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SORTS OF NATURALISM: REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL THEORY

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Abstract: In this article I investigate several "sorts of naturalism" that have been advanced in recent years as possible foundations for virtue ethics: those of Michael Thompson, Philippa Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, John McDowell, and Larry Arnhart. Each of these impressive attempts fails in illuminatingly different ways, and in the opening sections I analyze what has gone variously wrong. I next use this analysis to articulate four criteria that any successful Aristotelian naturalism must meet (my goal is to show *what naturalism must* deliver, not yet to show *that it can* deliver it). I then look at Alasdair MacIntyre's approach, which begins with our natural trajectory from complete dependency toward becoming independent practical reasoners; I argue that this sort of naturalism meets the aforementioned criteria and thus provides a good example of what Aristotelian naturalists must do. I close with a consideration of two important objections to any broadly MacIntyrean sort of naturalism.

Keywords: Foot, Hursthouse, MacIntyre, McDowell, naturalism, virtue ethics.

In recent years, a broadly Aristotelian naturalism has been resurgent in mainstream moral philosophy, and has been explored by numerous important thinkers—such as Philippa Foot and Rosalind Hursthouse—as a foundation for virtue ethics. Although this trend can look back to Elizabeth Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" and to Foot's own earlier work, it is perhaps Michael Thompson's "Representation of Life" that has been seminal with respect to *how* to revive an Aristotelian philosophy of human nature as normative. Yet although Thompson's approach is attractive, John McDowell formulated a persuasive critique of it in his "Two Sorts of Naturalism," which appeared in the same volume as Thompson's essay. Hursthouse and especially Foot draw heavily on Thompson without adequately addressing McDowell's critique. Indeed, McDowell's critique is a potential stumbling block for any attempt to found ethics on human nature. In what follows I focus on these and other authors who, largely in dialogue with each other, have been key players in the recovery of virtue ethics that frames much current interest in naturalism, and who in their more recent work have attempted

to formulate naturalistic foundations for virtue ethics as a self-standing moral theory.[1]

Before wading in, let me say a brief word about what I mean by the term "Aristotelian naturalism," or simply (as I usually say) "naturalism."[2] As I use the term, it implies that human nature is normative, such that to be morally good is to fulfill one's nature. As Hursthouse puts it, "Virtue ethics, or at least any form of it that takes its inspiration from Aristotle, is usually taken to be a form of ethical naturalism—broadly, the enterprise of basing ethics in some way on considerations of human nature, on what is involved with being good *qua* human being" (1999, 192). Or as McDowell writes, we can 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*" (1995, 174; my italics). Taking as the core meaning of "naturalism" the idea that human nature is normative initially leaves open a variety of approaches to constructing detailed naturalistic theories (the projects of Hursthouse and McDowell, for example, are quite different). At the same time, it does help partition off projects that are broadly Aristotelian from those that are not. Hobbes's moral philosophy, for example, while clearly naturalistic in some sense, does not qualify in the sense to be considered here, since for Hobbes morality is an artificial construct, the principles of which actually conflict with natural inclinations—thus understood, human nature cannot serve as a norm for life and action; instead, practical reason "dictates to one's nature from outside." The approaches of Thompson, McDowell, and Larry Arnhart, on the other hand, do seek to provide accounts according to which human nature is normative, and thus are initially promising "sorts of naturalism."[3]

Each of these impressive attempts will fail, however, and fail in illuminatingly different ways, so that an analysis of what has gone variously wrong can underwrite a search for requirements for success. After undertaking this analysis in the opening sections, I use it to

[1] It is generally accepted today that "virtue theory" provides essential insights for moral theory, but it is often claimed that a deontological or consequentialist foundation is required to justify the rationality of virtue and to orient and direct the application of the virtues, and therefore that "virtue ethics" as a self-standing moral theory is not called for (see, for example, the exchange between Hursthouse and Julia Driver in their respective 2006 articles). This claim is one reason virtue ethicists are interested in finding an alternative, naturalistic foundation.

[2] Let me just note that I make no claims in this article about how to interpret the "historical Aristotle."

[3] Let me try to head off one possible misunderstanding of this idea that, in Aristotelian naturalism, moral principles cannot dictate to human nature from outside: I do not mean that there will be no artificial principles, morally binding positive laws, and so forth. I mean only that such principles will be "downstream" from normative human nature—they will be expressions or specifications (or perversions) of what we can call natural norms.

articulate four criteria that any successful Aristotelian naturalism—one that preserves and elucidates the core meaning of human nature as normative—must meet. I then develop an interpretation of Alasdair MacIntyre's naturalism in *Dependent Rational Animals* with a view to showing how an "updated" Aristotelian approach can meet these criteria. Finally, I respond to two important objections that arise for naturalism of the kind I am advocating (and that arise in especially pressing forms for MacIntyre's particular version of it). But it should be kept in mind that, although I certainly try to portray a broadly MacIntyrean naturalism in an attractive light and seek to answer some important objections to it, the main goal of this article is to show *what naturalism must* deliver if it is to support a revived Aristotelian virtue ethics, not yet to show *that it can* deliver it; that point hinges on answers to some further large questions that themselves require lengthy treatment, for which I do not have space here.

1

Thompsonian Naturalism

As I said, Michael Thompson's "Representation of Life" is a seminal article for Aristotelian naturalists working today. In essence it is an attempt to work out the special logic of judgments we make about living things, and then to indicate its application to ethics. The most important concept Thompson introduces, for our purposes at least, is that of the "*natural-historical judgement*" or "*Aristotelian categorical*" (Thompson 1995, 267). Judgments of this special sort take the form "'The S is (or has, or does) F'—'The domestic cat has four legs, two eyes, two ears, and guts in its belly' " (281). This is a special form of judgment because it appears to be a universal judgment (it is not about any particular cat[s]), and yet is not taken to be falsified by the alleged "counterexample" of Fluffy, who lost a leg during an unfortunate encounter with a chainsaw. Nor can they be considered statistical claims about most Ss: as Thompson puts it, "Although 'the mayfly' breeds shortly before dying, *most* mayflies die long before breeding" (284). The subject of such judgments, Thompson insists, is the representation of "what was formerly called an *infima species*" (284); the judgments "express one's *interpretation* or *understanding* of the life-form shared by the members of that class" (288).

Thompson's next move is to point out that natural-historical judgments readily admit of combination into teleological judgments of the form "They have blossoms of such-and-such type in order that such-and-such insects should be attracted and spread their pollen about" (293–94). Such judgments stem from the form of life at issue, insists Thompson, not from "hypotheses about the past," whether about creation or natural

selection.[4] His discussion of final causality allows him to end with a brief discussion of "good" and related concepts.

A system of Aristotelian categoricals for a certain kind of subject provides, says Thompson, a standard separate from our own interests by which to make normative judgments about particular subjects of that kind, according to the following principle of inference: "*From* 'The S is F' *and* 'This S is not F' *to infer* 'This S is defective in that it is not F' " (295). Judgments of natural defect are grounded in facts about its form of life: "What merely 'ought to be' in the individual we may say really 'is' in its form" (295). He concludes by pointing out how his arguments connect with Philippa Foot's claims that vice and irrationality are human defects: we can now see that they are "*forms of natural defect*" (296). We might gloss this by saying that for human beings "The S is F" covers such judgments as "The man is virtuous" and "The man acts rationally." It is not surprising, then, that Foot and Hursthouse have used Thompsonian naturalism as a basis for the development of updated Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Foot's Development

Foot's basic idea in *Natural Goodness*—her indebtedness to Thompson is obvious, and lavishly acknowledged—is that living things can be evaluated as good or bad via the formulation and application of natural norms derived from its species's life cycle of development, self-maintenance, and reproduction. As she summarizes it:

> (a) There was the life cycle, which in those cases consisted roughly of self-maintenance and reproduction.
> (b) There was the set of propositions saying *how* for a certain species this was achieved: how nourishment was obtained, how development took place, what defences were available, and how reproduction was secured.
> (c) From all this, *norms* were derived, requiring, for instance, a certain degree of swiftness in the deer, night vision in the owl, and cooperative hunting in the wolf.
> (d) By the application of these norms to an individual member of the relevant species it (this individual) was judged to be as it should be or, by contrast, to a lesser or greater degree defective in a certain respect. (Foot 2001, 33–34)

Foot follows Thompson in calling such propositions mentioned in (b) "Aristotelian categoricals"; for example, wolves hunt in packs. The

[4] It is worth noting that, of the sorts of naturalism I consider in this article, only Larry Arnhart's pays any significant attention to details of evolutionary theory. While all the authors acknowledge the role of natural selection in forming human nature, they take it that they can bracket our evolutionary history and focus on human nature as it is now. This seems a plausible claim, but it will need to be defended (though not in this article!) against arguments of the sort made by Richard Joyce in his 2006.

catalogue of these propositions allows us to formulate what she calls "Aristotelian necessities"; for example, since pack hunting and the food that results from it are goods for wolves, wolves need to be able to rely on each other to cooperate in hunting. In this sense, lupine nature requires of wolves that they cooperate (for they need such cooperation to survive); it is this fact that permits the derivation of norms. Although Foot has certainly elaborated upon Thompson's view, the basic idea is the same: that we may derive, from how a species or life form does characteristically live (how it develops, survives, and reproduces), norms governing how a particular specimen *should* live. A wolf, for example, should engage in cooperative pack hunting, and if it does not, is defective as a wolf.

Foot insists that moral evaluation is one type of this general kind of evaluation, but because of our rationality it is a special type. In the botanical and zoological worlds, she says, when we have connected an operation or feature to survival and reproduction, "questions of 'How?' and 'Why?' and 'What for?' come to an end. But clearly this is not true when we come to human beings" (42). Physical survival and reproduction are not ultimate goods for us; happiness (in a broadly Aristotelian sense) is. There is moreover a tremendous amount of diversity across persons and cultures. Now we might worry that these facts undo the whole scheme of naturalistic evaluation of human beings. Foot is confident that this is not so: "For all the diversities of human life, it is possible to give some quite general account of human necessities, that is, of what is quite generally needed for human good, if only by starting from the negative idea of human deprivation" (43). We need things no other animals do, because we have capacities for goods beyond their reach. Because of our needs we do have certain characteristic ways of going on, many of which involve cooperation and depend upon such virtues as loyalty, fairness, kindness, and trustworthiness (the example she focuses on is the practice of making and keeping promises; see 45–51). Morality itself is an Aristotelian necessity for us (see 17).

Hursthouse's Naturalism

In Rosalind Hursthouse's naturalism Thompson's thought does not play as explicit a role as it does in Foot's, but the basic idea is nevertheless the same (although a crucial difference is introduced by Hursthouse's reliance upon a dual foundation of morality, on which more later). Like Thompson and Foot, Hursthouse hinges her naturalism on the idea that a good moral agent is a good human being; that is, a good human specimen. Since we are a species of social animal, we might fill this out by looking at Hursthouse's definition of a good social animal as "one that is well fitted or endowed with respect to (i) its parts, (ii) its operations, (iii) its actions, and (iv) its desires and emotions; whether it is thus well fitted

or endowed is determined by whether these four aspects well serve [the four ends of] (1) its individual survival, (2) the continuance of the species, (3) its characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, and (4) the good functioning of its social group—in the ways characteristic of the species'' (Hursthouse 1999, 202). In human beings, virtues will be those acquired traits that fit their possessors to function well in relation to these ends, from the standpoint of emotions as well as actions (see 1999, 208). Hursthouse follows this claim with a brief but interesting discussion of why such traditional virtues as courage, justice, honesty, and generosity are among the traits that so fit their possessors (1999, 208–11).

Like Foot (and Thompson), Hursthouse insists that humans are set apart from other animals by an additional aspect, rationality, which allows us to assess our characteristic ways of going on, and to try to change them if we judge it rational to do so (see 1999, 221). And with these brief summaries of their accounts in hand, it is on this aspect that I now wish to focus, for human rationality, with its attendant power of reflection upon and assessment of reasons for action, threatens to topple the whole structure of Thompsonian naturalism. So at least argues John McDowell.

McDowell's Criticism of Thompsonian Naturalism

In his ''Two Sorts of Naturalism'' McDowell takes up this sort of view, takes seriously its commitment to the idea that moral evaluation is a species of natural evaluation, and asks, ''Just how convincing a grounding for the appeal of ethical considerations to reason is available anyway, from the claim that human beings need the virtues if their life is to go well? Would this claim be like the claim that wolves need a certain sort of cooperativeness if their life is to go well?'' (1995, 153). He goes on to imagine a ''rational wolf'' debating whether to ''idle through the hunt but still grab his share of the prey,'' and then considers the sort of response that invokes a Thompsonian Aristotelian categorical, to the effect that full cooperation is how wolf-style hunting succeeds. ''If,'' counters McDowell, ''our wolf has stepped back from his natural impulse and taken up the critical stance [as reason enables him to do], why should what we say impress him?'' (1995, 153). This points to the logical weakness of appeal to Aristotelian categoricals: just as one cannot infer from ''Humans have thirty-two teeth'' and ''I am a human'' that ''I have thirty-two teeth,'' neither can we infer from ''Wolves need or do such-and-such'' and ''He is a wolf'' to ''He needs such-and-such''—for reason allows us to step back from our animal nature and question its decisiveness in practical problems. And this fact raises the specter of egoism: ''With the onset of reason, then, the nature of the species abdicates from a previously unquestionable authority over the behaviour of the individual animal. . . . This can easily leave the individual interest of the deliberator

looking like the only candidate to take over the vacant throne'' (1995, 154). This telling point, I think, brings down the curtain on any naïve hope that simple appeal to Aristotelian categoricals could all by itself provide a foundation for ethics. For, such natural-historical judgments describe how an evolved species does, in fact, propagate itself, and McDowell is right in pointing out that ''So what?'' is a perfectly legitimate question.

It is striking that although Foot and Hursthouse carry out their projects in continual dialogue with McDowell, to my knowledge neither they nor Thompson take up the criticisms McDowell offers in this article, even though it was published in the same volume—in honor of Foot and edited by Hursthouse—in which Thompson's article was published. This is not of course to say that they have no responses available, or even that nothing they have already said is relevant.

Indeed, to look ahead, one could supplement or transform the account of naturalism so far set out in a number of ways (ways not all mutually exclusive). First, one could recall that ''it is man's nature to live by convention'' (or, better, in and by culture) and point out that culture is not merely a product of a ''blind watchmaker'' but also in large part the product of reason—Thompson and Foot actually gesture in this direction, and McDowell himself adopts this sort of strategy in setting out his ''second sort'' of naturalism—that of second nature. A second strategy would be to accept that self-interest ascends to the throne, but to argue that human morality can be saved in these terms—we shall see that Larry Arnhart has developed an impressive account along these lines (I shall argue that Hursthouse too is at least pulled in this direction). The final strategy I consider, and largely endorse, that of Alasdair MacIntyre in *Dependent Rational Animals*, has something in common with each of the first two: it wholly agrees with McDowell in stressing the essential importance of second nature but also agrees with Arnhart in respecting the universality of certain fundamental human drives. The resulting close link between first and second natures will allow this strategy to overcome problems faced by the other sorts of naturalism.

2

McDowell's Second-Naturalism

Thompson, Foot, and Hursthouse do not actually embrace the hope I called ''naïve.'' Although they do not go into much depth, they see an important role in practical rationality for human culture, which as I said is in large part the product of human reason.[5] Now, this is actually the

[5] Thompson, for example, alludes briefly to moral discourse being ''caught up'' in ''custom and 'culture' '' and to complications this introduces (1995, 296). Foot discusses, for

kind of move McDowell makes in endorsing the "second sort" of naturalism he discusses in his article, namely, the sort focused on "second nature."

McDowell insists that reason's reflective distance from first nature need not leave us with self-interest as the only basis for practical reasoning. Rather, if one has through education and enculturation (or *Bildung*, as he calls it elsewhere) acquired a second nature, it "will seem to its possessor to open his eyes to reasons for acting" (1995, 171).[6] It is not even that such reasons must now compete with those of self-interest: "It is not that the dictates of virtue fill what would otherwise be a void; they are in position already, before any threat of anarchy can materialize. The alteration in one's make-up that opened the authority of nature to question is precisely the alteration that has put the dictates of virtue in place as authoritative" (1995, 170–71). In acquiring a second nature or character, one's practical reason takes on a "determinate non-formal shape" (1995, 167) that molds one's motivational and evaluational tendencies, so that the values in light of which one judges first-natural tendencies (say, toward aggression) will be precisely those prized by people of virtue, and not simply those of self-interest.

But as McDowell admits, any second nature, and not just virtue, will have this "eye-opening" effect on practical reason, with the result that people with different characters will "see" different reasons as salient. The virtuous person is the one who "gets this kind of thing right" (1995, 171). Now, this will raise the standard sort of worries about how to identify the virtuous person, how to identify the correct "shape" of practical rationality. In particular, if our acquired practical outlook determines how we see things, how can we (noncircularly) justify it, or criticize it so as to arrive at a rationally superior outlook?

McDowell is sensitive to these worries, although the answer he outlines may not satisfy many of those who raise them. We are not, he says, simply "stuck" with practical reason of the shape our formed character confers: "We can let the question arise whether the space of reasons really is laid out as it seems to be from the viewpoint of a particular shaping of the practical *logos*" (1995, 171). We can engage in reflection, even radical reflection, but "there is no addressing the question in a way that holds that apparent layout [of the space of reasons] in suspense, and aims to reconstruct its correctness from a vantage-point outside the ways of thinking one acquired in ethical upbringing" (1995, 171). Ethical reflection must be "Neurathian" (1995, 171). We cannot appeal directly to first-natural facts that "force themselves on us in a way that would bypass the

example, the key role in a characteristically human life of "songs and ceremonials," and the cultural roles of "leaders, explorers, and artists" in any richly human society (2001, 43–44).

[6] As McDowell puts it in *Mind and World*, "If we generalize the way Aristotle conceives the moulding of ethical character, we arrive at the notion of having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature. I cannot think of a good short English expression for this, but it is what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*" (1996, 84).

need for thought" (1995, 171)—that is, we cannot achieve a "view from nowhere" or appeal to "the given," something independent of all conceptual schemes (or "shapes" of practical reason), in such a way as to hope to convince "any rational person" of the truth of our claims. Rather, we can take up this trait, that principle, this other value and ask whether it fits with our overall moral conceptual scheme, our conception of a good life, our moral commitments (both the explicit and the implicit commitments we may upon reflection discover we have). Over time, this allows for radical changes to one's conceptual scheme, or to the shape of one's practical reason (as Hursthouse puts it commenting upon this reflective approach, "Neurath's boat might, over many years, become like Theseus's ship, without a single plank of the original remaining" [Hursthouse 1999, 166]).

Now, such Neurathian reflection will likely be effective in achieving a consistent practical outlook. Is there, however, any reason to think that it will achieve truth? Or even that such reflection will guarantee (in the long run) convergence? McDowell disallows any sort of external guide to this reflection (facts discoverable by natural science, for example). But first nature might also serve as an internal guide, in that it remains internal to any practical outlook. Thus McDowell insists that "the innate endowment of human beings must put limits on the shapings of second nature that are possible for them" (1995, 171). But these limits are modest, he thinks, and second nature "is to some extent autonomous with respect to nature on the natural-scientific conception" (1995, 174). Indeed, to a considerable extent "any actual second nature is a cultural product," and one should have a "lively sense of alternative possibilities for human life, lived out in cultures other than one's own" (1995, 176).

Thus, McDowell's second-naturalism seems to give way to a lightly constrained moral relativism, in which morality is multiply, and variably, realized in a diverse assortment of cultures. McDowell is vague about how great the variation may be among second natures that can still rightly be called virtuous. He speaks of a "culturally specific realization of what doing well is for human beings as such" (1995, 176), suggesting that he might have in mind something along the lines suggested by Martha Nussbaum in "Non-Relative Virtues": here each of the various "spheres" of life common to human beings (appetite, fear of danger, property, and so on) is covered by a thinly specified virtue (temperance, courage, justice). These virtues, however, admit of various thick or concrete specifications, and diversity of cultures is one key factor in this ramification of specifications.[7] This reading is lent some credence by McDowell's contention that claims about what members of a species need to continue their way of life (what Foot calls Aristotelian necessities) do serve as

[7] See Nussbaum 1988 (esp. 35–36, 44). Of course, McDowell's very strong position on the unity of the virtues (see his 1997) ensures that he will differ with Nussbaum over important details of the approach.

reasons, not for just any member of the species but for those initiated into a culture stressing cooperative social life (see McDowell 1995, 172–73).

However this may be, we should notice that what is doing the work in McDowell's naturalism is not human nature understood in a universal sense but second nature, or rather a constellation of second natures. Or, as we might instead put it, not nature but culture. And we might ask, is this really naturalism at all? Perhaps culturalism would be a better name. Now, so far this is simply a tendentious relabeling, not a serious objection. McDowell was never trying to ground his approach to ethics on first nature, so it hardly seems a problem for him that he relies so completely on second nature. The relabeling, however, does have a point. As I noted in my introductory comments, McDowell is after a sort of naturalism in which practical reason is not "something that dictates to one's nature from outside" (McDowell 1995, 174). Yet this is the sort of practical reason that is likely to follow from his naturalism, or culturalism. For this culturalism, since it is it really a multiculturalism, is very susceptible to being commandeered by a moral or political liberalism. The rejection of appeal to a universally shared nature to help resolve disputes between different cultural outlooks (different second natures) seems to set up the Grotian problematic of serious and incessantly unresolvable disagreement between equals—the problematic that led to modern natural law theories and thence to liberalism (see Schneewind 1997, 198–200). The rich second-natural moral outlooks McDowell sees as central to morality will be relegated to the periphery, and the heart of morality will come to be seen as a set of principles that would be agreed upon in an original position of equality (or that no one committed to unforced agreement could reasonably reject), those necessary to govern interactions between denizens of the various provinces of the space of reasons—and that is to say, principles that dictate to the various second natures "from outside." McDowell is surely correct to stress the importance of second nature (or natures), but it (or they) cannot sustain the whole weight of moral reasoning alone. Virtue ethics must either find a firmer footing in a common human nature or submit to the subordination of virtue to the more deontological elements of political liberalism—that is, give up the hope of naturalism supporting a self-standing virtue ethics.

3

Desire-Based Naturalism

One way around this problem is to link second nature more closely to first,[8] so that each practical outlook will have a standard external to it (or better, not peculiar to itself but internal to all such outlooks) to which it

[8] This is in line with the criticism that Alasdair MacIntyre makes of McDowellian treatments of second nature; see MacIntyre 1999, 60.

may appeal in criticizing itself or another outlook. One candidate for providing such a first-natural standard is self-interest: it may be tempting to a theorist to take up McDowell's gauntlet, admit that on a naturalistic view self-interest does ascend to the throne, and then try to show how this is not such a bad thing after all.

Hursthouse's Dualism

Rosalind Hursthouse at least leans in this direction. Officially, she provides her theory with a dual foundation. Her basic idea is that "a virtue is a character trait a human being needs for *eudaimonia*, to flourish or to live well" (1999, 167), but she complicates this by endorsing what she calls "Plato's requirement on the virtues:" (1) Virtues benefit their possessor; they are good *for her*; (2) virtues make their possessor a good human being; they are *good* for her; and (3) these features are interrelated (see 1999, 167–69). Hursthouse cashes out the beneficial nature of the virtues in terms of enjoyment and satisfaction with one's life (see 1999, 177, 185–86).

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.

[9] Hursthouse never explicitly says that her theory is (however subtly) egoistic—although the passage cited above from p. 190 comes close—and her treatment of these issues is rather more subtle than I have expressed it. One feature of her account that I have passed over is her attempt to show that conflict between these fundamental commitments will not (or perhaps even cannot) arise so long as we are considering well-being as seen from the standpoint of a virtuous agent. I do not think the attempt succeeds, but cannot argue this here.

Arnhart's Naturalism

We find in Larry Arnhart's *Darwinian Natural Right* an explicit attempt to elaborate and defend "an ethics of desire," the basic premise of which is that "the good is the desirable" (Arnhart 1998, 19). Arnhart follows Aristotle in arguing that, in all animal activity, desire and reason, or at least desire and cognition, work together in the generation of action. But he interprets this in a Humean fashion, such that "a reason for action is a complex psychological state in which the conative component (a desire) plays the primary role, and the cognitive component (a belief) plays the secondary role ... desires are primary because satisfying them is the ultimate motivation to which reason is subordinated" (19–20). Of course, Arnhart does not think that just any desire, together with relevant beliefs, provides a (good) reason for action: "To live well, we must perceive what we *truly* desire" (23; my italics), and then organize our less important desires (which he calls "arbitrary" vs. "natural"; see 29), our actions and relations—indeed, our lives—into a pattern that supports their achievement. Thus, "what we desire is a life planned to achieve the fullest satisfaction of our desires and the fullest development of our capacities over a whole life, which is what Aristotle calls *eudaimonia*, 'happiness' or 'flourishing' " (24).

Arnhart goes on to catalogue twenty natural desires, "general tendencies or proclivities that are true for all societies" (30–31), although these desires may not be occurrent in all individuals (sexual desire, for example, may be suppressed by extreme circumstances or natural defect). These include desires for mating, family bonding, friendship, reciprocity, social rank, health, and understanding. Virtues will be those traits required to organize our natural desires and pursue the natural ends they set for us; Arnhart focuses especially on the role of prudence (46–49). From his account of the naturalistic basis Arnhart goes on to treat substantial areas of morality and politics, including relations between parents and children, the function of culture, and the issue of slavery. Our concern, however, must be with whether his basis is adequate—and I believe it is not.

First, Arnhart's position that the goal in life is to satisfy one's most important ("true" or "natural") desires is a short step from egoism. It would be too hasty to say that it is, ipso facto, egoism. As Bernard Williams has pointed out, seeking to satisfy one's desires is not the same thing as seeking to satisfy oneself (see Williams 1973). One's desires may be self-serving or otherwise, and a number of those Arnhart lists are otherwise (desires to provide parental care, for example, and to relate to others on terms of reciprocity). But egoism seems likely to rear its head when it comes time to decide which desires are most important to us: since reason, as servant of the passions, cannot decide this issue, our desires themselves must. One solution would be to follow our strongest desire of the moment. Arnhart rejects this, of course, in favor of a prudential

organization of desires so as to secure the maximum compossible satisfaction of our most important desires. But the obvious candidate criterion for settling which are most important to satisfy is going to be *my* satisfaction, such that the most important desires are those the satisfaction of which will best promote my well-being, bring me the greatest balance of satisfaction over frustration (this is in essence the view that he attributes, with apparent endorsement, to Darwin and to Robert McShea; see 75–76, 81). True, some of these desires will, taken in themselves, be other-regarding (for example, the desire for the well-being of my children), but my basic reason for according them the status I do turns out to be their importance to *my* well-being. Now, as with Hursthouse, we can conclude this only tentatively, because Arnhart never admits this in so many words. Let us say that his theory tends toward, rather than is, a form of egoism. I suspect, actually, that Arnhart would not be unduly concerned about this one way or the other. I think he should be, but there is another serious problem as well.

It stems from Arnhart's basic assumption that desire is fundamental and reason secondary, with its implication that his moral psychology is a form of what McDowell calls "hydraulic psychology" (see McDowell 1980): reasons for action come down in the end to some thing or things we "just want," period. Practical reason is "pushed" into action rather than leading the way. So far this is simply to apply an unpleasant label to a broadly Humean view, but it is easy, I think, to show why the view is problematic. Reflection at least permits us to ask the question, are our natural desires good? This is in a sense to turn the rational wolf example on its head (instead of asking whether honoring moral principles satisfies our desires, it asks whether satisfying our desires honors our principles).

Arnhart recognizes the central role of ambition in human motivation, a role reflected in his inclusion in our natural desires of desires for social ranking, political rule, and even war (33–34). Relatedly, he admits that "human beings are naturally inclined to exploitation through coercion and manipulation" (167–68). In cases involving such motives, there can often result a clash of natural desires (for example, between the desire to dominate on the one hand, the desire to be free on the other, and presumably on both hands the desire for reciprocity). Arnhart takes this up in his fifty-page discussion of slavery, and eventually concludes that slavery is wrong, contrary to natural right, for two closely related reasons: because it goes against our natural moral sense, and because it "cannot be based on a natural complementarity of desires" (210) of the sort required to maintain a stable, balanced human society (which each individual needs in order to flourish). The claim that slavery is inconsistent with a stable society seems to be an empirical claim, and a questionable one at that. Doubtless the practice of slavery is often destabilizing (as in nineteenth-century America), but not always (Sparta was for a long time a stable city-state). It seems an insufficient condemnation of slavery

to say that we reject it on the condition that it is socially suboptimal in the present circumstances. Descendants of slaves, for example, may wish for something stronger, more direct, as would potential slaves (and it is likely that all of us, *in fine*, fit both these categories).

And Arnhart seems to give it: What could be more direct than saying that slavery is contrary to our natural moral sense? He takes this moral sense to be the product of our social feelings and our rational capacity to judge social principles (209). The moral sense in some way supervenes on our natural desires and our ability to reflect on how to satisfy them. But then it is not at all clear how the moral sense can claim to rule in the soul, rather than serve as a facilitator. If we define "wrong" in terms of being contrary to moral sense as Arnhart seems to do ("Slavery is wrong *because* it violates a natural moral sense," 209; my italics), then there is no trouble about labeling slavery wrong. But labeling it (or other forms of exploitation) always and in itself irrational or not to be done, all things considered, will be another matter. For if "morally wrong" is simply a short version of "contrary to natural moral sense," it seems perfectly intelligible to suppose that sometimes it would be wise, even right, all things considered, to act immorally (for example, in conditions alien to those that produced our natural moral sense). Unless he were to admit this, Arnhart would seem to allow the desire for reciprocity and the moral sense largely dependent upon it to trump other natural desires. In doing so he is, I believe, surreptitiously appealing to a standard beyond our natural desires, one that sits in judgment upon them.

This gets him into trouble—his (naturalistic) theory does not allow appeal to such a standard, and yet turns out to require it. If we understand by "human nature" simply a constellation of deep-seated desires thrown up into the psyche of a sophisticated ape by processes of natural selection, then we should hardly be surprised that it provides us at best an imperfect standard for life in environments changing far faster than the nature itself. Nor should we be surprised that human nature turns out to require some supervising principle like reciprocity (something in the near neighborhood of universalizability). But by this point we have abandoned ethical naturalism in any robust sense. As with McDowell, so with Arnhart—something must be imposed on human nature "from outside" to ground moral norms.

4

Taking Stock: Four Requirements for Naturalism

The shortcomings revealed in the foregoing review of these sorts of naturalism at last enable us to formulate some requirements on a plausible form of Aristotelian naturalism, one that takes human nature to be normative, and moral goodness to be the fulfillment of that nature.

I shall use the phrase "natural norm" as a generic stand-in for various candidate descriptions of what it is about our nature that sets the standard: fundamental desires, Aristotelian categoricals, natural inclinations, precepts of the natural law. The use of McDowell's device of the rational wolf lets us derive the first two requirements.

As we saw in McDowell's critique of Thompsonian naturalism, a rational wolf can note the Aristotelian categoricals describing how members of his species go on in their business of survival and reproduction, and find himself unmoved. Aristotelian categoricals do not, in and of themselves, stand up to the realization that we may want to act in ways out of accord with them. In order to avoid this sort of objection, the Aristotelian naturalist should hold that

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

One way to make natural norms intrinsically able to motivate is, with Arnhart, to identify them not with the categoricals but with natural desires that do motivate (at least most people most of the time). But here we ran into the trouble that the list of natural desires, compiled as Arnhart recommends (by relying on empirical data about what humans do in fact typically desire), includes some fairly unsavory members, such as the desires to master and exploit. Although Arnhart struggles against the conclusion, this approach seems to leave human nature in need of some supervising principle that is either artificial (such as the principle of universalizability) or at least artificially elevated to its supervising role (such as the desire for reciprocity). Whatever the merits of such an approach might be, it takes us out of the realm of naturalism as understood in this article—it is no longer human nature that is doing the normative work; instead, moral goodness consists in following principles imposed on nature "from outside." To avoid this, we must appeal to norms other than sheer natural desires as Arnhart understands them. Natural norms must be able to motivate but must also stand up to critical rational reflection, or,

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

McDowell indicates one way we might seek to identify norms that can do this, namely, by appeal to the Aristotelian notion of a second nature that opens our eyes to reasons at large. On this view certain (second) natural norms emerge as both self-justifying and intrinsically motivating. Now, as I hope the use of McDowell as an example suggests, I do not mean that naturalism claims that natural norms both convince and motivate "every rational agent," such that they could provide a convincing and life-changing response to Callicles or to the proverbial intelligent

Nazi. Naturalism does not entail that reason can be a "force."[10] 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. Rather, they are guides to the best way to live a fully human life, or to the best human life available (and as such are both motivating and convincing).[11] (I shall say more on this topic as the article proceeds.)

As we saw, McDowell's view turns out to be not so much a naturalism as a culturalism, or indeed a multiculturalism. I suggested that the outcome of McDowell's view would be not an Aristotelian virtue ethic but an indeterminate number of virtue ethics in various cultural enclaves regulated by a moral or at least political liberalism. This is not ethical naturalism even on McDowell's terms, because (if I may quote this passage again) something "dictates to one's nature from outside." An Aristotelian naturalism, in which human nature is truly normative and sets the standard of moral goodness, requires something further, something along these lines:

(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.

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

[10] See Bernard Williams's treatment of this idea in his 1985, chap. 2. I am actually a bit more sanguine than McDowell as to the universal pull of natural norms, but certainly admit that the intensity of that pull varies with the virtue of the agent in question, from almost imperceptible to almost irresistibly attractive.

[11] Relevant here is McDowell's discussion of Thompson's Aristotelian categoricals: having argued that they would be unable to motivate the rational wolf, McDowell later allows that the categoricals do provide reasons, not for every species member but for the virtuous (see McDowell 1995, 172–73, and also my discussion of this passage in section 2). I think what the virtuous see is that actions in accordance with the categoricals are themselves partly constitutive of a good individual life and also of a specific form of life worth sustaining and propagating.

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.

On this end-first approach, as we may call it, the "interpretation or understanding of the life-form" would be dialectically refined by a sort of back-and-forth movement, such that those among what Arnhart calls our natural desires inconsistent with our mature ethical standpoint (such as the desire to exploit) can be excluded from the conception of human nature and its tendencies, while those features of our current character or culture that are not developments of natural human tendencies (certain fashions in self-presentation or popular culture, say) can be seen as cultural accretions ("nonnatural" though certainly not always "unnatural").

But is not this approach circular, and in fact rather whiggish? Will it not be sure to justify our current character and culture and interpret human nature as whatever is, or is at least trying to be, like us? No: of course this approach could be abused in such a way, but it is in essence not circular but Neurathian (and self-critical) in roughly the way Hursthouse's and McDowell's approaches are. One will not be more satisfied, but also should not be less satisfied, with this approach than with those (in this respect, that is). I do not mean to suggest that the invocation of Neurath quiets all worries, but they are not new worries, and there are responses to them in the literature. I say more about this issue toward the end of the article.

First I want to turn to sketching in a bit more detail one way the kind of naturalism I am advocating might go. I mentioned earlier that MacIntyre criticizes McDowell in roughly the same way I have, namely, arguing that he separates too sharply first nature and second nature (see MacIntyre 1999, 60). In the next section, I argue that by linking the two more closely in something like the way MacIntyre does, we can articulate a form of naturalism that, unlike the others reviewed, meets all of (1) to (4) above.

5

MacIntyrean Naturalism

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 particular 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.

Without trying to capture all the details of MacIntyre's account, we can note that when we observe the required trajectory of our lives (from utterly dependent prenates to independent practical reasoners) certain capacities and certain needs loom particularly large: capacities to reason, to stand back from our current strongest impulses and judge candidate reasons for actions, and to form and criticize conceptions of the best life available to us; needs for the virtues that sustain practical reasoning and for a certain type of community instantiating a "network of giving and receiving" that both nurtures the immature and sustains the mature.

One can fairly readily see why such virtues as temperance and courage would be needed to enable one to stand back from one's emotional impulses (and, indeed, to shape one's emotions) and thereby to facilitate living in accordance with practical reason. MacIntyre's insistence upon the need for community follows on his recognition that so much is required of human beings, developmentally, in order for them to flourish, and thus that our needs and vulnerabilities are correspondingly great. The dependence of an immature human being upon a network of support (parents, playmates, teachers) is obvious (see especially MacIntyre 1999, chap. 8, on this). But MacIntyre points out (see 1999, 96–97) that we never entirely outrun our dependence upon others: there are the obvious points that we can at any time suffer injury or illness and are all susceptible to the infirmities attendant upon old age. But furthermore, even at our most mature and independent, we need others, for we remain susceptible to intellectual error (for example, on matters of which we are ill-informed) and to moral error (being influenced, for example, by a visceral but unfounded dislike of someone; the virtues may help guard against this, but not perfectly). Because of such imperfections, we need to be able to rely upon the help and counsel of friends, family, coworkers, and so on. In short, human vulnerabilities, both those we share with other animals and those that are specific to human animality, ensure that we always need a supporting community to help us reason well. This need is characteristic of the human condition, and these supporting networks of relationship are therefore "constitutive means to the end of our flourishing" (1999, 102).

MacIntyre's next move is to argue that such social networks are sustained only by the exercise of additional virtues, including especially what he calls "the virtues of acknowledged dependence," which sustain the activities of giving and receiving largely constitutive of these networks (1999, 120). The key virtue of giving is what MacIntyre calls "just generosity," so-called because it involves "uncalculating giving," but giving that is nevertheless owed to others (MacIntyre here follows Aquinas in seeing the Aristotelian virtue of liberality—just generosity—as a part of justice; see 1999, 120–21). The key virtues of receiving are gratitude, courtesy, and forbearance (see 1999, 126). Without the possession and exercise of such virtues, we shall neither be able to

give what we owe nor be able to receive what we need, reliably and graciously. And if we fail in these ways, the networks of giving and receiving necessary for, and partly constitutive of, our flourishing will break down.

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 flourishing—virtues are expressed in practical reasoning, and sustained and effective practical reasoning takes place only within networks of giving and receiving.

So much by way of a sketch of the main lines of MacIntyre's naturalism, but before turning to whether it can meet the four criteria I set out in section 4, I need to draw attention to a few points concerning how the virtuous "see the world," and see their own development. First, MacIntyre makes the point that in acquiring the virtues we come to recognize a common good and our debt to the community that raised us, to see the good of others as part of our own good and the needs of others as providing reasons for acting, and so forth (see, e.g., 1999, 108–9). Indeed, we come to see that "the acts required by the virtues are each of them worth performing for their own sake. They are indeed always also a means to something further, just because they are constitutive parts of flourishing. But it is precisely as acts worth performing for their own sake that they are such parts" (1999, 111–12). Here MacIntyre's approach closely parallels McDowell's in its insistence that the acquisition of virtuous character, of a second nature, opens one's eyes to reasons at large, which do not themselves rest upon "deeper" reasons having to do with a scientifically (value-neutrally) described first nature (whether cashed out in terms of Aristotelian categoricals or in terms of natural desires). Consider this passage from McDowell: "The point of a particular courageous action lies not in the fact that human beings in general need courage, focused, as it were, on the circumstances at hand, but in the fact that this action counts as worth while in its own right, by the lights of a conceptual scheme that is second nature to a courageous person" (1995, 174). For both him and MacIntyre, things become visible from the second-natural standpoint that were not visible from the first-natural. Anyone who has progressed to the level of inquiry, presumably, can see that some degree of community is necessary to foster practically rational agents, and some degree of self-control is instrumental to sustaining practical reason. Those who, by the acquisition of virtues and participation in the required sort of community, become successful practical reasoners see much more: that temperance is an excellence and the pleasures necessarily forgone for the sake of clear reasoning were actually undesirable, that community and its associated duties are not merely

troublesome necessities but central to the good life one is trying to lead, and so forth.

So the virtues and associated commitments and activities are part of human life as understood from the viewpoint of a developed second nature, part of the form of life about which Thompson says, "What merely 'ought to be' in the individual we may say really 'is' in its form" (1995, 295). This brings us to the second point regarding that viewpoint, concerning how the ethically mature understand themselves and their development. I mentioned toward the end of section 4 the role of a "back-and-forth" dialectic in achieving understanding of the relation between first and second natures. It is relevant to the self-understanding of the virtuous too (and here I go beyond what is explicit in MacIntyre): the mature practical reasoner looking back on the immature individual she used to be will identify certain tendencies and capacities as crude harbingers of the character she has attained through the assistance of others and her own hard work (these partly constituted her untutored first nature), and other tendencies and capacities as obstacles not central to her nature as a practically rational animal that had to be pruned and trimmed away (such aberrant tendencies may be seen as the flotsam of evolutionary history, say, or the effects of Original Sin). Examples of both sorts of tendency can be found in Arnhart's list: examples of the former are parental care, familial bonding, friendship, reciprocity, political rule; of the latter, exploitation, domination, war.[12] At the same time, the look backward can help us to identify certain acquired characteristics as no more than affectations. Certain dialects, manners, modes of dress, and fashions in spending leisure time can be recognized either as one of many ways of satisfying a natural tendency or as mere cultural accretion, harmless (or perhaps not) but not of the essence of a good human life.

Let us now check MacIntyre's approach against the four criteria established above. It is first worth noting that MacIntyre explicitly associates his naturalism with that of the natural law tradition: speaking about how the virtues essential to human flourishing do involve (although they are not exhausted by) a rule-following component, he attributes to Aquinas the view that these rules integral to the virtues are the precepts of the natural law (1999, 111). Elsewhere MacIntyre speaks of agents discovering "norm-governed directednesses" toward "certain hierarchically ordered ends" laid down for us by our specific nature, and identifies these directednesses with "what Aquinas calls *inclinationes*" in his discussion of natural law (MacIntyre 1998, 138–39). The natural inclinations give rise to precepts when an agent comes to understand and

[12] Depending how we individuate tendencies, we may see the desire to exploit and dominate as perversions of the political instinct, the tendency to war as an unschooled version of the legitimate inclination to defend oneself and others.

appropriate his own nature, to make his own the ends laid down by his nature.

Now, according to that tradition, first, precepts of the natural law are seen as directing us toward the ends laid down for us by nature, as articulations of our natural inclinations, and are thus perfectly suited to motivate one who understands them to follow them. Second, these precepts, or at least the most basic ones, are held to be *per se nota*, known to be true upon full comprehension of their content. Next, the precepts of the natural law, again as expressions or articulations of our natural inclinations, are clearly rooted in universal human nature. Finally, in the natural law tradition the virtues are understood as the mature expressions of the natural inclinations (for example, Aquinas speaks of a natural inclination to live in society, and this inclination expresses itself, in maturity, in such virtues as justice, liberality, and friendship).[13] All of this is to say that, as classically formulated,[14] the natural law tradition meets the four criteria enumerated above (understanding natural norms in terms of the requirements of the natural law):

(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.

As I stated, MacIntyre locates himself in the stream of this tradition. Of course he reformulates its claims in his own way, yet we can now see how his own statement of a natural law ethic also meets these four criteria. As we have seen, rather than natural norms, MacIntyre talks in terms of "the requirements of the virtues" or "norm-governed directednesses." We can understand such requirements in two ways: first, in terms of particular actions required by a virtue in this or that circumstance and, second, as an articulation of the virtue and its directedness into a precept or precepts. Such precepts, which can be understood simply as precepts of the natural law, will include certain exceptionless prohibitions (do not murder), and certain general rules (return borrowed items, tell the whole truth)—these latter are in essence what the medievals called conclusions drawn from the

[13] For an impressive articulation of this idea, see Pinckaers 1995, chap. 17.

[14] I should acknowledge that it is somewhat incautious to speak of "the natural law tradition" as though it were monolithic; I mean that strain of it of which Aquinas is chief spokesman.

precepts of the natural law, and they hold only for the most part (MacIntyre insists that such articulations can be only partial, not exhausting what the virtue requires). Also, understanding precepts of the natural law in this way, we should not be surprised to find, says MacIntyre, that they also include a universal positive injunction; "among the precepts of the natural law are precepts which enjoin us to do whatever the virtues require of us" (1999, 111). That is, the requirements of the virtues can be articulated into what Hursthouse calls "v-rules" (do what is just, what is courageous, and so forth).[15]

So, with respect to the first sort of requirement, we saw above that the virtuous regard the acts required by the virtues as worth performing for their own sake—such actions are constitutive means of human flourishing, and they are both justified per se, and intrinsically motivating (criteria (1) and (2)). Now, since recognition that an action is just or courageous is already a sufficient reason to do it, the virtuous implicitly recognize the claim on them of the requirements of the virtues in the second, more general, sense as well. Upon reflection, for example, they would clearly endorse the authority of the "v-rules," and with them the rules mentioned above, since MacIntyre sees following such rules as "integral" to the exercise of the virtues themselves. So for both ways of understanding "requirements of the virtues" they meet the first two criteria for natural norms: they are, for the virtuous, intrinsically motivating and self-justified, *per se nota*.

As for the third criterion, we have seen that MacIntyre argues that the possession and exercise of the virtues is essential to human flourishing as dependent rational animals. Thus natural norms or the requirements of the virtues, in articulating what we need (to have, to be, to do) to flourish, are anchored in and express universal human nature.[16]

We have also seen how MacIntyre's account speaks to the fourth criterion: given the noted trajectory of human nature from complete dependency toward independent practical rationality, it becomes clear from the vantage of a mature second nature (that of an attained practical rationality enabled by the virtues) that first nature, as understood at the conclusion of the back-and-forth dialectic outlined above, had been tending in that direction the whole time.

So a broadly MacIntyrean approach seems to offer a way to meet the four criteria distilled from our critical review of other attempts to

[15] See Hursthouse 1999, 36–39. Theoretically, this articulation is not terribly informative, but as Hursthouse points out, it can be surprisingly helpful in actual deliberation to rehearse such "mother's knee" sorts of rules (always be fair). See also Hursthouse 2006.

[16] This allows MacIntyre to escape the relativism that threatens McDowell: the requirements of virtue (of mature second nature) are universal—although MacIntyre certainly does not think every culture should be the same. The idea is that certain patterns of giving and receiving will be realized in every well-functioning community, but realized variously, based on local customs and conditions (see MacIntyre 1999, 143).

formulate an updated Aristotelian naturalism. It avoids the problems of the Thompsonian approach by not relying on de facto categoricals of the sort rejected by McDowell's rational wolf, and it steers clear of the trouble invited by Arnhart's reliance on brutely given natural desires. In their place it puts, as natural norms, the requirements of the virtues that are integral to human flourishing, where the virtues are seen as acquired traits that fit human beings for the exercise of practical rationality toward which their shared nature directs them (thereby rejecting McDowell's sharp separation of first and second natures). The tradition speaks of virtues as "perfections of powers." MacIntyre does not use this language, but the idea is there: the emotions or passions are "powers" that can interfere with practical rationality, and are developed by such virtues as temperance and courage into enablers of reasoning—our capacity to relate to others both as givers and as receivers (or as withholders and as exploiters) is educated and governed by such virtues as just generosity and gratitude. The acquisition of the virtues not only prevents emotions from interfering with practical reasoning but also, in McDowellian terms, "opens our eyes" to new sorts of reasons for action, not visible to the immature, that make the good of others part of our good. So while MacIntyre links first and second natures much more closely than does McDowell, he agrees with McDowell, against Arnhart, that it is the recognition of reasons rather than the mere fact of biologically given desires that is fundamental in the generation of (virtuous) human action.

6

Objections to MacIntyrean Naturalism

In this section I raise two objections to the sort of naturalism of which MacIntyre is one key exponent. The first grows out of the allegation of whiggishness leveled against the end-first approach. The second turns on the worry that naturalism cannot be self-standing, that surreptitious—or in MacIntyre's own case perhaps not so surreptitious—appeal to the supernatural is in the offing.

Naturalism and Tradition

Earlier I mentioned the obvious objection to the end-first approach that it was whiggish: of course, it can plausibly be charged, if you start from the moral outlook and judgments held by those who share your acquired second nature you will take your "natural norms" to be justified, of course you will be able to identify as "natural" inclinations tending toward your current state, and it will be easy to write off others as "accretions." But doing so, the objection continues, does no more than display your ability to tell self-serving just-so stories. The same exercise could be undertaken, with the same success, by a different community

sharing a very different second nature. Surely such story-telling as the end-first approach enjoins provides no real justification.

The kernel of the response to this sort of objection, as already mentioned, is the appeal to a "Neurathian procedure" that allows us to "rebuild our ship while at sea" by checking our views for internal consistency and coherence, criticizing this or that part of the view in light of the rest, verifying the view's ability to assimilate new moral data, and so forth.[17] Appeal to this sort of procedure should quiet any allegations of vicious circularity, but an objector may still reasonably contend that many communities of second nature could justify their moral outlooks (perhaps after some modifications) by such a procedure, so that this response to the initial objection leads to moral relativism. It seems to me that this is what happens to McDowell; it is a fate MacIntyre seeks to avoid.

Accordingly, MacIntyre rejects as false the sort of confidence McDowell says follows upon representing more and more ethical reasons as culturally specific, and he feels the "vertigo" McDowell wants us to dismiss.[18] So although, as I noted, MacIntyre holds that at a practical level the fact that something is a requirement of virtue is a sufficient reason to guide action, he also holds that "at a more theoretical level we may and must respond to the question 'Why is this a sufficient answer?' And what makes it a sufficient answer is that it is only through the acquisition and exercise of the virtues that individuals and communities can flourish in a specifically human mode" (1999, 112). This theoretical requirement may make itself felt at precisely those times McDowell is telling us to remain confident in our outlook: when a community encounters an alien culture or a changing situation or a new environment. It is in part by meeting such challenges that practical reasoners and their communities test and improve their conception of what flourishing is. As MacIntyre writes, "The stages through which we must go first in learning how to be independent practical reasoners, and then in extending our powers of reasoning to different and changing contexts, are also the stages through which we gradually acquire an adequate and reflective grasp of what human flourishing is" (1999, 113). The criticism made possible by this process (notice that it can be seen as one sort of Neurathian procedure) can go well beyond refinement of already held views—it can lead to radical revision.

Consider as an example of this what we might call the legend of the German tribes, the historical details of which were accepted by the

[17] For discussions of the Neurathian procedure, see McDowell 1995, 171–73, and Hursthouse 1999, 163–70.

[18] McDowell discusses the "vertigo" that can result from "the thought that there is nothing but shared forms of life to keep us, as it were, on the rails" in his 1997 (150–53). See McDowell 1995, 176, for his discussion of the "confidence" I mention.

medievals largely on the testimony of Julius Caesar. On this view, the tribes lived by pillaging and preying on neighboring communities rather than by producing things themselves. This worked until their neighbors' resources were depleted, at which point the Germans were forced to take up a more productive way of life to survive. At first this was grudgingly done, but over time (perhaps generations) the productive way of life came to be seen as valuable for its own sake and, at the same time, the life of plundering as repugnant, due not just to its long-term external consequences but also to its own character and contrariety to the honest, productive way of life now understood to be good.[19] A radically altered moral outlook resulted when changes in the tribes' environment collaborated with ongoing reflection about what it is to live well (there is no need to suppose that such reflection always requires great philosophical sophistication). Indeed, the Germans came to see the superiority of the way of life of the neighbors they had previously preyed upon.

So, beginning from our current moral outlook with its conception of flourishing, we continuously seek to refine, and when need be alter, our moral outlook to correspond to moral reality as we encounter it. This is a process that begins from a contingent starting point (conceivably involving radically misguided beliefs), is fallible at each point, and can never claim to be "done." But we've seen that the process is not viciously circular and that it allows for adjustment and improvements to our outlook. This is not a damning objection, or even an objection at all if we do not require of moral philosophy what no human thinking can deliver. In fact, it simply serves to link *Dependent Rational Animals* to MacIntyre's earlier writings on reason as both tradition-constituted and tradition-constituting in *After Virtue* and especially in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* The rationality so largely constitutive of human flourishing is discursive, dialectic, and indeed tradition-based.

The philosophical anthropology of *Dependent Rational Animals* aspires to provide additional common ground between traditions, thereby perhaps limiting and challenging their divergence, but it does not replace tradition-based inquiry. We begin conceiving flourishing substantially in terms of being rational (what more we initially conceive it to be will vary in terms of our histories, situations, traditions). The virtues we acquire in becoming rational open our eyes to new aspects of flourishing (such as the good of others, the common good), perhaps calling for new virtues or newly conceived versions of old virtues. The inquiry is open ended and progresses as tradition-based inquiries do, but there is nothing here contrary to MacIntyre's naturalistic commitments. In fact, we saw that his naturalism calls for such inquiry.[20] Yet, what are we to think when

[19] See Hall 1994, 95–101, for a more detailed discussion of this point.

[20] See the passage cited above from MacIntyre 1999, 113. See also Hall 1994 for a book-length treatment of this theme.

one of the virtues required for flourishing, to which our eyes are opened, is an effect of the theological virtue of charity (and that is to say, a supernatural virtue)?

Naturalism and the Supernatural

MacIntyre insists that among the virtues of acknowledged dependence essential to human flourishing is *misericordia* (roughly, mercy or pity), a virtue recognizing every human being as neighbor, brother, or friend and seeing his or her need, as such, as supplying a reason for action (see MacIntyre 1999, 123–26). But misericordia is, according to Aquinas, an effect of the theological virtue of charity, and hence itself supernatural. Because the recognition of the need for misericordia arises on a natural plane, well before any question of a supernatural human end (obviously, if we have a supernatural end we are going to require grace to reach it), it appears that MacIntyrean (or at least MacIntyre's own) naturalism is incomplete even in its own sphere.

The question of the incompleteness of naturalism can be posed in another way too: one might worry that the structure is not only incomplete but also as a whole unsupported, based on the thought that human nature does not seem to carry its own justification with it, and thus seemingly cannot be the ultimate source of moral norms. Hursthouse confronts this worry, as expressed by Bernard Williams, at the end of her *On Virtue Ethics* (1999, 259–65), and she recognizes that at least historically hope or faith in human nature has been bound up with trust in God's Providence. Belief that human nature is created and sustained by God does offer a promising way of vindicating the claims of human natural norms, but it is not a way consistent with a comprehensive metaphysical naturalism.

There are three broad paths the MacIntyrean naturalist might take here. First, and with respect to the first worry, concerning misericordia, he might notice, as MacIntyre himself does, that misericordia is "recognizably at work in the secular world" (1999, 124) and, indeed, that it or something like it is recognized as a virtue by many secular authorities (MacIntyre mentions, for example, Mencius and Cicero). Of course this may be because grace is broadcast beyond those formally part of the church; it may also be because misericordia is after all a natural virtue (perhaps having an infused counterpart, just as for Aquinas the cardinal virtues come in natural and infused varieties). MacIntyre himself remains agnostic on this question, and this is a tenable stance for the MacIntyrean naturalist: it may be that there are "holes" in our nature (perhaps due to Original Sin) that God graciously fills, or it may not. Either way the nature that we experience, or at any rate the second nature of virtuous people, is whole in these respects, and that is the nature we see as normative.

With respect to the second worry, concerning the authority of natural norms, the MacIntyrean naturalist can point out again that the nature that is ultimately normative is the mature second nature (of which first nature is a harbinger), not the nature revealed by value-neutral empirical science. In the process of coming to acquire that nature we have come to value things in certain ways, ways that ensure among many other things that we shall value that form of life, see it as worth living, and regard its norms as worthy of respect. To the extent that we are engaged in an open-ended tradition-based inquiry, we may never settle into a feeling of infallibility but at the same time have the assurance that our outlook is being held in a falsifiable way and embodies the "best theory so far." It may be that neither worry strictly requires appeal to the supernatural to quiet it.[21]

The second path the MacIntyrean could take involves simply and wholeheartedly embracing the dependence upon the supernatural. Yes, our nature stands in need of the backing of divine authority; fallen as it is, it also requires grace not only to perfect it with respect to its supernatural end but also to serve as a stopgap in certain instances (as the example of misericordia suggests). This does not vitiate the whole naturalistic project: natural norms can still be seen as governing us; it is just that their authority is now seen as real but derivative, as is the authority of government for one who accepts a consent theory of political authority.

The third path also sees the authority of human nature as coming up short, but it differs from the second in not granting a divine underwriter. Again, the naturalistic project is not wholly vitiated: natural norms may be seen as "the best we can do," and as pretty good at that—good enough for any ordinary situation (for example, situations not involving a deep divide between the agent's understanding of the requirements of natural norms and of his own welfare).

So the reliance of naturalism upon the supernatural is by no means immediately obvious; nor would it, even if established, be an obviously damning objection.

7

Concluding Remarks

To take stock: Thompson's naturalism (and Foot's and Hursthouse's) turns on an appeal to what human animals in fact need to be and to do in order to survive as individuals and as a species. Arnhart's naturalism

[21] For those who take this path and argue for the self-standing character of natural norms, there is no reason they may not also embrace the existence of the supernatural and even see it as performing a supporting role. Arnhart, for example, although himself quite skeptical about the supernatural and certainly denying that naturalism strictly requires it, insists that belief can play a strong supporting role with respect to naturalistic commitments (see Arnhart 1998, chap. 10).

turns on a claim as to what human animals in fact most deeply desire. Both of these sorts of naturalism will fall prey to McDowell's criticism, which itself turns on the claim that reason allows us to step back from any such facts discoverable by the natural sciences and to question whether such facts provide reasons for us to be and act in the supposedly indicated ways. McDowell's own sort of naturalism appeals to "second nature," or to an acquired culture or moral character that opens our eyes to certain reasons "at large," which our acculturated rationality sees as compelling. But McDowell's naturalism is vulnerable to the charge of relativism, and perhaps also to the charge that "naturalism" is not really a good name for it anyway. The weakness of McDowell's naturalism stems from the fact that his "second nature" is too loosely tied to his "first nature." The strength of MacIntyrean naturalism, then, is that while it agrees with McDowell's on the centrality of second nature, it conceives this second nature as a natural outgrowth and development of the first nature of rational animals (in what is after all good Aristotelian fashion). This allows this sort of naturalism to meet the four requirements for a successful naturalistic theory that we distilled from criticisms of the other sorts.

Let me now return to the disclaimer I made in my introductory section: I do not presume to have achieved anything in the neighborhood of a demonstration of MacIntyre's, or even of a broadly MacIntyrean, naturalism. I have tried only to show what an Aristotelian naturalism, which takes human nature as normative (such that to be morally good is to perfect one's nature), would need to say; and to show that, among the main forms of "updated" Aristotelian naturalism on offer, something along the lines articulated by MacIntyre comes closest to saying it. 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.[22]

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