Chapter 1

Eudaimonia: Virtues as Realizing our Natural Human Telos

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

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

Quotation. "γένοι' οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών" (Become such as you are, having learned what that is) Pindar, Pythian 2, line 72.

I. Introduction: Destiny and Destination

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

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

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

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

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

3. Cf. Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

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

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

6. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998); Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, chap. 2; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), chap. 5.

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

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

9. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996); Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

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

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

The problems addressed in this chapter

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

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

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

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

II. Neo-Aristotelians on Eudaimonia

Foot on Deep Happiness

Foot argues that happiness is "deep satisfaction." This is compatible with, say, an extremely uncomfortable and even tragic life, like Wittgenstein's. It is not compatible with superficial satisfaction, the

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

froth of pleasure and tittering mirth that floats on a shallow waters. It must be "deep", by which I suppose she means that it stands up to our own reflections in a sober hour.

Hursthouse

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

McDowell on Eudaimonia as the Noblest Life

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

MacIntyre on Telos as becoming independent practical reasoners

After Virtue

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

Dependent Rational Animals

Dependent Rational Animals is a more ambitious book in some respects. MacIntyre aims to build a broader account of virtues by attending to not only our independence but our dependence. Much

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

of our dependence on each other stems from our animality: periods of gestation, infancy, old age, and illness all make us dependent on our fellow creatures.

Telos

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

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

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

14. John Horton and Susan Mendus, "Alasdair MacIntyre: After Virtue and After," in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory*, ed. Mark Alfano (Routledge, 2015), 6.
15. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54ff.
16. Ibid., 55.
17. Ibid., 55.

not only virtue theory but ethical theory itself. Edward Oakes describes the removal of telos from our worldview as "perhaps the greatest category mistake ever made in the history of philosophy."

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

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

For now, it is not vacuous to conclude that the virtues needed to achieve this (extremely indeterminate) goal themselves indirectly make room for and might directly illumine "what else" our telos consists in. The virtues needed to preserve the quest for the good, he suggests, may illumine

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

"what else" our telos consists in. It may turn out (and his later writings are more explicit about it) that the determinate telos of a given tradition is a more determinate conception of eudaimonia.

III. Discussion: Our Natural Telos

My view Synthesize, Compare

Some points

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

The importance of telos

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

Telos

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

Teleological ethics of the sort that concerns Anscombe (and concerns us in these chapters) is not a matter of a posteriori, statistical analyses of character traits or actions or rules and their respective consequences aimed at reliably hitting the target by consistently bringing about the cause. Teleological ethics is about unfolding the inner form of a thing; actualizing its inherent or intrinsic

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

telos. This process of self-realization occurs in all living things, from the smallest bacterium to the largest whale. It does not (at least I shall assume it does not) occur in any non-living thing; there is no teleological, goal-oriented process guiding the development of new solar systems or the destructions of old ones; there is no "cosmic ecology" because there is no cosmic ecosystem. The cosmic relation between star and asteroid is more akin to the terrestrial relation between gas and matter than the terrestrial relation between bear and butterfly.

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

The Primacy of 'Ought' Over Is

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

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

IV. Objections and details

Do human beings have a function?

Nature and Nature

Is there anything to this criticism? Anyone who reads the literature on various kinds of "naturalism" (ethical, metaphysical, epistemological, etc.) will be tempted to take accusations from one philosopher to another that a theory fails to be "naturalistic" as vacuous. The noun 'Naturalism,' like the adjective, 'natural', is a cognate of 'nature.' 'Nature' is the most ambiguous, multi-significant word in our language.[21] It seems that the only thing to be done is to stipulate a meaning and move on. Rather, I think the question of naturalism is an important one.

Fink on Nature

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

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

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

> creator. 8. The ordinary world as opposed to a world of the extra-ordinary and mystical.[22]

> Indeed, it is a deep root of ambiguity that we can talk about the nature of art, law, language, culture, morality, normativity, history, civilization, spirit, mind, God, or nothingness even if we otherwise regard these as non-natural, that is, as not belonging to nature as a realm. There is no contradiction in talking about the nature of the unnatural, the super-natural, or the non-natural, just as it is an open question what the nature of the natural is.[23]

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

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

22. Hans Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 209.
23. Ibid., 206.
24. Ibid., 203.
25. Ibid., 204.

sentence, of certain parts of your surroundings where you may or may not choose to go for a walk. Perhaps it is by your very nature that you are a lover of nature.[26] The idea of nature as essence may point in an idealist direction, the idea of nature as constitution out of more elementary constituents may point in a materialist direction, whereas the idea of nature as the defining characteristics may point in a formal or rationalistic direction.[27] Such a ninth conception of nature would be an unrestricted conception. It would express the idea that there is one world only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be. There are no realms above or beyond nature. To be is to be in nature and to be in continuity with everything else in nature. Even the greatest and deepest differences are differences within nature rather than differences between nature and something else.[28] The Athenian doesn't just leave the concept physis to the 'men of science'. He does not first accept their conception of nature and then confront them with the claim that there is something extra-natural—the soul or the gods—which they have disregarded and which is in fact prior to nature. No. Like McDowell the Athenian is eager to have nature on his side. He therefore challenges the scientists' right to restrict the term 'nature' to the soulless, partly necessary and partly accidental combinations of the elements.[29] With reference to Plato and Aristotle I have characterized two sorts of contrasting or restricted conceptions of nature, a materialist and an idealist. Each of them could be seen as underlying a sort of naturalism in ethics or in other branches of philosophy. The materialist conception of nature is at the root of bald, empiricist naturalism and of the many different modern forms of naturalism that let one or other interpretation of the results of present day science define what belongs to nature and what not. (A materialist conception of nature is also being taken for granted by most forms of non-naturalism, whether subjectivist or super-naturalist). The idealist conception of nature is at the root of the natural law tradition of naturalism that is still alive. The philosophical impulse behind both these sorts of naturalism is to see the ethical in continuity rather than discontinuity with nature understood as that which is most primary in existence and most objective in experience. They just happen to disagree about what that is.[30] McDowell has convincingly shown that what Bernard Williams calls the absolute conception of reality is merely restricted, bald naturalism ideologically presented as absolute (MVR: 112–31, esp. sect. 5). Nothing less than a naturalism that deserves to be presented as absolute could help break the spell of bald naturalism without merely replacing one restricted sort of naturalism with another and thus keeping the oscillations going.[31]

26. Ibid., 206.
27. Ibid., 208.
28. Ibid., 210.
29. Ibid., 210.
30. Ibid., 216.
31. Ibid., 219.

Three alternatives to natural normativity (if not included elsewhere)

1. **Nature is purely descriptive, normativity is illusory.** Bald nature is a realm of pure, descriptive fact.[32] The problem with this picture is that human beings would not be natural. The other side of the same coin is the view that normativity, whatever it is, is not natural.[33] But then again, human beings would not be natural if we are in any sense irreducibly normative. For normativity is central to human consciousness and value, and perhaps even language and meaning. As Julia Annas puts it: "Non-naturalistic accounts of ethical terms assume that their function, prominently their normativity, is something that arises with humans, or is produced by humans, in a way which owes nothing to the nature which we share with other living things."[34] If nature cannot include irreducible normativity such as that which is essential to language and morality, surprisingly, it cannot include us. I think we ought to reject any picture of nature or of science that exiles naturalists and scientists.
2. **Nature is purely descriptive, normativity is reducibly descriptive.** Some zealous defenders of bald nature will be quick to assure me that normativity can and will be one day "reduced" to mere description. Beside the fact that such promises in philosophy of mind have been very long in the fulfilling, I think such assurances are especially misguided in this case. Telling me that normativity is, after all, *really* just descriptivity disguised or mistaken seems to me self-referentially incoherent. It is like arguing that one 'ought' not tell anyone what they 'ought to do.' Of course, arguing that one 'ought not' talk like that is an instance of telling me what I *ought* to do. Similarly, arguing that on best evidence everyone *ought* to believe that normativity is in principle reducible is an instance of appealing to fundamental, irreducible normative considerations about evidence and reasons for belief. To quote Annas again: "it strikes me as ironical that such accounts often arise… From an excessive respect for science. Not only do they cut off our self understanding from the understanding we have of other things, they prevent us from seeing continuities between us and other living things, and in both these ways reveal themselves as profoundly anti-scientific."[35] Some may choose to wait (perhaps forever) for the promised reductions of the normative to the non-normative. I elect to move on.
3. **Nature is unknown**. A final alternative, this one more desparate, would be to argue that nature is mysterious and that we cannot know the truth of generic statements. But, such a skeptical move renders us safe from natural normativity but at the cost of endorsing

32. John McDowell calls this kind of naturalism 'neo-Humean naturalism' (*Mind, Values, Reality*, 183, 194) or 'empiricistic naturalism', 'bald naturalism', 'naturalism of the realm of law' or 'naturalism of disenchanted nature'.

33. Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence*, 4 (Oxford University Press, 2003) offers an argument that moral properties are "non-natural" in that they can be known without empirical help, but "natural" in that they are perhaps always realized in the physical, natural world.

34. Annas, "Virtue Ethics, Old and New," 12.

35. Ibid., 13.

absurdity: isn't it scientific knowledge that penguins are birds, that eyes are adapted for seeing? I'm not sure how to debate someone who seriously would deny such statements.

4. **Nature is partly descriptive, partly normative.**.

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

// What exactly is this picture of the cosmos? Affirming a picture leads to difficulties; it is easier to deny the dualism. It rejects eliminative materialism which squashes all consciousness into the *merely* physical as well as rejecting panpsychism or idealism which sublimate all biological and physical things into consciousness. It aims to allow that both mind and matter are on a single continuum of fundamental reality.[36] I do not wish to enter a discussion of Russell's brand of neutral monism here; I simply use it as an example of a denial of dualism. If *something like* neutral monism is true, the imagination ignites. What would it be like to include the "human sciences" (*wissenschaft*) within science and to include the natural and cosmic in our politics and ethics? The neo-Aristotelian answer is that such an ethics would have to begin with an examination of human nature. In this way, it is much easier to see why neo-Aristotelians categorize themselves under the metaethical banner of "ethical naturalism", even though they reject naturalism's more aggressive reductionism.

Naturalism and the is-ought gap

Consider an example: Suppose Bob thinks 'nature' is simply another word for the concept of 'all that which is', all of reality, being. Nature is everything. His colleague Bettie thinks 'nature' is a

36. In this way, I take my brand of rationalistic naturalism to akin to "neutral monism". As Bertrand Russell explains it: "The view that seems to me to reconcile the materialistic tendency of psychology with the anti-materialistic tendency of physics is the view of William James and the American New Realists, according to which the "stuff" of the world is neither mental nor material, but a "neutral stuff," out of which both are constructed." Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind* (Routledge, 1921) 6

word that picks out something special, namely that part of 'all that is' that is cosmic, that part of reality that constitutes *this* world. For Bob, nature is being. For Bettie, nature is part of being.

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

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

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

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

The point of these dialogues is this: The title 'naturalist' can, without contradiction, be claimed by Bob, Bettie, and Charlie. Each with a straight face owns the title, defends it against

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

rivals, and criticizes the silly notions of their colleagues as "non-naturalistic." Bob is a non-naturalist to Bettie and Charlie because he thinks immaterial angels are part of nature, are members of the natural order. Bettie is a non-naturalist to Charlie because she thinks that angels exist above and beyond the material order. Charlie is a a non-naturalist to Bob because Charlie does not accept *all* of nature.

This problem is iterative. It does no good to call Charlie a "physicalist" – the term "physis" means "nature" so 'physicalist' is a Greek language version of the Latin language 'naturalist.' The question is whether angels have a *physis*.

If the label is universally applicable, it is useless in the attempt to construct clear arguments with clear propositions. If it is useless for such purposes, it is *a fortiori* pointless to use the term as an epithet of praise or blame. Yet despite this general conceptual anarchy, some philosophers emit the accusation of 'naturalism' or 'non-naturalism' as if uttering a curse. They seem to believe the sheer force of being called a naturalist or non-naturalist will melt their opponent's resolve and refute their position.

I should say that among the crew of naturalists like myself, it is perfectly well to point out that "that fellow over there is not a naturalist like us" – as long as we can recognize that that fellow and his crew are pointing to me and saying "that fellow over there is not a naturalist like us." Our disagreement is real. But it is over what 'nature' consists in and not whether some view ought to be taxonomized in philosophy encyclopedias as a 'naturalistic' view or not. I cannot imagine any philosophical view whatsoever – pansychism, Parmenidean monism, nihilism – that cannot be presented (without contradiction) as a variety of naturalism.

So what question should we ask about view X? We should ask what *kind* of naturalism X is. But this is the same as asking whether it is true or false. And that is a worthwhile question.

Unknown

We might put McDowell's complaint punchily in this way: human rationality is not part and parcel of nature, which is irrational or sub-rational. We cannot naturalize reason (eradicate or reduce it to *mere* bald nature) but neither can we justifiably project onto non-rational nature properties of the human mind.

Richard Bernstein calls John McDowell's naturalism a much needed "novel twist"[38] on the stalemate between those who think naturalism will eventually make good on its promise to naturalize reason and those who are sick of waiting and ready to give up. He quotes Joseph Margolis and Mark Gottlieb as saying that:

> Naturalism in the current analytic sense may well be the dominant programmatic orientation of Anglo-American philosophy. It may be characterized as an informally linked family of doctrines and strategies broadly in accord with 'ancestral' themes of W. V. O. Quine's "Epistemology Naturalized." The original themes feature in Quine include: a preference for physicalism of one sort or another, a strong emphasis on the continuity of science and philosophy, particularly at the explanatory level, and the effective replacement of legitimate inquiries of a typically noncausal sort by causal inquiries centering on belief."[39]

The "specter of Kant keeps surfacing in thinkers like Putnam and Habermas who are convinced that reason cannot be naturalized."[40] The "novel twist" comes from John McDowell. Bernstein says that "at first glance, it seems that McDowell fits right into the tradition of Kantian anti-naturalism — a tradition that runs from Kant right up to Putnam and Habermas" since he thinks "reason can't be naturalized."[41] But his arguments, Bernstein thinks, against bald naturalism amount to some sophisticated question-begging via sleight of hand.

The view I am attempting to defend is closest to Foot's, and may be seen as demanding that

38. Richard Bernstein, "Whatever Happened to Naturalism," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 69, no. 2 (Nov 1995): 57–76.
39. Ibid., 58.
40. Ibid., 58.
41. Ibid., 62.

reason and nature are unified. Some might describe this unification as the naturalization of reason, but others might describe it as the rationalization (or re-enchantment) of nature. Is enchanted nature naturalistic? I say that it is. But others have complained that Foot's neo-Aristotelian "naturalism" does not amount to a naturalistic theory. They object that Foot is not a "naturalist." Allen Thompson, though defending Foot overall, concedes the poignancy of the worry:

> The objection I think I understand and want to take seriously starts from the thought that in employing such notions as life and organism and life-form or species we introduce something foreign, in particular something 'biological', or crudely empirical, into the elements of ethical theory. Any such view, one thinks, must involve either a vulgar scientistic dissolution of the ethical, tending maybe toward an 'evolutionary ethics', or else the covert substitution of an outdated metaphysics for what we know to be empirical. Each path leads to its own absurdities. Together they may be thought to betray a yearning to view our practices 'from outside' or 'from sideways on' in hope perhaps of providing them with a foundation or an external grounding.[42]

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

> …we can see that Foot's naturalism offers a fresh approach to objectivism in ethics. Yet, in spite of such attractions, *Natural Goodness* is in the midst of a cool reception. Here, I will argue that this reception is due to the fact that Foot's naturalism draws on a picture of the biological world that is at odds with the view embraced by most contemporary scientists and philosophers. Foot's readers commonly assume that the account of the biological world that she must want to adhere to, and that she nevertheless mistakenly departs from, is the account offered by contemporary neo-Darwinian biological sciences.[43]

Neither of these worries are justified. I will offer one final argument that teleological generics are rationally permissible within our modern context. James Barham's recent work has argued that 'teleological realism' is a rationally permissible view to take on biology.[44] The very word 'teleology' is liable to sound quaint to modern ears. Barham clarifies the range of terms that denote identical or similar concepts:

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

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

44. Barham, *PhD Dissertation*.

> "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" (Barham 1). For a similar distinction, see Lennox (1992) and Brown (2001).

We can add "purposive" and "goal-directed" to the constellation of concepts in the offing.

Teleological realism in biology is making a come-back. There are those who protest teleological nihilism. Arnhart persuasively argues that teleology is assumed in medicine.[45] Zammito clarifies ongoing relevance in biology, since organisms seem to be intrinsically purposeful.[46] Barham continues:

> In a series of important articles and books over the past decade or so, 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), and Zammito (2006) 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.

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.[47] 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:

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45. 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.

46. 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.

47. Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

> 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 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."[48]

If scientists can countenance natural normativity via natural teleology as respectable, cannot we philosophers 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.[49] 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.

48. 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.

49. Monte Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Chapter 2

Natural Teleology Revisited

Chris Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism"

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).[1]

Christopher Toner distinguishes between the "biological naturalism" of Thompson and Foot (and Hursthouse) on the one hand from the "second naturalism" or "excellence naturalism" or 'culturalism' of McDowell and MacIntyre, each of which has its strengths and problems.

Christopher Toner attempts to draw out the distinction between the kinds of naturalism.[2] Toner agrees with Hursthouse that the term 'Aristotelian naturalism' "implies that human nature is normative, such that to be morally good is to fulfill one's nature."[3] McDowell too believe that it is possible to "formulate a conception of reason that is, in one sense, naturalistic: a formed state of practical reason is one's second nature, not something that dictates to one's nature from outside."[4]

1. Annas, "Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism?" in Gardiner, *Virtue Ethics, Old and New*.
2. Christopher Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism: Requirements for a Successful Theory," *Metaphilosophy* 39, no. 2 (2008): 220–50.
3. Ibid., 221.
4. McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism."

However, Toner himself argues that the brands of naturalism espoused by Thompson, Hursthouse, and Foot cannot adequately respond to a criticism McDowell (among others) have pressed. Toner presents four criteria that "naturalism must deliver if it is to support a revived Aristotelian virtue ethics…"[5]

1. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to motivate the bearer of the nature.
2. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to justify themselves to the bearer of the nature.
3. Natural norms must be anchored in and express universal human nature.
4. First and second nature must be related so that the second is a natural outgrowth of the first, and so that that in our given makeup is (first) natural which does tend toward an ethically mature second nature.

The last of these four criteria is the one I shall attempt to defend in a later chapter.

Hursthouse

Toner interprets Hursthouse as endorsing a modified type of egoism:

> Dualism of this sort is hardly new — it is characteristic of standard Kantian and consequentialist moral psychologies — but it is a bit unusual for a virtue ethics claiming allegiance to Aristotle to embrace it. Indeed, it seems to raise the rather un-Aristotelian question about how to handle a conflict between fundamental practical commitments. Much that Hursthouse says hints that self-interest has priority: virtue ethics "offers a distinctively unfamiliar version of the view that morality is a form of enlightened self-interest" (1999, 190). Also, she seems to recognize the McDowellian point that Aristotelian categoricals about how an evolved species as a matter of fact propagates itself through time may have little normative claim on a reflective agent. Her response is to insist that the life of virtue does in fact tend to promote the welfare of the virtuous agent, so that the commitment to one's well-being seems more basic than, and a necessary ground of, the commitment to one's functioning as a species member (see especially 1999, 259–60). This move both highlights the power of McDowell's critique of the Thompsonian form of Aristotelian naturalism and illustrates how tempting it is, for naturalists equipped with only a disenchanted nature, to allow eudaimonism to collapse into egoism.9 Hursthouse comes close to this collapse; Arnhart will come closer still.[6] If generics are supposed to pick out natural properties of human beings, and if all such natural properties belong to disenchanted nature,

5. Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism," 222.
6. Ibid., 230.

> then the ethical conclusions we draw will "collapse into egoism." Eudaimonia will get a very "disenchanted" definition (pleasure, reproductive success.

MacIntyrean Naturalism

Toner argues that a naturalistic theory must satisfy four requirements:

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

The "natural norm" must be intrinsically able to motivate: desires that *do* motivate us satisfy this requirement. However, unless there is some "supervising principle" that coordinates desires (suppressing some, elevating others) the desires themselves seem to lead us to a sub-moral life; and the addition of such a supervising principle makes the theory no longer naturalistic.

2. Natural norms must be intrinsically able to justify themselves to the bearer of the nature.

The natural norm must be something that justifies itself, either to all rational agents as such or to all moral agents. The norm need not, Toner admits, automatically persuade a Callicles to repent of his wickedness. However, it must be able to motivate.

> This is why I say "intrinsically able to motivate or justify" rather than "intrinsically motivating or justifying": the natural norm is such that it can motivate or convince persons, provided they are not in too dysfunctional a state. In the same way a rose is such as to be intrinsically able to convince us of its being red. Its failure actually to do so in my case because I am color-blind or jaundiced does not impugn this intrinsic ability. Natural norms can motivate and convince because they are neither "mere facts" about the way a given species does go on nor "brute desires" a given species happens to have as a result of its evolutionary history.[7]

3. Natural norms must be anchored in and express universal human nature.

> If we want a naturalistic virtue ethics that is self-standing, natural norms must be capable not only of expressing the commitments of this or that culture but also of justifying that one, criticizing this one, and so forth.

7. Ibid., 235.

But what sort of thing is this universal human nature to be, if we are to avoid the problems of Thompson and Arnhart? It is to be, as Thompson said, "what was formerly called an infima species," the representation of which expresses "one's interpretation or understanding of the life-form shared by the members of that class" (1995, 288). This view runs into the troubles catalogued above if (and only if) we understand "one's interpretation or understanding" to be that provided by modern "value-free" science, a list of categoricals or natural desires supplied by anthropology and evolutionary psychology. Suppose instead this understanding of nature were supplied from the standpoint of a second nature seeking to understand its own development, so that the "universal nature" of (3) would be at its core our shared tendency to become and then to be and act as certain kinds of people. First nature on this interpretation would be that in all of us which points toward and calls for the development of second nature, and second nature would be that which perfects and completes first nature. Another way of putting this is:

4. First and second nature must be related so that the second is a natural outgrowth of the first, and so that that in our given makeup is (first) natural which does tend toward an ethically mature second nature.

> Alasdair MacIntyre writes that we can rightly understand the goods, harms, needs, and vulnerabilities of a certain species only by appeal to a notion of what it is for its members to flourish (MacIntyre 1999, 63–65). Now, for a living being to flourish it must develop its powers, especially those distinctive of it as a member of its species (there is more to flourishing than that, he allows, but this is at its core), and whether an individual or group is flourishing "is in itself a question of fact, even though the question of what it is to flourish has to be answered in part through evaluative and conceptual enquiry" (1999, 64). MacIntyre exemplifies the end-first approach sketched above, and it is worth quoting him at some length to see this: As a question of fact it [what it is to flourish] receives answers in a variety of scientific contexts. Distinguishing between environments in which members of some particular species flourish and environments in which they fail to flourish and distinguishing within some particular population those individuals or groups of a particular species that are flourishing from those that are not is a necessary preliminary to framing certain types of explanatory question which we provided with answers by the biological and ecological sciences. Drawing these distinctions successfully involves identifying the various characteristics that an individual or population of some particular species needs in order to flourish in this or that particular environment, at this or that par-

ticular stage of development. (1999, 64–65)

We start with a revisable account of what it is for an animal to flourish (for example, being a good pack hunter) and then ask scientific questions about what sort of environment, the development of which distinctive powers, and so forth, the animal needs. Now, the power most distinctive of human beings as a species is, of course, rationality. We know this in part because were it not, it would not be the case that we, and only we, were asking questions about the powers distinctive of species. Also, writes MacIntyre, "the question 'Why should I do this rather than that?' becomes from an early age inescapable and it is characteristic of human beings, that their replies to this question can themselves always be put in question. . . . Human beings need to learn to understand themselves as practical reasoners about goods, about what on particular occasions it is best for them to do and about how it is best for them to live out their lives" (1999, 67). So we know, says MacIntyre, that a flourishing human being is one who reasons well about how to live his or her life, is what he will call an "independent practical reasoner." That is our infima species or form of life. From this initial conception of flourishing, we can reason back to our needs, vulnerabilities, goods, and salient first-natural developmental tendencies.

Much of the detailed argument must be passed over, but let us crystallize the point MacIntyre is making: membership in networks of giving and receiving is essential to human flourishing, and the exercise of the virtues is essential to the maintenance of such networks, and therefore to flourishing. And essential not just as instrumental to but as constitutive means of flourishingFvirtues are expressed in practical reasoning, and sustained and effective practical reasoning takes place only within net- works of giving and receiving.

The task

Although I have tried to anticipate and turn aside some important objections, whether the MacIntyrean sort of naturalism is acceptable ultimately depends on answers to some rather large questions involving the nature of rationality (for example, whether it is tradition-constituted in something like the way MacIntyre says), moral psychology (for example, whether McDowell and MacIntyre are right in rejecting the "hydraulic" psychology of neo-Humeans like Arnhart), and even metaphysics (for example, whether and how moral philosophy is related to theology). But such interdependences are what we must expect for an ethic purporting to be based on a true understanding of human nature.

In a later chapter, I shall take up one of Toner's challenges: to defend a notion of practical reason as importantly constituted by "tradition" — that is, by particular cultural methods, facts, doctrines, and emphases transmitted within a particular people group over time.

I. Objections and Details Part II: Telos

My aim is to discuss a bit more about the details of the human telos. I shall assume that Aristotle and Annas are right that happiness is a good enough name for that thing or set of things, whatever it is/they are, that constitute our telos. So this is a discussion of happiness.

Is there telos like happiness for humanity? Destiny and destination

I would like to begin a discussion of happiness by distinguishing between two concepts: destiny and destination.

Roughly, a destiny is an inevitable end. A destination is an *avoidable* end; it is a *chosen* end. Destiny does not contain within it (at least not necessarily) any intentionality. An asteroid many light years away from the moon (let's say) has a destiny of hitting the moon in 180,000 years. It's trajectory, and the coincidental perfect timing of the absence of any intervening objects, makes contact inevitable.

A destination is different. When I told my mother I was moving to Kentucky *to get a PhD in philosophy* I was not describing my inevitable destiny, but describing my chosen destination. Many intervening factors could prevent me (car trouble, illness, etc.) – and what's more, many factors could *dissuade me* (lack of jobs, money trouble, etc.).

Happiness is our human destination. It is not, sadly, our human destiny.

There is no one factor that seems to capture our destiny except biological death. The major candidates for a hoped-for destiny are not universal: Health, reproduction, and survival. Not all living things are healthy, not all successfully reproduce, and in the end none survive.

But is there a universal human destination? If so, is it merely biological or something more – perhaps neurophysiological, psychological, or spiritual?

All living things *strive* for health, survival, reproduction and genetic propagation. But all living things, in the end, die. Individuals die when their metabolism stops, when if they have brains all brain functions stop, when they stop moving, and so on. Species "die" when they go extinct.

Socrates is mortal. All men are mortal, and Socrates is man. But so are you and I "men" (the species, not the sex). So our destiny is biological death.

What is our destination? Survival? The avoidance of death? Eternal life? Salvation? Evolution? Pleasure? "Permanent human happiness?"[8] Peace and nonviolence? Knowledge? The vision of God? Freedom from the wheel of reincarnation? Each of these guesses has something to commend it.

1. The avoidance of death by medical science and/or evolution. This is the transhumanist project of Ray Kurzweil, Google's Calico, and Nick Bostrom.
2. The avoidance of death by salvation from God as a free gift, or through faith or holiness or both. This is the Christian vision of
3. The achievement of pleasure while life lasts. This is formalized despair. There is no happiness, therefore eat drink and be "happy" with scare quotes in bold. Our destiny is all we have, so we have no destination. Enjoy the journey until the journey dumps you into the trash compactor.
4. The vision of God. This is the peculiarly Christian vision.
5. Freedom from the wheel of reincarnation.

One major distinction can be drawn between these various views along the question of how long human life lasts. Is human life (ideally) about 80 years, or more as medical science advances? Or is the human life countless millennia? This is a factual question that, of course, bears on the question of our telos.

Is there any one conception of happiness that can coordinate these two views? If not, then no discussion of happiness can proceed before either proving or assuming an answer about the length of human life.

8. The Dalai Lama proposed this formulation.

Clearly, proving an answer to the satisfaction of all is a fool's errand. It is a massive, contentious question. One can formulate it in terms of human personhood, the "immortality of the soul," and so on. Andrew Bailey's recent paper calls this the "persistence question": Do human animals have strictly biological persistence conditions?

> Most contemporary animalists also say 'yes' to the persistence question. According to these animalists, a human animal lasts across an interval just in the case that its 'purely animal functions – metabolism, the capacity to breathe and circulate one's blood, and the like – continue' across that interval. We may, following Eric Olson, call this theory about the persistence of animals the 'Biological Approach'.

If so, what criteria would such a view have to satisfy?

Given that human beings are rational animals that live either approximately 80 years or forever, what is our destination? The disjunction embedded in the question opens up a discouragingly wide range of possible answers. Nevertheless, let us try to answer it

If there is any *one* thing that animals seek, it is determined by their nature. In my terms, their nature provides a "destiny". But our rational nature makes our way of life variable and hence pluralizes our destiny until death consolidates all those differences again. Hence if there is any *one* thing that rational animals seek, it is determined by the nature of rationality itself. Clearly, different people and cultures vary in believing and valuing particular objects. But variance is compatible with a single telos or single *plurality* of teloi.

Variance is compatible with error.

Is there anything rationality seeks by nature? Knowledge. What about practical rationality? Goodness. That is, knowing things *is what reason does*, and pursuing good things *is what practical reason does*; reason also avoid false things, and practical reason avoids evil.

Happiness, the destination of every human being, is to know truth and to attain as much goodness as possible – whether in the span of 80-90 years (barring illness, injury, and) until biological death or for the rest of time.

That this is our telos is possible to know even without knowing whether, in fact, our existence persists beyond biological death.

According to Sartre, we must despair. According to Russel we must despair. According to these two, despair is the rational emotion, the emotion that makes most sense given the facts; the emotion that "fits" reality.

I think despair is a rational emotion if we are animals who amass goods for 80 years or so and then die, and if our species will eventually go extinct and all habitable planets in the cosmos will become uninhabitable. However, like Russel, the pursuit of knowledge is still worthwhile. It is our human "ideals of goodness and knowledge" (I paraphrase Russel) that remain worthwhile pursuits even under the shadow of despair cast by that great reality of death.

Teleology in nature

What if there are no ends in nature?

One powerful objection to the recovery of telos is that there is no teleology in nature. There are no *ends* (τελοι). Call this position *teleological nihilism.* There are two forms of teleological nihilism: extreme and moderate. Extreme teleological nihilism we may call the view that 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. Moderate teleological nihilism we may call the view that there are no natural purposes *except* those in human actions, intentions, and societies, etc. On moderate teleological nihilism, human purposes are 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.[9]

Teleological nihilism claims as its evidence *modern science* as a whole. Natural sciences have dismissed the notion of final causation for three or four centuries now and have gotten along well without it. 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.

Teleology

[% out of order]

That nature is normative and some norms are natural is the best explanation of two phenomena: (1) 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 primaries*; and (2) animals, plants, and all living things exhibit end-directed or teleonomic behavior: eyes see, hemlock trees offers shade to fish, stomachs digest, deer leap. The first of these phenomena is less controversial: pretty clearly, humans *act on reasons* and in pursuit of ends. The second is more controversial and more interesting – is the appearance of teleology "just" teleonomy or teleology indeed?

Call the view that there are no natural end-directed behaviors *teleological nihilism*.[10] 'Strong nihilism' can refer to the belief (of say determinists) that not even human practices are teleological. 'Weak nihilism' can refer to the belief that *only* human behaviors are end-directed, but nothing else. For example, Kant's explanation of natural purpose denies the biological theory that the form of an organism causes the parts to grow and relate to each other in a particular way, but he admits we

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

10. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."

cannot help thinking so.[11] If the "nature is normative" thesis is true, both forms of teleological nihilism are false.

What if ends are reducible?

Teleoreductionism has taken one of two popular forms: the first reduces 'teleonomic' (that is, apparently teleological) 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.

Reducible reply

Neither forms of 'teleoreduction' can account for the normativity of the biological function in question. If 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 — then teleoreduction comes to light as an unnecessary and sadly desperate attempt to preserve a philosophical dogma in the face of scientific fact.

James Barham elaborates:

> I was aware of well-known criticisms of both of the then-current reductionist accounts of function: the "causal-role" theory and the Darwin-inspired "selected-effects" theory. In a nutshell, the problem is that neither theory can explain the normative character of biological processes in a coherent manner. (Biological processes are "normative" in the sense that they may either succeed or fail in fulfilling their functions.) 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. 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

11. 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.

> constitutes it as a function. This is a logical point that Darwinists simply miss. 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.

Millikan bites the bullet on this objection. She isn't trying to do "conceptual analysis" of the term 'function.' She is willing to admit that her concept of proper function only applies to functional objects with histories and that hypothetical counterexamples involving functional objects without histories prove that two objects with one and the same "*mark* of purposiveness" can have different functions.[

Biological Teleology

Teleological realism in biology is making a come-back. There are those who protest teleological nihilism. Arnhart persuasively argues that teleology is assumed in medicine.[12] Zammito clarifies ongoing relevance in biology, since organisms seem to be intrinsically purposeful.[13]

> In a series of important articles and books over the past decade or so, 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), and Zammito (2006) 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.

The very word 'teleology' is liable to sound quaint to modern ears. Barham clarifies the range of terms that denote identical or similar concepts:

12. Arnhart, "Aristotle's Biopolitics."
13. Zammito, "Teleology Then and Now."

> "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" (Barham 1). For a similar distinction, see Lennox (1992) and Brown (2001).

We can add "purposive" and "goal-directed" to the constellation of concepts in the offing.

Ruth Millikan's objection

Millikan argues that an organism's proper function cannot be read off its capacities but must be known via empirical history. Both Barham and Thompson dispute this (influential) definition of "proper function."

Kevin Kelly, wired editor, what technology wants. Robert Right nonzero. Christian de Duve Robert OUsan? Our telos.

> 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 eludes us," he wrote. "But as soon as we introduce time, we see trends of improvement."

> More recently, Kevin Kelly, founding editor of *Wired*, made the case for teleology as clearly as could be in his book *What Technology Wants:* "Evolution … has an inherent direction, shaped by the nature of matter and energy." That is, there may be laws of nature that push the universe toward the creation of life and mind. Not a supernatural god, but laws as basic and fundamental as those of thermodynamics. Robert Wright said much the same in *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny:* "This book is a full-throated argument for destiny in the sense of direction." Those books prompted discussion among the literati but little backlash from evolutionary biologists. Ruse thinks that's because the authors are science writers, not scientists: "At a certain level, it's their job either to give the science or to put forward provocative hypotheses, and nobody takes it personally."

The 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."

Stuart Kauffman, of the Santa Fe Institute, who argues that the universe gives us "order for free." Kauffman has spent decades on origin-of-life research, aiming to show that the transition from chemistry to metabolism is as inevitable as a ball rolling down a slope. Molecules on the early earth, he suggests, inevitably began to catalyze themselves in self-sustaining reactions ("autocatalytic networks"), converting energy and raw materials into increasingly complex structures that eventually crossed the boundary between nonliving and living.

Other biologists are proposing laws that would explain evolutionary ascent in fundamental terms. Daniel McShea and Robert Brandon, a biologist and a philosopher of science, respectively, at Duke University, have argued for what they call a "zero-force evolutionary law," which posits that diversity and complexity will necessarily increase even without environmental change. The chemist Addy Pross, at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in Israel, argues that life exhibits "dynamic kinetic stability," in which self-replicating systems become more stable through becoming more complex—and are therefore inherently driven to do so.

Still other scientists have asked how we could measure increases in complexity without being biased by our human-centric perspective. Robert Hazen, working with the Nobel Prize winner Jack Szostak, has proposed a metric he calls "functional information," which measures the number of functions and relationships an organism has relative to its environment. The Harvard astrophysicist Eric Chaisson has proposed measuring a quantity that he calls "energy-rate density": how much energy flows through one gram of a system per second. He argues that when he plots energy-rate density against the emergence of new species, the clear result is an overall increase in complexity over time.

But Nagel's goal was valid: to point out that fundamental questions of origins, evolution, and intelligence remain unanswered, and to question whether current ways of thinking are up to the task. A really good book on this subject would need to be

> both scientific and philosophical: scientific to show what is known, philosophical to show how to go beyond what is known. (A better term might be "metascientific," that is, talking about the science and about how to make new sciences.)
>
> The pieces of this book are scattered about the landscape, in a thousand scraps of ideas from biologists, physicists, physicians, chemists, mathematicians, journalists, public intellectuals, and philosophers. But no book has yet emerged that is mighty enough to shove aside the current order, persuading scientists and nonscientists alike, sparking new experiments, changing syllabi, rejiggering budget priorities, spawning new departments, and changing human language and ways of thought forever. On the Origin of Species did it in 1859. We await the next Darwin.[14]

Three characters, one successful, one virtuous, one both successful and virtuous

The first character I should like to keep before our imagination is the Successful Man: wealthy, powerful, influential, well-connected, owning lots of land, designer clothes, and jets. This is Bruce Wayne, Donald Trump, or Hilary Clinton. We can playfully imagine them furthermore in the peak of life in beauty, health, and vigor. Whether or not this person is virtuous seems to be beside the point: they are Successful. They may not be wise but they enjoy the richness of the "aesthetic life."

The second character is the Scrappy Sage: even though these wise, unyielding in principle, scrupulous, discerning, practical, reliable, beneficent, large-minded, generous, unflappable, just, undeceived and undeceivable, undistracted by petty pleasures, and far-sighted regarding the affairs of this life. This is Diogenes, Symeon Stylites, or John the Baptist who were despised for their lack of Success but admired and sought out for their Sagacity. They are ascetic sages but rejecting the aesthetic and embracing the "ethical life."

The third is a combination of worldly success and virtuous sagacity: wealthy but wise, powerful but unyielding in principle, influential but scrupulous, well-connected by discerning, full of possessions but practical. This is King Solomon, Cato the Younger, or St. Katherine of Sienna.

14. Michael Chorost is the author of Rebuilt: How Becoming Part Computer Made Me More Human (Houghton Mifflin, 2005) and World Wide Mind: The Coming Integration of Humanity, Machines, and the Internet (Free Press, 2011).

The question 'why be good?' is asked by someone who is earnestly in doubt as to whether it is better to be more like Solomon or St. Katherine than like Donald Trump or Hilary Clinton. They might agree that virtue and success together are better than virtue and no success; they are earnestly in doubt as to whether it would be better to have success without virtue or virtue without success. So the question "why be good?" is not the question "Why be motivated at all?" but "why not be motivated, after all, by success with or without virtue?'.

This question is echoed by Eryxias: even supposing someone were as wise as Nestor, wouldn't such a person be miserable without food and drink and clothes and the like? What *advantage* is wisdom? The assumption here is that the meaning of "advantage" is advantage for *us* here and now, not just abstract admirable qualities.

If virtues is partly constitutive of flourishing (even "success"), then the question 'why be virtuous?' is close — if not identical — to the irrational question 'why do what is worth doing?'. It is a conceptual confusion. However, if virtue is not constitutive of flourishing, then the question of whether *I* really ought to let virtue be the over overriding practical consideration instead of the alluring temptations of wealth, riches, sex, and power in however great of quantities I can achieve.

So my first thesis in this chapter, is this: virtue causes human flourishing but also partly constitutes it. This is my first step toward solving the problem of why be good.

Many neo-Aristotelians use "flourishing" to translate the untranslatable "eudaimonia." Eudaimonia is the human telos. telos is, of course, Greek for "end". The word is bursting with dizzying array of possible meanings, including "definite point", "goal", "purpose," "cessation," "order," "prize," "highest point", "realization", "decision", and "services."[15] There are at least two kinds of

15. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Harper & Brothers, 1896) compare with Strong's 5056: "telos tel'-os from a primary *tello* (to set out for a definite point or goal); properly, the point aimed at as a limit, i.e. (by implication) the conclusion of an act or state (termination (literally, figuratively or indefinitely), result (immediate, ultimate or prophetic), purpose); specially, an impost or levy (as paid); continual, custom, end(-ing), finally, uttermost."

teleology we can distinguish between: natural and social.[16] Natural teleology is not *intentional*. Social teleology is. The type of teleology the Aristotelian tradition takes for granted is natural teleology, of which social teleology is an instance in human rational creatures.

So our telos is eudaimonia. What is eudaimonia? Answering this question is treacherously difficult. "Religious" pagans like Aristotle thought it was the intellectual life of an (Athenian) gentlemen. Christians like Aquinas think it is the beatific vision of God after this life is over, including the time after a bodily resurrection. Atheists and other noble secularists such as Russell and Murdoch think that eudaimonia is a particular kind of virtuous and wise life here and now, despite the coming darkness. (Less noble secularists opt for cocaine, sex, whisky, heroine.) These are different reactions, but both are reactions to formalized despair. On a happier note, or perhaps equally anxious note, Ray Kurzweil and other transhumanists think that even this life can be extended, perhaps a little, perhaps a lot, which would afford more time to explore just what eudaimonia might be. I do not here bother to mention theories of reincarnation Is there any way to coordinate these views?

Virtues play some important part in happiness, unless the immoralist consents to the despairing notion that if death ends all, then life is meaningless and so eat drink and be merry.

The old Stoic line was the noble belief that virtue is *all* of eudaimonia. There is nothing more to be desired but virtue; "virtue is it's own reward." The Aristotelian line was, not surprisingly, a bit more human. The life of virtuous activity is necessary but not sufficient for eudaimonia. Also needed are money, friends, and some good fortune. In a sense, the fully virtuous man or woman could be a victim to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and lose all. But this is just a way of saying that tragedies can indeed happen. Socrates would, with superhuman stubbornness, deny it. *Nothing* can harm the good man; and nothing save the bad one.

16. Barham, *PhD Dissertation*.

Minimal and Maximal Conceptions

I would also like to distinguish between minimal conceptions and maximal conceptions of happiness. A minimal conception includes a necessary condition or set of necessary conditions the absence of which plausible constitutes *misery*. Peter Geach alludes to this kind of conception when he argues that only a broad basis of ethical agreement is needed for two groups to work together on building a hospital or running a university.[17] Alasdair MacIntyre's conception of telos in *After Virtue* is what I have called "minimal". A maximal conception of happiness is more imaginative, certainly, but more divisive. A maximal conception imagines what state of affairs or what human activity constitutes *full and completely satisfying human life* — fulfillment to the highest imaginable degree. Boethius pretty clearly aims for this kind of conception when he argues that the good of man is complete self-sufficiency and hence cannot but any "false happiness" such as wealth, power, or pleasure but must be participation in God himself.[18]

Natural law theorists like to talk about 'perfections' of nature, and happiness as 'perfect' or complete. I prefer the term 'maximal' to 'perfective' for two reasons. First, the concept of maximum is relative to circumstances; one should aim to be as happy as possible *given the limitations of time*. This clause includes theist and atheists in the conversation since they may disagree on just what the limitations of time are but agree that we should aim to be as happy as possible. Secondly, the notion of perfection implies that human nature has natural limits of happiness, a terminus. I'm not sure this is true. It might be that, so long as one lives well, and so long as the average lifespan of western industrial peoples continues to increase. Is there a natural limit, for instance, to how many languages one can learn? I know three languages. With enough time before my biological end, couldn't I learn ten? Someone more gifted with languages already knows ten and could learn twenty. If they lived 200 years, couldn't they learn thirty languages? Is there a natural limit to wisdom? Can one become fully wise and then stop? Continuing the discussion using the notion of

17. Peter T Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).
18. *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book III.

relative maximum keeps the case open on this issue.

Telos objections

One family of objections pertains to teleology. If MacIntyre's suggestion that we need to recover the Aristotelian tradition of the virtues is to be taken as a serious plan, then we must recover telos, for without a clear telos even a high moral earnestness attached to virtues devolves into an unintelligible set of rules or traditions. Virtue without telos literally has no point.[19] This constellation of objections is, I think, most potentially disastrous for MacIntyre's theory, and the objections are powerful. In addition to the real philosophical difficulty of the matter, the prejudices and misconceptions surrounding teleology are so thick one would need several chapters to dig through the muck and mire. I think an adequate response can, ultimately, be made.

In this section I shall present three objections from teleology that are especially problematic for MacIntyre's narrative. The first objection regarding teleology is to deny MacIntyre's historical narrative. Oakes above eloquently summarized MacIntyre's criticism of the loss of telos in modern moral philosophy, natural science, psychology, and ethics. But perhaps modern moral philosophy is not so anti-teleological as all that. Kant's categorical imperative, much vaunted for its austere duty for the sake of duty, is actually aimed at perfection.[20] Keith Ward argued with some impatience almost 40 years ago (10 years before *After Virtue*'s first edition) that Kant should not be interpreted as commending duty as some abstract, context-free obligation. He says:

> Kant's position is not merely that one must conceive oneself as setting up a purposive order of Nature, according to universal laws, as though one could arbitrarily choose anything whatsoever as one's purpose. One can see this if one takes Kant's list of examples of moral duties in the *Metaphysic of Morals* [sic]. Masturbation is against the

19. A society that enforces chaste behavior and honors chastity as a virtue but does so without any understanding of how such chastity fits into the fulfilled life of a fully virtuous human being and a fully virtuous community will be open to the criticism that such behaviors and virtues are prohibiting a whole range of pleasurable activities.

20. Keith Ward, "Kant's Teleological Ethics," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 85 (1971): 337–51.

> *purposes of Nature*, in forming the sexual organs; suicide contravenes *Nature's purpose* in establishing self-love in order to preserve life… Finally, "holiness of will" must be pursued, as this expresses the absolute worth of the human person, in its freedom from sensuous impulses and its transcendence of Nature.[21]

These quotes from the allegedly dour-faced deontologist certainly sound awfully similar to Aristotle (not to mention St. Paul). Along similar lines, Kantian ethicist David Cummiskey has argued that Kant can be understood as a consequentialist of sorts.[22] The proposal is that Kant's *justification* for moral normative principles was a brute, formal, categorical imperative, but the *content* of such normative principles included agents and the goods they aim to attain. Happiness can be valued as an imperfect duty, though rational agency must be valued as a perfect duty. Without entering into all the interesting details at this juncture, the thought is that perhaps a (thoroughly modern) moral philosophy like deontology can be synthesized with natural teleology.

The other putatively modern moral philosophy that comes in for criticism for MacIntyre, Anscombe, et. al., is Mill's utilitarianism. But isn't consequentialism teleological in the proper sense of telos. Clearly, consequences are *ends* of actions – I go to work *in order to* earn a paycheck at the end of the month; the consequence (my paycheck) is the goal or purpose or point of the action (going to work). For consequentialism, the great intrinsic value is happiness, or pleasure. On the surface, this sounds like a kind of Aristotelian eudaimonism. But Aristotle's eudaimonia is the necessary end of all action and all practical reasoning. The proof that we pursue eudaimonia (something vague) is as robust as the proof that we pursue *anything at all*.[23] Similarly, all that Mill can say to the enquirer who wants to hear about *why* happiness is desirable is that people desire it.[24] So perhaps virtue ethics

21. Ibid., 341.

22. David Cummiskey, *Kantian Consequentialism* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2014) Book I.1.

24. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 1861, chap. 4. *Of what sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible.* He says, "The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever

can be synthesized with consequentialism.

A second objection regarding teleology grants MacIntyre's pessimistic narrative. Ethics can get along well enough without intrinsic *teloi*. We cannot accept natural teleology since this notion has been exorcised from natural science (and from all rational philosophy) by Darwin and Newton. Bernard Williams summarizes this feeling well:

> It seems to me that a correct understanding of evolution is relevant to projects of this kind, but that the effect of that understanding is largely discouraging to them… the idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is 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… 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 fully into ethical thought.[25]

Williams' objection is a general objection from metaphysical naturalism to *any* form of naturalistic ethics. Rosalind Hursthouse says that, "From early on, Williams has expressed pessimism about the project of Aristotelian naturalism on the grounds that Aristotle's conception of nature, and thereby human nature, was normative, and that, in a scientific age, this is not a conception that we can take on board."[26] His objection is ostensibly against the notion of natural teleology but also against a realist notion of human nature as well. If humanity as it is today is a more or less jumbled "bricolage" of adaptive parts, it is hardly a secure enough entity to ground ethical obligations.

Thankfully, morality can function without it. The moral law *by itself* guides or forms our actions without a natural telos performing that function. For example, Christine Korsgaard[27] builds a case that human autonomy – the ability to be a law to oneself – is the source of normative authority. How does this work? My own identity as a human being obligates me to behave morally.

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convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness."

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

26. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 256.

27. Christine M Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

She argues that "autonomy is the source of obligation" and that "we have *moral* obligations… to humanity as such."[28] Because I am self-reflective, I am accountable for what I do. Also because I am self-reflective, I have a self-conception. She says the "thinking self" regulates the "acting self." Korsgaard's notion of practical identity is that we assume identities such as human being, child, parent, teacher, etc. Each identity is functional; it grounds obligations. If I am really to be a teacher, I must show up for class. If I really am to be a parent, I must feed and educate my child. Practical identities may be more or less contingent. All of us are children; not all of us educators. At least one practical identity is necessary. That is our practical identity *as humans*. Humans "need to have practical conceptions of our identity in order to act and live."[29] The fact is, we do act and live. Therefore we do have a moral identity. Put another way, she says: "Rational action is possible only if human beings find their own humanity to be valuable."[30] The moral identity is one in which I take up a viewpoint as a member of the "Kingdom of Ends", the community of those who also have a moral identity. So the moral law delivers content-full moral duties derived from my own autonomously legislated rules prescribed by my valuing humanity; these rules are not teleological in that they require any future fulfillment of an end to validate them.

The point of these objections is to push back on MacIntyre's narrative in which our modern liberal tradition excised telos. Either we did not do so, or (even if we did) we could get along without it.

These three objections – about relativism, tradition-constituted rationality, and teleology – are some of the most telling against MacIntyre's theory. In the discussion section I shall attempt to answer each one.

> It has often been suggested – by J. L. Austin, for example – that either we can admit the existence of rival and contingently incompatible goods which make incompatible claims to our practical allegiance or we can believe in some determinate conception of the good life for man, but that these are mutually exclusive alternatives. No one

28. Ibid., 93.
29. Ibid., 106.
30. Ibid., 106.

> can consistently hold both these views. What this contention is blind to is that there may be better or worse ways for individuals to live through the tragic confrontation of good with good. And that to know what the good life for man is may require knowing what are the better and what are the worse ways of living in and through such situations. Nothing a priori rules out this possibility; and this suggests that within a view such as Austin's there is concealed an unacknowledged empirical premise about the character of tragic situations.[31]

Telos is needed

One objection above stated that telos is indeed a necessary part of morality, but that it can be found in modern morality, for instance, in Kantian or consequentialist morality. If the sense of teleology we are using here is merely social and not natural, then MacIntyre would respond, "so much the better for Kant." Moral rules are unintelligible without an understanding of the *internal* or *necessary* relation between some actions and some outcomes. Kant himself, perhaps, understood this better than many of his contemporary readers give him credit.

Telos is not needed

Consequentialism, however, cannot be made to be "teleological" in the Aristotelian or the MacIntyrean sense. The first reason is that, For Mill, happiness is something too specific: pleasure, or freedom from pain. He offers precious little justification for this. Mill's definition of happiness cannot be that thing we all necessarily pursue whenever we act, because then moral rules (guiding us toward the happiness of the greatest number) would be unnecessary. We would all, already, pursue happiness.

The second reason is more important: The reason is that Mill and others define "consequences" so as to be always contingent. Mill, like Moore, sees the relation between the end (happiness) and the means (actions that bring about happiness) as statistical, contingent, and probable.

31. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 223–4.

There is no internal relation between some actions (such as virtues) and the proper end of human life.

Take as a few examples this statement from G.E. Moore:

> What ought we to do? The answering of this question constitutes the third great division of ethical enquiry; and its nature was briefly explained in Chap. I (§§ 15—17). It introduces into Ethics, as was there pointed out, an entirely new question—the question what things are related as *causes* to that which is good in itself; and this question can only be answered by an entirely new method—the method of empirical investigation; by means of which causes are discovered in the other sciences. *To ask what kind of actions we ought to perform, or what kind of conduct is right, is to ask what kind of effects such action and conduct will produce.* Not a single question in practical Ethics can be answered except by a causal generalization. All such questions do, indeed, also involve an ethical judgment proper—the judgment that certain effects are better, in themselves, than others. But they do assert that these better things are effects—are causally connected with the actions in question. Every judgment in practical Ethics may be reduced to the form: This is a cause of that good thing.[32]

Moore is explicit here that there are no acts that have intrinsic value (qua duty or qua virtuous deed); acts only have value insofar as they cause good effects. This good effects are, for Moore, aesthetic enjoyments, knowledge, and friendships.[33]

I said above that the refusal to treat the means/end distinction as clean and absolute is liable to cause his critics to misunderstand his position. Charles Taylor endorses the notion that "the place accorded the virtues [is] a kind of litmus test for discriminating Aristotelian from modern ethical theory."[34] He explains this feature of modern moral theories:

> …They cannot abide this kind of relation, in which one element is both cause and constituent of another. It is a central demand of one influential construal of modern reason that one clearly sort out means from ends. For utilitarians, the good is happiness, and virtues can only be good instrumentally… If the basic point of morality

32. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge University Press, 1903) Chapter 5, Section 89, my emphasis.

33. Ibid. Chapter 6.

34. Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," in *After MacIntyre* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 25.

> is to do the right actions, then the virtues must be seen as purely executive. They cannot also be seen as part of the end, because the end is not defined that way.[35]

What could this mean? Behind the means/end distinction is a peculiarly modern assumption that formal and final causes are either not related or not *necessarily* related. But the assumption is unreasonable. Exercise *causes* (efficient causes) health; but it is partly constitutive of health. In other words, exercise *causes* (formal causes) health. The relation between a formal cause and a final cause is an internal, natural, and necessary relation. In biology, the distinction between form and function is a real one but the two are related.[36] The relation between the species *gorilla gorilla* as instantiated in an infant gorilla and a fully grown, mature one is an internal and natural and (given the proper circumstances) a necessary relation. To deny that there are formal causes, or to deny that there are final causes, is simply to beg the question against teleological ethics.

For these reasons, consequentialism of the typical sort that *reduces* the question of what actions, rules, or character traits are good to a question that cannot "be answered except by a causal generalization" is not teleological in the required sense. The character traits that tend to bring about happiness must also be, in a sense, pre-payments on that happiness.

Section conclusion

In sum, the rebuttal of the "no teleology objection" is that the sort of teleology we need is defensible: social teleology. Social teleology does not *necessarily* offend against Darwinian biology, evolutionary psychology, or metaphysical naturalism, but can (and must) be accommodated by them. Furthermore, Kantian philosophy may be able to accommodate social teleology, and so would escape the

35. Ibid., 25.

36. Huneman, "Naturalising Purpose.. Huneman summarizes the "two poles" in the history of biology: "the concept of form and the concept of function." For Huneman, anatomy studies form and physiology studies function. He explains how Kant understood both poles and tried to give due weight to the mechanistic understanding of organisms *and* to the distinctive features of organic life. Humean, Kant, and evolutionary biologists are obliged to explain both form and function as real without reducing one to the other.

brunt of MacIntyre's criticism laid out in his narrative. On the other hand, the rebuttal of consequentialism, is that it has not often been taken to allow for a necessary relation between some means and their ends. Virtuous action both *causes* and *partly constitutes* virtuous character. Virtuous character traits both *cause* and *partly constitute* the kind of achievement of our human telos that makes life worth living.

Objection: Our telos is gene propogation

Stephen Brown's Darwinian objection that "happiness" of our species is gene propagation, which seems to transform ethics into a descriptive discipline;

Chapter 3

Conclusions: Virtue, Reason, Telos

I. Introduction: Where we go from here

Summary

Conclusion. The fifth chapter concludes by summarizing the contours of the main argument and surfacing a few objections that might remain. I offer ethical arguments with self-consciously metaethical import; the normativity of virtue and practical wisdom need to be related to broader concerns with normativity in general, wherever it might be found (in language, meaning, even metaphysics). This chapter could also gesture at future research directions. For example, my future goals would be to negotiate this account with various requirements of naturalism, and to weigh in on the lively debate on this point.[1] Is a virtue ethics based on a normative conception of human nature ethically authoritative? Is such an ethics 'scientific'? Are the requirements of practical reason 'natural' requirements or 'second natural' or are they merely 'cultural'? Is naturalistic virtue ethics compatible with theism or is it necessarily atheistic? Is it compatible with atheism or is it necessarily theistic? What is nature? Is virtue naturalism? Why is Aristotle different from materialism and

1. Stephen Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue," *Ethica* 4 (2005): 7–22; Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, chap. 1.

modern scientific Darwinian reductionism.

Modernism

One often hears sentiments similar to this: "The ancients were fools who thought rain fell from clouds, plants grew because of sunshine, pregnancy was caused by the transfer of seed in sexual intercourse, and that human beings need society in order to survive."

The sentiment of this statement is common. The speaker is, himself, a fool. The fact that a belief was endorsed by the ancients (or rejected by them) is irrelevant to the truth of the belief. There are many beliefs who enjoy a joint endorsement from ancients and 21st century technological, digital humanity. We ought not overstate the differences.

What is different? The biggest differences seem to be in certain advances in technology, especially transportation, communication, and medicine. The ancients (indeed Galileo himself) could not fly in airplanes, transmit wireless signals to satellites, observe moon rock in a lab, or take an antibiotic to clear up a sinus infection.

Are there any other, deep, weighty, existential differences in the worldview of the past and that of the present? There are none. Some are fond of suggesting that "we now know" big truths that the ancients did not, like that demons do not cause mental illness. However, most such sage utterances are run-of-the-mill instances of circular reasoning.

A useful test of rhetoric is the symmetry test: switch the content of the proposition to mean the opposite and see if the rhetorical force is fully preserved. For example, "Once upon a time, fools and charlatans used to believe there were only 7 planets. We now know that Pluto is a ninth planet." The smugness, the bravado, the grandiloquence, the accents of infallibility are all identical, but the content is false.

In order to assess the possibility of spiritual entities affecting physical conditions, in order to assess the possible existence of spiritual entities — malevolent or otherwise — we must examine the evidence. Those who have made up their minds and are therefore dismissive of the claims of

their opponents may enjoy agreeing with the like-minded but merely asserting their joint position is useless in proving their position or refuting their opponent's.

Conclusion of Final Chapter

II. Final sentence

Much (if not all) ethical truth can be known and justified by reflection upon our nature as practical, rational animals. Thus we can see that **virtues** (**such as moderation, generosity, and especially practical wisdom**) **are acquired traits that human beings as practical reasoners need, for they enable us to realize and themselves partly realize our natural human telos.**