Even after clarifying MacIntyre's optimism about the possibility of ethical truth, his answer to relativism is sufficient but still somehow indeterminate. This indeterminacy is partly due, as I have suggested, to his appeal to practical rationality. While this appeal seems to me to solve some problems, there is one lingering problem it does not solve. From my perspective (or my tradition), *every legitimate tradition* affirms the law of non-contradiction. But that is just to say that if Walt Whitman or Nagarjuna denies the law of non contradiction, then I will necessarily judge them to be irrational.[1] But I wish to go further and say that this strand of Buddhism *really is irrational*. That is, I wish to affirm that they are irrational – full stop. I am not sure MacIntyre's theory allows me to affirm that. Unless I am missing something crucial here, this seems to me a limitation of the theory.

Perhaps a qualified acceptance of MacIntyre's claim about tradition-constituted rationality is that when a tradition does not *seem* share this standard of rationality (the value of logical consistency) I should not be too quick to judge that I have really understood their meaning. Perhaps when I ask them if they affirm (S is P and S is not P) they have a slightly different concept in mind for "not" or for "and." Or perhaps they are speaking of an entity instantiating a property and not instantiating that same property at the same time but in ever so slightly different respects. Walt Whitman may be saying he contradicts himself in ever so slightly different respects in order to grasp apparently paradoxical truths that can be predicated of a transcendental modern man. Or perhaps they are denying both P and not P in favor of some other, different articulation of the predicates

1. Laurence R. Horn, "Contradiction," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, 2014. "Do I contradict myself? / Very well, then, I contradict myself. / (I am large, I contain multitudes.) (Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself');"Everything is real and not real. / Both real and not real. / Neither real nor not real. / That is Lord Buddha's teaching." (Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā 18:8), quoted in Garfield (1995: 102).

a given subject instantiates. In the case of any of these alternatives, the principle of charity recommends I extend my interlocutor the benefit of the doubt before concluding that the appearance of irrationality reflects real irrationality.

The clarity of tradition-constituted rationality

What exactly is a tradition? MacIntyre's account is not clear. John Haldane (among others) questions MacIntyre's ability coherently to identify what a tradition is. What is tradition A? How do we differentiate it from B? Are two traditions separate and hence identifiable only if they are *incommensurable*? How much difference constitutes separation? How much overlap is compatible with difference? Jewish and Christian traditions share a common origin and bear considerable overlap in authorities, scriptures, and doctrines.

MacIntyre's definition makes answering these questions difficult. He characterizes a tradition as "separate and unified when its members or texts have a core set of shared commitments to beliefs, when the tradition is situated in a particular context in a particular set of institutions and when the tradition has an identifiable linguistic difference when compared to other traditions."[2] But is there any universal procedure for identifying such linguistic and institutional differences?

The right response to this call for clarification, I think, comes from Weinstein. We should not expect, by MacIntyre's lights, that there is an automatically objective, view-from-nowhere by which we can define tradition itself. Rather, MacIntyre concludes that "the concept of a tradition, together with the criteria for its use and application, is itself one developed from within one particular tradition-based standpoint. This does not preclude its application to the very tradition within which it was developed."[3] MacIntyre grants that his self-definition of his own tradition arises, in part, from his criteria of that tradition. Traditions change over time. They progress (according to their own unchanging standards) toward unchanging goals or else they abandon old standards. This is liable

2. Jack Russell Weinstein, *On MacIntyre* (Wadsworth, 2003), 83.

3. John Horton and Susan Mendus, *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 295.

to frustrate some readers. But the alternative is worse. The alternative is a denial of pluralism that liberalism holds dear. For it is intellectual imperialism to assume that I have the *real* scoop on every other tradition. It assumes I have the right to define and critique all other traditions *in my own terms.* Even though MacIntyre thinks his own tradition correct, and others incorrect, this is not imperialistic. For he is willing to reflect on his own tradition, examine its resources and inadequacies, and engage through philosophical imagination with rivals.

In short, by MacIntyre's lights he does not need a definition of tradition that is any more cut and dry than it is. Forcefully to disagree with this conclusion requires his interlocutor to produce an alternative theory of practical rationality. But that alternative will either aim to be *not* tradition-constituted but universal (which is the encyclopedic tradition) or it will admit is tradition-constituted but the "best so far" (which is MacIntyre's own view).

We can think of this worry about MacIntyre's theory more generally as a problem of thinking about thinking. MacIntyre is a theorist of virtue and practical rationality. Hence rationally to assess his theory requires thinking through our own theory of rationality. The errors we make in *thinking things through* are not likely to be solved by *thinking them through*. The Greek proverb is: "If water chokes us, what shall we drink?" The Latin proverb (from a very different context) is "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" — who will guard the guards themselves? I believe the answer to the rhetorical question is *no one at all* can guard the guards; if water chokes us, there is *nothing at all we can drink to wash it down*. Likewise, if something is deeply wrong with the way we think, how can theorizing about rationality right the wrong?

Some of the errors MacIntyre diagnoses in thinkers who belong to encyclopedic tradition will be invisible to those thinkers unless they themselves earnestly examine the problems of the tradition. Even if MacIntyre's diagnosis is *correct* – especially if it is correct – the readers who especially need to hear it will find the diagnosis unintelligible, even irrational. Insofar as the "patient" finds any parts of his theory intelligible, they will seem radical, disastrous in their social implications, and destructive of the very nature and purpose of education. The reason these appearances will be

insuperable to MacIntyre's patient is because the patient is, by his lights, self-deceived. He or she simply denies being part of a tradition, and hence denies having a particular (rather than universal) tradition-bound conception of rationality, and hence denies having a particular, tradition-bound conception of the good (perhaps the good is unbounded freedom to follow the moral law, or to pursue happiness,, and justice unfettered equality). Modernity is the "tradition-less tradition" and hence *must* deny tradition to be consistent with itself.

The solution to this paradox is not to browbeat people into admitting that they inhabit a tradition. Rather, he directs the arguments (of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*) and others at interlocutors who are already undergoing epistemological crisis. This "patient" comes to MacIntyre with manifesting symptoms. MacIntyre offers one possible diagnosis, and the patient's job is to investigate further. The patient needs philosophical imagination to even *consider* the possibility of another truth. The patient needs patience, intellectual courage, and self-reflection. The patient needs to sit in front of the proverbial mirror and mouth the words, (a) "I am part of a tradition" and (b) "my tradition might be inadequate," and (c) "that other tradition might have the resources more adequately to address the intellectual and practical problems that I now see are insuperable to my tradition." The critic who would escape the battery is more likely to flee rather than engage; but the critic who would escape by engaging and overcoming is liable to meet her match.

The justification of morality by tradition-constituted rationality

A third reply is in order here. D'andrea[4] points out a critique Philippa Foot has leveled against MacIntyre: after all the informative and wide-ranging historical analysis, MacIntyre's account does not solve the "problem posed by Plato, and never solved … that of showing the rationality, for any man, of a thorough-going acceptance of the restraints of justice."[5] The challenge of a Nietzsche

4. Thomas D D'Andrea, *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue: The Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006).

5. Philippa Foot, "Review of After Virtue," *Times Literary Supplement*, 1981, 1 097. This is the "problem of immoralism" she tries to address in the final chapter of her *Natural Goodness*.

or Callicles or Thrasymachus lies in their acceptance that the good life for humans *requires* some virtues or requires virtue in some sense but their rejection of the "robust concept of justice with its corresponding constraints on action."[6]

One response is this: the question "why be moral?" is never asked in the abstract. For example, in describing the "self of the heroic age" MacIntyre says, "In heroic society there is no 'outside' except that of the stranger. A man who tried to withdraw himself from his given position in heroic society would be engaged in the enterprise of trying to make himself disappear."[7] Even though virtues in twenty-first century North America are not what the same as Homer's day, there is a parallel to be drawn.

Philosophers often ask "why be moral?" hypothetically. They ask it *as if* speaking on the skeptic's behalf, or as if *they* were skeptics. But hypothetical moral skeptics will not do. We must consider a concrete character, real or fictional. Once we look for a real or fictional skeptic, a problem arises. By MacIntyre's lights, sincere "why be moral?" skeptics are political or social outcasts. For millions of people who are full-fledged members of their tradition, the "why be moral?" question will not usually arise. Parents, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, businesses, and non-profit organizations all have a hand in giving each member of the community the tradition out of which the community arises and within which abstract philosophical or pseudo-philosophical worries such as "What does it all mean?" do not arise because they are satisfactorily answered.

By contrast, the emergence of the doubt as to whether one should be moral, and the crystallization of the doubt into an articulate challenge, is *a political failure*. The *polis* to which the moral skeptic belongs has failed him. The moral skeptic, likewise, has failed the *polis* which belongs to him or her. So MacIntyre's theory makes room for people who are not actually skeptical (to whom an answer to Foot's challenge is not required) and people who are actually skeptical but do not belong to their society (to whom an answer to Foot's challenge would be meaningless).

6. D'Andrea, *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue*, 430.
7. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 126.

MacIntyre's theory makes room for one more group: moral skeptics *are* members of their own tradition but are seeing the problems within their own tradition and who are troubled by a "border tradition". This type of skeptic sees the resources of a rival tradition and compares such favorably with the resources of his own tradition. The skeptic is, in a word, entering epistemological crisis.

Specifically, it might be that the moral skeptic has been raised outside of the Aristotelian tradition and is noticing the inadequacies of his or her own tradition, and is entering epistemological crisis. MacIntyre's response is to invite him or her to do the hard work of resolving that crisis by examining, from within the context of a primary tradition *and* a "second first" tradition, the problems at hand and the available solutions, working toward an ever greater understanding of the truth.

In short, MacIntyre's theory gives an account of two contradictory phenomena. It explains how a moral skeptic might arise within a community and how that skeptic might be moved to a more adequate grasp of the truth; and it explains why, in healthy, unified, moral societies, *so few people become moral skeptics*.

I. Discussion

My view: Synthesize, Compare: argue

Practical reasons are motives

Although it seems that reason cannot motivate, practical reasons are the *primary* meaning of motive. Other psychological states *move* me to act but only reasons *motivate* me to act, since motivation is (I argue) a fundamentally rational state.

My view is that practical reason is the general human capacity for deciding, through reflection and sensitivity to practical principles, what to do, and for evaluating one's own actions and those of others. Although we can by verbal sleight of hand define practical reasons as 'desires', the

judgment of what to do is a distinct mental state from desiring, wanting, wishing, or instinctual attraction. Hence, practical reasons can (and most often do) motivate, all by themselves, even in the absence of desires (etc.); however, desires can (and often do) function as reasons for action.

There are many reasons for action. But the concept of a reason for action is the concept of pursuing what is good or what is best, all things considered. Practical reason runs into quandaries because there are so many reasons for action, and they sometimes conflict. Some have to do with what is best for me, what is best for others, what is best for me and what is best for me later, what is permissible and what is required, etc. Although we may want to reserve the word 'moral' for other-regarding reasons, it is important to keep in mind that our goal of living well demands sensitivity to a whole range of reasons, regarding self, other, world, and (perhaps) God.

> I entertain the unfriendly suspicion that those who feel they *must* seek more than [the Aristotelian view of practical reason] provides want a scientific theory of rationality not so much for a passion for science, even where there can be no science, but because they hope and desire, by some conceptual alchemy, to turn such a theory into a regulative or normative discipline, or into a system of rules by which to spare themselves some of the agony of thinking and all the torment of feeling and understanding that is actually involved in reasoned deliberation.[8]

There are two specific normative conclusions I would like to make. I want to avoid the accusation that practical wisdom, as the argument stands at present, is an empty formality devoid of moral substance. As we saw in an earlier chapter, it might seem that the injunction: "pursue practical wisdom!" amounts to a truism that wisdom (which is a good) is a good.

The first particular normative conclusion is that truth is valuable. Often times one hears "education" praised as a panacea. Education, we are told, without any further definition to the term, is supposed to solve American economic problems, lift people out of poverty, reduce crime in inner cities, enrich students personally, lead to technological advances and medical breakthroughs,

8. David Wiggins, "Deliberation and Practical Reason," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76 (1975): 29–51.

subvert and correct systematic gender inequalities, and more. But unless the education a student receives consists in *knowledge* of *truth*, we can hardly expect that these exaggerated hopes be fulfilled.

A second particular normative conclusion is that young people in particular should not engage in conjugal activity outside of the bonds of legal marriage. Conjugal activity is a powerful part of life and part of the human experience. There are moral, prudential, legal, psychological, economic, social, and biological reasons to keep such a powerful force within safe bounds. Morally, moral authorities from Moses, Cicero, Socrates, St. Paul, Confucius, Epicurus, Thomas Aquinas, and many more urge chastity and conjugal fidelity. The Mosaic law condemns adulterers to death but if an unmarried man sleeps with an unmarried woman they are not to be punished; they are to marry.

"Character Ethics"

Edmund Pincoffs distinguishes two broad conceptions of philosophical ethics he calls "Quandary Ethics" and "Character Ethics." Quandary ethics is focused on the short-term resolution of immediate moral problems, either by dissolving moral perplexity or giving some (hopefully rational) basis for a particular decision or course of action; character ethics is focused on the long-term goal of living well by executing worthwhile goals in every day life. The Quandary ethicists are those Pincoffs quotes at the beginning of his article (such as Hare, Toulon, Brandt). They think that "the business of ethics is with" problems ", i.e. situations in which it is difficult to know what one should do; that the ultimate beneficiary of ethical analysis is the person who, in one of these situations, seeks rational ground for the decision he must make; that ethics is therefore primarily concerned to find such grounds, often conceived of as moral rules and the principles from which they can be derived; and that meta-ethics consists in the analysis of the terms, claims, and arguments which come into play in moral disputation, deliberation, and justification in problematic contexts."[9] By contrast, Aristotle is an example of a Character Ethicist. "[Aristotle] as is well known, thought of ethics as a branch

9. Edmund Pincoffs, "Quandary Ethics," *Mind*, 1971, 552.

of politics, which in turn he thought of as a very wide-ranging subject having to do generally with the planning of human life so that it could be lived as well as possible. Moral problems are given their due but are by no means stage-centre. The question is not so much how we should resolve perplexities as how we should live."[10] The chapters constituting this ethical inquiry partake more of character ethics. How do we live *well*? This is the first question of life that human beings, upon arriving at the age of reflection, ask. It is also the first question of ethical philosophers. The goal is broad, to understand virtue, wisdom, and happiness with an eye to becoming virtuous, wise, and happy in spite of the odds and in spite of the temptations to vice and the inevitable distractions and obstacles of chance.

Non-distinctive virtue ethics Nussbaum

Nussbaum rightly observes that the three features of "common ground" between a wide variety of "virtue ethicists" also include Kant and Mill and Sidgwick. Her three features are the notions that moral philosophy is (a) about the agent (not just individual choices or actions), (b) about motives, emotions, and settled character traits, and (c) the whole of life.[11] "Even though a concern for motive, intention, character, and the whole course of life was not in principle alien to Kantian and Utilitarian philosophy, it was certainly alien to most British and American Kantians and Utilitarians of the period."[12] Martha Nussbaum argues that the "common ground" between even diverging views is that we cannot construct a complete ethical theory by discussing only "isolated moments of choice"[13]

This "common ground" explains why virtue theorists often discuss examples from literature and why many virtue theorists are female philosophers or feminists. For "literary narratives display longterm patterns of character, action, and commitment" and females have "more often been

10. Ibid., 553–4.

11. Martha C Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics* 3, no. 3 (1999): 170.

12. Ibid., 173.

13. Ibid., 174.

encouraged by society to attend to, cultivate, and label their emotions."[14]

The "common ground" does not imply the rejection of theorizing, nor of moral rules. Ancient and contemporary virtue theorists employ both. Nor does the "common ground" imply the apotheosis of local custom and moral tradition. Reflective morality is supposed to rise above the raw material of one's maxims and habits to trim and add. Nor does the "common ground" imply that emotion and the sub-rational forces of tradition (she mentions "traditional pedagogues and astrologists and religious leaders and magicians") are to be preferred to rational morality.

The remaining virtue theorists, Nussbaum thinks, fall into two diverse groups: the first consists of characteristically "anti-Utilitarians" who want reason to play a much larger role than Mill (or the typical Utilitarian) would have it do; the second consists of characteristically "anti-Kantians" and want sub-rational psychological states to play a much larger role than Kant (or the typical Kantian) would have them do. The first group defend the plurality of goods, rationality's role in deliberating about which ends to pursue and its role in organizing, ranking, and harmonizing that plurality of goods, the rational character of some emotions, and the need for a rational critique of the broader social and political setting in which "defective passions and judgments" are formed.[15]

On the notion that values are plural, the anti-Utilitarians are united. Virtues are "an organized way of cherishing a particular end that has intrinsic value. Taken together, the virtues, and their orderly arrangement, represent a set of commitments to cherish all the valuable things, and to organize them all together, insofar as one can."[16] The "insofar" clause there is not insignificant. Religiously, the Greeks were deeply persuaded of the sometimes tragic and impossible task of pleasing all the gods. Ethically, they were likewise sensitive the sometimes tragic and impossible demand to pursue all intrinsic goods. One of the tasks of rational deliberation, Nussbaum, argues, is to organize this plurality of goods into a coherent set or to specify indeterminate ends into clear and pursuable ones. Ethicists who have supported this notion include Murdoch, McDowell and

14. Ibid., 176.
15. Ibid., 180.
16. Ibid., 183.

Sherman. While giving room to the passions, such Aristotelians elevate reason to a role that can have influence in shaping passions. She says they are "highly theoretical rationalists who would like reason to do much more than it currently does in perfecting our moral and political lives."[17] These are playfully chided as "Prussian" moralists who would not bathe in the sun without deliberating first whether doing so would be in accord with duty.

One possible response here would be to make an analogy to parenting. Different parents discharge their duty to raise children in vastly different ways. Upper and middle-class and lower-class parents in the U.S. exhibit a vast range all by themselves, not to mention the parenting habits of various classes of various first-, second-, and third-world countries. One plausible underlying unity, however, is the thought that parents (and guardians more generally) treat children as sub-rational. From the ages of 0-1, children do not respond to speech; from 1-5 their speech is limited, and from 5-12 children are fully able to understand basic speech but are most often swept about by emotion, impulse, desire, and social instinct. Parenting habits may be roughly graphed then on a scale of more or less "Prussian" according to how strictly a parent schedules the time for the child's day. Some parents impose rigid form on a child's day, allowing pockets of "play time" in between dressing, eating, learning, practicing instruments, and so on; some parents allow children to run about freely throughout the day, only imposing small pockets of rigid time (at meals, before bed, etc.). We might plausibly suppose that the role of reason is more like that of a parent managing sub-rational children than it is like that of a monarch ruling a polis.

The other "anti-Kantians" want reason to play *less* of a role – or at least a different role – in the moral life. Bernard Williams, she says, appreciated the Greek poets far more than he appreciated the Greek philosophers. Aristotle was excessively rationalistic and optimistic about subjecting the raw materials of our ethical thinking to abstract reflection by the construction of organized theories.

By this distinction, my view is much more clearly "anti-utilitarian" than anti-Kantian. The emotions, desires, motivations, passions – the numerous variegated non-rational or sub-rational

17. Ibid., 187.

mental states of normal human psychology – can be made rational and/or can be accommodated within a life of reason. That is, any kind of plant can be part of a garden with a clear, purposeful, even beautiful blueprint, even if dead leaves and rotten petals may sometimes dot the floor.

Nussbaum thinks that Foot's "heavily biologized" version of Aristotle is "not closer to but further from the views of practical reason characteristic of the neo-Aristotelians."[18] I'm not so sure Nussbaum is right here, since the biological nature of practical reason is, by any account, a deep mystery more suitable for a dissertation on the philosophy of mind. All I want to commit myself to here is the postulate that human reason (including practical reason) and human biology (physiology and neurophysiology) have a unitary root; and that the root is not *necessarily* the physical but may be the rational — or that they both have a third, neutral root. Blackburn's faint praise of reason as having "independent authority" over "human nature" is the precise view I am working against. If our rationality is not our nature itself, then the neo-Aristotelian project I am conceiving is doomed.

Nussbaum summarizes Baier as an anti-theory theorist who "understands virtue ethics as an alternative to the 'rationalist, law-fixated tradition in moral philosophy", who praises the voice of culture in moral thinking as often or more than she praises critical voice of philosophy over-and-above culture.[19] Though she later tempered this thesis to call for the "harmony" of justice and care. Her critics among the neo-Humeans and neo-Aristotelians are less comfortable deferring to existing community standards. Regardless, the neo-Humeans are concerned to reduce "reason's exorbitant demands and pretensions to authority; it is a way of grounding morality in other features of human nature."[20]

MacIntyre also is more willing to countenance existing social practices, if they are sound. "For MacIntyre, appeals to reason never in fact resolve ethical disagreements."[21] This is not right. For MacIntyre, one appeal to reason in one moral tradition will resolve one ethical disagreement,

18. Ibid., 192.
19. Ibid., 194.
20. Ibid., 195.
21. Ibid., 196.

while another appeal to (another!) reason in another moral tradition will resolve another ethical disagreement; and neither will resolve the other. To deny that appeals to reason can resolve disagreements *across* traditions is a far cry from denying that such appeals can resolve disagreements *within* a tradition. Nussbaum ascribes to MacIntyre the monstrous suggestion that "we need to get this functional order through some sort of political authority" who will dole out a "well-assigned role or function" by "authority and tradition" to each person who then "internalizes" that role. In ascribing this view to him, Nussbaum helps herself to a conception of reason MacIntyre has spent more than one book problematizing. MacIntyre's actual views undercut the very use of the terms "reason" and "tradition" Nussbaum deploys in her critique. In other words, she has not responded to him as well, but responded to a quite different view that might be expressed in the same, multiply ambiguous, terms.

Nussbaum's conclusion is that "virtue ethics" is a misleading category and represents multiple pluralities of views across more than one axis. "These views have widely different consequences for the role of the professional philosopher in society, for the criticism of existing habits of greed and anger, for the whole project of placing our hope in reason. What I have called the"common ground" is significant: but it can be pursued within Kantianism, within Utilitarianism, and within neo-Aristotelian and neo-Humean projects of many different sorts."[22]

Practical appraisal and action

MacIntyre puts a similar point in different terms. His earliest ethical work distinguished the significance of moral judgments compared to other kinds of judgments. In a careful critique of both intuitionists such as Moore and emotivists such as Stevenson, MacIntyre concluded that both (mistakenly) assume that moral judgments and moral terms have significance only in their referential meaning. The intuitionists, of course, concluded that moral terms refer to a non-natural property, while the emotivists concluded that moral terms do not refer to such a property and so do not refer

22. Ibid., 201.

at all. (Naturalists, later in the 20th century, argue that moral terms refer to natural properties.) MacIntyre's alternative denies the assumption entirely; moral judgments "have their own kind of logic" and their significance, like other kinds of judgments, comes from "exhibiting the logic of their usage."[23] The significance of moral judgments is that "they enable us to solve problems of appraisal and of action." That is their place in "a pattern of language and action…" He continues:

> Above all they arise out of the way in which we see the world and the way in which our language allows us to see the world. We cannot sufficiently emphasize the direction given to our appraisals by the language which happens to be available for our descriptions. It is as we see the facts that we judge the world.

MacIntyre's point is that moral judgments are not *simply* useful in moral dilemmas or quandaries. They appear, at the earliest stages of childhood development, in a pattern of usage that is inextricable from the human activities of reasoning, acting, and appraising. Evaluative judgments appear in the widest imaginable spread of human activities, from politics to playgrounds, from sociology to social life, from the practices of law and medicine to the professions of journalism and psychology, from the sciences to the arts.

Even if this point be granted, moral dilemmas are not *unreal*. Moral dilemmas are a special version of our general "problems of appraisal and action." They may be particularly vexing, but they are no different from the general problems of how to live, how to be happy, what kinds of public policies to pursue, what apparently meaningful types of life are really meaningful.

The word "ethical" is sometimes taken to have a broader connotation than the narrow "moral," but I think such distinctions etymologically suspect. As MacIntyre summarizes: " 'moral' is the etymological descendant of 'moralis'. But 'moralis', like its Greek predecessor ethikos — I invented 'moralis' to translate the Greek word in the De Fato — means 'pertaining to character' where a man's character is nothing other than his set dispositions to behave systematically in one way rather than another, to lead on particular kind of life."[24] The early uses of Moral did not contrast

23. Mark C. Murphy, in *Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. Mark C. Murphy (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 118, quoting p. 73 of MacIntyre's master's thesis *The Significance of Moral Judgments*.

24. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 38.

with " 'prudential' or 'self interested' " nor with " 'legal or 'religious' ". MacIntyre concludes: "The word to which it is closest in meaning is perhaps most simply 'practical'."

Practicality as a whole domain was sub-divided. The conventional distinction that "morality" is a special sub-division pertaining to right and wrong behavior toward others traces to the 1700s, where "immorality" meant sexual misbehavior. The conventional separation of "moral" from "non-moral" considerations traces to John Stuart Mill who divided the former domain as concerned with duties to benefit and to not harm others.

> Many if not most moral philosophers in modern times see their subject as having to do exclusively with relations between individuals or between an individual and society, and so with such things as obligations, duties, and charitable acts. It is for this reason that, of the four ancient cardinal virtues of justice, courage, temperance, and wisdom, only the first now seems to belong wholly to 'morality'. The other three virtues are recognized as necessary for the practice of 'morality' but are now thought of as having part of their exercise 'outside morality' in 'self-regarding' pursuits, 'moral' and 'prudential' considerations being contrasted in a way that was alien to Plato or Aristotle.4 J. S. Mill, for instance, expresses this modern point of view quite explicitly, saying in his essay On Liberty that 'A person who shows rashness, obstinacy, self-conceit . . . who cannot restrain himself from harmful indulgences' shows faults (Mill calls them 'self-regarding faults') which 'are not properly immoralities' and while they 'may be proofs of any amount of folly . . . are only a subject of moral reprobation when they involve a breach of duty to others, for whose sake the individual is bound to have care for himself'.[foot2001natural68]

As one MacIntyre scholar puts it: 'The term practical rationality is derived from Aristotle's *phronesis*. It is to be distinguished from *sophia*, a more technical form of reasoning. Practical rationality leads to more approximate conclusions; it takes context and relative facts into account, and it usually leads to moral or political conclusions."[25] If we take philosophical ethics to be reflection on morality as a whole then, on this view, philosophical ethics is reflection on practical rationality. Practical rationality is simply the process of deciding what to do. It is the process of thinking through what to do. Or, in Gibbard's unforgettable phrasing, it is "thinking how to live."[26]

25. Weinstein, *On MacIntyre*, 60–61.
26. Allan Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

Rosalind Hursthouse likewise 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.

Nussbaum paraphrases the question "how do specifically moral ends and commitments figure among the ends that [a moral agent] pursues?" in this way: "This question is posed in a characteristically modern way, presupposing a distinction between the moral and the non-moral that is not drawn, as such, by the Greek thinkers. But if one objects to that characterization, one can rephrase it: for example, What role does concern for other for their own sake play in here scheme of ends? What role does political justice play in her scheme of ends? And so forth."[28] Nussbaum's paraphrase makes clear that our narrowed sense of 'moral' means simply obligations to others.

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

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

28. Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics," 174.

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.

Julia Annas' presentation of virtue as as a skill illuminates this same point, I think, beautifully. She says, I should develop an account of virtue in which I show have central to the idea that the practical reasoning of the virtuous person is analogous in important ways… to the practical reasoning of someone who's exercising a practical skill."[29]. What she calls the "skill analogy" might be taken as problematic since it drains the peculiarly *moral* quality out of virtue; but we might reverse this worry. The skill analogy colors even living one's daily life with the moral quality of virtue. The virtuous person is *good at* and not just *good* — good at helping others, good at thinking ahead, good at human life. The vicious person, by contrast, is not just bad but *bad at* the essential elements of human life. Of course, being born with a paucity of natural talents is not a matter of immorality.

How did this broad sense of morality as living life excellently narrow?

How did the meaning of 'morality' narrow?

First, it meant any particular way of life — something like idiosyncrasy, habit, character. Second, any practical lesson — something like the "moral of the story", the point, that to be acted on, the rule, the maxim. Third, a domain of rules of conduct that are "neither theological nor legal nor aesthetic"[30]

Anscombe notes:

> The terms "should" or "ought" or "needs" relate to good and bad: e.g. machinery needs oil, or should or ought to be oiled, in that running without oil is bad for it, or it runs badly without oil. According to this conception, of course, "should" and "ought" are not used in a special "moral" sense when one says that a man should not bilk. (In Aristotle's sense of the term "moral" [ήθικός], they are being used

29. Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.
30. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 39.

> in connection with a moral subject-matter: namely that of human passions and [non-technical] actions.) But they have now acquired a special so-called "moral" sense--i.e. a sense in which they imply some absolute verdict (like one of guilty/not guilty on a man) on what is described in the "ought" sentences used in certain types of context: not merely the contexts that Aristotle would call "moral"--passions and actions--but also some of the contexts that he would call "intellectual."[31]

The equation between moral and intellectual excellence is not obvious for us. The notion that morality has to do with absolute verdicts is not obvious to Aristotle — nor to contemporary neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists.

Kant admits the apparent inconsistency in radically dividing speculative or theoretical reason from practical reason: >Here first is explained the enigma of the critical philosophy, viz. :how we deny objective reality to the supersensible use of the categories in speculation and yet admit this reality with respect to the objects of pure practical reason. This must at first seem inconsistent as long as this practical use is only nominally known.[32]

Three Dimensions of Practical Reason

Now, the domain of duties and obligations pertaining to others is a real domain and a legitimate division. But the division is not between morality and non-morality but between different types of morality or sub-domains. I shall call this domain "2nd-personal morality", that is, my duties to you or to you all. This domain is vast. But there are other domains for the 1st-person and 3rd-person.

The entire set is the domain of practicality — what one ought to do or ought to think, say, etc. The three sub-domains are defined by the object with regard to which one ought to do and not do this or that.

The domain of 1st-person morality is proper respect and care for one's self — self-love or enlightened self-interest. This is what Mill called the domain of "prudence". It includes the virtues

31. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19.

32. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S Pluhar (Hackett Publishing, 2002).

that benefit both oneself and others (moderation and courage) but especially practical wisdom, without which none of the other virtues do me much good.

The domain of 3rd-person morality is proper respect and care for everything that is not you or me — animals and plants, pets and work animals, our possessions, our earth and environment, and perhaps even our solar system. The primary virtue of this domain is justice, a respect for the whole and the proper arrangement of all the parts. If God exists, then 3rd-personal morality would require piety to him or her, since on most theisms God is not strictly speaking "one of us" but still demands our allegiance, sacrifice, or what have you.

The domain of 2nd-person morality, I said, is vast. It includes interpersonal moral obligations, values, and virtues as well as broader social or political ones. I suggest that the dominant virtue here is not only justice but love — I.e., a strong regard for the other, a charitable orientation to promoting the good of others, refusing to harm them, and committing to protect them from harm.

Foot argues, I think rightly, that qualities such as benevolence and generosity we tend to call human "moral goodness" are of a type with a broader category of goodness. She says: "I want to show that judgments usually considered to be the special subject of moral philosophy should really be seen as belonging to a wider class of evaluations of conduct with which they share a common conceptual structure."[33]

The argument is simple: We act on reasons. We pursue what is good, or what seems good. There are various types of good; hence there are various types of reasons. But we do not act *only* on one type of reason: moral reasons. Rather, we weigh and balance all the salient reasons we are aware of at the time when we deliberate and make decisions. In making a business transaction, the entrepreneur may allow considerations of justice to outweigh considerations of profit; or, he may allow considerations about loyalty to a friend outweighs considerations of justice. These two paths are not, respectively, "the moral" path and the immoral path. They are both moral and both

33. Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 66–67.

practical; they both weigh and attempt to negotiate the best reasons to act in this way rather than that, all things considered.

So I conclude that the domain of morality is, if anything at all, the sub-domain of practical reason concerned with obligations, duties, rights, goods, and harms that might obtain between one member of society to another. This way of putting the classification clearly connects "morality" with politics, family life, education, and so on. However, it paints in bright and burning colors the distinction between morality as a part of practical reason and practice itself. We are, first, and foremost, practical creatures, not merely moral or moralizing ones.

We can add to these arguments a Moorean shift: why do we moderns *assume* that there is a special domain of the moral? The ancient and medieval philosophers in the west thought of the domain of practical reason as a natural unit: all that is voluntary or under our control may be done well or badly. Our goal in living well is to to identify what to think, what to do, and what to make. As a corollary, we must identify what not to think, what not to do, and what not to make. But shrinking the whole domain of practical reason down to the domain of a few absolute prohibitions on harming others is a modern innovation. If it is right, then it is a modern invention. If it is wrong, it is a modern ignorance. Either way, its proponent needs, I think, to offer some account of why such a shrinking amounts to progress rather than regress in moral theorizing.

Objection: Is practical reason instrumental?

Although it seems reason is instrumental, rational motives are inherently related to *ends* seen as good; the first principle of practical reason is "pursue the good".

Objection: Is moral reasoning a special type of practical reasoning?

Although it seems that moral reasoning is the process of judging actions as right or wrong, or resolving moral dilemmas, or identifying a special property "goodness", moral reasoning is the business of pursuing what is worthwhile, appraising action decide what to do.

Objection: Is morality about oneself or only others?

Although it seems "morality" is narrowly about how we treat others, it is about self- and other-regarding virtues.

Objection: Is there only one virtue?

Although it seems that there are no other virtues because all virtue is knowledge, there are other virtues related to other cognitive and affective features of human nature, each of which, nevertheless, depends on and enhances practical reason.

The virtue of practical reason is, not surprisingly, practical wisdom. *Yet practical wisdom is strange and likely to be misunderstand: it is both theoretical (aiming at knowing what's true) and practical (aiming at what to do). To co-opt a phrase from Alan Gibbard:*[34] *our activity of practical reasoning is "thinking how to live."*[35] *So practical wisdom is knowing how to live, and* really knowing* it. Stated this way, it is easy to see why some have argued that practical wisdom is the *only* virtue. If one knows exactly how to live, in each circumstance, in each challenge, according to proper reasons, and for proper motives, what more to virtue could there be? Maggie Little[36] argues that virtue is a species of knowledge; John McDowell[37] argues something similar.* So why bother dividing up various virtues?

34. I'm not sure Gibbard would appreciate my use of the phrase.

35. Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*. I take the activity of thinking what to do in a far more realist direction than Gibbard. However, I have noticed with pleasure that Gibbard himself has become more open to realism in the recent years. He asks us to suppose that "normative realists are right about how normative concepts act" (xii), and only wishes to establish the possibility of the truth of his hypothesis that "the meaning of this phrase 'the thing to do' is explained expressionistically: if I assert 'Fleeing is the thing to do', I thereby express a state of mind, deciding to flee." (8) He says he is a "naturalist about humanity, about human thinking and planning, but in a sense I end up a non-naturalist about *oughts*. Much of what non-naturalists say is right, I conclude—but this needn't be mysterious to any naturalist." (xii).

36. Margaret Olivia Little, "Virtue as Knowledge: Objections from the Philosophy of Mind," in *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo (Blackwell, 2007), 252–64.

37. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62, no. 3 (1979): 331–50.

I do not think Aristotle himself was perfectly clear on this point. Though he divides up intellectual virtues into prudence, science, intellect, judgment, understanding, deliberation, and so on (Greek: phronesis, sophia, nous, gnome, sunesis, eubolia respectively), and though he says that prudence (knowledge about changing particulars) is inferior to wisdom (science about unchanging universals), nevertheless he says the absence of prudence ruins all other aspiring virtues.[38]

Objection: Is practical reason objective like logic?

Although it seems that practical reason is universal and objective like logic; it is intersubjective like logic; nevertheless, it is objective; it can be universal across cultures and traditions.

Practical reason is supposed by some to resolve possible worries about cultural relativism with regard to virtue.

1. It seems that practical reason is not objective since people disagree.
2. It seems to not be objective because it arises only in community.
3. On the other hand, Shafer-Landau argues that ethics is a species of philosophy.
4. I argue that practical reason is as objective as theoretical reason (whether both are objective or not).
5. It seems that practical reason is not objective since people disagree.

The question of how to live, and of how to resolve pressing moral disputes and dramatic moral conundrums, is not easy. There are various answers. People disagree.

Anyone who has long engaged in dialectical disputes over the various answer to the normative question of how to live well eventually comes to ask a secondary question: is there even any truth to be found? Are there any 'right answers' in ethics? Is there anything to all this discussion besides gas? Some worry that ethics has no 'right answers' because it is all just intuition-pumping. Some people view ethics as too easy because it is only a discussion of one's opinion.

We must admit that normative ethical conclusions — whatever conclusions satisfy us at the end of a long philosophical discussion about what is good and right — are different from conclusions in paleontology, medicine, or calculus. What does the difference amount to? Why is ethics *as a discipline* so different from, say, natural sciences?

38. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2014) NE, VI.

There are two sorts of interpretations of ethics as a discipline in light of the diversity of answers to the question about how to live well. The first is Hume's answer, that ethics is "easy" (while metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophical anthropology are presumably difficult).

The second is Aristotle's, that ethics is *a different sort of science* because it has a *different subject matter* to which it must correspond. He says, "For a well schooled man is wanting searches for that degree of precision in each kind of study which the nature of the subject at hand admits: is obviously just as foolish to accept arguments of probability from a mathematician has to demand strict demonstrations from an orator."[39]

By the traditional classification, ethics is a form of philosophy. Russ Shafer-Landau persuasively argues this simple equation in defense of moral realism[40] but the point has broader import. If ethics is *not* a species of philosophy, it is something else entirely. Perhaps it is a species of politics. Such a categorization assumes, at the outset, that power prevails over truth. But to concede that there are no right answers in ethics, that ethical philosophers have no hope of finding any ethical truth is to give up on ethics as a discipline.

So suppose ethics is a species of philosophy. The indirect answer is another question: Are there 'right answers' in philosophy? Isn't the relation of philosophy in general to ethics in particular the relation of genus to species? This is the relation Russ Shafer-Landau argues for.[41] So the fate of ethical claims or ethical theories hangs on the fate of philosophical claims and theories as a whole. If we are philosophical optimists at all — if we are not total skeptics or nihilists — then we can be ethical optimists.

So what species of philosophy is ethics? If philosophy is its genus, what is its differentia? As I have been arguing, ethics is the discipline of practical reason. There are 'right answers' in ethics since there are right ways to live one's life, there are wells to live well and ways to live poorly; things

39. Ibid. Book I.3.

40. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo, eds., *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2007) ethics.

41. Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

can go well or badly for us. One of the fundamental governing assumptions of this work is that there is no special domain of the moral. Value theory is a whole package. There is at bottom no intelligible distinction between morality and prudence.

2. It seems to not be objective because it arises only in community.

Tradition-constituted rationality was supposed to explain why practices can vary between people and traditions that both claim to be rational and believe the rival to be irrational; the process of switching between traditions explains, from within a tradition, one can rationally adjudicate these disagreements. This is why *practical rationality* is so important for MacIntyre's theory of *virtue.*[42]

Nevertheless, worries about relativism may linger. For MacIntyre, virtues are relative to practices; practices are relative to traditions; traditions are relative to conceptions of rationality. His answer to this worry is, I believe, the crux of his whole theory of ethics. It appeals to two concepts that are, for him, intimately bound up with each other. The two concepts are practical reason and human nature. *Dependent Rational Animals* is the capstone to address lingering worries about relativism.

Practical wisdom

Our human nature as dependent practical reasoners demonstrates why prudence or *phronesis* is the master virtue. For *Phronesis* complements every other moral virtue. MacIntyre defends Aristotle's conception of the practical syllogism. For example, *I ought to do (the courageous thing of) resisting a student's attempt to bribe me for a higher grade. This student is attempting to bribe me for a higher grade. Therefore, in this case, I ought to do (the courageous thing of) resisting this student's attempt to bribe me.* The major premise here is an evaluative judgment about a virtue or action-type; the minor premise is a factual judgment about a situation or action-token; the conclusion is a *maxim*. It is a judgment but not merely a judgment;

42. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* treat rationality as the ground of ethical reasoning, while *After Virtue* and *Dependent Rational Animals* treat ethical reasoning as practical reasoning.

it is *an action*. Each piece of the practical syllogism is needed for the whole to function in practice. For without moral virtues, prudence may be knowledge of what one ought to do but it does not entail that one is in the habit of actually doing it. And, more crucially, without prudence, the moral virtues are simply skills – skills that might be serviceable to bad ends. Without prudence, one might be skilled in achieving *what is not to be done*.

The mastery of prudence over other virtues also unifies the other virtues. *Dependent Rational Animals* supplies a necessary unifying base for MacIntyre's virtue theory in three ways: it unifies intellectual and moral virtues, unifies various moral virtues, and unifies the various stages of the narrative of *human* life.

Conclusion

Although it seems practical reason is not natural, it is part of human nature (whether as endemic to human *nature*, not merely second nature, not necessarily supernatural, but primary nature because primary nature is logical or rational will be addressed later)

Chapter 1

Virtue as Realizing our NATURAL Human Telos

Quotation *"What use would it be if a man had the wisdom of Nestor and wanted the necessaries of life, food and drink and clothes and the like? Where would be the advantage of wisdom then?" Eryxias, in the dialogue Eryxias (attributed to Plato)*

Quotation *"The human virtues make their possessor good qua human being, one who is as ordinarily well fitted as a human being can be in not merely physical respects to live well, to flourish—in a characteristically human way."*[1]

I. Introduction

Thesis: Virtue partially constitutes human flourishing (the realization of our human telos); there is a human telos, and virtue partially constitutes it. It *only partially* constitutes it.

Summary: Virtues as partly constituting the realization of our natural human telos. This chapter presents an account of human teleology as partly achievable through the virtues. I distinguish various senses of telos and consider several potential specifications of this indeterminate concept. There is traditionally some link between virtues and the human telos whether eudaimonia,

1. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 208.

flourishing, thriving, welfare, etc.[2] Bentham and Nietzsche, among others, mock this alleged role.[3] The questions I am to answer are: What is our telos and how do virtues relate to it?[4] If virtues to bring about happiness, again, is that just egoism?[5] Is there even a telos for humanity, or is there no sense in speaking of a *human function*?[6] How relevant to ethics is human "metaphysical biology"?[7] Is ethics partly dependent on our animal nature[8] or solely on our rationality?[9] Are virtues necessary for true or "deep happiness"[10] or are they necessary and sufficient?[11] Is it possible to be virtuous and miserable? What is misery? Can we know happiness without knowing whether or not there is an after life? Virtue partly constitutes human flourishing but does not completely constitute it, because luck and fortune out of our control have a real impact on our happiness and our objective flourishing.

The problems addressed in this chapter

The theme if our present chapter is to puzzle through some of the most difficult ethical questions.

2. R. Stephen Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature: A Defense of Ethical Naturalism* (Continuum, 2008) is not a eudaimonist, but alleges that virtues do contribute to the realization of the human telos of reproduction.

3. Cf. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*.

4. Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Robert M. Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Clarendon Press, 2006), chap. 4; John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics'," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1980), 359–76.

5. Yong Huang, "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2010): 651–92.

6. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998); Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, chap. 2; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 5.

7. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, chap. 3 and 4; John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," *Mind, Value, and Reality* 167 (1998): 97.

8. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Andrew M Bailey, "Animalism," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 12 (2015): 867–83; James Barham, *PhD Dissertation: Teleological Realism in Biology* (Web; University of Notre Dame, 2011).

9. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996); Foot, *Natural Goodness*.

10. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chap. 6.

11. Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics, Old and New," ed. Stephen Gardiner (Cornell University Press, 2005).

1. Why be good? If the conclusions from the previous inquiry were on the mark, then we can rephrase this question without a change of meaning: why is virtue (especially practical wisdom) necessary for human flourishing? This is the same question, since, "virtue" (especially practical wisdom) is what *good* is for creatures like us; and "human flourishing" is a name for, ex hypothesis, that indeterminate concept of the one thing worth pursuing. The question "why be good?" or "why be virtuous?" should not be taken as the irrational question in the vicinity: "why do anything at all? Why be motivate?" Such a question is practical irrationality unadulterated, as we saw with Melville's Bartleby. The preference not to do anything — or the lack of preference to do anything — is inhuman "madness" or mental illness.

> Now this can easily be made to seem a strange worry. The thought that virtue is sufficient for happiness or flourishing is apt to produce Aristotle's response: you can't be serious. But if you accept that a flourishing life isn't just one in which you have lots of stuff, or one in which you get success by any means – if, that is, you accept that wicked or selfish people do not in fact flourish, so that only those who live virtuously have a chance of flourishing – then a problem does emerge as to why virtue is not sufficient for flourishing. For it is up to me whether I live virtuously, or at least try to, but Aristotelian theories accept that even if I do the best I can I may still be deprived of happiness by factors that are beyond my control. For Aristotle, happiness is a hybrid combination of living virtuously and of achieving a measure of success in worldly terms. The latter is not under my control, and cannot be guaranteed.[12]

2. Is realizing our telos a human goal or somehow supernatural? Surely teleology is not natural after all, but only psychological, intentional?

II. Neo-Aristotelians on Eudaimonia

Foot on Deep Happiness

Foot argues that happiness is "deep satisfaction." This is compatible with, say, an extremely uncomfortable and even tragic life, like Wittgenstein's. It is not compatible with superficial satisfaction, the froth of pleasure and tittering mirth that floats on a shallow waters. It must be "deep", by which I suppose she means that it stands up to our own reflections in a sober hour.

12. Annas, "Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism?" in Stephen Mark Gardiner, *Virtue Ethics, Old and New* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

Hursthouse

> But what could this fifth end be? Tradition offers us a few alternatives. We might say that the fifth end was the preparation of our souls for the life hereafter, or that it was contemplation—the good functioning of the theoretical intellect. But to adopt the first is to go beyond naturalism towards supernaturalism, and even philosophers have baulked at following Aristotle and endorsing the second. I am not in a position to assert that there is no fifth end peculiarly appropriate to our rationality, but no plausible candidate suggests itself and I will suggest instead that the genuinely transforming effect of our rationality on the basic structure adequately registers the 'huge gap' that exists between us and the other animals.[13]

McDowell on Eudaimonia as the Noblest Life

McDowell takes the old Stoic line that virtues just *are* eudaimonia. There is nothing more "external" to it, certainly nothing external.

MacIntyre on Telos as becoming independent practical reasoners

After Virtue

MacIntyre is retiring and coy about what he thinks our telos might be. All he will say is the minimal definition: we ought to be free to pursue our telos. Virtue enables this. What more our telos might consist in I do not know that he cares to speculate.

Dependent Rational Animals

Dependent Rational Animals is a more ambitious book in some respects. MacIntyre aims to build a broader account of virtues by attending to not only our independence but our dependence. Much of our dependence on each other stems from our animality: periods of gestation, infancy, old age, and illness all make us dependent on our fellow creatures.

13. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 218.

telos

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

> Where Aristotle understood man as a creature with a definite function which he might fulfill or deny, modern morality sees man simply as a rational agent who has no true or definable purpose independent of his own will… By appealing to a telos, Aristotle was able to distinguish between the way we actually are and the way we should be. His conception of human beings as having a specific telos brought with it the possibility that we might fall short of the ideal… But with the rejection of Aristotelianism gain the rejection of any such distinction between what we are and what we should be. Post-Enlightenment man is seen as governed, not by a telos external to him, but simply by the dictates of his own inner reason… Thus the abandonment of an Aristotelian conception of the good has not only left us without standards by which to evaluate our moral arguments, it is also cast us adrift in the moral world. For Aristotle, a conception of the good for man has an essentially societal dimension.[14]

For MacIntyre, the loss of telos is one of the chief if not the chief error of Enlightenment moralities. He explains why in his discussion of the three elements of morality.[15] The first element is "untutored human nature" (as it is). The second element is human nature (as it could be, should be). The third element is the set of properties needed to move from the first to the second points. Moral rules or admirable character traits are the content of morality; but the telos of humanity is the context of morality. It quite literally makes the content of morality make sense. Understanding "human-nature-as-it-is"[16] is a task for philosophers, as well as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, etc. Understanding human nature "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-telos"[17] was "the whole point of ethics." It is difficult to understate the importance of this point about the self and its relation to not only virtue theory but ethical theory itself. Edward Oakes describes the removal of telos from our worldview as "perhaps the greatest category mistake ever made in the history of philosophy."

14. John Horton and Susan Mendus, "Alasdair MacIntyre: After Virtue and After," in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory*, ed. Mark Alfano (Routledge, 2015), 6.

15. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54ff.

16. Ibid., 55.

17. Ibid., 55.

> That word "teleological" is the key to MacIntyre's solution, the loss of which is the cause of the catastrophe described in his science-fiction parable. Teleology is the study of final causes, goals, purposes, and aims: a style of explanation that saturates Aristotle's philosophy. After the combined impact of Newton and Darwin, however, this type of explanation seems mostly 'quaint' and once Aristotle's science seemed quaint, his ethics soon followed: when Newton demonstrated how motion can be better explained as resulting from the outcome of mechanical laws, and when Darwin posited natural selection as the "mechanism" for explaining an organ's functionality, the use of teleology in ethics was doomed…Emptying moral discourse of teleological concepts because of the perceived impact of Newton and Darwin has been for MacIntyre the catastrophe of our times.[18]

Now, MacIntyre's account of virtue is "neo-Aristotelian" in that it borrows from but also contrast with Aristotle's. For instance, MacIntyre denies that Aristotle's virtues are so timeless, abstract, and generically human as Aristotle would make them appear; they are partly indexed to fourth century, upper-class, educated Athenian culture. He also rejects Aristotle's metaphysics of nature. Nevertheless, he argues, the loss of a concept of telos is dramatic. MacIntyre's provisional conception of our human telos is this: "The good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is."[19] Our telos is to be free to pursue our telos. MacIntyre is not a straightforward eudaemonist; this conception of the human telos is more vague than Aristotle's. Whatever the human telos turns out to be, it minimally includes the freedom to explore "what else" the telos might be.

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

18. Edward Oakes, "The Achievement of Alasdair Macintyre," *First Things*, 1996.
19. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 210.

III. My View

Synthesize, Compare

Some points

Flourishing– minimally, social and individual learning, knowledge, pleasure, survival, pleasure, and maximally eternal life and glory. It is not intolerant Teleology– our natural end is flourishing. It is not supernatural. It is not merely animal. It is second natural.

The importance of telos

That teleology is important has been one of the central contentions of this dissertation.

Telos

"Teleological ethics" was taken, especially a decade or two ago, to contrast with deontological ethics and to refer to utilitarianism.[20] Teleology then means simply that the utilitarian aims to achieve some end — happiness, pleasure, utility, or what have you. Thus understood, virtue theorists seem to be utilitarians whose primary concern is the character of moral agents rather than the acts moral agents perform or the rules they obey. But this is a misunderstanding.

Teleological ethics of the sort that concerns Anscombe (and concerns us in these chapters) is not a matter of a posteriori, statistical analyses of character traits or actions or rules and their respective consequences aimed at reliably hitting the target by consistently bringing about the cause. Teleological ethics is about unfolding the inner form of a thing; actualizing its inherent or intrinsic telos. This process of self-realization occurs in all living things, from the smallest bacterium to the largest whale. It does not (at least I shall assume it does not) occur in any non-living thing; there is no teleological, goal-oriented process guiding the development of new solar systems or the destructions

20. Robert B. Louden, "On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1984): 227.

of old ones; there is no "cosmic ecology" because there is no cosmic ecosystem. The cosmic relation between star and asteroid is more akin to the terrestrial relation between gas and matter than the terrestrial relation between bear and butterfly.

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

The Primacy of 'Ought' Over Is

The fundamental problem with the prevailing brand of metaphysical naturalism is that it believes that facts are ultimately descriptive. When it runs into various kinds of normative or prescriptive facts, it short circuits. Naturalism can neither deny, nor eliminate, nor reduce normativity.

The fundamental solution with my brand of metaphysical naturalism is that it admits that facts themselves are ultimately normative. When it runs into various kinds of descriptive facts, it can explain them as *successful*. 'Ought' is foundational to the bedrock of nature and the cosmos because everything ought to be some way. Most things *are* as they *ought* to be. But some aren't. My brand of naturalism can explain both why descriptive facts are the way they are, and why normative facts are the way they are (most of the time) and why some things are *not* the way they ought to be; namely, rational creatures can err through overwhelming passion.

IV. Objections and details

Nature and Nature

Is there anything to this criticism? Anyone who reads the literature on various kinds of "naturalism" (ethical, metaphysical, epistemological, etc.) will be tempted to take accusations from one philosopher to another that a theory fails to be "naturalistic" as vacuous. The noun 'Naturalism,' like the

adjective, 'natural', is a cognate of 'nature.' 'Nature' is the most ambiguous, multi-significant word in our language.[21] It seems that the only thing to be done is to stipulate a meaning and move on. Rather, I think the question of naturalism is an important one.

Fink on Nature

Begin with the word 'nature.' As Hans Fink says:

> In ordinary language 'nature' or 'the natural world' is actually understood in a quite bewildering number of different ways which illustrates the different ways in which different parts or aspects of the world in its totality are somehow taken to be external to or other than nature. We can initially distinguish between at least 8 different ways of conceiving of nature as a realm in contrast with other realms: 1. The world prior to or unaffected by human, cultural or social intervention. 2. The world prior to or not under agriculture—the wilderness, the jungle, the desert, as opposed to the cultivated world of the farmland, villages and towns. 3. The world prior to or not subjected to urbanization—the rural, the countryside, the landscape, the outdoors as opposed to life in the cities and indoors. 4. The world prior to or not subjected to industrialization—the organic, the 'green' as opposed to the synthetic and high-tech. 5. The material or physical or external world as opposed to the mental or psychological or inner world. 6. The empirical world as opposed to the intelligible world of the abstract, logical, or mathematical. 7. The earthly world as opposed to the heavenly world—the created (immanent) world as opposed to its transcendent creator. 8. The ordinary world as opposed to a world of the extra-ordinary and mystical.[22]

> 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.[23]

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

22. Hans Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 209.

23. Ibid., 206.

To say that various thinkers and various schools of thought defend non-identical definitions of nature would be an understatement. Various thinkers defend *incompatible* definitions.

> All we need by way of ethics can be grounded in facts about the natural world as 'the province of scientific understanding' (MVR: 182), including, e.g. facts about 'what animals of a particular species need in order to do well in the sort of life they naturally live' (MVR: 176). (This is actually a form of naturalism that Philippa Foot comes quite close to exemplifying.) This form of naturalism, in fact, has the same narrow conception of nature as many subjectivist non-naturalists but differs from them in claiming that an understanding of the animal side of human nature can give us sufficient direct ethical guidance without the additional intervention of some personal act of prescribing or endorsing which can be performed or withheld at will.[24] McDowell refers to a naturalism based on this richer conception of nature as an 'acceptable naturalism' (MVR: 197), a 'relaxed naturalism' (MW: 89) and a 'liberal naturalism' (: 98). He often introduces it by reflecting on Aristotle's account of the virtues, and he refers to it as 'Greek naturalism' (MVR: 174), 'Aristotelian naturalism' (MVR: 196), 'naturalism of second nature' (MW: 86), or 'naturalized platonism' (MW: 91). The richer conception of nature behind this sort of naturalism is also called a 'partial re-enchantment of nature' (MW: 97) though there is clearly meant to be nothing supernatural about it.[25] Every x has a nature (regarded as something internal to x) and every x has a place in nature or in relation to nature (regarded as something external to x whether x is seen as included in nature or not). The understanding of a) is basic to the understanding of b) so let us begin by considering what it is for an x to have a nature, postponing the question of how the same word can be used both of that which is your innermost self and at the same time, and even in the same sentence, of certain parts of your surroundings where you may or may not choose to go for a walk. Perhaps it is by your very nature that you are a lover of nature.[26] The idea of nature as essence may point in an idealist direction, the idea of nature as constitution out of more elementary constituents may point in a materialist direction, whereas the idea of nature as the defining characteristics may point in a formal or rationalistic direction.[27] 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.[28] The Athenian doesn't

24. Ibid., 203.
25. Ibid., 204.
26. Ibid., 206.
27. Ibid., 208.
28. Ibid., 210.

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.[29] With reference to Plato and Aristotle I have characterized two sorts of contrasting or restricted conceptions of nature, a materialist and an idealist. Each of them could be seen as underlying a sort of naturalism in ethics or in other branches of philosophy. The materialist conception of nature is at the root of bald, empiricist naturalism and of the many different modern forms of naturalism that let one or other interpretation of the results of present day science define what belongs to nature and what not. (A materialist conception of nature is also being taken for granted by most forms of non-naturalism, whether subjectivist or super-naturalist). The idealist conception of nature is at the root of the natural law tradition of naturalism that is still alive. The philosophical impulse behind both these sorts of naturalism is to see the ethical in continuity rather than discontinuity with nature understood as that which is most primary in existence and most objective in experience. They just happen to disagree about what that is.[30] 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). 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.[31]

Three alternatives to natural normativity (if not included elsewhere)

1. **Nature is purely descriptive, normativity is illusory.** Bald nature is a realm of pure, descriptive fact.[32] The problem with this picture is that human beings would not be natural. The other side of the same coin is the view that normativity, whatever it is, is not natural.[33] But then again, human beings would not be natural if we are in any sense

29. Ibid., 210.
30. Ibid., 216.
31. Ibid., 219.
32. John McDowell calls this kind of naturalism 'neo-Humean naturalism' (*Mind, Values, Reality*, 183, 194) or 'empiricistic naturalism', 'bald naturalism', 'naturalism of the realm of law' or 'naturalism of disenchanted nature'.
33. Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence*, 4 (Oxford University Press, 2003) offers an argument that moral properties are "non-natural" in that they can be known without empirical help, but "natural" in that they are perhaps always realized in the physical, natural world.

irreducibly normative. For normativity is central to human consciousness and value, and perhaps even language and meaning. As Julia Annas puts it: "Non-naturalistic accounts of ethical terms assume that their function, prominently their normativity, is something that arises with humans, or is produced by humans, in a way which owes nothing to the nature which we share with other living things."[34] If nature cannot include irreducible normativity such as that which is essential to language and morality, surprisingly, it cannot include us. I think we ought to reject any picture of nature or of science that exiles naturalists and scientists.

2. **Nature is purely descriptive, normativity is reducibly descriptive.** Some zealous defenders of bald nature will be quick to assure me that normativity can and will be one day "reduced" to mere description. Beside the fact that such promises in philosophy of mind have been very long in the fulfilling, I think such assurances are especially misguided in this case. Telling me that normativity is, after all, *really* just descriptivity disguised or mistaken seems to me self-referentially incoherent. It is like arguing that one 'ought' not tell anyone what they 'ought to do.' Of course, arguing that one 'ought not' talk like that is an instance of telling me what I *ought* to do. Similarly, arguing that on best evidence everyone *ought* to believe that normativity is in principle reducible is an instance of appealing to fundamental, irreducible normative considerations about evidence and reasons for belief. To quote Annas again: "it strikes me as ironical that such accounts often arise… From an excessive respect for science. Not only do they cut off our self understanding from the understanding we have of other things, they prevent us from seeing continuities between us and other living things, and in both these ways reveal themselves as profoundly anti-scientific."[35] Some may choose to wait (perhaps forever) for the promised reductions of the normative to the non-normative. I elect to move on.
3. **Nature is unknown**. A final alternative, this one more desparate, would be to argue that nature is mysterious and that we cannot know the truth of generic statements. But, such a skeptical move renders us safe from natural normativity but at the cost of endorsing absurdity: isn't it scientific knowledge that penguins are birds, that eyes are adapted for seeing? I'm not sure how to debate someone who seriously would deny such statements.
4. **Nature is partly descriptive, partly normative.**.

Positions that fly under the heading of 'naturalism', and they couldn't be more different: from Paul and Patricia Churchland's monistic physicalism, to John McDowell's "relaxed naturalism", to William James' neutral monism, to Thomas Aquinas' natural law theory, to Stoic pantheism, and more. Is there any question that these views are not just different but incompatible?

// What exactly is this picture of the cosmos? Affirming a picture leads to difficulties; it is easier to deny the dualism. It rejects eliminative materialism which squashes all consciousness

34. Annas, "Virtue Ethics, Old and New," 12.
35. Ibid., 13.

into the *merely* physical as well as rejecting panpsychism or idealism which sublimate all biological and physical things into consciousness. It aims to allow that both mind and matter are on a single continuum of fundamental reality.ˆ[In this way, I take my brand of rationalistic naturalism to akin to "neutral monism". As Bertrand Russell explains it: "The view that seems to me to reconcile the materialistic tendency of psychology with the anti-materialistic tendency of physics is the view of William James and the American New Realists, according to which the "stuff" of the world is neither mental nor material, but a "neutral stuff," out of which both are constructed."[36] I do not wish to enter a discussion of Russell's brand of neutral monism here; I simply use it as an example of a denial of dualism. If *something like* neutral monism is true, the imagination ignites. What would it be like to include the "human sciences" (*wissenschaft*) within science and to include the natural and cosmic in our politics and ethics? The neo-Aristotelian answer is that such an ethics would have to begin with an examination of human nature. In this way, it is much easier to see why neo-Aristotelians categorize themselves under the metaethical banner of "ethical naturalism", even though they reject naturalism's more aggressive reductionism.

Naturalism and the is-ought gap

Consider an example: Suppose Bob thinks 'nature' is simply another word for the concept of 'all that which is', all of reality, being. Nature is everything. His colleague Bettie thinks 'nature' is a word that picks out something special, namely that part of 'all that is' that is cosmic, that part of reality that constitutes *this* world. For Bob, nature is being. For Bettie, nature is part of being.

In a discussion one day, Bob says, "You know, Bettie, I attended a lecture on angels yesterday. Being a naturalist, I was interested in the nature of angels. I believe some real beings are not physical beings but intellectual or spiritual beings – but what is their nature? The lecturer argued that they are intellectual substances or disembodied minds. I found that compelling." Bettie replies, "I certainly agree that some real beings are not physical beings but intellectual or spiritual beings. But being

36. Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (Routledge, 1921), 6.

a naturalist, I would not say angels have a 'nature' or any 'natural properties' since they are not physical. Rather, angels have an essence."

Is there any question that a hard-nosed physicalist such as Frank Jackson or Alan Gibbard would have an aneurysm listening to this conversation?

Their colleague, Charlie, agrees with Bob in thinking 'nature' is simply another word for the concept of 'all that which is', all of reality, being – but he is a materialist.[37] Naturally enough, he thinks "because I am a naturalist, I do not think angels are real beings and part of the global world order, since they are not physical. I probably would not attend a lecture on angels in the first place." Charlie might look cross-eyed at Bob and Bettie during their exchange; Bob and Bettie might look cross-eyed at him back.

Bob accuses Charlie of being a non-naturalist. Why? Because Charlie denies part of reality. A true naturalist accepts all of reality, whether material or not. Charlie is a dogmatist about denying fairies, demons, gods, angels, ghosts, and any other purported being that has the gall not to be material; Bob is more ecumenical and can examine the evidence for each purported being as it comes.

The point of these dialogues is this: The title 'naturalist' can, without contradiction, be claimed by Bob, Bettie, and Charlie. Each with a straight face owns the title, defends it against rivals, and criticizes the silly notions of their colleagues as "non-naturalistic." Bob is a non-naturalist to Bettie and Charlie because he thinks immaterial angels are part of nature, are members of the natural order. Bettie is a non-naturalist to Charlie because she thinks that angels exist above and beyond the material order. Charlie is a a non-naturalist to Bob because Charlie does not accept *all* of nature.

37. I say "materialist" and not "physicalist" because "φύσις" is Greek for "nature" and so the problem iterates.