Chapter 1
Normativity of Human Nature: Philestine Scientism versus 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.

I. Human Generics

Recall Hursthouse's earlier statement that ethical evaluations of *human beings* "depend upon our identifying what is characteristic of the species in question." It is clear that success of our endeavor depends on finding true generic propositions about 'the human being' qua natural kind. Is this a hopeful search?

It is. We reasonably assume that humans are natural entities importantly similar to animals, plants, and other living organisms, even though they are also importantly different in exhibiting features like language and society.[1] As natural entities, and since scientific statements are about natural entities, then it is possible (and indeed quite common) to make scientific statements about us, even though we exhibit differences from other natural entities.

Identifying those "differences" between humans and other natural entities is part of task. The desired generics cannot be *merely* descriptions of our genes, organ systems, 30 billion brain neurons, and so on. They must also capture what is ethical or potentially ethical about human beings as rational creatures. Hursthouse explains:

1. 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 we are *at least* material; 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.

> 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.[2]

As an example, "humans are language-using primates" is the kind of generic we must defend as *both* "objective" and scientific *and* practical and ethical. The task of this chapter is to provide a conception of human nature that is both accurately descriptive and normative. We must first uncover, if possible, a set of scientific generics about humanity, specifying what kind of a creature human beings are and what kind of life they live by nature. Such generics, it is hoped, will give us initial insight into the concept of virtue and practical reason, which are our main themes. The subsequent chapters will provide more detail into the concept and content of virtue.

Obstacles

The obstacles to this task are from two quite different quarters. The first obstacle is from those critics (such as Bernard Williams and Lewins) who are underwhelmed by the arguments of the previous chapter and remain pessimistic about the prospects of teleological ethics.

This first sort of critic might object there are no objective properties of humanity, accessible from the objective, external, scientific point of view or that such objective properties are value-neutral and hence (as per the is-ought gap) useless for normative purposes.

The second obstacle is from those critics (such as McDowell and Hursthouse) who are optimistic about the prospects for teleological ethics, but share with the first sort of critic a skepticism about appeal to biology. This second sort of critic urges us to look no further than human rationality. Our rational nature is enough to ground teleological ethics. These objections, and response to them, will occupy us for this chapter.

Let's state them in a bit more detail.

No Human Nature Objection

The first objection is simply that there is no human nature and hence there can be no true generics about humanity. We can recall Williams' suspicion above that Darwinism has dispensed with the teleological outlook, and Mayr's belief that somehow modern science (especially Darwinism) has

2. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 217.

dispensed even with the essentialist notion of species.[3] Likewise, Arthur Ward argues that "naturalists should reject the idea of "human nature," and indeed should reject that any organism or its parts or operations has a nature, purpose, proper function, or the like."[4]

Irrelevance

The other side of the same coin is Lewins' objection that if there is such a thing as human nature it is "an extremely permissive one" which "offers no ethical guidance". Even if "natural norms" such as those argued for in the previous chapter existed, this objection says, they would be irrelevant from the practical point of view.[5] For if objective norms may be known from an external, scientific point of view, even so, they are impractical; human rationality allows us to reflect upon them and decide whether or not to allow them to count as reasons for action. Alternately, if norms of practical reason are knowable from within the practical (subjective, internal, non-scientific) point of view, then they the objective facts of our nature are irrelevant. Hursthouse says, "Ethical naturalism is not to be construed as the attempt to ground ethical evaluations in a scientific account of human nature."[6]

Hursthouse puts the irrelevance objection this way:

> 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.[7]

> 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

3. Cf. ibid., chap. 10; R. Stephen Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature: A Defense of Ethical Naturalism* (Continuum, 2008), chap. 5; Arthur Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory" (PhD thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013).

4. Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory," 1.

5. Jennifer Ann Frey, "The Will and the Good" (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2012). Her dissertation is a full-scale rebuttal of this objection. I shall review her arguments in a later chapter.

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

7. Ibid.

> 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?[8]

Hursthouse and McDowell's alternative is to base ethical considerations on our nature as rational agents. This is still loosely naturalistic, in that we are talking about "human nature" or "second nature". However, it grounds ethical norms in the intrinsic ends that belong to practical reasoning creatures.

On this objection, the only "nature" common to all humans is rationality – but rationality involves self-determination and is therefore variable. Perhaps Stephen Brown's paradox is true: "Human nature is variability itself."[9] The variability of human lives, cultures, and beliefs is due to our freedom from the tyranny of genetics and environment. In other words, the major difference between humans as natural entities and other natural entities is our set of rational capacities. Unlike any other creature in the physical cosmos, we demonstrate the ability to speak, to think, reason, deliberate, judge, set projects, pursue goals, reflect, communicate, form societies, create cultures, and so on. But, if by being practical reasoners we are free of the tyranny of biology, then biology is irrelevant to morality.

II. Human Nature: Generic Truths about Humans

These objections can be overcome, but they are important tools for framing this project. To overcome them, 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 *homo sapiens sapiens*? In contemporary classificatory scheme, we can locate ourselves as animals in the phylum chordata, the class mammalia, the order of primates, the suborder haplorhini, the familiy hominidae, the genus homo, the species homo sapiens.

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 on the earth about 200,000 years ago or in the "Late Pleistocene of 120,000 years ago."[10] The first among our species lived in Africa. They emigrated from that landmass and settled in various parts of the globe. Humans'

8. Ibid., 222.

9. Donald E. Brown, "Human Nature and History," *History and Theory* 38, no. 4 (1999): 138–57, `http://www.jstor.org/stable/2678062`.

10. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, 102.

heights range from 4'7" to 6'3" (plus or minus) and weights range from 120-180 pounds (plus or minus). They have 23 chromosomes in each somatic cell, with about 22,000 total genes. They are mammals that reproduce sexually, gestate in utero, and give live birth. Unlike other mammals, females go through menopause. They tend to thrive best in climates averaging between 42-80 degrees farenheit[11], but can survive in extreme cold. Humans have 32 teeth and an extremely diverse diet of carbohydrates, fats, fiber, minerals, proteins, vitamins, and water: they eat vegetables, red meat, fish, nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, mushroom, mollusks, herbs, and more. Genetically modern humans don't just hunt and gather but farm, store, combine, ferment, and cook food. They have opposable thumbs, are bipedal, and walk upright. They have large brains relative to other primates, with a neocortex and prefrontal cortex that correlate with abstract thinking, problem solving, society, and culture. And indeed, humans live in cultures and societies. They are language-users, communicating in signs and symbols. Their language is an extremely complex, open-ended system which is both recursive (able to nest propositions within propositions) and productive (able to create sentences by potentially limitless combinations of words). In virtue of language and their opposable thumbs, they are creative; they don't just live on the ground or under ground, but build houses and shelters, sometimes in new places, such as caves, trees, hills, mountains, etc. Also, they are self-reflective and moral. They 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.

Physical, Alive, Animal, Rational, Practical

The concept of an 'animal', as I argued in the previous chapter, entails the presence of certain natural teleological and formal facts.

> Further, phylogenetic trees indicate that all terrestrial life can be traced to a common ancestor. Organisms as different from us as yeasts share half; mice, over 90%, chim-

11. Yuming Guo et al., "Global Variation in the Effects of Ambient Temperature on Mortality: A Systematic Evaluation," *Epidemiology (Cambridge, Mass.)* 25, no. 6 (2014): 781.

> panzees, over 95%, and different human individuals share over 99% of our genome. These scientific insights give a deeper meaning to the unity of all Life. Our complex molecular patterns are common to all organic gene/protein life and distinguish us from any other phenomena of nature.[12]

This also entails the notion of *potential*. Even single celled organisms have the potential to reproduce and develop. As Mautner continues:

> Life is a process whose outcome is the self-reproduction of complex molecular patterns'. Importantly, Life is then a process that requires a onstant flow of information, matter and energy.[13]

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. Attempts 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.

What are our rational capacities? First, speech.[14] Aristotle observed that, "Man alone of the animals possesses speech."[15] Though other animals have speech and communication, nothing in modern science has superceded or contradicted the observation (obvious to anyone) that human speech is different. Other animals that communicate use non-grammatical closed systems with a small, finite set of symbols.[16] Our language is unique: it is grammatical, open-ended, recursive, and productive.

12. Michael N Mautner, "Life-Centered Ethics, and the Human Future in Space," *Bioethics* 23, no. 8 (2009): 434–5.

13. Ibid., 435.

14. Terrence W Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain* (WW Norton & Company, 1998).

15. *Politics*, 1.1253a.

16. 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.

We are animals who speak. Through our animality comes a sensitivity to our surroundings, the ability to see the sun and moon which are millions (or hundreds of thousands) of miles away, to hear our fellow creatures, and to "take in" the whole cosmos into consciousness. Through speech comes a whole second cosmos of culture. Through speech comes intentionality in all its forms. Through speech comes communication ("pass the salt"), distinct languages and cultures (about 5,000 distinct languages), self-consciousness ("who am I?"), abstraction ("all grass is green"), science, philosophy, religion, mythology, technology and more. Perhaps even art and music arise from the rational capacity to direct our actions to create not only what instinct demands but whatever the imagination can invent.[17]

Rational capacities are identified by the actions of rational creatures. As Haldane says, quoting the medieval scholastics, "acting follows being" and "things are specified by their power."[18] We just do deliberate, explain, propose theories, judge truth and falsity, wonder, inquire, and so on.

Rationality is also the capacity to judge true and false, to affirm and deny. This is the view of Aristotle and the neo-Aristotelians (among others).

While I shall have to say more about practical rationality in a later chapter, here I need only to specify that our nature as rational animals *includes* the notion 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."[19] 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.)

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).

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17. Gordon H. Orians, "Nature & Human Nature," *Daedalus* 137, no. 2 (2008): 39–48. Orians says that "Americans spend more money on music than on sex or prescription drugs."

18. John Haldane, "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind," *Ratio* 11, no. 3 (1998): 262.

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

Hypothesis

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.[20] (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.[21]

In the old classificatory schemes, philosophers provided a genus and a differentia.

Potential

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

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

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

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.

This helps to rebut a playful jab from Bertrand Russell, who says: "Man is a rational animal —- so at least I have been told. Throughout a long life I have been looked diligently for evidence in favour of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it."[22] Part of the skepticism from analytic philosophers to the neo-Aristotelian project stems, I think, from this worry. Nevertheless, the concept of nature being deployed here is of the appeal of the neo-Aristotelian project is a clear concept of nature that applies to both humans and other animals.

A nature is an abstract property. It is a set of capacities delimiting the range of potentialities of a given object or living being. Natures are in this sense empirically discovered and inductively generalized set of potentialities latent in a species, captured in generics. Accordingly, human nature is a set of potentialities to realize our animal and intellectual activities, including reproduction, metabolisis, rational choice, abstract reflection, and so on. This is the solution to Russell's playful jab. Not all people — not most, perhaps not even many people — fulfill their rational potential by becoming thoroughly rational people, free of the banes of intellectual life: ignorance, intellectual laziness, illogical inferences, the distractions of irrational psychological factors, attachment to prejudice and bias, informal fallacies, and so on. Rather, overcoming all these banes would exemplify the fulfillment of human nature.

Generics as a Basis for Virtue

Someone might be wondering: What does all of this have to do with virtue? Peter Geach says "Men need virtues as bees need stings."[23] Philippa Foot echoes Geach's statement about "need" and "necessity" as well. Alasdair MacIntyre subtitled his most recent monograph: "human beings need the virtues."[24] 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.

22. Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (2009), p. 45 %%%

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

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

Michael Thompson summarizes:

> "… we may view this line of thought as beginning with the idea… that will and practical reason are on the face of it just two more faculties or powers a living being may bear, on a level with the powers of sight and hearing an memory. The second crucial thought is that an individual instance of any of the latter powers — sight, hearing, memory — is intuitively to be judged as defective or sound, good or bad, well-working or ill-working, by reference to its bearer's life-form or kind or species."[25]

Something changes when we examine human beings compared to all other animals or all other natural kinds.[26] 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*.

And this is how virtues appear, in general. Rosalind Hursthouse says that: "The concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good: a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent or admirable person who acts and feels well, rightly, as she should. These are commonly accepted truisms."[27] These truisms encompass our everyday moral judgments about who is admirable much more broadly than our judgments about who is morally upstanding or who avoids being morally despicable. There is more to being an admirable person than *avoiding* transgressions. Nicholas Gier's memorable image of the "couch potato" illustrates this point. The Couch Potato works a mindless job which he is able adequately to perform while watching television (and today we can add, checking his Facebook and Twitter feeds); he rarely rises except to receive himself and microwave his dinners; he is even religious, watching his favorite preachers on Sunday morning television and tithing regularly. Yet the couch potato is by my standards living a wasted life and pitiable life. (I am counting on your similar intuition.) We do not want to imprison him for being such a failure; but we certainly do not admire how he lives. By contrast, admirable people command our respect for being morally upstanding, and so much more. We admire them for their brains, their guts, their strength, their rare talents, their outstanding achievements, their unimaginable creativity, their wit and eloquence. Some people are remarkable for *what they are given* (great beauty, great intelligence, and so on). But the admirable person is remarkable not just for good fortune. In fact, admirable people are often admirable for overcoming extraordinarily bad fortune. We truly admire *what they do* with *what they are given*. In a word, we admire how they live.

25. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 29.

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

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

The practical animal "takes up" all that is intrinsic to being an animal – hungers, thirsts, sleepiness, sexual urges, a desire for shelter and comfort – and lives a life with them. A practical animal takes up all that is given in the natural lottery – strengths, weaknesses, defects, injuries, sicknesses, and talents – and must put it to use in living a life.

While we may admire "winners" of the natural lottery, we admire more the person who uses the attributes they were given well, who makes an investment of them that pays dividends. Compare, for example, the crowds cheering for Olympic runner Derek Redmond when he is winning the gold medal with the crowds cheering for Derek Redmond finishing last after his hamstring tore and his father helped him to cross the finish line. There have been many gold medal winning races that millions of people have witnessed and forgotten. But this race, when an otherwise naturally talented and well-trained athlete finished *last* that remains forever etched in the memory of millions more. It's not just the unbridled emotion Redmond displayed in that moment which so touches viewers; it's the obvious love from his father shown in supporting his son's commitment to finish the race, even dead last.

The same principle applies to the various aspects of being a practical, rational animal we can mention. Aristotle taught that "affability" was a virtue, where many of us might chuckle to imagine that naturally phlegmatic people are morally better than their melancholic counterparts. Surely something so little under one's control is not a basis for evaluation? We should first remember that the "moral" virtues are not, for Aristotle, obedience to categorical imperatives or divine commands but simply ways of developing one's emotions into the likeness of a true human being. In this light, it does seem to me common for people to judge their fellows on the basis of *wilfully chosen* habits of relating to others – the cold, unfeeling, humorless, or self-absorbed person is not being judged for losing any natural lottery but for allowing him or herself to become a poor companion. The warm-hearted, empathetic, cheerful, and outwardly-focused person is rightly judged for cultivating sociable attitudes and habits. While not everyone needs to be entertaining or well-connected,basic levels of relating to other persons in family and social situations is not an optional part of human life but part of our very nature. And like Derek Redmond, somone who is naturally disposed to be soliarty, melancholic, cynical, bitter, or otherwise negative is all the more admirable when he or she becomes and remains affable against the odds.

Hursthouse captures up the good specimen of a practical rational animal, in this way:

> So, summing up, a good social animal (of one of the more sophisticated species) is one that is well fitted or endowed with respect to (i) its parts, (ii) its operations, (iii) its actions, and (iv) its desires and emotions; whether it is thus well fitted or endowed is determined by whether these four aspects well serve (1) its individual survival, (2) the

> continuance of its species, (3) its characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, and (4) the good functioning of its social group–in the ways characteristic of the species.[28]

This is pretty well comprehensive. The only points I would add have to do with adding specification to the "good functioning" or flourishing of individuals and social groups, which I will do in a later chapter.

III. Objections

Now I would like to consider a few objections.

No Human Nature Objection

One worry mentioned above is that human nature is a mess. For all we can tell (without the benefit of divine revelation) humanity is an anomaly. Our origin is shrouded in mystery, our destiny undecided. Our evolutionary history has bestowed upon us what Bernard Williams calls "ill-sorted bricolage of powers and instincts":

> The second and more general reason lies not in the particular ways in which human beings may have evolved, but simply in the fact that they have evolved, and by natural selection… On that [evolutionary] view it must be the deepest desire—-need?—-purpose?–satisfaction?–of human beings to live in the way that is in this objective sense appropriate to them (the fact that modern words break up into these alternatives expresses the modern break-up of Aristotle's view). Other naturalistic views, Marxist and some which indeed call themselves 'evolutionary', have often proclaimed themselves free from any such picture, but it is basically very hard for them to avoid some appeal to an implicit teleology, an order in relation to which there could be an existence which would satisfy all the most basic human needs at once. 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 into ethical thought.[29]

The response of Hursthouse, Foot, Brown, etc., is that natural teleology is indeed compatible with Darwinism and does indeed provide a "an appropriate way to behave" (or we might add, *ways*) that is "inherent in each natural kind of thing."This is Fitzpatrick's main worry, not that we have evolved

28. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 202.
29. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), 44.

poorly, but that we evolved at all.[30] He argues that evolved organisms have a telos to reproduce, not to "flourish".

That said, natural teleology is certainly incompatible with a teleological nihilism distinctive of (certain brands) of metaphysical reductionism. But it is not incompatabile with evolution.

Strictly speaking, evolutionary theory may be summarized in five theses explaining the current multiplicity and shape of terrestrial life.[Cf. Alvin Plantinga[31] 8-9. 1. The earth is very old; 2. Life has progressed from relatively simple to relatively complex forms; 3. Through slow and gradual changes, all the modern forms of live have appeared; 4. All of life originated from one original place and species; 5. Some mechanism such as natural selection drives the process of descent with modification.] Each separately and all together they explain biological processes of genetic mutation, reproduction, preservation, and proliferation. A sixth, not *necessarily* related Strictly speaking, about teleology, it says absolutely nothing.[32] As for those brands of metaphysical reductionism that are incompatible with natural teleology, if our knowledge of natural teleology is well-grounded enough then so much the worse for metaphysical reductionism.

While Hursthouse is quick to assure the reader that her goal is not the production of a "scientific" ethics, by this she means only that ethical evaluations cannot be made from "outside" the ethical outlook itself: ethics is not to become a branch of biology. She emphatically *does* mean to make evaluations of human beings can be made in a way analogous to the way we evaluate cacti or deer.

In each case we rely on the notion of natural kinds and their appropriate way of behaving:

> [I]n relation to which they are evaluated as good or defective. The evaluations do not—as they might in a post-Darwinian age—evaluate members of species of living things simply as good, or not so good, or downright defective, as replicators of their genes.[33]

Hursthouse's primary response to Williams is that his worry is not actually rooted in the progress of modern science. He himself admits that "many of course have come to that conclusion before" (the conclusion that "human beings are to some degree a mess… for whom no form of life is likely

30. William FitzPatrick, "Morality and Evolutionary Biology," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016 (`http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/morality-biology/`, 2016).

31. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

32. Cf. ibid., 8–10. A sixth thesis, often appended to the first five, is that the process of natural selection is unguided. But regardless of its popularity among biologists this is, strictly speaking, a philosophical claim, not a biological one.

33. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 257–8.

to prove entirely satisfactory, either individually or socially.")[34] Rather, Hursthouse points out, his worry is an expression of moral nihilism and despair.[35] Williams believes human nature is a mess *because* he believes no form of life is completely satisfactory for everyone. But that blade cuts the other way. If one has hope that some form of life is or may be at least mostly satisfactory for at least some people, it makes sense to believe human nature is not completely a mess. And Hursthouse movingly praises hope as a virtue.

> Alternatively (or perhaps as well) we could stick with what we have—those facts about human nature and the way human life goes that support the claim that the virtues on the standard list benefit their possessor, and the reading of human history that ascribes our persisting failure to achieve *eudaimonia* in anything but very small patches to our vices. True, it is not easy to hold on to them sometimes; despair and misanthropy are temptations. But we should.[36]

I should not like to deny that human society and many, many human individuals are "a mess" in the sense that corruption is a real feature of human life. A selected list of the dark side of our species: War, oppression, disease, genetic defect, injury, hatred, vice, a large and growing list of different kinds of injustice. These, also, are empirical facts of anthropology and psychology. I should not like to deny that *things are bad*. I should only like to make space for the possibility that things *are not all bad*. The universal optimist is obliged unrealistically to deny all the dark side of our existence. But the universal pessimist is obliged unrealistically to deny all the light side: peace and freedom, glowing health, genetic order, beauty that persists into old age, love, virtue, and the halting but admirable efforts toward justice and social harmony.

Below I shall make the case that ethical conclusions can be derived from natural facts about human beings. Here I only wish to make room for the possibility that our data set of such facts cannot with integrity include all light and sweetness nor all dank and dark cynicism.

As for the second worry, some will say that humans are mere mammals, and that is the end of it. As Andrew Bailey says, "we are animals."[37] Stephen Brown argues that ethics is a descriptive discipline in the end; even virtue ethics, after being appropriately "naturalized", does not *commend* the virtues so much as *detail* the traits which happen to be adaptive for creatures like us to survive and propagate our genotype.[38] Although the "characteristic form of life" of human beings involves

34. Ibid., 261, quoting from Williams.

35. I shall take up the topic of rational despair again in a later chapter.

36. Ibid., 265.

37. Andrew M Bailey, "Animalism," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 12 (2015): 867–83.

38. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*; Stephen Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue," *Ethica* 4 (2005): 7–22.

highly rarified neurological and cognitive processes we do not observe in other animals, nevertheless, nature only reveals one kind of biological concept of nature: a species. And species aim to survive and reproduce.

Response 2

My reply is that to say that humans are mammals is an empirical assertion; we exhibit quite a sufficient number of tell-tale properties shared by other mammals: a neocortex, hair, mammary glands, and hearts of a particular form and function. But to say that humans are *merely* mammals is a profoundly anti-empirical assertion. I even would tendentiously label it profoundly *anti-scientific*. For what we observe of ourselves both "from inside" and "from outside" we exhibit a range of properties not shared by other mammals: grammar and language, fire-making, cooking, sex for pleasure, abstract reasoning, science, philosophy, religion, mythology, agriculture. Of course, slippery spatial analogies like "inside" and "outside" admit of multiple senses: "inside" can and often does mean what can be known via introspection (e.g., the way I know what it feels like to be slighted or to be praised, the way I remember the color of my grandmother's house) and what can be known from accepting limitations of a first-personal or second-personal human point of view more generally (e.g., it appears that the sun orbits the earth rather than the other way around; and I know when my mother is upset because I just "know" that look). Looking at things from the "outside" might mean what can be known via sensory perception or what can be known – if anything – by pretending to a neutral, objective, third-person, God's eye view.[39] We can posit counterfactuals, as for example when we speculate what intelligent extraterrestrials would think of humans if they observed and studied our species, with fresh eyes, alongside every other. All that matters for my purposes now is that our species exhibits a range of peculiar activities that distinguish us from mammals, from animals more broadly, and from any other known natural entity in the cosmos – and that recognizing as much is an *empirical* matter. To deny our uniqueness is possible, after a long inquiry. But to be blind to our uniqueness from the outset is to be subject, in all likelihood, to philistine reductionism that has no more to do with genuine science than does belief in extraterrestrial life.

Irrelevance Objection

We need to turn now to the second major objection. McDowell urges that the is-ought gap is indeed a real problem, in so far as the "is" side of the gap (the biological side) is irrelevant to morality. He objects to the over-zealous application of empirical methods to ethics.

39. Whether we can know anything outside of time and space (such as platonic universals) is of course a large question I don't wish to enter into here.

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.[40]

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."[41] 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."[42] 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…"[43] 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

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

41. 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).

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

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

some exercise of human sensibility."[44] In this McDowell agrees with Mackie: the "central doctrine of European moral philosophy" is a mistake;[45] 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."[46] 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.[47] 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[48] – philosophy that 'leaves everything as it is'[49]. 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

44. Ibid., 143.

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

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

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

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

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

unlike shapes.[50] We might paraphrase this thesis by saying that "natural normativities" are qualities *in the world* (not just in our heads) but they are not Lockean "primary qualities." They are, 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."[51] Secondary qualities are "subjective" in that they cannot be adequately conceived "except in terms of certain subjective states"[52] 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."[53]

He says a secondary property ascription is true "in virtue of the object's disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance."[54] 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.

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50. 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.

51. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 137.

52. Ibid., 139.

53. Ibid., 139.

54. Ibid., 138.

Goodness, badness, and other values are therefore grounded in "second nature."[55] 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 we recognize reasons for belief and reasons for action. We are initiated into a Space of reasons by education, formation, cultivation (or *Bildung*).[56]

McDowell's fundamental solution to the mind-body problem in general is that the world given in experience is engaging both receptive and spontaneous capacities. We have to wonder about the implications of the "new interpretation of human experience"—and the location of the rational being within nature. McDowell does wonder about this, introducing the concept of second nature. Nature (we presume) is disenchanted. Human beings are natural—they exist within the disenchanted space of law. Yet, ex hypothesi the human being has (simultaneously) the capacity for spontaneous answerability to rational relations, which exist in a sui generis space of reason. These seem irreconcilable. McDowell here 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."[57] Second nature is that space in which human beings are initiated into particular ways of behaving and knowing.

Practical wisdom is a virtue that the young human being does not have, and the ethical demands of practical wisdom are not even perceptible to her. But she has the potential (within her nature) to develop the answerability to them. And ethical thinking is inculcated in a young person, and then later examined, but only examined from within ethical thinking. Human beings are intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing (Bildung) which instills the appropriate shape in their lives. So initiated, practically wise behavior is not just a new kind of behavior but the maturation and development of a new kind of faculty in the human

55. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 188 and following.
56. Bildung=formation, education; bild=form, image.
57. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.

animal. The circularity of this inculcation and new second natural faculty is not accidental: Since practical wisdom is responsive to reasons, it becomes a prototype "for the…faculty that enables us to recognize and create … intelligibility."[58] "[The ethical demands of reason] are essentially within reach of human beings. So practical wisdom is second nature to its possessors."[59]

Response

Both McDowell and Foot reject subjectivism; morality is not merely invented. So their disagreements, while serious, must be seen as an internecine disagreement.

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.

Dilemma Unrestricted or Restricted 'nature'?

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[60] 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 might be impatient with such digressions, insisting 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

58. Ibid., 79.
59. Ibid., 84.
60. "Three Sorts of Naturalism."

> 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.[61]

And Fink is right. If the error of Foot's critics lies in a deeply-held, barely articulated belief that some concept "nature" cannot include any normative content, then the only thing for it is to thematize the concept of nature, make such beliefs explicit, and subject them to scrutiny.

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.[62]

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.'[63] 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

61. Ibid., 206.

62. Ibid., 206.

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

materialism is not the *only* form of restricted nature. Rather, *the idealist, too, can rightly lay claim to the title of naturalism* – and not in a "Pickwickian" sense.

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."[64] 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."[65] 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"

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

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 matter-form 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."[66] 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 has argued persuasively that we must return return to the unrestricted conception of nature.

Neither restricted sort 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 idealist can be guilty of presenting the spiritual or conceptual version of nature as absolute. McDowell sees the same question-begging in what he calls "philistine scientism."[67] 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).[68]

Not unrestricted

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

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

67. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62, no. 3 (1979): 346.

68. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," 219.

> 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.[69] 219}

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 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.

Where the materialist and idealist are fighting over the definition of primary nature, the unrestricted conception refuses to fight, instead embracing both body and mind, brain and consciousness, matter and form, in a comprehensive view. While this has its attractions, the cost, however, is that one no longer has the right to criticize opponents on the basis of their positing something real over and above nature – such a criticism is meaningless once we have defined 'real over and above nature' as a contradiction in terms. This cost McDowell does not wish to pay.

McDowell must pick sides, but he has not allowed himself to pick sides. He rejects one sort of idealism[70] and rejects one sort of empiricism. Therefore, by default, it is a necessary consequence that he embraces the unrestricted conception of nature.

Instead of explicitly admitting that he embraces 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. He keeps his conception of nature restricted (anti-supernatural) while *calling* in unrestricted (neither idealist nor physicalist). McDowell as a hero of anti-dualism has allowed himself merely to *name and claim* an unrestricted conception of nature while fully developing and endorsing a restricted conception of nature.

69.

70. Cf. McDowell, *Mind and World*. He wants to dissolve the prejudice that we must be either Kantian transcendental idealists or reductive empiricists.

Sellars Example

To make the point even more clear, compare McDowell's refusal to pick sides with Sellars' example of the same. Sellars provides a specimen of such doublespeak in almost platonic purity:

> 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.[71]

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.

Conclusion

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.[72]

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

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

Values as primary qualities

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"[73] helps explain moral epistemology. This is McDowell's own example but he does not seem to notice that it can be used against his thesis. If "danger" is a Lockean primary quality, then "desirable" might be as well. His theory of "danger" is this: Just as there is *something* about red things *themselves* that makes them give us redness experiences, likwise there is something about the dangerous animal itself that gives us fear experiences. That quality may not be *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 engage in concept-use or perceptual judgment – seeing the bear *as dangerous* – rather the rabbit merely needs the instincts and perceptial capacities to see the bear. His response is not reducible to a response to the bear's size or fur or any other obvious empirical quality; the rabbit is responding to the danger. Likewise, when we see certain kinds of food as "disgusting" (rotten banana peels, say) we need to assume that we are projecting disgust onto the food; it is more plausible, by McDowell's own lights, that we are being sensitive to what such foods *merit*, given the kind of foods they are and the kind of animals we are.

Scientific realism?

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

73. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 142–3.

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.

IV. Conclusion

The sort of naturalism(s) represented by Foot, Hursthouse, and McDowell aim to ground evaluations of a member of a species on the life form of that species. The generic that 'a human being is a practical, rational animal' captures the life form of the species in a manner that is accessible to an "alien anthropologist" observing humanity from the "outside", from outside the practical point of view. The presence in humanity of such generically animal behaviors such as birthing, reproducing sexually, eating, sleeping, and dying betray a common root and identity with the animal kingdom and with the biological world as a whole; yet other human behaviors, especially language, deliberation, reflection, and intentional action betray a curious difference. As such, those qualities that enable human beings to be practical, rational animals are liable to turn out to be virtues. Those qualities of natural excellence enable the member of the species to actuate the potentials inherent in such a life form. Showing how such qualities as show up on "normal" catalog of virtues, and how perhaps even others, fall under the concept of natural excellence, is the task for the next chapter.