Chapter 1

Introduction: Virtue, Practical Reason, and Human Flourishing

"Not everything that is last claims to be an end, but only that which is best." (Aristotle, *Physics* 194a 32–33.)

Thesis

Philippa Foot's version of neo-Aristotelian virtue theory aims to lay the foundation and built the outline of an ethical naturalism that Mark Murphy calls a "secular natural law theory" in that she identifies ethical facts or properties such as virtue, vice, right, wrong, good, and bad with straightforwardly natural facts or properties of the human species. Foot's theory is classified as ethical naturalism. Jennifer Frey summarizes the "master thought" of Foot's type of naturalism:

> The ethical naturalist's master thought is this: man needs the virtues just as much as a bee needs its sting. Such a thought is intriguing insofar as it takes the ethereal and elusive 'moral ought' and brings it back down to earth, by locating it within a wider structure of evaluation we already readily grasp and acknowledge as objectively valid.[1]

John McDowell, however, objects to the heavily "biologized" type of virtue theory that Foot comes close to exemplifying, arguing that virtues are simply functions of rationality — namely, virtues are perceptual sensitivities to what a situation requires. Rosalind Hursthouse's *On Virtue Ethics* builds up

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

Foots account and supplies many missing pieces; however, she agrees with McDowell in rejecting the search for an external, objective, scientific foundation for virtue ethics.

In this dissertation, I defend Foot's project of aiming for a secular, scientific foundation for virtue ethics, and attempt to carry the project forward a few steps by offering my own account of virtue and humanity while defending the project against various objections, such as the "is-ought gap".

Specifically, I shall defend the following thesis: **virtue is the plurality of acquirable excellent character traits (such as moderation, tolerance, and wisdom) that are necessary for human beings qua practical, rational animals, because virtue partly constitutes natural human flourishing.**

This definition requires the elaboration on four key concepts: nature, virtue, practical reason, and teleology, each of which receives a chapter's attention. The hope is that these accounts move closer toward a secular, scientific, objective ethics that is both fully scientific (in respecting the best deliverances of biology, anthropology, psychology, and other social sciences) and fully normative (in commending particular virtues). Whether the natural facts or properties in which ethical facts are located is some conception of human biology, the human "life-form", our rational "form of life", the human characteristic way of life, or something else, the common point is clear: human beings need these qualities *because of who and what they are*, including a particular natural kind of flourishing defined by the natural normativity relevant to the species.

The Virtue Triangle

In the course of these chapters, I will defend this thesis. The primary themes are virtue ('acquirable excellent character traits') human nature (our life form as 'practical, rational animals') and human flourishing. These three concepts are interesting individually but even more so as a single schema.

To see why these three *together* are greater than the sum of their parts, consider a simple action such as cooking dinner. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre persuasively argues that there are three

necessary components entailed in the performance of any task – however menial or lofty: namely, a goal, a starting point, and the means from the starting point to the goal. For example, suppose my goal in this case is to reproduce what I see in the picture of a tasty meal from a cookbook; the starting point includes the raw materials at my disposal, such as the food in my fridge (and my cooking skills); the means to the end is a recipe, including a list of needed ingredients and instructions that I will enact to bring make a meal hopefully to that pictured in the cookbook. Similarly, one cannot make any mundane journey (say, leave for vacation) without knowing (a) where that destination is, (b) where one is at the moment, and (c) the directions — on foot, by car, or plane, or boat or what have you — to the destination. So, MacIntyre reasons, perhaps the same three necessary conditions exist for an intelligible moral system. One needs (a) a conception of human nature – including human rationality – as it is *prior* to deep self-reflection or moral effort; (b) a conception of some human flourishing or telos we can and *ought* to realize; and (c) a conception of the qualities, actions, attitudes, resources, laws, etc. that enable a human being to achieve his or her telos. The point of this astonishingly simple reflection is that we ought to demand that any moral theory supply all three components. A moral theory cannot simply offer one or two out of the three, and neglect the third. It needs *some* conception of individual or social well-being, *some* conception of what it means to be human (what kind of raw material are we working with?) and *some* conception of how one's moral duties and other obligations or other motivating factors connect humanity as it is with humanity-as-it-could-and-should-be. A moral theory without any one of these three formal constraints is bound to stultify. And many moral theories proposed lack one or two of the three.

At the same time, each of these three concepts are liable to misunderstanding in our modern context. We ought to be careful, in considering objections to neo-Aristotelian ethical theories, to ensure the objections are not scoring points against the wrong target.[2] Though her wording is slightly different from mine, Hursthouse puts the point this way: "Three of virtue ethics' central

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

concepts, virtue, practical wisdom and eudaimonia are often misunderstood. Once they are distinguished from related but distinct concepts peculiar to modern philosophy, various objections to virtue ethics can be better assessed."[3] A large part of my job is to stake out a conceptual space for virtue, practical reason (including its excellence, which I take to be practical wisdom), and natural human teleology (which I take to be closely related to eudaimonia). My task is also to defend the trilateral form that relates them in a dynamic schema.

Chapter Outline

1. Introduction
2. Natural Normativity
3. Virtue
4. Practical Wisdom
5. Flourishing
6. Natural Teleology Revisited
7. Conclusions

Chapter 2 is the foundation of all the rest, in that it addresses and attempts to resolve the worry that ethical naturalism is impossible. If ethical naturalists cannot derive normative conclusions from merely descriptive premises, then indeed it is impossible. And if there are no fundamental natural norms, one cannot derive normative conclusions. But there are natural norms. A conception of nature wherein nature is inherently normative is shown to be scientific in the form of 'generic' truths about all organic life, including humans. The account builds on natural normativity and constructs a concept of *normative human nature*. All the generic truths about human beings can be synthesized in the two predicates of rational and animal: Human nature is to potentially be practical, rational animals. For practical, rational animals, some traits are excellent and others undesirable given the kind of thing such animals are. We are parts of nature that are aware of nature, including the natural fact that we are part of nature.

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

Chapter 3 offers a definition of virtue consonant with the natural normativity already defended. Virtues are acquirable excellent character traits human beings need as practical, rational animals and which partly constitute natural human flourishing. Examples discussed include moderation, tolerance, and practical wisdom. These represent various kinds of 'self-regarding', 'other-regarding,' and 'object-regarding' virtues, sensitive to the intrinsic worth of self, others, and objects such as art, truth, beauty, etc. Virtues are also, among other things, necessary for the acquisition of more virtue, especially practical wisdom.

Chapter 4 explores practical reason in more depth. Practical reason is the capacity for resolving what to do, for "thinking how to live." The excellence of practical reason is practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is, among other things, a commitment and skill in acquiring more practical wisdom. Practical wisdom which is supremely important in that it is both an intellectual and a moral virtue. It is necessary for acheiving other moral virtues and sufficient for achieving some other intellectual virtues. Hence, once a human being has reached a level of practical wisdom certain kinds of well-being are secured.

Chapter 5 outlines an account of natural human flourishing, placing my virtue account squarely within the eudaimonist tradition but with important modifications. Flourishing for creatures like us is, among other things, the practical wisdom necessary to undergo the process of discovering human flourishing and the achievement of our humanity. We become what we truly are, even if our existence and identity end in death. Misery is to fail to be come human.

Chapter 6, returns in earnest to the theme of naturalism – that is, metaphysical and/or methodological naturalism. There, I address the broader question of whether the kind of neo-Aristotelian naturalism I have defended is compatible with 'naturalism' in any of the typical senses of the word. I argue that it is, and I suggest as a name for my theory Recursive Naturalism.

Chapter 7 draws conclusions and makes suggestions for further reasearch.

The remainder of this chapter defines the scope of the project.

I. Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism

Neo-Aristotelianism

My theory may be classified as neo-Aristotelian, both in its conclusions and in its primary source texts. My primary sources are Philippa Foot, John McDowell, and Alasdair MacIntyre, who each in their own way address all three themes from "the virtue triangle."[4] All three themes are, of course, important to Aristotle as well. But I shall reference historical sources such as Aristotle or Aquinas only occasionally and only for convenience; my primary purpose is not historical.

Who are the neo-Aristotelians? Rosalind Hursthouse provides an authoritative list: Anscombe,[5] Geach,[6] Foot,[7] McDowell,[8] MacIntyre,[9] Hursthouse,[10] Nussbaum,[11] and Thompson.[12] I would only add the great Julia Annas[13] who is of course an ancient philosophy scholar but whose recent

4. For example, McDowell, Foot, and MacIntyre can be seen using this schema: Cf. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62, no. 3 (1979): 331–50 and John McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics'," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1980), 359–76; Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

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

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

7. Foot, *Natural Goodness*.

8. John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998); John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996).

9. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*.

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

11. Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics," in *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, ed. J.E.J. Altham and Ross Harrison (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 86–131; Martha C. Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (September 1988): 32–53; nussbaum1999virtue

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

13. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*; Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press,

work has been largely devoted to contemporary ethics, and some more recent players in the movement such as Stephen Brown[14] and Jennifer Frey.

I also interact regularly with a broader set of virtue ethicists:[15] Peter Geach, Bernard Williams, and Iris Murdoch are responsible for gathering the kindling and setting the spark, so to speak, on contemporary discussions of virtue.

One could certainly construct a worthwhile project analyzing more of these authors for a different subset. Nevertheless, I consistently return to Foot, McDowell, and MacIntyre. Part of the reason is arbitrary. Every project must cut off somewhere. Another reason is that these three defend views that share enough similarities to illuminate many important themes while contrasting enough to motivate rich discussion.

II. Ethical?

Virtue ethics

A second point of taxonomy: my thesis is about virtue and so places this dissertation squarely within contemporary analytic virtue ethics. That said, I shall not devote excessive time to comparing my offering to those of other recent virtue ethicists. As Martha Nussbaum and others have pointed out, self-styled 'virtue ethicists' can differ as much as any other two ethicists. (Is there a tent big enough

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

14. R. Stephen Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature: A Defense of Ethical Naturalism* (Continuum, 2008); Stephen Brown, "Really Naturalizing Virtue," *Ethica* 4 (2005): 7–22.

15. The broader set includes Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts* (Mouette Press, 1998); Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Clarendon Press, 2003); Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 1992); Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Adams, Gopal Sreenivasan, Rachana Kamtekar, Talbot Brewer, and R. Scott Smith.

to include Plato, St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, and Benjamin Franklin?)[16]

That said, my overall aim *is* to contribute to the ongoing revival of virtue talk. It is difficulty to read any "old books" without noticing that virtue talk (in a great variety of theories and contexts) was once a normal part of cultural and intellectual life, (and not only in the west). But it is equally difficult not to notice that virtue talk has receded to the background or disappeared from academic discussions for two or three centuries. Its resurgence in the last 60 years has been well documented.[17] Not everyone is impressed by the alleged benefits accruing to 'virtue ethics', of course – Nussbaum is not the only one to find the designation unhelpful. Nevertheless, it would have amazed Elizabeth Anscombe if, more than 60 years ago, she could have known that in 2014 as many professional academic philosophers would identify as 'virtue ethicists' as identify as 'deontologists' – about 1/5th each.[18] So how might we explain the resurgance of a category of virtue ethics, however loosely defined?

There are a few reasonable options. Considering them will help frame my project. The first interpretation is that something went profoundly wrong in the series of modern moral philosophy. The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers turned away from tradition and religion in order to venture a universal, abstract, public, rational theory of morality. But perhaps something essential was lost as our ethical thinking had to adjust to advancements in modern science and changes in modern politics. Perhaps, for einstance, as science turned toward the natural or the cosmic (to the exclusion of the human), ethics and politics turned inward toward the human (to the exclusion of the natural or cosmic), it was inevitable that some would fall into Nietzschean

16. Nussbaum argues that a more helpful taxonomy would distinguish between neo-Humean, neo-Kantian, and neo-Aristotelian theories; and that even more helpful would be to debate the substantive issues, such as the role of reason in morality as compared to the role of emotions and desires and other sub-rational psychological phenomena. Cf. Martha C Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics* 3, no. 3 (1999): 163–201

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

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

subjectivism about morality, where no political or religious authority can correct the great individual, while others would fall into Hobbesian legalism, where know Great individual can correct the political and religious authorities.

Anscombe[19] takes this interpretation. She categorizes all the "English-speaking ethicists" from Sidgwick to "the present day" as consequentialists, and then diagnoses consequentialism as depraved. She argues that any secular theorist (such as Kantians) who appeal to an absolute, verdictive moral 'ought' are borrowing from a medieval divine law conception of ethics which is incoherent without the corresponding belief in a divine lawgiver. The alterative, she offers, is the Aristotelian 'ought' which critiques vice without blame and praises virtue without admonishment. In her view, virtue talk allows moderns to retain evaluative talk without a divine law by making it something closer to aesthetic talk.

McIntyre is another who takes this first interpretation. He argues that the fracturing of social and political bonds in modernity derives from the loss of a shared understanding of the good. Though he is often classified as a virtual ethicist McIntyre indeed rejects the label. Even modern virtue ethics, he thinks, does not go far enough to restore the Aristotelian tradition of virtue which he advocates.

Regardless of the varying details, this first intrepretation of the rise of virtue talk pits virtue theories against their consequentialist and Kantian alternatives. It finds in the flexibility of Aristotle and the humanism of Confucius a refreshing alternative to the stolid rationalism of Kant or Mill.[20]

Rosalind Hursthouse disputes this interpretation. She thinks virtue ethicists presented their views as *rivals* to the dominant moral theories only because, in the early days, it needed to fight for a position at the table. Now that virtue ethics has a respectable place in our taxonomy of philosophical ethics, such rivalry is needlessly combative.

19. "Modern Moral Philosophy."

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

The second interpretation (which Hursthouse seems to favor) is that virtue concepts can augment, rather than replace, other theories. She says, " 'virtue ethics' so-called does not figure as a normative rival to utilitarian and deontological ethics; rather, its (fairly) recent revival is seen as having served the useful purpose of reminding moral philosophers that the elaboration of a normative theory may fall short of giving a full account of our moral life."[21] On this interpretation, one would look to virtue concepts to enrich their own theories, whatever they may be. Kant himself had a theory of virtue.[22] Some theorists have been working to articulate a theory they call "virtue consequentialism" or "character consequentialism."[23] Even more broadly, philosophers have even found room for virtue talk in Humean[24] and Nietzschean[25] ethics.

In my view, there is some truth to each of these interpretations. While it is true that virtue talk is flexible enough to enhance non-Aristotelian theories, there is an identifiable core of western virtue theory. That core is part-and-parcel of a larger Aristotelian tradition that is in tension or competition with Enlightenment tradition. At the same time, certain features of the Enlightenment tradition – advances in modern science and changes in modern politics – can correct certain errors or contingencies in the Aristotelian tradition.

I would like to say a bit more about these mutal "corrections" (if they are corrections). Elizabeth Anscombe, Bernard Williams, Iris Murdoch and others have done us a valuable service by correcting certain myopic tendencies of modern philosophical ethics. The core I have in mind corresponds roughly to Nussbaums "common ground" underlying a wide variety of "virtue ethicists"

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

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

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

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

25. Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*.

– including Kant and Mill and Sidgwick.[26]

(a) **The whole action:** The first myopic tendency is that of focussing our attention on individual acts (e.g., "is X – abortion, lying, nuclear proliferation – right or wrong?"). Martha Nussbaum argues we cannot construct an ethical theory by discussing only "isolated moments of choice."[27] If morality is about individual actions, it seems to be the case that either moral rules are to be followed for their own sake or else they do not matter (for only consequences matter). If, on the other hand, obligations to be virtuous are only part of our ethical theory (the other two being concepts of human nature and human flourishing), then it is possible to see moral rules as neither arbitrary impositions nor as unaccountable, mere bolts of lightning from a clear sky.

(b) **The whole person**: The second myopic tendency is that of focussing on one aspect of moral psychology (such as motive, or emotion, or character traits) to the exclusion of others. She says, "Even though a concern for motive, intention, character, and the whole course of life was not in principle alien to Kantian and Utilitarian philosophy, it was certainly alien to most British and American Kantians and Utilitarians of the period."[28] The correction to this tendency is to include a role for both reason and the "passions." However, two groups display very different strategies in including the whole person. For Nussbaum, the first group consists of characteristically "anti-Utilitarians" who want reason to play a much larger role than Mill (or the typical Utilitarian) would wish; the second consists of characteristically "anti-Kantians" and want sub-rational psychological states to play a much larger role than Kant (or the typical Kantian) would wish. The first group defend the plurality of goods, rationality's role in deliberating about which ends to pursue and its role in organizing, ranking, and harmonizing that plurality of goods, the rational character of some emotions, and the need for a rational critique of the broader social and political setting in which "defective passions and judgments" are formed.[29] By this distinction, my theory is much more clearly "anti-utilitarian" than anti-Kantian. The emotions, desires, motivations, passions – the numerous variegated non-rational or sub-rational mental states of normal human psychology – can be made rational and/or can be accommodated within a life of reason. That is, any kind of plant can be part of a garden with a clear, purposeful, even beautiful blueprint, even if dead leaves and rotten petals may sometimes dot the floor.

(c) **The whole life**: A third myopic tendency is that of philosophizing about individual moral situations (especially moral dilemmas!) instead of the whole of life. Anscombe et. al., have reminded us that the first question of philosophical ethics is "How am I to live?" This question is not an optional one for normal, reflective, adults. This question is not an avoidable one for those who face major problems in life. We need to refocus our arguments in philosophical ethics from looking just at individual choices or actions

26. Nussbaum, "Virtue Ethics," 170.
27. Ibid., 174.
28. Ibid., 173.
29. Ibid., 180.

(viewed from the outside, like a moral critic) to looking at the whole of life (viewed from the inside, like a moral agent). Bernard Williams has done as much as anyone to remind moral philosophers that questions of how to live are prior, and deeper, than questions of what is wrong. "Character ethics," rather than mere "quandary ethics" is what is really needed in the vast majority of circumstances.[30] That is not to say that moral quandaries are unimportant in life or unimportant in theory; quite the contrary, often times the moral quandary is the exceptional case that can provide a cutting counterexample to a nonsensical view. And moral dilemmas like those encountered in great works of fiction (*Othello*, *War and Peace*, *Gilead*) are real, if blessedly rare, occurrences in a normal human life. But for all this, ninety-nine parts of any given day present great dilemmas or great temptations to do evil. Rather, much of a given day is occupied by choosing between competing or conflicting goods that all seem worthwhile but cannot all be pursued. (Check email or grade papers? Write more or spend more time with my kids? Pursue a teaching job in state or out of state? Invest in this friendship or spend much-needed time alone?)

(d) **The whole of history**: A fourth myopic tendency that these virtue ethicists have corrected, I think, is an *ahistorical* approach that was fashionable in analytic ethics. Many neo-Aristotelians and others studied classics or history in addition to ethics, or prior to ethics. Long familiarity with cultures, places, and times other than one's own has a salubrious effect of helping one to see one's own culture and time. (For many people, "culture shock" occurs not when leaving one's home country, but when returning home from a very different foreign country.) Likewise, philosophers who have spent long hours conversing with Aristotle or Aquinas are likely to notice more easily the assumptions, biases, strengths, and weaknesses of our own modern context. Jack Weinstein observes that Alasdair Macintyre did for ethics what John Rawls did for political philosophy: where Rawls re-invigorated political philosophy, "inaugurating the dominance of late twentieth-century liberalism"[31], MacIntyre helped to re-invigorate analytic ethical philosophy (especially the ascendancy of late twentieth-century virtue ethics) by freshly examining ethical concepts in light of history.[32] MacIntyre argues that we can only responsibly use and evaluate practical concepts such as self, practice, telos, or virtue when we know our own history. Since *we ourselves* inhabit a tradition, we must know ourselves *as* inhabitants of a tradition with a past. We will return to these themes in later chapters.

These are corrections that virtue ethics can offer to other modern moral philosophies. What corrections can modernity offer to virtue ethics? the modern world is not the ancient world. Modern science, philosophy, and culture are not the same as their pre-modern counterparts. It is imperative

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

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

32. Ibid., chap. 4.

that contemporary virtue ethicists pay due respect to what *has* changed.

(a) **Anti-dualism:** The modern "scientific" point of view (if there is *one* such view) is commonly supposed to be monistic or at least non-dualistic. Though not all are so confident,[33] there is a widespread preference – whenever it is possible – for ontological simplicity, epistemological parsimony, and aesthetic elegance. Eliminative physicalism is radically monistic but is unsatisfying in that it provides a clean explanation of "everything" only by leaving out some of the most important things (i.e., consciousness). The neo-Aristotelian project typically aims to avoid dualisms. It aims, rather, at a holistic picture of nature that includes humans and all living things within the cosmos and includes all parts of a human being (reason, emotion, desire, etc.). Margaret Atkins eloquently summarizes the holistic vision of these thinkers: "Anglo-American moral philosophy [has moved] beyond the limitations not only of A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson, but also of Hume's focus on sentiment, on the one hand, and Kant's focus on reason on the other. Contemporary ethics is about the whole human being, seen as biological, social and cultural, emotional and reflective."[34]

(b) **Scientific naturalism**: Relatedly, it is imperative that contemporary virtue ethicists clarify the relationship of their theories to modern science. This was the thrust of the original "naturalism" that became dominant in America in the early 1900s. As David Papineau summarizes, "The self-proclaimed "naturalists" from that period included John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook and Roy Wood Sellars. These philosophers aimed to ally philosophy more closely with science. They urged that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing "supernatural", and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit" (Krikorian 1944; Kim 2003)."[35]

Philosophical Ethics

The attempt to capture all that is good in both the Aristotelian and modern traditions leads me to neo-Aristotelian naturalism. Neo-Aristotelianism is a complete philosophical ethics, both aiming to provide detailed content about the kind of life one ought to live and the kinds of traits one ought to acquire and aiming to establish a ground of morality in moral metaphysics, moral psychology, moral epistemology, etc. That is, neo-Aristotelians (like Foot, McDowell, and MacIntyre) write about and

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

34. Margaret Atkins, "Morality Without God?" *The Heythrop Journal* 46, no. 1 (2005): 65–71.

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

defend views that combine normative and metaethical theses.

This may be worrisome to some. James Lenman's summary of neo-Aristotelianism is a good example of this worry:

> One important school of thought … [is] work is inspired by that of Aristotle. This view has its roots in the writings of G. E. M. Anscombe, P. T. Geach and the early Philippa Foot among others. Its contemporary representatives include the later Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, Martha Nussbaum and Judith Jarvis Thomson. As this list makes clear, this is very much the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics.[36]

Lenman seems bemused with neo-Aristotelian naturalism. A metaphilosophical confusion lurks behind statements such as the one that neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is "the official metaethical theory of the main current in contemporary virtue ethics." For when Foot, Hursthouse, McDowell are classified as virtue ethicists (a normative theory) *and* neo-Aristotelians (a metaethical theory), we might object. Aren't these two different projects?

One legacy of G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* has been the tendency to sharply distinguish primary ethical questions (about what things are good) from metaethical questions (about what 'good' as an evaluative predicate *means*). Of course, the questions that concern modern metaethicists were posed and discussed by prior thinkers. However, the *Principia* gave a distinctive form to these questions and suggested a distinctive range of possible answers. Moore argued that all previous ethical philosophers had failed to resolve their disputes for a failure to define their terms. The question of what the word 'good' *means* (and, possibly the same question, what 'good' *refers to*) is distinct from the question *which things are good?* The first question is a conceptual question that aims to define a category. The second question is a substantive or existential question that aims to bring other concepts within that category. Moore argued (or according to some critics, *assumed*) that 'goodness' was indefinable.[37] That is, the good could not be defined in terms of any other property.

36. James Lenman, "Moral Naturalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2014. Lenman acknowledges that Thomson might need to be subtracted from this list and that John McDowell might need to be added.

37. William K Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind*, 1939, 464–77.

It is false that 'goodness is pleasure' or 'goodness is whatever is most real'. That we pursue pleasure is a psychological claim, not an ethical one; that we judge something to be real is a metaphysical claim, not an ethical one.

If the good is indefinable, then, necessarily, any attempt to define it will fail. Any attempt to reduce the concept to a concept of lesser intension, or to translate it it as a concept, commits the "naturalistic fallacy." Moore is clear that the naturalistic fallacy isn't *just* the error of defining the good as a natural property (such as the pleasant) but also the error of defining the good as a metaphysical or supernatural property (such as the Really Real, or the Divinely-Ordained).

The neo-Aristotelians are pretty universally critical of Moore's arguments here. Philippa Foot and others dispute his starting points, as we shall see.[38] So the first reply to Lenman as to whether normative ethics and metaethics are two different projects is that they are not *necessarily* the same project. One's choice of philosophical taxonomy will reflect one's substantive views about ethics. Alan Gibbard, no opponent of metaethics, admits that one's substantive views largely determine one's view of the relation between questions of substance and those of meaning:

> Moore stressed the distinction in ethics between questions of meaning and questions of substance, and thereby gave rise to a tradition in analytic philosophy of separating the two parts of ethical theory: the metatheory and the substantive, normative part. Some philosophers have rejected the distinction; some Kantians, for instance, think that if you get the metatheory right, substantive ethical conclusions fall out as some kind of consequence, so that metaethics and substantive ethics are not really separate. Then too, anyone who rejects Sidgwick's and Moore's indefinability claim and thinks that ethical terms can be given analytic, naturalistic definitions thinks that the two putative subdivisions are not really separate. Those who reject any systematic distinction between questions of meaning and questions of substance might likewise reject a sharp, separate subject of metaethics.[39]

I think Gibbard is right, here. To allow the seemingly innocuous point that procedural and formal questions of meaning are separable from material and substantive questions is to beg the question

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

39. Allan Gibbard, "Normative Properties," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. S1 (2003): 320.

– perhaps unwittingly – against a range of answers to those questions.

Two observations may serve as evidence. First, we may point out that even philosophers who maintain that (first order) ethics and (second order) metaethics are separate projects betray conspicuous connections between their first-order ethical and second-order metaethical views; advocates of a supposedly "neutral" metaethics often ally with first-order consequentialism: G.E. Moore, J.L. Mackie, Frank Jackson, Richard Boyd, Peter Railton, Simon Blackburn, and Alan Gibbard all endorse consequentialism. (We might even echo Lenman and call moral naturalism the "official theory of a main current in contemporary consequentialism.") Secondly, even if a procedural, non-substantive approach to metaethics can be made neutral with respect to normative ethics, it is still admirably ambitious to construct a theory that pays attention to both. Darwall agrees. He summarizes the history of analytic ethics since Moore, and persuasively argues "that although metaethics and normative ethics are properly focused on different issues, they need to be brought into dynamic relation with one another in order to produce a systematic and defensible philosophical ethics. This mutual dependence is owing to the fact that issues of normativity are at the center of the concerns of both metaethics and normative ethics."[40]

In sum, the answer to Lenman's confusion is that the ethical and metaethical dimensions of neo-Aristotelianism are inseparable. My thesis is squarely and ethical argument concerning what character traits are worth pursuing (e.g, intellectual and moral virtues) and what traits count as virtues (e.g., practical wisdom). However, an adequate defense of my thesis requires me to assess more broadly metaethical considerations such as status of human beings as normative creatures who evaluate themselves and others and who reflect upon what they have reason to do or to abstain from doing.

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

Ethical Naturalism

This leads me to final point of philosophical taxonomy: my theory is a species of 'ethical naturalism', which is most often defined as a kind of moral realism that attempts to define moral facts (or more broadly evaluative facts) as natural facts, or that attempts to ground moral facts in natural facts. As James Lemnan says: "there are objective moral facts and properties and that these facts and properties are natural facts and properties."[41]

On this broad definition, neo-Aristotelian is a brand of moral or ethical naturalism, but of an odd sort. Hursthouse says that "Virtue ethics, or at least any form of it that takes its inspiration from Aristotle, is usually taken to be a form of ethical naturalism – broadly, the enterprise of basing ethics in some way on consideration of human nature, on what is involved with being good *qua* human being."[42] If we can say what a *good human being* is, we shall be well on the way to describing what kinds of actions are right and wrong, or what kind of character traits are admirable or blameworthy. Sociologist Amanda Maull summarizes this sort of ethical naturalism well:

> Drawing upon the works of philosophers such as Philippa Foot, Richard Kraut, and Martha Nussbaum, the claim is made that there are moral properties and facts that are natural (rather than occult or supernatural), which are derived from certain innate dispositions and capacities of living things (i.e., those associated with growth and self-maintenance as opposed to destruction or harm). Human beings have evolved as social creatures with special capacities for speech and reason such that specification of "human flourishing" is more complex and problematic than it is for plants or animals. For the human being, the idea of the "good life" goes beyond biological survival and pertains to potentially ambiguous concepts such as virtue, happiness, and "well-being.[43]

This is fairly straightforward. Why call neo-Aristotelian an "odd sort" of ethical naturalism?

41. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism."
42. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 192.
43. Amanda Maull, "A Deweyan Defense of Ethical Naturalism," *Society* 50, no. 6 (2013): 577.

III. Naturalistic?

Naturalism and Normativity

Relatedly, some critics of neo-Aristotelianism in particular exploit one or more horns of a dilemma,[44] questioning whether it is possible to construct a neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism that is both (a) actually *ethical*[45] and (b) actually *naturalistic*.[46] On the former horn, if ethics is naturalistic, then happiness seems to be simply a natural state, like health or pleasure, while the means to that end discernible through statistical analysis of causal relations between acts and their consequences. This seems hardly normative at all. On the latter horn, if ethics is really normative, then happiness is the kind of state we *ought* to pursue whether or not we actually reach it — whether or not, in fact *anyone* has actually reached it. Virtues are those qualities that are acquirable and that we *ought* to acquire, whether or not anyone does or ever has acquired them. This sounds hardly naturalistic at all.

This dilemma, I think explains the innocent confusion about who actually deserves the title of "naturalists". Lenman, among others, is not sure who counts, pointing out in a footnote that Thomson probably shouldn't be on this list and that John McDowell probably should. He says "McDowell is certainly pervasively inspired by Aristotle and he describes himself as a naturalist. See especially his 1995. But I suspect many philosophers would find his use of the term 'naturalist' here somewhat Pickwickian."[47] The confusion arises because Lenman and others[48] are not sure

44. Cf. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism," *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013; Bernard Mauser, "The Ontological Foundations for Natural Law Theory and Contemporary Ethical Naturalism" (PhD thesis, Marquette University, 2011). Mauser describes the dilemma excellently in chapter 5.

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

46. Cf. rehg2003conceptual . Rehg et. al., conclude that neo-Aristotelian naturalism is really ethical but not sufficiently naturalistic.

47. Lenman, "Moral Naturalism."

48. William Rehg and Darin Davis, "Conceptual Gerrymandering? The Alignment of Hursthouse's Naturalistic Virtue Ethics with Neo-Kantian Non-Naturalism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 4 (2003): 583–600; John Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" *Ratio* 22, no. 3 (2009): 308–21; John Hacker-Wright, "Human Nature, Personhood,

that neo-Aristotelian "naturalism" is "really *naturalism*" at all. I think this objection begs important questions, but I shall not attempt to unravel them now. That will be the task for a later chapter.

I contend an affirmative answer to both questions: neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism is both ethical and naturalistic (in senses to be defined). I hope that by the end, some plausible picture will be painted of the relation of virtue to practical reason and happiness and so that this problem will come to light as difficult yet tractable.

It seems to me that the fault line between neo-Aristotelians and their critics is a line between two ways of understanding the difference between nature and normativity, between facts and values.[49] The assumption of Lenman (and others) is that nature is purely descriptive, with no "ought". But Aristotle and the broad Aristotelian tradition deny that the fact-value dichotomy is absolute. They conceive of *nature* as including everything that *is and ought to be.*[50] Briefly, for Moore nature as including everything that *is* but not what ought to be – all facts, no values. Moore and those influenced by him, both naturalists and non-naturalists, have agreed with the underlying assumption that "nature" is purely descriptive. But what if this assumption is mistaken? Surely we cannot let a deeply-held assumption stand without scrutiny. For Aristotle, nature is some facts, some values. So norms and prescriptions can be just as natural as facts and descriptions. If normativity (*what ought to be*) is natural too, then it might be possible that *human nature* grounds ethical facts. And this is just what virtue ethics says.

In the spirit of open inquiry, we must ask ourselves: what if metaphysical and biology facts are just as natural as some ethical facts? What if the fact/value dichotomy is not absolute and inviolable? Then there might be a tight fit – perhaps an inextricable tie – between Aristotelian virtue theory and the metaethical view labeled neo-Aristotelian naturalism. And neo-Aristotelian naturalists argue that nature is or can be normative.

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and Ethical Naturalism," *Philosophy* 84, no. 03 (2009): 413–27.

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

50. As I understand it, the paradoxical notion of "that which really is what ought to be" is a good way of summarizing the notion of a natural law.

Responding to this worry is the explicit theme of chapters 2 and 6, but is in the background of the whole discussion. Certainly, some critics will insist that normativity is not natural. I ask them to consider the alternative, as I shall consider both, and examine the case I make in a later chapter. We must aim first for clarity before agreement.

Possible repeat

While no one who reads this dissertation is likely to doubt my commitment to moral realism, some may doubt that I have succeeded in making it naturalistic. (The problems attending almost all types of ethical naturalism will be addressed in chapter 2, and the even more acute problems attending my theory in particular will be addressed in chapter 7.)

Without stipulation, assertions or denials of a theory's "naturalism" are empty, for there are many types of naturalism. Ask two naturalists what 'naturalism' means, and you'll hear three definitions. So let me stipulate: Mine is an ethical naturalism in the broadest sense, as defined by Hans Fink's admirable essay, which I shall discuss more in a later chapter. He says: "An ethical naturalist is someone who insists on a fundamental continuity between the ethical and the natural."[51] It follows, on this view, that humans are continuous with nature.[52] Pretty clearly, one could explain this fundamental continuity in a variety of (perhaps conflict ways), depending on how one explicates the 'ethical' and the 'natural." I warmly welcome what Hans Fink calls an "unrestricted conception of nature."[53] This conception expresses the idea, he continues, that "there is one world only, and that that world is the realm of nature, which is taken to include the cultural, artificial, mental, abstract and whatever else there may prove to be."[54]

51. Hans Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 203. Compare with his later statement: "The philosophical impulse behind both [materialism and idealism] 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." (216).

52. Brown, *Moral Virtue and Nature*, 1–2. Brown stipulates his ethical naturalism in this way.

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

54. Ibid., 210.

So, throughout these chapters, I shall assume that 'nature' or 'natural' refer to familiar objects and properties that exist in the cosmos today: people, stars, trees, penguins, bacteria, and their properties, like 'being an animal', 'bright,' 'green', 'being countershaded for camouflage,' and so on. I do take my argument to be defending naturalism in the broad sense that I propose to use only philosophical and scientific methods for identifying my premises. However, I accept the possibility – indeed I shall defend as essential – that nature includes normativity. Hence, I am entitled to the label 'naturalism' since (as I shall argue) the natural world itself contains facts and norms, descriptivity and normativity. By 'normativity', I mean 'ought' talk and facts to which 'ought' talk refers.[55] The importance of this stipulation to my theory will become clear early on. And those who wish to challenge this stipulation will, I hope, receive a satisfying answer by a later chapter.

IV. Scientific?

The Challenge of Teleology

Though my theory is a form of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, I hope I have set enough now about the components of the "virtue triangle" to frame the project and show how important all three components are (virtue, human nature, and teleology). Arguably, the unifying concept of the schema is not virtue but telos. If we cannot even perform a menial, intentional action without a goal, then *a fortiori* it would seem we cannot perform our highest moral duties without a goal. Defining that goal is, of course, the rub. But it seems apparent that strict moral rules without any notion of the kind of life that is to be lived are bound to degenerate into a kind of pointless legalism. If the teleological notion of natural human flourishing in particular is central to the project of virtue ethics, it would

55. Cf. Peter Schaber, "Normative Facts," *Studies into the Foundations of an Integral Theory of Practice and Cognition*, 2005, 107–22; Gibbard, "Normative Properties," 321: "[Part] of what's special about morality is that it operates in the 'space of reasons;' it concerns justification and oughts. The term 'normative' is central to much current philosophical discussion. There's no agreement on what this technical term in our discipline is to mean, but it involves, in a phrase drawn from Sellars, being somehow 'fraught with ought'."

seem that developing a plausible modern virtue ethical theory would require rehabilitating a notion of natural teleology in general.

The project of rehabilitating natural teleology may seem overly optimistic. The idea of teleology is a major stumbling block for modern thinkers, especially for the kind of naturalist whose worries I tried to allay above.[56] it may be felt, for instance, that teleology has simply been debunked by modern science and therefore has no place in a scientific worldview. After all, Francis Bacon intentionally excised final causation from natural science since he feared that empirical investigation into final causes "defiled philosophy."[57] On this view, teleological ethics is inherently pre-modern and therefore outmoded.[58]] On this view, any attempt to revive virtue talk is guilty of being antiquarian and nostalgic until proven innocent.

Nevertheless, I think that the sort of realism about natural teleology requisite for neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics grounded on human nature is – and can be shown to be – perfectly respectable, modern, scientific, and naturalistic. I shall present the case for this optimistic conclusion in parts, first in a chapter on ethical naturalism and in a later chapter on telos itself. The conclusion I shall defend is a growing consensus that natural teleology is no more mysterious or magical than biological life, or consciousness, or rationality. And hence, the pursuit of virtues is no more obsolete than any other human activity, such as farming, or laughing, or studying astronomy.[59]

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56. Arthur Ward, "Against Natural Teleology and Its Application in Ethical Theory" (PhD thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013).

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

58. "The idea of a naturalistic ethics was born of a deeply teleological outlook, and its best expression, in many ways, is still to be found in Aristotle's philosophy, a philosophy according to which there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave." Bernard Williams, in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 109

59. Compare with "Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing." (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.*

V. Secular?

Methodological Agnosticism

Another reason many scientific naturalists are squeemish about teleology is a guilt by association; they feel that teleology is somehow religious. For this project, I wish to one side discussions about the possibility of the existence of God. I do not wish to *deny* that a divine mind is organizing the cosmos, but neither do I wish to *assume* it. Obviously, it would be morally relevant if a divine lawgiver were to reveal the way to live. But the conclusion of my arguments is that it is imperative upon all of us to become virtuous, whether or not any particular religious tradition is true.

In this way, my project may be seen as building on Philippa Foot's work to advance a kind of secular natural law theory. Mark Murphy says that "the paradigmatic natural law view [i.e., Aquinas] holds that (1) the natural law is given by God; (2) it is naturally authoritative over all human beings; and (3) it is naturally knowable by all human beings… Recently there have been nontheistic writers in the natural law tradition, who deny (1): see, for example, the work of Michael Moore (1982, 1996) and Philippa Foot (2001)."[60] It may also be seen as a kind of neo-Stoicism, if we follow Elizabeth Anscombe: "One might be inclined to think that a law conception of ethics could arise only among people who accepted an allegedly divine positive law; that this is not so is shown by the example of the Stoics, who also thought that whatever was involved in conformity to human virtues was required by divine law."[61] While I shall vigorously deny that normative ethics can survive in an aggressively reductive environment such as eliminative physicalism, I shall for present purposes remain neutral as to whether the "natural norms"[62] discoverable in nature are divine.

Section 124).

60. Mark Murphy, "The Natural 'Law Tradition in Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2011, 2011.

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

62. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chap. 2.

As a theist, I am perfectly willing and able to examine the additional resources an ethicist might exploit. But I see three good reasons for adopting methodological agnosticism in this project. The first reason is sociological. There seems to be no clear consensus within my source authors regarding the divine or numinous. (There is a semi-established consensus, among philosophers more broadly, that God is dead.[63]) Some neo-Aristotelians are atheists, some Platonists, others Christians or some other sort of theist.[64] There *is* a consensus that ethics can be grounded, somehow, in human nature. That "somehow" is the focus of my project.

The second reason is philosophical. The plausibility of my thesis seems to me the kind of theory – like biological evolution or the view that diseases can be caused by microorganisms – one can be persuaded of with or without the resources of any particular religious tradition.[65] This indeterminacy will inevitably seem a weakness to some philosophers, but it seems to me a strength. The belief in natural teleology just like the belief in electrons or integers is *compatible* with the existence of a god but it does not *require* or *entail* the existence of a god. One of my limiting goals has been to construct a theory that allows both possibilities. I aim to allow that God might be directing all affairs to his purposes and guiding human beings by his commands – that, to (paraphrase Augustine), our hearts are restless until they rest in him. And I am to allow that human life is a brief and beautiful flash of consciousness in an otherwise cold, pitiless, and dead cosmos, and that even so we ought to pursue all the virtues before we go extinct – whether or not we "go gentle into that good night."

The third reason is pragmatic. The dissertation would have become too long. I hope in

63. Bourget and Chalmers, "What Do Philosophers Believe?"

64. The recent neo-Aristotelians seem to be a representative sample of a broader historical population: a survey of the living and the dead would feature theists, atheists, humanists, pantheists, and so on.

65. Compare with H Tristram Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford University Press, 1996). Engelhardt is a religious philosopher exploring the scope and limits of secular philosophy. While I shall end up agreeing with Engelhardt that secular moral philosophy (in the form of virtue ethics) remains fundamentally — and perhaps dangerously — pluralistic, I am a bit more optimistic than he about how far natural morality can go. Noah was not a Christian or a Jew was nevertheless "a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." (Gen 6:9) Even Abel somehow knew what sacrifice would be acceptable.

future to research the relationship between virtue theories and Christianity, or between virtue hand religion in general.[66]

Why it matters

Virtue ethics is, on my view, a very useful guide to action, in personal life, political life, bioethics,[67] business,[68] and education.[69] It would be an improvement to almost any area of human life if we were aware of our own vices and worked to expunge them, and if we understood the virtues and pursued them. Yet many obstacles from philosophical and social tradition stand in the way. My dissertation is part of an attempt to remove such obstacles and, in their absence, render not only palatable but desirable a pursuit of virtues.

As difficult as it is to consider seriously the project of restoring natural teleology to its proper place and using it as a basis for ethical theory that is tenable and useful, I am optimistic it can be done. Many are on the project – biologists, cosmologists, philosophers of science, mathematicians – but philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition are uniquely situated to make advances. That tradition promises the resources with which to construct an ethical system including all three elements of MacIntyre's schema while rehabilitating a form of natural teleology that is not only tenable in light of modern beliefs, but rationally commends itself in light of all we now know. The case presented in these chapters aim to show how it might be done, and to begin doing it. Virtue, practical reason, and flourishing are age-old themes. Nevertheless, they are significant themes. Treating them adequately is too much for one dissertation. As Glaucon said to Socrates, "The measure of listening to such discussions is the whole of life."[70] But my hope is that even an unworthy treatment of a worthy topic

66. Especially Michael S Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press, 2005);

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

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

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

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

will attain some value.