Chapter 1

Virtue, Reason, and Natural Teleology

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

–Aristotle, *Physics* 194a 32–33.

"Men need virtues as bees need stings."

–Peter Geach, *The Virtues*

Introduction

'Ethical naturalism' is a name for any view of ethics that accords with metaphysical naturalism. In this sense, ethical naturalism includes a wide variety of "deflationary conceptions" of ethics, be they "non-cognitivist, prescriptivist, projectivist, relativist"[1] or any other anti-realist conception that acknowledges the "purported objectivity"[2] of morality but aims to "debunk it"[3].

In a narrower sense, however, 'ethical naturalism' is name for some types of moral realism according to which moral facts are real. In this sense, ethical naturalism is, as James Lemnan puts it, the view that "there are objective moral facts and properties and that these facts and properties

1. Richard Boyd, "Finite Beings, Finite Goods: The Semantics, Metaphysics and Ethics of Naturalist Consequentialism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66, no. 3 (2003): 504.

2. Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 287.

3. Ibid., 154.

are natural facts and properties."[4] In this sense, furthermore, ethical naturalism's rivals are super-naturalism (moral facts are real and somehow divine), non-naturalism (moral facts are real but not natural), and anti-realism (there are no moral facts).

Neo-Aristotelian is a brand of moral or ethical naturalism in the narrower sense. Neo-Aristotelians identify moral facts with natural facts about human nature. As Rosalind Hursthouse says, "Virtue ethics, or at least any form of it that takes its inspiration from Aristotle, is usually taken to be a form of ethical naturalism – broadly, the enterprise of basing ethics in some way on consideration of human nature, on what is involved with being good *qua* human being."[5] The hope is that if we can say what a *good human being* is, we shall be well on the way to describing what kinds of actions are right and wrong, or what kind of character traits are admirable or blameworthy.

Neo-Aristotelian naturalism has many rivals, but it has proven to have a surprisingly broad appeal. It appeals not only to philosophers but to specialists in other academic fields, such as sociology, business, bioethics, education, and others. For example, sociologist Amanda Maull summarizing the issue like this:

> Drawing upon the works of philosophers such as Philippa Foot, Richard Kraut, and Martha Nussbaum, the claim is made that there are moral properties and facts that are natural (rather than occult or supernatural), which are derived from certain innate dispositions and capacities of living things (i.e., those associated with growth and self-maintenance as opposed to destruction or harm). Human beings have evolved as social creatures with special capacities for speech and reason such that specification of "human flourishing" is more complex and problematic than it is for plants or animals. For the human being, the idea of the "good life" goes beyond biological survival and pertains to potentially ambiguous concepts such as virtue, happiness, and "well-being."[6]

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4. James Lenman, "Moral Naturalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2014. Alternatively, Russ Shafer-Landau's moral realism is not a metaphysical but an epistemological thesis: moral facts *can be known* apart from knowing natural facts. Some moral truths are self-evident. Cf. Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence*, 4 (Oxford University Press, 2003).

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

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

Three Sorts of Ethical Naturalism

Philippa Foot's brand of neo-Aristotelianism aims to discover that "the status of certain dispositions as virtues should be determined by quite general facts about human beings."[7] She goes further than just basing evaluative properties on "considerations of human nature"; she identifies goodness and badness with the natural properties of organisms in general (such as health and disease). Humans are one type of natural organism, so perhaps morality is one type of natural goodness.

Jennifer Frey summarizes the "master thought" of Foot's brand of neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism:

> The ethical naturalist's master thought is this: man needs the virtues just as much as a bee needs its sting. Such a thought is intriguing insofar as it takes the ethereal and elusive 'moral ought' and brings it back down to earth, by locating it within a wider structure of evaluation we already readily grasp and acknowledge as objectively valid.[8]

One of the potential attractions of Foot's type of ethical naturalism is that, by bringing the 'moral ought' into closer contact with empirical disciplines, ethicists can more fully avail themselves of the fruits of modern science. As Joyce points out: "Key contributions can be made by social and developmental psychologists, experimental economists, neuroscientists, geneticists, primatologists, anthropologists, comparative ethologists, and evolutionary biologists."[9] Mark Murphy calls Foot's hypothesis a type of "secular natural law theory". It aims to apply to ethics natural normative notions such as 'necessity', 'ought', and 'health', which are already in use in biological and other sciences.

Yet Foot's brand is by no means uncontroversial. Stephen Brown summarizes a "charge… frequently levelled at ethical naturalism, *viz.* that it seeks to 'reduce' ethics to something else, perhaps

7. Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 45.

8. Jennifer Ann Frey, "The Will and the Good" (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2012), 5.

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

biology, perhaps to something even more 'fundamental' like physics."[10] John McDowell levels such a charge. While not *quite* accussing Foot of this mistake, he thinks her theory is dangerously close to the kind of mistake that would "biologize" ethical theory, turning *normative* ethics into a merely *empirical* discipline. His criticism of such a mistake is that it falls prey to the "Myth of the Given"[11] – roughly, the notion that some conceptual content (including ethical norms) can be just *given*, for free, in perceptual experience.

While criticizing Foot, McDowell is himself a neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalist in the narrower sense described above: he thinks moral values are real, yet he denies that they are parts of the empirical world of bald nature and denies that they are part of some other, non-natural realm. What is the alternative? For McDowell, moral values are part of the "space of reasons", or "second nature."[12] "Second nature" is for McDowell our own rational consciousness in so far as it is enculturated by language, custom, evaluation, habit, and a way of seeing the world.[13] McDowell's "second nature" is inherently rational but also social, and depends on our intersubjective "form of life." Hence, values are "secondary qualities" of nature, partially constituted by the mental act of the observer. Human virtue, on this account, is a sort of perceptual sensitivity to "what a situation requires."[14] where one is not perceptually sensitive to a primary natural fact, but to a dispositional property partly constituted by primary nature and partly constituted by the rational appraisal of the moral agent (i.e., "second nature").

McDowell and Foot both lay claim to the title of 'neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism', since

10. R. Stephen Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature: A Defense of Ethical Naturalism* (Continuum, 2008), 5.

11. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996). McDowell borrows this phrase from Sellars. Cf. Wilfrid Sellars and others, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 1, no. 19 (1956): 253–329

12. McDowell, *Mind and World*.

13. Compare with Hegel: "The habit of the ethical appears as a second nature which takes the place of the original and purely natural will and is all pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence." Georg W. F. Hegel and Allen W Wood, *Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) 195.

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

neither wishes to completely debunk morality but neither wishes to accept a source that is super-natural or non-natural. Whether the natural facts or properties in which ethical facts are located is some conception of human biology, the human life form (Thompson), our rational form of life (McDowell), the characteristic way of life (Hursthouse), or something else, the common point is clear: human beings need these qualities *because of who and what they are*, including a particular natural kind of flourishing defined by the natural normativity relevant to the species.

But, as we can see, McDowell and Foot represent two very different "sorts of naturalism."[15] These internecine controversies are more than a war of words. One finds a grounding for real moral values in the context of intersubjective rationality, while other finds it in a broader context of biological functionality. Perhaps a helpful caricature of the controversy would be to say that one sort emphasizes biology (that is, the physical, the scientific, and the objective) while the other sort emphasizes rationality (that is, the conscious, the subjective, the cultural or intersubjective). Both see the importance of grounding ethical facts in natural facts, but Foot (and Brown) think that natural teleological facts are live candidates; McDowell does not.

Other neo-Aristotelians had to take sides or to find ways to synthesize the two sides. For example, Rosalind Hursthouse's landmark monograph, *On Virtue Ethics*, picks and chooses: she builds on Foot's account in many ways, even though she agrees with McDowell in rejecting the search for an "external", objective, scientific foundation for virtue ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre's influential book, *After Virtue*, aligns more with McDowell in rejecting "Aristotle's metaphysical biology", but his later writings align more with Foot in arguing that "human identity is primarily, even if not only, bodily and therefore animal identity and it is by reference to that identity that the continuities of our relationships to others are partly defined."[16]

Between Foot's and McDowell's sorts of ethical naturalism, who has the upper hand? Is

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

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

there any hope for a "third sort" of naturalism that draws from or synthesizes the other two? Can one unite "second nature" with "primary nature" – unite, that is, the *rational/cultural/intersubjective* aspect of ethics with the *empirical/biological/objective* aspect of the same?

Thesis

In this dissertation, I defend the broadly Footian/MacIntyrean project of aiming for a secular, scientific foundation for teleological virtue ethics. My overall aim is to "sell" virtue ethics to scientific naturalists who might have various objections to it, and to "sell" the notion that science has something to support and contribute to ethics to virtue theorists and other ethical naturalists.

I defend this project against various objections, such as the "is-ought gap" and cultural relativism, and, as proof of concept, I advance the project a few steps. Since it seems to me correct that we must develop accounts of natural teleology, virtue, practical reason, and human flourishing all in dynamic relation with the others, I accordingly offering a chapter on each of these themes.

Specifically, I shall defend the following thesis: **the plurality of virtues consists of acquirable excellent character traits (such as moderation, tolerance, and wisdom) that are naturally necessary practical, rational animals, and which partly constitute human flourishing.**

The main components of this thesis are virtue ('acquirable excellent character traits') the human life form or nature ('practical, rational animals'), human flourishing, and the notion of natural normativity ('naturally necessary').

As we shall see, approach to ethics I shall defend appeals to natural teleology to find a common root between human rationality and human biology. The contrast between Foot's and McDowell's sorts of naturalism might be unified if what a human being naturally *needs* as a member of the species matches what a human being *ought* rationally to think and to do. Positing such a union draws a close, perhaps inseparable, connection between the concept of species, health, and flourishing. Put differently, we might say that this kind of virtue ethics unites form, function, and

excellence. Hence, these three concepts are not only individually interesting but interesting in so far as they constitute a single, three-part schema, which (for lack of a better term) I shall call the "virtue triangle."

The Virtue Triangle

Why are the concepts of virtue, humanity, and flourishing *together* greater than the sum of their parts? In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre persuasively argues that there are three necessary "elements" to morality:[17] namely, a goal, a starting point, and the means from the starting point to the goal.

These three elements are necessary features of the performance of any task – however menial or lofty. In a simple project such as, say, cooking a dinner, my goal might be to reproduce what I see in the picture of a tasty meal from a cookbook. The starting point includes the raw materials at my disposal, such as the food in my fridge (and my cooking skills); the means to the end is a recipe, including a list of needed ingredients and instructions that, once enacted, will produce a copy of the meal pictured. Similarly, one cannot make any mundane journey without a destination, a starting location, and directions (on foot, by car, by plane, or what have you) to the destination. (Even the desire to "explore the countryside" or even to "wander about" involves a set *goal* if not a set destination.)

The point of this simple reflection is that we ought to demand that any moral theory supply all three elements. MacIntyre explains that, in morality, the first element is "untutored human nature" (as it is). The second element is the moral human, humanity as it could be and should be. The third element is the set of traits, actions, emotions, habits, etc., needed to move from the first to the second points. Understanding "human-nature-as-it-is"[18] is a task for philosophers, as well as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, etc. This would include a conception of the human species as rational animals as it is *prior* to deep self-reflection or moral effort. Understanding human

17. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 54 ff.
18. Ibid., 55.

nature "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-telos"[19] was "the whole point of ethics." This third conception of some human flourishing or telos we can and *ought* to realize. Moral rules or admirable character traits are the *content* of morality; but the telos of humanity is the *context* of morality. Telos makes morality make sense.

A moral theory cannot simply offer one or two out of the three, and neglect the third. It needs *some* conception of individual or social well-being, *some* conception of what it means to be human (what kind of raw material are we working with?) and *some* conception of how one's moral duties and other obligations or other motivating factors connect humanity as it is with humanity-as-it-could-and-should-be. Morality simply makes no sense without showing which qualities, actions, attitudes, resources, laws, etc. enable a human being to achieve his or her telos. A moral theory is bound to stultify if it leaves out any one of these three formal elements. The scandel of many modern moral philosophies is that they do just that.

The neo-Aristotelians such as Foot, McDowell, MacIntyre, and Hursthouse attempt to remedy this situation by providing accounts of all three concepts. In doing so, they agree in drawing from pre-modern sources (such as Aristotle and Aquinas) but dispute the proper strategy for updating their ethical theories in our modern context.

All three concepts need additional clarification, for they are liable to misunderstanding in our modern context. Hursthouse puts the point this way: "Three of virtue ethics' central concepts, virtue, practical wisdom and eudaimonia are often misunderstood. Once they are distinguished from related but distinct concepts peculiar to modern philosophy, various objections to virtue ethics can be better assessed."[20] Objections fired at neo-Aristotelian ethical theories often hit a bullseye but on the wrong target.[21] A large part of my job is to stake out a conceptual space for virtue, practical reason (including its excellence, which I take to be practical wisdom), and natural human

19. Ibid., 55.

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

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

flourishing (which I take to be closely related to eudaimonia). My task is also to defend the trilateral form that relates them in a dynamic schema.

Realism about Natural Teleology

All three elements of the "virtue triangle" are important. But the unifying concept of the schema is not virtue but telos. If we cannot even perform a menial, intentional action without a goal, then *a fortiori* it would seem we cannot perform our highest moral duties without a telos.

Defining that telos is, of course, the rub. But it seems apparent that strict moral rules without any notion of the kind of life that is to be lived are bound to degenerate into a kind of pointless legalism. If the teleological notion of natural human flourishing in particular is central to the project of virtue ethics, it would seem that developing a plausible modern virtue ethical theory would require rehabilitating a notion of natural teleology in general.

The project of rehabilitating natural teleology may seem overly optimistic.[22] It may be felt, for instance, that teleology has simply been debunked by modern science and therefore has no place in a scientific worldview, that Francis Bacon was right that the search for final causes "defiled philosophy"[23] and so that any attempt to revive teleological virtue talk is antiquarian and nostalgic.

This objection is a serious one, and will receive a reply. For now, I would like to highlight the stakes of the question. The differences between teleological niilism and teleological realism have significant ramifications for morality. For MacIntyre, the hypothesis that we ought to reject telos is the chief error of Enlightenment moralities. He explains why in his discussion of the three elements

22. Arthur Ward's recent dissertation, to be discussed in a later chapter, argues that the sort of teleological naturalism being pursued here is not a good foundation for ethics. Arthur Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory" (PhD thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013).

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

of morality which I have called "the virtue triangle."[24] It is difficult to understate the importance of this point about the self. Edward Oakes describes the removal of telos from our worldview as "perhaps the greatest category mistake ever made in the history of philosophy."

> That word "teleological" is the key to MacIntyre's solution, the loss of which is the cause of the catastrophe described in his science-fiction parable. Teleology is the study of final causes, goals, purposes, and aims: a style of explanation that saturates Aristotle's philosophy. After the combined impact of Newton and Darwin, however, this type of explanation seems mostly 'quaint' and once Aristotle's science seemed quaint, his ethics soon followed: when Newton demonstrated how motion can be better explained as resulting from the outcome of mechanical laws, and when Darwin posited natural selection as the "mechanism" for explaining an organ's functionality, the use of teleology in ethics was doomed…Emptying moral discourse of teleological concepts because of the perceived impact of Newton and Darwin has been for MacIntyre the catastrophe of our times.[25]

The problem is not that rejecting telos was unfortunate, or damaging, but that it was *a mistake.* Who are we, if we are not natural creatures? Since we are natural creatures, shifts in our thinking about nature are liable to match shifts in our thinking about ourselves. John Horton and Susan Mendus captures the stakes well:

> Where Aristotle understood man as a creature with a definite function which he might fulfill or deny, modern morality sees man simply as a rational agent who has no true or definable purpose independent of his own will… By appealing to a telos, Aristotle was able to distinguish between the way we actually are and the way we should be. His conception of human beings as having a specific telos brought with it the possibility that we might fall short of the ideal… But with the rejection of Aristotelianism gain the rejection of any such distinction between what we are and what we should be. Post-Enlightenment man is seen as governed, not by a telos external to him, but simply by the dictates of his own inner reason… Thus the abandonment of an Aristotelian conception of the good has not only left us without standards by which to evaluate our moral arguments, it is also cast us adrift in the moral world.[26]

These reflections suggest that at least our conception of ethics needs to be teleological. As we have

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

25. Edward Oakes, "The Achievement of Alasdair Macintyre," *First Things*, 1996.

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

seen above, there are several ways to achieve this conception. Foot argues that teleology is genuinely natural to all living organisms; McDowell argues that it is not natural to all organisms but that it is to humans. Even MacIntyre's project is not *Aristotelian* but "neo-Aristotelian" in that he contrasts with Aristotle's project on several points.[27]

A fundamental feature of my thesis is that realism about natural teleology is – and can be shown to be – perfectly respectable, modern, scientific, and naturalistic. As I shall argue in a later chapter, while it is true that some modern sciences focus exclusively on non-teleological causes (material, efficient, and possibly formal causes), methodologically excluding phenomena from study is different from denying such phenomena outright. Furthermore, some modern sciences (such as biology, ecology, medicine, and others) do irreducibly and unavoidably focus on teleological causes. Perhaps, after several centuries, it is time to consider that the search for final causes, – rather than "defiling" science – advances it. Hence, a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics grounded on human nature can be both scientifically informed and action-guiding.

Other Disclaimers

One of the wonderful things about philosophical reflection is the license – indeed the imperative – to examine new ideas and rexamine old ones. Philosophers have a unique vantage point from which to find plausibility in the most exotic or unpopular thoughts, to criticize implausibility in the most cherished of thoughts, and to see interconnections between varying disciplines. While this dissertation begins in a straightforward analysis of virtue ethics, it unabashedly explores some ideas (of varying plausibility) from philosophy of science, philosophy of biology, bioethics, social sciences, and a bit of epistemology as needed. While these discurses were not expected at the beginning of my research, they came to seem necessary and fitting in the eventual presentation of conclusions,

27. For instance, MacIntyre denies that Greek virtues are so timeless, abstract, and generically human as Aristotle would make them appear; they are partly indexed to fourth century, upper-class, educated Athenian culture. He also rejects Aristotle's metaphysics of nature. Nevertheless, he argues, the loss of a concept of telos is dramatic.

which form a coherent whole. I hope the overall cohesion is apparent, if not at the beginning, by the end.

Chapter Outline

The main argument of the dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part defines and defends neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism's conception of human nature or the human life form and of nature in general. The second part defines and defends a particular conception of virtue, reason, and human flourishing.

Part One

1. Introduction
2. Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism
3. Normativity of Nature
4. Normativity of Human Nature
5. Virtue and Vice for Rational Animals

Part Two

6. Virtue and Reason in Neo-Aristotelianism
7. Practical Reason
8. Practical Wisdom
9. Flourishing
10. Conclusions

Chapter 2 places my project in context and makes explicit my assumptions, aims, and source texts. My three goals are to establish a foundation for virtue ethics that is scientific, naturalistic, and normative. I address the broader question of whether the kind of neo-Aristotelian naturalism I have defended is compatible with 'naturalism' in any of the typical senses of the word. I argue that it is, and I suggest as a name for my theory 'Recursive Naturalism'. Recursive naturalism aims to capture the fact that nature recurs within nature. In other words, one part of nature (human beings) can think about nature (the whole cosmos), including that part of nature that doing the

thinking (human beings). We know nature, where "nature" includes us knowing nature, and so on ad infinitum.

Chapter 3 is the foundation of all that follows. It defends the notion of natural normativity. As such, it addresses the worry that ethical naturalism is a non-starter. If ethical naturalists cannot derive normative conclusions from merely descriptive premises, then indeed it is impossible. And if there are no fundamental natural norms, one cannot derive normative conclusions. But there are natural norms. A conception of nature wherein nature is inherently normative is shown to be scientific in the form of 'generic' truths about all organisms, including humans.

Chapter 4 extends the notion of natural normativity to the concept of *normative human nature*. There are many generic truths about human beings, but just about all of them can be synthesized in the two predicates of 'rational' and 'animal': Human nature is to be potentially a practical, rational animals. For practical, rational animals, some traits are excellent and others undesirable given the kind of thing such animals are. We are that part of nature that is aware of nature. I address the objections that either "natural norms" do not exist for human beings or, if they do, that they are irrelevant to ethics.

Chapter 5 offers a definition of virtue consonant with the natural normativity already defended. Virtues are acquirable excellent character traits human beings need as practical, rational animals and which partly constitute natural human flourishing. Examples discussed include moderation, tolerance, and practical wisdom. These represent various kinds of virtues, namely 'self-regarding', 'other-regarding,' and 'object-regarding' virtues – those sensitive to the intrinsic worth of self, others, and objects such as art, truth, beauty, etc. Virtue is, among other things, necessary for the acquisition of more virtue, especially the virtue of practical wisdom.

Chapter 6 reviews the accounts

Chapter 6 explores practical reason in more depth, since practical reason is supposed to define our human life form and also is supposed to supply a means to block individual and cultural relativism. Practical reason is the capacity for resolving what to do. To borrow Alan Gibbard's

elegant phrase, it is our capacity for "thinking how to live." Practical reason is not a "value neutral" process instrumentally achieving one's ends but also a process of determining which ends are worthwhile. The excellence of practical reason is practical wisdom.

Chapter 7 explores practical wisdom. This is, among other things, a commitment and skill in acquiring more practical wisdom. Realism about practical reason blocks cultural relativism about virtues, yet allows an acceptable pluralism consonant with tolerance and wisdom. Practical wisdom which is supremely important in that it is both an intellectual and a moral virtue. It is necessary for acheiving other moral virtues and sufficient for achieving some other intellectual virtues. Hence, once a human being has reached a level of practical wisdom certain kinds of well-being are secured.

Chapter 8 outlines an account of natural human flourishing, placing my virtue account squarely within the eudaimonist tradition but with important modifications. Flourishing for creatures like us is, among other things, the practical wisdom necessary to undergo the process of discovering human flourishing and the achievement of our humanity. We become what we truly are, even if our existence and identity end in death, and even if our species goes extinct. Human misery and failure is not just pain nor death but to fail to fully realize one's humanity.

Chapter 9 draws conclusions and makes suggestions for further reasearch.

Chapter 2

Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism

"The most striking occurrence in the history of thought between Aristotle and ourselves is the rise of modern science."

– John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism" in *Mind, Value, and Reality*, p. 174.

I. Introduction

My thesis is about virtue and reason and so places this dissertation squarely within contemporary analytic virtue ethics. That said, there are many strands or branches of analytic virtue ethics.[1] As Martha Nussbaum and others have pointed out, self-styled 'virtue ethicists' can differ as much as any other two ethicists. (Is there a tent big enough to include Plato, St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, and Benjamin Franklin?).[2] While I shall not devote excessive time to comparing my offering to

1. McDowell, Foot, and MacIntyre are each, in their own way, rather idiosyncratic exemplars of the "analytic philosophy".

2. Nussbaum argues that a more helpful taxonomy would distinguish between neo-Humean, neo-Kantian, and neo-Aristotelian theories; an even more fruitful path is simply to debate the substantive issues, such as the role of reason in morality as compared to the role of emotions and desires and other sub-rational psychological phenomena. Cf. Martha C Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics* 3, no. 3 (1999): 163–201. Pretty clear, neo-Humean virtue theory is an underexplored but exciting sub-field I shall unfortunately not explore. Neo-Kantian virtue theory is discussed by Foot and McDowell and so receives passing attention in these chapters.

those of other recent virtue ethicists, it is important to state, up front, that I see the best hope in neo-Aristotelian theories.

Neo-Aristotelianism

My thesis attempts to address issues that arise from the recent neo-Aristotelians. Who are the neo-Aristotelian virtue theorists? Rosalind Hursthouse provides an authoritative list: Anscombe,[3] Geach,[4] Foot,[5] McDowell,[6] MacIntyre,[7] Hursthouse,[8] Nussbaum,[9] and Thompson.[10] I would only add the great Julia Annas[11] (who is of course a scholar of ancient philosophy but whose recent work has been largely devoted to contemporary ethics), and some more recent players in the movement

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

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

5. Foot, *Natural Goodness*.

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

7. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.

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

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

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

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

such as Christopher Toner[12], Stephen Brown[13], Jennifer Frey[14], James Barham[15], Allison Postell[16], and Arthur Ward[17].

One could certainly construct a worthwhile project analyzing all or some subset of authors. I interact regularly with a broader set of virtue ethicists:[18] For example, the early writings of Peter Geach, Bernard Williams, and Iris Murdoch are responsible for gathering the kindling and setting the spark for contemporary discussions of virtue.

Nevertheless, my main sources are Philippa Foot, John McDowell, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Alasdair MacIntyre. These three defend views that share enough similarities to illuminate many important themes while contrasting enough to motivate rich discussion. For example, they all address (in their own way) all three elements of "the virtue triangle."[19]

12. Christopher Hugh Toner, "Flourishing and Self-Interest in Virtue Ethics" (PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame; Dissertation, 2003).

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

14. Frey, "The Will and the Good."

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

16. Allison Ann Postell, "What Comes Naturally? The Metaethical Foundations of Virtue Ethics" (PhD thesis, University of Dallas, 2013).

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

18. The broader set includes Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998); Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Clarendon Press, 2003); Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 1992); Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard Kraut, Robert Adams, Gopal Sreenivasan, Rachana Kamtekar, Talbot Brewer, and R. Scott Smith. Also, in Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Normativity* (Open Court, 2008), Thomson provides a neo-Aristotelian account of normativity.

19. For example, McDowell, Foot, and MacIntyre can be seen using this schema: Cf. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason. and John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics'," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1980), 359–76; Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and Foot, *Natural Goodness*; MacIntyre, *After Virtue* and MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*. All three themes are, of course, important to Aristotle as well. But I shall reference historical sources such as Aristotle or Aquinas only occasionally and only for convenience; my primary purpose is not historical.

The recent rise of virtue ethics

It is difficult to read any "old books" without noticing that virtue talk (in a great variety of theories and contexts) was once a normal part of cultural and intellectual life, in the west and beyond.[20] But it is equally difficult not to notice that virtue talk had receded to the background or disappeared from academic discussions for two or three centuries. Its resurgence in the last 60 years has been well documented.[21] Not everyone is impressed by the alleged benefits accruing to 'virtue ethics', of course – Nussbaum is not the only one to find the designation unhelpful. Nevertheless, it would have amazed Elizabeth Anscombe if, more than 60 years ago, she could have known that in 2014 as many professional academic philosophers would identify as 'virtue ethicists' as identify as 'deontologists' – about 1/5th each.[22] So how might we explain the resurgance of a category of virtue ethics, however loosely defined?

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

20. The Google Books Ngram viewer quantifies the use of the term 'Virtue' (with a capital V) and 'virtue' (lowercase v): 'Virtue' peaked in 1750 at 0.01%, meaning that 1 in every 1000 words in books published that year were the word "Virtue". For comparison, "the" is 5% of words, or about 50 in every thousand. "Virtue" fell by 1900 back down to 1600 levels (0.0001%, one in every million). The lowercase "virtue" likewise has dropped steadily since the 1790s.

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

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

while others would fall into Hobbesian legalism, where no great person can correct the political and religious authorities.

Anscombe takes the interpretation that something has gone wrong with modern moral philosophy. She diagnoses all forms of consequentialism as morally depraved just after arguing that all the "English-speaking ethicists" from Sidgwick forward were are consequentialists. She argues that any secular theorists (such as Kantians) who appeal to an absolute, verdictive moral 'ought' are borrowing from a medieval divine law conception of ethics which is incoherent without the corresponding belief in a divine lawgiver. The alterative, she offers, is the Aristotelian 'ought' which critiques vice without blame and commends virtue without 'the moral ought'. In her view, virtue talk allows non-religious moderns to retain evaluative talk without a divine law by making it something closer to aesthetic talk.

MacIntyre is another who takes this interpretation. He argues that the fracturing of social and political bonds in modernity derives from the loss of a shared understanding of the good. Though he is often classified as a 'virtue ethicist', McIntyre himself rejects the label for not even modern virtue ethics goes far enough to restore the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition which he advocates.

Regardless of the varying details, this first intrepretation pits virtue theories against their consequentialist and Kantian alternatives. It finds in the flexibility of Aristotle and the humanism of Confucius a refreshing alternative to the stolid rationalism of Kant or Mill.[23]

Hursthouse and Nussbaum offer a second interpretation, namely, that virtue ethicists in the early to mid 20th century presented their view as a *rival* in order to fight for a position at the table of respectable ethical theories. And it worked. Now that virtue ethics has earned its place as one of the "major moral philosophies" at the table, continuing to present it as a rival to other theories is needlessly combative. Nussbaum elaborates: " 'virtue ethics' so-called does not figure as a normative

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

rival to utilitarian and deontological ethics; rather, its (fairly) recent revival is seen as having served the useful purpose of reminding moral philosophers that the elaboration of a normative theory may fall short of giving a full account of our moral life."[24] On this interpretation, virtue concepts can augment, rather than replace, other theories. After all, Kant himself had a theory of virtue.[25] Some theorists have been working to articulate a theory they call "virtue consequentialism" or "character consequentialism."[26] Even more broadly, philosophers have even found room for virtue talk in Humean[27] and Nietzschean[28] ethics.

In my view, there is some truth to each of these interpretations. While it is true that virtue talk is flexible enough to enhance non-Aristotelian theories, there is an identifiable core of western virtue theory. That core is part-and-parcel of a larger Aristotelian tradition that is in competition – or at least in tension – with the Enlightenment tradition. The core of an Aristotelian tradition I have in mind corresponds roughly to Nussbaums "common ground" underlying a wide variety of "virtue ethicists."[29] At the same time, certain features of the modern Enlightenment tradition – especially advances in modern science and changes in modern politics – can correct errors or update contingencies in the Aristotelian tradition.

I would like to say a bit more about these mutal "corrections" (if they are corrections).[30] Elizabeth Anscombe, Peter Geach, Bernard Williams, Iris Murdoch and others have done philosophical

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

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

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

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

28. Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*.

29. Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics," 170. One difference is that Nussbaum's "common ground" includes Kant and Mill and Sidgwick, whereas neo-Aristotelians critique Kant and Mill's ethics along the lines I shall elaborate below: they are not holistic enough about action, human personhood, and human life.

30. I shall attempt to justify some of these assertions in a later chapter.

ethics a valuable service by correcting certain myopic tendencies.

The whole action: The first myopic tendency of modern philosophical ethics is a undue fixation on evauating discrete, particular actions. This is the kind of ethics that only knows how to ask "Is X wrong?" (substituting for X some particular moral action, such as abortion, or lying, or nuclear proliferation). If morality is about individual acts or even about kinds of action, it seems to be the case that either moral rules are to be followed for their own sake or else they do not matter (for only consequences matter). If, on the other hand, the obligation to be virtuous is only one point on the virtue triangle, then the other two points provide much needed context. If we know who and what we are prior to acquiring virtues, and we have some picture of who and what we have the potential to be, then it becomes more likely that we will not see moral rules as arbitrary impositions or as unaccountable – like bolts of lightning from a clear sky. The neo-Aristotelians are insistant on this point. Martha Nussbaum argues we cannot construct an ethical theory by discussing only "isolated moments of choice."[31] The correction is to ethically examine *whole actions* – such as cooking a meal, earning a degree, raising up a disadvantaged people group – where whole actions are conceptually united bundles of individual actions. MacIntyre scholar Stanley Hauerwas believes that "the central contention in *After Virtue* is his remark that "the concept of an intelligible action is a more fundamental concept than that of an action."[32] Similarly, Jennifer Frey (following Anscombe) argues that"no part of an intentional action is independently intelligible as a part, aside from an exercise of practical knowledge of the action as a whole."[33] We shall return to these themes in a later chapter.

31. Ibid., 174.

32. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 209. Hauerwas continues: This may seem a small philosophical point, but much revolves around it: His understandings of the centrality of practical reason, the significance of the body for agency, why the teleological character of our lives must be displayed through narrative, the character of rationality, the nature of the virtues, why training in a craft is paradigmatic of learning to think as well as live, his understanding of why the Enlightenment project had to fail, his particular way of being a historicist, and why the plain person is the necessary subject of philosophy." Stanley Hauerwas, "The Virtues of Alasdair MacIntyre," *First Things*, 2007.

33. Frey, "The Will and the Good," 123.

The whole person: The second myopic tendency is that of focussing on one aspect of moral psychology (such as motive, or emotion, or character traits) to the exclusion of others. Continuing with Nussbaum's "common ground", she says, "Even though a concern for motive, intention, character, and the whole course of life was not in principle alien to Kantian and Utilitarian philosophy, it was certainly alien to most British and American Kantians and Utilitarians of the period."[34] The correction to this tendency is to include a role for both reason and the passions, and to specify those roles. However, two groups display very different strategies in including the whole person. For Nussbaum, the first group consists of characteristically "anti-Utilitarians" who want reason to play a much larger role than Mill (or the typical Utilitarian) would wish; the second consists of characteristically "anti-Kantians" and want sub-rational psychological states to play a much larger role than Kant (or the typical Kantian) would wish. The first group defend the plurality of goods, rationality's role in deliberating about which ends to pursue and its role in organizing, ranking, and harmonizing that plurality of goods, the rational character of some emotions, and the need for a rational critique of the broader social and political setting in which "defective passions and judgments" are formed.[35] By this distinction, it will be plain that my thesis is much more clearly "anti-utilitarian" than anti-Kantian. The emotions, desires, motivations, passions – the numerous variegated non-rational or sub-rational mental states of normal human psychology – can be made rational and/or can be accommodated within a life of reason. That is, any kind of plant can be part of a garden with a clear, purposeful, and rational blueprint, even if some dead leaves and rotten petals dot the floor.

The whole life: A third myopic tendency is that of philosophizing about individual moral situations (especially moral dilemmas!) instead of the whole of life. We need to refocus our arguments in philosophical ethics from looking just at individual choices or actions (viewed from the outside, like a moral critic) to looking at the whole of life (viewed from the inside, like a moral agent).

34. Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics," 173.
35. Ibid., 180.

Anscombe and Bernard Williams have done as much as anyone to remind moral philosophers that questions of what is wrong are posterior to, and often less troublesome than, the question "How ought I to live?" Asking this question is not optional for normal, reflective, adults. This question is one every person who comes to major crossroads in life must ask. "Character ethics," rather than mere "quandary ethics" is what is really needed in the vast majority of circumstances.[36] That is not to say that moral quandaries are unimportant in life or unimportant in theory; quite the contrary, often times the moral quandary is the exceptional case that can provide a cutting counterexample to a nonsensical view. And moral dilemmas are real, if blessedly rare – at least the kind of great moral dilemmas encountered in great works of fiction (*Othello*, *War and Peace*, *Gilead*). But for all this, ninety-nine parts of any given day have no great dilemmas or great temptations to do evil. Rather, ninety-nine parts of any given day are filled with habits, long-held goals, and small choices between competing or conflicting goods that all seem worthwhile but cannot all be pursued. (Check email or grade papers? Use a spare hour to write more or read more? Apply to jobs in state near family or out of state near friends? Invest in this friendship or spend much-needed time alone?)

The whole history: A fourth myopic tendency that these virtue ethicists have corrected, I think, is an *ahistorical* approach that had become fashionable in analytic ethics during the apex and aftermath of logical positivism. Many had such a passion for mathematically clear, abstract, lucid and timeless articulations of their philosophy such that if an ethical theory could not be so articulated, it could be ignored. Furthermore, such philosophers easily fell for the temptation of regarding the contingencies of the present fashion as unquestionable timeless truths.

The correction to this tendency is to allow that ethical norms are typically bound up with social norms, and so to allow that ethical norms have a history; and that the social and ethical norms of the present day may be little more than fashion. Many neo-Aristotelians and others studied classics or history in addition to ethics, or prior to ethics. Long familiarity with cultures, places, and

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

times other than one's own has a salubrious effect of helping one to see one's own culture and time. (For many people, "culture shock" occurs not when leaving one's home country, but when returning home from a very different foreign country.) Likewise, philosophers who have spent long hours conversing with Aristotle or Aquinas are likely to notice more easily the assumptions, biases, strengths, and weaknesses of our own modern context. Jack Weinstein observes that Alasdair Macintyre did for ethics what John Rawls did for political philosophy: where Rawls re-invigorated political philosophy, "inaugurating the dominance of late twentieth-century liberalism"[37], MacIntyre helped to re-invigorate analytic ethical philosophy (especially the ascendancy of late twentieth-century virtue ethics) by freshly examining ethical concepts in light of history.[38] MacIntyre argues that we can only responsibly use and evaluate practical concepts such as self, practice, telos, or virtue when we know our own history. Since *we ourselves* inhabit a tradition, we must know ourselves *as* inhabitants of a tradition with a past. We will return to these themes in later chapters.

These are corrections that virtue ethics can offer to other modern moral philosophies. But the modern world is not the ancient world. Modern science, philosophy, and culture are not the same as their pre-modern counterparts. It is imperative that contemporary virtue ethicists pay due respect to what *has* changed. What corrections can modernity offer to virtue ethics? As McDowell suggests in the quotation with which I began above, the initial answer (however vague) is that virtue ethics needs to be updated in light of modern science.

And that is the project of the recent neo-Aristotelians: creating or re-creating an Aristotelian ethics that is genuinely scientific and genuinely normative.^[By 'normativity', I mean 'ought' talk and facts to which 'ought' talk might refer.[39] As Alan Gibbard says: "[Part] of what's special about morality is that it operates in the 'space of reasons;' it concerns justification and oughts. The term 'normative' is central to much current philosophical discussion. There's no agreement on what

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

38. Ibid., chap. 4.

39. Cf. Peter Schaber, "Normative Facts," *Studies into the Foundations of an Integral Theory of Practice and Cognition*, 2005, 107–22

this technical term in our discipline is to mean, but it involves, in a phrase drawn from Sellars, being somehow 'fraught with ought'."[40] Theirs is a view that is agnostic or atheistic in that it does not depend upon any particular religious ethic; it is action-guiding in that it commends very specific virtues, such as moderation, tolerance, and practical wisdom; and it is (or at least Foot's and MacIntyre's brand is) scientific in that it draws on the latest research in ethology, anthropology, evolutionary biology, sociology and so on.

II. Four Goals

To put the matter simply: the Neo-Aristotelian naturalism of the sort I am discussing strives to be ethical, naturalistic, secular,[41] and scientific. To understate the point, this project is difficult. It is attended by difficulties on all sides. I would like to say a bit more about each of these four goals.

Ethical

The recent neo-Aristotelians offer what we might call a complete philosophical ethics. That is, neo-Aristotelians such as Foot, McDowell, and MacIntyre write about and defend views that combine normative ethical and metaethical claims. Put differently, their theories have aimed to provide a normative ethics (detailed content about the kind of life one ought to live and the kinds of traits one ought to acquire) as well as a ground of morality in moral metaphysics, moral psychology, moral epistemology, etc.

This combination of sub-disciplines is a source of worries about taxonomical confusion. James Lenman's summary of neo-Aristotelianism is a good example of this worry:

> One important school of thought … [is] work is inspired by that of Aristotle. This view has its roots in the writings of G. E. M. Anscombe, P. T. Geach and the early

40. Allan Gibbard, "Normative Properties," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. S1 (2003): 141–57 321

41. By 'secular' I do not mean 'non-religious', but rather not *necessarily* religious, as I explain below.

> Philippa Foot among others. Its contemporary representatives include the later Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, Martha Nussbaum and Judith Jarvis Thomson. As this list makes clear, this is very much the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics.[42]

Lenman seems bemused with neo-Aristotelian naturalism. When he says that neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is "the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics" he seems to betray a lurking metaphilosophical confusion. For when Foot, Hursthouse, McDowell are classified as virtue ethicists (a normative theory) *and* neo-Aristotelians (a metaethical theory), we might object. Aren't these two different projects? The answer in short is: not necessarily. Explaining this answer requires a short discursus.

One legacy of G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* has been the tendency to sharply distinguish primary ethical questions (about what things are good) from metaethical questions (about what 'good' as an evaluative predicate *means*). The first asks about what things are good; the second about the word 'good' itself. The first is a substantive question about which items fall under a category. The second is a conceptual question about how to define that category.

Moore valiantly took it upon himself to indict all previous ethical philosophers for failing to resolve their disputes for a failure to define their terms. (Of course, the questions that concern modern metaethicists were posed and discussed by prior thinkers. However, the *Principia* gave a distinctive form to these questions and suggested a distinctive range of possible answers.) Moore argued (or according to some critics, *assumed*) that 'goodness' was indefinable.[43] That is, the good could not be defined in terms of any other property. It is false that 'goodness is pleasure' for our pursuit pleasure is a psychological fact, not an ethical one; it is false that 'goodness is whatever is most real' for something's reality is a metaphysical fact, not an ethical one.

42. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism." Lenman acknowledges that Thomson might need to be subtracted from this list and that John McDowell might need to be added.

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

Now, it is tautologous that if goodness really is indefinable, then any attempt to define it will fail. Any attempt to reduce the concept to a concept of lesser intension, or to translate it, will fail. Moore had a preferred name for this error – if it is an error – but mentioning it would just muddy the waters.[44]

The neo-Aristotelians are pretty universally critical of Moore's argument, as we shall see.[45]

Lenman's confusion reflects the widely-held belief that normative ethics and metaethics can "come apart". But this is not *necessarily* true. Alan Gibbard, no opponent of metaethics, explains how one's substantive ethical views largely determine one's view of the relation between questions of substance and those of meaning:

> Moore stressed the distinction in ethics between questions of meaning and questions of substance, and thereby gave rise to a tradition in analytic philosophy of separating the two parts of ethical theory: the metatheory and the substantive, normative part. Some philosophers have rejected the distinction; some Kantians, for instance, think that if you get the metatheory right, substantive ethical conclusions fall out as some kind of consequence, so that metaethics and substantive ethics are not really separate. Then too, anyone who rejects Sidgwick's and Moore's indefinability claim and thinks that ethical terms can be given analytic, naturalistic definitions thinks that the two putative subdivisions are not really separate. Those who reject any systematic distinction between questions of meaning and questions of substance might likewise reject a sharp, separate subject of metaethics.[46]

I think Gibbard is right, here. One's substantive views will affect one's preferred philosophical taxonomy. Kantians and (some kinds of) naturalists will deny the strict separation. To allow the seemingly innocuous separation of formal from material aspects of a topic might just unwittingly beg the question against a range of acceptable views on that topic.

As evidence, notice the conspicuous pattern that advocates of a neutral, procedural, formal metaethics seem to endorse first-order consequentialism. Moore himself, though non-naturalist,

44. If absolutely necessary, I shall only call Moore's version "The Fallacy That Shall Not Be Named."

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

46. Gibbard, "Normative Properties," 320.

was a consequentialist as well, so we ought to expect that he separate the formal metatheory from the substantive moral theory. Not only Moore, but theorists as different from each other as J.L. Mackie, Frank Jackson, Richard Boyd, Peter Railton, Simon Blackburn, and Alan Gibbard all endorse some form of consequentialism. To echo Lenman, we can say that the view that metaethics is separable from normative ethics is very much the official theory of a main current in contemporary consequentialism. Richard Boyd makes much the same point:

> …although nothing like entailment between these positions obtains, the idea that moral questions are questions about how we can help each other flourish seems central to contemporary naturalist moral realism. In a certain sense, some version of consequentialism seems to be the *natural* position for naturalist moral realists."[47]

This is the first response to Lenman's worry about fusing ethics and metaethics in one theory. Neo-Aristotelianism, like Kantianism, is a view wherein ethics and metaethics cannot and do not "come apart." While the formal and material aspects of neo-Aristotelian ethics might be *distinct*, they are not *separable*.

A second response is possible. Even if a procedural, non-substantive approach to metaethics can be made neutral with respect to normative ethics, it is still admirably ambitious to construct a theory that pays attention to both. Stephen Darwall agrees, arguing that:

> …although metaethics and normative ethics are properly focused on different issues, they need to be brought into dynamic relation with one another in order to produce a systematic and defensible philosophical ethics. This mutual dependence is owing to the fact that issues of normativity are at the center of the concerns of both metaethics and normative ethics.[48]

Hence, my thesis is squarely an ethical argument concerning what character traits are worth pursuing (e.g, moral and intellectual virtues) and what traits count as virtues (e.g., moderation, practical wisdom). However, an adequate defense of this thesis requires assessment of foundational metaeth-

47. Richard N Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," *Contemporary Materialism*, 1988, 505–6.

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

ical considerations (e.g., is the human life form a sufficient grounding of moral facts? How do we know what to do?)

Naturalistic

A point of philosophical taxonomy: My thesis is a species of 'ethical naturalism', which is a kind of moral realism that attempts to define moral facts (or more broadly evaluative facts) as natural facts. Yet Hursthouse calls neo-Aristotelian an "odd sort" of ethical naturalism.[49] Why? Some critics of neo-Aristotelianism in particular exploit one or more horns of a dilemma,[50] questioning whether it is possible to construct a neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism that is both (a) genuinely *ethical* (i.e., normative and action-guiding)[51] and (b) genuinely *naturalistic*.[52]

On the former horn, if neo-Aristotelians succeed in naturalizing ethics, then it seems that normative categories such as virtue, vice, flourishing, human goodness, will be reduced to descriptive facts (.eg., virtuous people are statistically likely to flourish, flourishing is psychological health, etc.). But this seems hardly normative at all. On the latter horn, if ethics remains truly normative, then we end up concluding that flourishing is the kind of state we *ought* to pursue whether or not we actually reach it — whether or not, in fact *anyone* has actually reached it. Virtues are those qualities

49. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism," *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013.

50. Frey, "The Will and the Good" describes the dilemma excellently in chapter 4. Cf. also Bernard Mauser, "The Ontological Foundations for Natural Law Theory and Contemporary Ethical Naturalism" (PhD thesis, Marquette University, 2011); and Scott Woodcock, "Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism and the Indeterminacy Objection," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 23, no. 1 (2015): 20–41.

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

52. Cf. William Rehg and Darin Davis, "Conceptual Gerrymandering? The Alignment of Hursthouse's Naturalistic Virtue Ethics with Neo-Kantian Non-Naturalism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 4 (2003): 583–600 . Rehg et. al., conclude that neo-Aristotelian naturalism is really ethical but not sufficiently naturalistic. Cf. also John Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" *Ratio* 22, no. 3 (2009): 308–21; John Hacker-Wright, "Human Nature, Personhood, and Ethical Naturalism," *Philosophy* 84, no. 03 (2009): 413–27.

that are acquirable and that we *ought* to acquire, whether or not anyone does or ever has acquired them.

This sounds hardly naturalistic at all. Now, on the one hand, questioning a theory's "naturalism" is pointless without further stipulation, for there are many types of naturalism. The word 'nature' – like its cognates 'natural' and 'naturalism' – is perhaps the most ambiguous, multi-significant word in our language. It seems that the only thing to be done is to stipulate a meaning and move on. On the other hand, though, the question of "naturalism" is tangled up with real, substantive issues.

As I shall explain in a later chapter, the fault line between neo-Aristotelians and their critics (who sometimes include other ethical naturalists) is a real one. Each represents an understanding of the difference between nature and normativity, between "facts and values."[53] This dilemma, I think, explains the innocent confusion from Lenman and others about who actually deserves the title of "naturalists". Lenman points out in a footnote that Thomson probably shouldn't be on this list and that John McDowell probably should. He says "McDowell is certainly pervasively inspired by Aristotle and he describes himself as a naturalist. See especially his 1995. But I suspect many philosophers would find his use of the term 'naturalist' here somewhat Pickwickian."[54] Such confusion arises from Lenman's assumption that nature is purely descriptive, with no "ought". Moore and those influenced by him, both naturalists and non-naturalists, have agreed with the underlying assumption that "nature" is strictly non-normative. But what if this assumption is mistaken? Certainly, some critics will insist that normativity is not natural. I ask them to consider the alternative, as I shall consider both, and examine the case I make in a later chapter. We must aim first for clarity before agreement. We cannot let a deeply-held assumption stand without scrutiny. That is just what we shall do in a later chapter.

For now, let me stipulate my sense of 'naturalism.' Mine is an ethical naturalism in at least

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

54. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism."

the following senses:

1. My thesis is naturalistic according to what Hans Fink calls an "unrestricted conception of nature."[55] This conception expresses the idea, he continues, that "there is one world only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be."[56]

2. It is naturalistic in that I argue that such philosophical and scientific methods applied to the world – including to the biological world and to humanity – are sufficient to derive my normative ethical conclusions.
3. It is naturalistic in that I propose to use only the resources of human experience and the methods of philosophy and the natural sciences in identifying my initial premises and advancing my claims.

I should specify that I am remaining *agnostic*. One of my limiting goals has been to construct a theory that allows both possibilities. I aim to allow that a monotheistic God might be directing all affairs to his purposes and guiding human beings by his commands and that, to (paraphrase Augustine), our hearts are restless until they rest in him. But I also aim to allow that human life is a brief and beautiful flash of consciousness in an otherwise cold, pitiless, and dead cosmos, and that even so we ought to pursue all the virtues before we go extinct – whether we do or "do not go gentle into that good night."[57] There is no clear consensus among neo-Aristotelians about the role of religion in ethics; this diversity seems to me a strength. It gives some merit to the notion that one can evaluate virtue ethics grounded in natural normativity like one can evaluate electrons, integers, or evolution: these is *compatible* with the existence of a god but it does not *require* or *entail* the existence of a god.[58]

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

56. Ibid., 210.

57. I hope in future to research the relationship between virtue theory and religion, especially in Michael Sherwin, Michael Austin and others. Cf. Michael S Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press, 2005); Michael W Austin, *Virtues in Action: New Essays in Applied Virtue Ethics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

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

In this way, my project may be seen as building on Philippa Foot's work to advance a kind of secular natural law theory.[59]

This kind of "natural law" may also be seen as a kind of neo-Stoicism. Elizabeth Anscombe says:

> One might be inclined to think that a law conception of ethics could arise only among people who accepted an allegedly divine positive law; that this is not so is shown by the example of the Stoics, who also thought that whatever was involved in conformity to human virtues was required by divine law.[60]

While I shall concede that normative ethics cannot survive some philosophical environments – such as aggressively reductive or eliminative physicalism – I shall for present purposes remain neutral as to whether the natural norms discoverable in nature have a further, divine origin.

My suggested name for this type of relaxed or liberal naturalism is Recursive Naturalism.[61] By this epithet, I aim to capture several facts. First, though human beings are natural and continuous with the rest of nature, human beings can hold nature in consciousness. With human beings comes into the cosmos intentionality or "aboutness." And one of the things that human beings can be conscious about is themselves, or all of the cosmos including themselves. Just as the Droste Effect[62] the human mind can know even that part of nature that is *the human mind consciously thinking about nature*.

God." (Gen 6:9) Even Abel somehow knew what sacrifice would be acceptable, perhaps because, as Paul says, he was "doing by nature the things contained in the law." Rom 2.14.

59. Murphy: "The paradigmatic natural law view [e.g., Thomistic natural law] holds that (1) the natural law is given by God; (2) it is naturally authoritative over all human beings; and (3) it is naturally knowable by all human beings… Recently there have been nontheistic writers in the natural law tradition, who deny (1): see, for example, the work of Michael Moore (1982, 1996) and Philippa Foot (2001)." Cf. Mark Murphy, "The Natural 'Law Tradition in Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2011, 2011

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

61. I do not find this term anywhere in the literature. The only place I can find it is an obscure chapter of an obscure book about democracy: Ali Errishi, in *Problems for Democracy*, vol. 181 (Rodopi, 2006). Errishi's nice little paper uses the term 'recursive naturalism' to mean something quite different than I am do here. He means something like "unquestionable completeness and adequacy", a vicious belief that one no longer need be open to criticism.

62. Which is a painting on a box of cocoa of the dutch girl holding a box of cocoa (which shows a painting of a dutch girl holding a box of cocoa, etc.)

Nature recurs within nature, that one part of nature (us) knows nature (the cosmos) including that part of nature that we are. Secondly, my definition of virtue is recursive, since virtues are defined (in part) as those qualities that enable a moral agent to acquire more virtues. Thirdly, my definition of practical wisdom is recursive, since practical wisdom is defined (in part) as the know-how one needs to acquire more wisdom. Fourthly, my definition of human flourishing is recursive, since flourishing is defined (in part) as the state in which a human being is becoming more virtuous, becoming more practically wise, and discovering more detail about the definition of human flourishing.

Scientific

It is imperative that contemporary virtue ethicists clarify the relationship of their theories to modern science. This was the thrust of the original "naturalism" that became dominant in America in the early 1900s. As David Papineau summarizes, "The self-proclaimed "naturalists" from that period included John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook and Roy Wood Sellars. These philosophers aimed to ally philosophy more closely with science. They urged that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing "supernatural", and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit" (Krikorian 1944; Kim 2003)."[63] Quine thought (or claimed he thought) that "naturalistic philosophy is continuous with natural science"[64] but we should not forget that this continuity cuts both ways. It might be taken to mean that philosophy should be or can be more "scientific" (i.e., empirical and material); but it also might be taken to mean that science should be or can be more "philosophical" (i.e., abstract and formal).

More broadly, 'naturalism' has become a kind of banner for a variety of views that are not supernaturalistic and place a high value on natural sciences. Such a broad definition is rightly seen to be almost infinitely inclusive: it does not exclude Spinozistic pantheism or panpsychism.[65]

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

64. (1995a), 256–7, see also 1969, 126–7.

65. David Skrbina, *Panpsychism in the West* (MIT Press, 2005).

Without further determination, therefore, the relationship between naturalism and morality is somewhat unclear. For example, some philosophers – such as Michael Ruse and Sharon Street – find in modern evolutionary theory incompatible with moral realism.[66] Ruse's famous expression is that "morality is a collective illusion foisted upon us by our genes."[67] Others – such as Wielenberg and Thomas Nagel – find evolutionary theory either irrelevant to morality or a possible source of *vindication* of moral realism.[68] Given this indeterminacy, the attempt to capture all that is good in both the Aristotelian and modern traditions leads me to neo-Aristotelian naturalism. How can neo-Aristotelianism help, if at all, clarify the relationship between science and morality in particular, and (more generally) between facts and values, between 'is' and 'ought'?

The modern "scientific" point of view (if there is *one* such view) is commonly supposed to be monistic or at least non-dualistic. Though not all are so confident,[69] there is a widespread preference – whenever it is possible – for ontological simplicity, epistemological parsimony, and aesthetic elegance. Non-dualism may have an ontological aim, or an epistemological one, or both.

For example, eliminative physicalism is radically monistic but is unsatisfying in that it provides a clean explanation of "everything" only by leaving out some of the most important things (i.e., consciousness). The epistemological naturalism (of, say, John Shook) sees experience, reason, and science (together) as constituting the single method for acquiring knowledge of the world and ourselves. The neo-Aristotelian project takes this corrective to ethics and typically aims to avoid dualisms. It aims, rather, at a holistic picture of nature that includes humans and all living things within the cosmos and includes all parts of a human being (reason, emotion, desire, etc.). Mar-

66. Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value," *Philosophical Studies* 127, no. 1 (2006): 109–66.

67. Michael Ruse, *Taking Darwin Seriously: A Naturalistic Approach to Philosophy* (Blackwell, 1986), 253.

68. Erik Wielenberg, "On the Evolutionary Debunking of Morality," *Ethics* 120, no. 3 (2010): 441–64; Erik Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism," *Faith and Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2009): 23–41.

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

garet Atkins eloquently summarizes the holistic vision of these thinkers: "Anglo-American moral philosophy [has moved] beyond the limitations not only of A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson, but also of Hume's focus on sentiment, on the one hand, and Kant's focus on reason on the other. Contemporary ethics is about the whole human being, seen as biological, social and cultural, emotional and reflective."[70]

By taking advantage of the expansive definition of scientific naturalism, neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism defends a view of nature as normative in that it is (at least in some part) teleological. As difficult as it is to consider seriously the project of restoring natural teleology to its proper place and using it as a basis for ethical theory that is tenable and useful, I am optimistic it can be done. Many are on the project – biologists, cosmologists, philosophers of science, mathematicians – but philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition are uniquely situated to make advances. That tradition promises the resources with which to construct an ethical system including all three elements of MacIntyre's schema while rehabilitating a form of natural teleology that is not only tenable in light of modern beliefs, but rationally commends itself in light of all we now know.

The case presented in these chapters aim to show how it might be done, and to begin doing it. The conclusion I shall defend is a growing consensus that natural teleology is no more mysterious or magical than biological life, or consciousness, or rationality. And hence, the pursuit of virtues is no more obsolete than any other human activity, such as farming, or laughing, or studying astronomy. As Wittgeinstein said: "Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing."[71]

70. Margaret Atkins, "Morality Without God?" *The Heythrop Journal* 46, no. 1 (2005): 65–71.
71. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.* Section 124).

III. Why neo-Aristotelianism matters

Virtue ethics is, on my view, a very useful guide to action,[72] in personal life, political life, bioethics,[73] business,[74] and education.[75] It would be an improvement to almost any area of human life if we were aware of our own vices and worked to expunge them, and if we understood the virtues and pursued them. Yet many obstacles from philosophical and social tradition stand in the way. My dissertation is part of an attempt to remove such obstacles and, in their absence, render not only palatable but desirable the pursuit and acquisition of virtues.

Virtue, practical reason, and flourishing are age-old themes, and no worse for wear. Their recurrance in so many different cultures and places and times is a sign of their enduring significance. Treating them adequately may well be too much for one dissertation; as Glaucon said to Socrates, "The measure of listening to such discussions is the whole of life."[76]

72. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chap. 1.

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3

The Normativity of Nature: Organic and Practical Teleology

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

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

Is-Ought Gap

Rosalind Hursthouse argues that ethical evaluations (of humans) and non-ethical evaluations (of plants and animals) "both depend upon our identifying what is characteristic of the species in question."[1] In other words, *normative* evaluations depend on *descriptive* facts about a species. If true, this notion would be momentous: "is" statements would underwrite "ought" statements.

This chapter addresses and challenges the widespread prejudice against scientific teleology. I invoke the help of sciences – especially life sciences such as biology and medicine – which indicate that teleological nihilism and teleoreductionism are by no means "*the* scientific doctrines". Rather, if teleological realism is a scientifically respectable position, then nature is normative. And if nature is normative, it is at least possible that *human nature* is normative, even though humans are a unique kind of animal.

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

The notion that natural, descriptive propositions can serve as premises in arguments with normative conclusions is central to the project of ethical naturalism. Is this notion even intelligible? Many have posed an obvious challenge to this notion. We can put the challenge in this form:

Is-Ought Gap Challenge

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

The second premise seems to render hopeless the thought, articulated by Hursthouse, that we can evaluate things on the basis of what they are. This is the major problem I shall address. This problem goes by many names, but the one I prefer is the "is-ought gap."

Simply put, the is-ought gap is the intuitive notion that one cannot learn anything about *what ought to be* simply by examining *what is*.[2] For example, suppose your friend Jim will be attending his first Oscar ceremony, but doesn't know what to wear. Suppose we observe that *most male celebrities wear black ties to the Oscars.* It simply does not follow from the premise that most men in fact wear black ties that *Jim ought to wear a black tie to the Oscars*. At least, it does not follow without additional, brutely normative premise such as that *He ought to wear whatever most people are wearing*. Even if we supply *that* normative premise, where did it come from? "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is not something supplied by *observation*.

More broadly, in ethics, the is-ought gap seems devastating. For even supposing we gathered a whole collection of reliable scientific truths about human bodies, cognitive-behavioral patterns and so on – from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and also biology, chemstry, physics – we would not be a wit closer to establishing any ethical truths. A detailed and scientific description

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

of human nature could hope to supply a "descriptive ethics" that narrates what such-and-such a culture approves of or finds worthwhile compared to what they find worthless and reprehensible.

At its best, a descriptive ethics might identify universal moral approbations and disapprobations. For example, while habits and attitudes toward drinking alcohol vary dramatically from culture to culture, there seems to be a universal (cross-cultural) disapprobation for continual drunkenness, even among cultures (like the Bolivian Camba) that drink regularly and drink heavily.[3] Such findings might be interesting, but the is-ought gap reminds us that they are a far cry from *ethical* insights.

The is-ought gap objection is fatal to some forms of ethical naturalism, but not to the neo-Aristotelian type Hursthouse and others are pursuing.[4] For there exists a second, and more promising way to underwrite "ought" statements. From basic, fundamental, scientifically respectable *natural norms*. Call this the possibility of natural normativity.[5] We can put the challenge, in the following form:

Bald Nature Challenge

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

This challenge parallels the first one in that everything depends on the second premise – on whether

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

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

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

nature consists of *merely* non-normative facts.[6] If so, then it follows that normativity is either real but *non-natural* (or supernatural) or "naturalistic" but not real (i.e., not mind-independent). There would be no such thing as the paradoxical notion of a "prescriptive fact" or a "natural ought."[7] Hume (and others) assume this. But if the second premise is not true – if some facts are genuinely both natural and normative – then ethical naturalism is at least *possible*. (There will be other challenges to address, of course.)

The candidates for natural normative facts I shall defend are natural formal and functional or teleological properties of organisms. Hursthouse, Philippa Foot, John McDowell, MacIntyre, and Stephen Brown are united in the thought that some natural formal or teleological facts – whether that is Hursthouse's "characteristic", or a "life-form"[8] or "form of life"[9], or "human nature" – are inherently normative. Rather than "bridging" the gap between "is" and "ought", they defy the opposition.

I. Teleology as Solution

Although the neo-Aristotelians are united in the affirmation that some natural norms can serve as a grounding for ethical facts, there are two or three competing strategies as to which "norms" are up to the task. The strategies go under many names.[10]

6. That nature consists of merely "natural" facts is, of course, a tautology. But whether all natural facts are non-normative facts is the question at hand. Simply to *stipulate* that "natural facts are descriptive and not normative!" is to beg the question with an exclamation point. I will pick up this question again in a later chapter.

7. Recall Mackie's beautifully expressed worry about notion of "to-be-pursuedness" built into things.

8. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 57

9. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 339.

10. Annas distinguishes two sorts of naturalism, one that emphasizes the biological nature of humanity (at the expense of the odd normativity of reason) and another that emphasizes the rational nature of humanity (at the expense of the mundane descriptivity of biology). Christopher Toner distinguishes between the "biological naturalism" of Thompson and Foot (and later MacIntyre) from the "second naturalism" or "excellence naturalism" or 'culturalism' of McDowell and (early) MacIntyre, each of which has its strengths and problems. Cf. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism.;

Biology or Rationality?

The basic difference is between those who discover natural normativity in *human nature* – culture, or rationality, or practical agency – and those who hope to find natural normativity more generally in all organic life. As Thomas Nagel puts it, with the existence of life in the cosmos arises the existence of "beings of the kind.. for which things can be good or bad."[11] (The third group defends the view that natural normativity is intrinsic to the whole cosmos.) Let's examine each one a bit more.[12]

Social Teleology: the Normativity of Human Nature

The second option is the normative notion of humanity. On this option, something about humanity is naturally and inherently teleological. For example, perhaps one of the natural functions of rationality is to construct goals for itself and legislate laws for itself.[13] On this view, ethical conclusions are irreducibly based upon human facts such as human rationality, human culture, or human excellence. Since these human facts are contrasted with broader natural facts, call this view "So-

Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism.; Christopher Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism: Requirements for a Successful Theory," *Metaphilosophy* 39, no. 2 (2008): 220–50; Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism?" in Stephen Mark Gardiner, *Virtue Ethics, Old and New* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

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

12. Though I shall not pursue it, I should at least mention the most ambitious and most risky sort of strategy: to defend the view that *all* of nature is teleological. But it is the notion that everything – including stars and rocks – "has a purpose", as if the cosmos were somehow organized and *going somewhere*. Call this Cosmic Teleology. Though such natural normativity in the form of natural teleology has its recent defenders. For atheistic version of cosmic teleology, see ibid., ; for non-human centered versions see John Leslie, *Universes* (Psychology Press, 1996) and Tim Mulgan, *Purpose in the Universe: The Moral and Metaphysical Case for Ananthropocentric Purposivism* (Oxford University Press, 2015). For Thomistic versions, cf. Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* (Oneworld Publications, 2009); and Peter Kreeft, *Summa Philosophica* (St. Augustine, 2012).

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

cial" or "Rational" or "Practical Teleology."[14] Pretty clearly, human cognitive and and practical behaviors are inherently end-directed or teleological: John goes to the gym *in order to get fit for his film role*; Jane practices her speech *to win the Iowa primary*. Humans *act on reasons* and in pursuit of ends.[15] This kind of social or rational teleology is certainly the safer of the two strategies, and is followed by McDowell, Hursthouse, and the early MacIntyre.[16]

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

In *After Virtue*, he emphasizes "second nature" far more than primary nature. That is, he finds a ground of normativity not in our life-form but in us: in our social identities, our culture, our rationality. For example, he says his account of virtue "happily not Aristotelian" for "although this account of the virtues is teleological, it does not require any allegiance to Aristotle's metaphysical biology."[17] The "metaphysical biology" MacIntyre refers to here is that metaphysically realist view that formal and final causes inhere (and in fact constitute) biological species.[18] That said, Mac-

14. Cf. Marinus Farreira, "Reasons from Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism," 2011. Ferreira calls this "excellence naturalism" as opposed.

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

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

17. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 197.

18. These causes may be understood by metaphysical realists as intelligible forms or universals which the intellect, by virtue of its intelligible powers, can be abstracted. As John Haldane says: content-determining principles of perception are one and the same as the character-determining principles of the objects of perception — the identity of act and object." Intellection, in turn, is a

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

The notion of social teleology builds on the apparently obvious truth that *human society is teleological.* That is, we do not just act randomly. We do not only act according to the promptings of instinct (that too). Rather, we act *on reasons,* both individually and in groups. We act to achieve goals. Whether we arise from bed *in order to* give a talk, or drive to work *in order to* do a good job, or pursue a career *for* satisfaction and a profitable retirement, we are directing ourselves toward ends. In groups, too, we pursue shared goals, deliberate about *what is to be done*: Congress aims to pass just and beneficial laws. The school board aims to increase enrollment and balance the budget. Expanding our focus from individual actions or projects, we can put the point more strongly: all of human life is a practice. It can be brought under the concept of either one, unified, whole practice or pluralistic set of practices. Even when Iris Murdoch assumed[19] that human life has "no external point or τελος", she argues that it has a point *from within.* It is impossible, in other words, to bring our own human life under the concept of an *event.* Human life must be brought under the concept of a practice, which is teleological and essentially so.This insight has important implications for ethics, as well as other fields: action theory, sociology, anthropology, philosophy of mind, and so on.[20] But the point here is that, since we act in groups and for reasons, teleology is a real feature of our social nature. They cannot be understood without teleology. So if the critic of natural normativity rejects teleological realism (as did the early MacIntyre), it is enough if she accepts social teleology.

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distinctly human (rational) activity. While animals can not only sense but *perceive*, humans have the capacity of intellection, the power of abstracting the forms themselves from percepts. An animal can sense an informed, organized object; an animal can be affected by the object. But the human animal can *acquire information* from the organized object. The ability to perceive something *as*, or even to perceive something big and brown with a smudge on its nose, does not imply the ability to perceive that thing as a cat. Cf. John Haldane, "On Coming Home to (Metaphysical) Realism," *Philosophy* 71, no. 276 (1996): 287–96

19. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts*.

20. Cf. Thompson, *Life and Action*.

Natural Teleology

The second strategy is more ambitious and more risky. It is to defend the view that other parts of nature (such as living creatures) are naturally and inherently teleological. For example, perhaps one of the functions of *being alive at all* is that plants, animals, insects, and microbes perform whatever movements are necessary for them to survive, grow, and develop into the state of species-specific maturity. And not just animals, but all organic life: "Molecular biology shows that all organic cellular life share a common feature, self-reproduction through gene/protein protein cycles."[21]

Hence, at least some natural entities – that is, all living organisms – have ineliminable, irreducible, normative properties. Call this view Natural Teleology. Natural Teleology is the preferred strategy of Foot, Thompson, and the later MacIntyre. It seems to have won over Annas, Brown, and Barham, and a host of other biological scientists.[22]]

Problems for Teleology

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

21. Michael N Mautner, "Life-Centered Ethics, and the Human Future in Space," *Bioethics* 23, no. 8 (2009): 433–40.

22. Keith Ward, "Kant's Teleological Ethics," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 85 (1971): 337–51; Larry Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics: A Defense of Biological Teleology Against Biological Nihilism," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1988): pp. 173–229; Monte Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Philippe Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose: From Comparative Anatomy to the 'Adventure of Reason'," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37, no. 4 (2006): 649–74; Mariska Leunissen, *Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a detailed exposition of the full menu of philosophical options, cf.Bill Cosby, "The Modern Philosophical Resurrection of Teleology," *The Monist* 87, no. 1 (2004): 3–51.

Bernard Williams summarizes the antiquated worldview that many are suspicious of:

> The idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is still to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave.[23]

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

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

> The concepts of unchanging essences and of complete discontinuities between every *eidos* (type) and all others make genuine evolutionary thinking impossible. I agree with those who claim that the essentialist philosophies of Aristotle and Plato are incompatible with evolutionary thinking.[24]

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

A second, related, objection is that if there is such thing as "human nature", it is nothing more or less than our biological and physiological makeup. Tim Lewins argues that:

> the only biologically respectable notion of human nature that remains is an extremely permissive one that names the reliable dispositions of the human species as a whole. This conception offers no ethical guidance…[25]

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23. Cf. Bernard Williams, in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 109.

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

25. Tim Lewens, "Human Nature: The Very Idea," *Philosophy & Technology* 25, no. 4 (2012): 459–74.

On Lewins' view, the only scientific talk about our "nature" is an indetermiante series of complicated stories about our genetics, evolutionary history, and neurophysiology, perhaps even including cultural, geographical, and ecological settings. The problem, of course, is that an empirical "scientific" conception of human nature has nothing to do with *ethics*. All of the complicated stories we could tell – if they are genuinely scientific – would be purely *descriptive*. In response to this worry, Rosalind Hursthouse's response is to reassure us that: "Ethical naturalism is not to be construed as the attempt to ground ethical evaluations in a scientific account of human nature."[26] Nevertheless, she *does* endorse the project of grounding ethical evaluations in human nature. If this grounding is not *scientific*, then how is a grounding of ethics going to work?

Bald Nature Objection

I shall return to the problems regarding a normative conception of human nature in a later chapter. Here I must address the objections to the Organic or Natural Teleology strategy. This second strategy has its own, even bigger, problems; not even all the neo-Aristotelians are optimistic about the strategy of grounding human ethics in natural normativity.

Even if natural normativity in the form of teleology in the non-human world *could possibly* underwrite normative conclusions about human ethics, how would we confirm the hypothesis that there is such a thing as natural normativity? Is the hypothesis scientific or not? For many, scientific naturalism just is the commitment to believe all and only the best deliverances of all the sciences.[27] But suffice many scientific naturalists do indeed think that the scientific conception of nature is incompatible with the kind of natural normativity found in Foot's brand of neo-Aristotelian ethical

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

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

naturalism. They think that the scientific picture of nature is the picture of "bald nature" (McDowell's phrase for non-normative nature) or the "Laplacian" picture.[28] Call "teleological nihilism" the view that there are no natural purposes *except* those in human actions, intentions, and societies, etc. On teleological nihilism, *social teleology* is not instances of a broader category that includes the tendency of an acorn to become an oak and the tendency of deer to survive and reproduce; human purposes are sui generis phenomena that spontaneously emerge out of our brains at a certain level of complexity. Final causation thinking is then projected out onto the world by us; we observe that the beaver gathered wood and that the beaver built a dam and we say "the beaver gathered wood *in order to* build the dam." But really the beaver did no such thing. This is what philosopher of biology Ernst Mayr calls "teleonomic" natural behavior, but not genuinely teleological.[29]

II. An Initial Case for Natural Normativity

So what are we to make of these challenges? I shall respond to the Bald Nature Objection.

On the one hand, I think both strategies (social teleology and natural teleology) would work, and wish to defend them against ethical non-naturalists or ethical naturalists of different sorts.[30] On the other hand, I think natural teleology is the stronger of the two and is less subject to objections from cultural relativism. Hence, in the spirit of devil-may-care adventure seeking, I shall pursue the more ambitious strategy of defending natural normativity in all of organic nature, not just human beings.

However, in a later chapter I will more thoroughly examine the notion human (and only human) teleology is the source of natural normativity. (In the end, I do not think these two notions of

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

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

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

normativity are *contradictory*. A "third type" of naturalism could even perhaps combine them.)[31] To those for whom the concept of natural teleology might have been completely unpalettable, I hope to render it not only conceivable but plausible. For those who do not find it plausible, human teleology is a kind of fail-safe. The facts of social or practical teleology are enough to ground the theory of virtue I develop in a later chapter. Although I feel confident that social teleology is a sufficient ground for ethics, I shall caution that the cost of rejecting natural teleology is an incorrigible cultural relativism: While objective morality may be realized intersubjectively, intersubjective morality is not objective.

For now, I shall pursue the strategy according to which natural normativity in the form of natural teleology is sufficient to ground a theory of ethics in observations about human nature as practical, rational animals.[32] This is to defend the Foot/Thompson strategy of Natural Teleology as preferable over McDowell's strategy of Social or Practical Teleology. In doing so, I shall summarize and bolster her arguments, offering a more rigorous argument for the fundamental premise that some natural facts are brutely normative, teleological facts.

Foot on Natural Normativity

Let's begin with Philippa Foot. Foot argues that human virtues are instances of a broader class of natural properties: 'natural goodness.'[33] to earn an audience for her argument, her first chapter (which she call a "fresh start") clears some shaky assumptions inherited from Hume and Moore. Instead of treating human valuations as sui generis, a miraculous new appearance in the cosmos that only appears with the existence of humans, hat we should expand our scope to examine our

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

32. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."

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

status as natural entities. She is well aware that her offering is likely to offend the ears of some listeners. Her defense is the thought (drawn from Wittgenstein) that crude beginnings are often a necessary first step on the way something refined.

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

In this Foot agrees with Thompson's groundbreaking *Representation of Life*. There, he argues that the concept of "life" is not, as it may seem to some, a property of some beings where *being* is the fundamental concept; rather "life" is a fundamental concept.[34] Thompson reviews and refutes a variety of biological definitions of life such as reproduction, growth, metabolisis, etc., for these properties depend on a prior understanding of life. He says, "Vital description of individual organisms is itself the primitive expression of a conception of things in terms of 'life-form' or 'species', and if we want to understand these categories in philosophy we must bring them back to that form of description."[35] When we observe and examine living things we rightly employ some shared categories and our conclusions rightly share a logical structure. What is that common structure? Every individual living being is a member of a species or life-form. And different life-forms are subject to different

34. Thompson, "The Representation of Life."
35. Thompson, *Life and Action*, 57.

normative appraisals.

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

Foot concludes that:

> …goodness and badness, and therefore about evaluation in its most general form; but we might equally have been thinking in terms of, say, strength and weakness or health and disease, or again about an individual plant or animal being or not being as it should be, or ought to be, in this respect or that. Let us call the conceptual patterns found there, patterns of natural normativity.[36]

Another way of putting this point is that some properties we can call 'goodness' are primary qualities of nature. McDowell and others will worry that this picture of nature is not "the scientific picture" of nature, and that even if it were, such a picture is not necessary since social normativity is a sufficient grounding for ethics.

III. A Novel Case for Natural Normativity from Generics

What are the odds that "identifying what is characteristic of a species" can license normative judgments? The odds are quite good, I think. My case for natural normativity depends on a minimal

36. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 38.

scientific realism and on a little-utilized feature of language and conceptualization called "generic propositions" – or simply "generics." The case in brief is this:

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

The Special Logic of Generics

Michael Thompson is one of the first to work out "the special logic of judgments we make about living things, and then to indicate its application to ethics." That 'special logic' is variously called "Aristotelian categoricals"[37], "natural-historical judgements"[38] "norms"[Anscombe[39] 14-15. Anscombe is not very optimistic about the project Thompson, Foot, and I are undertaking. She says: "It might remain to look for"norms" in human virtues: just as man has so many teeth, which is certainly not the average number of teeth men have, but is the number of teeth for the species, so perhaps the species man, regarded not just biologically, but from the point of view of the activity of thought and choice in regard to the various departments of life-powers and faculties and use of things needed- "has" such-and-such virtues: and this "man" with the complete set of virtues is the "norm," as "man" with, e.g., a complete set of teeth is a norm."] "bare plurals"[40]. I prefer the shorter and less adorned term 'generic.[41]

37. Ibid.

38. Thompson, "The Representation of Life"; Thompson, *Life and Action*.

39. "Modern Moral Philosophy."

40. Greg N Carlson, "A Unified Analysis of the English Bare Plural," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (1977): 413–57.

41. Cf. ibid., . Carlson's essay is an early attempt to account for a variety of linguistic forms under one concept of reference to kinds; Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Greg N Carlson, *The Generic Book* (University of Chicago Press, 1995); Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Generics: Cognition and Acquisition," *Philosophical Review* 117, no. 1 (2008): 1–47; Andrew M Bailey, "Animalism," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 12 (2015): 867–83 for a discussion of a specific generic: "we are animals" in metaphysics and philosophical anthropology; Andrei Cimpian, Amanda C Brandone, and Susan

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

Generics are neither universal nor particular

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

> Start with this sentence: [all ducks lay eggs.] This first sentence is, let us suppose, true. So far so good. But is it equivalent to 'for every x, if x is a [duck], x [lays eggs]? 'ducks lay eggs' may be true even if not all ducks lay eggs, 'mosquitos carry dengue fever' may be true even if only a very few mosquitos carry that virus, and so on). We are now positioned to observe one curious property of generics: they admit of exceptions.[42]

Thus, generics are statements of the form "S is F" or "S has or does F" where S is not an individual but a class or natural kind. The logical form of "all S's ϕ" does not predicate ϕ-ing to all members of the category S without exception, nor does it simply assert that some "S's ϕ", which is true but uninteresting.

Consider the statement "all wolves hunt in packs." Logically, the proposition expressed in this statement is neither strictly universal nor strictly particular. It is not a strictly true universal judgment (for some actual wolves hunt alone, and some don't hunt at all). Furthermore, it is true

A Gelman, "Generic Statements Require Little Evidence for Acceptance but Have Powerful Implications," *Cognitive Science* 34, no. 8 (2010): 1452–82 for an experiment in cognitive psychology that seeks to quantify the prevalence levels at which subjects tend to agree to generics, i.e., how many birds have to lay eggs before we agree to the assertion that "birds lay eggs"? Manfred Krifka, "Bare NPs: Kind-Referring, Indefinites, Both, or Neither?" in *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, vol. 13, 2003, 180–203; Ariel Cohen, "On the Generic Use of Indefinite Singulars," *Journal of Semantics* 18, no. 3 (2001): 183–209.

42. Bailey, "Animalism," 869.

but trivial that *some wolves hunt in packs*. Confining ourselves to particular judgments like "Some reptiles lay eggs" would be radically unambitious science. We want to know – and can know – what is true of the class as a whole. If a biologist discovers an exception to the proposition "All reptiles lay eggs", then either it turns out that not all reptiles lay eggs *or* she has discovered a new species of reptile that does not lay eggs.

Generics refer to natural kinds

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

The statement that "wolves hunt in packs" is only interesting to scientists if it is an item of conceptual knowledge about wolves as a *kind*. A generic is interesting because it is, or we treat it as, a truth about forms, or species. The subject of the statement is not all S's nor merely some S's, but the "infama species."[43] As Leslie says:

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

Generics are not statistical

As Leslie's point shows, generics are not merely statistical regularities. The members of extinct species do not exhibit any properties at all, yet it is still true in some sense that *the species* is extinct. Likewise, all the living members of a species might fail to exemplify its formal attributes. Consider the fact that "California condors can fly for hours without resting."[44] In 1987 there were only 27 known condors alive. One could easily imagine a scenario in which every living member of such an

43. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism," 222, quoting Thompson.
44. Jeffrey P. Cohn, "Saving the California Condor," *BioScience* 49, no. 11 (1999): 864–68.

endangered species were too injured, old, or diseased to exemplify this attribute. It would be strictly false of the individual condors that any of them could fly for hours; nevertheless the generic would still be true that "condors" (as a class) *can* fly for hours.

McDowell calls this a "logical weakness" of generics, as if Aristotelian-categoricals were aiming for deductive certainty but falling short. He cites the example from Anscombe (and Aristotle) that "humans have 32 teeth", saying "there is a truth we can state in those terms, but from that truth, together with the fact that I am a human being, it does not follow that I have 32 teeth. (In fact it is false)."[45] McDowell rather misses the point. Generics are not half-hearted universal judgments; they are judgments of a logically different kind. That we do not know deductively whether any particular wolf hunts in a pack is rather a strength than a weakness; the generic truth that wolves hunt in packs sets in us a normative expectation we then bring to any particular wolf and by which we can judge whether it is exemplifying its life form.[46] Similarly, while anthropological generics such as "human beings wear clothes" admit of exceptions, they might, if true, set normative expectations.

Generics are familiar

While there is much to be learned about the linguistic features of generics,[47] still, their use and acquisition is actually very familiar. Michael Thompson points out that: there is a "general and thoroughgoing reciprocal mutual interdependence of vital description of the individual and natural

45. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 171–2.

46. Sandeep Prasada et al., "Conceptual Distinctions Amongst Generics," *Cognition* 126, no. 3 (2013): 3.

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

historical judgment about the form or kind."[48] Micah Lott's comment on this same point is that:

> At each stage of an empirical investigation, our observations are mediated by our current understanding of the life form whose members we are observing. At the same time, our observations of those individual members will in turn improve our understanding of the life form itself, which then makes possible even more accurate and extensive future observations.[49]

Generic truths are acquired via a normal scientific means of empirical observation, rational reflection, and discussion.[50] This familiar scientific process may not be easy or free of dangers, but it is at least *a familiar scientific process*. Scientists are continually correcting formerly established generics (the notion that all mammals give live birth was thrown into crisis by the platypus) and working to distinguish between the normal and defective traits of a species.

Generics are teleological

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

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

49. Micah Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form," *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 3 (2012): 414.

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

> Many objects in the world have functions. Some of the objects with functions are organs or parts of living organisms… Hearts are for pumping blood. Eyes are for seeing. Countless works in biology explain the "Form, Function, and Evolution of …" everything from bee dances to elephant tusks to pandas' 'thumbs'. Many scientific explanations, in areas as diverse as psychology, sociology, economics, medical research, and neuroscience, rest on appeals to the function and/or malfunction of things or systems.[51]

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

> "By "teleology," I have in mind such words and concepts as "purpose," "end," "goal," "function," "control," and "regulation," as well as the real-world biological phenomena to which these words and concepts refer. This means that the word "teleology" should always be construed here in its internal or "immanent" sense—purposiveness existing in living beings themselves—and never in its external or "transcendent" sense of an overarching cosmic principle"[52]

With these concepts in hand, we can see why Chris Toner says that "natural-historical judgments readily admit of combination into teleological judgments."[53] Thompson, for example, cites the scientific observation that "flowers have blossoms of such-and-such type in order that such-and-such insects should be attracted and spread their pollen about."[54]

This kind of combination of generic truths is very familiar. No sooner have I learned the formal facts about a penguin (that it is a bird, that it can swim, that it has a countershaded white belly and dark back etc.) do I learn that *penguins are countershaded in order to avoid predators from above and below.* A shark looking up may miss a penguin, because its white belly blends in with the sunlight surface waters; a shark looking down may miss a penguin, because it blends in with the pitch dark waters of the abyss. Since an individual penguin may fail to be countershaded in the way that expresses its form, it would be defective. This defect is not a judgment made by scientists and "imposed" as it were, from the outside, on the penguin; but a normative fact about the penguin. As Hursthouse says, "Wolves hunt in packs; a 'free-rider' wolf that doesn't join in the hunt fails to act well and

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

is thereby defective."[55] We might add that some formal features *of a normal, mature* animal exist merely potentially before full maturation. For example, a female reptile that cannot lay eggs might be injured, ill, or simply young. Eyes that cannot see might be injured, ill, or simply developing. Eyes that have had enough time to develop *should* see, are *supposed to* see, *ought to* see. Hearts do not just "pump blood" but hearts are *for* pumping blood.

IV. Three Paths Forward

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

Reject

The first path is to reject generic truths about species and their formal and functional characteristics. Probably, those who are tempted to reject natural teleology believe there are no *ends* (τελοι). Call this view teleological nihilism.[56] Teleological nihilism claims as its evidence "*modern science" as a whole.* Abandoning the search for natural teleology was a harbinger of modern science; Francis Bacon and others believed that the search for final causes corrupted science. So, if best science tells us that

55. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 201.
56. Also called teleological eliminativism.

nature is *only* descriptive, natural normativity is dismissed out of court.[57] In fact, natural sciences and the experimental, empirical methods that advance them have progressed far more than anyone could have dreamed. In part, this success is the result of giving up magical thinking.

Reply to Teleological Nihilism

Nevertheless, let's suppose for *reductio* that no generic statements are true. Then it would be false in some important sense false that 'wolves hunt in packs', and false that 'condors can fly for hours', false even that 'penguins are birds'. It is false, furthermore, that eyes see and humans are mammals. But such denials are, I think, absurdities.[58]

The proper reply to Bacon is that the teleological nihilism hypothesis has been tried and found wanting. Animals, plants, and all living things exhibit end-directed or teleonomic behavior: eyes see, hemlock trees offer shade to fish, stomachs digest, deer leap to avoid predators. Even when Kant denies natural teleology – the biological theory that the form of an organism causes the parts to grow and relate to each other in a particular way – he admits we *cannot help thinking so*.[59]

By all means, let us be scientific. But let us be careful not to become anti-scientific in the *name* of preserving the purity of science. The notion that some of nature is normative – or that some norms are natural – is not only a good logical explanation of the natural phenomena of biology but also a good *scientific* explanation. While natural teleological realism is still controversial, it is not a controversy between science and philosohpy but a controversy *within science*. It is a legitimate

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

58. That is not to say that the denial is not worth considering. It might well be true. My point in calling the denial 'absurd' is to say that if it is true, an absurdity is true. If it is true, then the truth is absurd. And reality itself might well be absurd. I don't think it is, but there have been many philosophers who have thought so, and such thoughts cannot be justly dismissed without consideration. Since absurdist philosophers are not my primary audience, I simply lay the issue aside.

59. Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose."

discussion between scientists of one stripe and scientists of another.

An analogy might help: suppose a marine biologist studying dolphin behavior came to believe dolphin's have language. One could imagine other biologists accusing her of "projecting" an exclusively human phenomenon – communication by language – on non-human nature. They could ridicule her "magical thinking" but they would miss a fascinating repository of scientific insight. "Listening to science" does not mean listening to materialist philosophers who haven't studied biology since their undergraduate days; "listening to science" *just means* listening to actual scientists, such as biologists and others who tell us that teleological functions are real and who treat them as if they were irreducible. Branding "heretics" and demoting their research as "anti-scientific" is a behavior more appropriate to the zealous defense of ideological materialism than it is to advancing the genuine researches of ground-breaking scientists.

Things are even clearer when it comes to natural kinds and generic truths about species. If we accept scientific realism of any form, we cannot deny that some generics are true. (Even more strongly, if we accept *any* form of conceptual knowledge, we are probably implicitly already committed to the truth of some generics, for much of our conceptual knowledge consists in generics.[60]) Animals, plants, and all living things belong to species, and our knowledge of them consists of generic truths about not just individuals but that species. A species involves a defined range of potential attributes that normally come to be actualized over time. An individual hemlock tree may or may not shade any fish in any rivers, but it may in time; or it may never do so, but it is still a scientific insight that that is one thing 'hemlock trees' in general do. Compare with Thomas Nagel's point that some "laws of nature would apply directly to the relation between the present and the future."[61]

Hence, to reject *all truths* about natural kinds, I contend, is to reject the best scientific deliverances of our best scientific evidence. As Perlman says, "It is surprising that analytic philosophers,

60. Prasada et al., "Conceptual Distinctions Amongst Generics."
61. @ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 93.

with their strong focus on science, would reject a notion that is so central to some areas of science, most notably, biology and engineering sciences… Biology cannot, or at least in practice does not, eliminate functions and purposes."[62] The great cost of throwing out generics *as a class* threatens to throw out a huge percentage of scientific statements in biology, organic chemistry, anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics, anatomy, and medicine.[63]

Reduce

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

Arguing for or against teleoreductionism has become a cottage industry.[64] It is impossible to do justice to the complexity of the dialectic here. I will content myself to note, and critique, two popular forms of reduction: the first reduces biological functions to causal contributions to a system and the second reduces teleonomic biological functions to naturally selected effects. A proponent of the first reduction is Donald Davidson. A proponent of the second is Ruth Millikan. For example, Ruth Millikan argues that an organism's proper function simply cannot be "read off" its capacities at present but must be known via empirical history. Her theory entails the unpalatable conclusion that an organ that is otherwise physically identical to, say, a heart, that was magically apparated into existence would not have a "proper function". She bites the bullet on this.

Reply

James Barham argues that neither of these forms of reduction is very promising: "In a nutshell, the problem is that neither theory can explain the normative character of biological processes

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

63. We must not forget that the term 'science' is an abstraction. The only real thing is scientists and their statements. Scientists disagree, and some of their statements are proven false by the research of other scientists.

64. Cf. ibid., sec. III; and Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," chap. 3.

in a coherent manner."[65] The problem with the "causal-role" reduction of teleonomic phenomena is that in order to even posit a hypothesis about how some parts of a system contribute to the achievement of its end or purpose, we must identify *in advance* which parts of the organism play a role in bringing about the end or purpose. But if we already know the causal contribution of those parts, what more could we learn by positing the causal-role theory? James Barham elaborates:

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

As regards the second form, Thompson insists that judgments about natural teleology are made true from the form of life under question, not from "hypotheses about the past."[66] Barham agrees. He says:

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

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

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

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

> In a series of important articles and books over the past decade or so [many authors] have cast grave doubt on the coherence of any reductive analysis of function. Some of these authors (e.g., Jacobs, Maund, Zammito) call explicitly for a reconsideration of the possibility that teleological phenomena in biology might be both objectively real and irreducible.[67]

Accept as is

The third option is to accept that some natural facts are intrinsically normative, irreducible, natural facts. Although the very word 'teleology' is liable to sound quaint to modern ears, Barham has argued that 'teleological realism' is a rationally permissible view to take on biology.[68] Teleological realism in biology is making a come-back. For instance, Arnhart persuasively argues that teleology is assumed in medicine.[69] Zammito clarifies ongoing relevance in biology, since organisms seem to be intrinsically purposeful.[70]

Thomas Nagel is a third who has followed out the argument for natural teleology from a much broader, cosmic perspective, though he too denies that the cosmos is like an orchestra being played.[71] Though Nagel took a lot of heat for his argument, Michael Chorost's review of *Mind and Cosmos* reminds readers that natural teleology is not so scientifically heretical as it might first seem. He says:

> Natural teleology is unorthodox, but it has a long and honorable history. For example, in 1953 the evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley argued that it's in the nature of nature to get more advanced over time. "If we take a snapshot view, improvement

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

68. Ibid.

69. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."

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

71. Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*.

> eludes us," he wrote. "But as soon as we introduce time, we see trends of improvement."… [the furthermore] paleontologist Simon Conway Morris, at the University of Cambridge, has argued that natural structures such as eyes, neurons, brains, and hands are so beneficial that they will get invented over and over again. They are, in effect, attractors in an abstract biological space that pull life in their direction. Contingency and catastrophe will delay them but cannot stop them. Conway Morris sees this as evidence that not only life but human life, and humanlike minds, will emerge naturally from the cosmos: "If we humans had not evolved, then something more or less identical would have emerged sooner or later."[72]

If scientists can countenance natural normativity via natural teleology as respectable, we philosophers not do the same? Certainly natural teleology is out of fashion; but the winds of intellectual fashion blow hither and yon, and we may yet discover that Aristotle was right.[73] Either way, philosophers of various schools (metaphysicians and ethicists) would do well to dialogue with biologists and cosmologists to come to grips with the possibility that our best evidence suggests that nature is normative.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to meet the **Bald Nature Challenge to Ethical Naturalism** stated above, and to clear away the **Scientific Facts** and **Teleological Nihilism** objections. The challenge, recall, was this:

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

The conclusion we have drawn is that indeed *some* facts – especially facts about living things – are both natural and irredicubily normative. These are natural formal and functional or teleological facts about natural kinds and about living beings. Such facts are expressed in perfectly respectable

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

73. Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology*.

scientific judgments we have called "generics" but may also be called "Aristotelian categoricals", "natural-historical judgements", "norms", "bare plurals", etc. Generics like these render it at least *possible* to conclude the the scientific picture of nature includes normativity in the form of natural teleology. If true generics could be stated about human beings, then it is conceivable we can use them as a basis for ethical theory.

Of course, I have not yet tried to show *which* true generics about humans can serve as the basis for ethical theory. All I have tried to show is that *some* of these generics are true. By denying the consequent, we are not necessarily affirming the antecedent. That affirmation requires another step, namely, to apply the above argument to human beings. The argument that will help us transition from generics about the biological world in general to generics about human beings and which may provide the basis of normative *ethics* is this:

Human Normativity

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

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

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

> The idea that any features and operations of humans could be evaluated in the same way as those of plants and animals may provoke instant opposition. For to say that this is possible is to imply that some at least of our judgements of goodness and badness in human beings are given truth or falsity by the conditions of human life. And even if it is allowed that certain evaluations of this kind are possible—-those vaguely thought of perhaps as 'merely biological'—-there is bound to be scepticism about the possibility that 'moral evaluation' could be like this.[74]

74. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 38.

Despite such legitimate worries, we have followed Foot in trying to earn a hearing for this notion by arguing that the "meaning of 'good' in so-called 'moral contexts'" does not have a special logic of its own. Rather, as she insists, "no change in the meaning of 'good' between the word as it appears in 'good roots' and as it appears in 'good dispositions of the human will.'[75] Hursthouse articulates Foot's basic point in this way:

> The starting point is an idea that she has never lost sight of, and which figures in her early attack on Hare. It is the idea that 'good', like 'small', is an attributive adjective. What that entails is that, although you can evaluate and choose things according to almost any criteria you like, you must select the noun or noun phrase you use to describe the thing you are calling good advisedly, for it determines the criteria of goodness that are appropriate. Hare can call a cactus a good one on the grounds that it is diseased and dying, and choose it for that reason, but what he must not do is describe it as a good cactus, for a cactus is a living thing. He can describe it as a good 'decorative object for my windowsill' or 'present to give my detestable mother-in-law', but not as a good cactus.[76]

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

> When we moved from the evaluations of other social animals to ethical evaluations of ourselves, there was an obvious addition to the list of aspects which are evaluated. The other animals act. So do we occasionally, but mostly we act from reason, as they do not, and it is primarily in virtue of our actions from reason that we are ethically good or bad human beings. So that is one difference that our being rational makes.[77]

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

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75. Ibid., 39.
76. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 195.
77. Ibid., 217.

Chapter 4

Normativity of Human Nature: Philestine Scientism versus the Practical Point of View

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

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

"The human alone of the animals possesses speech."

– Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1253a.

"It was not man who made the myths but the myths, or the archetypal substance they reveal, which made man. We shall have to come, I am sure, to think of the archetypal element in myth in terms of the wind that breathed through the harp-strings of individual brains and nerves and fluids, rather as the blood still today pervades and sustains them."

–Owen Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," in *The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays*.

I. Human Generics

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

hopeful search?

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

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

> When we moved from the evaluations of other social animals to ethical evaluations of ourselves, there was an obvious addition to the list of aspects which are evaluated. The other animals act. So do we occasionally, but mostly we act from reason, as they do not, and it is primarily in virtue of our actions from reason that we are ethically good or bad human beings. So that is one difference that our being rational makes.[2]

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

1. By calling humans 'natural' here I only wish to present an innocent truism: we are here, in nature. We are material. Not necessarily *wholly* material, but we are *at least* material; we eat food grown on earth, drink water from the earth, are we born from fellow humans and do we die and disintegrate into the earth like every other living thing.

2. Ibid., 217.

Obstacles

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

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

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

Let's state them in a bit more detail.

No Human Nature Objection

The first objection is simply that there is no human nature and hence there can be no true generics about humanity. We can recall Williams' suspicion above that Darwinism has dispensed with the teleological outlook, and Mayr's belief that somehow modern science (especially Darwinism) has dispensed even with the essentialist notion of species.[3] Likewise, Arthur Ward argues that "naturalists should reject the idea of "human nature," and indeed should reject that any organism or its parts or operations has a nature, purpose, proper function, or the like."[4]

3. Cf. ibid., chap. 10; Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, chap. 5; Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory."

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

Irrelevance

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

Hursthouse puts the irrelevance objection this way:

> I shall assume, without argument, that McDowell is right … [that] the pretensions of an Aristotelian naturalism are not, in any ordinary understanding of the terms, either 'scientific' or 'foundational'. It does not seek to establish its conclusions from 'a neutral point of view'. Hence it does not expect what it says to convince anyone whose ethical outlook or perspective is largely different from the ethical outlook from within which the naturalistic conclusions are argued for.[7]

> This is a major part of the genuinely transforming effect the fact of our rationality has on the basic naturalistic structure. But has it transformed the structure beyond recognition? I said that ethical naturalism looks to be doomed to failure if it depends on identifying what is characteristic of human beings as a species, in the way their pleasures and pains and ways of going on are characteristic of the other species. By and large we can't identify what is characteristic of human beings as a species in this way—there is too much variety. And even if we could, it looks as though we would not allow anything we identified to carry any normative weight if we thought it was something we could change. So is ethical naturalism, after all, a non-starter?[8]

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

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

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 222.

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

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

II. Human Nature: Generic Truths about Humans

These objections can be overcome, but they are important tools for framing this project. To overcome them, let's first assemble a sample of scientific generics about humanity. What can we – by careful observation and inductive generalization – confidently say about genetically modern humans without much scientific controversy? Examining ourselves "from the outside" as it were, from an external, objective, cool, scientific view point, what is a *homo sapiens sapiens*? In contemporary classificatory scheme, we can locate ourselves as animals in the phylum chordata, the class mammalia, the order of primates, the suborder haplorhini, the familiy hominidae, the genus homo, the species homo sapiens.

Suppose that the earth was formed about 4.5 billion years ago and that life arose on earth

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

3.5 billion years ago. Suppose that anatomically modern humans arose on the earth about 200,000 years ago or in the "Late Pleistocene of 120,000 years ago."[10] The first among our species lived in Africa. They emigrated from that landmass and settled in various parts of the globe. Humans' heights range from 4'7" to 6'3" (plus or minus) and weights range from 120-180 pounds (plus or minus). They have 23 chromosomes in each somatic cell, with about 22,000 total genes. They are mammals that reproduce sexually, gestate in utero, and give live birth. Unlike other mammals, females go through menopause. They tend to thrive best in climates averaging between 42-80 degrees farenheit[11], but can survive in extreme cold. Humans have 32 teeth and an extremely diverse diet of carbohydrates, fats, fiber, minerals, proteins, vitamins, and water: they eat vegetables, red meat, fish, nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, mushroom, mollusks, herbs, and more. Genetically modern humans don't just hunt and gather but farm, store, combine, ferment, and cook food. They have opposable thumbs, are bipedal, and walk upright. They have large brains relative to other primates, with a neocortex and prefrontal cortex that correlate with abstract thinking, problem solving, society, and culture. And indeed, humans live in cultures and societies. They are language-users, communicating in signs and symbols. Their language is an extremely complex, open-ended system which is both recursive (able to nest propositions within propositions) and productive (able to create sentences by potentially limitless combinations of words). In virtue of language and their opposable thumbs, they are creative; they don't just live on the ground or under ground, but build houses and shelters, sometimes in new places, such as caves, trees, hills, mountains, etc. Also, they are self-reflective and moral. They establish social relations upon biological grounds (some children growing up with natural parents) and upon normative grounds (some orphans growing up in orphanages created by philanthropists).

Is there anything of potential ethical significance in this collection of commonplaces? I think so. Indeed, this collection admits of patterns. If we had to gather up the individual features into

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

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

categories, we could capture most of them under two categories: animal (of a particular sort) and rational. Even the upright posture, opposable thumbs, and large neocortex of genetically modern humans are intimately tied to our language use, symbol use, creativity, science, and sociality. Without the hands that we have, we could not create nearly as much as we do. Without the brains that we have, we could not think, speak, organize into language-groups and create culture.

Physical, Alive, Animal, Rational, Practical

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

> Further, phylogenetic trees indicate that all terrestrial life can be traced to a common ancestor. Organisms as different from us as yeasts share half; mice, over 90%, chimpanzees, over 95%, and different human individuals share over 99% of our genome. These scientific insights give a deeper meaning to the unity of all Life. Our complex molecular patterns are common to all organic gene/protein life and distinguish us from any other phenomena of nature.[12]

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

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

Mammals begin life as tiny cells and progress through gestation to infancy, maturation, and adulthood, at which point they typically reproduce themselves before dying. All of these phases we notice in human animals as well. Attempts to characterize human nature, however broadly, must not only cite our *physicality* – our relation to the physical world – but our *animality* – our relation to the living world as a whole. What property or set of properties differentiates humans from any other animal,

12. Mautner, "Life-Centered Ethics, and the Human Future in Space," 434–5.
13. Ibid., 435.

or any other physical object? So the property of being an animal encompasses a whole range of biological and neurophysiological facts that obtain in each normal human being.

However, the concept of 'rationality' is new. We use terms like 'reason' and ratio as abstractions to describe a set of capacities we notice in ourselves. For example, activities that get called 'rational' are activities such as to observe, perceive as, create, reflect, decide, determine, abstract, infer, explain, deduce, remember, predict, criticize, praise, blame, admonish, and so on.

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

We are animals who speak. Through our animality comes a sensitivity to our surroundings, the ability to see the sun and moon which are millions (or hundreds of thousands) of miles away, to hear our fellow creatures, and to "take in" the whole cosmos into consciousness. Through speech comes a whole second cosmos of culture. Through speech comes intentionality in all its forms. Through speech comes communication ("pass the salt"), distinct languages and cultures (about 5,000 distinct languages), self-consciousness ("who am I?"), abstraction ("all grass is green"), science, philosophy, religion, mythology, technology and more. Perhaps even art and music arise from the rational capacity to direct our actions to create not only what instinct demands but whatever the imagination can invent.[16]

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

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

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

Rational capacities are identified by the actions of rational creatures. As Haldane says, quoting the medieval scholastics, "acting follows being" and "things are specified by their power."[17] We just do deliberate, explain, propose theories, judge truth and falsity, wonder, inquire, and so on.

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

While I shall have to say more about practical rationality in a later chapter, here I need only to specify that our nature as rational animals *includes* the notion that we are *practical* rational animals. That is, we do not just act but act on reasons. Micah Lott says: "Human form is characterized by practical reason. This is the capacity to act in light of an awareness of the ground of our actions, to recognize and respond to practical reasons."[18] We set goals and act in order to achieve goals. In the unity of reason between theoretical and practical that I shall ground both moral and intellectual virtue. All the acts of reason (whether theoretical or practical) are acts of *reason.* (I shall pick up the theme of practical rationality in a later chapter.)

And the property of being potentially rational encompasses a range of psychological, intellectual, and cultural facts that obtain in each normal human being.

More specifically, all of these activities are (a) actions or practices consciously performed or conducted by an agent, that (b) aim to know what is true, what the world is like, and what to do about it, and (c) are essential social activities in that they are essentially linguistic and language is acquired only with a social context (such as family or culture).

Hypothesis

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

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

18. Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form."

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

If human beings *really are* rational animals, we may initially hypothesize that that an *irrational* human is ipso facto defective.[19] (As above, I do not here intend to discuss mental illness, disability, birth defect, chromosomal disorders, and other such exceptions to 'normal' functional humans.) Initially, then, we should expect that the qualities that count as virtues for practical rational animals are those that enable us to actualize our life form and fulill our natural functions.

Hans Fink agrees with my hypothesis:

> The nature of x is both what is special about this x and what makes this x one of the x's as opposed to the y's. When x is defined per genus et differentiam both the genus and the differentiating characteristic and their combination could be taken to express what is the nature of x.… Human nature is what differentiates us from the animals and the plants. By nature we are rational beings. Our human nature, however, is also that in virtue of which we belong to the animal kingdom and to the living organisms. By nature we are mammals. We may thus use the concept of nature to differentiate rather than include, but also to include rather than differentiate. And we may use the concept of nature to express that differentiation and inclusion should not be seen as incompatible.[20]

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

Potential

I must hasten to add that "humans are practical, rational animals" is a generic. It admits of exceptions. Anacephalic babies are not even potentially rational, for they lack the subvenient brain structure necessary for rational consciousness, yet they are recognizably *human* (they are not opos-

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

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

sums), just defectively so. (A war veterans is still human even if he or she is no longer bipedal!) Injury, illness, genetic defect, radiation poisoning, and any number of other negative factors may render a human being sub-rational. Coma, mental illness, and other factors may render a human being non-practical (unable to direct his or her own life to a normal degree). The point of the argument above was that generic truths about humans inform us about the lifeform of the species.

This helps to rebut a playful jab from Bertrand Russell, who says: "Man is a rational animal —- so at least I have been told. Throughout a long life I have been looked diligently for evidence in favour of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it."[21] Part of the skepticism from analytic philosophers to the neo-Aristotelian project stems, I think, from this worry. Nevertheless, the concept of nature being deployed here is of the appeal of the neo-Aristotelian project is a clear concept of nature that applies to both humans and other animals.

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

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

Generics as a Basis for Virtue

Someone might be wondering: What does all of this have to do with virtue? Peter Geach says "Men need virtues as bees need stings."[22] Philippa Foot echoes Geach's statement about "need" and "necessity" as well. Alasdair MacIntyre subtitled his most recent monograph: "human beings need the virtues."[23] The kind of necessity being predicated here is the same kind of necessity with which a bee needs a sting. It is a formal and teleological necessity. Virtues are those qualities needed by us as members of the human species, each member of which exemplifies the same human nature of being a potentially practical, rational animals.

Michael Thompson summarizes:

> "… we may view this line of thought as beginning with the idea… that will and practical reason are on the face of it just two more faculties or powers a living being may bear, on a level with the powers of sight and hearing an memory. The second crucial thought is that an individual instance of any of the latter powers — sight, hearing, memory — is intuitively to be judged as defective or sound, good or bad, well-working or ill-working, by reference to its bearer's life-form or kind or species."[24]

Something changes when we examine human beings compared to all other animals or all other natural kinds.[25] We continue to evaluate humans on the basis of their species, but we evaluate not just their health and normal developmental stages, and their maturity, but their *actions*.

And this is how virtues appear, in general. Rosalind Hursthouse says that: "The concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good: a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent or admirable person who acts and feels well, rightly, as she should. These are commonly accepted truisms."[26] These truisms encompass our everyday moral judgments about who is admirable much more broadly than our judgments about who is morally upstanding or

22. Geach, *The Virtues*, 17.
23. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.
24. Thompson, *Life and Action*, 29.
25. Katherine Hawley and Alexander Bird, "What Are Natural Kinds?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (2011): 205–21.
26. Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics."

who avoids being morally despicable. There is more to being an admirable person than *avoiding* transgressions. Nicholas Gier's memorable image of the "couch potato" illustrates this point. The Couch Potato works a mindless job which he is able adequately to perform while watching television (and today we can add, checking his Facebook and Twitter feeds); he rarely rises except to receive himself and microwave his dinners; he is even religious, watching his favorite preachers on Sunday morning television and tithing regularly. Yet the couch potato is by my standards living a wasted life and pitiable life. (I am counting on your similar intuition.) We do not want to imprison him for being such a failure; but we certainly do not admire how he lives. By contrast, admirable people command our respect for being morally upstanding, and so much more. We admire them for their brains, their guts, their strength, their rare talents, their outstanding achievements, their unimaginable creativity, their wit and eloquence. Some people are remarkable for *what they are given* (great beauty, great intelligence, and so on). But the admirable person is remarkable not just for good fortune. In fact, admirable people are often admirable for overcoming extraordinarily bad fortune. We truly admire *what they do* with *what they are given*. In a word, we admire how they live.

> So, summing up, a good social animal (of one of the more sophisticated species) is one that is well fitted or endowed with respect to (i) its parts, (ii) its operations, (iii) its actions, and (iv) its desires and emotions; whether it is thus well fitted or endowed is determined by whether these four aspects well serve (1) its individual survival, (2) the continuance of its species, (3) its characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, and (4) the good functioning of its social group—in the ways characteristic of the species.[27]

III. Objections

No Human Nature Objection

One worry mentioned above is that human nature is a mess. For all we can tell (without the benefit of divine revelation) humanity is an anomaly. Our origin is shrouded in mystery, our destiny undecided.

27. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 202.

Our evolutionary history has bestowed upon us what Bernard Williams calls "ill-sorted bricolage of powers and instincts":

> The second and more general reason lies not in the particular ways in which human beings may have evolved, but simply in the fact that they have evolved, and by natural selection… On that [evolutionary] view it must be the deepest desire—-need?—-purpose?–satisfaction?–of human beings to live in the way that is in this objective sense appropriate to them (the fact that modern words break up into these alternatives expresses the modern break-up of Aristotle's view). Other naturalistic views, Marxist and some which indeed call themselves 'evolutionary', have often proclaimed themselves free from any such picture, but it is basically very hard for them to avoid some appeal to an implicit teleology, an order in relation to which there could be an existence which would satisfy all the most basic human needs at once. The first and hardest lesson of Darwinism, that there is no such teleology at all, and that there is no orchestral score provided from anywhere according to which human beings have a special part to play, still has to find its way into ethical thought.[28]

Response

The response of Hursthouse, Foot, Brown, etc., is that natural teleology is indeed compatible with Darwinism and does indeed provide a "an appropriate way to behave" (or we might add, *ways*) that is "inherent in each natural kind of thing."This is Fitzpatrick's main worry, not that we have evolved poorly, but that we evolved at all.[29] He argues that evolved organisms have a telos to reproduce, not to "flourish".

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

Strictly speaking, evolutionary theory may be summarized in five theses explaining the current multiplicity and shape of terrestrial life.[Cf. Plantinga[30] 8-9. 1. The earth is very old; 2. Life has progressed from relatively simple to relatively complex forms; 3. Through slow and gradual

28. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), 44.

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

30. *Where the Conflict Really Lies*.

changes, all the modern forms of live have appeared; 4. All of life originated from one original place and species; 5. Some mechanism such as natural selection drives the process of descent with modification.] Each separately and all together they explain biological processes of genetic mutation, reproduction, preservation, and proliferation. A sixth, not *necessarily* related Strictly speaking, about teleology, it says absolutely nothing.[31] As for those brands of metaphysical reductionism that are incompatible with natural teleology, if our knowledge of natural teleology is well-grounded enough then so much the worse for metaphysical reductionism.

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

> In each case we rely on the notion of natural kinds and their appropriate way of behaving:
>
> > [I]n relation to which they are evaluated as good or defective. The evaluations do not—as they might in a post-Darwinian age—evaluate members of species of living things simply as good, or not so good, or downright defective, as replicators of their genes.[32]

Hursthouse's primary response to Williams is that his worry is not actually rooted in the progress of modern science. He himself admits that "many of course have come to that conclusion before" (the conclusion that "human beings are to some degree a mess… for whom no form of life is likely to prove entirely satisfactory, either individually or socially.")[33] Rather, Hursthouse points out, his worry is an expression of moral nihilism and despair.[34] Williams believes human nature is a mess *because* he believes no form of life is completely satisfactory for everyone. But that blade cuts the

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

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

33. Ibid., 261, quoting from Williams.

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

other way. If one has hope that some form of life is or may be at least mostly satisfactory for at least some people, it makes sense to believe human nature is not completely a mess. And Hursthouse movingly praises hope as a virtue.

> Alternatively (or perhaps as well) we could stick with what we have—those facts about human nature and the way human life goes that support the claim that the virtues on the standard list benefit their possessor, and the reading of human history that ascribes our persisting failure to achieve *eudaimonia* in anything but very small patches to our vices. True, it is not easy to hold on to them sometimes; despair and misanthropy are temptations. But we should.[35]

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

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

As for the second worry, some will say that humans are mere mammals, and that is the end of it. As Andrew Bailey says, "we are animals."[36] Stephen Brown argues that ethics is a descriptive discipline in the end; even virtue ethics, after being appropriately "naturalized", does not *commend* the virtues so much as *detail* the traits which happen to be adaptive for creatures like us to survive

35. Ibid., 265.
36. Bailey, "Animalism."

and propagate our genotype.[37] Although the "characteristic form of life" of human beings involves highly rarified neurological and cognitive processes we do not observe in other animals, nevertheless, nature only reveals one kind of biological concept of nature: a species. And species aim to survive and reproduce.

Response 2

My reply is that to say that humans are mammals is an empirical assertion; we exhibit quite a sufficient number of tell-tale properties shared by other mammals: a neocortex, hair, mammary glands, and hearts of a particular form and function. But to say that humans are *merely* mammals is a profoundly anti-empirical assertion. I even would tendentiously label it profoundly *anti-scientific*. For what we observe of ourselves both "from inside" and "from outside" we exhibit a range of properties not shared by other mammals: grammar and language, fire-making, cooking, sex for pleasure, abstract reasoning, science, philosophy, religion, mythology, agriculture. Of course, slippery spatial analogies like "inside" and "outside" admit of multiple senses: "inside" can and often does mean what can be known via introspection (e.g., the way I know what it feels like to be slighted or to be praised, the way I remember the color of my grandmother's house) and what can be known from accepting limitations of a first-personal or second-personal human point of view more generally (e.g., it appears that the sun orbits the earth rather than the other way around; and I know when my mother is upset because I just "know" that look). Looking at things from the "outside" might mean what can be known via sensory perception or what can be known – if anything – by pretending to a neutral, objective, third-person, God's eye view.[38] We can posit counterfactuals, as for example when we speculate what intelligent extraterrestrials would think of humans if they observed and studied our species, with fresh eyes, alongside every other. All that matters for my purposes now is that our species exhibits a range of peculiar activities that distinguish us from mammals, from ani-

37. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*; Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue."

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

mals more broadly, and from any other known natural entity in the cosmos – and that recognizing as much is an *empirical* matter. To deny our uniqueness is possible, after a long inquiry. But to be blind to our uniqueness from the outset is to be subject, in all likelihood, to philistine reductionism that has no more to do with genuine science than does belief in extraterrestrial life.

Irrelevance Objection

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

This objection he shares with non-naturalist realists, subjectivists, and moral anti-realists. On the other hand, he does not think that goodness is *purely* subjective, originating in moral evaluators and projected outward by them onto the world. I will try, in this section, to get a clear handle on this paradoxical view. An initial quotation from McDowell expresses his relation to Foot:

> Philippa Foot has long urged the attractions of ethical naturalism. I applaud the negative part of her point, which is to reject various sorts of subjectivism and supernaturalist rationalism. But I doubt whether we can understand a positive naturalism in the right way without first rectifying a constriction that the concept of nature is liable to undergo in our thinking. Without such preliminaries, what we make of ethical naturalism will not be the radical and satisfying alternative to Mrs Foot's targets that naturalism can be. Mrs Foot's writings do not pay much attention to the concept of nature in its own right, and this leaves a risk that her naturalism may seem to belong to this less satisfying variety. I hope an attempt to explain this will be an appropriate token of friendship and admiration.[39]

As this quotation makes clear, McDowell shares Foot's rejection of "subjectivism and supernaturalist rationalism" but he disputes her "concept of nature". McDowell's classifies his own view as a "sort of naturalism" – namely "relaxed naturalism."[40] Farreira calls McDowell-type views "excellence

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

40. He calls it by a variety of other names: 'liberal' naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind and World* 89, 98); 'acceptable naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* 197). Like Thomas Nagel, he also finds friends in Plato and Aristotle, calling his view 'Greek naturalism' (McDowell, *Mind and*

naturalism" and Foot-type views "empirical naturalism". McDowell invokes Aristotle's notion of ethics, by which he hopes to rethink our conception of human nature and nature as a whole. He says, "the rethinking requires a different conception of actualizations of our nature."[41] Second nature is that space in which human beings are initiated into particular ways of behaving and knowing.

What is his objection to Foot's view? She thinks that normative facts are response-independent features of nature. He says that the naive realist view (that moral values are response-independent) is "impossible – at least on reflection – to take seriously…"[42] The first reason McDowell can't "take naive realism seriously" is that he finds one sort of motivational internalism absurd. He points to a "worry about how something that is brutely *there* could nevertheless stand in an internal relation to some exercise of human sensibility."[43] In this McDowell agrees with Mackie: the "central doctrine of European moral philosophy" is a mistake;[44] it is wrong to think that some things *merit* certain responses by virtue of what they are and what we are. (McDowell's worry is akin to Mackie's bewilderment over the notion that "to-be-pursuedness" is built into things.) A second worry is that the doctrine of objective value, where normative facts are primary qualities of nature, has been discredited or outmoded by modern science. The modern scientific picture of nature is "disenchanted" from such instrinsic values as meaning and morality. He says, "The most striking occurence in the history of thought between Aristotle and ourselves is the rise of modern science."[45] This objection McDowell shares with Gibbard and Blackburn.

Yet McDowell does not conclude (as many do), that therefore values are merely subjective; he does not conclude that there is no such thing as natural normativity. McDowell's anti-dualist position here (as elswhere!) is liable to puzzle or frustrate some philosophers. He is not a realist; but

World 174), 'Aristotelian naturalism' (ibid., 196), 'naturalism of second nature' (ibid., 86), or 'naturalized platonism' (ibid., 91). Cf. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism. 204; and Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).

41. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.
42. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo, eds. (Blackwell, 2007), 137.
43. Ibid., 143.
44. John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Penguin UK, 1977).
45. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 174.

he is not an anti-realist. He is an "anti-anti-realist". McDowell is always fighting on two fronts, attacking a position without thereby supporting its apparent opposite. (Similarly, in *Mind and World* he attempts to dissolve the "vacillation" between naive empirical realism and "Rampont Platonism".) It may be worthwhile to make the contextual observation that McDowell's position here reflects his broader project of *dissolving dualisms*. He says he is influenced by two main sources: the "Socratic tradition" and Wittgenstein.[46] From the Socratic tradition he draws a way of thinking in which dualisms do not even arise. And from the later Wittgenstein he draws a way of doing "therapeutic" philosophy[47] – philosophy that 'leaves everything as it is'[48]. That is, McDowell believes many philosophical puzzles arise not from puzzling reality but from errors in *our own thinking*, so we need "therapy": dualisms need to be *exorcized*.

It makes sense that McDowell disputes both Foot's brand of moral realism and also its apparent opposite, subjectivism and anti-realism. But what is the alternative to the apparently exhaustive dualism of seeing values (or norms) as *either* facts of nature like primary qualities *or* unreal, illusory, and purely subjective. His answer is that values are "secondary qualities" or "dispositional properties" of nature. His essay "Values and Secondary Qualities" argues that values are like colors and unlike shapes.[49] We might paraphrase this thesis by saying that "natural normativities" are qualities *in the world* (not just in our heads) but they are not Lockean "primary qualities." They are, rather, Lockean secondary qualities.

Yet McDowell also disagrees with the opposite extreme of Foot's view, as represented by those (such as J.L. Mackie, Alan Gibbard, and Simon Blackburn) who believe that normativity is "projected" by philosophers and scientists onto the natural facts. Mackie's error theory gets right

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

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

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

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

the common sense view that "ordinary evaluative thought [is] a matter of sensitivity to aspects of the world."[50] Secondary qualities are "subjective" in that they cannot be adequately conceived "except in terms of certain subjective states"[51] but not in that they are therefore illusory. A secondary quality is not "a mere figment of the subjective state that purports to be an experience of it."[52]

He says a secondary property ascription is true "in virtue of the object's disposition to present a certain sort of perceptual appearance."[53] Experience of secondary qualities is a (sense) perceptual experience. This a Lockean doctrine. Redness is not *merely* a microscopic texture property (say, the texture that scatters all light waves except red ones) because microscopic textures don't *look red* and things that *look red* appear so to observers with no knowledge of such textures.

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

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

Goodness, badness, and other values are therefore grounded in "second nature."[54] The

50. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 137.
51. Ibid., 139.
52. Ibid., 139.
53. Ibid., 138.
54. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," 188 and following.

space of reasons in which our rational capacities operate makes us sensibile to those dispositional properties of primary nature which become, for us, values such as goodness and badness. We will explore McDowell's view of second nature a bit more in a later chapter. Suffice it for now that "second nature" is a distinctly human phenomenon. We partially re-enchant nature by bringing primary facts into the space of reasons when they weren't there before.

McDowell, recall, thinks that values are secondary qualities of the world but not primary. This belief is consistent with his solution to the mind-body problem that even primary qualities are not given to us in experience without the involvement of spontaneous conceptual capacities. He assumes that nature – primary nature – is bald nature, disenchanted from values, teloi, and other esoterica. Yet to posit humanity, especially human rationality, as merely mechanical would be to deny our rationality. So he posits the space of reasons. Humanity exists in a space of reasons where we recognize reasons for belief and reasons for action. We are initiated into a Space of reasons by education, formation, cultivation (or *Bildung*).[55]

McDowell's fundamental solution to the mind-body problem in general is that the world given in experience is engaging both receptive and spontaneous capacities. We have to wonder about the implications of the "new interpretation of human experience"—and the location of the rational being within nature. McDowell does wonder about this, introducing the concept of second nature. Nature (we presume) is disenchanted. Human beings are natural—they exist within the disenchanted space of law. Yet, ex hypothesi the human being has (simultaneously) the capacity for spontaneous answerability to rational relations, which exist in a sui generis space of reason. These seem irreconcilable. McDowell here invokes Aristotle's notion of ethics, by which he hopes to rethink our conception of human nature and nature as a whole. He says, "the rethinking requires a different conception of actualizations of our nature."[56] Second nature is that space in which human beings are initiated into particular ways of behaving and knowing.

55. Bildung=formation, education; bild=form, image.
56. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.

Practical wisdom is a virtue that the young human being does not have, and the ethical demands of practical wisdom are not even perceptible to her. But she has the potential (within her nature) to develop the answerability to them. And ethical thinking is inculcated in a young person, and then later examined, but only examined from within ethical thinking. Human beings are intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing (Bildung) which instills the appropriate shape in their lives. So initiated, practically wise behavior is not just a new kind of behavior but the maturation and development of a new kind of faculty in the human animal. The circularity of this inculcation and new second natural faculty is not accidental: Since practical wisdom is responsive to reasons, it becomes a prototype "for the…faculty that enables us to recognize and create … intelligibility."[57] "[The ethical demands of reason] are essentially within reach of human beings. So practical wisdom is second nature to its possessors."[58]

Response

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

Nevertheless, I think McDowell's ingenious alternative to "empirical naturalism" or "strict naturalism" is flawed. So, before I defend my own version of Footian realism, I would like to point out two or three aspects of the inadequacy of McDowell's constructivist alternative.

Dilemma Unrestricted or Restricted 'nature'?

McDowell faces a dilemma. He must choose between two incompatible definitions of nature, and he wants both. On the one hand, he wants the term 'nature' to analytically exclude anything falling under the description of 'supernatural'; on the other hand, he most emphatically does *not* want to exclude "second nature" of human thought and experience in the space of reasons. But he can't have

57. Ibid., 79.
58. Ibid., 84.

what he wants, at least, not without further argumentation. He has merely asserted (but not earned the conceptual rights) to his conception of nature. Fink[59] expertly exposes McDowell's sleight of hand on this issue. To draw out the critique of McDowell that Fink and I share in common, I will have to present the details of his article.

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

> This is a terminological issue, but it is not easy to resolve simply by choosing one's definition of 'nature' and then sticking to it. No account of naturalism should forget the fact that 'nature' is, as Raymond Williams puts it, 'perhaps the most complex word in the language' (Williams 1981: 184), or as Hume puts it, a word 'than which there is none more ambiguous and equivocal' (THN: III.I.II.). In this section I shall try to give a somewhat systematic overview of some of this complexity that simply cannot be reduced by philosophical fiat…Indeed, it is a deep root of ambiguity that we can talk about the nature of art, law, language, culture, morality, normativity, history, civilization, spirit, mind, God, or nothingness even if we otherwise regard these as non-natural, that is, as not belonging to nature as a realm. There is no contradiction in talking about the nature of the unnatural, the super-natural, or the non-natural, just as it is an open question what the nature of the natural is.[60]

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

To see the dilemma McDowell faces, consider that there are at least two kinds of conceptions of nature: (1) "Restricted nature" picks out some subset of all things that are natural, leaving everything else 'non-natural', unnatural, or supernatural. Fink provides a list of eight different intuitive ways of contrasting (a restricted conception of) nature with what is non-natural. For instance,

59. "Three Sorts of Naturalism."
60. Ibid., 206.

'nature' could mean the world unaffected by human intervention (e.g., the arrangement of trees in the Yukon is natural) or "the empirical world as opposed to the intelligible world of the abstract, logical, or mathematical" (e.g., formal sciences contrast with sciences of nature.) All of these eight contrast with the (2) unrestricted nature. "Unrestricted nature" is just a multisyllabic synonym for "all." It leaves nothing out. This is the ninth option Fink summarizes as follows:

> Such a ninth conception of nature would be an unrestricted conception. It would express the idea that there is one world only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be. There are no realms above or beyond nature. To be is to be in nature and to be in continuity with everything else in nature. Even the greatest and deepest differences are differences within nature rather than differences between nature and something else.[61]

With these distinctions in hand, we can observe a crucial point that no one philosophical view has copyright on the term 'naturalism.' For example, classical materialism is perhaps a paradigmatic form of 'naturalism.'[62] By Fink's lights, classical materialism is a form a restricted naturalism for it affirms that whatever is material is part of nature, and so that the label 'not-natural' applies to whatever is not material (or not obviously material, such as ghosts, souls, and fairies). But classical materialism is not the *only* form of restricted nature. Rather, *the idealist, too, can rightly lay claim to the title of naturalism* – and not in a "Pickwickian" sense.

To see why idealism is a form of restricted naturalism, Fink takes a highly informative detour to analyze Plato's *Laws*. There he finds a Greek trichotomy between events that come about by nature (*physis*), chance, and art. 'Nature' and 'chance' explain why plants grow, why the sun moves, and so on. 'Art' explains why houses have roofs, why humans wear clothes, and anything else that we do and that nature and chance could *not* have done. The "natural" pair in this trichotomy consists of the first two: that which comes about, so to speak, on its own, *prior to* and *independent of* intelligent intervenion from humans or gods. This conception of nature excludes not only the supernatural

61. Ibid., 206.

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

but also the cultural, the fictional or imaginative, and so on. The Athenian does not accept this "dangerous" conception of nature. Rather, he argues that "soul is necessarily prior in origin to things which belong to body, seeing that soul is older than body."[63] Fink comments on this passage:

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

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

Fink's comment is that "This, I take it, is pretty rampant Platonism but clearly presented as an account of the soul as natural becaus eprimary in existence… mind is prior to world."[64] This brings us back around to idealism as naturalism. If soul is the primary sense of nature, then body is "second nature"! Mind is the primary thing, the first thing, the paradigmatic thing, against which mere body is contrasted.

We can now see the crucial point about 'naturalism.' Idealism and materialism turn out to be *identical* in one respect: they offer a "restricted conception of nature" and relegate to a "secondary" status everything that is not "natural" in the privileged sense. Idealism and materialism of course *contrast* – indeed, *compete* – in that they fight each other for the right to call *their* preferred side of the matter-form divide the *first* and *natural* side. Fink bolsters this point with a quotation from Aristotle

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

showing that Aristotle is aware of the competition between the matter-form divide. "Some identify the nature or substance of a natural object with the immediate constituent… e.g., wood is the 'nature' of the bed… [others] that 'nature' is the shape or form."[65] His comment on this passage is:

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

The point of these reflections is that McDowell has argued persuasively that we must return return to the unrestricted conception of nature.

Neither restricted sort of nature

The restricted conceptions of nature (materialism and idealism) are in ideological battle; some philosophers are willing to pick a side and battle it out with the other side. The idealist can be guilty of presenting the spiritual or conceptual version of nature as absolute. McDowell sees the same question-begging in what he calls "philistine scientism."[66] As Fink summarizes:

> McDowell has convincingly shown that what Bernard Williams calls the absolute conception of reality is merely restricted, bald naturalism ideologically presented as absolute (MVR: 112–31, esp. sect. 5).[67]

Not unrestricted

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

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

66. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 346.

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

> Nothing less than a naturalism that deserves to be presented as absolute could help break the spell of bald naturalism without merely replacing one restricted sort of naturalism with another and thus keeping the oscillations going.[ibid.[68] 219}

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

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

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

McDowell must pick sides, but he has not allowed himself to pick sides. He rejects one sort of idealism[69] and rejects one sort of empiricism. Therefore, by default, it is a necessary consequence that he embraces the unrestricted conception of nature.

Instead of explicitly admitting that he embraces the unrestricted conception without qualification, he puts the ball in one cup and then moves it around to the other side, pretending the

68.

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

ball was in the other cup all along. He keeps his conception of nature restricted (anti-supernatural) while *calling* in unrestricted (neither idealist nor physicalist). McDowell as a hero of anti-dualism has allowed himself merely to *name and claim* an unrestricted conception of nature while fully developing and endorsing a restricted conception of nature.

Sellars Example

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

> I mean that naturalism takes nature in a definite way as identical with reality, as self-sufficient and as the whole of reality. And by nature is meant the space-time-causal system which is studied by science and in which our lives are passed.[70]

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

Conclusion

I conclude that, despite their differences, McDowell shares with Mackie and other subjectivists radically reductive, disenchanted, Laplacian picture of material nature as a manifold of bald descriptive facts. The richer – and more scientific – unrestricted conception of nature is the one Foot (and MacIntyre) can help us to recover. McDowell merely asserts, without additional argument, the

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

common prejudice that "modern science" somehow disenchants nature, when in fact the "partial re-enchantment" he himself endeavors to recover is already present *within modern science*.

James Barham captures the dualism into which McDowell unwitting falls:

> the philosophical literature tends to work with a scientifically outdated image of living things as rigid "machines." This results in a picture in which only human beings (or at most the higher animals) can be properly ascribed purposes and agency in the full normative sense. From this perspective, we appear to be faced with an unappealing choice between eliminating teleology and normativity from our picture of nature altogether and understanding these phenomena as they are manifested in our own human form of life as floating free from any grounding in the natural world.[71]

Values as primary qualities

A second critique is that McDowell himself *does* allow that "values" can be primary qualities in nature. The theory of danger also helps McDowell in his conclusion deny that his view is a variant of "projectivism." The "epistemology of danger" that arises from McDowell's "theory of danger"[72] helps explain moral epistemology. This is McDowell's own example but he does not seem to notice that it can be used against his thesis. If "danger" is a Lockean primary quality, then "desirable" might be as well. His theory of "danger" is this: Just as there is *something* about red things *themselves* that makes them give us redness experiences, likwise there is something about the dangerous animal itself that gives us fear experiences. That quality may not be *the form of red* or *the form of danger*, but it is also not *nothing.* The "theory of danger" is intended to capture this "something" with the important notion of *merit*. Red objects *just appear as red* to us under the proper circumstances. They *just do* dispose us to have red experiences. But dangerous objects *merit* appearing fearful and dangerous. They *merit* that we have a fear experience. To describe a bear (say) as "dangerous" to rabbits is to say something about bears and about rabbits in their context on planet earth. The rabbit need not engage in concept-use or perceptual judgment – seeing the bear *as dangerous* – rather the rabbit

71. Barham, "Teleological Realism in Biology," 1.
72. Shaffer-Landeau and Cuneo, 142–3.

merely needs the instincts and perceptial capacities to see the bear. His response is not reducible to a response to the bear's size or fur or any other obvious empirical quality; the rabbit is responding to the danger. Likewise, when we see certain kinds of food as "disgusting" (rotten banana peels, say) we need to assume that we are projecting disgust onto the food; it is more plausible, by McDowell's own lights, that we are being sensitive to what such foods *merit*, given the kind of foods they are and the kind of animals we are.

Scientific realism?

McDowell wants to denigrate one kind of scientific realism (say, realism about evaluative judgments of health and sickness) while endorsing another kind of scientific realism (about shapes, sizes, weights, and other primary qualities.) That is, he denigrates the desire to find goodness in (primary) nature as a kind of neurosis or anxiety arising from the philosophical vertigo we experience upon becoming inculcated with "the scientific worldview." But if there is such a thing as "the scientific worldview" – the best thinking about the best deliverances of our best sciences – then it includes the deliverances of biology. It is hard to be asked to reject "science" (scientific knowledge from biology) on behalf of "science" (scientific knowledge from physics). One begins to suspect that the request is that we reject genuienly scientific knowledge from biology on behalf of philosphical materialism, which wields the word 'science' as a bludgeon with which to beat its ideological opponents. McDowell acknowledges that his critics will criticize him for failing to live up to "philistene scientism" and yet criticizes the Footian picture for philistene scientism.

IV. Conclusion

The sort of naturalism(s) represented by Foot, Hursthouse, and McDowell aim to ground evaluations of a member of a species on the life form of that species. The generic that 'a human being is a practical, rational animal' captures the life form of the species in a manner that is accessible to an "alien anthropologist" observing humanity from the "outside", from outside the practical

point of view. The presence in humanity of such generically animal behaviors such as birthing, reproducing sexually, eating, sleeping, and dying betray a common root and identity with the animal kingdom and with the biological world as a whole; yet other human behaviors, especially language, deliberation, reflection, and intentional action betray a curious difference. As such, those qualities that enable human beings to be practical, rational animals are liable to turn out to be virtues. Those qualities of natural excellence enable the member of the species to actuate the potentials inherent in such a life form. Showing how such qualities as show up on "normal" catalog of virtues, and how perhaps even others, fall under the concept of natural excellence, is the task for the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Virtue and Vice for Rational Animals

If riches are desirable in life, what is richer than Wisdom, who produces all things? … Or if one loves righteousness, whose works are virtues, she teaches moderation and prudence, righteousness and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful than these.

Wisdom 8:5-7

Introduction

My thesis in this chapter is the thesis of the dissertation as a whole: **virtue is the plurality of acquirable excellent character traits (such as moderation, tolerance, and wisdom) that are necessary for practical, rational animals because virtue partly constitutes natural human flourishing.**

This builds on the argument of the last chapter that human beings are rational animals, and hence experience life as a process of maturation toward an intrinsic life form. At the beginning of life, vulnerable human animals need many practical and physical necessities if they are to survive to maturity. Then, as they mature, the need for particular virtues and for virtue in general increases, especially for traits that enable one to engage in successful practical reasoning.

Once acquired, traits dispose the mature practical rational animal to do well at accomplishing the universal projects of human life (such as sustaining friendships) and to react well to the universal challenges of human life (such as the death of loved ones). The absence of virtues, and the presence of vices, corrupt practical reasoning and stultify the realization of our natural flourishing. Vices dispose us to succomb to common temptations and to fail at universal projects.

In this chapter, I present my own synthesis. I shall defend the resulting synthesis against various objections.

I. Excellence and Imperfection

Our prediction from the last chapter was that virtues would pertain to the three aspects of our nature identified in the generic: "humans are practical, rational animals." As animals we are inherently mortal, biological, beings whose life consists of a process of maturation, homeostatic maturity, aging, and death. Human being as rational *animals* by nature need to breathe, eat, sleep, and stay warm, deal with the urgings of our sexual nature, and so on. So our account of virtue will have to show how by reflection and deliberation, the virtuous person takes up his own biology and psychology into a space of reasons and construct a "pattern that, given the human situation, is likely to lead a good life."[1] As practical, rational animals, we are inherently conscious and self-conscious beings who speak, interpret, and create in the context of a linguistic community such as a family, society, and culture. Although we are pushed about by our biological instincts and by social pressures, we do not *simply* stumble around through life, but, in general, also sometimes act on reasons. We deliberate about future actions, and reflect on past actions. The success of our actions is not guaranteed, and the reasonableness of our reasons is not guaranteed. So, we may tentatively hypothesize that the qualities that enable us to pursue our ends *well* would be excellent qualities. The practical, rational agents who consistently succeed at pursuing and achieving their ends would be models of virtue. I shall have much more to say below about what ends people *have* or *ought to have* and about the

1. John Kekes, "Wisdom," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (1983): 280.

indeterminate concept of a human telos.[2]

Recall the criteria that are guiding our construction of an account of the excellence of rational animals: (1) Rationality is social, verbal, and symbolic (we learn to speak, to think, and to interpret from our family and community and culture). (2) Animality is social, physical, chemical, embodied (we must always care for the needs of nutrition, exercise, sleep, and our sexual nature). (3) Practical rationality is our active and proactive self-governance, including over all our thoughts and actions (we can affect but not choose the appearance, strength, size, etc. we start out with).

The excellences and imperfections intrinsic to our life form are likely to relate to these three attributes. Excellences would be those character traits that rational animals *need*, tout court. They need them to *become* rational animals, to actuate the form. Imperfections, by contrast, would be those that rational animals *need to avoid*, traits that partially inhibit or wholly prevent the actuation of human life. While I will discuss in detail the natural human telos in a later chapter, here I only assert that actualizing the potential latent in human nature is necessarily good for us.[3]

We can predict that evaluative features of a human being will be either beautific or miserable along these lines. (We are not yet speaking of moral blame, just evaluation-of-a-kind). A maximally miserable human being is one who has for whatever reason not become what human beings potentially can be and are by nature. He or she will be (a) physically imperfect (sick, weak, undeveloped, diseased), (b) rationally imperfect (ignorant, stupid, overly credulous and overly skeptical, unperceptive, angry) and (b) practically and socially imperfect (solitary, foolish, rash, unteachable, immoderate, highly valuing worthless things and disregarding the most valuable things). The maximally beautified human being is one who has for whatever reason become what human beings potentially can be and are by nature. He or she will be (a) physically excellent (healthy, strong, developed, well); (b) rationally excellent in knowledge, society (knowledgable, smart, properly trusting

2. Eudaimonists believe our telos to be human flourishing or happiness. Others believe it is something else, such as genetic proliferation, the creation of the self, or what have you. We shall return to this in a later chapter

3. Paul Bloomfield, "Virtue and Happiness," ed. Rachana Kamtekar, 2012.

and properly critical, perceptive, calm) and practice (sociable, wise, patient, teachable, moderate, valuing each thing according to its worth).

Of course, such a prediction has some serious problems. First, it does not distinguish between different kinds of excellence. Some of our attributes and actions may fail to be excellent without being our *fault*. So our account must allow us distinguish between various kinds of excellence. Consider the broadest set of things labelled 'good for humans'. All of the good things of human life enable the realization of a fully human life. But not all good things are subject to our control. The virtues are among those good things under our control – good dispositions we each choose to cultivate or fail to cultivate. Unlike other goods (say, wealth), virtues become *what we are*. On this point, Foot cautions against several species of terminological misunderstanding: *αρετή* for the Greeks refers "also to arts, and even to excellences of the speculative intellect whose domain is theory rather than practice"[4]. We should like to distinguish beauty, raw talent, strength, and other excellences that are not at all under our control from virtues – which are under our control, either partially or completely. Furthermore, even their list of "moral virtues" (*arete ethikai* or *virtues morales*) do not correspond precisely to *our* "moral virtues". The traditional list of cardinal "moral virtues" (including courage, moderation, practical wisdom, and justice) includes positive traits we might classify as "self-regarding" (e.g., moderation) as well as "other-regarding" (e.g., justice), and includes practical wisdom (*phronesis/prudentia*) which, if we mentioned it all, we would be inclined to classify as an intellectual virtue. Finally, not all of the items on our list of positive qualities (e.g., unselfishness) obviously correspond to one of the classical virtues. So, we ought not to assume that the terms 'excellence' or even 'moral excellence' can be a short-cut for understanding the concept of virtue. We must, instead, construct our account with care and attention.

Secondly, such a prediction sounds awfully elitist. It does nothing, thus far, to correct the suggestion that those who are natively intelligent are *morally* superior to those who are natively unintelligent; and it does nothing to correct the suggestion that those who are trained and educated

4. Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, 2; Cf. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy."

in various excellences are morally superior to those who lack such good fortune. I think such corrections can be made, however; we are still remaining true to Anscombe's directive of avoiding the concepts of "moral fault" and "moral superiority" for now. And while even after such corrections, there may be natural differences between people's excellence and imperfection there is nothing about the *very facts* of the human life form that is elitist or unjustly hierarchical – nature produces people with a wide diversity of physical attributes (height, weight, size, color) and will continue to do so.

For now, we are trying to get clear on the idea that the human life form fixes natural excellence and defect or imperfection. (I like "imperfection" because it connotes immaturity as well as defect.) The concept of 'excellence' is relative to an object's nature and function; an excellent knife is one that *cuts well*; but an excellent guard dog is one that barks loudly, is hostile to strangers, and so on. Artifacts receive their function by design, and even natural entities (such as dogs) have artificial functions insofar a they are trained by human users. It is tempting to assume that all functions are imposed on objects and that natural organisms (trees, dogs, humans) have no *inherent* function. Nevertheless, natural entities such as organisms have natural functions as well, as we have argued above. And, we argued, the teleological facts obtaining in organisms can be empirically discovered even remaining agnostic about its mechanistic or divine origin. That is, we can learn what acorns are by observing and reflecting upon their development from embryonic stages to maturity and the activities mature, typical members of the species exhibit.

Similarly, we can hypothesis that the "function" of a practical rational animal is to become a fully mature practical rational animal, and perform all of the activities characteristic of typical members of the species. Not all practical rational animals fully actuate the human life form. Such failures to realize one's life form may still be tragic even if they are not that rational animal's *fault*. For example, in extreme cases when a person's set of potentialities for rational activity (such as speech and abstract thought) is not realized because of genetic disorder, injury, or mental or physical illness, we still have no trouble identifying that are *a human being* by virtue of having a *human nature*.

Natural Flourishing

'Telos' picks out the Greek concept of an end, purpose, direction, limit, fulfillment, destination. It is pretty clear that human beings set ends for themselves, undertake projects, chart courses in a particular direction, and so on. To say that there is a "given" telos for humanity is to suggest that there is at least one or a set of ends "built in."[5] Put crudely, there are some goals we *ought* to have regardless of our other goals; or perhaps more accurately, the concept of inbuilt teleology suggests that there are some ends we *simply have* by virtue of being human. The question then becomes how to coordinate our chosen ends and our "given" ends. This question is by no means easy. However, I shall take a stab at it.

One way that moral philosophers (divine command theorists and Kantians, for instance) answer the question of the relation between our inbuilt ends and our chosen ends is to suggest that our inbuilt ends are "categorical imperatives" — that is, imperatives that are obligatory and authoritatively binding regardless of our chosen ends. The divine command theorist sees laws of God being objectively binding on all human beings. The Kantian substitutes a divine law for an autonomous, self-given law that each rational agent necessarily imposes upon oneself. However, each of these theories makes the law a brute obligation, a necessity without further conditions.

The virtue theorists I am discussing — and in some cases defending — take a different approach. Rather than treating the moral law as a divine "positive law" or a law of practical reason as such, they treat moral laws such as they are as laws of nature. Of course, these are not "descriptive" laws of nature, like the law of universal gravitation. It is a brute prescriptive law arising from the nature of humans as such. Now, since humans are (as I shall argue) rational animals, my view aligns rather closely with Kant's. However, I take a different line of argument on the controversy Kant had with Reinhold and others about whether or not one can freely choose to disobey the moral law. Kant thought one could not, since he defined "freedom" as conformity to the moral law (rather

5. Geach, *The Virtues*, chap. 1.

than conformity to natural, selfish, law of inclination or egoism). My view is closer to Reinhold's on this point, in that I think that our natural law is objectively prescriptive and binding, and in some sense defines who we *already are*, but that it is given to us to fulfill. We must align our chosen end with our given end. Failing to achieve our given end is, by definition, human misery. So even if I am "successful" in achieving my chosen ends, I shall be necessarily miserable if my chosen ends are radically opposed to my given ends.

> According to Thomson, it is a moral defect not to care about justice. It might be objected that someone might still ask, "Why should I care about justice?" We need to give that person a reason to care and it doesn't seem to be enough to say that lacking justice is a moral defect. However, the same problem arises in any view. Why should I care about what's wrong? Why should I care about what I ought to do? Why should I care about what I have most reasons to do? In fact, why should I care about what I should care about? No view seems immune from this sort of worry.[6]

Acquirable

There are two corollaries to this initial, formal definition of virtues as those traits human beings as practical reasoners need.

First, I would like to underscore the importance of the term 'acquirable'. Virtues are the acquirable traits needed by creatures like us, by social rational animals. Since, for the first decade or two of life, we are not primarily responsible for our own traits, the first corollary is high importance of moral and intellectual education. In many respects, our individuality depends on fate and luck. But in some very key respects, the acquisition of virtues and vices with which we begin adult life depends upon our education.[7] The beginning of human life, like the beginning of any organic life, is the foundation for all that follows. When a mother drinks heavily or uses cocaine while pregnant, the child is going to suffer the negative consequences for the remainder of his life. When a child

6. Gilbert Harman, "Judith Jarvis Thomson's Normativity," *Philosophical Studies* 154, no. 3 (2011): 441.

7. W. Jay Wood, "Prudence," in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A Boyd (Oxford University Press, 2014).

is abused – emotionally, verbally, physically, or sexually – by her parents, the psychological cost is meted out across the entire life and across generations. By the same token, when a mother eats healthily and takes her vitamins while pregnant, the child is going to reap the positive consequences for the remainder of his life. When a child is given love, approval, empowerment, discipline, by her parents, the psychological gains are meted out across the entire life and across generations. The original source of most people's life maxims are not their ethics professors, favorite novels, Holy Bibles, or therapists, but their parents or other guardians. This corollary might be obvious but we must never forget it. It is important to the argument because we should never give into the temptation to think that the cultivation of virtue is simply a business for adults (least of all adult professional academics) to argue for and against. It is the business of societies and families to do or fail to do every day.

Unified Plurality

The second corollary is that excellences of our practical rationality and even of our animality have a common foundation in practical reason. This is a partial solution to the age-old conundrum about the unity of virtues. Are there many virtues or just one? And if there are many, are they unified or a fundamental plurality? We should expect, on the basis of our nature as rational animals, that all virtues will be united in our rationality, and that our various concepts of virtue will be united in an appropriate concept of rationality. This is just what we will defend in a later chapter. If human nature is as "rational animals" then the unity of virtues as each depending on practical reason.[8]

II. Initial Objections

Our dialectic thus far has defended two major claims: first, that some natural facts are normative facts; and secondly, that some such facts are natural human facts. These natural norms are expressible in generic propositions of the familiar sort, such as 'acorns become oak trees' and 'human

8. Ibid.

beings are practical rational animals'. The "nature" – or set of in-built potentialiaties – of genetically modern humans is fixed enough to justify such generics. The current task is to see whether any of this has genuinely ethical significance for us.

Polyanna Objection

The major obstacle for this chapter is what Micah Lott calls the "Polyanna Problem."[9] To see this problem, supposing that the other two objections have been overcome: human norms are discoverable and demonstrable both practical and relevant. Still are such norms merely "protonormative"[10] or fully *ethical*? Are we obligated to fulfill all such norms? Just some? How are they to be distinguished from unethical, vile behaviors also statistically common among human behaviors? Empirically, some acorns become fully grown, mature oaks, but other acorns become stulted, sickly specimens. Most acorns never become anything other than acorns before they disintegrate into dust in the soil. So statistical majorities will not do the trick. Likewise, norms can be discovered for both good and evil: Some animals protect their young while other animals abandon or even consume their young. Some humans are kind and gentle while others are vicious and cruel. Anscombe anticipates this worry when she says:

> The search for "norms" might lead someone to look for laws of nature, as if the universe were a legislator; but in the present day this is not likely to lead to good results: it might lead one to eat the weaker according to the laws of nature, but would hardly lead anyone nowadays to notions of justice.[11]

Can we move from vague statements such as "human beings are language users" to particular moral statements: 'Human beings make and keep promises'?

The Polyanna Problem is the temptation to wink at the evils of human behavior in the effort to paint a portrait that is falsely full of sweetness and light. Put differently, even if human norms are

9. Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of Human Form."
10. Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory," chap. 2.
11. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 14.

discoverable, will they be *good*? Will they not be a mixed bag of good and apparently evil norms? Will we not need something else, such as conscience, or divine revelation, over and above these human laws, by which to judge which ones are normative for us?

Empty Definition Objection

Another objection is that the very definition of virtue as a *beneficial* or "positive" character trait is circular and therefore empty. To see the problem, suppose we define "boldness" as *doing hard things* and "courage" as doing hard things when it is good. Boldness is, so to speak, value neutral. One can be bold in wrongdoing or bold in doing well. If courage is just boldness in doing good, is this a trivial truth? An analytic truth? The affirmation that 'courage (doing hard things when it is good) is good' would appear to amount to the life-altering revelation that 'good things are good'.

Virtue is Optional Objection

Another objection is that virtues are good but not obligatory. They are not "perfect duties" in Kant's sense. Since clearly not all ethicists are virtue ethicists, it would seem a bit overreaching to assert that the pursuit of virtue is obligatory on every ethicist. Also, since not all people are westerners or neo-Aristotelians, it would seem cultural imperialism to assert that the pursuit of virtue is obligatory on everyone in the world.

Relativism Objection

Another objection has various expressions. One is that virtues (which are defined as good) can be used for evil, as when a criminal requires great courage to undertake his or her vile derring-do. Another expression is that "virtues" can only be defined by each cultural group within their own terms, and that there is no way for us to judge the conflicting "virtues" of another group. So Aristotele and Nietzsche (despite their other differences) both seem to agree in finding magnanimity

a virtue and humility or meekness a vice where St. Paul and Aquinas agree in finding humility or meekness a great virtue.

III. Response to Objections

Response to Polyanna Objection

The response to the Polyanna Objection is that virtue ethicists do not *ignore* vice, the dark side of human nature, or human evil. Rather to the contrary, the whole project of identifying virtues and successful, virtuous agents, is the process of sifting through the various examples of human lives in hopes of finding a pattern that is recognizably *good*.

Thomson explains that normativity consists in evaluations and directives. Evaluations say that "There is such a property of being a good K if and only if K is a goodness-fixing kind."[12] Directives say that "For it to be the case that A ought to V is for it to be the case that there is a directive kind K such that: A is a K, and if a K doesn't V, then it is a defective K."[13]

Virtues are just those traits needed by our goodness-fixing kind.

How do we sort through and filter out the kinds of lives that are miserable, pitiable, undesirable? In some cases, it is easy. In other cases, it is quite as difficult to know who is living a successful life as it is to live one's own life well. Hursthouse provides some clear thinking on this difficult topic. Sometimes, we have to find out what a virtuous person does to know what is right. And while we can't be guaranteed that our assessment of who is a virtuous person is infallibly correct, it is sometimes the best we can do:

> In response, it is worth pointing out that, if I know that I am far from perfect, and am quite unclear what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances in which I find myself, the obvious thing to do is to go and ask one, should this be possible. This is far from being a trivial point, for it gives a straightforward explanation of an important aspect of our moral life, namely the fact that we do not always act as 'autonomous',

12. Thomson, 21-22 %
13. Thomson 209 %

> utterly self-determining agents, but quite often seek moral guidance from people we think are morally better than ourselves. When I am looking for an excuse to do something I have a horrid suspicion is wrong, I ask my moral inferiors (or peers if I am bad enough), 'Wouldn't you do such-and-such if you were in my shoes?' But when I am anxious to do what is right, and do not see my way clear, I go to people I respect and admire: people who I think are kinder, more honest, more just, wiser, than I am myself, and ask them what they would do in my circumstances. How, or indeed whether, utilitarianism and deontology can explain this fact, I do not know, but, as I said, the explanation within the terms of virtue ethics is straightforward. If you want to do what is right, and doing what is right is doing what the virtuous agent would do in the circumstances, then you should find out what she would do if you do not already know.[14]

Response to Empty Definition Objection

Another objection was that virtues are defined as beneficial traits. This is an important objection but at the same time, it misses the point. It is a synthetic truth discoverable only by reflection that humans have a nature, a species-specific kind of flourishing, and that some character traits are conducive to the realization of our life form while others are conducive to our stultification. Peter Geach argues that just because an ethical conclusion is virtually un-revisable doesn't mean it is content-less.[15] All truths are true, in part, in virtue of the words used. But not all truths by definition are empty and content-less; rather, the stuff of life from which we derive our conceptual definitions or which we must fit into our conceptual definitions is a contentfull task. Let's consider this objection in another way.

Some ethical propositions are widely believed to be true.[16] Some philosophers argue that

14. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 35.

15. Geach, *The Virtues*, Chapter 1.

16. It is good to be kind; cruelty is bad. Pleasure is good. Wise people make good leaders. I ought to keep my promises. A just society is desirable. Fools are ridiculous and the wise are admirable. "Do good and avoid evil" (called the first principles of practical reason). Moderation is good (called the foundation of all ethics). "Drunkenness" or alcoholism are shameful. The Golden Rule (called the only objective rule in both religious and atheistic moralities). Injustice is bad. We ought to care for children and respect elders. Generosity is admirable.

this widespread, near universal belief is a sign that these propositions are self-evidently true:[17]

> It seems to me self-evident that, other things equal, it is wrong to take pleasure in another's pain, to taunt and threaten the vulnerable, to prosecute and punish those known to be innocent, and to sell another's secrets solely for personal gain.

Saying "it is good to be good" is a tautology. And most (if not all) tautologies are trivial. But these ethical propositions are not tautologous but are so widely and commonly accepted as to be easily mistaken for tautologies. Of course, if we define "kindness" simply as "a good disposition to treat others well" then it appears that "it is good to be kind" amounts to the same tautologous proposition "it is good to be good." But kindness is *not* best defined simply as *something good*. Kindness, it seems to me, and to many others upon reflection, is a special sort of quality we can recognize and name but not ultimately define. Cruelty, likewise, we "know it when we see it." There is more to our recognition of cruelty than the arbitrary application of "a bad disposition to hurt others." We know that a troubled child who takes to torturing animals for fun is acting cruelly. We try to help him or her to satisfy curiosity (or get attention, or whatever) through other means. We help them stop nursing a disposition to cruelty.

Another way of putting what is perhaps the same point is to call these propositions "quasi-analytic":

> Indeed, many fundamental scientific laws (as well as some scientific tru- isms) and many fundamental moral principles have the property which we might call quasi-analyticity (see, e.g., Putnam 1962). Because of their con- ceptual and methodological centrality, even when we know that their justifi- cation is a posteriori rather than a priori, we find it extremely difficult to envision circumstances under which they would be disconfirmed. For as long as they occupy so central a conceptual and methodological role, they are immune from empirical revision, and principles incompatible with them are ineligiblefor empirical confirmation (let's call them quasi-analyticallyineli- gible). As Putnam indicates, quasi-analyticity and quasi-analytic ineligibility can be altered only by pretty serious conceptual and theoretical "revolutions," whose directions are all but impossible to anticipate prior to the innovations or

17. Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism*, chap. 11.

> crises which precipitate them. The principle that torturing children is wicked and the fundamental laws of quantum mechanics are both candidates for quasi-analyticity.[18]

These ethical propositions do not seem to be tautologies. Call these non-tautologous but basic ethical propositions Platitudes. Some Platitudes are small, others great. "It is polite to say please" is a Platitude. But "treat others as you would wish to be treated" is a Great Platitude.

The core principles of "common morality" that have acheived an astonishingly wide consensus in bioethical discussions are good examples of Great Platitudes.[19]

Debunkers and Defenders

Some philosophers take their task to be to debunk the Great Platitudes. They wish to explain them away, to explain *why* they are false and *how so many people fall in for them*. The platitudes are either *false* ("know your place" taken as a justification of socio-economic or gender inequality is false) or as trivial; *of course* "murder is unjust" is true because, 'murder' is defined as 'unjust killing.'

Other philosophers take their task to be to *underwrite* the great platitudes. They wish to explain them, to explain why they are true and how it is we learn them, preserve them, and (most crucially) live well by taking them as sound practical advice. Both philosophers are sophisticated; but one is sophisticated in attacking and explaining away the Great Platitudes while the other is sophisticated in defending and explaining them.

As examples of the Debunkers, consider J. L. Mackie and Alan Gibbard. Mackie claims to be running counter to the great tradition of European moral philosophy.[20] Gibbard's metaethical works aim to capture our common sense belief that morality is objective but without the Platonism. He says, "It might be thought ordinary conceptions of rationality Platonistic or intuitionistic. On the Platonistic Picture coma among the facts of the world are facts of what is rational and what is not. A person of normal mental powers can discern these facts. Judgments of nationality are

18. Boyd, "Finite Beings, Finite Goods," 520.
19. Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*.
20. Mackie, *Ethics*.

thus straightforward apprehensions of fact, not through sense perception through a mental faculty analogous to sense perception…"[21]

As examples of Defenders, consider G. E. Moore, Robert Adams, and Frank Jackson. Moore's grandiloquent denouncements of moral philosophy are not, as one might expect, the harbingers of a revolutionary transvaluation of values; by the end of *Principia Ethica* he has given a sophisticated 300 page articulation of the yawningly common judgment that beauty, friendship, and knowledge are goods. Robert Adams' metaethical work aims to capture the common sense belief that morality is objective… by providing a systematic defense of Platonism. Plato sees goodness as becoming like god: "Fleeing [evil] is becoming like god so far as one can, and to become like god is to become just and pious with wisdom.[22] And Adams defends this resemblance relation as well. But not all Defenders are non-naturalists. Frank Jackson's influential account of functionalism[23] aims to naturalize "mature folk morality" without necessarily invalidating all of it.

It does no good to object that the Great Platitudes are *evil* or *oppressive*, binding women to social subjugation or condemning the poor to poverty. Rather, the corrections to the errors of European (and more broadly, western) moral philosophy are contained *within the resources* of western moral philosophy. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" tells more powerfully against sexism or classism than any revolutionary ideal.

Virtue not Optional Response

Another objection was the virtues are either optional or intolerant. This objection, as stated, misses the point. By arguing that virtues – whatever they may turn out to be – are those qualities needed by practical reasoners, we are not arguing about the *concept* of virtue but that *very qualities themselves*. Any culture, business, family, civilization, will thrive insofar as it is virtuous and disintegrate insofar

21. Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, 155.

22. Cooper, *Complete Works of Plato Statesman* 176a5-b2; John M Armstrong, "After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 171–83.

23. Frank Jackson, "From Metaphysics to Ethics" (Clarendon Press, 1998).

as it fails. Virtue is necessary because it is human. Justice, prudence, and courage are "needed in any human-scale enterprise"[24], from motherhood, to a successful career, to farming.

Put negatively, the thesis of this chapter is that vices necessarily contribute to misery, unhappiness, and human stultification and stagnation. Human nature is the starting point, flourishing is the goal, and the moral and intellectual virtues are the means by which we move from start to goal. Vices are those qualities that partly constitute human misery. Many kinds of living conditions are miserable; excessive cold or heat; starvation; illness; mental handicap; injury; extreme isolation and loneliness, and so on. But these kinds of circumstances are not *always* and *necessarily* miserable. Rather, being a lying, treacherous, scheming, envious, whining, daydreaming moral agent is truly miserable, even such happens to have a comfortable bed to sleep in and enough money to get through life. Such a person is despicable, a worthy specimen of human failure.

Some vices, especially intellectual vices, are especially despicable. Not everyone has equal amounts of intelligence conceived as raw mental horsepower. Some children even at a young age excel at doing "mental math" or memorizing geographical names, while others never acquire the knack for it. However, not all unintelligent people are stupid in the deplorable sense: stubborn, unteachable, slow to learn and resenting every bit, arrogant, smug, self-satisfied, and willfully ignorant. Such persons demonstrate intellectual vices noxious to all their fellows except those equally debased, and especially noxious to those unfortunate enough to be their teachers, parents, or guardians. And such intellectual vices are in a special way exemplary of human failing.

Response to Beneficial by Definition

The second objection, building on the above response, is about the very definition of virtue as a *beneficial* or "positive" character trait. To see the problem, suppose we define "boldness" as *doing hard things* and "courage" as doing hard things when it is good. Boldness is, so to speak, value neutral. One can be bold in wrongdoing or bold in doing well. If courage is just boldness in doing

24. Geach, *The Virtues*.

good, is this a trivial truth? An analytic truth? The affirmation that 'courage (doing hard things when it is good) is good' would appear to amount to the life-altering revelation that 'good things are good'.

This is an important objection but also misses the point. It is a synthetic truth discoverable only by reflection that humans have a nature, a telos, and that some character traits are conducive to the realization of our telos while others are conducive to our stultification. Peter Geach argues that just because an ethical conclusion is virtually un-revisable doesn't mean it is content-less.[25] All truths are true, in part, in virtue of the words used. But not all truths by definition are empty and content-less; rather, the stuff of life from which we derive our conceptual definitions or which we must fit into our conceptual definitions is a contentfull task. Let's consider this objection in another way.

Some ethical propositions are thought to be self-evidently true: it is good to be good. This is a tautology. And most (if not all) tautologies are trivial. Other ethical propositions are not tautologous but are so widely and commonly accepted as to be easily mistaken for tautologies: it is good to be kind; cruelty is bad. Pleasure is good. Wise people make good leaders. I ought to keep my promises. A just society is desirable. Fools are ridiculous and the wise are admirable. "Do good and avoid evil" (called the first principles of practical reason). Moderation is good (called the foundation of all ethics). "Drunkenness" or alcoholism are shameful. The Golden Rule (called the only objective rule in both religious and atheistic moralities). Injustice is bad. We ought to care for children and respect elders. Generosity is admirable.

Of course, if we define "kindness" simply as "a good disposition to treat others well" then it appears that "it is good to be kind" amounts to the same tautologous proposition "it is good to be good." But kindness is *not* best defined simply as *something good*. Kindness, it seems to me, and to many others upon reflection, is a special sort of quality we can recognize and name but not ultimately define. Cruelty, likewise, we "know it when we see it." There is more to our recognition

25. Ibid., Chapter 1.

of cruelty than the arbitrary application of "a bad disposition to hurt others." We know that children who tortures animals for fun is acting cruelly. We try to help him or her to satisfy curiosity or get parental attention through other means. We help them stop nursing a disposition to cruelty.

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26. Mackie, *Ethics*.
27. Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, 155.

grandiloquent denouncements of moral philosophy are not, as one might expect, the harbingers of a revolutionary transvaluation of values; by the end of *Principia Ethica* he has given a sophisticated 300 page articulation of the yawningly common judgment that beauty, friendship, and knowledge are goods. Robert Adams' metaethical work aims to capture the common sense belief that morality is objective… by providing a systematic defense of Platonism. Plato sees goodness as becoming like god: "Fleeing [evil] is becoming like god so far as one can, and to become like god is to become just and pious with wisdom.[28] And Adams defends this resemblance relation as well. But not all Defenders are non-naturalists. Frank Jackson's influential account of functionalism[29] aims to naturalize "mature folk morality" without necessarily invalidating all of it.

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Objection: Are virtues inborn?

I have emphasized throughout that virtues are acquired. I would like to state an objection to this part of the thesis. My response will be to concede some ground before holding the line.

To state the objection, first distinguish between what is "given" and what is under the control of a normal, functional, adult human being. Simply put, one's nature is given, and one's choices throughout life are controllable. But what is given in the life of a child includes (at least) one's genetic identity, one's time and place in history, one's culture and tradition, one's parents or guardians. If virtues are first inculcated in a child by tradition and only later acquired by an individual's own initiative, then it seems the dichotomy breaks down. It seems, in short, that the virtues one acquires

28. Cooper, *Complete Works of Plato Statesman* 176a5-b2; Armstrong, "After the Ascent."
29. Jackson, "From Metaphysics to Ethics."

or fails to acquire are part of the Given. For example, suppose Chivo grows up on a poor farm in rural Mexico in a large, Catholic household with pious parents. He learns not to lie, not to steal, to work hard on the farm, to be kind to his siblings and to have a good time with them. He is inculcated with honesty, respect for property, industry, gentleness, and affability. Perhaps Krishna does not attend school, or only does for a few years. But he learns from his famiily the social and trade skills needed to become a fully functioning member of his rural community. What effect would practical reasoning have on Krishna's life? It seems the answer is 'not much'. Socially, he is poor enough that he is not obligated to make many decisions about travel or entertainment. Religiously, he cannot choose (for many years at least) whether or not to join in the religious rituals of his family. Intellectually, he cannot choose to read many books or write ethical treatises, for farming occupies him for virtually all the daylight hours.

Compare Chivo with June. June grows up in a wealthy urban skyrise in Los Angeles with two secular parents and no siblings. She is taught not to lie, not to steal, and to do well in school, to respect her parents and friends but not to be too frivolous. She is inculcated with honesty, respect for property, studiousness, seriousness, and dignity. She becomes successful in grade school, high school, and college, and becomes a successful lawyer with enough disposable income to travel the world, enjoy aesthetic pleasures and a thriving social life. What effect would practical reasoning have on June's life? It seems the answer is 'a great deal.' She is a member of the "creative class" who earns her wages with her expertise in legal history, ratiocination, and rhetoric.

The moral differences between Chivo and June, such as they are, are given by their parents and cultures and socio-economic statuses and genders, etc. It seems that virtues can be defined as qualities that are not acquired *by the individual*'s effort but are *inculcated* by the individual's tradition.

Answer

The cardinal virtues are especially important because they are necessary for success in any worth-while human endeavor. Chivo and June do not need the same professional skills since they do not

perform the same social function; but they both need the "moral skills" of relating to their friends and family, cultivating their talents, and striving self-actualization. Most people in the world will not write books or even read many books; however, every human being in the world has biological parents and hence has family. Every living human being belongs to a community; even orphans and street urchins live in a community.

These traits are indeed acquirable and obligatory. Not everyone has equal opportunity to acquire them — moral education is helpful; virtuous parents and teachers are helpful; social conditions wherein vice will not be gratuitously rewarded or virtues gratuitously punished are helpful. Yet every human being has equal responsibility to acquire them.

One of the points we must concede is that farmers, socialites, and lawyers etc. need different levels of theoretical knowledge. Not everyone needs to be "learned." But the concession proves a deeper point: It takes practical wisdom to decide whether or not one can and should – in one's own circumstances – pursue theoretical knowledge. I shall return to this below.

Objection: Is the pursuit of virtue egoistic?

Supposing that virtues *benefit their possessor*, is it then egoistic or selfish to pursue virtue? Although it seems we only need virtue if we want to be happy, everyone has an obligation to develop virtuous traits because virtues help us become who we are. Such a pursuit is not selfish in the pejorative sense of the word; it is not 'egoism' for the charge of egoism assumes that the good for men is not *the good* per se. But we need not assume this. It may be that the good for men is the good. Pleasure is not the good, though it is *a* good. Moderation is a good as well, and a person who enjoys both the moderate pleasures of life and the moderation of pleasure and pain

IV. How Many Virtues? Two Examples: Moderation and Tolerance

Objections: How many virtues?

Virtues are those excellent traits that humans as practical reasoners need to realize our natural telos. And, we have argued, human nature is an intelligibly determinate concept: rational animals. Still, we might wonder how many virtues there are? It seems that our neo-Aristotelian writers vary widely on this point, from one, to a limited set, to a virtually unlimited set.

Foot and Geach use as examples the four "cardinal" virtues which are delivered by tradition. (Hursthouse also defends the "theological virtue" of hope and Geach defends even a kind of faith as non-theological virtues. Nevertheless, Geach argues that love can only be a religious virtue.)[30]

McDowell's account makes it seem like there is only one virtue (knowledge). Each individual virtue is "a sort of perceptual capacity", a "specialized sensitivity" to a particular range of reasons for action (say, the feelings of others), and all virtue is sensitivity to reasons. There is only one "moral outlook."[31]

MacIntyre, by contrast, not only includes in his broad historical list the virtues of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, the Greek tragic poets, the New Testament, Aquinas, Jane Austen, Benjamin Franklin, and Jane Austin, but he adds (apparently ad lib) new virtues like "integrity or constancy"[32] and "an adequate sense of tradition"[33]

Aristotle's list of virtues includes twelve moral virtues, each of which is defined by a moderate state between two possible extremes with respect to a given feature of human life, such as fear, pleasure, or wealth.[34] He builds into the definition of some of the virtues (e.g., magnanimity)

30. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chap. 11; Geach, *The Virtues*, chap. 4.

31. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 332.

32. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 203. "There is at least one virtue recognized by the [Aristotelian] tradition which cannot be specified at all except with reference to the wholeness of a human life – the virtue of integrity or constancy."

33. Ibid., 223.

34. 1. Courage in the face of fear; 2. Temperance in the face of pleasure and pain; 3. Liberality with wealth and possessions; 4. Magnificence with great wealth and possessions; 5. Mag-

the notion that not *all* human beings as such require it (since not all are extremely wealthy public servants).

Is there any sense to be made here? If human nature is stable, yet human reason is flexible enough to admit of variation (both progressive and regressive), then we ought to expect a stable set of qualities that count as virtues that is flexible enough to admit of variation.

The 'cardinal' or classical virtues to which those in the Aristotelian tradition (including recent neo-Aristotelians) give preeminent place are courage, justice, moderation, and practical wisdom. The four cardinal virtues are not only "delivered by tradition" but can be most easily ratified by anyone willing to do the critical analysis.

Roughly, justice is every member of the community doing their business and each person giving and receiving his due. Since every human being exists in society, the presence or absence of justice in the members of the community will sustain or destroy that community.

Courage is the proper boldness in doing the right thing despite opposition. Courage is not simply a military virtue appropriate to police officers, firefighters, telephone wire repairmen, etc.

Moderation is pursuing the right amount of pleasure in the right way at the right time, and avoiding the wrong amount and the wrong way and the wrong time. The dangers to health and happiness of excessive pleasure are obvious to anyone who has had the (mis)fortune to earn or inherit enough time and money to overindulge. Many celebrities who have worked their way to the top of the entertainment industry find that they lack the moderation by which to successful navigate the temptations associated with wealth and time.

Practical wisdom is excellence in knowing what to do in a given situation. Practical wisdom is I think rightly the most important virtue in the sense that it is a hub from which the other virtues emerge as spokes. Even the theoretical or intellectual virtues Zagzebski writes about depend for

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nanimity with great honor; 6. Proper ambition with normal honors; 7. Patience in the face of irritation; 8. Truthfulness with self-expression; 9. Wittiness in conversation; 10. Friendliness in social conduct; 11. Modesty in the face of shame or shamelessness; 12. Righteous indignation. He adds five intellectual virtues.

their cultivation on a person willing to invest the time and energy into theoretical learning.[35] But I shall return to this theme in a later chapter.

Beyond these, our definition of virtue is flexible enough to include a variety of positive character traits. Strictly speaking, however, the core virtues are those *all human beings need* since they benefit people along the lowest common denominator. We might call 'virtues' those positive traits that are appropriate for various life stations, ages, genders, professions, social roles, and so on. But if we are being strict such traits (regardless of how we label them) will be sharply distinguished from the cardinal virtues. They are the base of a triangle.

V. Moderation and Tolerance

VI. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to define virtues as those acquirable traits that are excellent for practical, rational animals like us. Our nature is normative, such that fulfilling it is morally good. We distinguished various kinds of excellence that are emphatically *not* within the purview of one's practical reasoning. Vices are those traits that we are either given through bad upbringing and bad education and (more to the point) those traits that we acquire ourselves. Virtues are those traits that we are given through good upbringing and education and that we acquire with moral effort, sometimes great moral effort. It remains to give a few examples of various virtues, to block the looming worry about cultural relativism, and to explain how they are unified in a concept of practical reason. That is the task for the next chapter.

35. Cf. Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry Into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Conclusion

Virtues are excellent character traits all rational animals need. The virtuous person takes up all that is given and puts it to good use in the resistance to evils and the pursuit of and sustainance of goods, both in individual life and communal life. The virtuous person discriminates between what is morally significant and insignificant, discriminating in what is significant between what is beneficial and harmful to the actualization of rational animals like us.

Vices are corruptions of life that are all-too-common. They are negative or destructive traits to which one is tempted somewhere in the common course of human life. Pleasures tempt us to immoderation; the urges to do favors for friends or to slight enemies tempt us to injustice; danger, difficulty, and other kinds of resistance tempt us to cowardice and *acedia*; laziness, arrogance, and culpable ignorance tempt us to practical foolishness.

Even if this account of neo-Aristotelian virtue is plausible, several questions remain. Let us to queue up the questions to be addressed in a later chapter.

Setting up Remaining Chapters

1. **What is our telos?**. The first point is that virtues bring about (and partly constitute a "pre-payment" on) human flourishing. So we would need to say more about our telos and what it would be like to have it realized. Although it seems to be merely pleasure or worldly success, and though I shall define it more later, I mean generally "well-being", true happiness, human success as such.
2. **Can virtues be put to bad use?** Virtues are necessarily good for human beings as such. But some of the qualities the moral tradition picks out as virtues can be conceived as being put to bad use. So can virtues remain virtues while in bad use? Although it seems that virtuous traits cannot be put to bad use, some virtues admit of misuse since the absence of practical wisdom renders traits (like moderation) that really are virtues ineffective at the realization of our human telos. This will require a discussion of practical wisdom.
3. **Are the virtues human or cultural?** Virtues must be derived from human nature and exemplify excellence in human nature. But still must all such human actions and excellence be mediated by culture, by "second nature"? Although it seems they are cultural, they are 'human traits' in that they express human nature. MacIntyre does not basis virtue enough in metaphysical biology; Foot bases it too much in metaphysical bi-

ology; McDowell bases virtue in reason but does not explain the relation of reason to metaphysical biology. Foot is closest to my view, but I supplement her view with arguments to the effect that normativity (including teleology) is built-in to nature as a whole, not just humanity.

4. **Can the virtuous person be irrational?** Relatedly, virtues are supposed to be actions "in accord" with reason and in accord with human nature. This suggests that the virtuous person cannot be irrational. Although it seems that the virtuous person can be irrational, the virtuous person is by definition rational either (in the primary sense) by reflectively endorsing their own reasons for action in every or almost every significant life pursuit or (in a derivative but no less real sense) by acting in accordance with good reasons, either on good advice from another or on their own, unreflective, habitual, reasons. Practical wisdom, then, has pride of place. There are other virtues besides practical wisdom; Socrates was wrong there. And Maggie Little is wrong to suggest that virtue is knowledge *and nothing more*.[36] But it is correct that wisdom has pride of place. Courage without wisdom ceases even to be courage. This will also require a discussion of practical wisdom. And to that task we now turn.

36. Margaret Olivia Little, "Virtue as Knowledge: Objections from the Philosophy of Mind," in *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Russ Shaffer-Landeau and Terence Cuneo (Blackwell, 2007), 252–64 It is not totally clear to me from this essay whether she means to suggest this point or not; but the suggestion is there and she does nothing to counteract it.