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LYCEUM

Back to Nature: Aquinas and Ethical Naturalism
Gavin T. Colvert

Kant's Theory of Geometry in Light of the Development
of Non-Euclidean Geometries
Martha King

Plato's Parmenides
An Analysis and Response to Objections Raised
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The Virgin Desert:
Gender Transformation in Fourth-Century Christian Asceticism
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Alice Evans

A Publication of the
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LYCEUM

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Back to Nature:
Aquinas and Ethical Naturalism

Gavin T. Colvert

> There is no doubt that we are living in a moment of extraordinary development in the human capacity to decipher the rules and structures of matter, and in the consequent dominion of man over nature. We all see the great advantages of this progress and we see more and more clearly the threat of destruction of nature by what we do… The capacity to see the laws of material being makes us incapable of seeing the ethical message contained in being, a message that tradition calls ***lex naturalis***, natural moral law. This word for many today is almost incomprehensible due to a concept of nature that is no longer metaphysical, but only empirical.[1]

In his recent addresses to groups of scientists and academics Pope Benedict XVI has been sounding a common theme: they ought to get back to nature.[2] His concern cuts deeper to the core of modern life than simply the question of whether human beings are using natural resources responsibly. As the Pope indicates, advances in empirical science and technology have enabled tremendous growth in our understanding of the structure of the physical world, including human biology. A paradoxical and unfortunate byproduct of these inherently worthy endeavors is that we have become less able to understand our own human nature, including its ethical implications, often referred to

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[1] Benedict XVI, ***Address to the Participants in the International Congress on Natural*** Law, Vatican City, February 12, 2007. <URL: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070212_pul_en.html>. See also, Benedict XVI, ***Meeting with the Representatives of Science, Lecture of the Holy Father***, Regensburg, Germany, September 12, 2006, <URL: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html> .

[2] A portion of this paper was presented at St. Anselm College in November 2006. I wish to thank the College for the generous invitation to give this lecture.

collectively as natural law ethics. As a consequence, we stand in danger of eliminating human nature.

Remarkably, other intellectuals, who share few of his presuppositions, agree with the Pope in this matter. Francis Fukuyama, for instance, has argued that advances in chemistry and biotechnology will enable us to alter our nature so fundamentally that we need to speak of a "post-human future" unless we find the ethical and political principles to establish prudent boundaries for technological innovation.[3] Our advances in scientific understanding, make it difficult for us to articulate these principles, because modern empirical methods challenge the traditional presuppositions of natural law ethics.

In addition to those who worry about the eclipse of human nature, there are also theorists who share the Pope's sense that we must return to nature in moral and political philosophy. Proponents of the new "Darwinian natural right," for instance, hold that evolutionary theory is compatible with traditional Aristotelian teleology when it is properly understood.[4] These arguments draw upon work by scientists who are prepared to admit the necessity of teleological explanations in biology.

The effort to get back to nature in ethics and politics is a welcome development from the point of view of those who sympathize with the classical natural law tradition of reflection. It forces us to rethink modern philosophy's wholesale rejection of many traditional ethical presuppositions. Furthermore, it offers hope that we may be able to find theoretical resources to avoid the grim "post-human future" envisioned by critics of contemporary culture as disparate as Benedict and Francis Fukuyama. Given Benedict's warning about the inadequacy of contemporary empirical scientific accounts of human nature, however, we must examine whether this retrieval of ethical naturalism can be

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[3] Francis Fukuyama, ***Our Posthuman Future : Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution***, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

[4] See, for example, Larry Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, ***Suny Series in Philosophy and Biology*** (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

successful. For various reasons, we will conclude that it cannot succeed without alteration. Furthermore, some account of the genuine challenges modern philosophy poses to the role of nature in ethics must be considered. We may therefore ask three questions. What are the historical sources of this debate? What are the inadequacies of the recent 'back to nature' movement in moral philosophy? Finally, can we get back to nature in ethics and politics while continuing to live in the contemporary world?

Defining Nature Down:

> Eighteenth-century rationalism assumed that Natural Law was either discovered in Nature or ***a priori*** deduced by conceptual and rational knowledge... I submit that all the theories of Natural Law which have been offered since Grotius (and including Grotius) were spoiled by the disregard of the fact that Natural Law is known through inclination or connaturality, not through conceptual and rational knowledge.[5]

The renaissance of interest in nature's connection to the moral order would be welcome to students of classical natural law theory like Jacques Maritain. Maritain also understood well why natural law ethics fell out of fashion. Modern philosophy came to reject traditional reflection upon the ethical implications of human nature for several reasons. First, there was the supposition, which was highly attractive to early modern thinkers, that modern thought represented a practical watershed over its merely theoretical pre-modern counterparts. According to this view, science and technology would enable improvement of the human condition and make human beings masters of their

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[5] Jacques Maritain, ***The Range of Reason***, in (University of Notre Dame, (1952) [cited 2007-04-24 23:59:50 2007]); available from http://www2.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/range.htm.

own destiny. From that vantage point, it could hardly seem appropriate that nature was the measure of human beings. Second, developments in empirical and quantitative methods of analysis in natural philosophy called into question the role of natures and purposes (teleology) in scientific explanation. Third, Humean and other forms of skepticism radically undermined claims regarding what we can know of human nature. Fourth, key figures in the Enlightenment period were not satisfied with the apparent imprecision of traditional approaches to morality based upon the virtuous cognition of the agent. This caused moral philosophers to seek other empirical and rational replacements for the role of nature in moral theory that were perceived to be more precise and therefore "scientific." As Maritain points out, the combination of these factors led to a much thinner empirical account of human nature and a distorted conception of natural law morality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

We owe the idea that scientific progress should make human beings masters of nature to figures such as Descartes and Bacon. In his ***Discourse on Method***, Descartes rejected the Aristotelian natural philosophy and metaphysics of his scholastic predecessors in favor of new empirical sciences, including physics and medicine. His goal was to replace a putatively inaccurate and useless speculative philosophy, with a more useful practical one.[6] Cartesian science and philosophy initiated a challenge to natural law ethics on two fronts. First, empirical and quantitative accounts of nature would replace qualitative and teleological ones. Descartes himself proposed that rational reflection could establish certain truths about the nature of the human soul. This part of his

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[6]René Descartes, ***Discourse on Method for Reasoning Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences***, in (2006 [cited 2007-04-26 16:34:34 2007]); available from http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/descartes/descartes1.htm. "For my notions had made me see that it is possible to reach understandings which are extremely useful for life, and that instead of the speculative philosophy which is taught in the schools, we can find a practical philosophy by which, through understanding the force and actions of fire, air, stars, heavens, and all the other bodies which surround us as distinctly as we understand the various crafts of our artisans, we could use them in the same way for all applications for which they are appropriate and thus make ourselves, as it were, the masters and possessors of nature."

program seemed increasingly untenable to those who came after him, especially Hume. Second, our mastery of nature would quite literally enable human beings to live for an indefinitely long period of time. There is no doubt that Descartes would have been an eager proponent of the contemporary biotechnological revolution, whether or not he would have been willing to embrace a post-human future.

The ethical effects of this intellectual and cultural transformation have been analyzed with depth and clarity by Rémi Brague in his recent book ***The Wisdom of the World***.[7] Brague's thesis is that cosmology and ethics were necessarily intertwined for pre-modern thinkers, whereas they are disconnected for us. As Brague puts it, "The modern cosmos is ethically indifferent. The image of the world that emerged from physics after Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton is of a confluence of blind forces, where there is no place for consideration of the Good."[8] The natural order of the cosmos is perceived by moderns at the very least as indifferent and more often as quite imperfect and standing in need of improvement.[9] One's presence in the world is no longer a matter of ethical significance; an ethical obligation to conform to the natural order is therefore inconceivable. Our existence and nature are bare empirical facts to which the forces of nature are absolutely indifferent. Both immanent and extrinsic senses of teleological explanation are lost through a thin empirical conception of both human nature and the cosmos. More strikingly, the blind forces of nature produce a very imperfect state. Brague quotes John Stuart Mill: "The order of nature, in so far as unmodified by man, is such as no Being whose attributes are justice and benevolence would have made with the intention that his rational creatures should follow it as an example."[10] Given the putative imperfection of this state of affairs, one can understand the connection between

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[7] Rémi Brague, ***The Wisdom of the World : The Human Experience of the Universe in Western Thought*** (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[8] Brague, p. 185.

[9] See Brague, p. 194.

[10] J.S. Mill, ***Nature***, in Brague, p. 203.

Descartes' technological imperative and the ethical implications of modernity.[11] Modern inventions hold out the prospect that we may correct and improve the crudity of the natural world, including ourselves as natural artifacts, rather than conform to it. The perfection or ultimately the annihilation of human nature appears to be a form of progress.

The vast difference between the classical and modern viewpoints can be illustrated by comparing the moral traditions initiated by Aristotle and the Bible over against that of an early modern thinker such as Thomas Hobbes. Without diminishing their significant differences, the Bible and the Aristotelian corpus share important commonalities in their accounts of human nature. According to both traditions human beings are members of a common natural kind, with common interests and purposes, capable of excellence through virtue, although they are capable of failing to achieve it. In Aristotle's case this excellence is grasped through a careful immanent teleological account of human beings in relation to the political community. In the ***Nicomachean Ethics***, for instance, Aristotle envisions a hierarchy of common human ends shared by members of the natural kind.[12] In the ***Politics*** he adds that the political community is natural, and although it is posterior in the temporal order, it is prior in nature to the family and the individual. [13] By this he means that human beings are by nature structured for and completed by life in the polis. In the case of ***Genesis***, human beings are said to be made in the image and likeness of God. Prior to the Fall their existence is divinely intended to be a rich and happy one. Later theological reflection will conclude that after the Fall human friendship with God is restored through divine grace. Although by definition grace is gratuitous, it perfects nature rather than eliminating it. So, the attainment of human perfection, though requiring assistance is still desired by

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[11] See Brague, p. 209. "But the good comes back to nature: since good is not in nature, it is thus necessary to introduce it into nature. And by force, by taking nature against the grain… Modern technology defines itself through an undertaking of domination, through a plan to become, according to the famous epigram of Descartes, the "master and possessor of nature."

[12] See ***Nicomachean Ethics***, I.1-2 (1094a1-25), also I.7 (1097a15-8a15).

[13] See ***Politics***, I.2 (1253a1-25).

and perfective of human nature.[14] In spite of significant differences between these traditions, what they share is a qualitatively thick conception of the ethical implications of human nature.

In the ***Leviathan*** on the other hand, Hobbes offers a qualitatively thin empirical conception of human nature that is quite deliberately in opposition to both of the preceding traditions. Using language and imagery reminiscent of the Biblical text of ***Genesis***, the Introduction contrasts art and nature. The state is emphatically a creation of human activity, rather than of natural or divine origin.[15] The metaphors used are robotic as opposed to organic. Hobbes goes on to describe human beings as naturally selfish and the political community as essentially unnatural. His argument does not offer a contrary but equally thick qualitative account of nature; rather it constitutes a total rejection of the classical teleological approach. Human selfishness is an empirically observable bare fact about human existence. Furthermore, although he is willing to admit that human beings share common emotional responses by nature, the objects, purposes and goods beneath those responses are neither observable nor universally human:

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[14] It is beyond the scope of the present analysis to give full consideration to the debate concerning the distinction between natural and supernatural beatitude in the tradition. For Aquinas' treatment of this subject see ***Summa theologiae*** (hereafter ST) I-II.3.8, and also I-II.5.1 & 5. Aquinas argues that although human beings cannot attain perfect beatitude without divine assistance, human nature is more perfect than some other creatures because human beings are capable of attaining such perfection with divine assistance.

[15] Thomas Hobbes, ***Leviathan***, in (University of Adelaide Library, 2007 [cited April 23 2007]); available from http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/h/hobbes/thomas/h68l/complete.html. Introduction: "NATURE (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal… Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS), which is but an artificial man…the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the Let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation. To describe the nature of this artificial man, I will consider First, the matter thereof, and the artificer; both which is man."

Back to Nature:

> …whosoever looketh into himself and considereth what he doth when he does think, opine, reason, hope, fear, etc., and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions. I say the similitude of passions, which are the same in all men,- desire, fear, hope, etc.; not the similitude of the objects of the passions, which are the things desired, feared, hoped, etc.: for these the constitution individual, and particular education, do so vary…[16]

From Descartes' mastery of nature to Hobbes' robotic commonwealth we can begin to see how the thin empirical conception of nature that emerged in the modern era began to define nature down to the point at which it has become nearly impossible to undertake a critique of the trend toward our post-human future.

Two important but ultimately unsuccessful kinds of responses from within modernity have attempted to provide a version of ethical cognitivism and a more complete account of ethical and political principles. The utilitarian tradition, including Bentham and Mill, sought to replace Aristotle's putatively imprecise and qualitative conception of human flourishing by deducing the moral good from a quasi-scientific maximization of an empirically observable quantity: pleasure. Bentham's appeal to a purely quantitative account of pleasures had the virtue of restricting itself to the thin empirical approach. But, this virtue proved to be also a vice, since Bentham's approach undermined the commonsense view that certain higher pleasures were qualitatively more valuable than lower ones that were more plentiful and easily obtained. Recognizing this, Mill insisted upon a qualitative differentiation of human pleasures.[17] His qualitative distinction, however, undermined the quantitative

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[16] Hobbes, ***Leviathan***, Introduction.

[17] John Stuart Mill, ***Utilitarianism***, in (University of Adelaide Library, 1998 [cited 04-23 2007]); available from http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645u/. Chapter 2: "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other

and empirical approach that was meant to replace Aristotle's qualitative teleology. Furthermore, the justification for his qualitative distinctions rested upon the unsatisfactory basis of expressed preferences, since he could not ground them in an underlying appeal to a common teleological conception of human nature.[18]

On the opposite extreme, Kant's approach sought to do for ethics ("laws of freedom") what Newton had done for physics ("laws of nature") by rational as opposed to merely empirical means.[19] In the process Kant rejected the Aristotelian teleological conception of human nature and account of happiness as hopelessly vague and heteronomous.[20] He proposed to replace this

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things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."

[18] Mill, ***Utilitarianism,*** Chapter 2. "If I am asked, what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure."

[19] Immanuel Kant, ***Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals***, in (University of Adelaide Library, 2004 [cited 04-23 2007]); available from http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16prm/. Preface: "Material philosophy, however, [which] has to do with determinate objects and the laws to which they are subject, is again twofold; for these laws are either laws of nature or of freedom. The science of the former is physics, that of the latter, ethics… Natural and moral philosophy…can each have their empirical part, since the former has to determine the laws of nature as an object of experience; the latter the laws of the human will, so far as it is affected by nature…We may call all philosophy empirical, so far as it is based on grounds of experience: on the other band, that which delivers its doctrines from a priori principles alone we may call pure philosophy…In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysic — a metaphysic of nature and a metaphysic of morals. Physics will thus have an empirical and also a rational part. It is the same with Ethics…"

[20] Kant, ***Fundamental Principles***, Section 1. "…a man cannot form any definite and certain conception of the sum of satisfaction of all [desires]…which is called happiness… Thus the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effect expected from it, nor in any principle of action which requires to borrow its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects, agreeableness of one's condition and even the promotion of the happiness of others — could have been also brought about by other causes, so that for this there would have been no need of the will of a rational being; whereas it is in this alone that the supreme and unconditional good can be found. The pre-eminent

approach with a transcendental deduction of practical principles from the universal requirements of practical reason itself. As Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, Kant flattened the conception of human nature to the single dimension of rationality, just as other moderns ended up with a thin empirical conception.[21] Deriving the full requirements of the moral law from Kant's philosophical defense of the Golden Rule has proved to be notoriously difficult. As the observation from Jacques Maritain quoted above indicates, all of these approaches attempted to replace the classical account of moral principles with dubious appeals to rational and scientific modes inquiry in the wake of jettisoning the traditional conception of nature.

Art Imitates Nature?

As Rémi Brague has demonstrated, the modern tendency to define nature down has had profound cultural effects in terms of human beings' abilities to understand themselves and the meaning of their existence in relation to the world. A good way to illustrate just how far the impact of the intellectual shift in our conception of nature has penetrated broader culture is through the arts, and in particular visual art because of its rich capacity for carrying a narrative. Even a relatively cursory and schematic examination of the differences between

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good which we call moral can therefore consist in nothing else than the conception of law in itself, which certainly is only possible in a rational being, in so far as this conception, and not the expected effect, determines the will."

[21] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, ***After Virtue : A Study in Moral Theory***, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). pp. 43-46, 52.



Plate 1: ***The Unicorn in Captivity***, South Netherlands, 1495–1505 (Metropolitan Museum of Art).



Plate 2: ***The Unicorn Leaps across a Stream***, South Netherlands, 1495–1505 (Metropolitan Museum of Art).

pre-modern and modern visual artworks reveals how changes in our conception of human nature have altered artists' narratives. As Aristotle asserted in the ***Physics***, art imitates nature. [22] To this we ought to add that art also follows our conception of nature, even in the modern case where art/craft is thought to transcend imitation of nature by mastering it.

Consider the example of two late medieval masterpieces in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Unicorn Tapestries and the Merode Altarpiece by Roger Campin. The Unicorn tapestries include seven separate wall hangings depicting the hunt for the mythical figure of the unicorn, which is both a symbol of fertility and a Christ figure in medieval art.[23] The most famous individual piece (Plate 1) is the image of the unicorn in captivity, a stunningly beautiful panel which appears to complete the series of images, although previous panels show the hunt coming to a gruesome climax with the capture and killing of the unicorn (Plate 2). The iconography of these images is contested, but the fact that the unicorn is alive in the final panel strongly suggests the motif of the risen Christ. The astute viewer notices that there are eleven visible upright fence posts in this view, with a twelfth post either obscured or missing, possibly an allusion to Christ's Apostles (the pillars) and more broadly to the Church. The unicorn is tethered inside the fence, although the fence is low. It appears that he could easily escape. His captivity is therefore very likely pleasurable and chosen. On the other hand, the unicorn is located under a pomegranate tree laden with fruit. This and other vegetation in the scene was strongly associated with fertility in the Middle Ages. The unicorn is therefore also a symbol of fertility, procreation, the family, and especially in this case the beloved who has been captured by his lover. Other iconographical clues in the narrative are consistent with this interpretation. People gathered for

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[22] Aristotle, ***Physics*** II.2 (194a20-25).

[23] For a brief description of the Unicorn tapestries see the Metropolitan Museum's online catalogue: http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=7&viewmode=0&item=37%2E80%2E6&section=description#a .

Back to Nature:



Plate 3: ***The Annunciation Triptych***, Netherlands, ca. 1425, Robert Campin. (Metropolitan Museum of Art).



Plate 4: ***The Annunciation Triptych*** (detail).

the hunt are not dressed as hunters, but appear as if they might be guests at a wedding. The initials of the patrons are woven into the fabric of the tapestries, which were perhaps wedding gifts. How can these apparently disparate iconographical schemes fit together? Scripturally, Christ is referred to as the bridegroom and his bride is the Church. To the medieval viewer there was an evident connection between the natural order of human fulfillment through family life and the supernatural order of grace and salvation. Whether we have described all of the contested details accurately or not, the makers of these images have indisputably produced a narrative in which the ethical implications of the natural and supernatural orders are seen to be closely intertwined with more ordinary surface appearances.

The Merode altarpiece (Plate 3), executed by the Flemish artist Roger Campin provides a similar though even more richly narrative case in point. In addition to its fine aesthetic value, this unique triptych constitutes a veritable summa of medieval theological and ethical reflection. Its smaller size and domestic context indicate that it was commissioned by a medieval burgher family for private devotion.[24] The patrons kneel in the left hand panel, observing the model conduct of central figures and the significant event taking place in the other panels. Family coats of arms appear in the windows of the central panel. A typical Flemish city is seen in the background of the right hand panel. The connection of the theological and ethical implications of this scene to ordinary life is unmistakable. The image in the central panel is easily recognizable as that of the Annunciation of Christ's birth to Mary by the angel Gabriel. Mary's betrothed husband Joseph, a carpenter, works with the tools of his trade in the right hand panel to fashion a mousetrap. The image of the

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[24] For a brief description of this painting see the Metropolitan Museum's online catalogue: http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/ViewOne.asp?item=56.70&dep=7. See also the following source, upon which the present discussion of the iconography of the painting draws: Meyer Schapiro, ""Muscipula Diaboli," the Symbolism of the Merode Altarpiece," ***The Art Bulletin*** 27, no. 3 (September 1945); available from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0004-3079(194509)27%3A3%3C182%3A%22DTSOT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6.

mousetrap is a familiar medieval trope drawn from Augustine's Sermons.[25] Christ's cross provides the bait by which the devil's dominance over fallen human nature is to be reversed by divine assistance. The dignity and redemptive value of work is very possibly a theme intended by the artist. Mary sits on the floor in the central panel, an indication of the virtue of humility. She sits beside a scroll and book suggesting the combination of the Old and New Testaments. The lily on the table and the boiling water in the background are common signs of her purity. Barely visible to the naked eye (Plate 4) at the left is a small image of the Christ-child carrying a cross, flying through the glass window directly on a line with Mary's ear. The ear and the passage of light through glass are common metaphors for Mary's virginal conception of the second Person of the Trinity, the ***Logos*** or Word. Perhaps most remarkably, the astute observer recognizes that the image of the child descends upon seven distinct rays of light, one of a number of medieval images indicating the presence of the "Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit," which are supernatural counterparts of the great virtues. The seven great virtues form the centerpiece of Thomas Aquinas' structuring of his treatise on ethics and moral theology in the Second part of the ***Summa theologiae.*** While the Merode altarpiece may contain distinctively medieval themes, its linkage of the moral dimensions of ordinary human life with cosmic events and principles is a classical move as Rémi Brague has demonstrated.[26] Just as we find a qualitatively thick understanding of human nature and its ethical implications in pre-modern philosophical thought, pre-modern art resonates with rich narrative accounts of the ethical implications of natural and supernatural events. It is remarkable to contrast this fulsome 'perspective' in pre-modern visual art, with some modern counterparts.

To say that modern art generally lacks either an ethical dimension or an interest in nature would be a gross error for two reasons. First, the existence of

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[25] A copy of the relevant passage from the sermons (see sermon CXXX section 2) is available at: http://www.ewtn.com/library/PATRISTC/PNI6-12.TXT.

[26] See e.g. Brague, p. 190.

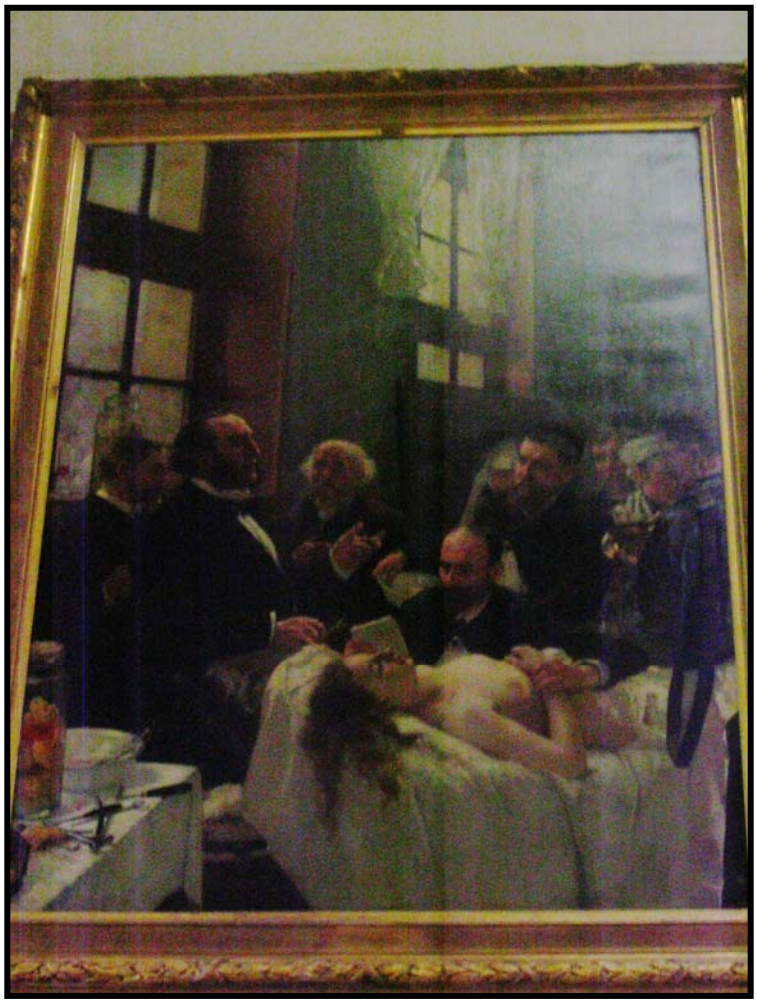


Plate 5: Henri Gervex , ***Before the Operation, 1887***
(Musée d'Orsay).

a wide range of recent genres within the visual arts defies generalization. Second, while some modern artists have eschewed naturalism and the didactic impulse in favor of a purely abstract aesthetic ideal, many have embraced one or both of these concerns. Two examples of modern genres of visual art that have expressed distinctive interest in the natural world are the 19th and early 20th century movements of Realism/Naturalism and Impressionism. Realists and Impressionists shared with their pre-modern counterparts an interest in representing nature, but they had very different conceptions of the human understanding of nature.[27]

In the mid to late 1800's Realists chose novel but mundane subjects for their paintings that were perceived initially by many to be shocking and even ugly. Although the Merode altarpiece involved a domestic setting, with references to work and ordinary life, those references were elevated within the dramatic and moral purposes of the work. Members of the Realist school portrayed ordinary subjects with a kind of empirical and quasi-scientific attention to naturalistic exactitude and minute detail, including in many cases the more unsavory aspects of modern life. Thus, their subjects included poverty, disease, prostitution and the horrors of warfare. Surely, some artists had ethical purposes in mind by calling attention to these subjects. The question is whether their representation of the natural order itself was intended to manifest intrinsic ethical implications. 'Nature' for the Realists is treated in a radically empirical and phenomenal manner. An interesting example from this genre is Henri Gervex's ***Before the Operation*** (Plate 5), which is found in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.[28] This image of a surgical procedure, which bears a

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[27] One exception to this trend within the various Realist schools that appears to demonstrate the norm is the case of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England. This group of artists combined an interest in naturalism and realistic representation with a deliberate attempt to incorporate and recover elements from late medieval northern European artwork. For a brief discussion of this movement see: http://www.engl.duq.edu/servus/PR_Critic/index.html.

[28] For a brief description of the painting, from which some of the details discussed here are drawn see the catalogue of the Musée d'Orsay at: http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire_id/avant-loperation.html.

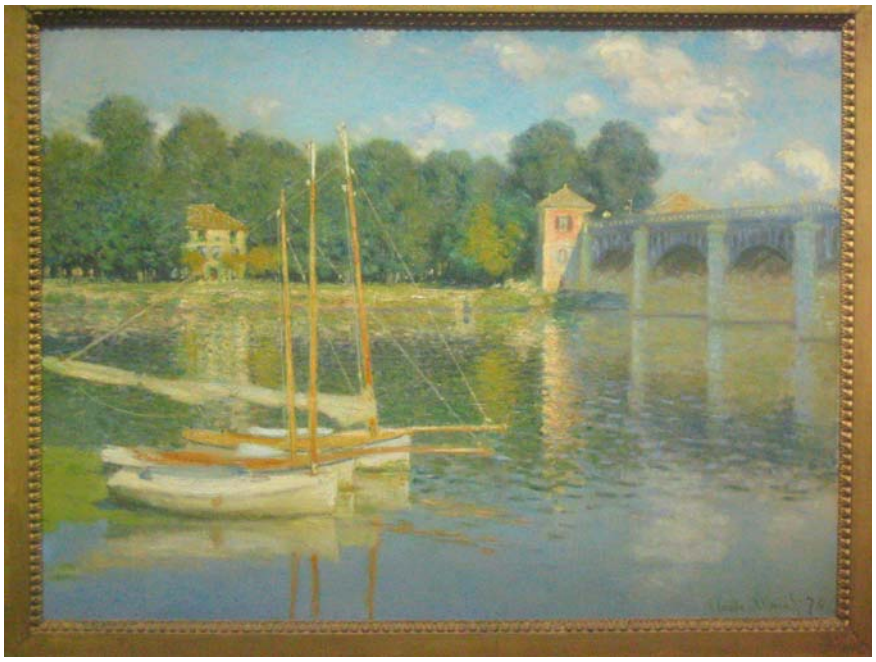


Plate 6: Claude Monet, ***The Argenteuil Bridge, 1874 (***Musée d'Orsay).

likeness to Rembrandt's ***Anatomy***, adds numerous detailed touches including the display of the latest surgical instruments in the foreground. With almost photo-realistic exactitude the artist recreates the objects and figures in the painting, paying close attention to light, shadow and authentic reproduction of the scene. Compared to the detail of the Merode altarpiece, it is as if meticulous attention to the visible surface appearance of the natural world in Gervex's painting has supplanted the qualitatively deeper but empirically less exact 'perspective' of the late medieval triptych.

Not far from Gervex's haunting canvas in the Musée d'Orsay, is a collection of Impressionist works by Claude Monet (Plate 6). ***The Bridge at Argenteuil*** is an interesting example. Impressionists reacted against the quasi-photographic exactitude of the Realists, but shared an abiding fascination with the natural world. Monet's method of capturing nature by seeing light and color, rather than by painting pre-conceived collections of objects, comes through very clearly in this painting. The infinite range of colors and shadows reflected in the water, the bent image of the boats' masts, and the color textures of the tree line in the background all convey the intensely subjective and phenomenal quality of Monet's artwork. From the point of view of the spectator, nature is once again immensely rich in terms of surface appearances, but little is understood of the deep structure of things; we do not penetrate through to their nature, essence or form. As Monet remarked to one viewer: "For me, a landscape does not exist in its own right, since its appearance changes at every moment; but its surroundings bring it to life, through the air and the light, which continually vary…"[29]

The purpose here has not been to make a careful and detailed assessment of either the iconography of medieval art or trends in modern painting. Those endeavors would require greater detail and expertise. Nevertheless, the outlines of a broader narrative are fairly clear. The artists who

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[29] For this quotation see the catalogue description of ***Haystacks*** from the National Gallery of Australia, http://www.nga.gov.au/International/Catalogue/Detail.cfm?IRN=29073. (Quoted in translation from W.G.C. Byvanck, ***Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891***, Paris, 1892, p. 176.)

created the Unicorn Tapestries and the Merode Altarpiece were able to see in the natural world and in human events profound ethical implications. For them the whole of life was infused with a purposive ethical structure, which lay open to view for the careful observer. While modern Realism and Impressionism show much more careful attention to either the empirical and quasi-scientific or phenomenal surface appearance of the natural world, the former qualitative depth has apparently disappeared from view. As such, these artworks provide a graphic demonstration of Benedict's assertion that modern technological and scientific modes culture may obscure the qualitatively deep ethical implications of our understanding of nature, even as it renders our grasp of empirical detail infinitely more rich and varied.

The Modern Tribulations of Natural Law Theory

As we have already noted, Jacques Maritain's complaint against both proponents and critics of natural law ethics in the 18th and 19th centuries was that they caricatured the traditional view. In so doing they did not point out internal difficulties within the theory. His observation has proved to be quite accurate. It is now clear how such systematic misperception and transformation of traditional appeals to the role of nature in ethics could be possible. As the modern understanding of nature changed, so did the understanding of the ethical implications of nature, and with this change arose awareness of the apparent impossibility of inferring moral norms from bare empirical facts.

Two points in the modern conception of natural law struck Maritain as problematic: the appeal to a thin empirical and quasi-scientific account of nature, and the failure to recognize the importance of cognitive but non-algorithmic "connatural knowledge." We can trace the former view to thinkers such as Hobbes, who rejected the epistemic possibility of grasping shared natural potentialities or teleological descriptions, and recognized only appeals to shared emotional and behavioral responses. The latter view is evident in thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, who relegated the idea of cognitive but non-

discursive moral judgments to the role of suspect intuitions. As he argued in ***Utilitarianism***, particular moral judgments must always involve the application of a universal rule to a particular case. [30] In this Mill was implicitly rejecting the classical Aristotelian emphasis upon the prudential judgment of the virtuous agent. This viewpoint was shared by Kant, who insisted that only rationally derived principles of good willing, not an appeal to an agent's character, were adequate to determine the rightness or wrongness of a moral choice.[31] Modern ethics is therefore generally rule-based, and is modeled upon the successes of early modern natural science in articulating precise hierarchical systems of predictive rules or "laws of nature."

Fortunately, recent work in the foundations of ethics has begun to call these early modern presuppositions into question. Some of this work owes its inspiration to Wittgenstein's analysis of rule following, which challenged the notion that all rational applications of a norm are algorithmic or deductive. [32] An important case in point is the British analytical philosopher John McDowell, who has quite consciously made an effort to rehabilitate Aristotle's concept of

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[30] See Mill, ***Utilitarianism***, Ch 1: "The difficulty is not avoided by having recourse to the popular theory of a natural faculty, a sense or instinct, informing us of right and wrong. For- besides that the existence of such- a moral instinct is itself one of the matters in dispute- those believers in it who have any pretensions to philosophy, have been obliged to abandon the idea that it discerns what is right or wrong in the particular case in hand, as our other senses discern the sight or sound actually present. Our moral faculty, according to all those of its interpreters who are entitled to the name of thinkers, supplies us only with the general principles of moral judgments; it is a branch of our reason, not of our sensitive faculty; and must be looked to for the abstract doctrines of morality, not for perception of it in the concrete. The intuitive, no less than what may be termed the inductive, school of ethics, insists on the necessity of general laws. They both agree that the morality of an individual action is not a question of direct perception, but of the application of a law to an individual case."

[31] See Kant, ***Fundamental Principles***, First Section.

[32] For a discussion of Wittgenstein on rule following see: Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, ***Ludwig Wittgenstein***, in ***The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy***, (Winter 2006 [cited); available from http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2006/entries/wittgenstein/.

virtuous judgment through the notion of a cognitive "sensitivity."[33] Aristotle's idea of habituated practical understanding and Maritain's category of "connatural knowledge," which would have been dismissed at the mid-point of the 20th century as forms of discredited intuitionism, take on new significance in light of this work.

Maritain's assertion that modern versions of ethical naturalism have failed because they buy into a false empirical and pseudo-scientific conception of nature has also received support. In his recent book, ***Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality***, the British philosopher David Wiggins notes that some of the most influential mid-twentieth century criticisms of 'naturalism' in ethics were directed at contemporary rather than classical conceptions of nature. G.E. Moore's principal concern, for instance, was utilitarianism's specious "scientism."[34] Moore's charge that versions of ethical naturalism commit the "naturalistic fallacy" was originally directed at Bentham and Mill's claims that one could deduce particular conclusions about moral goodness from an empirical or quasi-empirical account of pleasure. Wiggins observes, quoting Moore:

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[33] See John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," in ***Virtue Ethics***, ed. Roger Crisp and Michael Slote (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 142. "The deliverances of a reliable sensitivity are cases of knowledge; and there are idioms according to which the sensitivity itself can appropriately be described as knowledge: a kind person knows what it is like to be confronted with a requirement of kindness. The sensitivity is, we might say, a sort of perceptual capacity." See also John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," in ***Essays on Moral Realism***, ed. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 166-80. McDowell unfortunately argues for a version of moral particularism in which all ethical judgments are deliverances of cognitive sensibilities and none can be derived from more general ethical principles. It is beyond the scope of the present analysis to refute this claim. We must simply note that Aquinas' moral philosophy envisions both cognitive but non-algorithmic prudential judgments and moral conclusions derived from or justified by appeals to general principles such as those of the natural law.

[34] David Wiggins, ***Ethics : Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality*** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 173.

> To understand this accusation, we first need to know what Moore meant by 'nature'. 'By nature,' Moore writes, 'I do mean and have meant that which is the subject-matter of the natural sciences and also of psychology… Naturalism in ethics not only seeks to define the indefinable. By approaching good in the sort of terms Bentham and Mill had employed, naturalism approaches ethics ***in the wrong kind of terms***.' [sic][35]

Given Moore's understanding of nature it is no wonder that he thought there was an insurmountable logical divide between facts about nature and moral norms. The truth in Moore's so-called "naturalistic fallacy," misguided though it is in some ways, is that the relationship between human nature and the human good is more complex than merely being a calculus of human inclinations and desires. What Maritain asserted was that, properly understood, Aristotelian and Thomistic ethical naturalism does not depend upon the deduction of moral imperatives from crudely empirical descriptions. Curiously, Moore's gift of the naturalistic fallacy to the analytical tradition in moral philosophy provided a key tool in the arsenal of modern efforts in the middle and latter part of the twentieth century to dismiss natural law ethics as outdated.

In addition, towards the latter part of the 20th century, the significance of the critiques of ethical naturalism by figures such as G.E. Moore and earlier David Hume came to be felt very firmly within the natural law tradition itself. That event prompted various responses. Some natural law ethicists organized efforts to show that natural law theory was not guilty of violating the 'fact/value' distinction. The most important such effort is often referred to as 'New Natural Law Theory' or more disparagingly as 'natural law without nature,' since its proponents reject the idea that the moral ought can be deduced from descriptive propositions about human nature alone. There is truth in this view, especially if one considers descriptive propositions about nature to be limited in the way that Moore did. Others in the Thomistic tradition simply

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[35] Ibid., 174.

rejected the idea that Aquinas was a natural law theorist. They argued instead for a sort of Aristotelian virtue ethics in Aquinas that appealed to habituated moral cognition, but deemphasized moral absolutes and tended towards moral particularism and even relativism.[36]

Such was the state of ethical naturalism, including the study of Aquinas' natural law theory, towards the latter part of the last century. Two significant recent developments have changed this situation dramatically. Within the Post-Positivist analytical tradition of moral philosophy some rethinking of the rigid distinction between fact and value has taken place. Proponents of a so-called new 'moral realism' argue that the dichotomy between fact and value is analogous to the distinction between descriptions in the sciences and social sciences. Just as psychological and biological descriptions are factual, although not reducible to physical descriptions; moral language may be factual though not reducible to descriptive terms. Numerous contemporary theorists have concluded that Moore and Hume's arguments cannot bear the logical weight they were originally thought to carry.

In addition, study in the area of Neo-Darwinian biology, including ethical and political reflection upon the implications of this thinking, has undergone some important shifts, which has led to the development of a renewed interest in ethical naturalism from within the scientific community. Proponents of a theory of 'Darwinian natural right', such as Larry Arnhart, suggest that Darwinism can accommodate the traditional role of nature in ethics and provide a defense of a fairly traditional conception of morality without appeal to traditional religious concepts. This renewed extramural interest in ethical naturalism has caught the attention of those within the natural law tradition looking to revitalize the role of nature in ethics, some of whom embrace elements of the Darwinian approach. An important concern with this approach, however, is that appeals to the evolutionary naturalist basis of ethics

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[36] See e.g. Daniel Mark Nelson, ***The Priority of Prudence : Virtue and Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas and the Implications for Modern Ethics*** (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

will lead us back to the deplorable scientism repudiated by both Maritain and Moore. In addition, it is very uncertain that Neo-Darwinian ethical naturalism can preserve all of the appropriately elevating principles and institutions fostered by the older teleological conception of nature.

The purpose of the considerations that follow is to point towards the establishment of the appropriate role of human nature in ethical and political reflection. No definitive solution to this problem is offered, only the initiation of a promising line of inquiry, rooted in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. This line of inquiry depends upon two avenues of reflection. The first avenue considers what can be learned from recent arguments for and against the fact/value dichotomy and whether they can be reconciled with Aquinas' account of the status of the primary principles of the natural law. Contrary to some recent work in natural law theory, careful study of recent developments in the field demonstrates we should reject the stronger forms of the claim that moral evaluations do not depend upon facts about human nature. The common sense reading of Aquinas' ethics also presupposes a relation of dependence between ethics and theoretical knowledge. But, at the same time, we should not claim that ethics is deduced from metaphysics and philosophical anthropology, as some students of Aquinas' ethics have thought. Ethics does not reduce to metaphysics or some other science. The second avenue of inquiry aims to assess the significance of the alternative view of ethical naturalism presented by 'Darwinian natural right' theory. Observing the pitfalls in this alternative approach is an important exercise for proponents of natural law theory who ought to avoid accepting uncritically any form of ethical naturalism that purports to ground morality in human nature and human inclinations.

The Case for and against the 'The Naturalistic Fallacy'

There are two important sources for the fact/value distinction, Hume's ***Treatise of Human Nature***[37] and G.E. Moore's ***Principia Ethica***. Moore claimed that good is an indefinable, non-natural property, and that those who attempt to define good in terms of natural properties commit the 'naturalistic fallacy'.[38] Hume's paramount concern was with the distinctive character of practical judgment as action-guiding.[39] Hume remarks that if moral judgments were not action guiding there would be no point in studying or teaching morality.[40] He formulates a deceptively simple syllogism to capture his viewpoint: 'Morality is action-guiding, reason is impotent, therefore morality is not derived from reason'.[41] The primary gap for Hume is therefore between the action-guidingness of practical reason and the descriptive role of theoretical reason. This concern is shared in a qualified way by classical Aristotelians such as Aquinas.

A more radical claim about the diversity of fact and value is actually made by G.E. Moore, who argues that moral and non-moral terms cannot be inter-definable or synonymous. Moore proposed the "open question argument" as a test for the synonymous character or reducibility of moral and descriptive language. According to this test, whenever the identical meaning of two terms can be questioned, such as 'good' and 'pleasurable', we cannot infer the one from the other. Moore argued that this test applies to every attempted naturalistic reduction of moral predicates, including utilitarianism and Neo-Darwinism. If, for instance, we regard the good as pleasure, we may ask

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[37]David Hume, ***A Treatise of Human Nature***, Second Edition, L.A. Selby-Bigge & P.H. Nidditch eds., Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978. Book III.i.1, 455-470.

[38]G.E. Moore, ***Principia Ethica***, I.5-14, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988, 5-21.

[39]This fact is pointed out by John Finnis. See: John Finnis, ***Natural Law and Natural Rights*** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 37ff. Unfortunately, in the same place Finnis appears to embrace the more sweeping view of a radical cleavage between fact and value.

[40] David Hume, ***A Treatise of Human Nature,*** 457.

[41]Ibid., 457. also 458, 459, 462, 465, 466.

whether anything is good in virtue of producing pleasure. Since this is always open to dispute, Moore argued good could not be synonymous with or reduced to any natural property.

The 'open-question argument' points to an indisputable truth about moral and descriptive language. The connection between descriptive facts and moral goods is not universally transparent. Aquinas actually discusses this point himself on occasion when he argues that certain moral principles are not ***per se nota*** or self-evident to everyone. This does not entail that facts and values are utterly diverse, however, since two terms may have their meaning fixed with respect to each other without the connection between them being transparent. Moore's argument fails to account for the possibility of semantic depth—or unrecognized levels of meaning. It requires that competent speakers be able to recognize any and all synonymous terms once they are familiar with the terms under discussion.[42] This overly simple view of meaning precludes the possibility that we may discover through analysis and experience greater depth of meaning to terms with which we are already familiar, because we come to appreciate the deep structure of reality through reflection and activity.[43]

A good example of how this may take place in the case of ethical reflection is to be found in Aristotle's dialectical inquiry into the nature of the human good in the ***Nicomachean Ethics***. Aristotle maintains that the human good depends upon the human function, which is given by our nature.[44] But, an appreciation of our nature and the goodness of certain possibilities for human fulfillment must come from the practice of the virtues. It is by repeating the acts of the virtues that we come to acquire a cognitive appreciation for the point of

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[42] See David Owen Brink, ***Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics***, ***Cambridge Studies in Philosophy*** (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 153. See also Allan Gibbard Stephen Darwall, Peter Railton, "Toward Fin De Siecle Ethics: Some Trends," ***The Philosophical Review*** 101, no. 1 (January 1992): 116-17; available from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-8108(199201)101%3A1%3C115%3ATFDSES%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X.

[43] See David Brink, ***Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics***, 153.

[44] See ***Nicomachean Ethics*** I.7 (1097b25-1098a20).

those activities as perfections of our nature. We are not merely socialized. Virtues are cognitive dispositions.

Reflection upon the status of Moore's "naturalistic fallacy" shows us that the issue of the relationship between descriptive and evaluative discourse is part of a more general problem concerning also the relationship of any two descriptive discourses. Unless we intend to hold that all rational discourse must be reduced to a single univocal subject matter, it turns out that Moore's account will render impossible movement back and forth between various sciences as making factual claims. It must therefore be rejected. For instance, without reducing psychological descriptions to biological descriptions, and biological descriptions to chemical ones, and chemical descriptions to physics, it is clear that psychology depends upon biology, chemistry and physics. But, the relationship between these sciences is not a strictly deductive one. Furthermore, psychology as a science cannot be subsumed into biology and these two sciences cannot further be subsumed into physics. Some have suggested that psychology can be reduced to chemistry, and perhaps even to physics. Thus, physicists could deduce psychological conclusions with properly physical principles alone. But, this project has not proved to be successful. Psychological descriptions are in some measure irreducible to biological, chemical or physical descriptions, even though the former depend upon the latter.

This suggests a note of caution for both those who would maintain a radical distinction between fact and value, and those who would simply dismiss Moore's analyses. Just because factual and evaluative discourse do not appear to pass Moore's test, does not entail that a relationship of dependence between them is lacking. Moral norms do appear to depend upon the kind of beings that we are, even if the relationship of dependence is open to question and inquiry. This is consistent with Thomas Aquinas' assertion that moral facts and physical facts are not distinct in reality, but differ in intelligible content or ***ratio***, because in some sense moral facts just are physical facts. [45] On the other hand, the

[45] See ***ST*** I.5.1.

efforts by some natural law theorists to 'reduce' ethics to metaphysics or anthropology are not unlike the effort to reduce psychology to physics. An ontological relationship of dependence between the subject matters of these various bodies of knowledge does not license or entail a reduction. Moore was over-zealous in drawing out the implications of his principle. But, there is an important sense in which ethical principles are discovered and defended within ethics, just as psychology has its own proximate principles and subject matter.

Consider the claim that we can deduce physics from metaphysics. Surely physics depends upon metaphysics, but the integration of metaphysical principles into physical science does not imply a mere deduction of principles in physics from metaphysics. There is a danger of falling into a mistaken view on both sides of this situation. These observations are compatible with the Aristotelian view of the relationship between various sciences, in which the principles of a lower science depend upon the higher, but the sciences remain distinct because proper principles of a particular science must be co-assumed (as bridging premises) with the principles demonstrated in the higher science.[46]

Aquinas's View of the Relationship Between Ethics and Human Nature: The Foundational Principles of the Natural Law

Consideration of G.E. Moore's 'naturalistic fallacy' has shown that his speculation does not warrant the complete diversity of factual and ethical discourse although it does suggest the distinctness of the domain of ethical inquiry. We do not immediately perceive, nor can we merely deduce the relationship between moral norms and descriptive facts from a cursory examination of the empirical data. Crudely empirical descriptions of human capacities and desires do not allow us to read our moral obligations from a merely descriptive account of human nature. This was Moore's concern with

[46] For useful discussion of this points see Kevin L. Flannery, ***Acts Amid Precepts : The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory*** (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

utilitarianism, and at another point in ***Principia Ethica*** with Neo-Darwinian biology. While Moore was wrong to assert an impassible logical gulf between normative ethics and our understanding of human nature, he was right to insist that there was something wrong with the crude scientism of his day.

The approach to human nature and ethical naturalism in early modern philosophy has a history that distinguishes it in important ways from classical ethical naturalism, and indeed from classical philosophical anthropology and metaphysics. What is crucial to the modern understanding is the replacement of an account of the function or perfection of human nature, which defines its essence or purpose (teleology), by a merely descriptive account of an empirical given. As we have seen, Hobbes insists in the ***Leviathan*** that human beings share in virtue of their common nature certain passions (or emotions) like desire, fear and anger; but not the objects or purposes of those emotions. Our incapacity according to Hume to discover the secret purposes of nature, gives way to a surface empirical account, which like the case of the Impressionist studying light and color does not allow discernment of a deeper narrative beneath the surface appearances. The present analysis contends that Aquinas' account of the role of human nature in ethical and political theory is innocent of the legitimate concerns raised by figures like Moore and Hume, but that some other contemporary efforts to revive ethical naturalism, such as the new Darwinian natural right theory, face serious obstacles because they share modern philosophy's surface empirical account of the connection between human nature and the human good.

We can begin to get an understanding of Aquinas' particular version of ethical naturalism by looking at his view of the relationship between ethical first principles and theoretical knowledge. For the purpose of illustration we may consider a single key passage in Aquinas' ***Summa theologiae*** (***ST*** I-II.94.2) that has been the subject of a great deal of controversy over the last half century or so. The passage contains Thomas' most well known treatment of the relationship between practical and theoretical knowledge. Interpretations of this passage have ranged from the view that ethical principles are part of a

subordinate science deduced from metaphysics and philosophical psychology, to the view that practical reason is completely autonomous. It is not difficult to see that the disputed interpretations of this passage have been deeply influenced by modern criticism of ethical naturalism by figures such as Hume, Kant and Moore. The truth of the matter is that that Aquinas' position is somewhere in between these extremes.

Three key points in ***ST*** I-II.94.2 need clarification: (1) how the natural law is ***consequent*** to human nature, (2) precisely what relation the First Principle of Practical Reason (FPPR) bears to the Principle of Non-Contradiction (PNC) and other theoretical principles, and (3) in what sense the natural law is founded upon the rational character of goodness and upon human inclinations. We can investigate the first and third points by examining the second objection to the article.

Question 94.2 poses a remarkably contemporary problem if we pause to think about its central thesis: that the natural law is composed of a single precept or norm in one sense, and in another sense it is composed of many. Aquinas evidently has in mind here the complex and sometimes contradictory character of the natural motivations to action within persons. For example, human beings have both deeply rooted cooperative and competitive tendencies that render us both fiercely loyal and also sometimes treacherous. How can both altruism and egoism be natural, and there be a consistent ethic rooted in human nature? Aquinas is also aware of the diversity of cultural forms between groups of persons. In what ways are various cultural forms rooted in human nature without implying ethical relativism? Without denying the complexity of human nature, and the grounding of ethics and politics in the variety of cultural customs, Aquinas' purpose is to argue that human nature provides a common basis for ethical universals.

The purpose of the hypothetical question Aquinas poses to himself in the second objection is to argue that the natural law can be composed of only one precept, because otherwise it would involve any human inclination whatsoever, including any particular human desire. The unstated presumption is

that such desires are often conflicting, and are even the source of vicious conduct. The objection formulates at least two relevant concerns: to protect the rational character of the natural law and to preserve it against the charge that many kinds of immoral behavior could be justified under the guise of natural desires. In formulating this objection, Aquinas shows that he is aware of the danger of allowing ethical naturalism to be described in crudely physicalistic terms. He anticipates the sort of concern that Moore had with consequentialism and also certain difficulties associated with contemporary attempts by evolutionary psychologists to account for moral norms strictly in terms of natural selection.

Aquinas does not mention any particular example in Objection 2, but the context makes it clear that he is aware of these kinds of problems. His response to the objection affirms that every human inclination, including those of the passions, belongs to the natural law, insofar as they are all "regulated by reason" and are thus "reduced to one first precept." In this sense he says there are many precepts that share a common "root." Aquinas thus rejects a crudely empirical account of human inclinations in favor of one in which natural desires acquire normative significance in the context of a reasonable assessment of their mutual ordering to the human good. Clearly, natural law is rooted in nature for Aquinas, but is not merely deduced from a surface account of human inclinations. Aquinas can make this move because his account of human nature presupposes an understanding of its deeper structure. The human good is not merely equated with an empirical account of the satisfaction of our given desires, but in terms of how desire and reason can shape a perfected form of human existence.

We can see Aquinas putting the fruits of this approach into effect in his discussion of matrimony in Book 3, Chapters 122-125 of the ***Summa contra gentiles***. In that passage he proposes to himself the kinds of considerations advanced by evolutionary psychologists as justification for the dissolubility of marriage. According to such theorists, we can infer a temporary but not a permanent basis for marital fidelity from the male's genetic interest in

establishing paternity.[47] For Aquinas, however, the natural good of human sexual desire and activity must be understood not only in terms of the ability to reproduce, but in terms of the ultimate end toward which reproduction is ordered. Children require nurture and flourish in a society where they experience the permanent love and concern of their parents. Aquinas asserts 'serial monogamy' is contrary to justice because it does not respect fairness and equality of the husband towards the wife. Finally, marriage is said to be the highest kind of friendship, and the intrinsic good of this virtuous activity cannot be established without the permanence of indissoluble unions.

A similar pattern of argumentation is offered in Chapter 129, where Aquinas develops the thesis that certain actions are good or evil according to nature. He argues from the inclination of natural sociability to the affirmative precepts of justice and the negative precept of non-maleficence. Evolutionary naturalists have noted the difficulty in deriving other regarding justice and universal requirements associated with human rights from our cooperative tendencies, since competitive inclinations also have a natural evolutionary basis. While he is not ignorant of this point, Aquinas argues in response that cooperative and competitive inclinations are given meaning in the broader context of their contribution to human fullness of being. We are clearly very far from a crudely physicalistic derivation of the norms of the natural law from nature at this point. Aquinas thinks the raw data of the inclinations must be subsumed into a comprehensive understanding of the good life in order to appreciate their full significance and limits. We may or may not agree with his particular arguments, but it is clear that his appeal to the natural inclinations is complex and sophisticated. It should also be clear that such interpretation can only be completed in the context of a broadly evaluative as well as descriptive account of human life.

The other major interpretative issue at the heart of Question 94.2 is how Aquinas intends to characterize the relationship between theoretical and

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[47] See e.g., Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 262-66.

practical first principles. It is clear that this relationship is crucially relevant to the question of the connection between ethics and our knowledge of human nature. Here we can make a few pertinent observations about some points in the body of the article.

Both theoretical and practical first principles are naturally known, ***per se nota*** or self-evident and indemonstrable according to Aquinas. It is important to stress that "indemonstrable" is a technical term here referring to the idea of syllogistic demonstration. There is a broader sense of demonstration, or defense by ***elenchus*** or ***reductio ad absurdum*** proof strategy that can be used to show the truth of first principles for Aquinas.[48] We do not deduce first principles, since they are firsts, but we can show they are undeniably true. Whatever Aquinas means by the term ***per se nota*** (self-evident), it is clear that the first principles of ethics are not proper conclusions deduced from some other principles. The sense in which practical first principles are "founded" upon theoretical ones is thus not one of straightforward deduction. It is also true that for Aquinas our self-evident grasp of first principles can be at first fairly inchoate or lacking in specificity. That is, we only see into the deep structure of first principles as first and universal at the end of the process of moral reflection rather than at the beginning. Initially, we recognize them only as principles in a concrete and more particular sense. Aristotle suggests a similar model, when he asserts that we acquire the virtues as we begin to grasp the point of the activities to which we have been habituated. Self evident principles need not be fully formed ***a priori*** intuitions.

A second important point is that the plain sense of the text suggests a relationship of dependence between the first practical principle (FPPR) and the first theoretical principle, the Principle of Non-contradiction (PNC). Aquinas says that an understanding of being is included in everything we apprehend. The first theoretical principle, the PNC, is founded upon the nature of being and non-being and all other principles are founded upon it. Just as the plain sense of

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[48] For a useful discussion of this point see Flannery, ***Acts Amid Precepts : The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory***.

the text leads us to believe that primary practical principles are not proper conclusions, because they are indemonstrable, the plain sense of the text leads us to deny that the practical and theoretical orders are completely diverse—contrary to the arguments of contemporaries such as G.E. Moore. The Principle of Non-Contradiction functions as a requirement of rationality and consistency in ethical thinking as much as it does in other areas, even if ethical rationality and consistency requires the FPPR as well. Furthermore, theoretical propositions may enter into practical argumentation as premises of ethical arguments, when they are combined with evaluative bridging premises. An analogy with biological and psychological descriptions may be helpful at this point. We do not conclude that psychology can be reduced to biology merely because premises about biological facts of the matter can function directly in psychological argumentation.

The really crucial issue at stake between competing interpretations of Aquinas' account of the relationship of practical and theoretical principles is ultimately not the question of whether ethics 'depends' upon theoretical knowledge such as metaphysics and philosophical anthropology. The plain sense of the text requires that this is true. The real issue is whether we think that certain ethical principles, specifically those grounded in human beings' natural desires and inclinations are founded upon a strictly or even primarily theoretical knowledge of human nature. Aquinas is more confident than present day successors of Hume and Moore that the deep structure of reality permits the grasp of evaluative implications in descriptive concepts. This situation is analogous to the arguments made by some contemporary philosophers that certain descriptive concepts like 'danger' have a 'thick structure' that implies an evaluation. At the same time, a consideration of Aquinas' account of how specific norms are rooted in human inclinations shows that crudely empirical descriptive accounts of the inclinations as such are too thin to serve as a basis for specific moral norms. We come to grasp the full moral significance of our natural desires and inclinations only in light of a broader conception of the full range of the possibilities for human fulfillment. The point is bound to be

controversial, but it seems clear that the working out of our understanding the good of human nature is both practical as well as theoretical. A part of this understanding includes recognition of the fact that virtues such as temperance, justice and friendship are intrinsically worthy aspects of human fulfillment, not merely instrumentally valuable as serving the needs of particular inclination. Natural desires and inclinations may in some cases lead away from virtues like temperance and justice, unless they are tempered by reflection that places them into the context of full human good. Marriage and our natural sexual desires provide a good example of this point.

From the foregoing considerations it is clear that Aquinas is an ethical naturalist in the sense that he believes concrete moral norms for human conduct depend upon the type of beings that we are, which is given by our human nature and the possibilities for human fulfillment specified by that nature. But, as we have seen from Aquinas' discussion of straightforward attempts to derive specific norms from human desires and inclinations, reaching practical principles from descriptive knowledge of these inclinations requires placing that knowledge in the context of a broader appreciation of how the inclinations contribute to human perfection or fullness of being. Furthermore, we cannot simply deduce how to integrate our natural desires and inclinations into human full-being from some antecedent descriptive facts about our nature. We must understand the object or point of those inclinations as indicating some possibility for human fulfillment. That is, reason must integrate the objects of natural desire into a coherent understanding of the human good.

In order to appreciate fully the natural goodness of the inclination to human sexual activity, for example, as grounding norms concerning marriage and human sexual relations, we need to understand that sexual activity finds it full meaning in marriage and family life, as well as that friendship is an intrinsic fulfillment of persons. Divorce is contrary to the goods that place the natural inclination to sexual relations in a fuller human context. Without this understanding of the deep structure and meaning of human sexual relationships, we would fail to appreciate the moral significance of our natural inclinations.

Otherwise, if the natural inclinations were to be looked at in abstraction from this broader context, the male tendency towards sexual promiscuity would appear to license infidelity and no-fault divorce. A just estimate of the relationship between human nature and ethics from the theoretical point of view suggests that ethics depends upon human nature, but that it is not exhausted by a kind of crudely empirical account of nature. Classical ethical naturalism, such as that of Aquinas, could provide a richer account of the relationship of human nature to ethics, because it presupposed that inquiry into human nature was deeper than a surface empirical account, and included a teleological or purposive account of nature. It remains to be seen whether contemporary attempts to revive ethical naturalism fair as well.

Human Nature and Political Theory

The preceding examination of Aquinas' treatment of practical principles demonstrates that he thinks ethics depends upon human nature, and that practical knowledge depends upon theoretical knowledge in several respects. There is a danger, however, of overstating this point about Aquinas' moral philosophy. For Aquinas, human nature and our natural inclinations have normative significance within a broader context that includes the integration of our basic desires into an understanding of the human good. For example, we come to see the normative weight of our natural inclinations in light of their relationship to the intrinsic goodness of virtues such as justice and friendship. Neither the goods nor the virtues are grasped by ***a priori*** rational intuitions. They are expressions of undeniably good possibilities for human fulfillment that are only understood fully through experience and reflection upon activity.

Thus, we cannot deduce a complete system of normative principles from a bare set of empirical descriptions of human nature, nor even from a simple enumeration of natural inclinations. Indeed, the concept of a natural inclination's naturalness must be understood in light of our overall grasp of the human good and cannot be reduced merely to a commonly expressed behavioral

pattern as Hobbes suggested. In many cases, habituation must correct or at least shape certain typical attitudinal or behavioral responses commonly exhibited by immature persons. It is for this reason that contemporary natural law ethicists such as John Finnis have suggested that our grasp of human nature is practical as opposed to merely theoretical. Facts about the deep structure of human nature are only grasped fully in light of reflection upon what goods constitute genuine possibilities for human fulfillment. It is useful to complement this abstract argument in the foundations of ethics with a concrete political consideration of the role of nature in politics. This alternative approach will lead us to the same conclusion from a complementary vantage point.

For Aquinas, moral and political philosophy are two species of a single broader genus having to do with conduct ordered to the human good. Politics adds some further dimensions to ethical considerations. For instance, politics has to do with the realm of positive law. Aquinas points out in ***ST*** I-II.95 that while some concrete moral and political norms, such as the prohibition against killing the innocent, can be derived directly from fundamental general principles, others are specifications of those principles in ways that admit of multiple different instantiations.[49] For instance, while the requirements of justice include certain concrete moral absolutes prohibiting injustice, justice with respect to property rights in a particular society depends in part upon custom and particular social arrangements. The irreducible role of custom and political prudence should not be underestimated when enumerating the factors that ought to shape social and political life. A certain gap between nature and concrete political norms is to be expected, since there are multiple ways of realizing individual possibilities for human fulfillment. The relationship between human nature and moral and political goods is complex, though not merely relative. We should therefore expect that sound political theory would lead us to recognize both the dependence of concrete political norms upon human nature, and also room for variation. Political life in the final analysis cannot be reduced to either nature alone or nurture alone.

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[49] See ***ST*** I-II.95.2c.

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In order to develop this argument it is appropriate to examine recent efforts in political theory to revive the normative significance of human nature as a source of concrete political norms contrary to contract theory and social constructionism. The most significant recent effort in this area is referred to by its proponents as a theory of 'Darwinian natural right'. This examination will lead to two sorts of conclusions: first, Darwinian evolutionary naturalism is an inadequate though instructive approach to ethical and political theory, and second the lessons that can be learned from studying it help us to understand the complex relationship between nature and politics.

Neo-Darwinian Ethical Naturalism

Proponents of the theory of 'Darwinian natural right' provide an excellent example of a contemporary attempt to restore ethical and political naturalism outside the natural law tradition. Neo-Darwinian naturalism in political theory draws upon the work of a group of biologists and evolutionary psychologists who reject the claim that evolutionary theory supports ethical egoism and social contract theory or moral relativism. They argue that human cooperative tendencies are explicable and required by a careful study of the mechanisms of evolution. Political theorists, drawing upon the work of these natural and social scientists argue that traditional concepts such as justice and even altruism can be defended from an evolutionary perspective. In addition, according to these thinkers liberal democracy can dispense with the religious foundations of morality and replace them with an appeal to evolutionary science as a means of preserving and fostering cherished liberal political institutions, like democratic government, personal autonomy and individual rights.

Evolutionary theory putatively supports a form of ethical naturalism because it shows that evolved human inclinations and desires foster cooperative social behaviors that confer adaptive advantages in natural selection. Darwinian natural right theorists conclude that modern liberal theory may turn to evolutionary naturalism in place of its Christian religious roots for a number of

reasons. While some assert that evolutionary theory is not incompatible with monotheistic religion, others maintain that religious accounts of morality are simply false and exist in deep tension with the basic pleasure seeking tendencies inherent in liberal democracies. Nevertheless, they maintain that evolutionary explanations offer a defense of moral and political norms that is basically traditional, defending the status of our cooperative and socially oriented tendencies as the basis for certain natural norms, contrary to the assumptions of earlier Social Darwinism.

An influential representative of this position in political theory is Larry Arnhart, whose book ***Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature*** offers a comprehensive treatment of the subject.[50] His work draws upon earlier scholarship in the natural and social sciences, as well as in political theory. While Arnhart's position is certainly not unique, he is an able defender of the idea that Darwinian ethical naturalism should be seen as belonging to a fairly continuous tradition of reflection that includes Aristotle and David Hume.[51] This pairing might seem odd, since Hume is known for his innovative views in the foundations of ethics, which have tended to undermine the traditional conception of practical reason. With the possible exception of Hume's position on suicide, however, his moral conclusions are generally traditional. Like Aristotle, as Arnhart points out, Hume also argues that desire is an important component of moral reflection and judgment. Furthermore, Arnhart defends the idea that evolutionary naturalism supports traditional social institutions such as marriage and the family.[52]

For Arnhart, the content of Darwinian natural right morality is therefore essentially conservative. He is eager to defend evolutionary naturalism against ethical and political theorists, like Peter Singer, who think

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[50] Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***.

[51] Ibid., 4-5.

[52] Ibid., 1.

that Darwinian morality requires a more liberal or even leftist program.[53] Some of Singer's more avante garde positions are well known, like his defense of infanticide under certain circumstances and his claim that people ought to be prepared to give up any wealth in excess of a minimal threshold for the sake of the greater good. Arnhart discounts these views as incompatible with Darwinian ethical naturalism because they involve the denial of genuine restraints upon ethical and political conduct imposed by human nature:

> The real source of this confusion is not Singer's Darwinism but his leftism. As Singer indicates in A Darwinian Left, the Left has traditionally believed that human nature is so malleable that it can be shaped in almost any direction; therefore social problems can be solved through utopian programs that would make human nature conform to rational norms of social harmony.[54]

Utopian liberals either ignore that human nature gives us both cooperative and competitive tendencies, or they think that such tendencies ought not to be normative because they can be overcome in the service of some other rational principle such as utilitarian maximization. But, Arnhart reminds us that while our cooperative inclinations support sacrifice for the good of a group, competitive tendencies naturally constrain the focus of our concern to those who are more or less proximate. Evolutionary naturalism can support self-sacrifice, which is not identical with the kind of moral universalism and self-negation required by the principle of utility.[55] Failing to recognize the normative value of nature and natural inclinations, and thinking that we can subordinate nature to utopian social aspirations can lead us to implausible and repugnant conclusions, such as that we should overcome our natural revulsion to infanticide. Arnhart,

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[53] Larry Arnhart, "Stealing Darwin.," ***National Review*** 53, no. 6 (April 02, 2001); available from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=4223817&site=ehost-live.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

on the other hand, defends the view that enduring standards of right and wrong, including our aversion to infanticide, and support for marriage and the family are rooted in natural instincts that confer advantages in the process of natural selection. He concludes that evolutionary ethics therefore supports a fairly traditional form of virtue ethics, and that it belongs in the tradition of classical ethical naturalists such as Aristotle and Aquinas.[56]

Like some contemporary proponents of Thomistic natural law ethics, Arnhart recognizes that one of the most significant intellectual obstacles to the acceptance of his theory of Darwinian natural right is the so-called fact/value dichotomy and the naturalistic fallacy.[57] Many social scientists have accepted the assertions of mid 20th century analytical philosophers that there is an unbridgeable logical gap between empirical facts and moral evaluations. The fact/value distinction is often called "Hume's law" because the view that moral judgments are not judgments of fact is attributed to Hume as its original source.[58] Arnhart thinks this view of Hume of as an ethical anti-naturalist is mistaken, and that Hume is closer to the Aristotelian position than many people are willing to acknowledge.[59] His argument against the stereotypical classification of Hume is twofold: first, he asserts that Hume does not deny moral judgments are factual, as long we understand correctly the facts that they report, and second the real author who ought to bear responsibility for the fact/value distinction as we know it is Kant.

Arnhart points out that Hume thinks moral judgments are factual in the sense that they report certain "species-typical pattern[s] of moral sentiments in

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[56] Ibid., also Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 5.

[57] See Larry Arnhart, "The New Darwinian Naturalism in Political Theory," ***The American Political Science Review*** 89, no. 2 (1995): 389-400; available from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199506%2989%3A2%3C389%3ATNDNIP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q., also Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 7-8, 69-81.

[58] Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 69.

[59] Arnhart credits this insight originally to Alasdair MacIntyre. See: Ibid., 4.

specified circumstances."[60] Upon this basis he can argue that for Hume moral judgments are grounded in human nature. He distinguishes "cosmic objectivity," "emotive subjectivity," and "intersubjective objectivity."[61] Moral judgments lack cosmic objectivity because they are not true independently of the facts of certain shared human desires, nor are they just relative to a particular person's subjective emotional state. Moral norms are rather dependent upon human desires that are shared across the species. Arnhart appeals to Hume's comparison of moral judgment to secondary quality perception in order to make sense of this claim: "Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colors, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind…"[62] Just as the color red is said to be a power of objects to induce in the spectator the experience of seeing red, so vicious behavior is said to be the power of inducing the sentiment of disapproval in the agent.[63] We can be mistaken about a particular moral judgment, just as we can be mistaken about seeing a particular color, because we can be mistaken about what the species-typical sentimental response would be in a particular situation. This species-typical response is a fact of the matter accessible to reason, but the moral sentiment itself and its normative force is not derived from reason. Moral norms are therefore factual insofar as reason can judge of moral sentiment, but reason itself cannot motivate.[64]

Even more remarkable than his reading of Hume is Arnhart's suggestion that Hume and Aristotle agree fundamentally about the structure of practical judgment and its normative force.[65] Arnhart quotes Aristotle's assertion that "thought by itself moves nothing…" concluding that for Aristotle

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[60] Ibid., 70.

[61] Ibid.

[62] David Hume, L. A. Selby-Bigge, and P. H. Nidditch, ***A Treatise of Human Nature***, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press (Oxford), 1978), 469.

[63] Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 70-71.

[64] Ibid., 71.

[65] Ibid.

"desire or passion" is the primary motivating force in human action.[66] Identifying desire with the passions, Arnhart asserts, "Aristotle recognizes—but does not elaborate—the psychological basis of ethics in the moral passions that is elaborated by David Hume and other philosophers like Adam Smith who argued for the existence of a moral sense."[67]

From the point of view of Darwinian natural right, a key aspect of Aristotle's recognition of the moral sense is reflected in his attribution of human beings' naturally social and political behavior to the natural inclination to care for one's offspring, a point of view which is also shared by Hume.[68] Arnhart recognizes that it is difficult to extend this natural sentiment to a generalized theory of justice, because human cooperative tendencies are matched by competitive ones that tend to restrict our concern to those proximate to us. Nevertheless, he suggests that Hume and Aristotle would agree that this concern can "extend in principle to all members of the human species."[69]

The real enemy of ethical naturalism according to Arnhart is not Hume, but Kant. Kant rejected the idea that we can infer moral judgments from facts about human nature, since such natural facts pertain to the phenomenal realm, which is wholly determined by the laws of classical dynamics.[70] Moral

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[66] Ibid. Arnhart's quotation here is a bit odd, since he refers the reader to ***De Anima*** III.10 (433a10-31). While that passage discusses the dependence of practical judgment upon desire, it would appear that the quotation is actually from a parallel passage at ***Nicomachean Ethics*** VI.1 (1139a35-b5), "Thought by itself moves nothing; what moves us is goal directed thought concerned with action." (The translation is from: Aristotle and Terence Irwin, ***Nicomachean Ethics***, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., 1999).). It far from clear in either passage that Aristotle shares Hume's non-cognitivist tendency to bifurcate reason and desire and to regard practical judgment as at base non-rational. For corroboration of this doubt see T. H. Irwin, "Aristotle on Reason, Desire, and Virtue," ***The Journal of Philosophy*** 72, no. 17 (October 1975); available from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-362X%2819751002%2972%3A17%3C567%3AAORDAV%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X.

[67] Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 72.

[68] Ibid., 72-73.

[69] Ibid., 73.

[70] Ibid., 74.

behavior for Kant must originate within the noumenal realm of an agent's free choices. Arnhart maintains that Kant accepted Hobbes' unfortunate conclusion that human sociality is essentially an overcoming of our natural tendencies towards selfishness.[71]

The contrast between Hume and Kant is significant for Arnhart, precisely because he thinks that the same sort of struggle with similar divisions has taken place among Darwinian treatments of ethical and political theory. Darwin himself, according to Arnhart, embraced Humean/Aristotelian ethical naturalism in the ***Descent of Man***. (74) Darwin attributes the development of morality to the gradual refinement and enlarging of the natural human tendency to care for one's offspring. This ground of human sociality is explained by the theory of evolution as an adaptive advantage for sophisticated organisms like human beings, who need long term care from childhood through early adulthood. (75) Darwinian naturalism must respond to two significant objections: first that competitive tendencies among human groups militate against the extension of cooperation to a generalized theory of justice, and second that actions for the sake of others, like courage in battle, appear to contradict natural selection's tendency to favor self-preservation.[72] Arnhart points out that Darwin can respond to the first objection in the same way that Hume does, and to the latter objection Darwin argues that other regarding actions provide a reproductive advantage from the point of view of the social group although not the individual.[73]

Evolutionary theorists following in Darwin's footsteps appear to divide along the fault line of whether they accept his idea of group selection and his ethical naturalism. Arnhart notes that Darwin's close confidante Thomas Huxley eventually came to reject ethical naturalism and to hold the "Hobbesian-Kantian" position that nature is morally indifferent and that moral values cannot

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., 75-76.

[73] Ibid., 76.

be derived from facts.[74] While the latter position has been influential in evolutionary biology and political philosophy, Arnhart and some other political theorists have been working assiduously to rehabilitate Darwin's Humean ethical naturalism. Arnhart concludes, "…if we agree with Hume that moral obligation is grounded in natural human sentiments or desires, then we would have to say that human morality must be rooted in human nature."[75]

In assessing the merits of Arnhart's argument for Darwinian natural right theory as a potential alternative to natural law ethics, we must first ask whether it is necessary to embrace the conclusion that moral obligation, even for an ethical naturalist, is grounded only in human sentiments. Arnhart's enumeration of the similarities between Aristotle and Hume is surely correct in numerous respects. Aristotle holds that practical judgment depends upon reason and desire, as opposed to reason alone, but we must wonder whether Arnhart fails to appreciate fully the nature of Aristotelian practical reason and the intrinsic value of the virtues and basic goods. Even more fundamentally, it would appear problematic to equate desire with the passions for Aristotle, since that is to beg the question of whether we should exclude the rationality of desire in Aristotle's analysis.

Terence Irwin has argued forcefully that despite the overt similarities in language between Hume's ***Treatise*** and Aristotle's discussion of practical judgment in ***Nicomachean Ethics*** VI.1 and ***De Anima*** III.10, we should not equate the Aristotelian view of practical judgment with Humean sentimentalism.[76] This view is consistent with medieval Aristotelians, such as Aquinas, who held that there are different forms of appetitive tendency, including rational appetite or will. The very texts that Arnhart uses to establish Aristotle as a Humean sentimentalist lend support to the view that Aristotle's conception of desire includes in some cases an intrinsic rational component.

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[74] Ibid., 77.

[75] Ibid., 80.

[76] See, Irwin, "Aristotle on Reason, Desire, and Virtue."

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Consider ***De Anima*** III.10, for instance. In the passage where Aristotle argues that intellect does not move without desire, he adds that the object of desire is the good.[77] Contrary to Hume and also to Hobbes as we have previously indicated, who hold that human beings share only common sentiments, Aristotle's point here seems to be that human beings are naturally motivated by shared common possibilities for human fulfillment. In the opening to the ***Nicomachean Ethics***, for example, Aristotle argues that the evaluation of these goods requires a teleological account of the overall human good or happiness. Arnhart stresses Aristotle's treatment of certain passions as morally praiseworthy, despite the fact that they are distinct from the virtues, because they are dispositionally ordered to the virtues.[78] He is admittedly correct, but it should also be noted that Aristotle treats the possession of the virtues as a cognitive dispositional state. There is a difference, he insists, between a person who simply repeats the acts of the virtues, and one who does them from the state of possessing the particular virtue. Acting from the state of possessing a virtue requires that the agent acts intentionally for the sake of the intrinsic good the virtue instantiates.[79]

Another puzzle in Arnhart's presentation is what to do with agents whose sentiments are conflicted, either because they are at odds with the species-typical norm, or because they are experiencing mutually incompatible desires.[80] If the good is simply what is desired, rather than what is objectively desirable, it is difficult to say from what vantage point, other than an overall conception of the good, the value of various desires may be assessed. Because they are different, we may be compelled to treat cultural psychopaths as abnormal, but we lack the rational basis for a critique of such behavior if morality is ultimately rooted in non-rational sentiments that cannot be further

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[77] See ***De Anima*** III.10 (433a20-30).

[78] Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 72.

[79] See ***Nicomachean Ethics*** II.4 (1105a30-35).

[80] For a discussion of psychopathic behavior and the natural moral sense, see Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, Chapter 8, 211-30.

analyzed as goods. In addition, Aristotle clearly thought that young people have natural tendencies that must be modified or shaped through the process of habituation. Basic human desires for certain pleasures and against certain pains, for instance, must be shaped by moderation in order to possess the virtues of temperance and fortitude. As we have argued above, Aquinas holds that the normative force of the natural inclinations to various goods must be integrated through the consideration of reason. Humean sentimentalism does not provide for this possibility.

Several other similar difficulties merit attention. Arnhart acknowledges that human competitive inclinations tend to confine justice within the bounds of one's particular social group. Thus, he notes, "…the humanitarianism of human beings will always be difficult to cultivate and almost always weaker than their egoism, their nepotism, and their patriotism.[81] Still, he thinks that Darwinian natural right can "constitute the universal principle of morality" through the broadening of human sentiments.[82] He even goes so far as to suggest that this natural sentiment of justice can include recognition of the immorality of slavery.[83] It is frankly quite hard to imagine how Darwinian ethical naturalism can produce anything like an Aristotelian theory of justice without treating reasons as fundamental norms. Furthermore, the specific case of slavery seems particularly difficult. Although we can imagine the broadening of human cooperative sentiments to include a city, state or even a large modern society, so long as we regard human cooperative and competitive tendencies as equally natural, there is always some competitive advantage to subordinating a particular group. Nor can it be argued that such competitive advantage should be rejected upon the basis that all human beings are equally human, unless we are prepared to apply a universal rational standard of evaluation to a primitive moral sentiment.

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[81] Ibid., 73.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Arnhart, "The New Darwinian Naturalism in Political Theory," 391.

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A further difficult puzzle arising from the equation of the good with natural sentiments is the problem of critiquing the technological separation of the satisfaction of desires from their ordinary natural consequences. Francis Fukuyama's disturbing vision of a post-human future provides for the possibility of a world in which we may separate completely the satisfaction of some desires from their ordinary consequences. It is possible to envision any number of examples in which science and technology may allow us to separate natural sentiment from what has traditionally been understood as human flourishing, for example. Unless the normative force of our natural sentiments can be further analyzed in terms of their contributions to an overall conception of the human good, the content of morality would have very little stability, and our confident determination of normality vs. psychopathic behavior would collapse.

The final and perhaps the most fundamental difficulty with Arnhart's account of Darwinian ethical naturalism based upon Humean sensibility theory lies in his conception of intersubjective objectivity. Arnhart borrows Hume's analogy between moral evaluations and secondary quality perception. According to Hume, unlike primary qualities such as solidity, secondary qualities such as color are not extra-mental. They are merely the propensity of a particular object to produce in the mind a perceptual response. Just like color perception, Hume and Arnhart argue, moral evaluations are 'true' if the conduct that produces them is such as to induce a species-typical particular moral sentiment. The normative force of a particular evaluation is nothing more than the fact of a species-typical sentimental response. John McDowell offers a penetrating critique of this aspect of Humean theory from an Aristotelian perspective in his article, "Values and Secondary Qualities."[84] He insists that there is an important disanalogy between values and secondary quality perception: "The disanalogy, now, is that a virtue (say) is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit the appropriate 'attitude' (as a colour is merely such as

[84] McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," 166-80.

to cause the appropriate experiences), but rather such as to ***merit*** it."[85] In order to illustrate the concept of 'meriting' a particular evaluation McDowell uses the evaluative concept 'danger', which he suggests is similar to a moral evaluation. Any theoretical attempt to give an account of the ***correct*** application of the concept 'danger' must include not only the fact that a particular object induces the perception of danger, but that such an object is in fact dangerous, or such as to ***merit*** the application of the concept.[86] McDowell's purpose is to argue against the unreality of values presumed by Humean non-cognitivism. But, it also shows why, from the point of view Aristotelian ethical naturalism, it is not sufficient to reduce moral norms to species-typical moral sentiments or natural inclinations themselves. Natural inclinations are not normative because of the bare fact of their existence, but because they are natural human tendencies toward human perfection understood in the context of the overall human good.

Neo-Darwinian Naturalism, Political Theory and the Transcendent

> That is why religious nations have often accomplished such lasting achievements. For in thinking of the other world, they had found out the great secret of success in this. Religions instill a general habit of behaving with the future in view… But as the light of faith grows dim, man's range of vision grows more circumscribed, and it would seem as if the object of human endeavors came daily closer.[87]

Up to this point we have considered some internal difficulties with Darwinian natural right as a replacement for traditional ethical naturalism. Alexis de Tocqueville reminds us of an external difficulty. The purpose here is not to

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[85] Ibid., 175.

[86] Ibid., 176.

[87] Alexis de Tocqueville and J. P. Mayer, ***Democracy in America***, 1st Perennial library ed. (Harper & Row, 1988), 547.

critique evolutionary theory as such, but to ask whether Darwinian natural right can provide a fully adequate moral and political philosophy from its own resources. The problem with such 'materialist' views according to Tocqueville is that they end up with an impoverished conception of the human person and social life that cannot preserve human dignity against the degrading tendencies inherent within a liberal democracy. In this respect, they share some of the problems faced by those who completely reject the ethical implications of human nature.

Although Darwinian natural right theorists wish to preserve the dependence of ethical and political principles upon human nature, like other modern moral philosophers their conception of nature is fairly thin because it is largely empirical and physicalistic. In a recent critique of Darwinian natural right theory, Carson Holloway argues that this approach to ethical naturalism ultimately fails because it preserves a "merely decent" conception of society, instead of fostering human excellence.[88] He calls upon Alexis de Tocqueville's assertion that a democracy which fails to temper the mediocre and hedonistic temptations of its citizens with a yearning for higher goods, is likely to end up with oppression through the "tyranny of the majority" and the dehumanizing effects of mass society.[89] Tocqueville pointed out that Christianity, with its twofold emphasis upon the dignity of the individual person and the individual's simultaneous transcendent calling has been the salvation of the American democratic system. Without this elevating and transcendent aspect Tocqueville suggests that American democracy would have succumbed to the worst tendencies of hedonistic self-interest. But he does not stop there. Transcendent religious aspirations are, he insists, a part of human nature:

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[88] Carson Holloway, The Right Darwin? : Evolution, Religion, and the Future of Democracy (Dallas, Tex.: Spence Pub. Co., 2006).

[89] Ibid., 17-29. See also Tocqueville and Mayer, ***Democracy in America***, 246-76.

> It is by a sort of intellectual aberration, and in a way, by doing moral violence to their own nature, that men detach themselves from religious beliefs; an invincible inclination draws them back. Incredulity is an accident; faith is the only permanent state of mankind. Considering religions from a purely human point of view, one can then say that all religions derive an element of strength which will never fail from man himself, because it is attached to one of the constituent principles of human nature."[90]

Oddly enough, when we place Tocqueville's assertion into the context of a traditional version of natural law ethics such as that of Aquinas we are faced with an apparent paradox in the form of the distinction between the natural and supernatural ends of human persons. Perhaps Tocqueville's argument would render Thomistic natural law theory moot as well, since it regards supernatural beatitude as beyond unaided human nature? This paradox is only apparent, however, because Aquinas asserts, as did Augustine before him, that the human tendency towards a perfect transcendent good is natural. Furthermore, he places the virtue of religion under the heading of the moral virtue justice, distinguishing it explicitly from the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.[91] Although Aquinas speaks of two kinds of beatitude, he does not assert that the human person has two ultimate ends, even though he does speak of a kind of natural happiness proportioned to the immanent capacities of human nature.[92] From the point of view of the human subject, happiness is something natural because it is an activity of the soul according to the highest virtue. [93] From the point of view of the object, perfect happiness is something beyond the immanent capacities of human nature, though not

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[90] Tocqueville and Mayer, ***Democracy in America***, 296-97.

[91] See ***ST*** II-II.81.5.

[92] For a useful discussion of this point see: Kevin Staley, "Happiness: The Natural End of Man," ***The Thomist*** 53 (April 1989): 215-34. For the relevant passages in Aquinas see ***ST*** I-II.2, 3, 5.

[93] See ***ST*** I-II.3.1.

contrary to them. In this sense, imperfect and perfect beatitude are both genuinely natural ends of human activity. To speak of religion and a supernatural end is not therefore to place oneself automatically outside the consideration of nature. We do not need to deny that there is a natural end of human life, proportioned to immanent human capacities in order to agree with Tocqueville that human beings have a natural desire for supernatural happiness.[94]

Tocqueville's observations suggest a somewhat curious but very important result. They imply openness in human nature to multiple possibilities in the specification of the ultimate end. This is true whether or not we concede that human beings actually have a transcendent ultimate end. True or false as a view about human life, it is a possibility that must be considered. Granting the possibility of a transcendent end, which would entail the fact that human beings are ordered to an end they can desire but not achieve by virtue of their own immanent functional capacities, the relationship of human nature to the human good turns out to be complex. It is not merely deducible from a thin empirical analysis of those functional capacities themselves. Our grasp of human natural inclinations can only be made sense of in light of reflection upon human possibilities for fulfillment. Thus, the normative character of the natural inclinations cannot be defended apart from a genuine theory of practical reason, in which goods provide the rational basis for appetitive tendencies. This conclusion is consistent with the analysis of Aquinas' account of practical

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[94] Two points made by Arnhart with regard to this topic merit consideration, but are beyond the scope of the present analysis. First, he draws a distinction between immanent and cosmological teleological descriptions. He asserts that Aristotle's use of biological teleology is immanent and excludes cosmological teleological explanations, such as that natural processes are rationally ordered by a divine mind. He concludes that this is compatible with evolutionary theory, and that evolutionary theory necessarily excludes cosmic teleological explanations. Furthermore, he suggests that many who appeal to the necessity of religion depend upon such cosmological explanations and the concept of a supernatural will. See Arnhart, ***Darwinian Natural Right : The Biological Ethics of Human Nature***, 238-49. It should be clear from the present context that Aquinas' ethical argumentation appeals to immanent teleology, but that such immanent teleology does not exclude complementary cosmic teleological explanations.

reasoning above, and it militates against the acceptance of Arnhart's Humean sentimentalism.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of Tocqueville's argument against what he calls 'materialist' theories is that by trying to reduce the good to an enumeration of strictly immanent human functional capacities, they vitiate the very attainment of the political goods they seek to preserve in liberal democracies. A purely mundane vision of the human person, according to Tocqueville, will destroy the pursuit of human excellence and will grant unbridled freedom to the inherent democratic tendency towards self-centered hedonism. A chilling empirical confirmation of Tocqueville's assertion may be on the horizon in the form of the coming biotechnological revolution, in which human beings may finally be able to alter human nature in order to satisfy their desires. What matters to the human organism from an evolutionary point of view is reproductive success for oneself or one's proximate genetic relatives, not the abstract good of a whole race, or even the species. As Carson Holloway argues in his critique of Darwinian natural right, this invites the dehumanization of our nature through advances in various eugenic programs.[95] Neo-Darwinians who argue to the contrary that there is a basis in evolutionary naturalism for an argument favoring individual human dignity engage in a non-sequitur. Since there are no species-transcendent moral values, there is no basis for one species or the evolved state of a species to be preferred to another. Based upon Darwinian premises alone, we have many reasons to wish that the nature of our offspring and the future state of the human community be very different from its present condition. None of this is incompatible with the fundamental genetic desire for self-preservation. In the final analysis, the attempt to derive a full-scale conception of morality strictly from the observation of human sentiments and immanent capacities is deeply flawed.

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[95] See Holloway, ***The Right Darwin? : Evolution, Religion, and the Future of Democracy***, 148-77.

Back to Nature:

Conclusions

> My point is that those who stand outside all judgements of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their own impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse… At the moment, then, of Man's victory over Nature, we find the whole human race subjected to some individual men, and those individuals subjected to that in themselves which is purely 'natural'—to their irrational impulses. Nature, untrammelled by values, rules the Conditioners and, through them, all humanity. Man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man. [96]

As early as 1944, in the ***Abolition of Man*** C.S. Lewis warned of the grim possibility of a post-human future brought on by the biotechnological revolution that is currently gaining momentum all around us. Lewis stressed that he was not a Luddite who opposed either developments in science or advances in technology as such. But, he was concerned about certain dangers inherent in Descartes and Bacon's project of making human beings masters and possessors of nature. The unfolding of this project had at least two important intellectual effects. First, human beings came to think of themselves as reversing their relationship to nature. Instead of needing to conform to nature in order to succeed, now they could refashion nature in their own image according to their desires. Second, mastery was achieved through the quantification of nature. The old qualitative and teleological systems of natural philosophy were set aside in favor of new empirical and rational approaches.

Both of these developments have had profound ethical implications. We have documented how the replacement of the classical conception of nature with the modern one has led to a qualitatively thin empirical account of human

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[96] C.S. Lewis, ***The Abolition of Man*** (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 76.

life. Lewis suggested that a general effect of the new quantitative approach was to produce a value neutral understanding of anything assigned to the category of 'nature' as a mere artifact. What the biotech revolution makes possible is that human life itself shall be rendered a mere 'natural object' open to technological manipulation. Furthermore, it is a consequence of the modern view that no inherent values can guide or limit this technological manipulation, since we have overcome nature's limits and our understanding of a 'natural object' is value neutral in any case. Lewis' worry was that only the pleasures and sentiments of those who would be in control of the process would be left to guide the biotech revolution. Paradoxically, the human victory of mastery over nature would end up subordinating most human beings to the crudest 'natural' sentiments of a small minority of other human beings. Recent history has demonstrated that Lewis' concerns were well founded, since our contemporaries disagree not only over what biotechnological manipulations we ought to undertake, but also whether any ethical imperatives whatsoever should intrude upon scientific and technological progress.

This shows that there is a simple, if somewhat flippant, answer to the concern that we may not be able to get back to nature in the contemporary world because the old idea that human nature has ethical implications has been outmoded. We may disagree about what those ethical implications are, but we cannot escape them. None of this comes as a surprise to natural law theorists. Claiming that 'human nature' just is a term for a certain natural artifact for which an empirical/factual, but not a qualitative/ teleological description can be given has important moral and political consequences. We must evaluate those consequences in light of whether they constitute the best possibility for human fulfillment. This requires an understanding of human nature in light of an overall conception of the good life. We cannot escape the need for this kind of inquiry. Such an evaluation is not in principle anti-scientific or anti-technological, even if it challenges the view that a deeper qualitative understanding of human nature is either unachievable or unscientific.

For this reason, there is a danger of failing to recognize the good in the Darwinian natural right theory even as we critique it. The effort to discover the ethical implications of nature in light of advances in the natural sciences ought to be applauded as a positive development. Darwinian natural right theorists astutely criticize positivistic accounts that treat ethical appeals to nature as simply meaningless because of a putative logical gulf between facts and values. As we have seen with regard to Aquinas' treatment of the first principles of the natural law, getting beyond such a simplistic view of meaning does not entail the conclusion that ethics can merely be deduced from a set of naturalistic descriptions in physics or metaphysics. There is truth in the fact/value distinction when it is properly understood. Evolutionary naturalists like Larry Arnhart ought be applauded and studied carefully for their efforts to restore a basically Aristotelian account of the virtues and human excellence, and to defend human dignity, from within the limits of a scientific point of view. There is much to be gained from Arnhart's evolutionary critique of Hobbesian egoism and utopian social constructionism, which tends to treat nature as a kind of infinitely malleable artifact for social engineering. Evolutionary naturalists have also made significant strides toward showing that teleological descriptions have a place in natural science, although we ought to challenge the idea that immanent and cosmic teleological reasoning are fundamentally incompatible.

These strengths in Darwinian natural right theories are matched by important weaknesses. Arnhart's appeal to Humean sentimentalism based upon the analogy between value and secondary quality perception can find no deeper basis for the normative significance of nature than species-typical sentiments themselves. But, as John McDowell has pointed out, there is an important disanalogy between practical judgment and secondary quality perception. It is not merely the empirical fact that we have certain species-typical responses that make them normative, but that our responses are ***merited*** by our nature and the way things are. After all, as Aquinas recognized, there can be fundamental conflicts between natural human sentiments. Through habituation to the virtues our natural responses must be shaped and corrected by practical judgment about

the human good. Natural inclinations are normative within a practical grasp of our nature and possibilities for human fulfillment. In other words, a genuine theory of practical reason is needed. Sentimentalism is not enough. C.S. Lewis pointed to the fundamental problem with this approach in ***The Abolition of Man***. It provides no vantage point from which to criticize the final conquest of nature, which will result not in liberation, but our subordination to the passions of a small minority in power. As Alexis de Tocqueville recognized, only a qualitatively deeper and ultimately transcendent understanding of the meaning and purpose of human life can in the final analysis sustain the liberties we have worked so hard to achieve through liberal democracy and the quest for advances in human understanding through the mastery of nature. Natural law arguments in ethics and politics should therefore remain a vital and important source of reflection about the human good.

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Kant's Theory of Geometry in Light of the Development of Non-Euclidean Geometries

Martha King

With the development of non-Euclidean geometries in the nineteenth century, the concern arose as to whether these alternatives constituted a refutation of Kant's theory of geometry. Partly the concerns were related to Kant's argument that geometric judgments were ***a priori*** synthetic judgments, meaning that the conclusions of geometry could not be derived empirically but were yet universal principles. This aspect of universality led some to believe that the development and subsequent proof of non-Euclidean geometries implied a contradiction of Kant, whose conception of geometry was based in Euclid. In this article I will address whether or not Kant's conception of geometry can be reconciled with the conclusions of non-Euclidean geometry, and in what way Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries can be reconciled with respect to the sensible world.

For Kant, geometric propositions can only be justified through the construction of ***a priori*** intuitions in the imagination, which intuitions must of necessity correspond with the sensible world: "[I]t follows that the propositions of geometry are not determinations of a mere creation of our poetic imagination, which could therefore not be referred with assurance to actual objects; but rather that they are necessarily valid of space, and consequently of all that may be found in space. . . ." (Prol. 287: 31).

There are several ways in which it is thus assumed that there is no room for non-Euclidean geometry in Kant's theory. One entails the idea that the postulates of non-Euclidean geometry cannot be conceptualized ***a priori***. In addressing this concern, it is important to note the fact that non-Euclidean geometries have been proven to apply to space and the sensible world.[1] In this sense, if the intuitions of a non-Euclidean geometry are determined to be ***a priori***, then there is plenty of room in Kant for the validity of such intuitions, provided that they in some way correspond to physical space.

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[1] To name one example, "[a]ccording to Einstein's theory [of relativity] we must expect that every two rays of light within the same plane will meet sooner or later, if their paths extend far enough" (Barker 1964, p. 50).

There seems to be a natural inclination to want to jump to the conclusion that the propositions of non-Euclidean and Euclidean geometries contradict one another to the extent that if they cannot be allowed to co-exist then one or the other must be determined to be the 'true' geometry of our world. The problem is not just that Euclidean geometry can be derived soundly from its postulates, but that so too can multiple non-Euclidean geometries. Since Kant was relying on Euclidean geometry, it is assumed that there was no room in his epistemology for any non-Euclidean geometry. Yet Kant's theory on second glance actually seems to fit quite well with the possibility of alternate geometries. Take, for example, the construction of two parallel lines in my intuition. Whether or not my formal intuition of these two lines allows them to potentially intersect depends entirely on the shape which my ***form*** of intuition takes—that is, whether in this given instance I take space to be elliptical, spherical, or Euclidean. In each instance I will still derive what will happen with the parallel lines by ***a priori*** intuition alone. In point of fact, Gauss, Bolyai, and Lobachevski "all carried out their work without recourse to experiment, and thus ***a priori***" (Jones 1946, p. 143). Despite this, however, we are drawn back to Kant's remark in the ***Prolegomena*** that "the space of the geometer is exactly the form of sensuous intuition which we find ***a priori*** in us, and contains the ground of the possibility of all external appearances" (288: 32). If we are to accept the possibility that both Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries can be derived ***a priori***, are we 'stuck' then when it comes to determining which one applies to external experience?

Here we come to several possibilities. One possibility, put forth by Paul Henle, is to take the division of phenomenal and physical space and argue that these are the "same space considered in different contexts, not of two separate spaces" (1962, p. 234). Another possibility, which Lucas references, is that of Ewing and Strawson who "have attempted to save Kant's account of geometry by maintaining that it is ***a priori*** true at least of phenomenal geometry—the geometry of our visual experience—that is, Euclidean" (Lucas 1969, p. 6). This desire to remedy Kant's theory of geometry with respect to the

existence of non-Euclidean geometries by the separation of space/geometry into two separate realms seems entirely unnecessary. First, Kant's theory provides without any difficulty the sheer logical ***possibility*** of alternate geometries so long as the concepts of such geometries are not contradictory. "A Kantian may admit these without difficulty as being mere exercises in deduction having nothing to do with actual space. The physical use of non-Euclidean geometry is, however, another matter" (Henle 1962, p. 232). Yet why can't both kinds of geometry be made manifest in the physical world? Taking light rays to be the physical manifestation of 'straight lines' can lead us, on Earth, toward accepting Euclidean geometry under certain circumstances, but in outer space the investigation of black holes would lend toward the acceptance of Riemannian geometry. Both of these possibilities can exist in the physical universe, and thus it is the circumstances of the investigation at hand that call for the application of one or another geometry, as opposed to a strict reliance on only one geometry as applicable to the physical world. The obvious concern, however, is that the only way to determine which geometry applies in what cases is empirically. Nevertheless, if we are secure that the constructions of any geometry have been derived from ***a priori*** intuitions, and that these constructions of geometry apply or have the potential to apply to the physical world (including the vast reaches of outer space), then there is no ground on which to say that Kant's theory excluded the possibility of valid non-Euclidean geometries. Nor can we say that the geometry of the universe must be exclusively Bolyaian, Riemannian, ***or*** Euclidean.

Another reason some have mistakenly assumed that non-Euclidean geometry cannot fit within Kant's theory is the contention that we are incapable of imagining (and thus intuiting ***a priori***) any space other than Euclidean space.[2] This simply does not seem to be the case. I can imagine a globe in which the

[2] See, for example, Frege (1950), ***The Foundations of Arithmetic***, Oxford: Oxford UP; and Strawson, P. F. (1966), ***The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason***, London: Methuen.

longitudinal lines intersect at the poles and yet imagine that I, standing on the face of the Earth looking upwards, imagine these longitudinal lines to run parallel over my head. In fact, Hermann von Helmholtz suggested that we could even "imagine ordering our perceptions in a non-Euclidean space" by imagining the world as reflected through a convex mirror (Grabiner 1988, p. 226). Even Escher's drawings seem to suggest that it is quite possible to imagine a world other than the strictly Euclidean. If the figures of non-Euclidean geometry cannot be 'drawn' in the intuition, it further begs the question as to how Lobachevski and others were able to come up with their concepts in the first place. Following what Lobachevski perhaps assessed in his mind, I can—in an even starker example—imagine my form of intuition to be spherical and thus construct various geometrical possibilities within my intuition.

Thus I contend, following Hopkins, that we are able to both "see and picture consistently with Euclidean and non-Euclidean theories" (Hopkins 1973, p. 34). It is important here to say that while Kant, having pre-dated the development of non-Euclidean geometry, would have been functioning under the assumption of the possibility of intuiting only Euclidean concepts, I nonetheless contend that there is plenty of room to include the concepts of other geometries within Kant's distinction between formal intuitions and the form of intuitions.

While he did not argue specifically for the possibility of more than one form of intuition, I would argue that allowing for this possibility is essential in reconciling Kant with the development of multiple non-Euclidean geometries and also with his own contention that the construction of a concept "must in its representation express universal validity for all possible intuitions which fall under the same concept" (A713/B741: 577). Since both Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries have applicability in both intuition and the physical world, this possibility of multiple forms of intuition allows Kant's assessment of "geometry's unquestionable validity with regard to all objects of the sensible world" (Prol. 292: 36) to stretch into the realm of non-Euclidean geometries. This indeed meets Kant's requirement that the form of appearance "must allow

of being considered apart from all sensation" (A20/B34: 66). Here I think it deserves mention that for Kant geometric concepts aren't given validity superficially: "It is, indeed, a necessary logical condition that a concept of the possible must not contain any contradiction; but this is not by any means sufficient to determine the ***objective reality*** of the concept, that is, the possibility of such an object as is thought through the concept" (emphasis added, A220/B268: 240). Where an impossibility crops up, however, is at the level of intuition (A221/B269). And thus by shifting the concept of space in the mind at the level of intuition the possibility of non-Euclidean geometries can be shown to be valid. Our form of intuition is perhaps most naturally Euclidean, as that is the geometry we are taught and with which we are most familiar. However, it is clearly possible to shift our form of intuition into a spherical or elliptical space and work with constructions within these different realms. Certainly this is what Lobachevski and Bolyai must have done, for their geometries were not entirely derived at the level of empirical observation. With this possibility of different forms of intuition in mind, the axioms of multiple geometries can thus peacefully coexist as ***a priori*** intuitions, but only when the form of intuition assumes the shape in the mind which best corresponds to these seemingly contradictory axioms of multiple geometries.

Jones suggested that the reason why so many people have taken the arrival of non-Euclidean geometries to imply a refutation of Kant is that such people incorrectly reason that:

> [1] Only one geometry can correctly apply to actual space.
> [2] Experience alone, therefore, can determine which geometry is true.
> [3] Kant's position that geometry is ***a priori***, and independent of experience, is thus untenable. (Jones 1946, p. 139)

The problem, Jones argues, is in [1]. It seems, though, that from experience and empirical evidence we know that more than one geometry can apply to physical

space. The question then becomes not which geometry applies in all cases to actual space, but rather which geometry is ***necessitated by*** a given instance of actual space. Thus: "Which type of geometry proves most suitable . . . depends on the type of lines we use, and the choice of the type of line for actual measurements, in turn, is affected by empirical factors. Regardless of the type of line, and thus of the type of geometry used, however, the other geometries remain sound unless it can be shown that only one type of line can be constructed in space" (Jones 1946, p. 143). We see then that those who view the development and seemingly contradictory nature of multiple geometries as a reason to insist that only one geometry can be the 'correct' one "do not fully realize that the postulates of geometry are capable of truth or falsity only when they are interpreted in some specific way. . . . What we should say is that Riemannian geometry is true when, for instance, the term 'straight line' is interpreted as meaning the path of a ray of light through a medium of uniform refractive index. . . . It is equally misleading and false to say simply that the postulates of Euclidean geometry are false—for the postulates of Euclidean geometry are true under some interpretations and false under others" (Barker 1964, p. 52).

For now, we simply can't determine ***a priori*** which geometry ***best*** describes the sensible world. In some cases appearances may deceive us as to which geometry to follow, and in such cases we must rely on empirical data to sort out our methods. However, given that there is at least one shared principle among all the geometries, i.e., that they all define a 'line' as the "shortest path between two points" [for example, in Euclidean geometry this 'line' being 'straight' and in Riemannian geometry this 'line' being an arc] (Hopkins 1973, p. 8), there exists the potential for a unifying theory of geometry which would someday incorporate all possibilities in a non-contradictory way.

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Plato's Parmenides
An Analysis and Response to Objections Raised

Colin Connors

The ***Parmenides*** is composed of two parts: the first section is a self-criticism of Plato's theory of Forms, while the second part consists of a series of hypotheses concerning the one, and what results if the one is or if the one is not. The first part of Plato's ***Parmenides*** contains four objections or problems concerning the Theory of Forms, which apparently result from the very nature of the forms. The problems break down into two main categories: metaphysical and epistemological. There are three metaphysical problems: (1.) What things count as having a Form? (2.) How is it that instances participate in their Form? (3.) What is a Form and how is it different from a particular? Finally, there is one epistemological problem: if the forms are separate existences or are in another realm, how is it that human beings can come to know them in this realm? All of the objections or problems fail to invalidate Plato's Theory of Forms because they misrepresent the Theory of Forms and/or involve an unwarranted assumption.

The first problem that is raised in the ***Parmenides*** centers around a perplexity on Socrates' part as to whether things like mud, men, and fire have forms; however, the perplexity seems to arise from Socrates' disdain for material things. Socrates readily agrees that there is a character of the Just itself, the Good itself, and Beauty itself, but refuses to believe in the existence of a character for physical things: "Surely those things actually are just what we see them to be, and it would be absurd to suppose that something is a character of them" (Annas 248). Unlike justice, beauty, and goodness, physical things are bound to this temporal world, and since they are so, there is no reason to suppose an eternal character of them. Francis Cornford observes that Plato initially approached the Forms of moral qualities: "…Plato must have started by recognizing the Forms of moral qualities, because these had been the main object of Socrates' inquiries" (Cornford 82). Given the fact that Plato initially began his study of the Forms through moral qualities, it is not surprising that he

should disregard the existence of Forms of physical things. Physical things are, for Socrates, insignificant, and therefore do not have forms.

Socrates' perplexity with regard to the existence of Forms for physical things could also be attributed to the fact that one of his proofs for the existence of Forms relies on Forms being the perfect exemplars of their instances. Justice, Beauty, and Good all allow gradation: one can say something is more or less beautiful, but we do not say that that anything that is beautiful in this world is perfectly beautiful—Beauty itself. Physical things do not allow gradation as does Beauty: one cannot say that one wood is more or less wood than another with respect to the wooden thing; and one cannot say that there is any perfect wood because one wood is just as much wood as another. One of the attributes that Plato's Argument from Recollection establishes is that Forms are perfect exemplars for their instances. The argument, which relies on a relative property, i.e. equality, would break down if one were to substitute "wood" for "equality". If Socrates regards solely the Argument from Recollection as being the basis for establishing the existence of Forms, then it is no wonder that he regards physical things as being "just what they appear to be".

It seems, however, that Plato is misrepresenting his own theory and being inconsistent in his reason to posit the existence of forms. The original intent of Forms is to explain why things are and/or can be like one another. Parmenides alludes to this original intent: "Now tell me: do you yourself thus distinguish as you say, certain characters themselves separately, and separately in turn the things that have a share of them? And do you think that likeness itself is something separate from the likeness we have…" (Annas 247). If something is similar to another thing, then there is a Form that is posited over the two like things in order to explain why those two similar things are similar. If Socrates kept this principle in mind, he probably would have agreed that physical things do have forms: one wood is similar to another wood, so there must be "Woodness" to explain why those two things are wood.

Parmenides' criticism of participation revolves around two spatial concepts: whole and part. Parmenides initially influences Socrates to agree that

instances share in their Form only either by having the whole Form in them or part of the Form in them. If it is not the case that instances share in their Form either by whole or by part, then the idea of participation is problematic. Parmenides begins with participation by whole and shows it to be absurd: "Therefore, being one and the same, it will be present at once and as a whole in things that are many and separate, and thus it would be separate from itself" (Annas 248). What makes participation by whole absurd is the assumption that Forms, like their instances, are bound to the same space. If there are many instances, and there is the Form that is bound to each of the separate instances, which are in turn bound to a certain, separate space, then it is clear that the same Form would be separate from itself because it is "in" separate instances. Kenneth Sayre illustrates this point: "By way of analogy, think of a collection of compact discs that is contained in several drawers. If the entire collection, per impossible, were present in each drawer, then the collection as a whole would exist apart from itself—being wholly contained as it were, in several separate drawers" (Sayre 76). It is therefore problematic for a Form which is a single thing, to be wholly in its instances.

Participation by part is also problematic because a Form, which is one, indivisible thing, would be divided amongst its instances. Parmenides uses the spatial example of a sail (a Form) covering a group of men (instances) resulting in the division of a Form: "…the characters themselves are divisible, and things that have a share of them have a share of parts of them; whole would no longer be in each, but part of each in each" (Annas 248). Socrates finds this division of a form unacceptable because the division of an entity that is supposed to be one and without parts is now many and with parts.

Furthermore, another problem arises with the Forms of relations if the instances participate in the Form by part: the instances of the Form of a relation participate in another contrary Form of relation. Parmenides uses the example of the Form of largeness: "…if you divide largeness itself, and each of the many large things is to be large by a part of largeness smaller than largeness itself, won't that appear unreasonable?" (Annas 248). By way of analogy, take a finite

straight line, and call it "largeness itself". Now divide the straight line into many parts and call these parts "large things" since these parts are from the straight line "largeness itself". Since any finite part is smaller than the finite whole, the "large things" which are parts of the whole "largeness itself" participate in both "largeness itself" and "smallness itself" simultaneously—which is contradictory since what is large is not what is small. If participation by part, as Parmenides conceives it to be, is true, then, similarly, the equal things share in both smallness itself and unequal itself, and small things also share in largeness itself—all of which are contradictory. Given the fact that participation by whole or by part is problematic, participation itself, a central idea to Plato's Theory of Forms, is also problematic.

The notion that participation occurs only through whole or part in a spatial sense is an assumption that cannot be granted in Plato's Theory of Forms. Earlier, Socrates suggests a different way of conceiving participation by whole using the following analogy: "…at least if it were like one and the same day which is in many different places at once and nonetheless not separate from itself. If it were in fact that way, each of the characters could be in everything at once as one and the same" (Annas 248). Sayre suggests that Plato is hinting at a temporal model for participation, and that such a model would avoid the problem of participation by a spatial whole: "The fact that the same day is present in Athens and Corinth simultaneously, for instance, carries no implication that the day is 'apart from itself" in any way" (Sayre 76). Although it is true that any finite time is divisible into measures of time, and poses a problem with the view that Forms are one and without parts, the "day" analogy extends only to how the Form exists in comparison to the instance—how the instance participates in the Form. Since it is true that the day, or even the night, can be in multiple places at once wholly, and lack division even though they are in many places, it is possible for something to be, as Socrates states, "one and the same", despite participation by whole.

If it is true that participation works according to a temporal model, and not a spatial model, then Parmenides' criticism of participation by part collapses

since the criticism relies on a spatial model. When one divides "largeness itself" into "large things", one must employ the spatial concept of the relation between part and whole in order to perceive the absurdity involved with this division. If it is the case that the temporal concept of participation by whole is the manner in which instances participate in their Forms, then this criticism is irrelevant since not only does participation by a temporal whole work, but a criticism of a spatial model is not a criticism of a temporal model. Consequently, Parmenides' criticisms of participation fail since he assumes that participation can work only through a spatial model.

Parmenides' underlying assumption for his criticism of how the Form is different from the particular is that the Form itself has the same definite attribute that its instances have. The criticism arises from the reason one posits a Form over its instances: "I suppose you think that each character is one for some such reason as this: when some plurality of things seem to you to be large, there perhaps seems to be some characteristic that is the same when you look over them all, whence you believe that the large is one" (Annas 249). Based on this phrasing of this principle, it is clear that the "large itself" or the "large is one" has the same characteristic that the many "large things" or "plurality of things seem to you to be large" have—namely, that the "large itself" and "large things" are all "large". If it is true that a Form is posited over all things that have the same characteristic, and that the "large itself" and the "large things" are all "large", then another "large itself" is posited over the other "large itself" and the "large things". One can see how an infinite regress of "large itself" results. Parmenides highlights the problem that arises from an infinite regress of Forms for Plato's theory: "And each of the characters will no longer be one for you, but unlimited in multitude" (Annas 249). The problem is that the infinite regress generated by the Theory of Forms shows that, instead of simplifying the account of the similarity of things, it makes the account more complex. The criticism, which is also called the Third Man argument, therefore, does not show that Forms cannot exist, but that the Theory of Forms does not simplify the account of the similarity of things.

If the assumption that Forms have the same definite property as their instances is not granted, then the Third Man argument cannot hold against Plato's Theory of Forms. Part of the reason the infinite regress is generated is because the same term, which represents a property, is found in both the name of the Form and the name of the instance. For example, the term "large" is present in the Form "largeness" as well as the instance "large thing". Underlying this use of the same term is the conception that the Form "largeness" and the instances "large things" are both large—one cannot seem to conceive how the Form of an instance is different from the instance. Consequently, it appears that both the Form "largeness" and the "large thing" are both "large", and an infinite regress results. If that which is the genus is distinguished from that which is the species, each representing a distinct property, an infinite regress does not arise. For example, take the Form or genus "animality" for the species "dogness". One can see that it cannot be said that "animality" is itself "dogness" or a "dog", or else all animals are dogs, which is false. Similarly, if "largeness" is the genus of "large things", it does not necessarily follow that "largeness" is a "large thing". The Form "largeness" is the cause of "large things" being "large", but the cause is not the same as its effect. Similarly, "animality" is the cause of "dog" being an animal, but "animality" is not itself a "dog". Thinking of the Form and instance in this manner avoids the infinite regress, and shows that Parmenides' assumption that the Form has the same definite property as its instance is not warranted.

Another assumption involved in the Third Man argument is that the Form must be like the particulars, generating another infinite regress. If a Form must be posited to explain the resemblance of two or more things, and the Form is similar to those two or more similar things, then another Form must be posited to explain the resemblance the one Form has with its similar instances. This process repeats ad infinitum if the Form is like, or similar to, its instances/lesser Forms. To resolve this problem, Cornford suggests that, for instance, two or more men, who are similar to one another, partake of the Form Man, which is in turn the Form of which the copies are copies (Cornford 94).

The basis for things' similarity is not "likeness itself" but the Form (i.e. Man). Cornford states: " 'This man is like that man' is not equivalent to 'These men both partake of the same Form, Man' " (Cornford 94). The reason those two statements are not the same is because the former merely states that there exists a likeness between the two men, but the likeness is not specified, while the latter states why both things are said to be "men". In this case, the Form "Man" partakes of the Form "Likeness" and the men partake of the Form "Man". Thus, there are two different relations: "Likeness to Man", and "Man to men". Each relation is different because "Man to men" signifies "what the things are", while "Likeness to Man" signifies the basis for similarity as mediated through the Form Man. Since the relations are different one cannot generate a third man because the Form of "Man" participates in the Form "Likeness".

The final objection, which is epistemological in nature, is the Master-Slave argument, which states that if the Forms are really separate from the instances of this world, bearing a relation only to themselves, then knowledge of the Forms is impossible. Parmenides begins with the master-slave analogy: "If one of us is master or slave of someone, he is surely not a slave of master itself, what it is to be master, nor is a master the master of slave itself, what it is to be a slave… but mastership itself is what it is of slavery itself, and slavery in like manner slavery of mastership" (Annas 251). What Parmenides is saying here is that, when there is a master in this world, the master is a master because of a relation to another slave, and vice-versa. The master in this world does not exist or have bearing on the Form "Slavery", as the slave in this world does not exist or have bearing on the Form "Mastership". But the Form "Mastership" and the Form "Slavery" exist and have bearing on each other. The Forms have bearing only on themselves and not on the things of this world. Parmenides takes this analogy further by distinguishing Knowledge itself, and knowledge of the truth and reality of things among us: "…knowledge itself, what it is to be knowledge would be knowledge of what is there, namely, what it is to be real and true? But knowledge among us would be knowledge of the truth and reality among us? Moreover, as you agree, we surely do not have the characters themselves nor

can they be among us. But the kinds themselves, what it is to be each thing, are known, I take it, by the character of knowledge?" (Annas 251). Since Knowledge itself of the truth and reality of things is not the same as the knowledge of the truth and reality of things around us, and since we do not possess the character of knowledge (Knowledge itself) we cannot know Forms. Without Knowledge itself being present, or relative to this world, any Form is unknowable.

There are two underlying assumptions that are worth challenging: (1) the confusion of the perfect instance of knowing with the Form Knowledge, and (2) the human being is tied to this world alone. Cornford points out that Parmenides is being inconsistent in identifying the Form with the act of knowing, when Parmenides had previously shown Socrates that a Form cannot be an act of knowing (Cornford 98). The confusion arises especially when Parmenides states that only a god can possess the most perfect knowledge (98); according to Cornford: "…it is in fact the god, not the Form, Knowledge, that knows the Forms" (98). Since the act of knowing is distinct from the Form, Knowledge, it does not follow that if one does not possess Knowledge itself, that one cannot know the Forms.

It is clear from the ***Phaedo*** that our souls are not confined to this world. Cornford states: "Our bodies certainly are; but as the ***Phaedo*** argued, our souls are more akin to the unseen and intelligible" (99). Given the fact that our souls are more like the unseen and intelligible, our souls are more capable of coming to know the form. The reason for this is that the Forms, which are unseen and intelligible, are similar to the soul. Given this similarity, it does not follow that our souls are necessarily excluded from knowing the Forms, unlike our bodies which are purely sensible.

If it is true that all of the objections or problems raised against Plato's Theory of Forms either misrepresent the Theory or involve an unwarranted assumption, and Plato is aware of the misrepresentations, then one can raise the question: what is the point of this dialogue? Perhaps Plato is hoping that the attentive reader would detect the flaws in the objections, and answer those

objections on his own. It could also be true that the misrepresentations indicate Plato's struggle to explain precisely the principles of the Forms (i.e. how participation occurs). Even with the responses to the objections, the metaphysical principles that are essential to the Theory of Forms are unclear. Perhaps Plato leaves the elucidation of the principles to the inquiry of the reader. Whatever is the case, the assumptions on which the objections rest are unwarranted or misrepresent Plato's Theory of Forms.

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The Virgin Desert: Gender Transformation in Fourth-Century Christian Asceticism

Erin Kidd

Macrina was a fourth-century ascetic who was famous for her wise counsel. We know of Macrina through her brother Gregory of Nyssa, a rather prolific fourth-century Cappadocian father. In his epistle to the monk Olympius, Gregory wrote in great detail about the life of his sister. Of interest is his introduction of Macrina. After referring to her as a woman, he questioned himself: "if indeed she should be styled woman for I do not know whether it is fitting to designate her by her sex, who so surpassed her sex."[1] How did Macrina surpass her sex? Is Gregory's hesitancy to call his sister "woman" indicative of a belief in the inferiority of women? Was Gregory implying that it was necessary to overcome her gender in order to acquire success in ascesis? Though it is obvious that Gregory adored and admired his sister, his reverence for her appears to be at the cost of her femininity.

Macrina is not alone. Amma Sarah, one of the few desert mothers whose sayings are recorded, refers to her own gender transformation: "According to nature I am a woman, but not according to my thoughts." In fact, many fourth-century female ascetics in early Christianity were praised (and praised themselves) in words which emphasized the putting off of femininity. In order to understand exactly what sort of transformation these women went through, it is necessary to understand how early Christian ascetics understood gender. What did it mean to be woman qua woman? What did the feminine gender represent for early Christian asceticism?

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[1] Gregory of Nyssa, ***The Life of Macrina***, trans. by W. K. Lowther Clarke (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916) published in the Internet Medieval Source Book, 1997, 24 Apr. 2006 <http://www.fordham.edu/HALSALL/basis/macrina.html>.

The Virgin Desert:
Gender Transformation in Fourth-Century Christian Asceticism

A cross-section of fourth-century texts from early Christian writers will illustrate that gender was understood as part of a broader theology of creation and the fall. Christian asceticism saw its purpose in attempting to reverse the fall, specifically through the ascetic renunciation of the body and sexuality. Situating these gender transformation texts within the larger context of ascetic belief clearly demonstrates that the transformation of the female sex was more closely related to the redemption of the soul than it was with the negation of femininity.

Transformation, Transcendence, or Negation

Texts which display gender transformation on the part of early female ascetics are often used in order to debate the level of misogyny in the early church. Most current scholarship has interpreted this phenomenon in one of two ways. The first argues that situated in context, such statements represent a challenge to contemporary gender roles. The equation of women with men displayed that unity in Christ countered the social norms of Greco-Roman patriarchy. Understood in light of these patriarchal norms, the early Church was progressive in its understanding of gender.

The second dominant theory argues that gender transformation statements don't challenge, but reinforce the status quo of patriarchy. The transformation of gender seems to be largely a transformation from female to male in order to take part in a new humanity that was primarily masculine. Willi Braun, Professor of Religion at the University of Alberta, wrote an article titled "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness in Early Christian Discourse" in which he demonstrates that even at its most inclusive, the early church was primarily androcentric. He argues that while early ascetics did seek to denounce gender differences, it was only through the woman becoming male. Braun supports this thesis with an exegetical appeal to Galatians 3:28: Paul used the masculine form for the word "one" when declaring that male and female were

one in Christ, even though the feminine and neutered genders were available to him. The "one" which the two genders were urged to become was not androgynous, but masculine. At best, the female is absorbed or erased into an ideal which is given masculine form.[2]

This second theory does not deny the premises of the first. The fact that the church dared to give women equal status to men was indeed countercultural at the time. Braun and his followers hold contention with the fact that women became equal to men only by becoming men. The belief in masculine superiority was not only maintained but strengthened. Braun argues that the move to virginity and widowhood by female ascetics represented a fleeing from femininity towards masculinity. Even if done for autonomy, the rejection of traditional feminine roles is a rejection of femininity. Female ascetics, who had rejected these traditional roles, were managed by men and complimented by being called "man." Sometimes they even dressed like men. While early Christianity was unusual in its inclusion of women as leaders, it maintained the assumption that maleness was the human standard.[3]

This theory seems to make two rather large mistakes. To begin with, it reads current understandings of gender over these fourth-century texts. Second, it ignores the theological assumptions of the early Christian writers. Third, it neglects to situate gender transformation in its true context—asceticism.

The Greco-Roman Understanding of Women

Fourth-century Christianity was greatly influenced by Greco-Roman thought, inheriting many of its presuppositions. Platonic thought dictated a distinction between the body and the soul. The soul was seen as rational and good, partaking in those qualities which represented the participation in the divine. Being a woman implied inferiority. While the female body was seen as

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[2] Willi Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness in Early Christian Discourse," ***Religion and Theology 9***.1&2 (2002): 110-111.

[3] Braun 111-112.

obviously weaker, debate ensued over whether the female soul was also weaker. Aristotle argued that it was—women were unable to reason sufficiently and therefore participated less in the divine. Opposing this view was one held by the Platonists and Stoics. Though it was more difficult for women to become virtuous, they shared a common humanity with men. Given proper training, they could become just as morally upright.[4] Despite the debate on the state of the female soul, both views see woman as being further away from perfection than men.

In fact, Greco-Roman thought interpreted gender through a theory of monosexuality. Such a theory envisioned a spectrum of masculinity and femininity, in which the ***telos*** was male. Virtue was identified with the male pole, vice with the female. Men were the standard for humanity.[5]

Braun and his followers argue that early Christian writers, like Gregory of Nyssa, were influenced by Greco-Roman monosexuality. If Gregory of Nyssa grew up in a context where masculinity was the standard of virtue and the ***telos*** of humanity, his statement concerning Macrina could understandably be interpreted that she had surpassed her sex in order to become male. Braun's opponents would argue that Christianity should be praised for combating such misogyny. In comparison, early Christianity was radically egalitarian by allowing that women could make comparable achievements in ascesis as men.

Christianity, however, does not understand humanity's ***telos*** in masculinity or femininity. Instead, its ***telos*** is the transformation and redemption of humanity through Christ. Close inspection of a variety of fourth-century Christian texts will demonstrate that early Christianity's understanding of gender was more closely related to the participation in the glory of the Kingdom of God than Greco-Roman misogyny. In particular, the ascetic tradition sought

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[4] Gillian Clark, Women in ***Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles*** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 120-121.

[5] Braun 113-114.

to participate in this glory by becoming like the angels, who are neither male nor female. It was being "like the angels," and not being male, which was the ***telos*** of asceticism.

Fourth-Century Christian Understandings of Women

While Greco-Roman philosophers often spoke to an all-male audience, Christian philosophers, like Augustine and John Chrysostom, spoke as bishops in front of congregations which included many women. Even male ascetics could not escape encountering women who sought their counsel. As a result, early Christian leaders were forced to address the status of women. It is no surprise that there is a wealth of writing from the fourth century on the female gender.[6] These texts present a large diversity of views. It would be inaccurate to argue that there was one dominant view, and it would be impossible to explore all texts. For this reason, texts from a few influential Church Fathers will be explored as representative of the views of the fourth-century church as a whole. Close examination of these texts will demonstrate that, despite the diversity, there are common beliefs throughout fourth-century Christian texts.

Eve:

During the time of Macrina, Christian writers understood gender in light of the Genesis account of creation and the fall. This account's implications for the first woman were seen as being valid for all women. To understand Macrina, we must understand Eve.

Augustine and Ambrose both understood the account of creation and the fall to indicate that women were inferior to men. Augustine argued that the only reason Eve was created was for procreation. He reasoned that if God had intended to give man a helper or companion, another man would have been more suitable. The female sex must have been created for the possibility of procreation. Because the female sex existed only to propagate the species,

[6] G Clark 119-120.

woman alone could not represent the image of God, but only when united with a man. A man, on the other hand, was sufficient alone to represent the image of God.

Despite his rather harsh treatment of women, Augustine conceded that women were good. He did so in light of their creation by God. Therefore, he argued that it would not be necessary for women to be transformed into men in this life, nor the afterlife. As women, they would be able to participate in the Kingdom of God.[7]

Augustine believed that if Eve's disobedience had not occurred, sex between a man and a woman would still have happened in order for procreation. However, he argues that such an act would be separate from lust. He even thought that it would leave a woman physically a virgin:

> The husband, without the alluring sting of passion, with tranquil mind and no destruction of bodily wholeness, would have been poured out in the marital embrace. . .when the wild fire of love did not drive those parts of the body, but that, as there was need, a voluntary power came to aid, the masculine seed then could not have been discharged into the wife's womb, preserving the wholeness of the female genitalia, just as now the flow of menstrual blood can be discharged from a virgin's uterus without injuring that same integrity. For the seed obviously could have been inserted through the same passage by which this other fluid can be ejected. Just as at childbirth the woman's womb would not have been dilated by a groan of pain, but by the impulse of fullness of term, so their sexual organs would have been joined for

[7] Augustine "Literal Commentary on Genesis," IX, 5 in Elizabeth A. Clark, ***Women in the Early Church: Messages of the Fathers of the Church*** (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1983) 28-9.

> impregnation and conception not by lustful appetite, but by a natural exercise of the will.[8]

He saw the pain of child-bearing, orgasms, sexual desire, and the loss of virginity during intercourse as a result of the fall.[9]

Ambrose also referred to the garden in his argument for the inferiority of women. He pointed out that Eve was the first to be deceived, and that she herself was the one who deceived Adam. Like Augustine, he conceded some goodness to women. Ambrose realized that it was only after Eve was created that God pronounced "It is good." He explained this tension by arguing that, though it was a woman who brought sin into the world, it was also a woman who brought the possibility for reproduction. By satisfying the need to produce the next generation, a woman fulfilled her duty as a good "helper."[10]

Though Augustine and Ambrose have particularly negative views of women, they concede her goodness (even if only because of the possibility of procreation). Most importantly, neither requires or encourages any sort of gender transformation. Even Augustine, whose views on women were more negative than most of the early Christian writers, did not indicate that it was necessary for women to undergo a gender transformation. It is unwarranted by what we know of early Christian theology to argue that the gender transformation statements concerning fourth-century female ascetics are representative of a religious belief in the need for women to transcend their gender and become like men. While early Christian writers may have been influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy, this influence does not explain the gender transformation statements.

Many of the Church fathers had more positive views of women. Basil of Ancyra saw Adam and Eve as a "parted androgyne," two parts of an original

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[8] Augustine "The City of God" XIV 26 in EA Clark 46-47.

[9] Augustine "The City of God" XIV 23, 26 in EA Clark 45-47.

[10] Ambrose "On Paradise" IV, 24; X, 46-48 in EA Clark 29-33.

neutered whole.[11] This origin of gender explains the natural state of interdependence between the sexes. Basil understood the attraction of men for women as equalizing what could otherwise have been a cruel mastery. The need of women for sex and reproduction ensured that women would not be dominated by members of the opposite sex who were often more physically and politically powerful.

The Cappadocian fathers, including Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa believed that the soul was without sex. Male and female were only human categories, part of the animal nature of humanity. Both women and men were made in the image of God. Therefore, they both shared in the possession of the rational aspect of God.[12]

While Augustine and Ambrose believed that women were created for procreation, Gregory of Nyssa believed that gender was created for procreation. Though Adam and Eve were created male and female, he wrote that "the differentiation of the original human nature into two distinct sexes became active only when Adam's disobedient act of will brought upon him the loss of immortality."[13] Gender was instated at the fall, and therefore nonessential to human nature.

Gregory understood humanity as being caught between the glory of Adam and the future restoration of that glory. For him, gender existed only as a temporary measure, created in order for the human race to provide progeny. However, a Christian's goal was to return to the original purity. This is not to be taken as a condemnation of marriage, gender, or sexuality, but recognition of them as only temporal. It was not necessary for women to undergo gender transformation, but for both sexes to surpass their gender. Early Christians

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[11] Peter Brown, ***Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 268.

[12] G Clark 122-123.

[13] Brown 293-295.

waited for the day when their bodies would be transformed at the resurrection and acknowledged that at that time they would be like the angels, neither male nor female and not being given in marriage.[14]

John Chrysostom was greatly influenced by Gregory. He understood Adam and Eve to have lived in a state of virginity in the garden:

> Adam and Eve remained apart from marriage, leading the sort of life in Paradise they would have led had they been in Heaven, luxuriating in their association with God. Desire for sexual relation, conception, labor pains, childbirth, and every form of corruptibility was removed from their souls. As a clear stream flows forth from a pure source, so in that place were they adorned with virginity.[15]

Chrysostom understood there to be a correlation between the pre-Fall paradise of Eden and heaven. In their relationship with each other, Adam and Eve existed as if in heaven.

This relationship was not only defined by virginity, but by equality. His exegesis of the biblical account supports his view that woman was originally equal in status. However, the fall introduced a hierarchy into the relationship between man and woman:

> The first dominance and servitude was that in which men ruled over women. After the original sin, a need arose for this arrangement; before the sin, the woman was like the man. Indeed, when God molded the woman, he used the words in creating her that he had used when he fashioned man. Just as he said in the case of creating the male, "Let us make man after our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26), rather than "Let there be man," so also in

[14] Matthew 22:30, Mk 12:25, Luke 20:35.

[15] John Chrysostom "On Virginity" 14, 3 in EA Clark 122-3.

> the case of woman, God did not say, "Let there be woman," but here he said in addition, "Let us make for him a helper"(Gen. 2:18). And he does not call her simply a "helper,' but "a helper like him," once more showing the equality of honor.[16]

John understood that man and woman were one in likeness and form. After the fall, a difference in authority was introduced into the relationship between man and woman. However, only man shared in the authority of God. Women, who were subject to men, were unlike God who was subject to no one.[17]

Though the early church varied in its understanding of gender, the majority of early Christian writers drew their philosophy of gender from a theology of Genesis. Gender was understood in light of sex and reproduction and seen as a nonessential part of the human person. Instead, it represented a falling from the paradise of Eden. This understanding of gender would play a particularly important role in early Christian asceticism, which saw its purpose in returning to that paradise.

Ascetic Understanding of Sexuality:

Early Christian ascetics believed that they could regain a taste of the glory of Adam while still on earth. Though ascetics sought to participate in the glory of Adam, there was a stark recognition that they were still in the body. Asceticism understood the body to be intimately connected with the transformation of the soul. The way ascetics treated their bodies reflected their understanding of redemption. The importance was not on the flesh, but on the state of the heart, which the flesh often mirrored. Adam's heart had desired God, and the ascetics sought to recapture the glory of Adam by opening their own heart.

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[16] John Chrysostom "Discourse 4 on Genesis" 1, in EA Clark 34.

[17] See interpretation of Genesis 3:16 in John Chrysostom "Discourse 4 on Genesis" 1, 2 in EA Clark 33-36.

Sexuality was particular to the ascetics in that it most intimately reflected the state of the soul. The permanence of sexual fantasy demonstrated the deep connection between human nature and sexual desire. The persistence, depth, and intimacy of sexual temptation led it to represent the unopened heart for the ascetic.[18]

Virginity: Like the Angels

The renunciation of sexuality enabled the ascetics to attain a heart that was open to God like Adam's was. Virginity, therefore, was of particular importance to early ascetics. It represented a way to begin the transformation and to participate to some extent in the pre-Fall glory of Adam.

Early Christian writings demonstrate that virginity was part of a looking forward to a future resurrection. Gregory of Nyssa praised virginity, writing that humans should strive for virginity in imitation of the angels. By becoming like the angels, humans could escape the attachment towards transitory things. For Gregory, virginity was heavenly. He understood it as a mediator between humanity and God:

> The power of virginity, then, is such that it abides in the heavens with the Father of spirits; it is in the chorus of the celestial powers, it applies itself to human salvation, and by its power it leads God down to share in human life, while it gives humans wings, so that in virginity we have a desire for heavenly things. It is as if virginity were a kind of bond in humans' relationship with God, and by its mediation leads into harmony things that by nature are separated from one another.[19]

[18] Brown 222-235.

[19] Gregory of Nyssa "On Virginity" 2, 3 in EA Clark 119.

Virginity was not merely a practice. It represented both the redemption of humanity as well as the concern of God for humanity. Its movement was both anthrotropic and theotropic.

Gregory even argued that virginity was found in the Trinity. He understood virginity as embodying both purity and incorruptibility. Virginity was also seen as stronger than death. Marriage, which existed as a result of the curse, propitiated death because it brought more people into the world in order to die. Virginity, however, broke this cycle of death, by curtailing the proliferation of mortals. In this way, virginity reversed three of the consequences of the Fall: sexuality, marriage, and death.[20]

Most important in understanding Macrina is the fact that virginity reversed a fourth consequence of the Fall: gender. Jerome emphasized that the putting on of the new man and rebirth in Christ mentioned in Colossians 3:9-10 were connected with the removal of sex differences. For Jerome, since "Marriage fills the earth, virginity fills Paradise,"[21] virginity represents one way in which Christians can take part in the kingdom of God. Those who remain virgins will begin participation in the redemption of their bodies:

> Virgins begin to be on earth what others will be afterwards in Heaven. If it is promised us that we shall be as the angels (however, among angels there is no difference of sex), either we shall be without sex, as the angels are, or assuredly, as is plainly attested, we may be resurrected in our own sex but shall not perform the sexual function.[22]

Two important things should be drawn from this text. First, Jerome is primarily looking forward. The return to the pre-Fall glory of Adam is also a forward

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[20] Gregory of Nyssa "On Virginity" 4, 8; 4, 9; 13, 1; 14,1in EA Clark 120-1.
[21] Jerome "Against Jovinian" I, 16 in EA Clark 127-8.
[22] Jerome 131.

movement in which Christians were looking ahead to the resurrection. Second, this future state would involve being like the angels, including some degree of removal of sex differences.

Female Virginity:

The word "virgins" referred to both male and females in the early Church and both were under the same sexual demands. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to focus on female virginity. Far from being looked down upon, female virgins were extremely respected in the early church. Jerome taught that since virginity began with a woman, Mary, women may experience the blessings of virginity more fully. In the fourth-century, dedicated Christian women were seen by men as possessing prized values. A virgin could bring salvation upon a house. Their prayers were known to protect from disasters; their virginity thought to bring down the very mercy of God.

Female virgins were admired by males as representing continuity in the storm: "She was the one human being who could convincingly be spoken of as having remained as she had first been created."[23] The female virgins did not go out into the desert like their male counterparts. For women, the city remained the center of holiness. They lived more informal ascetic lives: they were often grouped organically in families, pairs of soul-mates, or served as heads of households.

> Their untouched body represented what the desert represented to male ascetics:
>
> To late antique males, the female body was the most alien body of all. It was as antithetical to them as the desert was to the settled land. When consecrated by its virgin state, it could appear like an untouched desert in itself: it was the furthest reach of human flesh

[23] Brown 271.

> turned into something peculiarly precious by the coming of Christ upon it.[24]

The virgin, in herself, became a desert.[25] The female was revered, not to the extent that she had renounced being a woman, but to the extent which she had transcended temporality, beginning the transformation which would be completed at the resurrection.

The Practicality of Virginity:

At this point, it is necessary to introduce more logistical reasons for gender transformation in early asceticism. Such considerations substantially weaken the argument that the early church was misogynist. It is important to keep in mind the tension which asceticism held between redemption and earthly existence. While at once attempting to both revert to the pre-Fall state and look ahead to the resurrection, early ascetics recognized that they still existed in space and time. Though gender transformation was esteemed, the ascetics recognized that, in the body, they were still male and female. As a result, issues of safety, temptation, and society affected how early ascetics viewed body, sexuality, and marriage.

For Anthony, the father of asceticism, the struggle against sexuality was one part of the attempt to sever his relationship to the world. A bride would have meant settling down in the village. Sexual temptation represented an opposing drive toward matrimony, and thus the world. Therefore the renunciation of his sexual drive was necessary in order to abandon his social status.[26]

Ascetic literature saw women as representing a temptation which was almost impossible for men to resist. Androgyny not only represented pre-Fall

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[24] Brown 271.
[25] Brown 271.
[26] Brown 214-7.

human nature, but served a very practical purpose in avoiding sexual temptation. In light of the danger of sexual sin, the virgin was urged to deny her femininity.[27]

Conclusions

Though certain gender transformation statements have been used to demonstrate misogyny in the early church, situating them in the context of asceticism indicates that they are not primarily concerned with leveling or maintaining gender hierarchy. Early Christian ascetics looked backward to gaining a pre-Fall state of the heart, as well as forward to the resurrection. For them, gender was part of their animal nature which though necessary, was only temporal. Through the renunciation of sexuality and gender, they condemned neither, but attempted to participate in the glory of the angels. When Gregory of Nyssa wrote that Macrina surpassed her sex, he was assuming an understanding of sex and gender which was only too human. He believed his sister to have been freed to some extent from the constraints of this world. Gregory recognized that she was already being made a new creation. While on this earth we are still male and female; in the kingdom of heaven, we are already one in Christ.

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[27] Brown 268.

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Why Parfit's Contradiction Makes Me Think I Don't Exist

Alice Evans

Although counter-intuitive and apparently contradictory consequences may in themselves be insufficient grounds to reject a theory, realising that a theory has such consequences may prompt us to reconsider its premises and question whether they are as sound as we would have otherwise been inclined to believe. If those premises are insufficiently forceful to make us amend our intuitions, so that they accommodate the consequences of that theory, we may justifiably reject that theory altogether. This may be the case for Parfit's theory of personal identity, as revealed by an analysis of his **Division**. I shall argue that because the uniqueness condition is neither logically nor metaphysically justified, Parfit should revise his theory. But such revision entails an inescapable problem. I then provide further reasons to think doubt that Parfit's Reductionism is our concept of identity.

According to Parfit, numerical personal identity is a metaphysical fact that holds because of certain impersonal circumstances. For Parfit, "our identity over time just involves (a) Relation R – psychological connectedness and/ or psychological continuity – with the right kind of cause [which he takes to be 'any cause'[1]], provided (b) that this relation does not take a 'branching' form, holding between one person and two different people."[2] But discussion may suggest that Parfit be advised to revise his view.

Parfit's Division

Recall Parfit's example of his own body and his twin's brain being fatally injured.[3] Parfit maintains that he would survive if his brain were transplanted into his twin's body. He also maintains that he would survive upon the transplantation of just one of his cranial hemispheres, if the other hemisphere

1 Parfit, D., 1984, p. 215.

2 Ibid., p. 216.

3 Ibid., p. 254-55.

were destroyed. But what if the other hemisphere was not destroyed but instead transplanted into the body of a different identical triplet? Because both offshoots would be psychologically connected with Parfit, both offshoots would not only believe themselves to be Parfit but the requisite relation R would also hold between Parfit and both offshoots. But who are they and what has happened to Parfit?

Consider the possibilities that: (1) Parfit does not survive; (2) he survives as one of them; (3) he survives as the other; and (4) he survives as both. Or perhaps in there are not different possibilities. According to Parfit, it could only be the case that there are these different possibilities if we are separately existing entities, such as Cartesian Egos[4]. But this requires further justification; for, in general, Parfit does not think we must accept Non-Reductionism before we acknowledge that there is a real answer to whether Parfit at t_1 is identical to X at t_2, because he thinks our answers will represent different metaphysical possibilities. Indeed, as Parfit admits it is only "since [Parfit's Reductionism] recognises other cases where this is a real difference [that] it preserves and explains the truth that these [i.e. identity and non-identity] are different concepts."[5] For if it is an empty question whether two persons are or are not identical when there is strong psychological connectedness, Parfit would not have distinguished his position from Eliminitivism. So given that Parfit's "[Reductionism] does recognise cases where there is a real difference between numerical identity and exact similarity,"[6] he must provide reason why his **Division** is not such a case. Parfit's main example of an empty question is certain Spectrum cases, whereby relation R does not obviously hold and his theory does not thereby appear to commit him to a particular answer. But this same reasoning cannot be used to argue that his **Division** poses an empty question, since we can stipulate that relation R certainly does hold. Although Parfit thinks that "how we choose to describe this case has no rational or moral

4 Parfit, D., 1984., p. 258.

5 Ibid., p. 272.

6 Ibid., p. 272.

significance,"[7] given that a certain answer may be required by Parfit's theory, answering the question is important, in so far as it betters our understanding of Parfit's theory.

So recall the aforementioned possibilities. If Parfit could have survived with one hemisphere, had the other been destroyed, it seems implausible that "double success [could] be a failure."[8] Parfit thinks that (1) is only implausible on the assumption that identity is what matters. But even if identity is not what matters, it still seems rather odd that what would otherwise ensure one metaphysical possibility, namely survival, does not if there is replication. The idea that only one of the offshoots would be Parfit is likewise peculiar, for, in ech case, had the other hemisphere been destroyed, Parfit's theory would declare our protagonist to have survived, in the remaining offshoot.

There is a fourth alternative, that Parfit survives as both. Now such a possibility may "involve a great distortion our concept of a person"[9] but it does seem to be implied by the most plausible version of Parfit's theory. Because the requisite relation R holds from Parfit to the two resulting offshoots, consistency plausibly requires that Parfit admit that he would be numerically identical with both offshoots.

One might follow Parfit in objecting that "[one] cannot be identical with two different,"[10] but describing them as such, without further argument, begs the question. Neutrality demands that we label them "offshoots" and understand that each has a distinct stream of consciousness. Parfit's **Division** is thereby analogous to his **Physics Exam**, in which his mind is similarly divided into two streams of consciousness, with each separate state of awareness having different experiences[11]. When discussing his **Physics Exam**, Parfit rejects the

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7 Parfit, D., p. 265.

8 Ibid., p. 256.

9 Ibid., p. 256.

10 Ibid., p. 256; this assertion is also found in: Lewis, D., 1983, pp. 61-63; Noonan, H., 1989, p.166; Sider, T., 1996, p.434.

11 Ibid., 1984, p. 250.

view that a person is the subject of one set of experiences and affirms that "a person could have a divided mind,"[12] with several co-conscious experiences.[13] Parfit thinks that "we can come to believe that a person's mental history need not be like a canal, with only one channel, but could be more like a river, occasionally having separate streams."[14] These comments are consistent with (4). Given that both streams are psychologically continuous with the original Parfitian stream, they are both, on the most plausible version of Parfit's theory, numerically identical to Parfit. That the two streams are housed in the same or different bodies is not plausibly relevant, yet this is the only difference between Parfit's **Physics Exam** and his **Division**.

The Uniqueness Condition

Parfit's reason for thinking that his **Division** offshoots are two different people, neither identical with himself, is that the structure of personal identity "logically" requires that relation R holds uniquely[15]. However, this is not required: identity would not have this logical structure if particular persons were thought of as types. The numerical identical of types is not such that there can only be one of it. Suppose that one horse and two foals are snuggling in a stable. How many types of animal are there? Because the numerical identity of 'horse' plausibly takes a type form, we think that there is one type of animal in the stable, multiply realised in three bodies. If each person were likewise a type (namely their own), personal identity would have a logical structure that allows for two people to be numerically identical without being qualitatively identical. Because there is a view of persons that allows for persons to be multiply realised in different humans, it cannot be claimed that the non-branching condition is forced upon us by the logical structure of identity.

12 Parfit, D., 1984, p. 256.

13 Ibid., p. 250.

14 Ibid., p. 247.

15 Ibid., p. 267.

Since the non-branching condition is not logically required, Parfit must appeal to metaphysical reasons. If it is assumed, as it is by Parfit, that two consciousnesses can be numerically identical when they occupy different temporal locations then the plausibility of the uniqueness condition requires that spatial location is relevantly disanalogous to temporal location. But nowhere does Parfit argue for the requisite disanology between spatial and temporal location and sensibly so, for this view is neither plausible nor consistent with Parfit's arguments on other occasions. For example when Parfit discusses what matters he maintains that "the only difference in the case of division is that the extra years are run concurrently… Double survival is not the same as ordinary survival. But this does not make it death."[16] Indeed, it is because Parfit denies this disanology that he is able to affirm that he is identical with both streams of consciousness in his aforementioned **Physics Exam**. To insist on the uniqueness condition when the streams occupy different bodies seems unjustifiably inconsistent.

Uniqueness does not seem to be metaphysically relevant, as affirmed by Parfit in his discussion of the **Branch Line Case**; for apparently "it makes little [metaphysical] difference that [his] life briefly overlaps with that of [his] Replica."[17] Notably, Parfit does suggest that if that the overlap were more extensive then said identity relations would be questionable. But this is implausible. If the two offshoots are numerically identical in the Branch **Line Case** for ten minutes, adding another two hours, or a week, or a month, cannot plausibly affect their respective metaphysical properties. So, just as Parfit explicitly rejects that "the presence or absence of [a relation holding uniquely] make[s] a great difference to the value of relation R,"[18] I deny that uniqueness affects the offshoots' metaphysical properties.

A reason for denying the metaphysical relevance of uniqueness lies in the intuitive claim that identity cannot be extrinsically determined. Now, on

16 Parfit, D., 1984, p. 262.

17 Ibid., p. 289.

18 Ibid., p. 263.

Parfit's account, his synchronic identity is determined by his psychology, an intrinsic property. Because the duplication of one person's synchronic identity conceptually generates diachronic identity, it seems plausible to infer that the identity relations between Parfit and his offshoot Y are determined by their intrinsic properties, namely in virtue of their sharing the requisite essence. Factors extrinsic to this relationship, such as the existence of offshoot Z, do not seem relevant to the issue at hand, namely the adjudication of whether Y shares Parfit's essence. The uniqueness clause seems to be over and above what is required, which seems inconsistent with Parfitian Reductionism, which purports to be able to inform you of the identities of two persons from physical and psychological facts about them. Of course, extrinsic factors can be relevant, in some situations, such as when we try to determine whether A or B is most ***qualitatively similar*** to Parfit, by some particular axiom; such as when the Warden of All Souls College seeks Parfit's replacement. Because only one person could be ***most*** qualitatively similar, factors extrinsic to each candidate are relevant, for this question of maximum qualitative similarity calls for ***relative*** assessment. But because many consciousnesses could be numerically identical to Parfit, such as over the course of time, extrinsic factors are thereby irrelevant to questions of numerical identity.

Counter-Intuitive Consequences?

Of course the stipulation that numerical identity only holds where there is no branching enables Parfit to avoid the counter-intuitive consequence that a pre-division person is identical to both offshoots. And perhaps this consequence is reason to grant that uniqueness makes a metaphysical difference and thereby deny that numerical identity obtains in branching cases. Parfit certainly seems to appeal to this reason when he denies that he is identical to both offshoots. He apparently has difficulty in contemplating the idea that two offshoots might fight in a duel, for, in the event of death, it would apparently be unclear whether

there had been a murder or a suicide, or both[19]. But Parfit is too hasty; the consequences of both duelers being numerically identical are not so totally outrageous to justify the ad hoc addition of the uniqueness condition. In fact, such an occurrence is consistent with Parfit's described **Physics Exam**. If, during Parfit **Physics Exam** one of his streams of consciousness realised that it was totally under-prepared, promptly became suicidal and killed the body it resided in, there would be a death. It may be unclear how exactly we should describe this event, for it could be plausibly described as both a suicide and a murder, but it is some form of death all the same (and similarly so for the two offshoots, in Parfit's **Division**). It thus seems that Parfit's uniqueness clause is ungrounded; it is neither logically required nor has metaphysical relevance, but is simply an ad hoc addition to avoid counter-intuitiveness. It thus seems that Parfit should abandon his uniqueness clause, revise his account of identity (to be relabeled 'Parfitianism$_2$') and accept (4).

Counter-Intuitive and Contradictory Consequences

The above discussion suggests that the most plausible Parfitian position is that Parfit survives as both offshoots (Y and Z). Thus far this consequence is not that implausible but it becomes increasingly problematic when we consider the offshoots' futures. Suppose that Y becomes a troll and Z becomes a pixie, by some sufficiently gradual process to ensure diachronic identity. Now because there is psychological continuity, the troll is numerically identical with Y and the pixie is numerically identical with Z. But if the troll is numerically identical to Y, who is numerically identical to Z, who is numerically identical to the pixie, there is a problem. The pixie and the troll are neither psychologically connected nor continuous with each other. So, lacking relation R, they cannot be Parfit-ly numerically identical. However, each offshoot is R-related to Parfit and therefore identical to Parfit. Since the pixie is identical to Parfit and Parfit is identical to the troll, the pixie must be identical to the troll. But we have just

19 Parfit, D., 1984, p. 257.

denied that this identity relation is possible, since identity requires relation R. Thus due to the transitivity of identity, Parfitianism$_2$ commits adherents to upholding this contradiction; that the troll and the pixie are and are not numerically identical

Possible Solutions

One might attempt to solve this contradiction by denying that the relation of identity is transitive, but this is not plausible; if Parfit is numerically identical to Y who is numerically identical to the troll, there appears to be no way of denying that Parfit is numerically identical to the troll. Another response would be to deny that psychological ***continuity*** suffices for identity, which could then yield the conclusion that Parfit is only identical to Y, because of connectedness, but not the troll. But given that identity relations are, most plausibly, transitive, such an admission would require the denial that psychological connectedness makes for numerical identity, for if each link in the chain, between Parfit and the troll, is psychologically connected, all are thereby identical. Since Parfit upholds a single occupancy psychological theory of identity, it would then seem difficult for him to deny that psychological ***continuity*** suffices for identity.

Parfitians could avoid the contradictory consequences by endorsing Lewis's theory that two persons co-exist in the pre-division body, becoming spatially distinct upon division[20]. Lewis defines a continuant person as "a ***maximal*** R-interrelated aggregate of person-stages,"[21] "each of which is R-related to all the rest (and to itself), and it is a proper part of no other such aggregate." [22] On this basis, Lewis avoids the conclusion, of Parfitianism$_2$, that any R-related person stages are I-related [meaning, stages of the same person]. The explicit purpose of Lewis's account is to reconcile the common sense view, that being I-related is what matters in survival, with Parfit's revisionist view,

[20] Lewis, D., 1983, p. 63.
[21] Lewis, D., 1983, p. 60.
[22] Ibid., p. 60.

that being R-related is what matters in survival. But this attempted reconciliation has since been discredited by Parfit, who shows that these two views about what matters are incompatible in fission cases; for a post-fission offshoot may be R-related (and thereby has what matters) to a pre-fission person without being I-related to that pre-fission person.[23] Given that Lewis's theory does not achieve its aim and has many more counter-intuitive implications, Parfitians are unlikely to think it offers an attractive alternative. As such, it appears that Parfitians are inescapably held to a theory that allows for the contradicting troll-pixie situation.

Questioning Parfitian Premises

One might now call into question the Parfitian premises that generate the contradiction. By providing a set of conditions that are largely extensionally equivalent with our common ideas about identity, Parfit's account is relatively plausible. But there are three problems with his argument. Firstly, Parfit's account implies the aforementioned contradiction, which gives reason to doubt ***his*** account of 'identity'.

Secondly, for there to be people, an account of identity must be both conceptually adequate, i.e. it must talk about what we mean by identity and not something irrelevant, like apples, and it must be substantively true, there must be members of the set it describes. Herein lies another problem with Parfit's concept of identity; it fails to approximate our own. If Parfitian persons are not what we mean to refer to when we talk of persons then Parfit's theory fails for being irrelevant. Consider the following analogy, if someone argued that there were no moral facts, we could not legitimately dismiss this claim merely because it is counter-intuitive. However, if someone argued that there were moral facts and that these were apples, we could reject their account as

23 Parfit, D., "Lewis, Perry, and What Matters" in Rorty, A. (ed.), ***The Identities of Persons***., University of California Press: Berkeley, 1976, p. 94.

irrelevant. My contention is that Parfit's concept of identity likewise misses the mark.

A plausible test for whether a theory of identity is conceptually adequate is whether its answer to what matters in survival matches our own answer. Parfit thinks that what matters in survival is that future persons are R-related to us, that they are psychologically connected and or psychologically continuous with us.[24] But Parfit's view is not convincing. Suppose that you are invited to participate in an experiment, in which you will be cloned and one resembling person will die shortly there after. If Parfit is right, that both have what matters to you in survival, then if one dies it should not matter, for the other will survive and he will have what matters for you. But I simply cannot believe that anyone would volunteer for this experiment without the assurance that it would be them who survives. This suggests that identity matters, not relation R.

Parfit objects that there is no good evidence for Non-Reductionism[25] but this is to confuse substantive and conceptual issues. That there are no members for there being any members of the set described by Non-Reductionism suggests that Non-Reductionism is not substantively true (which I grant) but it does not show that Non-Reductionism is not ***conceptually*** true, that this is not what we mean by identity.

Parfit could reply that although Non-Reductionism may be the correct conceptual claim, because Non-Reductionism is not substantively true we must modify our concept so that it matches what actually obtains. The question then is whether Parfit's view is tolerably revisionist. Parfit may be right that knowing that my clone endures is better than knowing that both of us will die, for at least the survival of my clone allows for the completion of my non-personal projects, such as for global veganism. But the survival of my clone is definitely not as good as my not dying. Finding out that I will die but some clone will survive may be better than nothing but it is definitely not as reassuring as finding out

24 Parfit, D., 1984. p. 217.

25 Ibid. p.275.

that I will not die at all. Clearly identity is what matters. Thus Parfit's Reductionism is not conceptually adequate.

Parfit fails to consider that our concept is Non-Reductionist but since there are no such entities, there are no persons. Parfit's failure to consider intension makes him liable to the following error: suppose, for example, that the intension of concept X is "red" and we think that concept has the extension of circles. But further suppose that red does not actually exist. In trying to give an account of X we might successfully give an account which picks out circles, and is thus extensionally equivalent to X. However, it is more accurate to deny that red exists. Although Parfit's Reductionism may provide an account with an extension that is somewhat similar to what we believe the extension of identity to be, this does not show that Parfit's Reductionism is our concept of identity.

I have shown that Parfit should revise his account of personal identity and abandon his uniqueness condition, because it is neither logically required nor metaphysically justified, given his other views. But on this revised account, certain circumstances give rise to a contradiction, in that two streams of consciousness are and are not numerically identical. In my example, the troll and the pixie are each R-related to Parfit and therefore identical to Parfit. Since the pixie is identical to Parfit and Parfit is identical to the troll, the pixie must be identical to the troll. Yet the troll and the pixie are neither psychologically connected nor continuous with each other and lacking relation R they cannot be Parfit-ly numerically identical. I suggest that those who uphold Parfit's revised account, having abandoned the uniqueness condition, are bound to uphold this contradiction; that the troll and the pixie are and are not numerically identical. Parfit cannot dismiss this particular case as representing an empty question for he would otherwise not have distinguished his own position from Eliminitivism. Since the alternative, Lewis's cohabitation theory is unable to achieve its own aims, Parfitian identity is in dire straits. Parfit's account is also conceptually unsatisfactory, for it cannot yield the right answer to what matters. Hence Parfit's account is conceptually unsatisfactory, with implausible consequences.

Why Parfit's Contradiction Makes Me Think I Don't Exist

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