Is Goodness a Homeostatic Property Cluster?*

Michael Rubin

I. INTRODUCTION

In "How to Be a Moral Realist," Richard Boyd proposes that moral properties such as *moral goodness* have the same metaphysical structure as properties that define natural kinds. In particular, he proposes that *moral goodness* is constituted by a "homeostatic property cluster" (HPC). This hypothesis plays a key role in Boyd's defense of naturalistic moral realism. He contends that, if *moral goodness* were an HPC, then there would be independent justification for thinking that the term 'moral goodness' possesses an a posteriori real definition. This latter claim is then used to rebut several influential arguments advanced by moral antirealists and ethical nonnaturalists.

Although "How to Be a Moral Realist" is among the most widely cited defenses of contemporary naturalistic moral realism, Boyd's proposal that *moral goodness* is an HPC has received very little attention. This article is an attempt to rectify this situation. I argue here that Boyd's hypothesis is false: *moral goodness* is not an HPC. In Section II, I present Boyd's account of HPC kinds. In Section III, I present his proposal that *moral goodness* is constituted by an HPC (and thus demarcates an HPC kind). In Section IV, I advance two arguments against this proposal. The first is a moral argument. The second points to suspicious structural features of THE MORAL GOOD that are not shared by paradigmatic HPC

* Many thanks to Fred Feldman, Hilary Kornblith, Jason Raibley, Vere Chappell, Dan Doviak, Chris Heathwood, Kristen Hine, Justin Klocksiem, Helen Majewski, Kris McDaniel, Kirk Michaelian, and Andrew Platt. I am also grateful to Associate Editor David Copp, two anonymous editors, and an anonymous reviewer at *Ethics* who provided valuable criticism and advice on earlier drafts.

Ethics 118 (April 2008): 496–528

kinds.[1] In Section V, I offer two further arguments to the effect that reference to THE MORAL GOOD does not support reliable inductive inference in the way that it should were it an HPC kind. In Section VI, I anticipate a reply that might be made on behalf of the HPC conception of *moral goodness*. Section VII provides a conclusion.

II. BOYD'S HOMEOSTATIC PROPERTY CLUSTER KINDS

A. Homeostatic Property Clusters.

Since Mill's *A System of Logic*, philosophers have witnessed an intimate connection between natural kinds, on the one hand, and induction and explanation, on the other hand.[2] Boyd writes: "One of the defining features of natural kinds generally . . . is that reference to natural kinds facilitates induction and explanation with respect to a wide variety of issues."[3] Hilary Kornblith adds: "It is precisely because the world has the causal structure required for the existence of natural kinds that inductive knowledge is even possible."[4]

Boyd's HPC account of natural kinds is intended to explain, among other things, how it is that certain natural kinds ground induction and explanation. The key idea is that, for many natural kinds, the essence of the kind is constituted by a group of properties that, although logically independent of one another, are "clustered in nature in the sense that they co-occur in an important number of cases."[5] The clustering is the result of a certain nomological relationship among the properties. Boyd describes this relationship as a "sort of homeostasis." He offers a dis-

1. I employ a convention of using small caps for terms referring to kinds and italics for terms referring to properties. I have found that treating properties as distinct from the kinds whose membership they define helps in the exposition of Boyd's view. However, nothing I say in this article depends upon kinds and properties actually being distinct sorts of entities.

2. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867), 434. See Richard Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization: Comments on Millikan's 'Historical Kinds and the Special Sciences,'" *Philosophical Studies* 95 (1999): 67–98, 81; John Dupré, "Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa," *Philosophical Review* 90 (1981): 66–90, 68; Philip Kitcher, "Species," *Philosophy of Science* 51 (1984): 308–33, 315n; Joseph LaPorte, *Natural Kinds and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19; W. V. Quine, "Natural Kinds," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 114–38, 126; Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948), 318.

3. Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 81.

4. Hilary Kornblith, *Inductive Inference and Its Natural Ground: An Essay in Naturalistic Epistemology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 35. See Ruth Garrett Millikan, *On Clear and Confused Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15–32.

5. Richard Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 181–228, 197.

junctive account of what is involved in this kind of homeostasis for a family of properties, F:

> Either the presence of some of the properties in F tends (under appropriate conditions) to favor the presence of the others, or there are underlying mechanisms or processes that tend to maintain the presence of the properties in F, or both.[6]

Two things deserve mention here. First, it is plausible to read the phrase 'tends to favor' as meaning "makes more likely." Making this substitution naturally raises the question of just how much more likely need the presence of some of the properties make the presence of the others in order for there to be a homeostatic clustering of properties. Would any increase in likelihood, however slight, suffice for a group of properties to count as homeostatically clustered? Although Boyd does not explicitly set a lower bound on how much of an increase in likelihood is required for a group of properties to count as homeostatically clustered, he does make it clear that, where HPC kinds are concerned, the homeostatic clustering of properties should be "causally important." This suggests that, at least with respect to HPC kinds, we should expect that the presence of some properties in the relevant group raises to a considerable degree the likelihood of the others being present. (Indeed, if this were not so, then it would be hard to see how HPC kinds could fulfill their role in facilitating reliable inductive inference.) Of course, even if this is accepted, we are still left with a good deal of imprecision in the account of property homeostasis. Although I cannot attempt to sharpen the account any further, I should note that this imprecision is relevant to the discussion in Section VI of this article.

The second item worthy of mention is this: the passage quoted above suggests that the mechanisms responsible for the homeostasis among a family of properties should be thought of as "underlying" in some sense. However, in other writings, Boyd makes it clear that, in some cases, (some of) the relevant mechanisms responsible for property homeostasis are external to the individual members of the HPC kind.[7] With this in mind, I propose that we drop the word 'underlying' from Boyd's account of property homeostasis.

In light of these considerations, I take the following as my official statement of Boyd's account of property homeostasis:

PH: A family of properties, F, is homeostatically clustered if and only if either

6. Ibid.

7. See Richard Boyd, "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," in *Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Robert A. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 141–85, 153–54, and "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 79.

i. (under appropriate conditions) the presence of some of the properties in F makes more likely the presence of the other properties in F, or
ii. there exist mechanisms or processes that make more likely the continued presence of the properties in F, or
iii. both i and ii.

B. Homeostatic Property Cluster Kinds

For Boyd, some HPCs constitute the real essences[8] of certain natural kinds.[9] Call such kinds 'HPC kinds'. In their capacity as essences, HPCs (along with the mechanisms that bind them together) supply the membership conditions of HPC kinds. As I understand Boyd, an individual, x, is a member of an HPC kind K just in case (*a*) x instantiates the properties in the HPC that define K and (*b*) the coinstantiation of

8. The real essences of kinds are contrasted with "nominal" essences. Roughly, the nominal essence of a kind, K, is something like an analytic definition that speakers conventionally associate with the predicate or kind term that corresponds to K. If a kind has only a nominal definition, then its membership conditions depend solely upon linguistic conventions and are discoverable by a priori conceptual analysis. By contrast, the real essence of a kind determines that kind's membership conditions independently of linguistic conventions and thus cannot be discovered by mere conceptual analysis (see Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 194–95, and "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," 142, 146; and Brian Ellis, *Scientific Essentialism* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 32. Note that Boyd uses 'real essence' interchangeably with 'natural definition' and 'a posteriori definition').

9. An editor for *Ethics* recommends a different reading of Boyd with respect to the relationship between HPCs and the essences of natural kinds. On this alternative reading, HPCs are not themselves to be identified with the essences of natural kinds. Instead, the HPC correlated with a natural kind constitutes something like its "operational definition" that can be used to pick out some other property that is the kind's genuine a posteriori essence (or "natural definition"). While there are some passages in "How to Be a Moral Realist" that prima facie permit this alternative interpretation, other passages—especially in Boyd's later writings—strongly favor my preferred interpretation, according to which the HPC *just is* the essence or natural definition of the relevant natural kind. For instance, Boyd writes: "I conclude that individual species have (homeostatic property cluster) essences, so that a form of 'essentialism' is true for species" (Boyd, "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," 142); "there are a number of scientifically important kinds . . . , biological species among them, whose natural definitions are very much like the property-cluster definitions postulated by ordinary-language philosophers except that the unity of the properties in the defining cluster is mainly causal rather than conceptual" (Richard Boyd, "Kinds as the 'Workmanship of Men': Realism, Constructivism, and Natural Kinds," in *Rationalität, Realismus, Revision: Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Gesellshaft für Analytische Philosophie*, ed. Julian Nida-Rümelin [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999], 52–89, 67; cf. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 196); "Species are defined, according to the HPC conception, by those shared [phenotypic] properties *and* by the mechanisms . . . which sustain their homeostasis" (Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 81, emphasis in the original). For additional passages that favor my interpretation, see n. 22 below.

these properties in x is brought about or maintained (at least in part) by the homeostatic mechanisms definitive of K (if there are any such mechanisms).[10]

Homeostatic property cluster kinds are well suited to satisfy the inductive and explanatory role that is associated with natural kinds. Because the defining properties of an HPC kind are homeostatically unified, the members of a given HPC kind will exhibit a significant degree of uniformity. In turn, this uniformity facilitates reliable inductive inferences and explanations. This sort of uniformity is readily seen, for example, in biological species. For an individual member of a given species, its manifest properties flow from underlying mechanisms. Because these mechanisms are shared by every (or nearly every) member of the same species, conspecifics are uniform with respect to very many manifest properties. As a result of this uniformity, when we observe that all observed samples of a species exhibit a property G, we can often reliably infer that all unobserved samples will exhibit G as well. This remains true even when our original sample is relatively small.[11] For example, biologists were no doubt able to infer (with a high degree of epistemic warrant) that all female platypuses are egg layers upon observing only a few specimens that laid eggs.

Traditionally, the essence of a natural kind is thought of as a property or a collection of properties whose exemplification by a given individual is both necessary and sufficient for that individual to count as a member of the kind. This sort of view is reflected in the claim that necessarily something is a quantity of WATER if and only if it has the property *being* H_2O, where *being* H_2O is understood to be the essence of WATER. Boyd relaxes this requirement so that an individual may belong to an HPC kind even if it fails to instantiate some of the properties in

10. The notion that natural kinds are defined by clusters of properties can be found in Mill's *A System of Logic* and Russell's *Human Knowledge*. Russell's own account strikingly anticipates Boyd's. Russell writes: "The essence of a natural kind is that it is a class of objects all of which possess a number of properties that are not known to be logically interconnected" (*Human Knowledge*, 317). His claim that the defining properties are not known to be logically interconnected suggests that he recognizes that their belonging to the kind's essence is not a matter of our linguistic conventions but rather is a matter of a nomological connection. Furthermore, Russell backs away from the claim that every member of a kind needs to share all of the kind-defining properties. Like Boyd, he accepts indeterminacy in the extensions of natural kind terms: "Assuming evolution, there must have been outlying members so aberrant that we should hardly know whether to regard them as part of the [intension] or not" (ibid., 443).

11. Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 82; Kornblith, *Inductive Inference*, 92ff; Russell, *Human Knowledge*, 318.

the kind's HPC essence.[12] He writes: "Imperfect homeostasis is nomologically possible or actual: some thing may display some but not all of the properties in [the property cluster] F; some but not all of the relevant underlying homeostatic mechanisms may be present."[13] As long as the individual instantiates "enough" of the "important" properties in F, where these properties are unified by "enough" of the relevant mechanisms, it is properly classified as a member of the kind whose essence is constituted by F and F's homeostatic mechanisms. This feature of Boyd's view allows us to class certain anomalies, such as mutants, within the species to which they intuitively belong. Moreover, it permits cases of indeterminacy where there are

> things that display some but not all of the properties in F (and/or in which some but not all of the relevant homeostatic mechanisms operate) such that no rational considerations dictate whether or not they are to be classed under [natural kind term] t, assuming that a dichotomous choice is to be made.[14]

If biological species are to count as HPC kinds, then this relaxed understanding of natural kind essences must be accepted. Because of the gradual nature of evolution, there are bound to be cases in which it is indeterminate whether some particular individual is a member of a given species.[15]

C. Two Examples of HPC Kinds

Boyd offers biological species as paradigmatic examples of HPC kinds. He also suggests that certain chemical kinds are examples of HPC kinds. To illustrate the HPC conception of kinds, I will consider an example

12. Boyd's HPC conception of natural kind real essences also departs from more traditional views insofar as it denies that the essences of natural kinds must be (i) "unchanging" and (ii) composed only of properties that are both "ahistorical" and (iii) intrinsic to the kind's members (Boyd, "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," 146–47, 153–57; contrast this with Ellis, *Scientific Essentialism*, 19–23).

13. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 197, and "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," 143.

14. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 197.

15. Not only is the possibility of imperfect homeostasis and extensional indeterminacy important for the plausibility of HPC definitions of biological species but also it plays a role in Boyd's defense of moral realism. Some have thought that the existence of actions whose moral status is irresolvable is best explained by the hypothesis that there are no moral facts (see, e.g., J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* [New York: Penguin, 1977], 37). Boyd's HPC account of moral properties makes an alternative explanation possible. If moral terms designate HPC phenomena, then, as with species, we should expect instances where it is indeterminate whether or not an individual action or state of affairs falls within the extension of a given moral term. Thus, not only are such indeterminate cases not an embarrassment to an HPC conception of moral properties but they are predicted by it (Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 213).

from each of these domains. Although Boyd is most emphatic that biological species are HPC kinds, I find it helpful to begin with an example from the domain of chemistry.

Boyd seems to accept that chemical elements such as GOLD and compounds such as WATER are natural kinds with real essences that conform to the more traditional (non-HPC) conception of essences: their essences identify fully necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in these respective kinds. Still, he suggests that other, more general, chemical classifications may mark HPC kinds. One example of a chemical HPC kind that Boyd offers is METAL.[16] He proposes that the cluster of properties that define METAL includes (among other properties) *conductivity*, *ductility*, *malleability*, and the property of *having an inverse relationship between conductivity and temperature*. These properties (and others) are regularly coinstantiated in distinct individual quantities of substance. Boyd does not say what things serve as the homeostatic mechanisms that unite these properties in samples of METAL. A plausible candidate for such a mechanism is something like the property of *being composed of atoms that donate electrons*.[17] In virtue of their homeostatic relationship, the aforementioned collection of properties satisfies PH and thus constitutes an HPC. Boyd's suggestion is that this HPC, along with its homeostatic mechanisms, constitutes the a posteriori real essence of the kind METAL: a portion of substance is a piece of METAL when and only when it instantiates enough of these properties (weighted for importance) where their coinstantiation is due (at least in part) to mechanisms such as, for example, *being composed of atoms that donate electrons*.

Consider next the biological species TIGER. Any individual tiger instantiates innumerably many common morphological, physiological, and behavioral properties. Among these are properties corresponding to its particular skeletal structure, the arrangements of its organs, its behavioral dispositions, and so forth. For an individual tiger, its particular genotype is a plausible candidate for the (most central) underlying mechanism that causes and sustains the coinstantiation of its (intrinsic) properties. However, when we turn our attention to the biological species TIGER itself (as opposed to its individual members), discerning the defining homeostatic mechanisms is somewhat trickier than it is for

16. Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 83–84.

17. Here and elsewhere I treat the relevant homeostatic mechanisms as properties. I do so in this case because the mechanism associated with the kind METAL is evidently something that has multiple instances. Although Boyd is not explicit about what the ontological status of the homeostatic mechanisms is supposed to be, his own examples are also of things that admit of multiple instantiations. In any case, nothing much here turns on whether we understand homeostatic mechanisms as properties rather than individuals.

chemical kinds. We might be tempted to suppose that the TIGER genotype is the sole homeostatic mechanism in the definition of the kind TIGER, but this is not Boyd's view. If I understand him correctly, one reason for rejecting such a view is this: without additional mechanisms, such as "*gene exchange between certain populations* and *reproductive isolation from others*,"[18] the properties that define TIGER might fall out of homeostasis in a relatively short period of time. For instance, if tigers were not reproductively isolated from other biological species, they might interbreed with them and bring new genes into the TIGER gene pool. In turn, some of the manifest properties found in the defining cluster may be quickly lost. For example, tigers might lose their stripes or their tails if a new dominant gene were to spread throughout their population. What this illustration shows is that some of the mechanisms responsible for the homeostatic unity of the properties that define the kind TIGER are extrinsic and external to individual tigers.[19] These mechanisms (both internal and external ones), along with the morphological, physiological, and behavioral properties that are produced, maintained, and unified by them, constitute the HPC essence of the kind TIGER.[20] An individual is a tiger just in case it instantiates enough of these properties (weighted for importance) where their coinstantiation is due (at least in part) to the above-mentioned mechanisms.

III. THE MORAL GOOD AS AN HPC KIND

A. Homeostatic Consequentialism

Boyd proposes that THE MORAL GOOD, like METAL and THE TIGER, is an HPC kind. On this view, the property *moral goodness*[21] is itself constituted

18. Boyd offers these and other examples of homeostatic mechanisms unifying the properties of biological species in his "Homeostasis, Species and Multiple Realization," 165 (cf. Ernst Mayr, "What Is a Species, and What Is Not?" *Philosophy of Science* 63 [1996]: 262–77). I have added italics in keeping with my convention of italicizing property-referring terms.

19. Of course, given the evolution of biological species, the homeostatic unity of certain property clusters is bound to be disturbed over a long enough period of time. This implies that the constituents of a biological kind's HPC definition change over time. Boyd recognizes and accepts this consequence of his view. He writes, "the properties which determine the explanatory definition of a species (and, thus, the conditions for membership in it) may vary over time (or space), while it continues to have numerically the same definition" (Boyd, "Kinds as the 'Workmanship of Men,'" 68).

20. Boyd, "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," 142, and "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 81.

21. From here on, I will typically drop the adjective 'moral' from 'moral goodness' and 'the moral good'. Unless otherwise indicated, 'goodness' and 'the good' should be taken to refer to *moral goodness* and THE MORAL GOOD.

by a cluster of properties that are homeostatically unified.[22] The properties that compose *goodness* correspond to "things which satisfy important human needs."[23] Here, Boyd gestures toward what those needs are: "Some of these needs are physical or medical. Others are psychological and social; these (probably) include the need for love and friendship, the need to engage in cooperative efforts, the need to exercise control over one's own life, the need for intellectual and artistic appreciation and expression, the need for physical recreation, etc."[24] Boyd does not say which properties in fact correspond to the satisfactions of these needs. The following seems like a plausible (though perhaps not exhaustive) list of properties whose instances are the satisfactions of the human needs Boyd adumbrates above: *being educated*, *being physically healthy*, *sharing friendship*, *sharing love*, *enjoying leisure*, *engaging in physical recreation*, *engaging in cooperative efforts*, *creating and appreciating art*, and *being autonomous*.[25] As I understand Boyd, these properties (along with certain homeostatic mechanisms to be mentioned shortly) are constitutive of *goodness*. They are also constitutive of the essence and definition of THE GOOD. Thus, we should think of the property *being physically healthy* as playing a role in the HPC that defines THE GOOD that is analogous to the role that, for example, *malleability* plays in the HPC that defines METAL and analogous to the role that, for example, *being quadrupedal* plays in the HPC that defines THE TIGER. Following Boyd, I will refer to the properties that are constitutive of *goodness* as 'the human goods'.

If the human goods are to constitute an HPC essence, they must be homeostatically clustered. That is to say, they must satisfy one of the three disjuncts on the right-hand side of PH. Boyd's view seems to be

22. As evidence that Boyd means to identify *moral goodness* with an HPC of the sort that I am about to introduce, note that Boyd explicitly writes "the term 'good' in its moral uses refers to the homeostatic cluster property" (Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 205). Note also that my reading of Boyd as identifying *goodness* with an HPC also accords with the way Nicholas Sturgeon—himself a supporter of the HPC conception of *goodness*—understands Boyd. He writes that Boyd thinks of "moral properties such as intrinsic goodness as homeostatic clusters of various natural features" (Nicholas L. Sturgeon, "Moore on Ethical Naturalism," *Ethics* 113 [2003]: 528–56, 550).

23. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 203.

24. Ibid.

25. It should be clear from this list that I understand the properties that putatively compose *goodness* to be properties whose instances satisfy the various human needs (where, e.g., instances of *being in love* satisfy the need for love). One might be tempted to read Boyd as claiming instead that the properties that compose *goodness* are instances of a broader property, namely, *having a need satisfied*. I do not think such a reading could be correct. If it were, then there would be a single property that composes *goodness*: i.e., the property *having a need satisfied*. In that case, *goodness* could not be thought of as a *cluster* of properties.

that they satisfy the last disjunct of PH (i.e., the conjunction of clause i and clause ii):

> Under a wide variety of (actual and possible) circumstances these human goods (or rather instances of the satisfaction of them) are homeostatically clustered. In part they are clustered because these goods themselves are—when present in balance or moderation—mutually supporting. There are in addition psychological and social mechanisms which when, and to the extent to which, they are present contribute to the homeostasis. They probably include cultivated attitudes of mutual respect, political democracy, egalitarian social relations, various rituals, customs, and rules of courtesy, ready access to education and information, etc. It is a complex and difficult question in psychology and social theory just what these mechanisms are and how they work.[26]

If Boyd is right, then the human goods can be said to constitute an HPC. It is natural to suppose that this means that something like the following is true: under suitable social and psychological conditions, whenever an individual person is, for example, happy and enjoys leisure, an education, autonomy, and cooperative efforts, there is an increased likelihood that that same individual is also physically healthy, engages in physical recreation, shares friendship and love, and appreciates art. Boyd, however, is anxious to point out that the homeostasis between instances of the human goods need not involve their all being possessed by one and the same individual. He writes: "The properties in homeostasis are to be thought of as instances of the satisfaction of particular human needs among people generally, rather than [merely] within the life of a single individual."[27] His idea seems to be that, when the relevant homeostatic mechanisms (e.g., democracy and social equality) are in place, there is a causally sustained tendency for the having of some goods by one or more individuals to bring about or sustain the having of these and other goods by other individuals as well. For example, under the proper social conditions, Bob's engaging in artistic activity, physical recreation, and so forth will bring about, sustain, or otherwise enhance Carol's appreciation for art, her education, her own engagement in physical recreation, and so forth.

Boyd's central claim is that (something like)[28] this HPC and the

26. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 203.

27. Ibid., 204n.

28. It should be acknowledged that Boyd presents his particular account of the human goods and the homeostatic mechanisms that unify them as speculation. He is careful to note that the question of exactly which properties and mechanisms belong to the cluster that defines THE GOOD is a matter for empirical inquiry. The success of the HPC conception of *goodness* does not depend upon the correctness of precisely this list of goods and mechanisms (though Boyd believes that his characterization of the HPC is "close to the

mechanisms that unify it define THE MORAL GOOD: "[THE MORAL GOOD] is defined by this cluster of goods and the homeostatic mechanisms which unify them.[29] Actions, policies, character traits, etc. are morally good to the extent to which they tend to foster the realization of these goods or to develop and sustain the homeostatic mechanisms upon which their unity depends."[30] Although what Boyd proposes here is a theory of value and not a theory of right action, I will follow him in calling this account of THE GOOD "homeostatic consequentialism."[31]

If THE GOOD is defined by the cluster of human goods and its homeostatic mechanisms, then it is natural to suppose that something (e.g., a state of affairs) is good—that is, is an instance of *goodness*—just in case it instantiates the cluster of human goods (where these goods are unified by the relevant mechanisms). Let's call this proposal "HC1":

> HC1: A state of affairs, P, is noninstrumentally morally good if and only if P instantiates the HPC of human goods.[32]

---

truth" [ibid., 202]). With the exception of the argument I offer in Sec. V.B, my arguments against Boyd's view can be directed against other HPC proposals of *goodness* with little or no modification.

29. In the original text, Boyd uses 'moral goodness' where I use 'the moral good'. I have modified this passage in order to preserve the symmetry between moral HPC kinds and biological and chemical HPC kinds. Thus, although he writes that *moral goodness* is defined by the cluster of goods and their homeostatic mechanisms, I take him to mean that the property *moral goodness* is *constituted* by this cluster and its mechanisms. In turn, the HPC *moral goodness* defines the kind THE MORAL GOOD.

30. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 203.

31. Boyd evidently thinks of homeostatic consequentialism proper as a broader moral theory that includes the present HPC account of *goodness* as just one component. This larger view would presumably include a consequentialist account of *moral obligation* alongside the HPC conception of value. (Boyd discusses his consequentialist view of right action in greater depth in his "Finite Beings, Finite Goods: The Semantics, Metaphysics, and Ethics of Naturalist Consequentialism, Part II," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67 [2003], 24–47.) However, since he does not offer a distinct name for the theory of value he proposes, it will be convenient for our purposes to use 'homeostatic consequentialism' to denote only the HPC theory of value.

32. Just below, I explain why making a distinction between *noninstrumental goodness* and *instrumental goodness* is desirable for the homeostatic consequentialist. Although Boyd does not himself acknowledge the distinction in "How to Be a Moral Realist," fellow homeostatic consequentialist Nicholas Sturgeon attributes to Boyd the view that homeostatic consequentialism is an account of *intrinsic goodness* (Sturgeon, "Moore on Ethical Naturalism," 550). However, Sturgeon suggests that the kind of *intrinsic goodness* he has in mind is not "a property that depends only on the intrinsic, nonrelational properties of the things that have it" (ibid.). Because *intrinsic goodness* is sometimes thought to be just the sort of *goodness* that a thing has in virtue of its intrinsic, nonrelational properties, I prefer to label the sort of *goodness* that Sturgeon describes as "noninstrumental." I cannot here attempt a precise account of the distinction between *instrumental* and *noninstrumental goodness*. Perhaps a slogan will suffice: "a thing is noninstrumentally good if and only if it is good as an end, rather than good merely as a means to some other good thing." For

The second sentence in the last passage quoted might be thought to be in tension with HC1. That sentence suggests that an entity can be good even if it does not itself instantiate the cluster. All that is needed is that the entity "tends to foster the realization" of the cluster. This would be a very surprising possibility if THE GOOD were an HPC kind. After all, we do not say that some policy that tends to foster the realization of *tigerhood* (e.g., a policy of breeding tigers or protecting them from hunting) is itself a tiger (i.e., an instance of *tigerhood*). Only those entities that instantiate the cluster of properties that defines the kind TIGER are tigers. For this reason, I think it is best to read the second sentence in the last quoted passage as describing a phenomenon that is distinct from *moral goodness* or THE MORAL GOOD. We might call this phenomenon "instrumental moral goodness."[33] Roughly, something is instrumentally morally good on this view just in case it tends to foster the realization of the HPC that defines THE GOOD. My focus will be on homeostatic consequentialism as an account of *noninstrumental moral goodness*.

B. The Metaethical Significance of Homeostatic Consequentialism

Before moving on to my criticisms of homeostatic consequentialism, I want to say something about the metaethical advantages that might accrue to a realist form of ethical naturalism of the sort Boyd ultimately wants to defend, should it turn out that *moral goodness* really is an HPC. On the traditional construal of ethical naturalism, it is thought that any proposed naturalistic definition of a moral predicate is to be understood as an analytic or "nominal" definition. For an ethical naturalist of this sort, the matter of which natural property is expressed by a speaker's use of 'morally

---

a useful discussion, see Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 277–97. (Note, however, that Kagan takes the label 'intrinsic goodness' to apply both to *noninstrumental goodness* and to the kind of *goodness* a thing has in virtue of its intrinsic, nonrelational properties.)

33. Here are two additional considerations in support of this exegetical decision: First, as we saw earlier, Boyd represents himself as claiming that "the term 'good' in its moral uses refers to the homeostatic cluster property just described" ("How to Be a Moral Realist," 205). This way of representing homeostatic consequentialism is hard to square with the view that an act is good just in case it "tends to foster" the HPC of human goods. For if that were Boyd's view, he should have said that 'good' (or better, 'goodness') refers to the property of *tending to foster the HPC just described*. A second consideration concerns the sorts of items that Boyd cites as bearers of *moral goodness* in the passage cited above. The three kinds of items he cites are actions, policies, and character traits. However, on a standard consequentialist conception of morality, only states of affairs are taken to be the fundamental bearers of noninstrumental (or intrinsic) value; actions, policies, and character traits are typically understood to have only instrumental (or extrinsic) value. This gives us yet more reason to treat the passage cited above as describing *instrumental moral goodness*, a property that is distinct from the more fundamental *noninstrumental moral goodness*.

good' depends entirely upon the description or collection of natural properties that the speaker associates with that predicate. If this kind of moral semantics is correct, discovery of the definition of 'morally good' must proceed solely by way of a priori, conceptual analysis.

A number of contemporary ethical naturalists, including Boyd, have been persuaded that it is implausible to hold that moral terms have analytic definitions.[34] These naturalists argue that definitions of moral terms (and identity claims involving moral properties) should be seen, not as analytic, conceptual claims, but rather as expressing putative synthetic, a posteriori necessities.[35] Here, proponents of what can be called "synthetic ethical naturalism" look to the a posteriori theoretical definitions of scientific terms and to the causal theory of reference as their model for moral identity claims and definitions. These naturalists hold that, just as it required substantive a posteriori chemical inquiry to discover that the content of the predicate 'water' (and the essence of the kind WATER) is the property *being* H_2O, so too is substantive, a posteriori ethical inquiry required in order to determine which natural property serves as the content of 'good' (and essence of THE GOOD). Similarly, they argue that, just as the content of 'water' is individuated by facts about what property stands in the right causal relation to our use of 'water', so too is the content of 'good' individuated by facts about what property stands in the right causal relation to our use of 'good'.

Since the publication of "How to Be a Moral Realist," several philosophers have raised troubling objections to the semantic picture that underwrites synthetic ethical naturalism. The Moral Twin Earth objection advanced by Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons, for example, reveals that Boyd's own causal semantics for moral terms fails to make good sense of the apparent disagreement between speakers whose respective uses of moral terms bear putative reference-making causal links

34. The most influential argument against "analytic" ethical naturalism is G. E. Moore's open question argument (see G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903/1993], 66–69). Another argument that receives less fanfare, though it is to my mind more persuasive, involves the claim that analytic ethical naturalism cannot make sense of the possibility of substantive moral disagreement between two speakers who subscribe to different moral standards (see Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 186–87; R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1952], 49, 148–49; and Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 62–64). In addition, the abandonment of analytic ethical naturalism is sometimes motivated by skepticism about analyticity in general. (Boyd expresses such a skepticism in "How to Be a Moral Realist," 196.)

35. Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 199–212; David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundation of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 166, 175; Sturgeon, "Moore on Ethical Naturalism," 533–35.

to distinct natural properties.[36] Even if the Moral Twin Earth argument fails to refute synthetic ethical naturalism outright, I believe it at least deprives the view of its initial presumption of innocence. If it does, then ethical naturalists cannot justify the claim that moral terms have nonanalytic, a posteriori real definitions simply by noting that many scientific terms have definitions of this sort. Naturalists must offer some positive grounds for thinking that the semantics and epistemology appropriate for natural kinds and natural kind terms ought to be extended to moral properties and moral predicates.[37]

Boyd's HPC conception of *goodness* promises such grounds for accepting synthetic ethical naturalism's semantic and epistemological claims. The properties in an HPC are unified by nomological necessity, not by conceptual necessity. If a kind has an HPC essence, then the question of which properties belong to its essence can be answered only by discovering which properties exhibit the right nomological connection to the rest of the clustered properties. This, however, is an a posteriori question, not to be answered by way of a priori conceptual analysis. Thus, Boyd writes: "If the good is defined by a homeostatic phenomenon the details of which we still do not entirely know, then it is a paradigm case of a property whose 'essence' is given by a natural [i.e., a posteriori real] rather than a stipulative [i.e., analytic or nominal] definition."[38] In this way, Boyd's HPC conception of *moral goodness*, if viable, promises to be an important component in the defense of synthetic ethical naturalism.

IV. THE CASE AGAINST HOMEOSTATIC CONSEQUENTIALISM

A. Isolated Goods

Although homeostatic consequentialism is presented foremost as a metaethical view, it has substantive moral implications. Consider the following scenario. There is a hermit, alone in the woods. Although it is a relatively cool day, the sun peeks out from behind the clouds and warms the hermit's back. The hermit finds this sensation pleasurable. Suppose, however, that this pleasure contributes neither to his nor anyone else's having friends. Nor does it contribute to his appreciation of art, his engagement in cooperative efforts, his sharing love, and so forth. In

36. Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons, "New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 16 (1990–91): 447–65.

37. For his own part, Boyd seems to agree that independent justification is needed. He writes that, if the naturalistic moral realist is to legitimately make use of the epistemological and semantic claims characteristic of synthetic ethical naturalism, then there need to be "good reasons to think that moral terms must possess natural [i.e., nonanalytic, a posteriori] rather than stipulative [i.e., analytic or nominal] definitions" (Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 210, cf. 201).

38. Ibid., 210.

short, the hermit's experience of pleasure causally contributes to the realization of very few, if any, of the human goods.[39] It follows that the hermit's being pleased does not instantiate the HPC that putatively constitutes *goodness*. Even if we thought that the property *being pleased* is itself a human good, the instantiation of only one property in a cluster is not the same thing as the instantiation of the cluster itself.[40] Because the hermit's being pleased fails to instantiate the HPC that putatively constitutes *goodness* (and, moreover, fails to contribute to the realization of that HPC), HC1 implies that the hermit's experience of pleasure is not good. It follows that the world in which the hermit experiences this particular episode of pleasure is no better than a world that is otherwise identical except that the hermit does not experience this pleasure. This consequence of HC1 is surely counterintuitive. The world in which the hermit experiences the additional pleasure is the better world. If so, we must reject HC1. Let us call this objection to homeostatic consequentialism "the problem of isolated goods."

(While I have taken the property *being pleased* as my example of an isolated good, it should not be thought that the objection depends upon this choice. For those who are not inclined to view *being pleased* as a good-making property, we can modify the hermit example so that the relevant state of affairs realizes some other putative good-making property in causal isolation from the rest of the human goods. For example, we might imagine instead a state of affairs in which the hermit has a preference satisfied—or appreciates the beauty of some landscape or contemplates some magnificent truth or some such—where this state of affairs fails to causally contribute to the realization of other human goods.)

B. An Alternative Formulation

Hitherto, I have taken HC1 to express the core thesis of homeostatic consequentialism. However, there may be a different way to understand the view:

> HC2: A state of affairs, P, is noninstrumentally morally good if and only if P instantiates at least one of the human goods in the HPC of human goods.

39. There is probably some correlation between experiences of pleasure and a person's physical health. So we may have to grant that this particular episode of pleasure makes a causal contribution to the hermit's health, however slight.

40. In light of the discussion of Sec. II.B, it should be observed that an HPC "as a whole" may be instantiated by an individual even when some of the cluster's constituent properties are not instantiated by that individual. Even so, it should also be clear that an HPC itself is not instantiated in an individual that instantiates only one of its constituent properties; e.g., an individual's being striped is not sufficient for it to be properly classified as a TIGER.

One benefit of HC2 is that, by allowing there to be a plurality of noninstrumental good-making properties, it brings homeostatic consequentialism closer to more traditional forms of axiological pluralism. More important, however, it promises an answer to the problem of isolated goods. Here is how. Suppose that *being pleased* is a human good. Although the state of affairs in which the hermit is pleased does not instantiate the entire cluster of human goods, it does instantiate at least one human good that is part of the cluster. Given HC2, this is sufficient for it to be true that the hermit's being pleased is noninstrumentally good.

Unfortunately, the problem of isolated goods returns in a slightly different form to threaten even HC2. Consider a possible world, W, in which the homeostatic mechanisms that putatively unify the human goods in our world are absent. In W, the sociopolitical conditions are such that it is not true that the presence of some of the human goods raises the likelihood that the others will be present. (We might imagine that the human social environment in W is something like a Hobbesian state of nature.) From this assumption, it follows that the human goods are not homeostatically clustered in W. Next, imagine that the sunbathing hermit is in W. Once again, his pleasure neither instantiates nor contributes to the instantiation of a larger cluster of human goods. More important, however, because the hermit is in W, his pleasure does not instantiate a property that is homeostatically clustered with other human goods. From this, it follows that, even on HC2, this hermit's pleasure is not good. As before, this consequence of HC2 clashes with considered moral judgment.[41] (And again, the objection could be restated mutatis mutandis with some other putative good-making property in place of *being pleased*.)

At this point, the homeostatic consequentialist might appeal to something like the idea of rigid designation in order to answer the "revived" problem of isolated goods. The strategy is roughly this: Let us grant that there is a homeostatically unified cluster of human goods here in the actual world. The predicate 'noninstrumentally good' applies

41. There is some indication that a homeostatic consequentialist would be willing to bite the bullet here. Sturgeon allows that "nothing would have a property such as intrinsic goodness at all, given a radical enough breakdown" in a certain part of the HPC that constitutes *goodness* (Sturgeon, "Moore on Ethical Naturalism," 550). Since the Hobbesian world exhibits a breakdown of the HPC that constitutes *goodness*, it would appear that Sturgeon is willing to accept that the hermit's being pleased is not an instance of *goodness*. (However, Sturgeon is here speaking of a breakdown only in a specific part of the HPC. In particular, he is considering the breakdown in the part of the cluster that involves "the existence of purposive, valuing creatures somewhat like us" [ibid.]. The claim that a world without purposive, valuing creatures contains no *goodness* strikes me as far less controversial than the claim that a world that included such creatures would nevertheless fail to contain intrinsic or noninstrumental value, if there were a lack of homeostasis between the human goods.)

to any instance of one (or more) of those human goods. This predicate should be understood to apply "rigidly." A predicate is a rigid applier, according to this strategy, just in case, if it applies to all instances of a property F in the actual world, it applies to all instances of F in every possible world.[42] Since 'noninstrumentally good' presumably applies to all instances of *being pleased* in the actual world, as a rigid applier it also applies all instances of *being pleased* in every possible world. As a result, it is consistent with HC2 to ascribe *noninstrumental goodness* to the hermit's being pleased in the Hobbesian world. This is so despite the fact that the human goods are not homeostatically clustered in that world.

It is doubtful that this conception of rigid application is defensible, at least if it is supposed to capture some semantic property common to

42. I do not claim that this is the best or most useful conception of rigid application. It is, however, the conception that the defender of HC2 needs in order to avoid the revised problem of isolated goods. As will be seen below, I think this conception of rigid application is defective. An arguably better conception can be found in Michael Devitt, "Rigid Application," *Philosophical Studies* 125 (2005): 139–65. Unfortunately, Devitt's conception is of no help to HC2. Furthermore, I doubt that the more traditional notion of rigid designation could be deployed in the service of HC2 without making questionable assumptions. On the traditional view, a term, t, rigidly designates an entity, e, if and only if t designates e in every possible world in which e exists and t designates no other entities (Saul Kripke, "Identity and Necessity," reprinted in *Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds*, ed. Stephen P. Schwartz [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977], 67–101, 78, 79). As an initial difficulty, it isn't clear that predicates are the sort of items that can be rigid designators: if predicates (be they natural kind predicates or nominal kind predicates) designate their extensions, then none are rigid, since their extensions are different at different possible worlds. If they designate properties, then every meaningful predicate is a rigid designator. In that case, rigid designation marks no interesting distinction among predicates. This last consequence might be avoided if we suppose that only those predicates that designate sparse properties (or universals) rigidly designate. Assuming this restriction were defensible, it would still require some maneuvering to get this conception of rigid designation to do the work HC2 needs of it. For one thing, given the pluralistic assumptions of HC2, there is no one property that 'good' designates; there is a plurality. Thus, it is not true of 'good' that it designates an entity in every possible world in which that entity exists *and designates no other entities*. One solution is to suppose that 'good' designates the conjunctive property made up of all the different good-making properties. But now HC2 has no reply to the problem of isolated goods. As we saw, the hermit's episode of pleasure does not instantiate a conjunctive property that includes all the other putative good-making properties as constituents. What is needed instead is an account where 'good' designates a disjunctive property. Here we face more trouble. We have had to assume that rigidly designating predicates designate only sparse properties. However, on familiar conceptions of sparse properties, disjunctive properties do not qualify as sparse (see, e.g., D. M. Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism*, vol. 2, *A Theory of Universals* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978], 19–23). Perhaps there is more that can be said that would make it plausible that rigid designation can do the work that HC2 needs it to do. I hope to have said enough to make it clear that rigid designation does not provide a quick or easy solution to the problem of isolated goods.

natural kind terms. Suppose that 'cordate' is a rigidly applying term. It applies to all actual instances of the property of *being a creature with a heart*. As a rigid applier, it also applies to all possible instances of *being a creature with a heart*. The trouble begins when we notice that 'cordate' also applies to all actual instances of the property *being a creature with a kidney*. From this, along with the assumption that 'cordate' is a rigid applier, it follows that 'cordate' applies to all possible instances of *being a creature with a kidney*. But this is false.

I think that this shows that this conception of rigid application is defective. If I am right, then the homeostatic consequentialist will not be able to appeal to it in his response to the revised problem of isolated goods. However, it might be thought that the argument of the previous paragraph shows only that it was wrong to assume that 'cordate' is a rigid applier. This is a desperate tack. As a biological kind term, 'cordate' is a good candidate for a natural kind term (and possibly even an HPC kind term). But if 'cordate' is a natural kind term, then some explanation is required for why it fails to be a rigid applier whereas a supposed (HPC) natural kind predicate like 'good' succeeds.

C. Two Structural Disanalogies

Even if HC2 could avoid the revived problem of isolated goods, the move from HC1 to HC2 is suspiciously ad hoc; there is no precedent for a view like HC2 in the general theory of HPC kinds. Let me explain.

Given HC2, each of the individual properties (i.e., human goods) that compose the HPC that putatively defines THE GOOD is such that it is proper to predicate *noninstrumental moral goodness* of its instances. For example, it is proper to say of John's being in love with Mary that it is morally good. Likewise, we can say that Sam's creating and appreciating art at some particular time is morally good. Moreover, we can say that Rachel's being healthy is morally good.

No paradigmatic HPC kind is like THE GOOD in this respect. Consider the properties that define TIGER. We do not say of a particular tiger that its being quadrupedal is a tiger. Nor do we say that its stalking behavior is a tiger. Nor do we say that its being warm blooded is a tiger. In general, the property of *being a tiger* does not belong to the instances of the individual properties that define TIGER.[43] The same observation

43. Of course an instance of a property like *being quadrupedal* might be a part of a larger state of affairs that constitutes some individual's being a tiger. But this does not mean that the state of affairs consisting in a given individual being quadrupedal itself has the property of *being a tiger*. In such a case, we should say instead that one and the same individual has the property of *being quadrupedal* and has the property of *being a tiger*.

holds for other biological kinds as well as for chemical kinds (e.g., the *malleability* of this piece of metal is not itself an instance of METAL).[44]

What this shows is that, as it is characterized by HC2, *goodness* is structurally unlike the property clusters that define paradigm HPC kinds. *Goodness* is a property exemplified by instances of the individual properties that (putatively) constitute it. Paradigmatic natural kinds like species and chemical substances do not share this feature. This ought to make us suspicious of HC2. If *goodness* really were constituted by an HPC, we would expect it to have the same metaphysical structure as the HPCs that define paradigmatic HPC kinds. Unless there is a convincing precedent for an HPC that functions as *goodness* does according to HC2, the move to HC2 would appear to be ad hoc.[45] As far as I can see, the only motivation for HC2 is its promise to solve the first version of the problem of isolated goods.

Since both HC1 and HC2 are vulnerable to the problem of isolated goods, this most recent objection to HC2 would seem to make HC1 the more attractive statement of homeostatic consequentialism. Unfortunately, there is another structural feature of paradigmatic HPC kinds that simply cannot be extended to THE GOOD without absurdity. (This feature creates trouble for homeostatic consequentialism on either of its formulations.)

For paradigmatic HPC kinds, most (though perhaps not all) of the properties that are part of the kind's definition are properties had by individual members of the kind. For example, just as *ferociousness* and *being quadrupedal* are part of the HPC definition of the kind TIGER, individual tigers are themselves ferocious and quadrupedal. Likewise, just as *malleability* and *conductivity* are part of the definition of METAL, individual pieces of metal are malleable and conductive.

By contrast, the properties that putatively define THE GOOD are not had by individual members of THE GOOD: no good state of affairs is

44. In Sec. V.D I introduce putative examples of HPC social kinds. It should be noted here that even those kinds behave like the paradigm HPC kinds and not like THE GOOD. For instance, suppose that the property of *keeping kosher* is part of the cluster of properties that defines the social kind HASIDIC JEW. Some particular man's keeping kosher does not have the property of *being a Hasidic Jew*.

45. Boyd suggests that the predicates 'healthy' and 'is healthier than' express HPC phenomena (Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," 198). It may be that my challenge (to find a paradigmatic example of an HPC that shares the structural features of *goodness* as understood by HC2) could be answered by developing a plausible HPC account of HEALTH. Unfortunately, Boyd says very little about what sorts of properties might compose the HPC that defines HEALTH. In the absence of a more detailed account, it is difficult to tell whether or not the example of HEALTH will help the homeostatic consequentialist meet the present challenge.

pleased, educated, enjoys leisure, shares love, or so forth.[46] To predicate one of these properties of a good state of affairs is to commit a category mistake. Once again, we are presented with a way in which the cluster of properties that putatively defines THE GOOD fails to behave like the property clusters that define paradigmatic examples of HPC kinds. This provides yet another reason to doubt that THE GOOD is an HPC kind.

D. An Alternative Cluster of Properties

Both of the structural disanalogies just described might be avoided if we take a rather different collection of properties to constitute the cluster that putatively defines THE GOOD. Consider the following list of properties: *being pursued by rational beings*, *being worthy of being loved*, *meriting realization*, *being approved of by ideal observers*, *being fitting*, and *deserving appreciation*. If properties of this sort were taken to compose the cluster that defines THE GOOD, then the structural dissimilarities between the good and other HPC kinds would be avoided. With respect to the first disanalogy noted above, it is arguably not a serious defect if we could not properly say of a particular state of affairs that the fact that it merits realization is (noninstrumentally) good. With respect to the second disanalogy, we make no category mistake when we say that a particular good state of affairs merits realization, is fitting, is deserving of appreciation, or so forth. Perhaps, then, a collection of properties such as this could serve as the cornerstone of a different proposal for an HPC definition of *goodness* (one that would replace Boyd's own proposal).

There are at least two reasons for thinking that this maneuver will not be successful for the homeostatic consequentialist. First, all of the aforementioned properties contain at least one unabashedly normative property as a constituent: *worthiness*, *merit*, *fittingness*, *desert*, *being ideal*, and *being rational*. An HPC definition of *moral goodness* that includes such properties does nothing to advance the naturalistic accommodation of moral properties that Boyd and other naturalist moral realists are pursuing. After all, it is the putative normativity of moral properties that has led so many philosophers to think that such properties cannot be

46. Of course, individual persons that are constituents of these states of affairs might have these properties. However, because states of affairs are the primary basic bearers of *goodness*, this is of little help. The current difficulty might be avoided by noting that persons themselves may reasonably be taken to be bearers of *moral goodness*. This reply helps if we are advancing some sort of HPC account of virtue. Still, I presume that Boyd and other homeostatic consequentialists want to say that things other than persons may be noninstrumentally morally good. If so, they are faced with the present difficulty.

accommodated within a naturalistic metaphysic.[47] Without a further naturalistic account of these normative properties, homeostatic consequentialism will have accomplished very little, if anything, in the way of showing that *goodness* can be admitted into a naturalistic ontology.

A second worry is this: to the extent that properties like *being fitting*, *deserving appreciation*, *being worthy of being loved*, and so forth are clustered in nature, their clustering does not seem to be a matter of causal connection. In the first place, several of these properties may well be identical. It may be, for example, that the property designated by 'meriting realization' is identical to the property designated by 'being fitting'. Second, even where distinct properties are designated by these terms, the connection between these properties appears to be conceptual or metaphysical rather than causal or nomological. It strikes me as a conceptual truth that an ideal observer is one who approves of all and only that which merits realization or deserves appreciation. To my ears, the claim that there is an ideal (moral) observer who, nevertheless, approves of that which does not deserve appreciation sounds incoherent.[48] At any rate, even if the necessity involved is not conceptual, it is doubtful that the laws of nature could have been different in such a way that there exist ideal observers who approve of that which does not deserve appreciation or that which does not merit realization. If so, the necessity binding these properties is stronger than mere nomological necessity; it is better characterized as a metaphysical necessity. My point here is that a property cluster in which these new properties (*being fitting*, *being deserving of appreciation*, etc.) were given significant definitional weight would not fit Boyd's characterization of an HPC. The property cluster under consideration appears to be, in most cases at least, unified by conceptual or metaphysical necessity.[49] By contrast, the necessity that

47. See, e.g., Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 105; Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 187ff.; Hare, *The Language of Morals*, 91; Mackie, *Ethics*, 38ff.; and Charles L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), 336. I should add that, in selecting these particular properties as potentially definitive of THE GOOD, I was inspired by various nonnaturalist and constructivist analyses of 'good'.

48. A. C. Ewing expresses roughly the same thought in his *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 85. He suggests that the claim that what is good or right is what an impartial spectator would approve of "is equivalent to saying that something is good or right when it is approved by somebody who only approves what is really good or right."

49. Of the properties I have recommended for this alternative HPC proposal, the one exception seems to be the property of *being pursued by rational beings*. If one takes a Humean or instrumentalist view of rationality, then it will be at best a metaphysically contingent fact that rational beings pursue, e.g., fitting states of affairs. Thus, *being pursued by rational beings* may well be nomologically linked to the other properties mentioned. I doubt that this one exception can give the homeostatic consequentialist what he needs to get past the present worry. However if more properties of this sort could be found,

unifies the properties of an HPC is causal or nomological. Thus, even on this alternative proposal, it would not be true that *moral goodness* is an HPC.

V. INDUCTIVE INFERENCE AND THE GOOD

A. Outline of the Argument

In Section II.A, we saw that Boyd takes natural kinds to provide the metaphysical ground for successful induction and explanation. His HPC conception of natural kinds is meant to account, in part, for how it is that (some) natural kinds play this role. In Section II.B, I explained that the homeostatic clustering of properties makes the instances of an HPC kind fairly uniform with respect to their manifest properties. In turn, this uniformity makes reliable inductive inference possible. If this is so, and if THE GOOD is an HPC kind, then we should expect that THE GOOD (and *goodness*) will ground significant reliable inductive inferences. To the extent that this expectation is not fulfilled, we have reason to think that THE GOOD is not an HPC kind. In the next two sections I argue that there is, in fact, reason to think that *goodness* does not facilitate significant reliable inductive inferences. If I am right, then we have even more reason to doubt that THE GOOD is an HPC kind. (As far as I can tell, my arguments remain cogent regardless of whether homeostatic consequentialism is understood as HC1 or understood as HC2. Still, it may aid the reader to know that the following sections were written with HC1 in mind.)

In arguing that *moral goodness* does not ground significant reliable inductive inferences, I will be relying on anecdotal evidence. For my argument to be conclusive, empirical research would be required. In the absence of such research, I must state the conclusion of my argument modestly. Here I aim to show that, pending the needed empirical research, we ought to be pessimistic as to whether homeostatic consequentialism can make good on its empirical commitments.

---

and if there were a compelling case to be made that these other properties are indeed contingently clustered, then this worry could be put to rest. But new difficulties are likely to arise. My suspicion is that the sorts of properties that are needed here would consist primarily in various sorts of characteristic human responses to good states of affairs. If I am right about this, then an alternative HPC definition of THE GOOD that incorporated these properties would raise its own problems for Boyd's larger project of defending naturalistic moral realism. Briefly, a cluster definition involving such properties threatens to make *moral goodness* a response-dependent property. Response-dependent accounts of moral properties, however, are at odds with the robust sort of moral realism that Boyd means to defend.

B. Biological Kinds versus Moral Kinds, Part 1

For comparison, consider the sorts of reliable inductive inferences that are afforded by biological kinds. While walking in the woods, you see something poking up from behind a log. They are two pieces of furry flesh, about four inches in length, standing straight up. You recognize them as nearly morphologically identical with the ears of some rabbits you have seen. Before you move any closer, you already have a pretty good idea of what you will find as you approach: a furry creature, with short front legs and powerful, kangaroo-like hind legs. The creature will also have whiskers and a short fluffy tail. If you get close enough, you will likely see its nose making a "sniffing" motion. If you get too close, it will rapidly scurry away. In addition to all this, you have a rough idea of what you would find if you were to catch it and cut it open. The background knowledge needed to make these inferences could be culled from having seen only a handful of rabbits in the wild (supplemented with one or two observations of mammalian internal anatomy). On the basis of only a few previous observations, you are able to reliably infer an impressive amount of information about a particular individual by observing just a pair of ears.[50] Notice, too, that, in this case, you are able to infer the presence of a vast number of properties in the individual from observing comparatively few.

Now consider a putatively moral case. Suppose that, while walking through the park, you observe four young persons playing a game of two-on-two basketball. You observe that each pair is engaged in a cooperative effort and that they are enjoying physical recreation as well as leisure. Each individual appears to be friends with his or her own teammate and, furthermore, all appear to be in good health. Let us grant that all these observations are in fact true. On the basis of these observations, which reveal the instantiation of five out of the nine human goods sketched above (in Sec. III.A), what else can you reliably infer? Well, very likely someone is happy or pleased, as basketball is an enjoyable game. As for some of the other human goods in the proposed cluster, it is anybody's guess. There is no reason to think the game makes any contribution to anyone's education, artistic development, or ability to engage in a loving relationship. I doubt that we can even reliably

50. Of course, the reliability of this inference requires the support of some contingent features of the observer's environment as well. For instance, there must not be too many things that look like rabbit ears but are neither attached to rabbits nor creatures that share many (but not too many) properties that are characteristic of rabbits. (Keep in mind, however, that in my example what you infer is not that this thing is a rabbit but rather that it has such and such morphology, anatomy, behavior, etc. If the creature should turn out to be a hare, these conclusions are every bit as correct as if it turns out to be a rabbit.)

infer whether playing the game has any impact on anyone's personal autonomy (perhaps two of the players had to be nagged into joining the game). It is worth adding that we do not appear to be warranted in inferring that the state of affairs in which these young people are playing basketball is (all things considered) morally good. In fact, given our evidence, it is not too improbable that the young people are doing something that is, all things considered, bad: perhaps they have all neglected their university studies in order to play; perhaps they have unfairly excluded others from joining their game; perhaps one team is in the process of hustling the other team out of their paychecks. If the basketball game exhibits any of these features, then it may well generate enough harm that, on balance, it contributes negative noninstrumental value to the world. What these considerations suggest is that, in fact, the observation of the properties in the cluster that putatively defines THE GOOD does not afford us much, if any, inductive knowledge. In this respect, THE GOOD is nothing like a paradigmatic HPC kind such as THE RABBIT.[51]

Now, if the example just offered is to support the conclusion I want to draw, then it must be generalizable. It will be of no use if I have simply called attention to one of the infrequent cases where some of the properties defining THE GOOD are present but the rest are not. (After all, we sometimes witness small, furry, ear-like things, and they turn out not to be attached to small timid mammals.) What I need to show, then, is that cases in which a number of human goods are present but the others are not constitute the norm rather than the exception. Since I cannot here continue to produce examples of this sort, I will offer a pair of cases of a somewhat different sort to compare. I believe the implications of the following cases are generalizable. They differ from the first pair in that, here, the epistemic agent does not see the individual but is merely told that a given unseen individual belongs to a certain kind. I then consider what sort of information he or she can reliably infer from this (let us grant) accurate testimony about the individual.

C. Biological Kinds versus Moral Kinds, Part 2

If a person is competent at recognizing members of a natural kind, then she should be able to reliably infer the presence of many properties had by an unseen individual solely by being (truthfully) told that the individual is a member the kind in question. For example, I have seen only a handful of scorpions (real and images thereof); I have also

51. To make matters worse, even if we could inductively infer the presence of some of these goods from others, it is not clear that it is reference to THE MORAL GOOD that facilitates these inferences. Our inductions may well turn out to be grounded by the properties that cluster around sporting activities qua sporting activities.

learned several facts about them through the testimony of experts. This relatively small number of encounters has been enough for me to acquire competence in recognizing members of the kind SCORPION. Simply by being told that Snippy is a scorpion, I can reliably infer that Snippy is an insect-like creature, three or four inches long from head to the start of the tail. His tail is roughly the same length as his body and is equipped with a stinger and a pouch full of venom. Moreover, affixed to the front of his body are "lobster-like" claws. In addition to these morphological features, I can reliably infer some behavioral properties: for example, Snippy would eat an insect if it were available; if a person were to agitate Snippy properly, Snippy would sting her. I know all this about Snippy only by being told that he is a member of the kind SCORPION.

Contrast the scorpion case with a case in which we are truthfully informed that a state of affairs, P, that has just taken place is noninstrumentally morally good. We are given no further information concerning P's characteristics. Given our background knowledge of noninstrumentally good things, what inductive inferences would we be justified in making? One might be tempted to infer that P exemplifies whatever property one's favorite axiological theory entails is noninstrumentally good-making. Perhaps, then, P involves the satisfaction of a preference, or someone's being pleased, or both. On the face of it, this hardly seems like an example of inductive inference. Still, if the homeostatic consequentialist is granted his favored account of moral theorizing, it may well count as a case of inductive inference. Let us suppose, then, that these two inferences concerning P are examples of epistemically justified inductions.

If THE GOOD is an HPC kind, we should expect that we can reliably infer more than this. Unfortunately, I doubt that we can. Consider the human goods listed in Section III. Surely, the information we have been given about P does not justify us to infer that P involves someone's being in love, engaging in cooperative efforts, appreciating art, or so forth. Even a convinced axiological pluralist must recognize that the mere knowledge that P is good does not justify us in inferring which of the good-making properties P realizes. Even less does our information justify us to infer that all (or nearly all) of these human goods are realized in P. This is bad news. If the human goods really are homeostatically clustered and constitutive of *noninstrumental goodness*, we should expect this stronger inference (that nearly all the human goods are realized in P) to be justified. Perhaps there is empirical research that can be conducted that would show that such inferences are reliable. In the absence of this research, however, we have no reason to believe that such a strong inference is epistemically justified. If this is right, then we ought to be skeptical of the claim that *goodness* is constituted by an HPC.

So far, I have been considering the relationship between *noninstrumental moral goodness* and inductive inference. It might be thought, however, that *instrumental moral goodness* is more promising as a ground of reliable inductive inference. Let's consider, then, what we may justifiably infer from the news that Jane has just performed an instrumentally morally good action. I am inclined to think that matters are not much different than before. I suspect that we are justified in inferring that someone was pleased and had a preference satisfied as a result of Jane's act. I suppose we would be also be justified in inferring that, if anyone's preferences were frustrated as a result of Jane's act (or if anyone was pained by it), this frustration was outweighed by the preferences satisfied (or the quantity of pleasure it brought about). Once again, however, I doubt that we would be justified in inferring that her act causally contributed to the realization of *love*, *friendship*, *cooperation*, *physical health*, *artistic appreciation*, and so forth. As often as instrumentally good actions contribute to the realization of these properties, they contribute to their frustration. And again, even if we are in a position to infer that Jane's act contributes to the realization of some of these human goods, we are not in a position to infer which of these it contributes to. Still less are we justified in inferring that it contributes to the realization of nearly all of them.

We might be encouraged to take a long-term view of Jane's action. While her good action might have immediately involved breaking a friendship, ending a love affair, sacrificing someone's autonomy, and so forth, it may be that, in the long run, her act will contribute to the realization of all these things. If so, then her act does contribute to the cluster of human goods after all. But even if all this turns out to be true of Jane's act, we are surely in no position now to infer this with any kind of confidence. Such an inference may signal an admirable sort of optimism, but it is surely not an example of justified reliable inductive inference. If I am right, then even *noninstrumental goodness* is of little value in grounding significant reliable inductive inference.

To summarize, it is doubtful that the human goods sketched in Section III.A enjoy the sort of homeostatic relationship shared by the properties that define chemical and biological kinds. If the human goods did share such a nomological bond, we would expect to be able to make a significant number of reliable inductive inferences upon observing that some (at least half) of the properties in the cluster are instantiated by some state of affairs. Furthermore, we would expect that the knowledge that a given state of affairs is good will permit us to reliably infer a significant number of further facts about it. I have argued that neither of these expectations are met. Reference to THE GOOD does not facilitate significant reliable inductions. In this respect, THE GOOD

is very much unlike paradigmatic HPC kinds. Consequently, we have yet more reason to doubt that THE GOOD is itself an HPC kind.

It is worth recalling that one of the appeals of Boyd's HPC account of natural kinds is that it purports to explain how such kinds are able to fulfill the inductive and explanatory roles they are alleged to play. In light of this, these observations concerning THE GOOD are no small blow to homeostatic consequentialism. THE GOOD lacks the very feature of natural kinds that the HPC view is meant to account for.

D. Social Kinds

It might be objected that it is much too demanding to ask that moral kinds ground as numerous and reliable inductions as chemical and biological kinds do. This is a reasonable objection. A fairer comparison might contrast moral kinds with kinds that make up the subject matter of social sciences like psychology or sociology. I take examples of social kinds to include THE STATE, RELIGION, NATIVE AMERICAN, JEW, PSYCHOPATH, HOMOSEXUAL, FOREIGNER, BACHELOR, and ECONOMIC DEPRESSION.[52] Boyd suggests that at least some social kinds are HPC kinds.[53] It is reasonable to suppose that, if there are HPC social kinds, such kinds support significantly fewer and less reliable inductive inferences than biological and chemical kinds support. Consequently, if social kind terms can be shown to designate HPC kinds, and if reference to THE GOOD facilitates nearly as many reliable inductive inferences as does reference to social kinds, then the arguments of Sections V.B and V.C could be answered.

The first challenge facing an objection along these lines is to establish that there are, in fact, plausible examples of social kinds whose extensions are defined by HPCs. At least some of the kinds listed in the previous paragraph seem to resist a posteriori HPC definitions. BACHELOR, for instance, has a fairly straightforward analytic definition; even if there turns out to be some properties that contingently cluster around bachelors (qua bachelors)—for example, *having an active night life*—it is doubtful that such properties are part of the definition of BACHELOR. Still, I think HPC social kinds may well exist. At any rate, it seems to me that there exist social kinds that ground interesting reliable inductions where it can be plausibly maintained that the essential properties of these kinds are discoverable only a posteriori. The trouble is that these social kinds seem to license a far greater number of reliable inductive inferences than THE GOOD does. In the previous section, I

52. The first five examples are culled from Richard Miller, "Half-Naturalized Social Kinds," *Philosophy of Science* 67 (2000): S640–S652.

53. Boyd offers CAPITALISM as an example of a HPC social kind in "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 83.

counted only two inductive inferences that seemed to be licensed by the proposition that some particular state of affairs (or action) is good. Contrast this with the inductive inferences afforded by the proposition that some particular individual is a member of the social kind HASIDIC JEW (HASIDUM). Upon being told that Jacob is an adult male Hasidic Jew, we (or at least, those of us somewhat familiar with HASIDUM) can reliably infer that he has a beard and payas (long curls of hair growing from the temples). His typical attire includes a black hat, a black suit with a white button-down shirt, and, on certain occasions, tallis (a prayer shawl) worn under his coat. We can also reliably infer several things about Jacob's weekly activities: he keeps kosher, does not work or drive on the Sabbath, and regularly studies the Torah. Likewise, we can infer that Jacob believes (or at least purports to believe) that the Torah gives a literally true account of historical events.[54]

What this example shows is that, by observing the practices of only several Hasidic Jews, an epistemic agent could safely infer that these practices are shared by nearly all other Hasidic Jews (at least those belonging to the same sect).[55] If I am right, then a social kind such as HASIDIC JEW provides us with an impressive metaphysical ground for inductive inference. These inferences seem to be much nearer in quantity and reliability to inferences afforded by biological and chemical kinds than they are to a kind like THE MORAL GOOD. Consequently, appeal to the existence of HPC social kinds fails to help the case for homeostatic consequentialism.

At this point, two complaints might be raised about my example. First, it might be complained that Hasidic Jews make up an unusually uniform social kind. According to this objection, the norms governing Hasidic life are more far-reaching and pervasive than those governing

54. I am here offering these sample inferences after having done only a minimum of research. They are based on my own limited casual observations of Hasidic Jews (along with bits of testimony from others). No doubt, some of these observations need refinement or correction (e.g., I have not said—because I do not know—on which occasions tallis is worn). In any case, there can be little doubt that it would require only a modest amount of sociological research to extend both the number and the reliability of inductive inferences that can be made about Jacob in his capacity as a Hasidic Jew.

55. It should be recognized that we should expect inferences to be reliable only when they concern properties that are homeostatically clustered. Suppose that my sample of Hasidic men was small, consisting of only five men. Suppose further that I observed that all five men have gray beards. I might be tempted to infer that Jacob's beard will be gray as well. It should be clear, however, that, even if this conclusion were to turn out to be true, this inference is not epistemically warranted. What this observation suggests is that, if our practice of making inductive inferences from a small sample is to be practical, then we had better have some skill at detecting which properties of an individual are essential to its kind. For a defense of the claim that human beings really do possess such a skill, see Kornblith, *Inductive Inference*, 83–107.

other social groups. A more typical social kind would be much nearer to THE MORAL GOOD in its (weak) grounding of induction. A second possible objection is that the uniformity among male Hasidum is artificial since it results from behaviors that individuals consciously undertake in order to remain members of the group. A genuine HPC social kind would not be unified by such an artificial mechanism.

Now, for those who subscribe to Boyd's HPC account of kinds, the "artificiality" of the homeostatic mechanism ought to be beside the point. After all, Boyd includes human artifacts like THE 1969 PLYMOUTH VALIANT as examples of HPC kinds.[56] Nevertheless, I will offer one more illustration of a potential HPC social kind. The kind I will cite grounds a number of reliable inductive inferences but is not open to either of the above complaints. Its members are significantly less uniform than members of HASIDUM and do not (as far as I know) engage in their kind-typical behaviors for the express purpose of maintaining their membership within it. Consider, then, the social kind designated by the term 'hippie'. When we learn that Bill is a hippie, we can reliably infer the following propositions: Bill owns at least one tie-dyed shirt and at least one pair of sandals; he listens to (or at least can appreciate) the music of The Grateful Dead and Phish; he has smoked marijuana and supports its legalization; in politics he opposes aggressive foreign policy and socially conservative domestic policies. To be sure, the reliability of these inferences will be much weaker than the inferences involving biological kinds; there are certainly many more hippies that do not enjoy the music of Phish than there are scorpions without claws. Still, I suspect these inferences are reliable enough to meet the threshold for epistemic warrant. We see, then, that even a social kind like HIPPIE grounds significant inductive inference where THE GOOD does not.[57]

The comparison of THE GOOD with plausible examples of HPC social

56. See Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," 68. It is worth adding here that Ron Mallon defends an HPC conception of certain social kinds where the homeostatic mechanisms include the members' own recognition of themselves as members of a kind. See Ron Mallon, "Social Construction, Social Roles, and Stability," in *Socializing Metaphysics: The Nature of Social Reality*, ed. Frederick Schmitt (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 327–53.

57. Some might object that the inferences about Bill are not inductive at all. It may be that 'hippie' has an analytic cluster definition where the properties I have attributed to Bill are just those that are analytically associated with 'hippie'. I am not inclined to protest very loudly against this objection. But note that this should be of no comfort to the homeostatic consequentialist. After all, the same objection may be raised against any (supposedly) inductive inference involving THE GOOD (i.e., it might be objected that such inferences are not examples of a posteriori inductions at all, but are, instead, examples of the analytic a priori). In any case, unless a clear case of a HPC social kind that weakly grounds inductive inference can be found, the homeostatic consequentialist cannot appeal to a comparison with social kinds in order to answer the arguments of Secs. V.B and V.C.

kinds reveals once again that THE GOOD supplies us with a very weak metaphysical ground for reliable inductive inferences. Since one of the most notable features of HPC kinds (and natural kinds more generally) is supposed to be the role that they play in grounding reliable inductive inferences, this observation supports the conclusion that THE GOOD is not itself an HPC kind.

Of course, I have cited only two examples of HPC social kinds. The homeostatic consequentialist may hold out in the hope that some social kind will be found that both (*a*) weakly grounds inductive inference and (*b*) is a convincing example of an HPC kind. (Perhaps it will be thought that one of the other social kinds I list at the start of this section can fit the bill.) I think such a hope is misplaced. Conditions *a* and *b* are in tension with one another. To the extent that a kind grounds inductive inference only very weakly, there will be good reason to doubt it is an HPC kind. If so, then we should not expect to find any convincing examples of an HPC social kind that grounds inductive inference as weakly as THE GOOD does.

VI. AN ANTICIPATED REBUTTAL

In a more recent presentation of his ethical views, Boyd suggests that the HPC that constitutes *goodness* is currently "fragmented."[58] It might be thought that this claim provides the homeostatic consequentialist with a reply to the arguments of Section V. In this section, I consider the prospects for such a reply.

As we saw in Section III.A, Boyd suggests that several of the mechanisms that hold the human goods in a homeostatic relationship are sociopolitical. They include democratic institutions, social egalitarianism, certain customs, and so forth. In different social environments, these mechanisms may be stronger, weaker, or even completely absent. Boyd's view is that as these mechanisms are made stronger—as a society becomes more democratic, more egalitarian, and so forth—the human goods will become more strongly homeostatically unified.[59] As I understand it, this amounts to the claim that, as the relevant homeostatic mechanisms are strengthened, there will be an even greater increase in the likelihood than before that, when some of the human goods are instantiated, the other goods are instantiated as well.

Boyd submits that, at present, the sorts of mechanisms expected to produce homeostatic unity among the human goods are not nearly as strong as they could be: "So far we have always operated morally within social structures which lacked the resources (technical or social or economic or political) to achieve the sort of (homeostatic) unity of [*good-*

58. Boyd, "Finite Beings, Finite Goods," 34–38.
59. Ibid.

ness][60] towards which our moral concerns aim, and which possessed lots of features 'designed' as it were (often literally designed) to prevent the emergence of such resources."[61] He goes on to suggest that, because of the poor present state of the relevant social institutions, the HPC that constitutes *goodness* is "not now very unified."[62] This claim might be thought to supply homeostatic consequentialism with a reply to the arguments of Section V. Here is how. If *goodness* is constituted by a weakly or partially unified HPC, then we should expect that the presence of some of the goods only slightly raises the likelihood that the others are present. In that case, however, we should not expect to find that reference to THE GOOD facilitates many reliable inductive inferences. These considerations show that it is possible that *goodness* is an HPC even though it fails to ground the sorts of reliable inductive inferences that are characteristic of HPC kinds. In light of this possibility, it might be argued that we are unjustified in concluding that *goodness* is not an HPC from the fact that it fails to ground significant inductive inferences.

It is difficult to assess this reply without a more detailed account of property homeostasis and of what sorts of characteristics a property cluster must have in order to serve as the real essence of a natural kind. It is not obvious that just any amount of homeostatic clustering among a group of properties is sufficient to make that group suited for the role of natural kind's real essence. Indeed, as we saw in Section II, Boyd takes it to be characteristic of HPC kinds that the clustering of their defining properties is "causally important." However, to the extent that the purported clustering of the human goods fails to make a noticeable difference to the inductive inferences we are licensed to draw, it would seem that such clustering is not all that causally important. In addition, it should be recalled that Boyd himself takes it to be a defining feature of natural kinds (and so, HPC natural kinds) that reference to such kinds facilitates explanation and inductive inference. If he is right, then the fact that reference to THE GOOD fails to ground inductive inference in any interesting way should be thought to give us very strong grounds for denying that it is itself an HPC kind even if it should so happen that the human goods are weakly unified.

Suppose, however, that we grant that a weakly unified cluster of properties is capable of playing the role of a natural kind essence. It still remains the case that the lack of interesting reliable inductions yielded by reference to THE GOOD leaves us with no assurance that the human goods, or any other collection of properties suitably related to the predicate 'morally good', really are in fact weakly unified. This lack

60. Boyd uses 'the good' here.
61. Ibid., 36.
62. Ibid.

of assurance might not worry the homeostatic consequentialist. While he cannot confirm his empirical hypothesis (that the goods are weakly unified), he might suppose that the burden of proof is on his detractors to show that this empirical hypothesis is false. I think this stance would be a mistake. To see why, we need to revisit the dialectic.

In "How to Be a Moral Realist," Boyd raises the possibility that the human goods are homeostatically clustered and that this cluster can be identified with the property *moral goodness*. This hypothesis is meant to keep alive the possibility that some naturalistic version of moral realism is true despite a battery of antirealist and nonnaturalist objections. I take the arguments of Section IV to show that, even if the human goods that Boyd cites really do form an HPC, we should not identify this HPC with *moral goodness* itself. My own view is that the arguments of Section IV are sufficient to refute homeostatic consequentialism outright. More cautiously, however, I would insist that those arguments at least deprive the theory of any presumption of innocence it might have enjoyed and give us at least some positive reason to think it false. At this point in the dialectic, then, the balance of reasons is against the hypothesis that *moral goodness* is an HPC.

Perhaps the best evidence that could be adduced in favor of homeostatic consequentialism would be an observation to the effect that reference to *goodness* or THE GOOD facilitates reliable inductive inference. Unfortunately, the arguments of Section V show that there is at present little reason to believe that reference to *goodness* or the good does in fact facilitate reliable inductive inference. This finding constitutes more than a mere failure to uncover exculpating evidence in favor of homeostatic consequentialism. In light of Boyd's claim that it is definitive of natural kinds (and thus, HPC kinds) that such kinds ground inductive inferences, the findings of Section V give us additional evidence for the denial of the proposition that *goodness* is an HPC. As I see it, then, the score is now (at least) 2 to 0 against homeostatic consequentialism.

It is at this point that the hypothesis that the HPC of human goods is weakly unified becomes relevant. This hypothesis promises to explain why it would be that *goodness*, though an HPC, fails to ground reliable inductive inference. If this hypothesis turns out to be consistent with the general theory of HPC kinds, and if we allow that our current evidence does not rule out this hypothesis, then the conclusion of Section V must be weakened. We could no longer take the lack of reliable inductive inferences afforded by reference to the good as positive evidence for the denial of the claim that *goodness* is an HPC. Instead, the observations of Section V should be taken to show merely an absence of evidence in favor of the affirmation of that claim. But this is too little too late. At best, the homeostatic consequentialist gets to turn the scoreboard back to 1 to 0; but he is still losing. In light of the arguments of

Section IV, the balance of reasons still favors the denial of the proposition that *goodness* is constituted by an HPC.

VII. CONCLUSION

I have argued that the homeostatic property cluster account of *goodness* is false. First, it fails to account for the value of "causally isolated" human goods. Next, the relationship between THE GOOD and its defining properties is suspiciously unlike the relationship between paradigmatic HPC kinds and their defining properties. Finally, reference to THE GOOD does not support inductive inference nearly as well as would be expected if it were an HPC kind. For these reasons, we should conclude that *goodness* is not an HPC and that THE GOOD is not an HPC kind.