological world in general to generics about human beings and which may provide the basis of normative *ethics* is this:

Human Normativity

1. On ethical naturalism, all generics can be used as premises in arguments with normative conclusions.
2. Some true generics are about humans (there are some human natural norms).
3. Therefore, some true generics about humans can be used as premises in arguments with normative conclusions.

Establishing premise 1 has been our task in this chapter. Establishing premise 2 is the task for the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Normativity of Human Nature

"The human virtues make their possessor good qua human being, one who is as ordinarily well fitted as a human being can be in not merely physical respects to live well, to flourish—in a characteristically human way."

–Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 208.

I. Applying Generics to Humanity

Human beings are natural entities importantly similar to animals and plants, though importantly different in exhibiting rational activity.

By calling humans 'natural' here I only wish to present an innocent truism: we are here, in nature. We are material. Not necessarily *wholly* material, but are we *at least* material at all? Yes. Do we eat food grown on earth, drink water from the earth, are we born from fellow humans and do we die and disintegrate into the earth like every other living thing? Yes. So we are natural. Again, I do not mean to prejudge the question of whether we are *also more than natural*. I simply mean to invoke the obvious that the *we are at least natural*. Since we are (at least) natural entities, and since scientific statements are about natural entities, then it is possible (and indeed quite common) to make scientific statements about us. 'Humans emigrated from Africa about 200,000 years ago' is

a statement about a natural species group, namely *homo sapiens sapiens*, the only extant members of the hominin clade.

So, for example, 'Humans are language users' is a generic scientific statement. Since some such statements are generic, teleological statements, and since some such statement can be used as the basis of evaluative truths, some such statements about human can be used as the basis of evaluative truths.

We saw above that the is-ought gap remains, but it is pre-emptively undercut as a problem when we realize that there exist thousands of perfectly scientifically respectable natural normative facts. Natural teleological facts, are, if you like, a natural "ought". And teleological facts obtain in many – perhaps all – living things. Generic truths about those living things are genuinely normative, and therefore can be used to derive genuinely normative conclusions.

To recall Hursthouse's statement from the beginning, ethical evaluations of *human beings* "depend upon our identifying what is characteristic of the species in question." So the success of our endeavor depends on finding true generic propositions about 'human beings' qua natural kind. That success depends further on examining whether the normativity in question is genuinely *ethical*.

Now we must go further and specify what kind of life it is we as human beings live arising from what kind of creatures we are. Of course, the difficulty comes in attempting to move from such vague statements to particular moral statements: 'Human beings make and keep promises.' This will give us initial insight into the concept of virtue, which is our main theme. The subsequent chapters will provide more detail into the nature of virtue.

Here is one: 'Human beings are practical, rational animals'. This is a generic, hence it is both descriptive and normative; it is a "thick" term. Initially, we can conclude that if human beings *really are* rational animals that an *irrational* human is ipso facto defective.[1] Again, I do not here intend to discuss mental illness, disability, birth defect, chromosomal disorders, and other such exceptions

1. To call a human 'defective' sounds like a schoolyard insult; but it is a straightforward, evaluative description of some people.

to 'normal' functional humans.

Two criteria for successful application to humans

Supposing there were a way to overcome the is-ought gap, two objections provide us with criteria our natural normativity theory will have to satisify The first objection is that there is no such thing as a universal human nature from which we might derive normative conclusions. Even the singular noun phrase "human nature" is liable to sound mystical and too abstract, like a platonic universal underlying all human beings. Bernard Williams summarizes the antiquated worldview that many are suspicious of:

> The idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is still to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave.[2]

The problem, of course, is that if human beings are a "mess" (as Williams puts it) then the normative conclusions to be derived would be equally messy. And indeed, humans are occasionally irrational and always variable, positing themselves in various ways, defining various values, charting various destinies. Ernst Mayr puts the alleged tension between the flexibility of evolutionary species and a fixed human nature in this way:

> The concepts of unchanging essences and of complete discontinuities between every *eidos* (type) and all others make genuine evolutionary thinking impossible. I agree with those who claim that the essentialist philosophies of Aristotle and Plato are incompatible with evolutionary thinking.[3]

A second objection is that if there is such thing as human nature, it is nothing more or less than our biological and physiological makeup. On this view, the only way to talk about our "nature" is to tell a series of complicated stories about our genetics, evolutionary history, and neurophysiology, perhaps even including cultural, geographical, and ecological settings. The problem here is that an empirical

2. Cf. Williams, 109.
3. Mayr, *Populations, Species, and Evolution*, 4.

"scientific" conception of human nature has nothing to do with *ethics*. All of the complicated stories we could tell – if they are genuinely scientific – would be purely *descriptive*. In response to this worry, Rosalind Hursthouse's respons is to reassure us that: "Ethical naturalism is not to be construed as the attempt to ground ethical evaluations in a scientific account of human nature."[4] Nevertheless, she *does* endorse the project of grounding ethical evaluations in human nature. If this grounding is not *scientific*, then how is a grounding of ethics going to work?

These objections can be overcome, but they are important framing tools for our answer. Generic statements about 'the human being' or the human life form have to capture what is genuinely true of the human life form, if there is such a thing. But generic statements about 'the human being' or the human life form cannot *merely* be descriptions of our genes, organ systems, 30 billion brain neurons, and so on.

Generic Truths

To satisfy these criteria, let's first assemble a sample of scientific generics about humanity. What can we – by careful observation and inductive generalization – confidently say about genetically modern humans without much scientific controversy? Examining ourselves "from the outside" as it were, from an external, objective, cool, scientific view point, what is a human being?

Human beings are *homo sapiens sapiens*. The species emigrated from Africa about 200,000 years ago, and are the only extant members of the hominin clade. They are language users whose language is a formal structure of open-ended, productive, recursive system allowing potentially limitless combinations of meaningful words; they are symbol users, communicating with signs and symbols; they are bipedal and walk upright; have opposable thumbs; have large brains relative to other primates, with a neocortex and prefrontal cortex that correlate with abstract thinking, problem solving, society, and culture; are creative; self-reflective; establish social relations upon biological grounds (some children growing up with natural parents) and upon normative grounds (some

4. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* especially chapter 10.

orphans growing up in orphanages created by philanthropists); are moral[5]; are curious and gather knowledge into sciences; don't just hunt and gather but farm, store, combine, ferment, and cook food; eat vegetables, red meat, fish, nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, mushroom, mollusks, herbs, and more; don't just live on the ground or under ground, but build houses and shleters; don't just Humans don't just build shelters of one particular type; they invent new shelters and structures in new places, such as caves, trees, hills, mountains, etc.; human females go through menopause; have 32 teeth; 4' 7" to 6' 3" tall (plus or minus), and weigh 120-180 pounds (plus or minus); have two sets of 23 chromosomes in each somatic cell, and about 22,000 total genes; reproduce sexually.

Is there anything of potential ethical significance in this collection of commonplaces? I think so. If we had to gather these various features into categories, we could capture most of them under two categories: animal (of a particular sort) and rational. The very concept of 'reason' is our abstraction of a set of capacities we notice in ourselves, such as the capacities to observe, perceive as, create, reflect, decide, determine, abstract, infer, explain, deduce, remember, predict, criticize, praise, blame, admonish, and so on. All of these activities are (a) actions or practices consciously performed or conducted by an agent, that (b) aim to know what is true, what the world is like, and what to do about it, and (c) are essential social activities in that they are essentially linguistic and language is acquired only with a social context (such as family or culture).

There is much truth to the old formula, that human nature is to be a rational animal. We might say that our species is an intentional primate, the only language-using semiotic primate or a self-concious mammal.

> The nature of x is both what is special about this x and what makes this x one of the x's as opposed to the y's. When x is defined per genus et differentiam both the genus and the differentiating characteristic and their combination could be taken to express what is the nature of x.… Human nature is what differentiates us from the animals and the plants. By nature we are rational beings. Our human nature, however, is also that in virtue of which we belong to the animal kingdom and to the living organisms. By nature we are mammals. We may thus use the concept of nature

5. Joyce, "Ethics and Evolution."

> to differentiate rather than include, but also to include rather than differentiate. And we may use the concept of nature to express that differentiation and inclusion should not be seen as incompatible.[6]

Suppose that the earth was formed about 4.5 billion years ago and that life arose on earth 3.5 billion years ago. Suppose that anatomically modern humans arose about 200,000 years ago.

What defines us? What characterizes us? The old formulation of human nature was that humans are rational, featherless, bipedal, animals. I argue that this is still the best, emprically verifiable, scientific, and philosophical formulation of human nature. That we are animals is plain to anyone who wishes to examine the facts. Clearly, something changes when we examine human beings compared to all other animals or all other natural kinds.[7] We continue to evaluate humans on the basis of their species, but we evaluate not just their health and normal developmental stages, and their maturity, but their *actions*. The fact that our being potentially rational differentiates us from whales and chimps and cauliflower is just as plain. I do not wish to assume that all species have *only one* differentium. (There may be a thousand other rational animals out in the cosmos somewhere else.) I only urge the point that we happen to be the only ones on earth.

So the attempt to characterize human nature, however broadly, must not only cite our *physicality* – our relation to the physical world – but our animality – our relation to the living world as a whole. What property or set of properties differentiates humans from any other animal, or any other physical object? So the property of being an animal encompasses a whole range of biological and neurophysiological facts that obtain in each normal human being. And the property of being potentially rational encompasses a range of psychological, intellectual, and cultural facts that obtain in each normal human being.

Our language is unique. Other animals that communicate use non-grammatical closed systems with a small, finite set of symbols.^[Communication systems used by other animals such as

6. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 207.

7. Katherine Hawley and Alexander Bird, "What Are Natural Kinds?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (2011): 205–21.

bees or apes are closed systems that consist of a finite, usually very limited, number of possible ideas that can be expressed. In contrast, human language is open-ended and productive, meaning that it allows humans to produce a vast range of utterances from a finite set of elements, and to create new words and sentences."

I would add to this formulation that we are *practical*, rational animals. That is, we do not just act but act on reasons. Micah Lott says: "Human form is characterized by practical reason. This is the capacity to act in light of an awareness of the ground of our actions, to recognize and respond to practical reasons."[8] We set goals and act in order to achieve goals. In the unity of reason between theoretical and practical that I shall ground both moral and intellectual virtue. All the acts of reason (whether theoretical or practical) are acts of *reason.* (I shall pick up the theme of practical rationality in a later chapter.)

I must hasten to add that "humans are practical, rational animals" is a generic. It admits of exceptions. Anacephalic babies are not even potentially rational, for they lack the subvenient brain structure necessary for rational consciousness, yet they are recognizably *human* (they are not opossums), just defectively so. (A war veterans is still human even if he or she is no longer bipedal!) Injury, illness, genetic defect, radiation poisoning, and any number of other negative factors may render a human being sub-rational. Coma, mental illness, and other factors may render a human being non-practical (unable to direct his or her own life to a normal degree). The point of the argument above was that generic truths about humans inform us about the lifeform of the species.

Furthermore, Aristotle observed that, "Man alone of the animals possesses speech." (Politics*****, 1.1253a) Nothing in modern science has superceded or contradicted this.

Someone might be wondering: What does all of this have to do with virtue? Peter Geach says "Men need virtues as bees need stings."[9] Philippa Foot echoes Geach's statement about "need" and "necessity" as well. Alasdair MacIntyre subtitled his most recent monograph: "human beings

8. Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form."
9. Geach, *The Virtues*, 17.

need the virtues."[10] The kind of necessity being predicated here is the same kind of necessity with which a bee needs a sting. It is a formal and teleological necessity. Virtues are those qualities needed by us as members of the human species, each member of which exemplifies the same human nature of being a potentially practical, rational animals.

II. Neo-Aristotelians on Human Nature

Foot on Applying Generics to Human Nature

Foot is well aware that the imposition of normativity onto brute nature, or the derivation of normativity from brute nature, is likely to seem absurd:

> The idea that any features and operations of humans could be evaluated in the same way as those of plants and animals may provoke instant opposition. For to say that this is possible is to imply that some at least of our judgements of goodness and badness in human beings are given truth or falsity by the conditions of human life. And even if it is allowed that certain evaluations of this kind are possible—those vaguely thought of perhaps as 'merely biological'—there is bound to be scepticism about the possibility that 'moral evaluation' could be like this.[11]

However, she has tried to earn a hearing for this notion by arguing that the "meaning of 'good' in so-called 'moral contexts' " does not have a special logic of its own. Rather, as she insists, "no change in the meaning of 'good' between the word as it appears in 'good roots' and as it appears in 'good dispositions of the human will.'[12] Hursthouse articulates Foot's basic point in this way:

> The starting point is an idea that she has never lost sight of, and which figures in her early attack on Hare. It is the idea that 'good', like 'small', is an attributive adjective. What that entails is that, although you can evaluate and choose things according to almost any criteria you like, you must select the noun or noun phrase you use to describe the thing you are calling good advisedly, for it determines the criteria of goodness that are appropriate. Hare can call a cactus a good one on the grounds that it is diseased and dying, and choose it for that reason, but what he must not

10. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.
11. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 38.
12. Ibid., 39.

> do is describe it as a good cactus, for a cactus is a living thing. He can describe it as a good 'decorative object for my windowsill' or 'present to give my detestable mother-in-law', but not as a good cactus.[13]

The point here is that 'goodness' is not a sui-generis, non-natural property projected by human beings out onto the world; rather, 'good' and 'defective' pick out natural properties of living things. The goodness of a cactus is relative to its cactus nature; the goodness of human beings is relative to their human nature. And that human nature is to be or have the potential to become practical, rational animals. Hursthouse continues:

> When we moved from the evaluations of other social animals to ethical evaluations of ourselves, there was an obvious addition to the list of aspects which are evaluated. The other animals act. So do we occasionally, but mostly we act from reason, as they do not, and it is primarily in virtue of our actions from reason that we are ethically good or bad human beings. So that is one difference that our being rational makes.[14]

A major objection that may arise to this equation of "rationality" with "human nature" is the response that rationality (in us) is just too different from any other kind of value or evauluability in animals and plants. Animals are not rational and so seem to belong to the realm of bald nature, pure descriptivity; humans are potentially rational and so they seem not to belong to the realm of bald nature, but live in the space of reasons. Culture, language, science, rationality, philosophy are all in the space of reasons. Hursthouse summarizes this worry as follows:

> This is a major part of the genuinely transforming effect the fact of our rationality has on the basic naturalistic structure. But has it transformed the structure beyond recognition? I said that ethical naturalism looks to be doomed to failure if it depends on identifying what is characteristic of human beings as a species, in the way their pleasures and pains and ways of going on are characteristic of the other species. By and large we can't identify what is characteristic of human beings as a species in this way—there is too much variety. boy are you I'm curling like she's very eat meatAnd even if we could, it looks as though we would not allow anything we identified to carry any normative weight if we thought it was something we could change. So is ethical naturalism, after all, a non-starter?[15]

13. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 195.
14. Ibid., 217.
15. Ibid., 222.

McDowell is the major proponent of this worry.

III. McDowell The Initial Argument for Social or Practical Teleology

McDowell's objection is that goodness is one thing and natural facts another. He urges that the is-ought gap is indeed a real distinct between human normativity (on the one side) and natural descriptivitiy (on the other). This objection he shares with non-naturalist realists, subjectivists, and moral anti-realists. On the other hand, he does not think that goodness is *purely* subjective, originating in moral evaluators and projected outward by them onto the world. I will try, in this section, to get a clear handle on this paradoxical view. An initial quotation from McDowell expresses his relation to Foot:

> Philippa Foot has long urged the attractions of ethical naturalism. I applaud the negative part of her point, which is to reject various sorts of subjectivism and supernaturalist rationalism. But I doubt whether we can understand a positive naturalism in the right way without first rectifying a constriction that the concept of nature is liable to undergo in our thinking. Without such preliminaries, what we make of ethical naturalism will not be the radical and satisfying alternative to Mrs Foot's targets that naturalism can be. Mrs Foot's writings do not pay much attention to the concept of nature in its own right, and this leaves a risk that her naturalism may seem to belong to this less satisfying variety. I hope an attempt to explain this will be an appropriate token of friendship and admiration.[16]

As this quotation makes clear, McDowell shares Foot's rejection of "subjectivism and supernaturalist rationalism" but he disputes her "concept of nature". McDowell's classifies his own view as a "sort of naturalism" – namely "relaxed naturalism."[17] Farreira calls McDowell-type views "excellence naturalism" and Foot-type views "empirical naturalism". McDowell invokes Aristotle's notion of

16. McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, 167.

17. He calls it by a variety of other names: 'liberal' naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind and World* 89, 98); 'acceptable naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* 197). Like Thomas Nagel, he also finds friends in Plato and Aristotle, calling his view 'Greek naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind and World* 174), 'Aristotelian naturalism' (ibid., 196), 'naturalism of second nature' (ibid., 86), or 'naturalized platonism' (ibid., 91). Cf. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism. 204; and Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).

ethics, by which he hopes to rethink our conception of human nature and nature as a whole. He says, "the rethinking requires a different conception of actualizations of our nature."[18] Second nature is that space in which human beings are initiated into particular ways of behaving and knowing.

What is his objection to Foot's view? She thinks that normative facts are response-independent features of nature. He says that the naive realist view (that moral values are response-independent) is "impossible – at least on reflection – to take seriously…"[19] The first reason McDowell can't "take naive realism seriously" is that he finds one sort of motivational internalism absurd. He points to a "worry about how something that is brutely *there* could nevertheless stand in an internal relation to some exercise of human sensibility."[20] In this McDowell agrees with Mackie: the "central doctrine of European moral philosophy" is a mistake;[21] it is wrong to think that some things *merit* certain responses by virtue of what they are and what we are. (McDowell's worry is akin to Mackie's bewilderment over the notion that "to-be-pursuedness" is built into things.) A second worry is that the doctrine of objective value, where normative facts are primary qualities of nature, has been discredited or outmoded by modern science. The modern scientific picture of nature is "disenchanted" from such instrinsic values as meaning and morality. He says, "The most striking occurence in the history of thought between Aristotle and ourselves is the rise of modern science."[22] This objection McDowell shares with Gibbard and Blackburn.

Yet McDowell does not conclude (as many do), that therefore values are merely subjective; he does not conclude that there is no such thing as natural normativity. McDowell's anti-dualist position here (as elswhere!) is liable to puzzle or frustrate some philosophers. He is not a realist; but he is not an anti-realist. He is an "anti-anti-realist". McDowell is always fighting on two fronts, attacking a position without thereby supporting its apparent opposite. (Similarly, in *Mind and World* he attempts to dissolve the "vacillation" between naive empirical realism and "Rampont Platonism".)

18. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.
19. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo, eds. (Blackwell, 2007), 137.
20. Ibid., 143.
21. John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Penguin UK, 1977).
22. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 174.

It may be worthwhile to make the contextual observation that McDowell's position here reflects his broader project of *dissolving dualisms*. He says he is influenced by two main sources: the "Socratic tradition" and Wittgenstein.[23] From the Socratic tradition he draws a way of thinking in which dualisms do not even arise. And from the later Wittgenstein he draws a way of doing "therapeutic" philosophy[24] – philosophy that 'leaves everything as it is'[25]. That is, McDowell believes many philosophical puzzles arise not from puzzling reality but from errors in *our own thinking*, so we need "therapy": dualisms need to be *exorcized*.

It makes sense that McDowell disputes both Foot's brand of moral realism and also its apparent opposite, subjectivism and anti-realism. But what is the alternative to the apparently exhaustive dualism of seeing values (or norms) as *either* facts of nature like primary qualities *or* unreal, illusory, and purely subjective. His answer is that values are "secondary qualities" or "dispositional properties" of nature. His essay "Values and Secondary Qualities" argues that values are like colors and unlike shapes.[26] We might paraphrase this thesis by saying that "natural normativity" is a quality *in the world* (not just in our heads) but it is not Lockean "primary qualities." It is, rather, Lockean secondary qualities.

Yet McDowell also disagrees with the opposite extreme of Foot's view, as represented by those (such as J.L. Mackie, Alan Gibbard, and Simon Blackburn) who believe that normativity is "projected" by philosophers and scientists onto the natural facts. Mackie's error theory gets right the common sense view that "ordinary evaluative thought [is] a matter of sensitivity to aspects of the world."[27] Secondary qualities are "subjective" in that they cannot be adequately conceived "except

23. McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, preface.

24. Cynthia Macdonald and Graham Macdonald, *McDowell and His Critics* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

25. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.* Section 124.

26. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo, eds., "Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology" (Blackwell, 2007), 137–45. I shall cite this anthology. The essay is also printed in McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, chapter 7.

27. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 137.

in terms of certain subjective states"[28] but not in that they are therefore illusory. A secondary quality is not "a mere figment of the subjective state that purports to be an experience of it."[29]

He says a secondary property ascription is true "in virtue of the object's disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance."[30] Experience of secondary qualities is a (sense) perceptual experience. This a Lockean doctrine. Redness is not *merely* a microscopic texture property (say, the texture that scatters all light waves except red ones) because microscopic textures don't *look red* and things that *look red* appear so to observers with no knowledge of such textures.

Colors are response-dependent, while other properties (say, 'squareness') are response-independent. Color-properties must be defined partly by their "objective" or response-independent aspects and partly phenomenologically. Shape-properties, by contrast, can be defined by their objective or mind-independent aspects. It makes no sense to speak of what *redness is* apart from perceptions of red *in perceivers*. Similarly, it makes no sense to speak of "dangerousness" apart from a subject who is potentially vulnerable. So, perhaps, it also makes no sense to speak of "rightness" apart from a subject who potentially judges the value of a thing.

Yet by the same token right and wrong are not *purely* invented. The property of "being such as to look red" may or may not be *have ever been perceived as red* by any observer (if, for example, the appropriate conditions have never obtained). So a Lockean secondary quality may be response-independent in some sense, but it is not *redness as such*. It is the dispositional property that is disposed to present us with a appearance of a particular phenomenal character. So values (like colors) are dispositional properties.

Goodness, badness, and other values are therefore grounded in "second nature."[31] The space of reasons in which our rational capacities operate makes us sensibile to those dispositional properties of primary nature which become, for us, values such as goodness and badness. We will

28. Ibid., 139.
29. Ibid., 139.
30. Ibid., 138.
31. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 188 and following.

explore McDowell's view of second nature a bit more in a later chapter. Suffice it for now that "second nature" is a distinctly human phenomenon. We partially re-enchant nature by bringing primary facts into the space of reasons when they weren't there before.

McDowell, recall, thinks that values are secondary qualities of the world but not primary. This belief is consistent with his solution to the mind-body problem that even primary qualities are not given to us in experience without the involvement of spontaneous conceptual capacities. He assumes that nature – primary nature – is bald nature, disenchanted from values, teloi, and other esoterica. Yet to posit humanity, especially human rationality, as merely mechanical would be to deny our rationality. So he posits the space of reasons. Humanity exists in a space of reasons where we recognize reasons for belief and reasons for action. We are initiated into a Space of reasons by education, formation, cultivation (or *Bildung*).[32]

McDowell's objection and its broader implications

We might put McDowell's complaint punchily in this way: human rationality is not part and parcel of nature, which is irrational or sub-rational. We cannot naturalize reason (eradicate or reduce it to *mere* bald nature) but neither can we justifiably project onto non-rational nature properties of the human mind.

Richard Bernstein calls John McDowell's naturalism a much needed "novel twist"[33] on the stalemate between those who think naturalism will eventually make good on its promise to naturalize reason and those who are sick of waiting and ready to give up. He quotes Joseph Margolis and Mark Gottlieb as saying that:

> Naturalism in the current analytic sense may well be the dominant programmatic orientation of Anglo-American philosophy. It may be characterized as an informally linked family of doctrines and strategies broadly in accord with 'ancestral' themes of W. V. O. Quine's "Epistemology Naturalized." The original themes feature in Quine

32. Bildung=formation, education; bild=form, image.

33. Richard Bernstein, "Whatever Happened to Naturalism," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 69, no. 2 (Nov 1995): 57–76.

> include: a preference for physicalism of one sort or another, a strong emphasis on the continuity of science and philosophy, particularly at the explanatory level, and the effective replacement of legitimate inquiries of a typically noncausal sort by causal inquiries centering on belief."[34]

The "specter of Kant keeps surfacing in thinkers like Putnam and Habermas who are convinced that reason cannot be naturalized."[35] The "novel twist" comes from John McDowell. Bernstein says that "at first glance, it seems that McDowell fits right into the tradition of Kantian anti-naturalism — a tradition that runs from Kant right up to Putnam and Habermas" since he thinks "reason can't be naturalized."[36] But his arguments, Bernstein thinks, against bald naturalism amount to some sophisticated question-begging via sleight of hand.

The view I am attempting to defend is closest to Foot's, and may be seen as demanding that reason and nature are unified. Some might describe this unification as the naturalization of reason, but others might describe it as the rationalization (or re-enchantment) of nature. Is enchanted nature naturalistic? I say that it is. But others have complained that Foot's neo-Aristotelian "naturalism" does not amount to a naturalistic theory. They object that Foot is not a "naturalist." Allen Thompson, though defending Foot overall, concedes the poignancy of the worry:

> The objection I think I understand and want to take seriously starts from the thought that in employing such notions as life and organism and life-form or species we introduce something foreign, in particular something 'biological', or crudely empirical, into the elements of ethical theory. Any such view, one thinks, must involve either a vulgar scientistic dissolution of the ethical, tending maybe toward an 'evolutionary ethics', or else the covert substitution of an outdated metaphysics for what we know to be empirical. Each path leads to its own absurdities. Together they may be thought to betray a yearning to view our practices 'from outside' or 'from sideways on' in hope perhaps of providing them with a foundation or an external grounding.[37]

In a different context, Hacker-Wright articulates much the same worry:

34. Ibid., 58.
35. Ibid., 58.
36. Ibid., 62.
37. Thompson, *Life and Action*.

> …we can see that Foot's naturalism offers a fresh approach to objectivism in ethics. Yet, in spite of such attractions, *Natural Goodness* is in the midst of a cool reception. Here, I will argue that this reception is due to the fact that Foot's naturalism draws on a picture of the biological world that is at odds with the view embraced by most contemporary scientists and philosophers. Foot's readers commonly assume that the account of the biological world that she must want to adhere to, and that she nevertheless mistakenly departs from, is the account offered by contemporary neo-Darwinian biological sciences.[38]

Response to McDowell: Unrestricted or Restricted 'Nature'?

Both McDowell and Foot reject subjectivism; morality is not merely invented. So their disagreements, while serious, must be seen as an internecine. Nevertheless, I think McDowell's ingenious alternative to "empirical naturalism" or "strict naturalism" is flawed. So, before I defend my own version of Footian realism, I would like to point out two or three aspects of the inadequacy of McDowell's constructivist alternative.

1. The first critique is that McDowell wants to denigrate one kind of scientific realism (say, realism about evaluative judgments of health and sickness) while endorsing another kind of scientific realism (about shapes, sizes, weights, and other primary qualities.) That is, he denigrates the desire to find goodness in (primary) nature as a kind of neurosis or anxiety arising from the philosophical vertigo we experience upon becoming inculcated with "the scientific worldview." But if there is such a thing as "the scientific worldview" – the best thinking about the best deliverances of our best sciences – then it includes the deliverances of biology. It is hard to be asked to reject "science" (scientific knowledge from biology) on behalf of "science" (scientific knowledge from physics). One begins to suspect that the request is that we reject genuienly scientific knowledge from biology on behalf of philosphical materialism, which wields the word 'science' as a bludgeon with which to beat its ideological opponents. McDowell acknowledges that his critics will criticize him for failing to live up to "philistene scientism" and yet criticizes the Footian picture for philistene scientism.
2. A second critique is that McDowell himself *does* allow that "values" can be primary qualities in nature. The theory of danger also helps McDowell in his conclusion deny that his view is a variant of "projectivism." The "epistemology of danger" that arises from McDowell's "theory of danger"[39] helps explain moral epistemology. There is *something*

38. Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" 309.
39. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 142–3.

about red things *themselves* that makes them give us redness experiences; there is something about the dangerous animal itself that gives us fear experiences. That something is not *the form of red* or *the form of danger*, but it is also not *nothing.* The "theory of danger" is intended to capture this "something" with the important notion of *merit*. Red objects *just appear as red* to us under the proper circumstances. They *just do* dispose us to have red experiences. But dangerous objects *merit* appearing fearful and dangerous. They *merit* that we have a fear experience. To describe a bear (say) as "dangerous" to rabbits is to say something about bears and about rabbits in their context on planet earth. The rabbit need not judge the bear *as dangerous* – he need not apply concepts – for it to be true without projection that the bear is indeed dangerous. When he runs away from a abear, the rabbit is not responding to the bear's size or fur or any other obvious empirical quality; the rabbit is responding to its danger.

3. The third critique is that McDowell faces a dilemma. He must choose between two incompatible definitions of nature, and he wants both. On the one hand, he wants the term 'nature' to analytically exclude anything falling under the description of 'supernatural'; on the other hand, he most emphatically does *not* want to exclude "second nature" of human thought and experience in the space of reasons. But he can't have what he wants, at least, not without further argumentation. He has merely asserted (but not earned the conceptual rights) to his conception of nature. Fink[40] expertly exposes McDowell's sleight of hand on this issue. To draw out the critique of McDowell that Fink and I share in common, I will have to present the details of his article.

The first point, from Fink, picks up McDowell's statement that "Mrs Foot's writings do not pay much attention to the concept of nature in its own right". The conversations about 'two sorts of naturalism' or different kinds of 'ethical naturalism' are, after all, conversations about nature. What is 'nature?' Some would urge that we can resolve this sticky business by stipulation. But Fink disagrees:

> This is a terminological issue, but it is not easy to resolve simply by choosing one's definition of 'nature' and then sticking to it. No account of naturalism should forget the fact that 'nature' is, as Raymond Williams puts it, 'perhaps the most complex word in the language' (Williams 1981: 184), or as Hume puts it, a word 'than which there is none more ambiguous and equivocal' (THN: III.I.II.). In this section I shall try to give a somewhat systematic overview of some of this complexity that simply cannot be reduced by philosophical fiat…Indeed, it is a deep root of ambiguity that we can talk about the nature of art, law, language, culture, morality, normativity, history, civilization, spirit, mind, God, or nothingness even if we otherwise regard these as non-natural, that is, as not belonging to nature as a realm. There is no contradiction in talking about the nature of the unnatural, the super-natural, or the

40. "Three Sorts of Naturalism."

> non-natural, just as it is an open question what the nature of the natural is.[41]

To see the dilemma McDowell faces, consider that there are at least two kinds of conceptions of nature: (1) "Restricted nature" picks out some subset of all things that are natural, leaving everything else 'non-natural', unnatural, or supernatural. Fink provides a list of eight different intuitive ways of contrasting (a restricted conception of) nature with what is non-natural. For instance, 'nature' could mean the world unaffected by human intervention (e.g., the arrangement of trees in the Yukon is natural) or "the empirical world as opposed to the intelligible world of the abstract, logical, or mathematical" (e.g., formal sciences contrast with sciences of nature.) All of these eight contrast with the (2) unrestricted nature. "Unrestricted nature" is just a multisyllabic synonym for "all." It leaves nothing out. This is the ninth option Fink summarizes as follows:

> Such a ninth conception of nature would be an unrestricted conception. It would express the idea that there is one world only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be. There are no realms above or beyond nature. To be is to be in nature and to be in continuity with everything else in nature. Even the greatest and deepest differences are differences within nature rather than differences between nature and something else.[42]

With these distinctions in hand, we can observe a crucial point that no one philosophical view has copyright on the term 'naturalism.' For example, classical materialism is perhaps a paradigmatic form of 'naturalism.'[43] By Fink's lights, classical materialism is a form a restricted naturalism for it affirms that whatever is material is part of nature, and so that the label 'not-natural' applies to whatever is not material (or not obviously material, such as ghosts, souls, and fairies). But classical materialism is not the *only* form of restricted nature. Rather, *the idealist, too, can rightly lay claim to the title of naturalism.*

41. Ibid., 206.
42. Ibid., 206.
43. @ Roy Wood Sellars, "Why Naturalism and Not Materialism?" *The Philosophical Review* 36, no. 3 (1927): 216–25.

To see why idealism is a form of restricted naturalism, Fink takes a highly informative detour to analyze Plato's *Laws*. There he finds a Greek trichotomy between events that come about by nature (*physis*), chance, and art. 'Nature' and 'chance' explain why plants grow, why the sun moves, and so on. 'Art' explains why houses have roofs, why humans wear clothes, and anything else that we do and that nature and chance could *not* have done. The "natural" pair in this trichotomy consists of the first two: that which comes about, so to speak, on its own, *prior to* and *independent of* intelligent intervenion from humans or gods. This conception of nature excludes not only the supernatural but also the cultural, the fictional or imaginative, and so on. The Athenian does not accept this "dangerous" conception of nature. Rather, he argues that "soul is necessarily prior in origin to things which belong to body, seeing that soul is older than body."[44] Fink comments on this passage:

> The Athenian doesn't just leave the concept physis to the 'men of science'. He does not first accept their conception of nature and then confront them with the claim that there is something extra-natural—the soul or the gods—which they have disregarded and which is in fact prior to nature. No. Like McDowell the Athenian is eager to have nature on his side. He therefore challenges the scientists' right to restrict the term 'nature' to the soulless, partly necessary and partly accidental combinations of the elements.

The Athenian proves his desired point – that soul is "older than" and prior to body – by first defining 'soul' as self-movement, and the cause of motion in other things. Material bodies either do not move at all or they are moved by something else. Since all material things are either moved (by another moving thing) or unmoved, material things cannot be the first principles of motion. But since soul *is self-motion*, it is the first principle of motion. Or rather, the first *ensouled* body is able to move itself, and therefore to move other material things.

Fink's comment is that "This, I take it, is pretty rampant Platonism but clearly presented as an account of the soul as natural becaus eprimary in existence… mind is prior to world."[45] This brings us back around to idealism as naturalism. If soul is the primary sense of nature, then body is

44. Cooper, *Complete Works of Plato*, *Laws* 891cff.
45. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 215.

"second nature"! Mind is the primary thing, the first thing, the paradigmatic thing, against which mere body is contrasted.

We can now see the crucial point about 'naturalism.' Idealism and materialism turn out to be *identical* in one respect: they offer a "restricted conception of nature" and relegate to a "secondary" status everything that is not "natural" in the privileged sense. Idealism and materialism of course *contrast* – indeed, *compete* – in that they fight each other for the right to call *their* preferred side of the body-soul divide the *first* and *natural* side. Fink bolsters this point with a quotation from Aristotle showing that Aristotle is aware of the competition between the matter-form divide. "Some identify the nature or substance of a natural object with the immediate constituent… e.g., wood is the 'nature' of the bed… [others] that 'nature' is the shape or form."[46] His comment on this passage is:

> Like in Plato, we find here both a definition of the word 'nature' (an inner source or cause of being moved and being at rest) and two competing conceptions of what that source is, namely matter and form (the material and the formal cause in Aristotle's sense). Aristotle himself finds it most satisfying to regard the formal (and the teleological or final) cause as the nature of x.

The point of these reflections is that McDowell wants to return to the unrestricted conception of nature. The restricted conceptions of nature (materialism and idealism) are in ideological battle; some philosophers are willing to pick a side and battle it out with the other side. The unrestricted conception wins the war by overcoming it, by embracing both body and mind, brain and consciousness, matter and form, in a comprehensive view. The cost, however, is that one no longer has the right to exclude opponents on the basis of their positing something real over and above nature (for now one has defined 'real over and above nature' as a contradiction in terms). This cost McDowell does not wish to pay.

Culture, art, human intervention, rationality, and so on are part of the all. Fink quotes Dewey to make this point:

46. Ibid., 216, quoting from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2014) *Physics*: 2, 1 (192b7ff).

> Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They *are* the earth in one of its manifest operations. It is the business of those who are concerned with the theory of the earth, geographers and geologists, to make this fact evident, in its various implications. The theorist who would deal philosophically with fine art has a like task to accomplish. (Dewey 1958: 3–4, italics in original) On this conception the aesthetical (and the ethical) are not independent of nature, but they are not somehow based on nature or supervening on it either; rather, they simply are nature in some of its manifest operations. To think otherwise is both to mystify the aesthetical (and ethical) and to trivialize nature. The man- made, the artificial, the cultural, the historical, the ethical, the normative, the mental, the logical, the abstract, the mysterious, the extraordinary, are all examples of ways of being natural rather than examples of ways of being non- natural. Nature is never *mere* nature. That which is *more* than *mere* is nature, too.

McDowell has not allowed himself to pick sides. Yet, instead of embracing the unrestricted conception without qualification, he puts the ball in one cup and then moves it around to the other side, pretending the ball was in the other cup all along. I find it odd that McDowell qua hero of anti-dualist has allowed himself merely to *name and claim* an unrestricted conception of nature while fully developing and endorsing a restricted conception of nature.

Compare with Sellars:

> I mean that naturalism takes nature in a definite way as identical with reality, as self-sufficient and as the whole of reality. And by nature is meant the space-time-causal system which is studied by science and in which our lives are passed.[47]

The first sentence explicitly endorses an unrestricted conception of nature. The second sentence invisibly and secretly slides the ball into the other cup, explictly endorsing an incompatible restricted conception of nature. The second sentence merely *assumes* that the "space-time-causal system which is studied by science and in which our lives are passed" is "identical with reality". The second sentence asserts: "Nature is all there is!" with an exclamation point and a loud voice. But nobody (not idealists or supernaturalists) dispute that "Nature (unrestricted nature) is all there is"; they only dispute the implicit assumption, that the space-time-causal-system is all there is.

47. Sellars, "Why Naturalism and Not Materialism?" 217.

McDowell sees the same question-begging in what he calls "philistine scientism."[48] As Fink summarizes:

> McDowell has convincingly shown that what Bernard Williams calls the absolute conception of reality is merely restricted, bald naturalism ideologically presented as absolute (MVR: 112–31, esp. sect. 5).[49]

Nevertheless, McDowell is of two minds. He rejects the restricted conceptions of nature offered him by the philistine scientism and by Kantian idealism, but he explicitly rejects the only route available to him: an unrestricted conception of nature. Fink continues:

> Nothing less than a naturalism that deserves to be presented as absolute could help break the spell of bald naturalism without merely replacing one restricted sort of naturalism with another and thus keeping the oscillations going.[ibid.[50] 219}

I conclude that, despite their differences, McDowell shares with Mackie and other subjectivists radically reductive, disenchanted, Laplacian picture of material nature as a manifold of bald descriptive facts. The richer – and more scientific – unrestricted conception of nature is the one Foot (and MacIntyre) can help us to recover. McDowell merely asserts, without additional argument, the common prejudice that "modern science" somehow disenchants nature, when in fact the "partial re-enchantment" he himself endeavors to recover is already present *within modern science*.

Another objection to McDowell: Dualism

> The concept of purpose, together with the closely related concepts of normativity and agency, stand at the crossroads of three academic disciplines: the philosophy of action, the philosophy of biology, and the nexus of theoretical biology and cognitive science that is concerned with the theory of the "self-organization" of "autonomous agents." Unfortunately, there has been very little cross-fertilization among the liteatures of these three disciplines. As a result, the philosophical literature tends to work with a scientifically outdated image of living things as rigid "machines." This results in a picture in which only human beings (or at most the higher animals) can

48. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 346.
49. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 219.
50.

> be properly ascribed purposes and agency in the full normative sense. From this perspective, we appear to be faced with an unappealing choice between eliminating teleology and normativity from our picture of nature altogether and understanding these phenomena as they are manifested in our own human form of life as floating free from any grounding in the natural world.[51]

IV. MacIntyre: Social Teleology

Alasdair MacIntyre's position on natural normativity is closer to McDowell's in most ways. That said, has shifted over the decades. I would like to mention both his earlier view and later view.

MacIntyre's earlier view — in *After Virtue* — is closer to that of McDowell than that of Foot. There, he emphasizes "second nature" far more than primary nature. That is, he finds a ground of normativity not in our life-form but in us: in our social identities, our culture, our rationality. For example, he says his account of virtue "happily not Aristotelian" for "although this account of the virtues is teleological, it does not require any allegiance to Aristotle's metaphysical biology."[52] The "metaphysical biology" MacIntyre refers to here is that metaphysically realist view that formal and final causes inhere (and in fact constitute) biological species.[53]

That said, MacIntyre does most emphatically argue for a teleological form of ethics based on the normativity of *human* nature. He grounds teleology not in non-human nature but in human nature, specifically our practical, social nature. He calls this notion "social teleology." The notion

51. Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," 1.

52. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 197.

53. These causes may be understood by metaphysical realists as intelligible forms or universals which the intellect, by virtue of its intelligible powers, can be abstracted. As John Haldane says: content-determining principles of perception are one and the same as the character-determining principles of the objects of perception — the identity of act and object." Intellection, in turn, is a distinctly human (rational) activity. While animals can not only sense but *perceive*, humans have the capacity of intellection, the power of abstracting the forms themselves from percepts. An animal can sense an informed, organized object; an animal can be affected by the object. But the human animal can *acquire information* from the organized object. The ability to perceive something *as*, or even to perceive something big and brown with a smudge on its nose, does not imply the ability to perceive that thing as a cat. Cf. John Haldane, "On Coming Home to (Metaphysical) Realism," *Philosophy* 71, no. 276 (1996): 287–96

of social teleology builds on the apparently obvious truth that *human society is teleological.* That is, we do not just act randomly. We do not only act according to the promptings of instinct (that too). Rather, we act *on reasons,* both individually and in groups. We act to achieve goals. Whether we arise from bed *in order to* give a talk, or drive to work *in order to* do a good job, or pursue a career *for* satisfaction and a profitable retirement, we are directing ourselves toward ends. In groups, too, we pursue shared goals, deliberate about *what is to be done*: Congress aims to pass just and beneficial laws. The school board aims to increase enrollment and balance the budget. Expanding our focus from individual actions or projects, we can put the point more strongly: all of human life is a practice. It can be brought under the concept of either one, unified, whole practice or pluralistic set of practices. Even when Iris Murdoch assumed[54] that human life has "no external point or τελος", she argues that it has a point *from within.* It is impossible, in other words, to bring our own human life under the concept of an *event.* Human life must be brought under the concept of a practice, which is teleological and essentially so.This insight has important implications for ethics, as well as other fields: action theory, sociology, anthropology, philosophy of mind, and so on.[55] But the point here is that, since we act in groups and for reasons, teleology is a real feature of our social nature. They cannot be understood without teleology. So if the critic of natural normativity rejects teleological realism (as did the early MacIntyre), it is enough if she accepts social teleology.

MacIntyre's later view is a bit more ambitious. While he does not go in for Foot's putative realism about "metaphysical biology", he does allow that the facts of our biological nature provide limits on what actions are ethical and what qualities count as virtues.

The project of *Dependent Rational Animals* is to insist that even if we are animals of a particular and unusual sort human beings are animals. This basic truth has significant implications. As animals, our dependence and vulnerability are as morally significant as our independence, autonomy, or self-sufficiency. Virtues of independence are, in the writings of Aristotle and others, related to our

54. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts*.
55. Cf. Thompson, *Life and Action*.

powers of rational reflection; we can rise above our animal nature, command, direct, and manage our bodies, our farms, our cities, and so on. But since we are *both* animals and *rational*, there are virtues of both autonomy *and* dependence. The book also contends that certain social arrangements are conducive to the transmission and sustenance of both kinds of virtue.

Let's consider a key quotation on each of these themes. Regarding the notion that we are unusual animals, MacIntyre argues at length that the human differentia (be it language, reason, practical reason, self-consciousness, or what have you) does not eradicate the commonalities between us and other animals. He says:

> I shall contend that although our differences from all other species are certainly of crucial importance, it is also important that both initially in our earliest childhood activities and to some extent thereafter we comport ourselves towards the world in much the same way as other intelligent animals. Indeed our ability to transcend those limitations depends in part upon certain of those animal characteristics among them the nature of our identity.[56]

The point, I take it, is that rational animals is *what we are*. If we cannot escape our identity as animals who are (potentially) practically rational, then we cannot escape our need for certain virtues. Furthermore, some activities will militate against our growing up achieve full practical rationality; these are vices.

What *kind* of animal are we? We are by nature practical reasoners. As I argued above, social teleology is an essential element of practical reasoning. We can imagine any scenario of humans gathering and doing what comes naturally, and it will involve group deliberation about what to do: High school students debating about where to sit at lunch; couples arguing over the budget; political leaders proposing new laws; philosophy department meetings making hiring and admissions decisions. It is impossible (for fully functioning adults) to live life even for a full day without engaging in such reasoning.

A second point MacIntyre makes is that human life is not one continuous phase of adult-

56. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 8.

hood; it begins with youth and ends with old age. So MacIntyre breaks important new ground in explaining the relation between virtues of independence and "virtues of acknowledged dependence." He argues that the vulnerability, fragility, and affliction characteristic especially of early childhood and old age are highly morally significant. As he says:

> Virtues of independent rational agency need for their adequate exercise to be accompanied by what I shall call the virtues of acknowledge dependence and that a failure to understand this is apt to secure some features of rational agency. Moreover both sets of virtues are needed in order to actualize the distinctive potentialities that are specific to the human rational animal. Identifying how and why they are needed is a prerequisite for understanding their central place in the kind of human life through which human flourishing can be achieved.[57]

Many others in the Aristotelian tradition have noticed the significance that we have the potential to be rational, and the potential to be independent reasoners. Fewer, until recently, have noticed the significance of dependence. But the virtues of acknowledge dependence are not identical to the virtues (such as the empathy or patience) *of a care-giver*. Rather, they are virtues that arise in *relation* between the dependent and the care-giver.[58] Dependence is, after all, as close to any of use as sickness, injury, or misfortune. The dependent needs certain virtues (gratitude is perhaps a good example) that the care-giver does not need, or needs differently. Independent rationality is rather the exception than the rule. So it is simply wrong-headed to magnify the virtues of independence out of proportion of those that are needed, in individuals and in a community, at the beginning and end of life, and also any disabling portion of life.

The third point pertains to the social arrangements needed to inculcate and consistently exercise such virtues. To achieve the communal goal of producing independent reasoners requires a systemic web of virtues across the entire communal association. MacIntyre argues that "neither the modern state nor the modern family can supply that kind of political and social association that

57. Ibid., 8.

58. There is an obvious – and I think exciting – connection here with some feminist ethics and with the ethics of care, and MacIntyre acknowledges his debt. Cf Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

is needed."[59] Not only individual human beings, but entire communities, institutions, and nations need virtues to keep their integrity and to produce the next generation of independent, virtuous, rational animals.

We can see how this renewed attention to our animal nature has implications for the normativity of nature. Certain social arrangements (features of "second nature") are liable to turn out to be conducive to the health and flourishing of creatures like us.

Other sections

Hursthouse agrees with McDowell:

> I shall assume, without argument, that McDowell is right … [that] the pretensions of an Aristotelian naturalism are not, in any ordinary understanding of the terms, either 'scientific' or 'foundational'. It does not seek to establish its conclusions from 'a neutral point of view'. Hence it does not expect what it says to convince anyone whose ethical outlook or perspective is largely different from the ethical outlook from within which the naturalistic conclusions are argued for.[60]

> Now, as in the preceding chapter, I shall assume, without argument, that McDowell is right to claim that the Neurathian procedure in ethics provides a way between the horns of this dilemma. The pretensions of an Aristotelian naturalism are not, in any ordinary understanding of the terms, either 'scientific' or 'foundational'. It does not seek to establish its conclusions from 'a neutral point of view'. Hence it does not expect what it says to convince anyone whose ethical outlook or perspective is largely different from the ethical outlook from within which the naturalistic conclusions are argued for. (So the mafioso drug baron, or whatever other wicked character we imagine being unconvinced, is largely irrelevant.)[61]

> It might remain to look for "norms" in human virtues: just as man has so many teeth, which is certainly not the average number of teeth men have, but is the number of teeth for the species, so perhaps the species man, regarded not just biologically, but from the point of view of the activity of thought and choice in regard to the various

59. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 9.
60. **???**
61. **???**

> departments of life-powers and faculties and use of things needed- "has" such-and-such virtues: and this "man" with the complete set of virtues is the "norm," as "man" with, e.g., a complete set of teeth is a norm.[62]

> In this sense the notion of a "norm" brings us nearer to an Aristotelian than a law conception of ethics. There is, I think, no harm in that; but if someone looked in this direction to give "norm" a sense, then he ought to recognize what has happened to the notion "norm," which he wanted to mean "law-without bringing God in" – it has ceased to mean "law" at all; and so the notions of "moral obligation," "the moral ought," and "duty" are best put on the Index, if he can manage it."[63]

> Our common human nature again is both what is special and what is generic about us as a kind. Human nature is what differentiates us from the animals and the plants. By nature we are rational beings. Our human nature, however, is also that in virtue of which we belong to the animal kingdom and to the living organisms. By nature we are mammals. We may thus use the concept of nature to differentiate rather than include, but also to include rather than differentiate. And we may use the concept of nature to express that differentiation and inclusion should not be seen as incompatible.[64]

Telos

John Horton and Susan Mendus summarize the contrast the two understandings of the self well enough to quote them in full:

> Where Aristotle understood man as a creature with a definite function which he might fulfill or deny, modern morality sees man simply as a rational agent who has no true or definable purpose independent of his own will… By appealing to a telos, Aristotle was able to distinguish between the way we actually are and the way we should be. His conception of human beings as having a specific telos brought with it the possibility that we might fall short of the ideal… But with the rejection of Aristotelianism gain the rejection of any such distinction between what we are and what we should be. Post-Enlightenment man is seen as governed, not by a telos external to him, but simply by the dictates of his own inner reason… Thus the abandonment of an Aristotelian conception of the good has not only left us without standards by

62. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 14–15.
63. Ibid., 14–15.
64. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 207.

> which to evaluate our moral arguments, it is also cast us adrift in the moral world. For Aristotle, a conception of the good for man has an essentially societal dimension.[65]

For MacIntyre, the loss of telos is one of the chief if not the chief error of Enlightenment moralities. He explains why in his discussion of the three elements of morality.[66] The first element is "untutored human nature" (as it is). The second element is human nature (as it could be, should be). The third element is the set of properties needed to move from the first to the second points. Moral rules or admirable character traits are the content of morality; but the telos of humanity is the context of morality. It quite literally makes the content of morality make sense. Understanding "human-nature-as-it-is"[67] is a task for philosophers, as well as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, etc. Understanding human nature "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-telos"[68] was "the whole point of ethics." It is difficult to understate the importance of this point about the self and its relation to not only virtue theory but ethical theory itself. Edward Oakes describes the removal of telos from our worldview as "perhaps the greatest category mistake ever made in the history of philosophy."

> That word "teleological" is the key to MacIntyre's solution, the loss of which is the cause of the catastrophe described in his science-fiction parable. Teleology is the study of final causes, goals, purposes, and aims: a style of explanation that saturates Aristotle's philosophy. After the combined impact of Newton and Darwin, however, this type of explanation seems mostly 'quaint' and once Aristotle's science seemed quaint, his ethics soon followed: when Newton demonstrated how motion can be better explained as resulting from the outcome of mechanical laws, and when Darwin posited natural selection as the "mechanism" for explaining an organ's functionality, the use of teleology in ethics was doomed…Emptying moral discourse of teleological concepts because of the perceived impact of Newton and Darwin has been for MacIntyre the catastrophe of our times.[69]

Now, MacIntyre's account of virtue is "neo-Aristotelian" in that it borrows from but also contrast with Aristotle's. For instance, MacIntyre denies that Aristotle's virtues are so timeless, abstract, and

65. John Horton and Susan Mendus, "Alasdair MacIntyre: After Virtue and After," in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory*, ed. Mark Alfano (Routledge, 2015), 6.
66. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54ff.
67. Ibid., 55.
68. Ibid., 55.
69. Edward Oakes, "The Achievement of Alasdair Macintyre," *First Things*, 1996.

generically human as Aristotle would make them appear; they are partly indexed to fourth century, upper-class, educated Athenian culture. He also rejects Aristotle's metaphysics of nature. Nevertheless, he argues, the loss of a concept of telos is dramatic. MacIntyre's provisional conception of our human telos is this: "The good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is."[70] Our telos is to be free to pursue our telos. MacIntyre is not a straightforward eudaemonist; this conception of the human telos is more vague than Aristotle's. Whatever the human telos turns out to be, it minimally includes the freedom to explore "what else" the telos might be.

For now, it is not vacuous to conclude that the virtues needed to achieve this (extremely indeterminate) goal themselves indirectly make room for and might directly illumine "what else" our telos consists in. The virtues needed to preserve the quest for the good, he suggests, may illumine "what else" our telos consists in. It may turn out (and his later writings are more explicit about it) that the determinate telos of a given tradition is a more determinate conception of eudaimonia.

"Teleological ethics" was taken, especially a decade or two ago, to contrast with deontological ethics and to refer to utilitarianism.[71] Teleology then means simply that the utilitarian aims to achieve some end — happiness, pleasure, utility, or what have you. Thus understood, virtue theorists seem to be utilitarians whose primary concern is the character of moral agents rather than the acts moral agents perform or the rules they obey. But this is a misunderstanding.

Teleological ethics of the sort that concerns Anscombe (and concerns us in these chapters) is not a matter of a posteriori, statistical analyses of character traits or actions or rules and their respective consequences aimed at reliably hitting the target by consistently bringing about the cause. Teleological ethics is about unfolding the inner form of a thing; actualizing its inherent or intrinsic

70. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 210.

71. Robert B. Louden, "On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1984): 227; Mark Schroeder, "Teleology, Agent-Relative Value, and 'Good'*," *Ethics* 117, no. 2 (2007): 265–000.

telos. This process of self-realization occurs in all living things, from the smallest bacterium to the largest whale. It does not (at least I shall assume it does not) occur in any non-living thing; there is no teleological, goal-oriented process guiding the development of new solar systems or the destructions of old ones; there is no "cosmic ecology" because there is no cosmic ecosystem. The cosmic relation between star and asteroid is more akin to the terrestrial relation between gas and matter than the terrestrial relation between bear and butterfly.

My thesis is simply that virtues, especially intellectual virtues like practical wisdom, are partially constitutive of human eudaimonia; that these truths are solid enough foundation to build an ethical theory on, even without appealing to divine revelation; and that no worries from Darwinism, metaphysical naturalism, or Moorman non-naturalism are enough to crack that foundation.

V. Telos objections

One family of objections pertains to teleology. If MacIntyre's suggestion that we need to recover the Aristotelian tradition of the virtues is to be taken as a serious plan, then we must recover telos, for without a clear telos even a high moral earnestness attached to virtues devolves into an unintelligible set of rules or traditions. Virtue without telos literally has no point.[72] This constellation of objections is, I think, most potentially disastrous for MacIntyre's theory, and the objections are powerful. In addition to the real philosophical difficulty of the matter, the prejudices and misconceptions surrounding teleology are so thick one would need several chapters to dig through the muck and mire. I think an adequate response can, ultimately, be made.

In this section I shall present three objections from teleology that are especially problematic for MacIntyre's narrative. The first objection regarding teleology is to deny MacIntyre's historical narrative. Oakes above eloquently summarized MacIntyre's criticism of the loss of telos in modern

72. A society that enforces chaste behavior and honors chastity as a virtue but does so without any understanding of how such chastity fits into the fulfilled life of a fully virtuous human being and a fully virtuous community will be open to the criticism that such behaviors and virtues are prohibiting a whole range of pleasurable activities.

moral philosophy, natural science, psychology, and ethics. But perhaps modern moral philosophy is not so anti-teleological as all that. Kant's categorical imperative, much vaunted for its austere duty for the sake of duty, is actually aimed at perfection.[73] Keith Ward argued with some impatience almost 40 years ago (10 years before *After Virtue*'s first edition) that Kant should not be interpreted as commending duty as some abstract, context-free obligation. He says:

> Kant's position is not merely that one must conceive oneself as setting up a purposive order of Nature, according to universal laws, as though one could arbitrarily choose anything whatsoever as one's purpose. One can see this if one takes Kant's list of examples of moral duties in the *Metaphysic of Morals* [sic]. Masturbation is against the *purposes of Nature*, in forming the sexual organs; suicide contravenes *Nature's purpose* in establishing self-love in order to preserve life… Finally, "holiness of will" must be pursued, as this expresses the absolute worth of the human person, in its freedom from sensuous impulses and its transcendence of Nature.[74]

These quotes from the allegedly dour-faced deontologist certainly sound awfully similar to Aristotle (not to mention St. Paul). Along similar lines, Kantian ethicist David Cummiskey has argued that Kant can be understood as a consequentialist of sorts.[75] The proposal is that Kant's *justification* for moral normative principles was a brute, formal, categorical imperative, but the *content* of such normative principles included agents and the goods they aim to attain. Happiness can be valued as an imperfect duty, though rational agency must be valued as a perfect duty. Without entering into all the interesting details at this juncture, the thought is that perhaps a (thoroughly modern) moral philosophy like deontology can be synthesized with natural teleology.

The other putatively modern moral philosophy that comes in for criticism for MacIntyre, Anscombe, et. al., is Mill's utilitarianism. But isn't consequentialism teleological in the proper sense of telos. Clearly, consequences are *ends* of actions – I go to work *in order to* earn a paycheck at the end of the month; the consequence (my paycheck) is the goal or purpose or point of the action (going to work). For consequentialism, the great intrinsic value is happiness, or pleasure. On the surface, this

73. Ward, "Kant's Teleological Ethics."
74. Ibid., 341.
75. David Cummiskey, *Kantian Consequentialism* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

sounds like a kind of Aristotelian eudaimonism. But Aristotle's eudaimonia is the necessary end of all action and all practical reasoning. The proof that we pursue eudaimonia (something vague) is as robust as the proof that we pursue *anything at all*.[76] Similarly, all that Mill can say to the enquirer who wants to hear about *why* happiness is desirable is that people desire it.[77] So perhaps virtue ethics can be synthesized with consequentialism.

A second objection regarding teleology grants MacIntyre's pessimistic narrative. Ethics can get along well enough without intrinsic *teloi*. We cannot accept natural teleology since this notion has been exorcised from natural science (and from all rational philosophy) by Darwin and Newton. Bernard Williams summarizes this feeling well:

> It seems to me that a correct understanding of evolution is relevant to projects of this kind, but that the effect of that understanding is largely discouraging to them… the idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave… The first and hardest lesson of Darwinism, that there is no such teleology at all, and that there is no orchestral score provided from anywhere according to which human beings have a special part to play, still has to find its way fully into ethical thought.[78]

Williams' objection is a general objection from metaphysical naturalism to *any* form of naturalistic ethics. Rosalind Hursthouse says that, "From early on, Williams has expressed pessimism about the project of Aristotelian naturalism on the grounds that Aristotle's conception of nature, and thereby human nature, was normative, and that, in a scientific age, this is not a conception that we can take

76. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I.1.

77. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 1861, chap. 4. *Of what sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible*. He says, "The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness."

78. Williams.

on board."[79] His objection is ostensibly against the notion of natural teleology but also against a realist notion of human nature as well. If humanity as it is today is a more or less jumbled "bricolage" of adaptive parts, it is hardly a secure enough entity to ground ethical obligations.

Thankfully, morality can function without it. The moral law *by itself* guides or forms our actions without a natural telos performing that function. For example, Christine Korsgaard[80] builds a case that human autonomy – the ability to be a law to oneself – is the source of normative authority. How does this work? My own identity as a human being obligates me to behave morally. She argues that "autonomy is the source of obligation" and that "we have *moral* obligations… to humanity as such."[81] Because I am self-reflective, I am accountable for what I do. Also because I am self-reflective, I have a self-conception. She says the "thinking self" regulates the "acting self." Korsgaard's notion of practical identity is that we assume identities such as human being, child, parent, teacher, etc. Each identity is functional; it grounds obligations. If I am really to be a teacher, I must show up for class. If I really am to be a parent, I must feed and educate my child. Practical identities may be more or less contingent. All of us are children; not all of us educators. At least one practical identity is necessary. That is our practical identity *as humans*. Humans "need to have practical conceptions of our identity in order to act and live."[82] The fact is, we do act and live. Therefore we do have a moral identity. Put another way, she says: "Rational action is possible only if human beings find their own humanity to be valuable."[83] The moral identity is one in which I take up a viewpoint as a member of the "Kingdom of Ends", the community of those who also have a moral identity. So the moral law delivers content-full moral duties derived from my own autonomously legislated rules prescribed by my valuing humanity; these rules are not teleological in that they require any future fulfillment of an end to validate them.

The point of these objections is to push back on MacIntyre's narrative in which our modern

79. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 256.
80. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*.
81. Ibid., 93.
82. Ibid., 106.
83. Ibid., 106.

liberal tradition excised telos. Either we did not do so, or (even if we did) we could get along without it.

These three objections – about relativism, tradition-constituted rationality, and teleology – are some of the most telling against MacIntyre's theory. In the discussion section I shall attempt to answer each one.

> It has often been suggested – by J. L. Austin, for example – that either we can admit the existence of rival and contingently incompatible goods which make incompatible claims to our practical allegiance or we can believe in some determinate conception of the good life for man, but that these are mutually exclusive alternatives. No one can consistently hold both these views. What this contention is blind to is that there may be better or worse ways for individuals to live through the tragic confrontation of good with good. And that to know what the good life for man is may require knowing what are the better and what are the worse ways of living in and through such situations. Nothing a priori rules out this possibility; and this suggests that within a view such as Austin's there is concealed an unacknowledged empirical premise about the character of tragic situations.[84]

Telos is needed

One objection above stated that telos is indeed a necessary part of morality, but that it can be found in modern morality, for instance, in Kantian or consequentialist morality. If the sense of teleology we are using here is merely social and not natural, then MacIntyre would respond, "so much the better for Kant." Moral rules are unintelligible without an understanding of the *internal* or *necessary* relation between some actions and some outcomes. Kant himself, perhaps, understood this better than many of his contemporary readers give him credit.

Telos is not needed

Consequentialism, however, cannot be made to be "teleological" in the Aristotelian or the MacIntyrean sense. The first reason is that, For Mill, happiness is something too specific: pleasure, or

84. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 223–4.

freedom from pain. He offers precious little justification for this. Mill's definition of happiness cannot be that thing we all necessarily pursue whenever we act, because then moral rules (guiding us toward the happiness of the greatest number) would be unnecessary. We would all, already, pursue happiness.

The second reason is more important: The reason is that Mill and others define "consequences" so as to be always contingent. Mill, like Moore, sees the relation between the end (happiness) and the means (actions that bring about happiness) as statistical, contingent, and probable. There is no internal relation between some actions (such as virtues) and the proper end of human life.

Take as a few examples this statement from G.E. Moore:

> What ought we to do? The answering of this question constitutes the third great division of ethical enquiry; and its nature was briefly explained in Chap. I (§§ 15—17). It introduces into Ethics, as was there pointed out, an entirely new question—the question what things are related as *causes* to that which is good in itself; and this question can only be answered by an entirely new method—the method of empirical investigation; by means of which causes are discovered in the other sciences. *To ask what kind of actions we ought to perform, or what kind of conduct is right, is to ask what kind of effects such action and conduct will produce.* Not a single question in practical Ethics can be answered except by a causal generalization. All such questions do, indeed, also involve an ethical judgment proper—the judgment that certain effects are better, in themselves, than others. But they do assert that these better things are effects—are causally connected with the actions in question. Every judgment in practical Ethics may be reduced to the form: This is a cause of that good thing.[85]

Moore is explicit here that there are no acts that have intrinsic value (qua duty or qua virtuous deed); acts only have value insofar as they cause good effects. This good effects are, for Moore, aesthetic enjoyments, knowledge, and friendships.[86]

I said above that the refusal to treat the means/end distinction as clean and absolute is liable to cause his critics to misunderstand his position. Charles Taylor endorses the notion that "the place

85. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge University Press, 1903) Chapter 5, Section 89, my emphasis.

86. Ibid. Chapter 6.

accorded the virtues [is] a kind of litmus test for discriminating Aristotelian from modern ethical theory."[87] He explains this feature of modern moral theories:

> …They cannot abide this kind of relation, in which one element is both cause and constituent of another. It is a central demand of one influential construal of modern reason that one clearly sort out means from ends. For utilitarians, the good is happiness, and virtues can only be good instrumentally… If the basic point of morality is to do the right actions, then the virtues must be seen as purely executive. They cannot also be seen as part of the end, because the end is not defined that way.[88]

What could this mean? Behind the means/end distinction is a peculiarly modern assumption that formal and final causes are either not related or not *necessarily* related. But the assumption is unreasonable. Exercise *causes* (efficient causes) health; but it is partly constitutive of health. In other words, exercise *causes* (formal causes) health. The relation between a formal cause and a final cause is an internal, natural, and necessary relation. In biology, the distinction between form and function is a real one but the two are related.[89] The relation between the species *gorilla gorilla* as instantiated in an infant gorilla and a fully grown, mature one is an internal and natural and (given the proper circumstances) a necessary relation. To deny that there are formal causes, or to deny that there are final causes, is simply to beg the question against teleological ethics.

For these reasons, consequentialism of the typical sort that *reduces* the question of what actions, rules, or character traits are good to a question that cannot "be answered except by a causal generalization" is not teleological in the required sense. The character traits that tend to bring about happiness must also be, in a sense, pre-payments on that happiness.

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87. Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," in *After MacIntyre* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 25.

88. Ibid., 25.

89. Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose.. Huneman summarizes the "two poles" in the history of biology: "the concept of form and the concept of function." For Huneman, anatomy studies form and physiology studies function. He explains how Kant understood both poles and tried to give due weight to the mechanistic understanding of organisms *and* to the distinctive features of organic life. Humean, Kant, and evolutionary biologists are obliged to explain both form and function as real without reducing one to the other.

Section conclusion

In sum, the rebuttal of the "no teleology objection" is that the sort of teleology we need is defensible: social teleology. Social teleology does not *necessarily* offend against Darwinian biology, evolutionary psychology, or metaphysical naturalism, but can (and must) be accommodated by them. Furthermore, Kantian philosophy may be able to accommodate social teleology, and so would escape the brunt of MacIntyre's criticism laid out in his narrative. On the other hand, the rebuttal of consequentialism, is that it has not often been taken to allow for a necessary relation between some means and their ends. Virtuous action both *causes* and *partly constitutes* virtuous character. Virtuous character traits both *cause* and *partly constitute* the kind of achievement of our human telos that makes life worth living.

VI. Toner

Toner attempts to draw out the distinction between the kinds of naturalism.[90] Toner agrees with Hursthouse that the term 'Aristotelian naturalism' "implies that human nature is normative, such that to be morally good is to fulfill one's nature."[91] McDowell too believe that it is possible to "formulate a conception of reason that is, in one sense, naturalistic: a formed state of practical reason is one's second nature, not something that dictates to one's nature from outside."[92]

However, Toner himself argues that the brands of naturalism espoused by Thompson, Hursthouse, and Foot cannot adequately respond to a criticism McDowell (among others) have pressed. Toner presents four criteria that "naturalism must deliver if it is to support a revived Aristotelian virtue ethics…"[93]

1. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to motivate the bearer of the nature. □

90. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism."
91. Ibid., 221.
92. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism."
93. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism," 222.

2. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to justify themselves to the bearer of the nature. □
3. Natural norms must be anchored in and express universal human nature.
4. First and second nature must be related so that the second is a natural outgrowth of the first, and so that that in our given makeup is (first) natural which does tend toward an ethically mature second nature.

The last of these four criteria is the one I shall attempt to defend in a later chapter.

Hursthouse

Toner interprets Hursthouse as endorsing a modified type of egoism:

> Dualism of this sort is hardly new — it is characteristic of standard Kantian and consequentialist moral psychologies — but it is a bit unusual for a virtue ethics claiming allegiance to Aristotle to embrace it. Indeed, it seems to raise the rather un-Aristotelian question about how to handle a conflict between fundamental practical commitments. Much that Hursthouse says hints that self-interest has priority: virtue ethics "offers a distinctively unfamiliar version of the view that morality is a form of enlightened self-interest" (1999, 190). Also, she seems to recognize the McDowellian point that Aristotelian categoricals about how an evolved species as a matter of fact propagates itself through time may have little normative claim on a reflective agent. Her response is to insist that the life of virtue does in fact tend to promote the welfare of the virtuous agent, so that the commitment to one's well-being seems more basic than, and a necessary ground of, the commitment to one's functioning as a species member (see especially 1999, 259–60). This move both highlights the power of McDowell's critique of the Thompsonian form of Aristotelian naturalism and illustrates how tempting it is, for naturalists equipped with only a disenchanted nature, to allow eudaimonism to collapse into egoism. Hursthouse comes close to this collapse; Arnhart will come closer still.[94]

If generics are supposed to pick out natural properties of human beings, and if all such natural properties belong to disenchanted nature, then the ethical conclusions we draw will "collapse into egoism." Eudaimonia will get a very "disenchanted" definition (pleasure, reproductive success.

MacIntyrean Naturalism

Toner argues that a naturalistic theory must satisfy four requirements:

94. Ibid., 230.

1. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to motivate the bearer of the nature. □

The "natural norm" must be intrinsically able to motivate: desires that *do* motivate us satisfy this requirement. However, unless there is some "supervising principle" that coordinates desires (suppressing some, elevating others) the desires themselves seem to lead us to a sub-moral life; and the addition of such a supervising principle makes the theory no longer naturalistic.

2. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to justify themselves to the bearer of the nature. □

The natural norm must be something that justifies itself, either to all rational agents as such or to all moral agents. The norm need not, Toner admits, automatically persuade a Callicles to repent of his wickedness. However, it must be able to motivate.

> This is why I say "intrinsically able to motivate or justify" rather than "intrinsically motivating or justifying": the natural norm is such that it can motivate or convince persons, provided they are not in too dysfunctional a state. In the same way a rose is such as to be intrinsically able to convince us of its being red. Its failure actually to do so in my case because I am color-blind or jaundiced does not impugn this intrinsic ability. Natural norms can motivate and convince because they are neither "mere facts" about the way a given species does go on nor "brute desires" a given species happens to have as a result of its evolutionary history.[95]

3. Natural norms must be anchored in and express universal human nature.

> If we want a naturalistic virtue ethics that is self-standing, natural norms must be capable not only of expressing the commitments of this or that culture but also of justifying that one, criticizing this one, and so forth.

But what sort of thing is this universal human nature to be, if we are to avoid the problems of Thompson and Arnhart? It is to be, as Thompson said, "what was formerly called an infima species," the representation of which expresses "one's interpretation or understanding of the life-form shared by the members of that class" (1995, 288). This view runs into the troubles catalogued above if (and only if) we understand "one's interpretation or understanding" to be that provided by modern

95. Ibid., 235.

"value-free" science, a list of categoricals or natural desires supplied by anthropology and evolutionary psychology. Suppose instead this understanding of nature were supplied from the standpoint of a second nature seeking to understand its own development, so that the "universal nature" of (3) would be at its core our shared tendency to become and then to be and act as certain kinds of people. First nature on this interpretation would be that in all of us which points toward and calls for the development of second nature, and second nature would be that which perfects and completes first nature. Another way of putting this is:

4. First and second nature must be related so that the second is a natural outgrowth of the first, and so that that in our given makeup is (first) natural which does tend toward an ethically mature second nature.

> Alasdair MacIntyre writes that we can rightly understand the goods, harms, needs, and vulnerabilities of a certain species only by appeal to a notion of what it is for its members to flourish (MacIntyre 1999, 63–65). Now, for a living being to flourish it must develop its powers, especially those distinctive of it as a member of its species (there is more to flourishing than that, he allows, but this is at its core), and whether an individual or group is flourishing "is in itself a question of fact, even though the question of what it is to flourish has to be answered in part through evaluative and conceptual enquiry" (1999, 64). MacIntyre exemplifies the end-first approach sketched above, and it is worth quoting him at some length to see this: As a question of fact it [what it is to flourish] receives answers in a variety of scientific contexts. Distinguishing between environments in which members of some particular species flourish and environments in which they fail to flourish and distinguishing within some particular population those individuals or groups of a particular species that are flourishing from those that are not is a necessary preliminary to framing certain types of explanatory question which we provided with answers by the biological and ecological sciences. Drawing these distinctions successfully involves identifying the various characteristics that an individual or population of some particular species needs in order to flourish in this or that particular environment, at this or that particular stage of development. (1999, 64–65)
>
> We start with a revisable account of what it is for an animal to flourish (for example, being a good pack hunter) and then ask scientific questions about what sort of environment, the development of which distinctive powers, and so forth, the animal needs. Now, the power most distinctive of human beings as a species is, of course, rationality. We know this in part because were it not, it would not be the case that we, and only we, were asking questions about the powers distinctive of species. Also,

> writes MacIntyre, "the question 'Why should I do this rather than that?' becomes from an early age inescapable and it is characteristic of human beings, that their replies to this question can themselves always be put in question. . . . Human beings need to learn to understand themselves as practical reasoners about goods, about what on particular occasions it is best for them to do and about how it is best for them to live out their lives" (1999, 67). So we know, says MacIntyre, that a flourishing human being is one who reasons well about how to live his or her life, is what he will call an "independent practical reasoner." That is our infima species or form of life. From this initial conception of flourishing, we can reason back to our needs, vulnerabilities, goods, and salient first-natural developmental tendencies.

> Much of the detailed argument must be passed over, but let us crystallize the point MacIntyre is making: membership in networks of giving and receiving is essential to human flourishing, and the exercise of the virtues is essential to the maintenance of such networks, and therefore to flourishing. And essential not just as instrumental to but as constitutive means of flourishingFvirtues are expressed in practical reasoning, and sustained and effective practical reasoning takes place only within net- works of giving and receiving.

The task

> Although I have tried to anticipate and turn aside some important objections, whether the MacIntyrean sort of naturalism is acceptable ultimately depends on answers to some rather large questions involving the nature of rationality (for example, whether it is tradition-constituted in something like the way MacIntyre says), moral psychology (for example, whether McDowell and MacIntyre are right in rejecting the "hydraulic" psychology of neo-Humeans like Arnhart), and even metaphysics (for example, whether and how moral philosophy is related to theology). But such interdependences are what we must expect for an ethic purporting to be based on a true understanding of human nature.

In a later chapter, I shall take up one of Toner's challenges: to defend a notion of practical reason as importantly constituted by "tradition" — that is, by particular cultural methods, facts, doctrines, and emphases transmitted within a particular people group over time.