Chapter 1

Normativity of Human Nature: Philestine Scientism and The Practical Point of View

"Human nature is normative, such that to be morally good is to fulfill one's nature."

– Chris Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism", 221.

"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.'" – James Barham, *Teleological Realism in Biology,* 1

I. The Task of Generics about Humanity

We saw above that although the is-ought gap blocks ethical naturalisms attempting to derive 'ought' statements from baldly natural facts, Foot's brand of neo-Aristotelian naturalism pre-emptively undercut this problem by drawing on the thousands of perfectly scientifically respectable natural normative facts that obtain in many – perhaps all – living things. Natural formal and functional (or teleological facts) are natural norms. They are, if you like, natural "oughts". And generic truths about those living things are genuinely normative, and therefore can be used to derive genuinely

normative conclusions. If these natural norms expressible in generics are to be be a source of ethical insight, we must assume that human beings are natural entities importantly similar to animals and plants, even though they be importantly different in exhibiting rational activity. For example, 'Humans are language using primates' is a generic scientific statement. Hence, 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.

Foot's Human Normativity

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.[1]

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.'[2] 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 do is describe it as a good cactus, for a cactus is a living thing. He can describe

1. Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 38.
2. Ibid., 39.

> it as a good 'decorative object for my windowsill' or 'present to give my detestable mother-in-law', but not as a good cactus.[3]

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.[4]

The task in discovering true generics about human beings is capturing what is common between us and other animals and what is unique about rational animals.

Obstacles to the task

1. Irrelevance objection: do such norms exist? 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. Does such a thing as a universal human nature exist, from which we might derive normative conclusions?
2. Polyanna Objection: Even if such norms exist, are they ethical? Can we move from vague statements such as "human beings are language users" to particular moral statements: 'Human beings make and keep promises.' Even if ethical norms can be discovered, how are they to be distinguished from unethical, vile behaviors also statistically common among human behaviors?
3. Social Teleology Objection: Even if successful, Rosalind Hursthouse and John McDowell are going to object to this project. Hursthouse says that, "Ethical naturalism is not to be construed as the attempt to ground ethical evaluations in a scientific account of human

3. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 195.
4. Ibid., 217.

> nature."[5] Their alternative is still naturalistic, but grounds ethical norms in the intrinsic ends that belong to practical reasoning creatures.

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. If successful, such generics 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.

II. Generic Truths about humans

To overcome these objections, 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? 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. Examining ourselves "from the outside" as it were, from an external, objective, cool, scientific view point, what is a *homo sapiens sapiens*?

Physical Animals

The species emigrated from Africa about 200,000 years ago, and are the only extant members of the hominin clade. 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. human females go through menopause; survive and thrive in climates between freezing and 105 farenheit; live on planet earth;

5. Ibid. especially chapter 10.

Rational, Cultural

They are language users whose language is a formal structure of open-ended, productive, recursive system allowing potentially limitless combinations of meaningful words; live in cultures; live in societies; they are symbol users, communicating with signs and symbols; are moral[6]; are curious and gather knowledge into sciences;

Both

act on reasons; 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; 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; 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.; they are bipedal and walk upright; are creative; self-reflective; establish social relations upon biological grounds (some children growing up with natural parents) and upon normative grounds (some orphans growing up in orphanages created by philanthropists);

Is there anything of potential ethical significance in this collection of commonplaces? I think so. Indeed, this collection admits of patterns. If we had to gather up the individual features into categories, we could capture most of them under two categories: animal (of a particular sort) and rational. Even the upright posture, opposable thumbs, and large neocortex of genetically modern humans are intimately tied to our language use, symbol use, creativity, science, and sociality. Without the hands that we have, we could not create nearly as much as we do. Without the brains that we have, we could not think, speak, organize into language-groups and create culture.

6. Richard Joyce, "Ethics and Evolution," *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory, 2nd Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013)*, 2013, 123–47.

Physical, Animal, Rational, Practical

The concept of an 'animal', as I argued above, entails the presence of certain natural teleological and formal facts. This also entails the notion of *potential*. Even single celled organisms have the potential to reproduce and develop. Mammals begin life as tiny cells and progress through gestation to infancy, maturation, and adulthood, at which point they typically reproduce themselves before dying. All of these phases we notice in human animals as well. 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.

However, the concept of 'rationality' is new. We use terms like 'reason' and ratio as abstractions to describe a set of capacities we notice in ourselves. For example, activities that get called 'rational' are activities such as to observe, perceive as, create, reflect, decide, determine, abstract, infer, explain, deduce, remember, predict, criticize, praise, blame, admonish, and so on. And the property of being potentially rational encompasses a range of psychological, intellectual, and cultural facts that obtain in each normal human being. More specifically, 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).

Hypotheis: Practical, Rational Animal

The generic we were looking for at the beginning needed to be *relevant*, *ethical* (or potentially ethical), and needed to go beyond its legitimate rival – the McDowellian objection that rational, social

teleology is all that is needed for a grounding of virtue.

The hypothesis we have discovered is simply this: 'human beings are practical, rational animals'. There is, it seems, a great deal of truth to the old formula, that to be human is to be a rational animal. Or, if you prefer to dress up the matter in more detailed and scientific terminology, we might say that our species is an intentional primate, the only language-using semiotic, self-concious, intentional, primates.

If human beings *really are* rational animals, we may initially hypothesize that that an *irrational* human is ipso facto defective.[7] (As above, I do not here intend to discuss mental illness, disability, birth defect, chromosomal disorders, and other such exceptions to 'normal' functional humans.) Initially, then, we should expect that the qualities that count as virtues for practical rational animals are those that enable us to actualize our life form and fulill our natural functions.

Hans Fink agrees with my hypothesis:

> 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 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.[8]

Three Criteria

Initially, then, we should expect that the qualities that count as virtues for practical rational animals are those that enable us to actualize our life form and fulill our natural functions, especially, the

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

8. Hans Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 207.

development of rationality.

1. Rational - Social - Practical - Linguistic - Cultural
2. Animals - Physical - Chemical - Emotional
3. Practical - Taking all of 2 up into 1 and making something of it

These criteria I shall attempt to satisfy in a later chapter. For now, I need to address the three obstacles stated above: irrelevance of human generics to ethics, the mixture of "positive" and "negative" generics or the ignoring of negative ones; and the "rationalistic" social teleology versus "scientiifc" biological teleology.

Our language is unique. Other animals that communicate use non-grammatical closed systems with a small, finite set of symbols.ˆ[Communication systems used by other animals such as 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."[9] 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!)

9. Micah Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form," *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 3 (2012): 407–31.

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."[10] Philippa Foot echoes Geach's statement about "need" and "necessity" as well. Alasdair MacIntyre subtitled his most recent monograph: "human beings need the virtues."[11] 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.

III. Objections

MacIntyre's early view agrees with McDowell

Alasdair MacIntyre's position on natural normativity has shifted over the decades. I would like to mention both his earlier view (defending social teleology), which is closer to that of McDowell than that of Foot.

In *After Virtue*, 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

10. Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 17.

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

biology."[12] The "metaphysical biology" MacIntyre refers to here is that metaphysically realist view that formal and final causes inhere (and in fact constitute) biological species.[13] 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 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[14] 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,

12. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 197.

13. 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

14. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998).

as well as other fields: action theory, sociology, anthropology, philosophy of mind, and so on.[15] 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.

McDowell's Social Teleology Objection

McDowell's major objection to Foot is an objection to the over-zealous application of empirical methods to ethics.

We may put articulate the objection as a response to the equation of "rational animality" with "human nature". For, McDowell is quick to point out, rationality (in us) is 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. And 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?[16]

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

15. Cf. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action* (Harvard University Press, 2008).
16. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 222.

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"[17] 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 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.[18]

The "specter of Kant keeps surfacing in thinkers like Putnam and Habermas who are convinced that reason cannot be naturalized."[19] 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."[20] But his arguments, Bernstein thinks, against bald naturalism amount to some sophisticated question-begging via sleight of hand.

The view I am defending, and which I find in Foot, 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"

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

18. Ibid., 58.

19. Ibid., 58.

20. Ibid., 62.

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.[21]

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

> …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.[22]

IV. McDowell: Social 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:

21. Thompson, *Life and Action*.

22. John Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" *Ratio* 22, no. 3 (2009): 309.

> 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.[23]

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."[24] Farreira calls McDowell-type views "excellence naturalism" and Foot-type views "empirical naturalism". McDowell invokes Aristotle's notion of 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."[25] 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…"[26] 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

23. John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 167.

24. He calls it by a variety of other names: 'liberal' naturalism' (John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996) 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).

25. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.

26. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo, eds. (Blackwell, 2007), 137.

some exercise of human sensibility."[27] In this McDowell agrees with Mackie: the "central doctrine of European moral philosophy" is a mistake;[28] 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."[29] 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".) 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.[30] 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[31] – philosophy that 'leaves everything as it is'[32]. That is, McDowell believes many philosophical puzzles arise not from puzzling reality but from errors in *our own thinking*, so we need

27. Ibid., 143.

28. John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Penguin UK, 1977).

29. John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 174.

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

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

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

"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.[33] 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."[34] Secondary qualities are "subjective" in that they cannot be adequately conceived "except in terms of certain subjective states"[35] 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."[36]

He says a secondary property ascription is true "in virtue of the object's disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance."[37] 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.

33. 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.

34. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 137.

35. Ibid., 139.

36. Ibid., 139.

37. Ibid., 138.

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."[38] 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 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

38. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 188 and following.

we recognize reasons for belief and reasons for action. We are initiated into a Space of reasons by education, formation, cultivation (or *Bildung*).[39]

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"[40] helps explain moral epistemology. There is *something* 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

39. Bildung=formation, education; bild=form, image.
40. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 142–3.

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[41] 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 non-natural, just as it is an open question what the nature of the natural is.[42]

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

41. "Three Sorts of Naturalism."
42. Ibid., 206.

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.[43]

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.'[44] 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.*

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

43. Ibid., 206.

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

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."[45] 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."[46] This brings us back around to idealism as naturalism. If soul is the primary sense of nature, then body is "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

45. John Cooper, *Complete Works of Plato* (Hackett, 1997), *Laws* 891cff.
46. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 215.

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."[47] 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:

> 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

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

> 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.[48]

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.

McDowell sees the same question-begging in what he calls "philistine scientism."[49] 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).[50]

48. Sellars, "Why Naturalism and Not Materialism?" 217.
49. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62, no. 3 (1979): 346.
50. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 219.

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.[51] 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*.

James Barham captures the dualism into which McDowell unwitting falls:

> 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 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.[52]

V. MacIntyre on Natural Teleology

MacIntyre's later view is a helpful synthesis of the biological and rational aspects of human nature I am aiming for. 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.

51.

52. James Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology" (PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame; Web, 2011), 1.

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 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.[53]

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

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

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 adulthood; 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.[54]

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.[55] 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.

54. Ibid., 8.

55. 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)

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 is needed."[56] 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.

VI. Toner on Polyanna and Irrelevance Objections

Toner attempts to draw out the distinction between the kinds of naturalism.[57] 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."[58] 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."[59]

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…"[60]

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

56. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 9.
57. Christopher Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism: Requirements for a Successful Theory," *Metaphilosophy* 39, no. 2 (2008): 220–50.
58. Ibid., 221.
59. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism."
60. 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.[61]

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:

61. 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.[62]

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

62. 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.