

It's For Your Own Good: Natural Law and the Good Life

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Declaration:

I confirm that this is my own work and that the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to create a distinctively Aristotelian-Thomistic ethical schema. I shall do this in four stages. First, in chapter one, I am going to present a summary of Aristotelian metaphysics. I will present a slightly Thomistic take on Aristotelian metaphysics specifically when it comes to the distinction between accidental and substantial form. However, I will present a more classically Aristotelian account when it comes to the source of teleology. Along the way I will explore whether science can disprove any aspects of Aristotelian metaphysics. In particular, I will examine whether science can show that there are no final causes, and whether evolution poses problems for the Aristotelian concept of form and essence in biology. Second, in chapter two, I shall explain the nature of goodness within this metaphysical schema. I will also engage with competing accounts of the nature of goodness and will argue that my Aristotelian account is superior. Third, in chapter three, I will list and defend my account of the basic goods. I will also explain why certain things, such as pleasure and freedom, are not included in my list of the basic goods. I will then explain how and why they do fit into my schema. Finally, in chapter four, I will move onto duties. I will show how we can derive a list of pro tanto duties from the Aristotelian ethical schema. Along the way I will also briefly sketch out an account of human rights. My ethical theory will differ from many contemporary neo-Aristotelians in that it will place emphasis on, and smoothly follow from, Aristotelian metaphysics. At the same time, my ethical theory will differ from more traditional neo-Aristotelians and the medieval neo-Aristotelians in the way that it reconciles an Aristotelian ethical schema with a non-natural account of goodness and a reasons-based account of obligation.

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Chapter 1: Aristotelian Metaphysics and Modern Science

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to sketch out the metaphysical theory with which I shall be working. I shall be relying on a basic Aristotelian metaphysical schema, in particular on the concept of form and ends (or final causes). To fully articulate and adequately defend an Aristotelian metaphysical theory is a thesis in and of itself and goes beyond the scope of what I want to accomplish here. As such, in this chapter I will not defend the full Aristotelian metaphysical schema from the full variety of criticisms that are available in contemporary metaphysics. Instead I will simply sketch out a very simplified version of Aristotle's metaphysical schema and will respond to objections which stem from modern science, in particular, whether science can show that there are no final causes and whether evolution has shown that there are no such things as essences. I do this simply to show that Aristotelian metaphysical schemas remain plausible candidates in the 21st century and I do not claim to have adequately demonstrated their superiority or correctness when compared to other contemporary metaphysical schemas.

I shall focus primarily on Aristotle's concept of form and ends because my ethical theory relies very heavily on these two concepts. Along the way I will briefly sketch out the concept of material causes and efficient causes and the distinction between act and potency for the sake of completeness and because they will be referred to from time to time. However, it should be noted that precisely how we should conceptualize material and efficient causes is not important for this thesis.

2. Act and Potency

The everyday objects that we are familiar with, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, are combinations of actualities and potencies (sometimes also called potentialities). The actualities of an object are the various ways, states and properties that it is or has currently. The potencies of an object are the various ways, states and properties that an object could be and have but is not, and does not have, currently. As an example, a red rubber ball is actually

round, but it is potentially flat and squishy (if melted). The distinction between act and potency is also necessary when trying to understand how an object can undergo change. This is because change is the actualization of a potency. The distinction between act and potency is crucial when trying to understand the Aristotelian metaphysical schema.

Things can be differentiated by their actualities and their potencies. Two red rubber balls are both actually red and rubber, but one may be actually rolling and potentially on a shelf whilst the other may be potentially rolling and actually on a shelf. Act is prior or more fundamental than potency. There are a number of reasons for this. Two of which are, first, that any potency is defined in relation to act. A rubber ball's potency for melting just is a potency for being actual in those ways (for actually being melted). The second is that a thing's potencies are grounded in its actualities. A ball has the potency to roll down a hill because it is actually round.

There are a number of different types of potency. The most important distinction to make is between pure or logical possibility and real potency. Imaginary creatures such as a gryphon or a dragon would be examples of the logically possible because there are no such things but there is no contradiction in the notion and thus they could potentially exist. Real potencies are grounded in the natures of real things such as a ball's potential to melt or roll. It is real potencies that we shall be interested in from now on.

With regard to real potencies there is a further distinction to be made between an active potency which is the ability to bring about an effect and a passive potency which is the ability to be affected. An active potency is a power and is strictly speaking a kind of actuality. It is a kind of actuality relative to the substance possessing it, although it is a potency relative to the action it grounds. A passive potency is a potency in the strict sense and usually what is meant by potency is passive potency.

3. The Four Causes

Aristotelians distinguish between four causes: efficient, final, formal and material. I shall discuss each of these in turn.

An efficient cause is that which changes something or brings something into being. It is sometimes called an “agent” or “agent cause”. An efficient cause is what is usually meant by “cause” in modern philosophy.

A final cause is a goal or ‘end’ for which something exists. It is sometimes called “teleological causation” in modern philosophy. A number of distinctions need to be made in order to understand final causality. The first is between intrinsic and extrinsic finality. If a function or end is imposed on something from an external source (such as a clock) then it is an example of extrinsic finality. If the finality is part of the nature of the thing itself then it is intrinsic finality, for example an acorn will grow into an oak because that is part of what it means to be an acorn.

A further distinction needs to be drawn between a goal or end and a thing’s directedness toward that end or goal. An end is itself always extrinsic to a thing. Actually being an oak is different from an acorn’s having a tendency to become an oak. However, directedness toward an end is sometimes intrinsic and sometimes extrinsic.

According to Aristotelian teleology there is directedness towards ends in natural objects and it is the nature of these objects that is the source of the directedness. A pine cone is directed toward growing into a pine tree because that is part of what it is to be a pine cone, not because any external (or divine) intelligence directs it.

Whether finality exists in the natural world should also be separated from the question of whether or not irreducible teleology exists in biology. Within the Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical schema the difference between living and non-living things lies in the distinction between transient and immanent causation. Transient causation is directed entirely outwardly from the cause to an external effect such as a rock bouncing off another rock. Immanent causation begins and stays within the agent (although it may have some external effects) and is normally for the agent’s own sake. Oderberg explains that immanent causation “is causation that originates with an agent and terminates in that agent for the sake of its self-perfection. It is a kind of teleology, but metaphysically distinctive in what it involves. Immanent causation is not just action for a purpose, but for the agent’s own purpose, where “own purpose” means not merely that the agent acts for a purpose it possesses, but that it acts for a purpose it possesses such that fulfillment of the purpose contributes to the agent’s self-perfection. Hence, in immanent causation, the agent is both the cause and the effect of the

action, and the cause itself is directed at the effect as perfective of the agent” (Oderberg, 2013, p. 213). Living things can act as transient causes and immanent causes because they can undertake activity that is perfective of them and that fulfils them. Standard examples of immanent causation are things like digesting a meal or repairing damage. Non-living things, on the other hand, cannot do this.

As such living things aim at a unique kind of end. It is only through having this specific sort of end (one that fulfils it), and not having an end or goal as such, that makes something a living thing. As such finality is not necessarily restricted to just the biological realm. There is also finality in inorganic systems insofar as they are cyclical or tend toward certain end-states.

We can also distinguish between a thing’s ultimate ends and its (what I shall call) contingent ends. A thing’s ultimate ends are what it does broadly and generally in a variety of different circumstances. On the other hand a thing’s contingent ends will be what it does as part of a more general (or ultimate) end and under a number of very specific circumstances. I will expand on this in greater detail later on and will give a number of examples involving human beings to make the distinction clearer. As such, for now at least, this admittedly overly simplistic discussion will suffice.

Under normal circumstances and with regard to the everyday objects with which we are familiar their final causes (or ends) will dictate the sorts of things of which they can be an efficient cause. If A is the efficient cause of B then causing B must be one of (or part of one of) A’s final causes. A match can be (one of) the efficient causes of a flame because matches are directed towards producing flames. As such, the concepts of final causes and efficient causes are closely linked.

Arguably one of the best known criticisms of final causation is represented by Molière’s joke about a doctor who when asked why opium causes sleep responded by saying that it was because it has a “dormitive power”. The joke is supposed to be funny because “dormitive power” means nothing more than “a power to cause sleep” so the doctor’s explanation reveals nothing new and thus is uninformative. This is supposed to be a criticism of final causation (powers) because it supposedly shows that explanations which appeal to a thing’s final causes (powers) are vacuous and uninformative.

However, this criticism is mistaken and an appeal to a thing's powers does contain at least some substantial content. Saying that "opium causes sleep because opium causes sleep" would be uninformative, indeed a mere tautology. However, saying that opium has the power to cause sleep tells us that the fact that a particular individual fell asleep after taking a particular sample of opium was not an accidental feature of that particular sample of opium and/or that individual, but instead that the power to cause sleep belongs to the nature of opium as a whole and, all other things being equal, we should expect sleep (or at least an increased chance of sleep) to occur after an individual takes opium.

Now it is true that an appeal to opium's final causes or powers does not give us the same amount of detail that an empirical chemical account of opium's nature would, but this does not mean that it is entirely uninformative. Instead, as Feser explains, the point of an explanation which appeals to opium's powers is "to state a basic metaphysical truth that underlies the empirical details about opium's chemical structure, whatever they turn out to be" (Feser, 2009, p. 38). As such, an explanation which appeals to a thing's final causes (powers) does contain some substantial content and does reveal some information. Thus, Molière's joke fails as a criticism of Aristotelian metaphysics.

Efficient causality and final causality go hand in hand and are implied by the theory of act and potency. Efficient causation is simply the actualization of a potency. Further a potency is always a potency for some specific outcome and thus it entails finality.

3.1. Science and Final Causes

As Feser points out many modern readers will think that "the principle of finality, on which ... virtually the whole of his [Aristotle's] metaphysics depends, might be thought to have been decisively refuted by modern science, which more or less officially banished the appeal to final causes from scientific method several centuries ago" (Feser, 2009, p. 36). As an example, Murphy writes that "modern science dispenses with final causes, holding that the only true causes are efficient causes; and, assuming this view to be correct, Aristotelian teleology is false" (Murphy, 2001, p. 32). However, when one correctly understands final causation it will become apparent that science is not able to do this. Further, it could even be argued that the success of science depends upon there being final causes. I will examine two

key arguments against final causation that come from modern conceptions of science and will show that neither are successful.

First, many people mistakenly think that the findings of modern science, which have successfully refuted various Aristotelian scientific views, have therefore refuted Aristotelian metaphysics. However, as Feser points out this is a non-sequitur, “Aristotelian physics is one thing, and Aristotelian metaphysics another, and they do not stand or fall together” (Feser, 2009, pp. 38-39). The fact that we now know that the earth is not the centre of the universe does nothing to show that the existence of, and distinction between, act and potency, and efficient and final causes is false.

Second, it is correct that the founders of modern science such as Galileo and Newton did disagree with Aristotelians about metaphysics as well as physics. They disagreed about what metaphysical assumptions should guide our empirical scientific inquiries. They suggested that final causes should be ignored in favour of non-teleological mechanical explanations and that a mathematical description of the universe was preferable to appeals to unquantifiable notions such as essence and substantial form. This new conception of science did have a large amount of success and led to many great scientific discoveries. However, none of this actually shows that Aristotelian metaphysics is false. This is because the two conceptions are interested in answering different questions and thus the ‘moderns’ defeated the Aristotelians at a game they were not playing. The Aristotelian schema is interested in getting at the deep ontological structure of reality whereas the mechanistic-cum-mathematical schema is more interested in accurately describing and predicting how material objects will behave using the language of mathematics usually, although not always, with the goal of making technological progress and increasing human abilities. The fact that the moderns did not reference or ‘find’ any final causes is not surprising given that they were not looking for them in the first place. Feser writes “if you insist on looking only for those features of nature that can be described in the language of mathematics, then of course that is all you are going to find; and if you refuse to look for or even to acknowledge the existence of final causes, then it is hardly surprising if you do not discover any” (Feser, 2009, p. 41). As such, the mechanistic denial of final causes did not follow from the science but instead was read into the science. Further, there is no reason to suppose that just because a mathematical description of the universe is possible that the Aristotelian metaphysical schema is therefore

false. A mathematical description of the universe is perfectly compatible with the Aristotelian metaphysical schema.

The Aristotelian can then push back and can argue that, not only is finality compatible with the mechanistic-cum-mathematical conception of science, but that the mechanistic-cum-mathematical conception of science in fact relies upon finality. This is because it can be argued that finality is necessary in order for causal regularity in nature to exist which is essential to the mathematical-cum-mechanistic conception of the universe. As we saw earlier, for Aristotle, we cannot make sense of efficient causation, which is close to modern conceptions of causation, without referencing final causation. This is because without final causation it is difficult to account for a necessary connection between causes and effects. Without this necessary connection various Humean puzzles about cause and effect, and various puzzles about induction arise. After all if we have a cause which is not directed at anything specific for all we know it could produce a completely random and unpredictable result. As such, perhaps it is possible that striking a match might create an elephant! However, if we suppose that striking a match is directed at causing a flame then the fact that a struck match regularly results in a flame is not in any way mysterious or surprising. Science assumes that the world behaves in a regular way and that if you recreate an experiment under the same conditions the same results will obtain. Final causes can explain this.

The necessity of final causes is most clearly seen in the biological realm. A complete description of any organ is most likely, and perhaps necessarily, going to involve a description of its function. As an example, the heart is there to pump blood around the body and the eye is there to allow its possessor to see. Any detailed description of the biological realm that uses no teleological language whatsoever seems to me to be doomed, at best, to being strained, forced and artificial and, at worst, entirely inadequate. This suggests we should accept the idea of teleology (final causes).

3.2. Hylemorphism

We have now explored two of the four causes; final and efficient causes. As such we shall now examine the concepts of formal and material causes. Hylemorphism is the theory that material objects are combinations of matter and form.

Matter is simply the underlying ‘stuff’ that makes up material objects. This matter is then able to take on different forms as it is transformed from one object into another. The material cause of a rubber ball would be the rubber out of which it is made. Another example would involve a clay bowl. The clay is the material cause of the clay bowl. The clay (provided it had not been heated) could then be reformed into a statue and so on. As such, matter can take on more than one form.¹

The form of a thing is a determining principle whereby a thing is of some kind or other. Within form we can distinguish between a thing’s substantial form and its accidental form. A thing’s substantial form makes it what it is, for example, a human being, an elephant, or a honey bee. A thing’s accidental form (consisting of its accidents) modifies an already existing thing, for example, a thing’s precise location, temperature or colour are all standard examples of accidents. Precisely how to understand the concepts of substantial form and accidental form and the relationship between them is a complex and disputed topic within Aristotelian metaphysics and I won’t go into it any further for that reason. For our purposes here, however, all we need to accept is that the everyday objects with which we are familiar are something in particular and thus in some sense they will have a substantial form which makes them what they are. They will then have certain properties and relations which are incidental to this substantial form which do not define the sort of thing they are such as their location (and thus they will have an accidental form).²

The distinction between substantial form and accidental form means that there is a distinction between two kinds of change. An accidental change involves a substance losing or gaining an accidental form. However the substance itself persists throughout the change. A substantial change will involve the loss of a substantial form and a new one taking its place. What takes on these forms, as we have seen, is matter.

¹ This discussion of matter is very brief and I have not introduced the concept of prime matter and secondary matter which is a very important part of Aristotelian metaphysics more broadly. For a more lengthy discussion see Feser’s *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (2014). For our purposes here, however, all we need to establish is that everyday material objects are made up of matter and I take it that this is uncontroversial.

² Once again for a more detailed discussion of substantial form and accidental form see Feser’s *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (2014) upon which this summary is partly based.

As with final and efficient causes the concept of formal causes follows from the distinction between act and potency. This is because when a material object comes into existence its form is what has been actualized in the matter.

A thing's substantial form and ends will be closely linked. What a thing is will dictate what it should and should not do e.g. an oak tree will grow roots and produce acorns because that is part of what it is to be an oak tree. Conversely, we can infer what a thing is from what it does e.g. a creature that produces honey and which lives in a hive is certainly honey-beelike if not a fully-fledged honey bee (you'd need to investigate the creature more closely to work out which). As such, a thing's form and ends are closely linked. Once again more could be said and the precise relationship between a thing's form and its ends is a disputed and complicated topic with Aristotelian metaphysics. However, for our purposes all we need to accept is that what a thing is (its substantial form) will have an effect on the way it characteristically behaves (its ends).

4. Essence

The essence of material substances (things) includes both their form and their matter.³ Any member of a given natural kind will share some single, explanatorily basic intrinsic power which explains the characteristic features of members of that kind. This basically means that any member of a given natural kind (for example, the kind 'human' or the kind 'tree') will share something in common i.e. their essence or nature. Walsh explains "In Aristotle's essentialist biology the nature of an organism is manifested as a goal-directed disposition to produce and maintain a living thing capable of fulfilling its vital function in ways characteristic of its kind" (Walsh, 2006, p. 427). This means that a thing's essence determines the kind of thing that it is and the way that it will behave, and if two things share an essence then they will behave in a similar way. It is important to note that according to Aristotle essences are real and mind-independent.

Essentialism is a doctrine about the natures or capacities of individuals. Aristotle explains that, "The nature of a thing, then, is a certain principle and cause of change and

³ If there are such things as immaterial substances then their form and their essence would be identical because an immaterial substance, by definition, is not made up of matter.

stability in the thing, and it is *directly* present in it” (Aristotle, 2008, II.1.2). The capacities of an individual determine the sort of thing they are and the sort of causal relationships that they will typically enter into. As such, the essence of a thing makes it what it is. Given that the only difference between a material object’s essence and form is that their essence is their form instantiated in matter I shall largely use the two terms interchangeably.

Essences can be common to many particulars. All honey bees have the same essence because they are all the same sort of thing. It is important to note that for Aristotle essences do not exist in a Platonic realm, but instead exist either immanently in a particular thing or abstractedly by an intellect. As such, this is a form of moderate realism and should not be confused with a Platonic conception of form. When a shared essence is abstracted by an intellect then it can be called a universal.

There are a number of arguments for the idea that natural objects have real essences. One argument for the idea that natural objects have real essences is to observe that the world has the features that we would expect if there were such a thing as essences. If two things share an essence then they will be the same sort of thing and will have the same sorts of properties and this is precisely what we see in the real world. As an example, wolves are all united to each other in a way that they are not united to lizards or rocks. Wolves are warm-blooded whereas lizards are not. Wolves (and lizards) are alive but rocks are not. As such, all wolves seem to be the same sort of creature. All lizards seem to be the same sort of creature and although they are similar to wolves in some regards they are very different in other ways and so on. As such, these things manifest common properties and causal powers which is what we would expect if they shared a common real essence.

A further reason to think that essence is real is due to the metaphysical arguments and considerations considered earlier. If things really do have substantial form, irreducible causal powers, final causes and so on then it is hard to deny that they have an essence. What would it mean to think that a thing has ends, substantial form, irreducible causal powers etc. but to deny that there is a mind-independent fact about what kind of thing it is? This brings my summary of Aristotelian metaphysics to a conclusion. Let us now turn our attention to various questions about the implications of modern science for Aristotelian metaphysics.

4.1. Evolution and Essence

Often it is thought that the theory of evolution might in some way pose problems for the idea that humans share an essence. For example, Rosalind Hursthouse writes “I accept that, although Aristotle was not the essentialist that Plato was, he certainly did believe some things about species essences which evolutionary biology undercuts” (Hursthouse, 2012, p. 170). Quite why she thinks that evolutionary biology undermines Aristotelian essentialism is unclear and she does not expand in great detail. Denis Walsh also highlights that in modern philosophy of biology the concept of essence has fallen out of fashion “There is a consensus that essentialism has no part to play in biology” (Walsh, 2006, p. 425). Walsh suggests that the reason for this is due to the (false) idea that the essences of organisms no longer play any explanatory role in modern theories of Neo-Darwinian evolution. Straight away it should be noted that the simple fact that essences do not play a role in an evolutionary explanation does not show that there are no such thing as essences. However, perhaps we should be cautious about inserting concepts into a theory that are explanatorily otiose. Walsh, however, thinks that the consensus that the essences of organisms play no role in evolution is actually false. He believes that, not only does evolution in no way preclude the possibility of essence, but that modern developments in developmental and evolutionary biology support the idea that organisms have an essence. This would in turn support Aristotelian metaphysical schemas (at least where their concept of essence is concerned). In this section, using Walsh’s paper, I will explore Aristotelian essentialism in more detail. I will explain how modern arguments against Aristotelian essentialism that stem from evolutionary biology fail and finally I will explain how current developments in developmental and evolutionary biology lend support to the idea that organisms have an essence.

4.2. Aristotelian Biological Kinds

Aristotle’s essentialist biology is often, and incorrectly, seen as primarily a taxonomic project, the objective of which is to produce a classification of organisms similar to the modern Linnaean hierarchy of taxa. With this in mind, many have read Aristotle’s central classificatory concepts of ‘genos’ and ‘eidos’ as the modern genus and species concepts. Eidos is also commonly translated as ‘form’ and this has meant that the concepts of form and species have been assimilated under that of eidos. When this is combined with the prevailing

thought that form constitutes the essence of an organism this has led to the opinion that according to Aristotle an organism's essence is entirely determined by the Linnaean species in which it belongs. This basically means that there are a collection of species, say that of wolves, trees and so on, and each organism's essence is wholly determined by the Linnaean species to which it belongs. Further, this means that if an organism's essence is determined by its belonging to a specific species, and its essence wholly determines its features then this would imply that, according to Aristotle's biological essentialism, an organism's features are wholly specified by its membership of a particular species. This basically means that because this animal is a wolf, for example, it will therefore have four legs and sharp teeth. Walsh explains that "Generation of commentators have thus imputed to Aristotle a form of 'typological essentialism' ... according to which there is a single canonical set of unchanging properties that defines a particular species and these properties constitute the essence of its members" (Walsh, 2006, p. 429).

However, this interpretation of Aristotle is incorrect. Instead Aristotle's project is in part 'classificatory' but it is not 'taxonomic'. Walsh explains "genos and eidos don't correspond to any fixed level on a hierarchical taxonomy; they don't demarcate essentialist kinds. Instead they are used by Aristotle to illustrate and explain the various degrees of similarity and difference between organisms. Genos groups organisms together according to some shared general features ... Groups united by a shared genos can be further differentiated into more specific groups, each according to a shared eidos" (Walsh, 2006, p. 429). This means that, instead of two animals sharing features because they are members of the same species or group, instead two animals are members of the same species or group because they share certain features. As such, it is the other way around to the 'typological essentialism' of which Aristotle is often accused.

Genos and eidos are thus deployed by Aristotle more as explanatory concepts than taxonomic concepts. They are used to explain recurrence and resemblance between organisms. Aristotelian essentialism should then be seen as an explanatory doctrine, not a taxonomic one. An organism's essence plays a teleological role in explaining why it has the traits that it does and why it resembles other organisms in the ways it does. Walsh explains that "Organismal natures play a teleologically basic role in explaining why organisms have the traits they have and why they resemble one another in the ways they do. Natures do not play a role in demarcating natural kinds united by the common possession of structurally

identical features ... This conception of essentialism diverges significantly from the doctrine that forms the target of modern anti-essentialist arguments” (Walsh, 2006, p. 430).

4.3. Evolutionary Anti-Essentialism

Now that we have clarified Aristotelian essentialism let’s turn to the anti-essentialist arguments from evolution.⁴ They can be divided into two sorts. The first is taxonomic anti-essentialism and the second is explanatory anti-essentialism. As we shall see taxonomic anti-essentialism poses no problems for Aristotelian essentialism, because it is not primarily taxonomic. However, explanatory anti-essentialism is a more serious problem for Aristotelian essentialism and so a more detailed response will be needed.

4.3.1. Taxonomic Anti-Essentialism

There are two main sorts of taxonomic anti-essentialist arguments. The first argues that there is an incompatibility between modern systematic and evolutionary biology and the essentialist conception of kinds. One of these says that the classification of organisms into essentialist kinds is incompatible with evolution. This is because species change over time and begin to exist and cease to exist. They are not fixed but instead are fluid. According to these critics, essentialist kinds, on the other hand, are fixed and unchanging. However, this misunderstands Aristotelian essentialism. The target here is typological essentialism (which is much closer to a form of Platonic essentialism). Aristotelian essentialism, however, does not see a species’ essence as transcendent or fixed. Instead they are goal-directed capacities instantiated in each organism. As such there is no reason, under Aristotle’s scheme, to think that natures couldn’t change over time. Walsh points out that under the Aristotelian scheme “Individual organisms may well vary in their formal and material natures, in such a way that over time some variants become more common than others” (Walsh, 2006, p. 431). As such, although this line of criticism might work against a more Platonic conception of species’

⁴ I suppose that one could also respond to arguments against Aristotelian essentialism that stem from evolution by arguing against evolution itself. However, this response would raise a number of other questions and objections and it would go against the vast majority of modern scientific opinion. As such, it seems to me a much stronger response is to accept evolution and show how it is compatible with Aristotelian essentialism.

essences in which there is an archetypal wolf, for example, in which all wolves partake, it fails to work against an Aristotelian conception. This is because under the typological essentialist scheme the essence of a wolf is a single set thing which exists eternally. However, according to evolution wolves slowly came into existence from earlier species and may well change into another species that does not currently exist. As a result, the two do not mesh together at all. However, Aristotelian essentialism is not committed to the claim that there is a transcendent, eternal and unchanging form of anything. Feser explains, with regard to the essence of humans, “To say that humanity is that which makes all of us human beings implies that this essence is something shared by all human beings, that we all have the same essence; and in general, the essence of a thing is something it shares with others in the same kind. In this sense humanity constitutes a natural kind or species, namely the one traditionally defined as falling under the genus animal and as differentiated from other species in that genus by virtue of its members being rational. (More simply: human beings are by nature rational animals.) Thus considered, however, humanity exists, not in the world outside the mind, but as a concept” (Feser, 2009, p. 26). As a result, this line of anti-essentialist argument simply misses the point when it comes to Aristotelian essentialism (although it may pose more serious problems for a more extreme Platonic realism about form, essence and universals).

The second class of taxonomic anti-essentialist arguments tries to show that the taxonomic practices of modern biology are incompatible with essentialist taxonomies. These arguments suggest (incorrectly) that essentialism requires taxonomies that recognise only a single criterion for the individuation of species. However, there is in fact a plurality of criteria. Again, this criticism misses the mark. There is nothing about Aristotelian essentialism which means that it is committed to a single criterion of species membership. As such, this criticism is particularly weak.

4.3.2. Explanatory Anti-Essentialism

We now turn to the second class of anti-essentialist arguments which are much more compelling. They aim to show that, from an analysis of the explanatory structure of evolutionary biology, the properties of individual beings play no role in evolutionary theory. These arguments, because they are anti-individualistic, pose a more serious problem for Aristotelian essentialism.

With Darwin, the explanandum for diversity amongst species and for species changing over time shifted from being a property of individual organisms to being a property of populations. This means that the properties of individual organisms therefore play no role in evolution and therefore neither do their essences. Walsh explains “If the properties of organisms play no explanatory role in modern evolutionary biology, then a fortiori their natures don’t either” (Walsh, 2006, p. 433).

This problem has been strengthened by more recent developments in modern synthesis biology. Walsh explains “The development of the Modern Synthesis theory underscores the anti-individualism inherent in evolutionary biology” (Walsh, 2006, p. 433). He goes on to explain that modern thinkers have “treated populations as very large assemblages of Mendelian factors, or genes. Their objective was not to explain changes to populations of organisms, but changes in the structure of these assemblages of genes” (Walsh, 2006, p. 433).

Modern biology is also anti-essentialistic with regard its conception of the source of variation and change amongst species and individuals. The source of this change is random genetic mutation. As such, there is nothing about the essence of individual organisms that explains the source or type of variation upon which evolution depends. Walsh explains “There are, then, three distinct ways in which modern evolutionary biology is anti-individualistic, and thereby, anti-essentialistic: (i) in its ontology- modern synthesis biology treats populations as assemblages of Mendelian trait types, not of organisms; (ii) in its explanatory apparatus- changes in population structure are explained not by the causal powers of entities of some kind but by the statistical structure of populations; (iii) in its conception of the source of variation (mutation). Unlike the taxonomic arguments, the explanatory argument from population thinking is equally effective against typological and Aristotelian versions of essentialism” (Walsh, 2006, p. 434). As such, essence does not seem to play an explanatory role in modern theories of evolution and this poses a problem for Aristotelian essentialism.

It might be objected at this stage that Walsh’s concerns are unnecessary. After all, just because essence does not play an explanatory role in evolution does not mean that it does not exist. Further, it may still play an explanatory role when it comes to the behaviour and attributes of individuals. However, given that according to Aristotelian metaphysics all the

four causes are linked and that all substances have a form the fact that essence (form instantiated in matter) does not play a role in evolution, a process involving substances, this then opens the door to it being explanatorily otiose in other areas and it seems that we should be cautious about having explanatorily otiose concepts in our metaphysics. Thus, this challenge from explanatory anti-essentialism needs to be answered. The role of essence in evolution needs to be found!

4.4. The Role of Essence in Evolution

Although modern synthesis biology primarily attempts to explain changes in the structure of a population of genes, evolutionary explanations have a much broader aim including explaining the adaptedness of, and variety and diversity amongst organisms. If the Modern Synthesis theory of evolution wants to be up to this task it must be able to explain how changes in populations of genes through natural selection are manifested in changes in individual organisms. There are two points that need to be made at this stage. The first is that genes occur as constituents of organisms. As such, the fate of a gene is tied to the organism it is in. This means that changes of a gene's frequency in a population will only be caused by the different survival and reproduction rates of the organisms in which it occurs. The second point to make is that adaptive evolution has to involve a process by which populations come to comprise organisms that are increasingly well suited to their environment (rather than badly suited organisms that will die and not reproduce). As such, it has become increasingly obvious that identifying the ways in which individual organisms survive, reproduce and meet the conditions required for evolution is extremely important. Walsh explains "Identifying the ways in which organisms meet the conditions required for adaptive evolution has recently been recognised as an issue of considerable importance. The question is often posed in the following way; 'what features must organisms possess in order that lineages of them are evolvable?'" (Walsh, 2006, pp. 435-436). The challenge, then, is to discover what gives individual organisms the necessary stability and mutability required for evolution.

4.4.1. Stability

Walsh defines stability as consisting “in an organism’s capacity to develop and maintain a well-functioning individual that is typical of its kind, despite the enormous complexity of its development and the vagaries of its environment and genome” (Walsh, 2006, p. 436).

Interestingly organisms achieve this stability through plasticity. Plasticity can be defined as “the ability of an organism to react to an internal or external environmental input with a change in form, state, movement, or rate of activity” (West-Eberhard, 2003, p. 33). This basically means that organisms can adapt themselves to their environment, such as lowering or increasing body temperature depending upon the temperature in the surrounding environment. Thus, plasticity gives the organism a robust yet sensitive capacity to direct its development towards attaining a viable and well-functioning end state in accordance with its kind. This basically means that despite encountering a variety of changing environments organisms can still grow, develop and fulfil their needs in order to survive and be successful.

4.4.2. Mutability

Surprisingly the conditions that give organisms mutability are the very same as the ones that give them their stability. Walsh explains “Development systems that are structured in such a way as to be robust and buffered against perturbations are also capable of generating adaptive novelties” (Walsh, 2006, p. 437). This means that the same conditions that allow organisms to survive in and adapt to a variety of different environment also sometimes generate new characteristics. Walsh expands explaining that “the stability and the mutability of organisms that are pre-requisites for adaptive evolution are consequences of the distinctive capacities of organisms, particularly as they are manifested in their development. The very feature that secures the robustness of organisms – their capacity to with-stand perturbation by mounting compensatory change – also underwrites their changeability. That feature is phenotypic plasticity” (Walsh, 2006, p. 438).

4.4.3. Phenotypic Plasticity

Phenotypic plasticity (the stability and mutability of organisms) provides the three necessary conditions “for changes in the structure of ensembles of traits, to be *realised* as adaptive evolution: (i) the origin of novel adaptations within individuals, (ii) the suppression of deleterious mutations and (iii) the constancy of traits across individuals” (Walsh, 2006, p. 439). Presumably, without going into details about the biology, the mutability of organisms allows for the origin of novel adaptations, and the stability of organisms suppresses deleterious mutations and allows for the constancy of traits across individuals. All three of these are needed for evolution. What all of this means is that changes to a population of genes, which is explained by the Modern Synthesis theory of evolution, is only realised as adaptive evolution because of the distinctive capacities of individual organisms! Basically, this means that any *full* evolutionary explanation must at some stage make reference to the capacities and properties of individual organisms. As such this should overturn the anti-individualist bias inherent in modern synthesis biology. This means that there is now room for essence in an evolutionary explanation!

4.4.4. Essence Playing a Crucial Role in Evolution

Walsh now thinks we can go one stage further. He highlights that “The phenotypic plasticity that drives adaptive evolution consists in an organism’s finely tuned capacity to develop and maintain a viable, stable homeostatic end state that is typical for organisms of its kind by the implementation of compensatory changes to its behaviour, structure and physiology” (Walsh, 2006, pp. 440–441). This capacity of organisms has all the features of a goal-directed phenomenon because it exhibits plasticity, which is the capacity to reach an end-state by a number of different routes, and persistence. As such, phenotypic plasticity is a classic example of goal-directed activity. It is also reminiscent of the type of capacity that makes up an organism’s formal nature or essence i.e. “a set of goal directed dispositions, to organise its matter in such a way that the organism is capable of performing particular soul functions” (Lennox, 2001, p. 183). As such, an organism’s phenotypic plasticity looks like it plays the same role as an Aristotelian formal nature or essence. Walsh points out that “Modern evolutionary biology, then, should count as a genuinely Aristotelian essentialist science if it finds these capacities explanatorily indispensable and deploys them in the same explanatory

role as Aristotelian natures” (Walsh, 2006, p. 442). As such, not only are Aristotelian essences compatible with the theory of evolution, but evolution may even depend upon some form of Aristotelian essentialism. This is because evolution cannot be fully explained without reference to individual organisms and their ability to develop towards a particular end state in different and changing environments. In conclusion, then, not only is Aristotelian essentialism compatible with evolution, but evolution may even support Aristotelian essentialism. Therefore, evolution need not give the Aristotelian or Thomist any concerns about the theory of essences and universals.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can see that there is no reason to believe that modern science shows that Aristotelian metaphysics is false. We can see that the modern scientific method does not show us that there are no final causes. Final causes may or may not exist and Aristotelian metaphysics may or may not be true, but this will have to be shown on philosophical grounds not on scientific grounds. Further, we have also seen that evolution does not pose any problems for the Aristotelian conception of essences and as such we can conclude that, at least in these areas, science does not disprove Aristotelian metaphysics. As such, it should be taken seriously in modern philosophical discussions.

Chapter 2: The Nature of Goodness

1. Introduction

What is goodness? We use the word ‘*good*’ regularly and yet pinning down precisely what is meant by the word *good* or *goodness* in abstract is a remarkably tricky question. Throughout this thesis I will be assuming some form of moral realism. If someone believes that matters of morality such as right and wrong, and good and evil are real and objective features of the world then they are moral realists, as opposed to moral irrealists and non-cognitivists.

In this chapter I will do a number of things. First, in section two, I will outline my account of goodness. Due to their significant impact on the field and similarity to my own position I will do this by first outlining what Geach and Thomson say about goodness. I will then utilize what they have said to craft my own account of goodness. Then I will present a preliminary argument in favour of my account of goodness. In section three I will engage with alternative conceptions of goodness. I will first outline the difference between naturalist, supernaturalist and non-naturalist accounts of goodness. I will show that the open question argument poses significant problems for the naturalist and the supernaturalist although it need not concern the Aristotelian. I will then explore the differences between the non-naturalist and the Aristotelian and will show that there is not necessarily as much conflict as many think and that there may in fact be a lot of shared ground. In section four I will do two things; first I will respond to three criticisms of the Aristotelian conception of goodness. I will begin by responding to what is sometimes called the fact/value dichotomy. Then I will respond to a series of arguments by Zimmerman and Orsi, and finally I will respond to an argument against the Aristotelian account put forward by Pigden. In responding to Pigden’s argument I will also present an argument against predicative accounts of goodness or goodness simpliciter (more on this later). In doing all of this I will have outlined my account of goodness, offered an argument in favour of it, responded to criticisms of it and levelled a criticism against alternative theories. This should then establish the plausibility of my Aristotelian account of goodness.

2. Geach on Attributive and Predicative Adjectives

In his 1956 paper 'Good and Evil' Geach lays out his views on goodness. He highlights that in grammar there are two sorts of adjectives: predicative and attributive. In the sentence: 'This is a red book' the adjective 'red' is an attributive adjective because it comes right before the noun 'book' and thus is a direct modifier. In the sentence: 'This book is red' the adjective 'red' is a predicative adjective because it comes after the noun and the verb 'to be' (is). This observation is simply grammatical and is inadequate to distinguish different types of goodness. However, Geach suggests that this observation can be used to make a logical point about certain adjectives. Some adjectives such as 'red' are logically predicative, whilst others such as 'big' or 'small' are logically attributive. Geach explains that "in a phrase 'an A B' ('A' being an adjective and 'B' being a noun) 'A' is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication 'is an A B' splits up logically into a pair of predications 'is a B' and 'is A'; Otherwise I shall say that 'A' is a (logically) attributive adjective" (Geach, 1956, p. 33). From now on when I talk about a predicative or attributive adjectives I will be using it in this logical sense (rather than a merely grammatical sense).

The distinction between (logically) attributive and predicative adjectives is best illustrated with an example. Big and small, tall and short, fat and thin, fast and slow are all logically attributive adjectives. This is because 'x is a big flea' does not split up into 'x is a flea' and 'x is big' (because even a big flea is still a small animal). However, adjectives like red and blue are all logically predicative. This because 'y is a blue box' does split up into 'y is a box' and 'y is blue'. Geach explains, "There are familiar examples of what I call attributive adjectives. 'Big' and 'small' are attributive; 'x is a big flea' does not split up into 'x is a flea' and 'x is big', nor 'x is a small elephant' into 'x is and elephant' and 'x is small'; for if these analyses were legitimate, a simple argument would show that a big flea is a big animal and a small elephant a small animal ... On the other hand, in the phrase 'a red book' 'red' is a predicative adjective in my sense, although not grammatically so, for 'is a red book' logically splits up into 'is a book' and 'is red'" (Geach, 1956, p. 33).

As such, an attributive adjective cannot be logically split from the noun that it modifies in a sentence without that sentence then being semantically incomplete. When somebody says, "Gosh! Isn't he big!" of, say, a new born baby they don't mean that he is a big human being or big simpliciter (whatever that might mean) instead they mean that of the

kind ‘baby’ he is a big instance of it. Indeed, if all you heard was “Gosh! Isn’t he big!” without knowing the context or to what they were referring you would have no idea how big the being in question is. It could be as big as an elephant or as small as a flea. As such, “Gosh! Isn’t he big!” is semantically incomplete.

The reason why the adjective ‘big’ cannot be split up from the noun it modifies is because there is no single property of bigness. Instead whether or not something counts as big will depend on what it is and what the context is. However, the adjective ‘red’ can be split from the noun that it modifies because there is a single property of redness that an object either does or doesn’t have.⁵

Geach then suggests that ‘*good*’ is always an attributive adjective. Quite clearly ‘*good*’ is sometimes an attributive adjective. Right now I am writing on a ‘good computer’ by that I mean it boots up quickly, connects to the internet quickly, has good RAM and doesn’t crash often. This means that it fulfils its functions as a computer well. However, when I say that John is a ‘good man’ I mean something quite different. Possibly something like ‘he behaves morally and is pleasant to be around’ (and perhaps he also rarely crashes). In both of these contexts in order to understand what I really mean by the adjective ‘*good*’ you need to know to what it is referring. If all you heard is someone saying, ‘it’s good!’ you would not know whether the thing in question connected to the internet quickly or always kept its promises (although perhaps you might know that it rarely crashed). When we use *good* like this we are using *good* in the attributive sense i.e. it is good of its kind (it is a good K). Similarly, we can use *bad* in an attributive sense as when we speak of a bad computer or a bad car which don’t fulfil their functions. Geach believed that *good* and *bad* are always attributive and I will adopt a similar, although slightly more elaborate, position to him.

However, some philosophers believe that there is also a predicative use of *good* i.e. *good simpliciter*. An example might be in the sentence “pleasure is good”. In this case, they might argue, that it is not the case that pleasure is good as an instance of its kind (perhaps that of sensation, i.e. of the sensations this is a good instance, or of the kind ‘pleasure’, i.e. of instances of pleasure this is a good instance) but simply that pleasure is good. Pleasure is *good simpliciter*! They believe that the property of ‘goodness’ is more like the property of

⁵ Granted there are different shades of red, but let’s put that aside for now or else insert something more clearly cut such as the adjective ‘perfectly spherical’ and the property of ‘perfect sphericity’.

redness or of sphericity than it is like the property of bigness and thus the word ‘*good*’ can legitimately be used as a predicative adjective. It is philosophers who believe in this predicative use of *good* that I will later on take to be my main opponents. Philosophers who believe in a predicative use of *good* believe that there is a single property or relation that is goodness. They may think that goodness is a relation such as ‘is desired’ and that anything that is desired is good and that to be desired and to be good are the same thing. Alternatively, they may think that goodness is a natural property such as ‘is pleasurable’ and thus that pleasure and goodness are identical. Alternatively, they may think that goodness is a supernatural property such as ‘is approved of by God’ and that goodness and being approved of by God are one and the same thing. Finally, they may think that goodness is a non-natural property and is only identical with itself. This property of goodness may then turn out to be definable or indefinable. I will expand on this later, but hopefully this shows how some philosophers believe in good in a predicative sense.

Geach rejects these uses of *good* as either semantically incomplete or illegitimate. He writes that ‘*good*’ “is essentially an attributive adjective. Even when ‘good’ or ‘bad’ stands by itself as a predicate, and is thus grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so” (Geach, 1956, p. 34). However, many philosophers disagree with Geach.

This is all that Geach seems to say about his account of goodness in this paper. He spends the rest of the paper engaging with and criticising two different groups of philosophical opponents. The first group he labels as ‘objectivists’. This group think that goodness is a non-natural and indefinable property, and thus their view would roughly correlate with some accounts of non-naturalism in more modern literature. He accuses them of “Playing fast and loose with the term ‘attribute’” (Geach, 1956, p. 35) and of having an excessively opaque and enigmatic account of goodness that he finds simply unintelligible and thus he dismisses their view (Geach, 1956, pp. 35 - 36).⁶

The second group Geach engages with he labels the ‘Oxford Moralists’. According to Geach they believe that the word *good* is “not descriptive at all but commendatory” and thus

⁶ I appreciate that this makes it seem like Geach has a very weak argument, or no argument at all, against the ‘objectivists’ and so some may worry that I am presenting the paper unfairly. However, I cannot find a further argument by Geach against the ‘objectivists’ in this particular paper but I am happy to be corrected and I apologise if I have left something out.

that “‘That is a good book’ means something like ‘I recommend that book’ or ‘choose that book’” (Geach, 1956, p. 36). As such this group roughly correlates with modern non-cognitivists of various stripes. He engages with the ‘Oxford Moralists’ in some detail but I won’t expand on it here because it is not really relevant for the rest of this chapter.

It is striking, to me at least, that Geach only seems to outline how something can be a good K and that he gives no account of intrinsic or instrumental goods or how something can be good ‘at’ or ‘for’ (and so on) something. Perhaps he thinks that these uses can be subsumed into the good K schema he has outlined (although quite how he might envision this I do not know). Perhaps he thinks that the concept of a good K is the most basic (with which I agree) and thus the other uses are less interesting (with which I disagree) or perhaps he has something else in mind. Either way I think that Geach is correct in observing that sometimes when we say sentences like ‘X is good’ we mean that ‘X is a good K’ and I agree with his basic point that *good* is essentially an attributive adjective (more on this later). At the same time, I think that Geach’s account is too narrow. As such, I will be defending a modified and expanded version of Geach’s account. Before I outline my account it is worth briefly outlining some of the things that Thomson has said about goodness. This is because, although my account is closer to Geach’s than hers, I will utilize some of her ideas and she has had some significant impact on the literature. As such, I will now outline what Thomson says about goodness before outlining my own views.

2.1. Thomson on Goodness-In-A-Way

Thomson, like Geach and me, rejects the idea of good simpliciter. She famously suggests that all goodness is goodness-in-a-way. She adopts a similar position to Geach but, like me, thinks that his account is too narrow and that he fails to account for certain ways that things can be good. I will outline Thomson’s account of goodness using her 1994 paper ‘Goodness and Utilitarianism’ and, to a lesser extent, her 2008 book *Normativity*.

In ‘Goodness and Utilitarianism’ Thomson is concerned by the apparent appeal of utilitarianism. She says that utilitarianism says that “the right act is the act that maximizes the good” (Thomson, 1994, p. 7). She believes that utilitarianism can be utterly defeated if it can be shown that the idea of maximizing the good is incoherent i.e. that there is no best possible

world or maximally good state of affairs. The aim of her paper then is to outline an account of goodness in which the idea of maximizing the good makes no sense and to defend this from various utilitarian responses. She says that the idea of maximizing the good makes no sense because there is no such property as goodness to be maximized! Instead all goodness is goodness-in-a-way or, put another way, from a particular perspective and with some specific goal or object in mind.

Thomson begins by critiquing the idea of goodness as a property. She begins by giving Moore as an example of somebody who believes that there is such a property as goodness. Moore believed that ethics was primarily interested in determining what counts as good conduct. He says that, “‘good conduct’ is a complex notion: all conduct is not good; for some is certainly bad and some may be indifferent. And on the other hand, other things, besides conduct, may be good; and if they are so, then, ‘good’ denotes some property, that is common to them and conduct” (Moore, 1951, p. 2). Thomson summarizes Moore’s position as the idea that, “there is such a property as goodness” and that “goodness is the property that all good things have in common. Therefore while ethics is concerned with the question what good conduct is, it begins at the beginning only if it begins by asking what the property goodness itself is” (Thomson, 1994, p. 8).

Thomson is having none of this. She writes “Now this won’t do” (Thomson, 1994, p. 8). This seems, as far as I can see,⁷ to be the end of her argument against the idea of goodness as a property/goodness simpliciter. The remainder of her paper consists of her expanding on Geach’s account of goodness and then considering what effect this account of goodness would have on the plausibility of utilitarianism. What then is Thomson’s account of goodness?

Thomson begins by restating Geach’s account (as I have outlined earlier). She summarizes Geach’s position as saying that “the adjective ‘good’ is incomplete in this sense: if a person Alfred says something of the grammatical form ‘x is good’, then either he or the context must supply a kind-term K such that we can take him to be saying about the thing referred to that it is a good K, or else we simply do not know what he is saying about the

⁷ Once again, if I have missed an additional argument in Thomson’s paper then I am happy to be corrected and apologise in advance. However, it does seem that both Geach and Thomson fail to give us any strong reason to doubt the existence of good simpliciter and I intend to rectify this later on in this chapter.

thing” (Thomson, 1994, p. 8). She gives some examples of kind-terms (Ks) including swimmer, dancer and hammer. Thomson agrees with Geach that this is sometimes what is taking place when we use the word ‘good’. However, like me, she thinks that this is overly restrictive and that there are other legitimate uses. She writes “But that is really over-strong – ‘good’ does very often occur as a modifier, but so also does it occur modified, and it would pay us to pay more attention to that fact. We may discover what someone who says something of the form ‘x is good’ is saying about the thing, not by being supplied with a kind-term K for ‘good’ to modify, but by being supplied with an expression that modifies ‘good’” (Thomson, 1994, p. 8). She gives various examples of good modified including; being good at, good to, good with, good to use for, good to use in, good for, good as. More complete examples would include things like being good at tennis or good to eat and so on. She labels these as examples of “‘good’ modified” (Thomson, 1994, p. 9).

Thomson is now highlighting that there are at least two ways that the word *good* can be used. The first, as highlighted by Geach, is as a modifier of a kind term (K) as in ‘X is a good K’. Here *good* is acting as a modifier. The second way that the word *good* can be used is in a modified way as in ‘good at’ or ‘good to’ and so on. These are examples of “‘good’ modified” (Thomson, 1994, p. 9). Thomson now writes “I think it very plausible, moreover, that the role of ‘good’ as modifier on a kind-term is parasitic on the role of ‘good’ modified” (Thomson, 1994, p. 9). Here Thomson and I begin to come apart.

Thomson’s argument for the parasitic nature of good as a modifier of a kind term (K) on ‘good modified’ begins by noticing that “It is familiar enough that there are kind terms such that prefixing ‘good’ to them yields something puzzling. If someone says of a thing that it’s a good swimmer or a good hammer, we know what is being predicated of the thing; if someone says of a thing that it’s a good pebble or a good molecule or a good corpse we find ourselves at a loss – what does the speaker have in mind?” (Thomson, 1994, p. 9). Thomson suggests that this is because when we use *good* as a modifier of a kind term (K) such as swimmer what we are really saying is that the thing in question is good at swimming and thus really we are ultimately still using *good* in this modified sense (‘good modified’). Thomson explains, “I suggest that we know what is predicated of a thing when it is said to be a good swimmer because we know that a good swimmer is a swimmer who is good at swimming ... In short, we know for those kinds K what it is that a good K is good at or to or for and so on. By contrast, we do not know what is predicated of a thing when it is said to be a good pebble

... because we do not know for these kinds K what it is that a good K is good at or to or for and so on” (Thomson, 1994, pp. 9-10). This means that what makes something a good K is that it is ‘good modified’ in a suitable way, for example, a good musician is a musician who is good at (‘good modified’) playing music. The musician can be labelled a good musician because he is good at playing music and playing music is precisely what musicians are supposed to do.

If I have understood Thomson correctly, then she would later come to label kinds like musician and swimmer ‘goodness-fixing kinds.’ In her 2008 book *Normativity* she explains that for some kinds (Ks) “there is such a property as being good qua K – being a model, exemplar, paradigm, or good specimen of a K” (Thomson, 2008, p. 21). She gives examples such as “the kinds toaster, seeing eye dog, tennis player, beefsteak tomato, tiger, and human being. Those kinds have something in common: each of them is such that what being a K is itself sets the standards that a K has to meet if it is to be good qua K. Thus being a toaster is being an artefact manufactured to toast, and that itself sets the following standard for being good qua toaster: toasting well” (Thomson, 2008, p. 21). These are examples of goodness fixing kinds. Further, in the case of toasters we can easily see how something is going to be a good toaster when it is good at (good modified) toasting.

Thomson then points out that her account is entirely compatible with there being some unusual cases where we might intelligibly describe something as a good K even if it is not part of, what she would later come to label, a goodness-fixing kind. She gives the example of a corpse. Normally if somebody says that a particular corpse is a ‘good corpse’ we would be slightly at a loss to know what they meant by this. This is because the kind ‘corpse’ is not a goodness-fixing kind. However, an embalmer might reasonably and intelligibly say that a particular corpse is a ‘good corpse’ and from the context we would know that he meant that it was an easy corpse to prepare for burial or something like this. As such, these unusual counter examples need not worry Thomson.

Thomson has now said that there are two uses for the adjective *good*. The first is as a modifier of a kind term (a good K) the second is ‘good modified’ (good at or for etc.). Further, she believes that good as a modifier of a kind term is often parasitic on ‘good modified’. This means that something is a good K ultimately because it is good at or for something. However, she accepts that there are some exceptions. She thinks that there are

some instances in which we can intelligibly describe something as a 'good K' without this being ultimately based on a use of 'good modified' (good at or for etc.). This means that there are some instances where we can say that something is a good K without this being ultimately because it is good at or for something. She gives the example of a good person or a good friend. Thomson writes "The most striking exceptions are the likes of 'good person,' 'good friend,' ... Suppose I say 'Alice is a good person'. It can't be said that you don't know what I've said about her unless you know what I am saying she is good at or to or for and so on. Perhaps good people are good at or to or for something; but that she is good at or to or for something wasn't at all what I meant to be saying of her in saying what I did" (Thomson, 1994, p. 10). It seems that somebody could be a good friend, and that we could describe them as such, without them being good at or for something in particular. As such, there are some instances when we can intelligibly say that something is a good K without this ultimately being based on a use of 'good modified'. On what, then, is the goodness of these Ks based?

Thomson answers this question by appealing to what are sometimes called thick evaluative terms. Bernard Williams in his 1985 book *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* distinguishes between what he labels as thick moral terms and thin moral terms. The distinction between the two is hard to precisely explain. Generally speaking, thick evaluative terms seem to have a 'thicker' descriptive content combining both evaluative and non-evaluative components. Whereas, thin evaluative terms seem to have a 'thinner' descriptive content with only evaluative components.

Put another way, thick evaluative terms combine evaluative and non-evaluative components. Whereas thin evaluative terms are entirely evaluative. At the same time, many will see thick and thin terms on a spectrum with some terms being thicker or thinner than others. Thus, a clear cut off point for when something qualifies as thick or thin may be impossible to specify.

The difference between thick and thin moral terms is perhaps best illustrated with examples. Thick evaluative terms include terms such as bravery and generosity, whereas thin evaluative terms include terms such as bad and good. As an example, if someone is described as being generous then, not only do we know that they are a good person (at least in this regard), we also know that they will be inclined to give up their time, effort or money to help others.

On the other hand, if someone is described as being bad then, although we might know they performed immoral actions, we would be unable to predict what those actions might involve. Do they torture children or lie to their partner? We would be unable to tell. This is because ‘*bad*’ is a thin evaluative term. If we were then told that they were deceitful (a thicker evaluative term) then we might be able to predict that they lied to their partner. As such, what this should illustrate is that thick evaluative terms seem to tell us more than thin evaluative terms. Both thick and thin moral terms tell us something evaluative about a situation, act or individual but the thick terms seem to have more descriptive content than the thin terms. As such, thick terms seem to have a ‘thicker’ descriptive content.

Thomson utilizes the idea of thick evaluative concepts to respond to situations in which a thing may be ‘good’ without it necessarily being good at or to or for something and so on. A person may be a good person or a friend a good friend without them necessarily being good at or for something. What then makes somebody a good person? Thomson suggests that what makes somebody a good person is that they are “just, reliable, loyal, generous, and so on” (Thomson, 1994, p. 10). They may have all of these qualities or just some (and thus may be good in some ways and bad in some ways). These terms are classic examples of thick evaluative terms. As a result, according to Thomson, it seems that thick evaluative terms can also explain why something is a good example of its kind. Thomson believes that of these thick evaluative terms some are overtly moral, such as just, reliable and loyal, and some are non-moral, such as graceful, vigorous and serene.

As such, Thomson’s full account of the adjective *good* is that “Where there is being a good or bad so-and-so that is because there is being a so-and-so that is good in this or that way – where the ways include, not merely being good at or to or for such and such, but also being just or reliable or graceful. Alternatively put, the adjective ‘good’ is incomplete in this sense: if Alfred says something of the form ‘x is good’, then either he or the context must tell us in what way or ways he is saying the thing is good if we are to know what he is saying about it. Still more compactly put: all goodness is goodness-in-a-way” (Thomson, 1994, p. 11). It should also be noted that Thomson does not think that goodness itself supervenes on ways of being good. Instead a thing is good because it is good in a particular way and hence all goodness is goodness-in-a-way. Thomson explains “my thesis here is not that goodness supervenes on ways of being good: my point is not that a thing is good because it is good in this or that way. To say, as I suggest we say, that all goodness is goodness-in-a-way is to say,

rather, that a thing's being good just is its being good in this or that way. The supervenience is lower down: it is the ways of being good that supervene, and indeed supervene on natural features of the things good in those ways" (Thomson, 1994, p. 11). This, then, is Thomson's account of goodness.

Thomson then goes on to criticise Geach's analogy between good and big. Thomson points out that big is fundamentally comparative whereas good is not. Something is big when it is larger than most other members of its kind or when it is simply larger than most other members of its kind in that particular location or context. However, something may be good even if it is no better, or even if it is worse, than all the other members of its kind. As an example a hammer may be a very normal hammer and no better than any other and yet still a good hammer. This would be because all the hammers in the world or in this context are good hammers. Thomson, I think, is correct to point out this disanalogy between good and big, but I suspect that Geach would happily accept this observation. I think he was simply using big as a well known example of an attributive adjective to make it clear what one was and I do not think he was making any substantive comparison between good and big beyond his belief that they are both attributive. Thomson spends most of the rest of the paper considering what implications her account would have for utilitarianism. Basically, she argues it poses serious problems for standard utilitarian theories as the idea of maximising the good becomes meaningless. I won't however, expand on this in any more detail as it is not relevant for the rest of this chapter and we should now have a clear idea of Thomson's account of goodness.

2.2. My Account of Goodness

Now that we have examined Thomson and Geach's account of goodness I will now put forward my own account of goodness which is similar to theirs and yet different in some important respects. It is interesting that Geach's discussion of goodness is based largely around the language of *goodness* and yet, if I have read him correctly, he is ultimately making a point about the nature of goodness. Thomson is a little more explicit in that she is making a point about the nature of goodness but once again this is closely linked in with a discussion of our linguistic practices. Ultimately, I too want make a point about the nature of goodness and I am much less interested in the technicalities of our linguistic uses. My thesis is that goodness is not any single property or relation; instead goodness is always going to be

relative to the thing in question. What is good for or with regard to X may not be good for or with regard to Y. I also believe that we cannot fully understand goodness without understanding the metaphysical schema I outlined in my earlier chapter on metaphysics.

Recall my earlier chapter on Aristotelian metaphysics. I argued that things have a form and that flowing from this form come one or more ends, for example, a bee is directed towards living in a hive and making honey because this is part of what it means to be a bee. A bee then has the form of a bee and the end of living in a hive. Similarly, wolves are directed at living in packs and so on. When a bee lives and works in a hive it is behaving in accordance with its ends and is more fully instantiating its form. We can reasonably say that it is behaving as it 'should'. If a beekeeper observed that some of his honey bees refused to live in a hive and produce honey he would wonder what was going wrong. He would think 'it shouldn't be doing that!' and he would look for an explanation as to why; perhaps the bee is sick or something. Thus, we can say that because of the form of bees they 'should' behave in certain ways. This is part of what it means to have a substantial form and ends (recall that all of Aristotle's four causes are interlinked). When a thing fulfils its ends it is behaving as it 'should' and it is more perfectly instantiating its form i.e. it is doing and being everything that it should be. This means that when a thing acts in accordance with its form and fulfils its ends it is being a better example of its kind. To use the language of Geach we can reasonably say that it is a good K. This then is the basis of my account of goodness and ultimately all other forms of goodness will only be so by reference to the idea of a thing fulfilling its ends and being a good K. We now have an account of how things can be a good K, but there are other sorts of goodness such as intrinsic and instrumental goods. How do I account for these?

Something will be intrinsically good because it fulfils a thing's ends. Straightaway many philosophers may feel that this flies in the face of the definition of an intrinsic good. However, when an Aristotelian talks about an intrinsic good they are talking about something that is intrinsically 'good for' a thing. They are intrinsically good for a thing because they fulfil its ends in and of themselves. Knowledge, for example, is intrinsically good for human beings. This is not because knowledge allows its possessors to do something, or brings them pleasure (or whatever) although it may well do this too. Instead it is simply good for humans. It makes us better examples of our kind. A man with knowledge and friendship is in a better position (in a pre-moral sense at least) than a man without knowledge or friendship (more on

what is good for humans later). This, I think, is intuitively obvious. I know which I would rather be.

We can now see why certain things are going to be bad for another thing. Something will be bad for humans if they frustrate a human end for example lying to somebody is (at least pro tanto) going to be bad for them because it frustrates their end of knowledge. Killing them will be very bad because it frustrates all of their ends.

There are two sorts of instrumental good in my schema and they are similar to how we normally think of them. The first sort are simply 'good'/effective ways of getting us something that we want but they are not valuable in themselves. They are a 'good' means to an end whatever that end may be. Stock examples include things like money and material possessions. They are not in and of themselves valuable but potentially they can be used to help us achieve our goals. A ladder may be a good way of getting over a wall but whether getting over the wall is worthwhile activity is entirely another matter.

The second sort of instrumental goods are things that are a means to something that is intrinsically good for you. Stock examples include things like medicine. Medicine in and of itself is not good or bad, but it is a way of achieving the intrinsic good of health (more on this later). The two sorts of instrumental goods will, of course, blend together and it may well be that some things are a mixture of the two. This then completes my account of the nature of goodness and the different ways that things can be good. Is my account strictly speaking attributive or predicative?

I think that my account of goodness is attributive. This is because, as we can see from my account earlier, all goodness is going to be relative to the thing in question. There won't be any single property of goodness regardless of the thing in question. Thus, I can affirm Thomson's idea that "all goodness is goodness-in-a-way" (Thomson, 1994, p. 11). This is because a thing or state of affairs is always going to be good for a particular thing and in a particular way. I can also adopt much of Geach's account of goodness although it will need expanding. Recall Geach's idea that '*good*', "is essentially an attributive adjective. Even when 'good' or 'bad' stands by itself as a predicate, and is thus grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so" (Geach, 1956, p. 34). I think that Geach's account is too narrow as it omits intrinsic and instrumental goods. As such I will modify Geach's

account: I believe that ‘good’ is essentially an attributive adjective. Even when ‘good’ or ‘bad’ stands by itself as a predicate, and is thus grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is only being a good or bad so-and-so, being intrinsically ‘good for’ something or being instrumentally good. There is no such thing as being just good or bad (good or bad simpliciter). As such, because I agree with Thomson that “all goodness is goodness-in-a-way” (Thomson, 1994, p. 11) and because my account of goodness is an expanded version of Geach’s I think it is reasonable to view my account as attributive.

This means that nothing can be intelligibly good or bad without it further being specified in what way; is it a good K? Is it good for K’s? Or is it merely instrumentally good? If something is a good example of its kind (a good K) then this means that it is fulfilling its ends as explained earlier. If something is intrinsically good for something else then this means that it fulfils that thing’s ends. Further, if something is instrumentally good then that means it is good at achieving a particular goal whatever that goal may be or is a means to a good end as explained earlier.

Again, it should be noted that I am thus ultimately making a claim about the metaphysical nature of goodness rather than merely a point about language. I am simply, like Geach, using an observation about predicative and attributive adjectives to make a point about the metaphysical nature of goodness. I am denying that goodness is any single property, such as pleasure, and am instead claiming that goodness is always going to be relative to the subject in question and its metaphysical ends.⁸ As such, we are only discussing the language we use when talking about goodness when this has direct bearing on its nature. This chapter is thus on the metaphysics of goodness rather than on the language of *goodness*, although the two are, of course, closely linked.

I will call the account of goodness that I am defending my Aristotelian account of goodness. This is because I am defending a distinctively Aristotelian account of goodness but, at the same time, it is also my own particular take on Aristotle and other Aristotelians may disagree about some of the finer details. I will usually call the general conception of goodness that I am opposed to ‘goodness simpliciter’. I will also sometimes talk about good

⁸ Thus we can see the importance of my earlier chapter on metaphysics and, in particular, my desire to defend Aristotle’s ideas about form and teleology.

in a predicative sense particularly when I am discussing the language of *goodness*. There are then a variety of different views and accounts within this general conception.

It should be noted that in the literature there are a variety of different definitions for all of the terms that are used here, such as predicative, attributive, intrinsic, pure, and so on. As is the case in all philosophical disciplines different thinkers will understand and use the terms in slightly different ways. However, hopefully my account and definitions are simple and clear enough so that they can be easily understood, but sophisticated and mainstream enough so that the discussion and arguments that I will now present will have relevance to the main writers in the field.

Before I continue, it is worth clarifying the distinction between what is ‘ultimately good’ and what is ‘intrinsically good’. Some philosophers who subscribe to good simpliciter distinguish between these two concepts. For these philosophers what is ultimately good is pure goodness and what is intrinsically good is anything that has more goodness on balance than badness. Thus, for the hedonist, who believes that goodness and pleasure are identical, pleasure is the ultimate good and anything that brings about more pleasure than pain is intrinsically good. These terms don’t translate so well into my Aristotelian account, but what we could say is that ultimate goodness within my schema is the fulfilment of ends (in accordance with form). In a sense one might say that within my schema this is a predicative form of goodness in that it is a single thing (maybe an event or an occurrence?) that is goodness. Hence I ultimately labelled my account of goodness an Aristotelian account rather than an attributive account. However, the things that are good are still going to be relative to the thing in question. The properties in the real world that are going to be good for a thing (and so on) will always be relative to the thing in question and thus I am not sure that it makes sense to view the Aristotelian account as predicative and instead I lean towards labelling it attributive. Once again however, we can see that what is important in this chapter is not the language of *goodness* but the nature of goodness and this is ultimately what I am interested in discussing. Throughout the rest of this chapter I won’t refer to what is ‘ultimately good’ because the term is unnecessary within my schema. Instead I will either refer to good Ks, what is intrinsically good for something, or what is instrumentally good for something as I outlined earlier.

2.3. A Preliminary Argument for my Aristotelian Account of Goodness

I think that one of the strongest arguments for my Aristotelian account of goodness is that it is implied by the Aristotelian metaphysical schema that I outlined in chapter one. As we have seen the idea of form and ends implies that there is teleology inherent in nature, a certain way that things ‘should’ be and, further, that certain things will be fulfilling of a thing’s ends. As such, the whole Aristotelian conception of goodness is implied in his concept of form and ends. Once we have established that certain creatures have a shared or similar form, and thus will be directed towards similar outcomes, we have given a metaphysical grounding for Geach’s account of ‘good Ks’ that is quite independent of human preferences and goals. Further, once we understand that living creatures will require certain things, such as food, water, companionship and knowledge, in order to fulfil their ends then we have found a metaphysical grounding for the idea of intrinsic goods. Finally, as I explained earlier something will be instrumentally good either when it is a good means to an end (whatever that end may be) or when it is a means to a good end. As such, if my chapter on metaphysics was persuasive, and if I have shown that science need not give us any concerns about the truth of an Aristotelian metaphysical schema, then we have a preliminary argument for the truth of my Aristotelian account of goodness. The fact that my ethical schema and account of goodness flow neatly from traditional Aristotelian metaphysics distinguishes my view from many contemporary neo-Aristotelians who often ground their ethical schemas in things like the virtues or ‘natural norms’ etc. rather than traditional Aristotelian metaphysics. For some examples of this see Foot (2001).

We now have a metaphysical grounding and explanation for good examples of kinds (good Ks), intrinsic goods and instrumental goods. All of which follows from the distinction between act and potency and the idea of form and ends. Now that these are in place all that remains for us to do in order to create an ethical theory is to identify the relevant goods for human beings and to explain how we should relate to them. This is exactly what I am aim to do in the next two chapters. First, however, I need to engage with some alternative theories and to respond to some criticisms.

3. Engaging With Alternatives

The aim of this section is to show where my account agrees with, and where it differs from, alternative theories of goodness. I will aim to show that my account is incompatible with more conventional forms of naturalism that postulate goodness simpliciter and with forms of supernaturalism that postulate goodness simpliciter. However, I will argue that these versions of naturalism and supernaturalism are vulnerable to the open question argument and so we have reason to be sceptical of them and their viability (particularly when coupled with my metaphysical account). I will do this by first defining and explaining naturalism and supernaturalism in 3.1. In 3.2. I will introduce the open question argument and will show that this poses problems for naturalists and supernaturalists that believe in goodness simpliciter but that it need not concern the Aristotelian. In 3.3. I will then engage with non-naturalism. I will first give a fairly standard non-naturalist account of goodness and I will then show that the Aristotelian can accept most of what the non-naturalist wants to say and as such there is much less conflict between the non-naturalist and the Aristotelian than is often thought.

3.1. Naturalism and Supernaturalism

First it is important for me to first define naturalism and supernaturalism so that we can see where the Aristotelian agrees with them and where the Aristotelian conflicts with them. Let us begin with naturalism. As Pigden points out, “In Philosophy, not only the doctrines but the definitions of the doctrines are subject to dispute. Thus it is with ethical naturalism” (Pigden, 1993, p. 421). It can often be difficult in philosophy to give a clear definition of many of the terms that satisfies everyone. However, I think we can make some general uncontentious claims about naturalism. Naturalism is the thesis that there are moral properties, such as goodness, and that moral properties are identical or reducible to natural properties. As such, naturalists attempt to define goodness in purely naturalistic terms. A prominent example is Mill’s hedonistic utilitarianism. Mill believed that goodness was, in some sense, identical to pleasure or happiness.⁹ He explains that, “happiness is the sole end of human action, and the promotion of it the test by which to judge of all human conduct; from whence it necessarily follows that it must be the criterion of morality, since a part is included in the whole” (Mill,

⁹ And that “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness” (Mill, 1906, II).

1906, IV). Mill's basic point seems to be that happiness is the only thing with intrinsic value. It is in the only thing worth pursuing entirely for its own sake. Put another way pleasure is good (simpliciter) and good (simpliciter) is pleasure they are simply two different words for the same basic thing.

Similarly supernaturalism is the thesis that there are moral properties and that these properties are reducible to or identical to supernatural properties. As such, supernaturalists attempt to define goodness in purely supernatural terms. For example Adams (1999) argues that the 'goodness is faithfully resembling God' i.e. that the property of goodness is the property of faithfully resembling God.

Usually Aristotelianism is considered a form of naturalism. This is probably because it attempts to explain what is good by appealing to a thing's nature and so most people assume it must therefore be a form of naturalism. I am not convinced that this makes sense for three reasons. First, the Aristotelian disagrees with most forms of naturalism over the existence of goodness simpliciter. The hedonist, for example, believes that goodness simpliciter is pleasure, whereas the Aristotelian denies the existence of goodness simpliciter altogether. Second, the open question argument, as will become clear, poses problems for the naturalist and supernaturalist but it simply does not apply to the Aristotelian. Third, as we shall see, the Aristotelian can accept much of what the non-naturalist wants to say about goodness. As such, I am not convinced that Aristotelian accounts of goodness should necessarily be considered forms of naturalism in any interesting sense of the word. Rather I think that Aristotelianism should count as its own label and that it will resist any attempts to label it a form of naturalism, supernaturalism or non-naturalism.

3.2. The Open Question Argument

Twentieth and twenty-first century philosophy has been heavily influenced by G. E. Moore's open question argument put forward in chapter one of his *Principia Ethica* (1903). The open question argument is interested in the nature of intrinsic goodness. After engaging with, and rejecting, the possibility that intrinsic goodness is a nonsense/not a property it concludes that intrinsic goodness is a property. It then attempts to show that the property of intrinsic goodness cannot be identified with or reduced to any natural or supernatural property. Hence

it is an attack upon naturalism and supernaturalism and this led Moore to adopt a form of non-naturalism.

Many Aristotelians are concerned by G.E. Moore's open question argument against ethical naturalism (for examples, see Veatch, 2003). Natural law theorists attempt to explain morality in terms of human nature, part of the natural world, and they believe that this is precisely what Moore's argument aims to show cannot be done. However, these Aristotelians are mistaken in this belief. Indeed Moore himself attempted to explain why some things are intrinsically good and others are not by appealing to facts about the natural world. All Moore was claiming was that moral properties, although they may be explained or grounded in natural properties, cannot be reduced to or equated to natural properties. As such, Moore's argument is aimed at predicative accounts of ethical naturalism that attempt to equate or reduce the property of goodness to a purely natural property (such as pleasure). As such Moore is simply not interested in the Aristotelian purely attributive account of goodness.

To illustrate this more clearly, I will briefly explain the open question argument and how it works. In doing so it should become clear that, although this poses problems for versions of naturalism (and supernaturalism) which postulate goodness simpliciter, it poses no problems for the Aristotelian.

Stratton-Lake summarizes Moore's argument as follows:

“(1) If goodness could be defined naturalistically- that is, wholly in terms of natural properties – then the question of whether something that has those natural properties is good would not be an open question.

(2) The question of whether something that has some natural property is good is always open.

So

(3) Goodness cannot be defined wholly in terms of natural properties” (Stratton-Lake, 2013, p. 7).¹⁰

¹⁰ We can then modify the argument to attack supernaturalism by simply replacing the term the term ‘natural’ with ‘supernatural.’

An open question is a substantive question i.e. a question about which there could be serious disagreement between people who understand all of the terms that occur in the question. A closed question is simply a question that is not open. Some stock example of closed questions include things like, one cannot seriously debate the marital status or gender of a bachelor because a bachelor is an unmarried man. If you understand what a bachelor is then you already know his gender and marital status. Similarly one cannot debate whether someone's sister is female and so on.

Premise two seems to be true. It seems that we could know that something is pleasant (or that it faithfully resembles God and so on) and yet still reasonably ask whether it is in fact good. It would still be an open question! Stratton-Lake explains "It is always an open question whether something that is pleasant, or which we desire to desire, or which causes the most happiness, is good or right" (Stratton-Lake, 2013, p. 7 – 8). As such, premise two seems to be true.

As such, given premise one then, it seems that goodness cannot be defined wholly in naturalistic terms. We can then modify the argument to attack supernaturalism by simply replacing the term the term 'natural' with 'supernatural' in Stratton-Lake's formulation. This argument then counts against naturalism and supernaturalism. There may be potential responses that the naturalist and supernaturalist can make and these usually involve attacking premise one (for example see Boyd, 1988, for a defence of naturalism, and Adams, 1999, for a defence of supernaturalism). Whether or not these responses are successful is another matter (for a potential counter response to Boyd and Adams see Alexander, 2012) and I will leave the defence of naturalism and supernaturalism to their proponents.

The open question argument, however, says nothing at all about my Aristotelian conception of goodness. This is because the argument is only interested in goodness simpliciter. Premise one, indeed the whole argument, assumes that the naturalist will be saying that goodness simpliciter is a property¹¹ that is identical to or reducible to a natural property or relation. However, the Aristotelian does not think that there is any single property of goodness instead it will always be 'goodness-in-a-way' and relative to the type of thing in question.¹² The Aristotelian simply doesn't postulate goodness simpliciter which is what the

¹¹ And thus the word '*good*' could then be used as a predicative adjective.

¹² And thus the word '*good*' would always be an attributive adjective.

open question argument is interested in. This means that the open question argument simply says nothing at all about my Aristotelian conception of goodness and thus it need not concern us further. However, it should be noted that the open question argument does count against both natural and supernatural accounts that postulate goodness simpliciter and thus this may give us reason to favour an Aristotelian account of goodness in their place.

Somebody could attempt to reformulate the open question argument so that it was aimed at attributive goodness.¹³ They could reformulate it something like this:

(1) If a good X could be defined naturalistically - that is, wholly in terms of natural properties – then the question of whether something that has those natural properties is a good X would not be an open question.

(2) The question of whether something that has some natural property is a good X is always open.

So

(3) Good Xs cannot be defined wholly in terms of natural properties.

However, this argument fails because premise two is false when it comes to *good* as an attributive adjective. This can be illustrated with an example. Imagine that the X in question is a toaster. If we know that a particular toaster is energy efficient, reliable, it toasts bread well and looks good in your kitchen then we would know that it is a good toaster. The question of whether it is a good toaster would then be closed. This is because, as Thomson points out, being a toaster “sets the standards that a K has to meet if it is to be good qua K. Thus being a toaster is being an artefact manufactured to toast, and that itself sets the following standard for being good qua toaster: toasting well” (Thomson, 2008, p. 21). Similarly, if my earlier chapter on Aristotelian metaphysics is correct then when a ‘natural’ thing (i.e. not an artefact) acts in accordance with its form and fulfils its ends we can reasonably say that it is a good example of its kind. All we need to do to understand whether something is a good example of its kind is to understand its form and ends and to know whether it fulfils them. This shows that in the case of *good* as an attributive adjective premise two is false. Thus, this reformulated version of the open question argument fails when it

¹³ My thanks go to David Oderberg for pointing this out.

comes to *good* as an attributive adjective. As such, this reformulated open question argument fails as a criticism of my account of goodness because *good* is an attributive adjective within my Aristotelian schema.

The strength of the open question argument has led many moral realists who subscribe to goodness simpliciter to instead give a non-natural account of goodness. In its broadest sense, non-naturalism is the thesis that moral philosophy is autonomous from the natural sciences. There are a number of further definitions of non-naturalism, but there are two (closely related) definitions in which we are interested. First, non-naturalism denotes the metaphysical thesis that moral properties, such as goodness, exist but they are not identical or reducible to natural properties in any interesting sense of the word natural. Second, non-naturalism denotes the semantic thesis that moral predicates and terms cannot be analyzed or explained in non-normative terms. We will mostly be interested in the first definition. However, it should be noted that the first definition, to some extent, implies the second definition because one explanation for why moral predicates/normative terms cannot be analysed in non-normative/natural terms is that normative terms denote non-natural properties.

3.3. Non-Natural Natural Law and Essential Reasons

I have now shown that the open question argument need not concern the Aristotelian. This was because it is primarily an argument against naturalist and supernaturalist account of goodness that subscribe to the idea of goodness simpliciter. Given then that Aristotelian does not believe in goodness simpliciter the open question argument is simply irrelevant. If anything, the open question could be seen as indirectly supporting the Aristotelian account of goodness as it dispatches with certain competing natural and supernatural accounts of goodness.

This does, however, leave the Aristotelian facing off against non-naturalistic account of goodness. In this section I will show that the Aristotelian can actually accept much of the non-naturalist definition of goodness and thus the conflict between the two positions may not be that great. Where they do clash is over the existence of goodness simpliciter. Moore, Ross and other traditional non-naturalists believe in goodness simpliciter, although whether they

are committed to this because of their non-naturalism per se is another matter. The Aristotelian does not accept the existence of goodness simpliciter and so in the next section I will present an Ockham's Razor style redundancy argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter. This should leave us in a position where we can accept most of what the non-naturalist wants to say about goodness without being obliged to follow them in their acceptance of the existence of goodness simpliciter.

In order to see how much of the non-naturalist's account of goodness the Aristotelian can accept let's begin by giving a non-naturalistic definition of goodness. Philip Stratton-Lake in his introduction to W. D. Ross's *The Right And The Good* gives a non-naturalistic definition of (intrinsic) goodness. He says that "for *X* to be good is for *X* to have features that give us reason to adopt some pro-attitude towards it" (Ross, 2002, p. xxii). A pro-attitude is an agent's attitude toward an action or object and includes states such as desire and approval. Defining a reason is fairly difficult and is a contentious topic in philosophy. However, as far as I can see most of the major definitions are available to the Aristotelian (for example see Scanlon, 1998, p. 17) and thus we need not concern ourselves with the precise definition of reasons here. So if we then accept this as a fairly standard non-naturalistic definition of goodness how much of this definition can the Aristotelian accept?

As far as I can see the Aristotelian can accept all of the definition given earlier albeit with some qualifications. Recall that for the Aristotelian the sorts of things that will be good for an agent will be relative to the agent in question. This is because something is good for an agent if it fulfils that agent's ends. The agent's ends are then defined by the agent's form or essence/nature. Now whether or not something fulfils a thing's ends will, of course, depend upon its properties or features. As such, the Aristotelian can accept the first part of Stratton-Lake's definition; 'for *X* to be good is for *X* to have **features...**'

The Aristotelian can also accept the second part of Stratton-Lake's definition; '... that give us reason to adopt some pro-attitude towards it'. Recall earlier that I argued that a thing 'should' act in accordance with its ends because everything is directed towards the fulfilment of its ends. I didn't define this 'should' in any particular way. Indeed I am not sure how much more there is to say about this 'should', but it's fairly easy to imagine that this 'should' relates to the concept of a reason. If humans 'should' pursue knowledge, because this is in accordance with their form/nature, then surely it follows that they have a reason to pursue

knowledge. Perhaps the 'should' and the reason are just two different ways of looking at the same thing or perhaps the reason follows from the 'should'. For my purposes it doesn't matter and it will depend upon one's definition of a reason. Personally, I suspect that reasons are fairly basic and so they may simply be two different ways of looking at the same thing. As such, the Aristotelian can accept the second part of Stratton-Lake's definition.

This can be further illustrated with an example; suppose that one of the ends of man is knowledge (I will defend this further in the next chapter) and suppose that X is a source of knowledge. This means that one of the features of X is that it is a source of knowledge. Further, since one of the ends of man is to pursue knowledge this means he 'should' pursue knowledge. Since X is a source of knowledge it seems that he has, at least some pro tanto, reason to pursue X. Thus, it seems that the Aristotelian can affirm all of Stratton-Lake's definition.

Where the Aristotelian and the non-naturalist such as Stratton-Lake or Ross will come apart is over the idea of goodness simpliciter. Stratton-Lake and Ross both believe that if X has a certain feature (call it feature A) then because X has feature A, and for that reason alone, all rational agents have reason to adopt some pro-attitude towards X. As such, X is good simpliciter. Simply by merit of having feature A X is good without reference to anything else. The Aristotelian here will disagree with the non-naturalist. For the Aristotelian whether or not feature A gives us reason to adopt some pro-attitude towards X will depend ultimately on whether feature A is fulfilling of our ends as defined by our form or nature. As such the reasons that we have will always be relative to our form or nature. Thus, I think that the Aristotelian can only believe in agent relative reasons. This is because the reasons that an agent has will be determined by/relative to the agent's form or nature. This means that whether or not something is good (for that agent) will ultimately depend on the agent's form. As such, there will be no such thing as good simpliciter. Goodness will always be relative to an agent's form or nature.

However, the non-naturalist such as Ross or Stratton-Lake may well believe that some features, such as A, provide all agents with a reason to adopt some pro-attitude toward X, regardless of the agent's form or nature. As such the non-naturalist may well postulate agent neutral reasons and thus good simpliciter (something that is good regardless of the agent in question).

To further clarify the distinction between the non-naturalist and the Aristotelian we can imagine that the agent neutral reasons, which the non-naturalist postulates, flow ultimately from the object (X) or feature (A) itself. However, the agent relative reasons, which the Aristotelian postulates, flow ultimately from the subject's nature or form (perhaps then via the object X or feature A in question). Call these sorts of reasons essential reasons because they flow ultimately from a thing's essence.

As such, we can see that the Aristotelian can actually accept most of what non-naturalists such as Ross or Stratton-Lake want to say about goodness. Potentially this may then lead to a version of non-natural natural law ethics! This at first seems like a contradiction but I do not think this is the case on closer inspection. This is because the reason there is 'natural' in natural law ethics is because the good and the right for an agent will be determined ultimately by the agent's essence or nature. However, this makes no claim at all about whether goodness or reasons themselves should be defined naturally, supernaturally or non-naturally. The Aristotelian is free to adopt any of these accounts and it is certainly open to him to adopt a non-natural account of goodness as I have outlined it.

The fact that I am free to adopt any of these accounts, and in particular a non-natural account of goodness, distinguishes my account of Aristotelian ethics from the medieval neo-Aristotelians, who would have been unaware of thinkers such as Moore and Ross (given they predate them by quite some time), but also certain contemporary Aristotelians who try to ground Aristotelian ethics in Aristotelian metaphysics, for examples of this see Oderberg (2000). My view is reasonably original in that it ties the ethical schema in to the metaphysical schema whilst remaining open to non-natural accounts of goodness and, as we shall see, a reasons-based account of obligation.

As such, the biggest area where the Aristotelian and non-naturalists, such as Moore, Ross and Stratton-Lake, disagree is over the idea of goodness simpliciter and it is to this question I shall turn in the next section. In the next section I will utilize an Ockham's Razor style redundancy argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter and I will argue that we should avoid postulating it all together and simply postulate goodness as I conceive of it.

To conclude section three then, so far I have done a number of things. In section two I outlined Geach's distinction between attributive and predicative accounts of goodness, I explained Thomson's views on the nature of goodness and I then explained my own account

of goodness. I then presented a metaphysical argument to support my account of goodness by showing that if the metaphysical schema I outlined and defended in chapter one is true then my Aristotelian account of goodness follows from it. In this section I engaged with alternative account of goodness. I first explained the distinction between naturalism and supernaturalism and showed that the open question argument poses significant problems for these particularly with regard to their commitment to the existence of goodness simpliciter. I then outlined a prominent example of non-naturalism and showed that the Aristotelian can accept much of what the non-naturalist wants to say about goodness other than the existence of goodness simpliciter. In order to fully justify my account of goodness all that remains for me to do is to respond to various criticisms of the Aristotelian account of goodness and to present an argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter. This is what I will do in the next section, section four, before finally bringing everything together and summarizing and concluding this chapter in section five.

4. Just Good

In section two I outlined my account of goodness and presented an argument in its favour. In section three I engaged with the open question argument and various alternative accounts of goodness. I showed that the open question argument need not concern the Aristotelian although it does pose problems for forms of naturalism and supernaturalism that postulate goodness simpliciter. I also showed that the Aristotelian can accept much of what the non-naturalist wants to say about goodness other than their belief in goodness simpliciter.

Now that I have done this the aims of this section are two-fold; to engage with arguments against the Aristotelian account and to present an argument against goodness simpliciter. I will engage with three arguments against the Aristotelian account of goodness. The first is a criticism that is sometimes called the fact/value dichotomy. I think that this is fairly easy to respond to but it is worth discussing because of its historical importance and its impact on ethics and philosophy. The second criticism is a series of criticisms originally put forward by Zimmerman and then echoed and strengthened by Orsi. Finally, I will respond to an argument against the Aristotelian account put forward by Pigden and in responding to this I will present argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter. In the next section I will

bring everything together, summarize and draw some conclusions. Let us now turn to the first criticism: the fact/value dichotomy.

4.1. The Fact/Value Dichotomy

This sort of concern has come in a number of different forms over the years and has been expressed in a number of different ways. Sometimes it is described as the fact/value dichotomy, sometimes it is described as the axiom that ‘you can’t get an ought from an is’ and so on. Perhaps the earliest formulation can be traced back to Hume. I will allow Hume to express his argument in his own words:

“In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given; for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason” (Hume, 1739, p. 335).

Hume’s argument is fairly straightforward. He notices that many traditional systems of morality start with statements about how the world is non-evaluatively and how these non-evaluative facts relate to one another. They then move onto statements about what one ought to do and how the world ought to be. However, these ‘ought’ statements seem to be of a very different nature to statements of facts about how the world is and it is not clear, to Hume, how these ‘ought’ statements can be arrived at based on very different ‘is’ statements. This severing of ‘ought’ from ‘is’ statements has thus been called Hume’s guillotine. This sort of concern equally applies to the apparent difficulty in arriving at value statements from a set of

purely non-evaluative descriptive statements.¹⁴ This is because, once again, value statements seem to be of a very different nature to purely non-evaluative descriptive statement. Lisska explains, “Hume’s point is that, as every elementary student of logic knows, one cannot have more in the conclusion of a deductive argument than is contained in the premises. If a value is not contained in the premiss or premises of a factual statement, then it cannot be derived validly from that statement about the world” (Lisska, 1996, p. 196). As such, the fact/value dichotomy is a criticism of a great number of traditional systems of morality of which Aristotelianism is just one. How then does the Aristotelian respond to the fact/value dichotomy and arrive at value statements, and conclusions about what we ‘ought’ to do, based on purely descriptive non-evaluative statements?

4.2. Responding to the Fact/Value Dichotomy

The Aristotelian can respond to this problem by appealing to the teleology inherent in nature. If we have a teleological view of essence, one in which a thing has ends, then a thing’s essence is not an inert static property but instead is something that is striving towards completion or fulfilment. If I have been successful in my earlier chapter on metaphysics then I have shown that this account of essences and teleology is plausible. A thing’s ends are what it is ‘for’. It is what its purpose is and what it (literally) ‘should’ do. This is the sense in which Aristotelians talk about value and goodness. When a thing fulfils its ends then that is good for it. This is because it is behaving and is as it should be. This means that the ‘oughts’ and the values are built into the metaphysical system right from the start. Lisska explains, “If a natural property can be dispositional [teleological] in character, then it is involved in a process ‘naturally’ – or from its very nature. It is disposed towards some goal or fulfilment, which is its end. The tulip bulb is directed ‘naturally’ towards becoming a tulip plant and not a hippopotamus. A hippopotamus embryo is structured ‘naturally’ towards becoming a certain kind of an animal, and not a palm tree or a corn plant. Individuals in natural kinds tend towards the ends or ‘perfections’ which are built into their dispositional properties” (Lisska, 1996, p. 198). As such, a thing’s actualities (what the Humean might call the ‘facts’

¹⁴ It should be noted that although Moore’s open question argument and Hume’s guillotine are perhaps in a similar vein they are fundamentally different arguments and require different responses. As such, I have responded to the open question argument earlier and will now discuss Hume’s guillotine separately.

about it) and a thing's ends (what the Aristotelian sees as a thing's good) are two sides of the same metaphysical coin and are inextricably related. This is because a thing's actualities and form determine its ends.¹⁵

As such, according to Lisska "There is no fact/value dichotomy because the 'value' – in this case, the 'end' of the natural process – is the result of the normal development of the 'fact' – in this case the dispositional property. There is no radical bifurcation between fact and value because the value – i.e. the 'good' – is nothing more than the development of the process structured by the nature of the set of dispositions" (Lisska, 1996, p. 199). As such, the value does not need to be added to the fact because the value as a fact is a state of completion of the end as a fact. As Oderberg points out, because of this, "the Humean can forge no relevant distinction between fact and value. Indeed, it is value 'all the way down'" (Oderberg, 2000, p. 15). As such, the Aristotelian need not be concerned about the (supposed) fact/value dichotomy. Once we understand a thing's ends and the teleology inherent in nature then we know what a thing is for and how it should behave.

Hume then may be correct in arguing that we can't 'derive an ought from an is' in that, strictly speaking, a syllogism containing purely non-evaluative descriptive premises will not have a conclusion containing prescriptive statements or evaluative (value) statements. However, this does nothing to show that we cannot explain why something is valuable, or more generally come to an evaluative conclusion, purely by appealing to non-evaluative descriptive statements. Thus, we can explain what is valuable and what a thing 'ought' to do in the way I outlined earlier by appealing to purely non-evaluative descriptive statements about a thing's ends and its circumstances.

Thus, we can determine when something is a good example of its kind and we can tell what is going to be good for it. As explained earlier, for the Aristotelian something is a good example of its kind when it is fulfilling its ends and thus is behaving as it should. Similarly something will be an intrinsic good for an agent when it fulfils that agent's ends. As such, it will be something that the agent should have and which will allow the agent to be a good example of its kind.

¹⁵ See chapter 1 on Aristotelian Metaphysics and Modern Science for more details.

4.3. Orsi and Zimmerman's Argument

Now that I have responded to the fact/value dichotomy I will now respond to a series of criticisms put forward originally by Zimmerman in his *The Nature of Intrinsic Value* (2001) and then reformulated by Orsi in his *Value Theory* (2015). I will then discuss an argument against the Aristotelian account put forward by Pigden and in responding to this I will present an argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter.

Orsi echoes an earlier argument put forward by Zimmerman (2001) which attempts to show that Thomson and Geach are incorrect in rejecting goodness simpliciter (*good* as a predicative adjective). Zimmerman's argument has three distinct points. Orsi restates all three points of the argument and then considers a response which Foot might make to Zimmerman's third point. He then in turn responds to Foot's potential response to Zimmerman. He then concludes that this new strengthened argument shows that Thomson and Geach are incorrect in rejecting a predicative account of goodness (goodness simpliciter). I will summarize and respond to each of Zimmerman's points in turn. Along the way I will outline Foot's response to Zimmerman's third point and will show (using Orsi) that Foot's response fails, but I will then offer my own response to Zimmerman's third point which neither Orsi nor Zimmerman consider.

4.4. Zimmerman's Ethical Goodness Point One

Zimmerman takes Thomson as his main opponent however his criticisms can also be applied to my schema and Aristotelianism in general. The first point he makes is that Thomson's view seems incoherent. Thomson claims that goodness is always goodness in a way and thus there is no such property as being just good (good simpliciter). At the same time, Thomson believes that being good for someone or something is always being good for someone or something in a way. However, Zimmerman thinks, that she doesn't therefore conclude that there is no such property as being just good for (good for simpliciter). As such, she owes us an explanation as to why being good is different from being good for (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 20).

I think that this criticism is particularly weak. I can't see any good reason as to why Thomson wouldn't think that there is no such property as being just good for (good for simpliciter) and so I don't believe she would think that being good for and being good are different (in the way that Zimmerman seems to be interested in). As such, I believe that Thomson would think that there is no such property as being just good for (good for simpliciter). Either way even if she doesn't think this then I do. There is no such property as being just good for (good for simpliciter). Everything that is good for, say, a person will be good for them in a particular way. It will fulfil a particular end. What all things that are good for humans have in common is that they all fulfil human ultimate ends, but they may well fulfil different ends and in different ways. As such, just saying "This is good for you" is an incomplete explanation and evaluation of that thing's status toward/for you. This is because it is going to be good for you in a particular way, rather than simply 'good for you' in no particular way. I don't think that this is a particularly strange idea. If, as an adult, a doctor tried to give you an injection and the only thing he told you was that it was "Good for you" you would still be in the dark about what it was actually going to do and you would be justified in feeling uneasy. You may then choose to trust him but it would be perfectly reasonable for you to want to know in what way it was good for you. As such, I don't think that this particular criticism of Zimmerman's has any weight at all.

4.5. Zimmerman's Ethical Goodness Point Two

Zimmerman's second point is that even if we accept that goodness is always goodness in a way this doesn't therefore mean that goodness is not a property, but that it is simply a determinable property. A determinable property is one which "needs to be 'determined' or specified in one way or another. Such is the case for being shaped or being coloured: nothing can be shaped without being shaped *some* way (square, circular, etc.), but this seems no reason to deny being shaped or being coloured the status of properties" (Orsi, 2015, p. 56).

Again I don't think that this is a particularly good criticism. The Aristotelian certainly believes that a thing is good because of its properties. A lion will be a good lion if it has the property of bravery, strength, sharp teeth and an impressive mane and so on. This is because these properties fulfil, and show that the lion is fulfilling, its ends and thus it is and is behaving as it should be. Veatch similarly explains with regard to a strawberry being good on

the basis of its properties, “is it not possible to regard the properties of the strawberry – its juiciness, sweetness, firmness, redness, etc. - not merely as properties that are just those particular determinations that they are, but, rather, as properties that have had a history, as it were, in that they have come to be in the strawberry and hence are so many perfections which the strawberry might be said to have attained?” (Veatch, 1966, p. 111). Again, the strawberry is a good strawberry on the basis of its properties which fulfil, and show that it is fulfilling, its ends.

This illustrates that what unifies all things that are good is that they are fulfilling their ends (even though they may have very different properties which do this). If one wants to say that ‘having fulfilled ends’ is a property (i.e. something can have the property of ‘having fulfilled ends’) then this poses no difficulties for my account of goodness and my project more generally. Goodness would then be an instance of a determinable property. As such, I can simply accept Zimmerman’s criticism. However, whether or not ‘having fulfilled ends’ does count as a property in and of itself will depend on your metaphysical view of properties but I am not sure that anything of importance rests on it with regard to my project.

Put another way, I can agree with Zimmerman that there is such a property as ‘being shaped’ but it does not follow that there is such property as ‘being shaped simpliciter.’ This is because if something is shaped it will always be shaped in a particular way. In the same way, I can accept Zimmerman’s claim that being good is property whilst still insisting that there is no such property as being good simpliciter. As such, once again, I don’t think that this is a particularly good criticism of Aristotelianism.

4.6. Zimmerman’s Ethical Goodness Point Three

Zimmerman’s main attack on Thomson aims to show that Thomson cannot account for intrinsic goodness without appealing to some form of predicative goodness. Zimmerman starts by observing that the property which Moore and other axiologists are traditionally interested in is not some form of pure, unadorned goodness, but intrinsic goodness. Being intrinsically good does seem to be one particular way in which a thing can be good and so in this sense it doesn’t seem to clash with Thomson’s view as it is still goodness-in-a-way. However, so Zimmerman argues, intrinsic goodness seems to be logically predicative rather

than attributive and Thomson and the Aristotelian will want to reject this. As such, if Zimmerman is correct and intrinsic goodness is logically predicative then Thomson and the Aristotelian who deny that there is predicative goodness are incorrect.

Zimmerman explains that from the premises ‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of mind’, and ‘a state of mind is a state of affairs’,¹⁶ we can conclude ‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of affairs’ (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 21). This seems to appeal to a form of predicative goodness.

Recall Geach’s account for what makes an adjective predicative, “in a phrase ‘an A B’ (‘A’ being an adjective and ‘B’ being a noun) ‘A’ is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication ‘is an A B’ splits up logically into a pair of predications ‘is a B’ and ‘is A’” (Geach, 1956, p. 33). In Zimmerman’s first premise ‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of mind’ ‘*intrinsically good*’ is the adjective and ‘*state of mind*’ is the noun. If we grant that the second premise (‘a state of mind is a state of affairs’) is true, then because the conclusion (‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of affairs’) seems to follow from the first two premises then this shows that the adjective ‘*intrinsically good*’ and the noun ‘*state of mind*’ can be split up. This is because the adjective ‘*intrinsically good*’ and the noun ‘*state of mind*’ are next to each other in the first premise but not in the conclusion. If this is the case then according to Geach’s own criterion intrinsic goodness must be predicative rather than attributive. It seems that something could be just intrinsically good simpliciter.

Zimmerman then explains that Thomson, in order to avoid the conclusion that intrinsic goodness is a form of predicative goodness, could then still insist on asking; what kind of way of being good is this? However, according to Zimmerman, both answers that could be given are unsatisfactory:

1) X is intrinsically good when X’s goodness depends only on X’s intrinsic properties.

However, this answer seems to appeal to some concept of pure, unadorned goodness, which

¹⁶ Many here may reject the idea that a state of mind is a state of affairs. However, I am here simply reporting Zimmerman’s argument. Further, I suspect that if somebody raised this criticism Zimmerman could probably rephrase his argument to avoid this objection without too much difficulty. As such, I am going to grant that a state of mind is a state of affairs because I think there are other and better ways to respond.

Thomson and the Aristotelian would reject and as such this answer is unavailable to Thomson and the Aristotelian.

2) X is intrinsically good when x is non-derivatively good. Something is derivatively good when its goodness is owed to the goodness of something else. This is not really a way of being good, but rather is a way of being related to something which is good. A standard example of a derivative good is an instrumental good. The thing itself isn't good but it allows something good to happen (or something like that). Therefore, this response seems either uninformative or false. Either it is simply telling you what an intrinsic good isn't, in which case it hasn't told you what it is, or it is comparing but differentiating it from something which isn't really good at all which might mean that intrinsic goodness isn't good either, which is absurd. Orsi explains "x's being derivatively good means that x's goodness is owed to some extent to the goodness of something else. And this (despite its adverbial form) is not really a way of being good, but rather a way of being related to something else which is good (in some way). A fortiori, being non-derivatively good is not a way of being good either" (Orsi, 2015, p. 57).

As such, it seems that both responses are unavailable to Thomson and perhaps the Aristotelian. This seems to be a problem for them. This is because they then have no explanation for what makes something intrinsically good without adopting some form of predicative account of goodness which they can't accept. The alternative would be to deny the existence of intrinsic goodness altogether. However, this would be a very strange conclusion which they also would not want to accept. As such, it seems that both Thomson and the Aristotelian are in trouble. Therefore, they must find a way to account for intrinsic goodness attributively.

However, Zimmerman's own account of what makes something intrinsically good ends up being dangerously close to the account given by Foot who is an Aristotelian. Perhaps then there is a solution available to the Aristotelian which is close to Zimmerman's account but still distinctively Aristotelian (i.e. Foot's account of intrinsic goodness).

4.7. Zimmerman's Account of Intrinsic Goodness

Zimmerman's account of intrinsic goodness says that being intrinsically good coincides with being ethically good. Standard candidates for intrinsic goodness such as beauty, pleasure and knowledge are such that "there is a moral requirement to favour them (welcome them, admire them, take satisfaction in them, and so on) for their own sakes" (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 24). Orsi then notes that "Being ethically valuable in this sense seems indeed to be a distinctive way of being good: what is good for people, or good as an object of its kind, might or might not be also ethically valuable ... If so it seems we can restore the idea that when we talk of what is 'just' good, or of good states of affairs, and so on, we are ascribing a specific evaluative property: being ethically good" (Orsi, 2015, p. 57). As such, if we accept Zimmerman's account of intrinsic/ethical goodness then we must accept that there is a way that something could be just good/good simpliciter. However, as we shall see, Zimmerman's account is very similar to Foot's account of intrinsic goodness and thus perhaps the Aristotelian could largely accept Zimmerman's account but then modify it in accordance with Foot's account so that it remains distinctively Aristotelian.

4.8. Foot's Account of Intrinsic Goodness

Foot formulates her account of intrinsic goodness in the context of her attempting to respond to the idea of an unqualifiedly good state of affairs (and thus potentially better and best state of affairs) as envisioned by act consequentialists.¹⁷ According to these act consequentialists more of something, or some collection of things, is always going to be better than less of it, for example pleasure. A pleasurable state of affairs is unqualifiedly good. A more pleasurable state of affairs is better and the most pleasurable state of affairs possible is the best (or something like this). Given this conception of goodness, and when coupled with the compelling thought that "it can never be right to prefer a worse state of affairs to a better" (Foot, 1985, p. 198) we arrive at an act consequentialist moral system. This is because if the maximally pleasurable state of affairs is the best state of affairs and we should prefer the best state of affairs then we would naturally seek to bring about the most pleasurable state of

¹⁷ As a result, the goal of her paper is very similar to the goal of Thomson's 1994 paper 'Goodness and Utilitarianism'.

affairs (and this is utilitarianism in its simplest and most general form). Foot wants to respond to this by challenging the very legitimacy of talk of simply better or worse states of affairs and of unqualifiedly good state of affairs (which is similar to the idea of good simpliciter). At the same time she wants to preserve our linguistic practices when it comes to saying that one state of affairs is good and another is better or worse.

Foot begins by trying to explain what we mean by 'a good state of affairs'. She accepts that such phrases are entirely appropriate, "combinations of words such as 'a good state of affairs' are beyond reproach or question, for such expressions are extremely familiar. Do we not use them every day? ... Surely no one can seriously suggest that 'good state of affairs' is an expression that we do not understand?" (Foot, 1985, p. 199). However, Foot then points out that for at least some uses of sentences like 'that is good' their truth or falsity is highly context sensitive.

She gives the example of two people watching a sports competition. She points out that of the exact same game and indeed the exact same events they might well say completely opposite things and yet both be true. One might say 'overall it went well and things turned great in the second half.' The other might say 'overall it went badly and things turned terrible in the second half.' The reason this is possible is that they are supporting different teams and implicitly meant by statements like 'that was good' is actually 'that was good for my team.' Foot writes "Now what shall we say about the truth or falsity of these utterances? It certainly seems that they can be straightforwardly true or false. For perhaps what appears to be going to turn out well is really going to turn out badly: what seemed to be a good thing was really a bad thing, and an apparently good state of affairs was the prelude to disaster. 'You are quite wrong' one person may say to another and events may show that he *was* wrong. Nevertheless we can see that this quasi-objectivity, which is not to be questioned when people with similar aims, interests, or desires are speaking together, flies out of the window if we try to set the utterances of those in one group against the utterances of those in another. One will say 'a good thing' where another says 'a bad thing', and it is the same for states of affairs" (Foot, 1985, p. 200). However, this seems to be trivially true. Surely these uses of statements like 'that is a good state of affairs' are entirely different to similar statements about moral matters or international disasters and so on. Foot explains "Now it may be thought that these must be rather special uses of expressions such as 'good state of affairs', because we surely must speak quite differently when we are talking about public matters, as when for instances we

react to news of some far-away disaster. We say that the news is bad because a lot of people have lost their lives in an earthquake” (Foot, 1985, pp. 200-201). Perhaps statements of these sorts are more objective and less context sensitive.

Foot then begins to explore some of the different options about what people might mean when they say that a particular state of affairs is, for example, ‘the best state of affairs’ when considering things like earthquakes or famines. She first suggests that they might mean that the state of affairs is “the best state of affairs from an impersonal point of view” (Foot, 1985, p. 202). However, she points out that to simply define ‘the best state of affairs from an impersonal point of view’ as one in which there is maximum welfare is no help at all as it is not supposed to be true by definition. She writes that the consequentialist is likely to think that “a good state of affairs from an impersonal point of view presumably means a state of affairs which is generally advantageous, or advantageous to most people, or something like that. About the idea of maximum welfare we are not (or so we are supposing for the sake of the argument) in any difficulty. But an account of the idea of a good state of affairs which simply defines it in terms of maximum welfare is no help to us here. For our problem is that something is supposed to be being said about maximum welfare and we cannot figure out what this is” (Foot, 1985, p. 202). The consequentialist must still give us an independent reason for thinking that ‘the best state of affairs from an impersonal point of view’ is one in which there is maximum welfare.

A second response the consequentialist might give is to say that what we are dealing with when discussing things like earthquakes is states of affairs which are good or bad from the moral point view. As such, a particular state of affairs would be the best state of affairs from a moral point of view. Foot explains “the consequentialist might say that what we should really be dealing with in this discussion is states of affairs which are good or bad, not simply, but from the moral point of view. The qualification is, it will be suggested, tacitly understood in moral contexts, where no individual speaker gives his own private interests or allegiances a special place in any debate, the speaker-relativity found in other contexts thus being left behind” (Foot, 1985, p. 202). The great advantage to this definition, for the consequentialist, is that if it is correct it seems impossible to deny the conclusion that the right action is action producing this ‘best state of affairs’ which the consequentialist will be keen to point out and adopt as part of his theory.

Foot is quite happy to accept that when people say things like ‘this is the best state of affairs’ without specifying in what way they may well implicitly mean ‘this is the best state of affairs from a moral point of view’. However, she makes two responses. The first is that simply adding ‘from a moral point of view’ does not tell us anything about what that state of affairs would be like and so it may well be meaningless. Further, even if the utilitarian does specify that a moral point of view is one with maximal pleasure we still need to be given further reasons to accept that this is the case. This is because once again it is not supposed to be true by definition, and so this statement may not be referring to anything real. Foot explains, “Summing up the results reached so far we may say that if taken in one way, with no special reference to morality, talk about good states of affairs seems to be speaker-relative. But if the qualification ‘from a moral point of view’ is added the resulting expression may mean nothing; and it may lack a reference when a special consequentialist theory has given it a sense” (Foot, 1985, p. 204).

It should be noted that Foot is not saying that the consequentialist cannot do this. As such, she is not creating a straw-man. What she is simply saying is that just because, for example, a utilitarian may convince you that we should always prefer ‘a better state of affairs to a worse’ (which she accepts) and that things like pleasure are good this does not, by definition, commit us to the view that, for example, a maximally pleasurable state of affairs is the best state of affairs. The non-consequentialist can accept that we should bring about the best state of affairs (from a moral point of view) and that, for example, pleasure is good without needing to surrender to the consequentialist position.

However, Foot now wants to go one stage further and to specify what she believes is meant by the ‘best state of affairs from a moral point of view’. She attempts to do this by utilizing the concept of virtues and the virtuous person. It is here where I believe she begins to go wrong. Foot begins by accepting that on some level a moral person would want maximal happiness. She says (reasonably) that it seems obvious that benevolence is a virtue and that from the point of view of benevolence happiness would be seen as a good thing. She writes of a moral person, “surely he must want others to be happy. To deny this would be to deny that benevolence is a virtue – and who wants to deny that?” (Foot, 1985, p. 204).

However, Foot then goes on to say that there are other virtues besides benevolence such as justice or friendship and this might on occasion clash with the end of maximising

happiness. As an example, justice may require the punishment, and thus unhappiness, of the guilty regardless of the effect this has on the total level of happiness. Thus from the point of view of all of the virtues, and from the point of view of a perfectly virtuous person we have no reason to assume that a maximally happy state of affairs will be the ‘best state of affairs’. Foot explains, “When we see it like this, and give expressions such as ‘best outcome’ and ‘good state of affairs’ no special meaning in moral contexts other than the one that the virtues give them, we shall no longer think the paradoxical thought that it is sometimes right to act in such a way that the total outcome, consisting of one’s action and its results, is less good than some other accessible at the time. In the abstract a benevolent person must wish that the loss and harm should be minimized. He does not, however, wish that the whole consisting of a killing to minimize killings should be actualized either by his agency or that of anyone else. So there is no reason on this score to think that he must regard it as ‘the better state of affairs’” (Foot, 1985, pp. 206-207).

Now it should be noted here that Foot is not, as I read her, presenting any substantive argument for this account of what it means to say that a state of affairs is “the best state of affairs from a moral point of view.” All she is doing is explaining how there are alternative ways of understanding ‘the best state of affairs from a moral point of view’ to the one offered by the utilitarian or consequentialist. As such, she is showing how the virtue ethicist or Aristotelian can accept that happiness is good and that we should always aim to bring about ‘the best state of affairs from a moral point of view’ without having to accept consequentialism. The virtue ethicist can do this by instead understanding ‘the best state of affairs from a moral point of view’ in the context of the virtues instead of in the context of happiness (as the utilitarian would).

Recall Zimmerman’s account of intrinsic goods, “there is a moral requirement to favour them (welcome them, admire them, take satisfaction in them, and so on) for their own sakes” (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 24). If we simply understand ‘a moral requirement’ in the same way that Foot understands ‘from a moral point of view’ i.e. in accordance and in the context

of the virtues then it seems that we can accept Zimmerman's account of intrinsic goodness (which is a predicative account) whilst holding on to our Aristotelianism.¹⁸

A fairly minor criticism that some might raise against Foot here is that there are intrinsically valuable things such as beauty and knowledge that are intrinsically valuable but which are, at least not directly, involved in morality thus Foot's account would fail to explain why we should pursue these since, so they would argue, there is no (specifically) moral reason to pursue these things.

I think that Foot can respond to this criticism by simply reminding this critic that for the Aristotelian the distinction between (what many non-Aristotelians would understand as) the moral aspects of life and other aspects of life is much less pronounced or important. The aim for the human, as we shall see in the next chapter, is to live 'a good life' and this should be understood in a broad way. This is a life that is good both with regard to our interactions with others, which most non-Aristotelians would agree is a moral issue, and with regard to our dealings with ourselves and the wider world, which many non-Aristotelians would not consider to be a specifically moral issue instead it would be merely a prudential issue or something like that. As such, it is bad for humans to not enjoy beauty or to pursue knowledge. Whether one wishes to label this as a specifically moral failing is up to them. What matters from the Aristotelian perspective is that it is bad and not conducive to a good life.

However, I think there is a much more serious flaw in Foot's account. If it is the virtues themselves that make something intrinsically good then the fact that something is intrinsically good in and of itself loses its role as a theoretical guide for practical decisions. This is because if it is the virtues that will be guiding people on how to act and on what is intrinsically good then this means that the intrinsic goodness of a thing, in and of itself, does not provide us with any reason for action as this role has now been given to the virtues. You will pursue 'good state of affair X' or 'intrinsic good Y' because the virtues tell you to do this. However, you won't then be pursuing 'good state of affairs X' because it is good, and 'intrinsic good Y' because it is intrinsically good, instead you will only be pursuing them

¹⁸ Whether Foot's account would make 'good state of affairs' and intrinsic goods attributive or predicative would depend upon how one conceived of the virtues and what made them apply to humans. However, I won't explore this further as it has no bearing on my criticism of Foot.

because the virtues tell you to do this and this seems to be a very strange conclusion. After all, it seems obvious that the reason you pursue something intrinsically good is because it is intrinsically good and for that reason alone (unless there are other additional instrumental reasons at work as well). Orsi explains ‘if Foot’s thesis is correct, then axiology would lose its role as a guide for moral claims’ (Orsi, 2015, p. 58). As such, it seems that Foot’s response to Zimmerman’s third point has failed. This means that a different response is needed.

4.9. My Response to Zimmerman’s Third Point

Recall Zimmerman’s third criticism of Thomson. He aims to show that Thomson cannot account for intrinsic goodness without appealing to some form of predicative goodness. This is because the property which axiologists are traditionally interested in is not some form of pure, unadorned goodness, but intrinsic goodness. Further, if Zimmerman is correct in saying that from the premises ‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of mind’, and ‘a state of mind is a state of affairs’, we can conclude ‘Judith being pleased is an intrinsically good state of affairs’ (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 21) then this seems to appeal to a form of predicative goodness. If this is the case then *intrinsic goodness* must be predicative rather than attributive. This is because the adjective ‘*intrinsically good*’ and the noun ‘*state of mind*’ can be split up because they are next to each other in the first premise but not in the conclusion. If this is the case then according to Geach’s own criterion *intrinsic goodness* must be predicative rather than attributive. It seems that something could be just intrinsically good simpliciter. If Thomson, or the Aristotelian, insists upon still asking in what way intrinsic goodness is good then the two natural answers fail (see section 4.6) and thus Thomson and the Aristotelian should accept that *intrinsic goodness* is predicative.

I don’t think that Zimmerman’s third point is particularly compelling. I suspect that Thomson could respond without too much difficulty and certainly a more traditional Aristotelian can respond. The problem with this criticism is that it doesn’t even consider the Aristotelian conception of intrinsic goodness which is linked to the Aristotelian metaphysical schema and so Zimmerman’s argument is implicitly question begging. The Aristotelian can simply respond to Zimmerman’s argument by saying that the two possible explanations that

he offers for what makes something intrinsically good are not exhaustive, and thus he has created a false dilemma. The Aristotelian can then offer their definition of an intrinsic good.

I have already explained the Aristotelian conception of an intrinsic good earlier in section 2.2 but to recap: Intrinsic goods are good because they fulfil a thing's ends. Straightaway many philosophers may feel that this flies in the face of the definition of an intrinsic good. However, when an Aristotelian talks about an intrinsic good they are talking about something that is intrinsically 'good for' a thing. They are intrinsically good for a thing because they fulfil its ends in and of themselves. Knowledge, for example, is intrinsically good for human beings in the same way that health and strength are good for a lion. This is not because they get their possessors something, or allows them to do something, or brings them pleasure (or whatever) although they may well do this too. Instead it is simply good for them. It makes them better examples of their kind. A man with knowledge and friendship is in a better position (in a pre-moral sense at least) than a man without knowledge or friendship and a strong healthy lion is better than a sickly weak lion.

This account of intrinsic goodness fits into neither of Zimmerman's options and yet it does offer an account of how something can be intrinsically good that is available to the Aristotelian. As such, Zimmerman has offered a false dichotomy and the Aristotelian need not be concerned.¹⁹

It also seems to me that this general argumentative strategy is unlikely to work. There are many examples which obviously involve attributive goodness but where we can still linguistically separate the adjective 'good' from the noun it modifies. As an example whilst all 'good' sportsmen are likely to have some things in common there is no such property as being a 'good sportsman simpliciter.' Someone who is good at one sport may well be very bad at another sport. Further, generally speaking it is good for basketball players to be very tall, but the opposite is true of gymnasts and jockeys. Similarly generally speaking it is good for rugby players to be heavy and very muscular but the opposite is true of long distance runners. As such, there is no such thing as being a 'good sportsman simpliciter.' This doesn't

¹⁹ I suspect that Thomson could also respond to Zimmerman by appealing to her idea of goodness-fixing kinds. It could be argued that her goodness-fixing kinds are very similar to the Aristotelian idea of a thing's form. A thing's form determines its ends which determine how it 'should' be and thus when it is good and what is good for it. Thomson goodness-fixing kinds could play a similar role and thus she could perhaps respond to Zimmerman this way. However, whether she would want to do this (perhaps it would make her view too similar to main stream Aristotelianism for her liking) and so on is another question that I leave to her and her defenders.

mean that all good sportsmen won't have some properties in common, for example having good cardiovascular fitness, but what it does mean is that in the world of sports one size does not fit all. However, despite the fact that there is no such property as 'being a good sportsman simpliciter' we can still separate the adjective 'good sportsman' from the noun or proper noun it modifies.

For example:

P1. David Beckham is a good footballer.

P2. Footballers are sportsmen.

Conclusion: Therefore, David Beckham is a good sportsman.

Here the adjective '*good*' has been split from the proper noun it modifies (David Beckham), but this does nothing to show that in the world of sports there is any such thing as a 'good sportsman simpliciter' or that David Beckham is a 'good sportsman simpliciter.' For all we know he may be very bad at tennis or golf. Alternatively he may be very good at all sports but each of these skill sets, whilst overlapping, is distinct. We can run similar examples in the world of art. If X is a good painting it follows that it is a good piece of art but it does not follow that it is a good statue and that there is such a property as 'being a good piece of art simpliciter.' As such, it seems to me that this whole argumentative strategy by Orsi and Zimmerman is unlikely to work.

It should be noted that Zimmerman and Orsi whilst attempting to answer Geach's challenge for what makes an adjective predicative rather than attributive have, in fact, failed to do this. Recall that Geach writes "in a phrase 'an A B' ('A' being an adjective and 'B' being a noun) 'A' is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication 'is an A B' splits up logically into a pair of predications 'is a B' and 'is A'; Otherwise I shall say that 'A' is a (logically) attributive adjective" (Geach, 1956, p. 33). Zimmerman and Orsi believe they have answered Geach's challenge using the adjective '*good*' by splitting it from the noun it modifies (state of mind) and attaching it to a different noun (state of affairs). However, Geach's challenge was to separate the adjective from the noun it modifies altogether. He gives the example of X is a red book which can be split up into 'X is red' and 'X is a book.' Here the adjective 'red' stands completely alone and Orsi and Zimmerman have not given us

a comparable example using the adjective ‘good’. As such, Orsi and Zimmerman have failed Geach’s challenge. In the next section I will discuss another argumentative strategy used against the Aristotelian account of goodness. In particular I will focus on some examples given by Pigden. I will respond to Pigden’s argument and in the process I will present my own argument against goodness simpliciter. Finally in the final section, section five, I will bring everything together, summarize and come to some conclusions for this chapter.

4.10. Who’s The Best?

A fairly common argumentative strategy used against Aristotelian purely attributive accounts of goodness is to give an example of something which seems to be obviously good or bad, but in a predicative rather than attributive sense (good or bad simpliciter). One example would be in the statement ‘Harold Shipman was Britain’s worst mass murderer.’²⁰ In a statement like this it seems that Shipman’s badness (expressed in the word ‘worst’) is predicative rather than attributive. This is because as a mass murderer Shipman was, in a sense, very successful. He killed a large number of people and got away with it for a long time. As such, if the sentence is referring to his status or success as a murderer then it should really say ‘Harold Shipman was Britain’s best mass murderer’ because qua being a murderer he was very good at it. However, the original sentence does still seem to make sense and may well be true. This means that the badness being referred to in the original sentence cannot be his badness qua his status as a murderer. Instead the badness being referenced here must be some other sense of badness and the most natural reading seems to be that the sentence is simply saying that he is bad simpliciter (in a predicative sense). If we read the sentence like this then it instead conveys the idea that he is a British murderer, and of the kind ‘British murderers’ in that group he is the worst in a predicative sense, or he is the most bad simpliciter. This then seems to be an example of badness (the opposite of goodness) in a predicative sense. The Aristotelian then must explain how, using just an attributive conception of goodness, he can make sense of this sentence.

A similar example has been put forward by Charles Pigden with regard to intercontinental ballistic missiles, ‘I may think it bad (indeed evil in the highest degree)

²⁰ I owe this example to Philip Stratton-Lake.

without believing it falls short *as* an ICBM or lacks the characteristics one associates with ICBMs. It is both bad and an honest-to-goodness full-blown ICBM. Hence the ‘bad’ is not *alienans* or quasi-*alienans*. Of course the ‘bad’ is not being used attributively here (or at least it does not seem to be) since the missile need not be a bad *ICBM* (indeed, it may be a very good one). But this merely confirms the existence of the predicative ‘bad’ – the very point at issue” (Pigden, 1990, pp. 131-132).

These examples are supposed to demonstrate that there is both an attributive and a predicative sense of the word ‘good’. Pigden explains, “We tend to think that a thing can be a good X (a good ICBM, say) without being *good* or a good *thing*. Indeed, a thing can be a good X and *bad*, if X is a bad thing to be. So what is wrong with linguistic pluralism? Why not a peaceful coexistence between the two uses?” (Pigden, 1990, p. 131). As such, what Pigden is arguing is that the Aristotelian should not deny the existence of goodness simpliciter (good in a predicative sense) because certain example statements are best understood and explained using just the predicative sense of goodness and this in no way precludes us from using the attributive use in other circumstances. Thus, we should simply accept that both a predicative use and an attributive use of the word *good* exists and that the Aristotelian is wrong to deny the existence of good in a predicative sense (good simpliciter).

I will respond to this in two ways. First I will argue that this general argumentative strategy seems wrong-headed. However, even if one rejects this response then I will still respond in a second way by showing that the badness of intercontinental ballistic missiles and of mass murderers can be accounted for attributively within the Aristotelian schema. Further, the explanation offered by the Aristotelian will be at least as informative, if not more so, than an explanation involving a predicative account of goodness. As such, Ockham’s razor would suggest that we should keep our value theories and metaethical theories simple and thus should avoid postulating a predicative sense of goodness altogether as it is simply unnecessary.

4.11. Superman or the Hulk? Who Would Win?

Generally I have concerns about the usefulness of Pigden’s argumentative strategy. It seems to me that the examples given earlier (the intercontinental ballistic missile example and the

example involving Harold Shipman) attempt to prove a point about the metaphysical nature of goodness by exploring how we use language and this seems to me to be a wrong-headed approach. Now fairly obviously the discussion about whether ‘good’ is an attributive or predicative adjective in day to day conversations is a discussion about language. However, whether ‘good’ should be considered a predicative or attributive adjective and whether we use it appropriately is going to depend on the metaphysical nature of goodness. As such the metaphysical nature of goodness is of first importance and it seems to me that analysis of how we use the word ‘good’ in everyday language is going to be a poor way to make any progress in understanding the metaphysical nature of goodness which is what this chapter is primarily interested in.

To illustrate this I will give a, perhaps slightly flippant, example. Imagine two teenagers discussing whether Superman or the Hulk is better. We can well imagine the two of them saying sentences like ‘The Hulk is good but Superman is the best’²¹ and other sentences like that. However, they could mean any number of things by this sentence. They may mean that Superman is stronger than The Hulk. Perhaps they mean that Superman is the better superhero than The Hulk, but again what is meant by the ‘better superhero’ is unclear (perhaps it means the one who more possesses heroic virtues such as bravery and a desire for justice or something like this). Perhaps they mean that Superman sells more comics than The Hulk and thus is commercially the better of the two. Or perhaps they simply mean that Superman is more popular with the public than The Hulk. Who knows? The only way to find out is to enter into their conversation, to ask them to clarify what they mean and to understand the context. However, it seems to me that to try to draw any conclusions about the nature of goodness itself from a conversation like this is absurd. Now I grant that examples involving intercontinental ballistic missiles and Harold Shipman are at least real world examples but again it strikes me as a poor way to go about understanding the nature of goodness. At best we may uncover something true about how we tend to use the words ‘good’ and ‘bad’, although whether this correlates to anything real is another matter, and at worst we will simply end up playing word games with each other trying to find imaginative ways of hearing and understanding sentences like ‘Harold Shipman is better than Jack the Ripper’. It seems to me this whole approach is wrong-headed and we should not assume that we will get any significant support for either the attributive or predicative account of

²¹ Personally my money is on Thor in all regards. The guy can control lightning and I think his outfit looks cool.

goodness by exploring how we use the terms in the real world. Instead it seems to me that our conversation must start and end with the metaphysics of goodness, rather than with our linguistic practices, if we want to understand the nature of goodness. This is why the first argument I put forward in section 2.3 to support my Aristotelian account of goodness was a distinctively metaphysical argument.

However, if the defender of good as a predicative adjective insists upon engaging in this argumentative strategy, in which he gives an example of something which seems to be obviously good or bad but in a predicative rather than attributive sense, then I think that the Aristotelian can still find ways of understanding the badness of Harold Shipman and intercontinental ballistic missiles using a purely attributive account of goodness.

4.12. Better in Some Ways, Worse in Others

Beginning with Pigden's example, it seems fairly obvious that (in some way) intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad. The Aristotelian has a ready explanation for this; namely that intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad for life because they are aimed at killing things. It seems to me that when we ask whether a particular intercontinental ballistic missile is good or bad we may in fact be asking a number of things. First, will it perform its function effectively? Second, is its use (or even existence) going to be beneficial for the nation which owns it? Third, is its use going to be good or bad (obviously bad) for the nation it is being launched at? And perhaps further questions such as 'is it going to be good for the human race as a whole?' or 'will it be good for the planet?' The Aristotelian can readily account for all of this using his attributive account of goodness. However, if someone presses further and keeps on asking 'Are intercontinental ballistic missiles just good simpliciter?' And demanding that this question be answered then they are simply question begging. In demanding that someone explain whether or not something has the property of goodness simpliciter they are, of course, assuming there is such a thing as goodness simpliciter which is the very question at stake!

As such, the Aristotelian can explain why intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad (because they are bad for life), why murderers are bad (because they are bad people, they are bad for their victims and they are bad for society), and why Harold Shipman was the worst murderer (because he killed the most people). This shows that the apparent truth of the two

examples given earlier is no problem at all for my Aristotelian account of goodness. Hence, we have been given no non-question begging examples of goodness or badness simpliciter.

It should be noted that the Aristotelian when examining statements such as ‘Intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad’ are obliged to echo Geach and say that in some way they are semantically incomplete. After all if all goodness (or badness) is always goodness (or badness) in a way then the statement ‘intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad’ is logically incomplete as it has not been specified in what way intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad. However, I don’t think that this is a particularly big problem. There are a great many sentences that are semantically incomplete that we use every day without getting worried. Note the examples I gave earlier using bigness. The sentence ‘It is big’ is grammatically complete and it does seem to be minimally informative. However, we don’t then conclude that there must be a predicative use of the word ‘big’ or bigness simpliciter. As such, if example sentences like ‘it is big’ do not prove that there is a predicative use of the word ‘big’ why should the sentence ‘Intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad’ prove that there is a predicative use of the word *bad*?

This means that when an Aristotelian is confronted with statements such as ‘intercontinental ballistic missiles are bad’ there are a number of ways that he can respond. He can either conclude that statements such as these are (strictly speaking) illegitimate, or he can say that they are semantically incomplete but without saying in what way, or he can do what I did early and hash out the ways in which the thing in question is good or bad.

4.13. KISS (Keep It Simple Silly)

We have now seen how the Aristotelian can respond to arguments against Aristotelian purely attributive account of goodness which give an example of something which seems to be obviously good or bad, but in a predicative rather than attributive sense. Further, I have given us some reason to be sceptical about the very usefulness of analysing the way we use terms like good and bad to tell us anything useful about their nature. However, if the defender of good as a predicative adjective insists upon engaging in this argumentative strategy then I think that the Aristotelian can go one stage further and can argue that, at least at first glance, the accounts that he offers of the goodness or badness of, say, an intercontinental ballistic

missile are more complete and satisfying than an account involving a predicative sense of goodness. This can be illustrated by re-examining how the Aristotelian explained the badness of intercontinental ballistic missiles compared to someone who merely appealed to a predicative sense of the word *badness* (such as Pigden's). How do the two explanations stack up?

The Aristotelian explanation that I offered earlier seems to me to be pretty informative and full. We can quite clearly see from the example of the intercontinental ballistic missile that I gave earlier the ways in which it is bad, but we can also see some ways in which it might be good and we have some grasp even from that brief description about how this goodness and badness is grounded in the metaphysics of ends and so on. So it seems to me that the Aristotelian has given a pretty good explanation.

When we compare this to the sort explanation given by, for example, Pigden in which he says something like 'intercontinental ballistic missiles are just bad simpliciter' we are still left wondering what is meant by the word *bad* (or indeed *good*). Now I don't deny that someone who subscribed to a predicative account of goodness could then potentially give us an explanation about what they mean by goodness or badness simpliciter. However, it seems to me that if they appeal to a natural or supernatural account then they are going to be vulnerable to the open question argument. This only leaves them with non-naturalism as a viable alternative and I don't here understand their motivation for postulating these non-natural predicative accounts of goodness given that an Aristotelian account, such as mine, can do all the work we need it to. If non-naturalists such as Moore and Ross are happy to accept that an attributive sense of the word goodness exists, and we can account for the goodness and badness of things in the world using just this account, and (as we shall see) we can build an ethical theory on the basis of this that has intuitive plausibility I simply don't see why they would postulate this additional sense of the word '*good*' at all. Ockham's razor would suggest they should keep it simple and just stick to the attributive account. Given this then, I think that until we are given an independent argument for goodness simpliciter (goodness in a predicative sense) the Aristotelian is more than justified in just sticking to his purely attributive account.

I have now responded to Pigden and others who attempt to criticise the solely attributive aspect of Aristotelianism by giving examples of something that seems to be

obviously good or bad but in a predicative sense rather than attributive sense. I responded to this argumentative strategy, explained in 4.10., in two ways. One way in which I responded in 4.11. was to argue that simple analysis of the language of goodness is unlikely to tell us anything very interesting about the nature of goodness. I used the slightly flippant example of two people discussing whether various superheroes were ‘good’ superheroes and argued that to come to a conclusion about the nature of goodness on the basis of conversations like this seems to be wrong-headed. The other way I responded in 4.12. was to show that the Aristotelian can explain the goodness or badness of these examples (such as intercontinental ballistic missiles) using a purely attributive account. As such, I have shown that we haven’t been given any really good examples of things that must be seen as good or bad in a predicative sense. In this section I then presented an argument against goodness simpliciter (good in a predicative sense). I argued that we have been given no good reason to believe in goodness simpliciter, because Pigden’s argument has failed and because that general argumentative strategy seems wrong-headed, I then pointed out that given we all accept the existence of good in an attributive sense and given it can be the basis of an intuitively plausible ethical theory it can therefore do all the work we need it to. If this is the case then goodness simpliciter (good in a predicative sense) is simply redundant and explanatorily otiose. As such, Ockham’s razor would suggest we should avoid postulating it altogether and simply stick with good in an attributive sense.

5. Concluding Our Discussion of the Nature of Goodness

In this chapter I have done a number of things. In section two, due to their impact on the literature and similarity to my own position, I explained Geach’s distinction between attributive and predicative accounts of goodness and outlined what Thomson believes about goodness. I then explained my own account of goodness and presented a preliminary argument in its favour; namely that it is implied by the metaphysical schema I outlined in chapter one.

In section three I engaged with various alternative conceptions of goodness. I first outlined the difference between naturalism and supernaturalism and showed where these agree and disagree with my own account. I then explained the open question argument and showed that this poses problems for versions of naturalism and supernaturalism that postulate

goodness simpliciter. I then showed that the open question argument simply doesn't apply to the Aristotelian conception of goodness and so it need not concern the Aristotelian. I then outlined a fairly standard version of non-naturalism and showed how the Aristotelian can accept much of what the non-naturalist wants to say about goodness other than their belief in goodness simpliciter.

In section four I then responded to a number of criticisms of the Aristotelian account of goodness. I first responded to a criticism of the Aristotelian account of goodness that has its origins in Hume which is sometimes called 'the fact/value dichotomy'. I then outlined and responded to a series of arguments by Zimmerman and Orsi and have shown that they need not trouble the Aristotelian. I then responded to a final argument against the Aristotelian account of goodness. This general argumentative strategy argues that certain statements about the goodness of things are best expressed and understood using a predicative sense of goodness (goodness simpliciter). I particularly focussed on some examples put forward by Pigden. I responded to this general argumentative strategy in two ways. I first argued that this whole strategy is wrong-headed because simple analysis of the language of *goodness* and how we talk about it is unlikely to tell us anything very interesting about the nature of goodness. However, if someone insists upon still engaging in this argumentative strategy then I also responded in a second way by showing that the Aristotelian can understand the various examples given using a purely Aristotelian attributive account of goodness. Finally, I then utilized an Ockham's razor style redundancy argument against the idea of goodness simpliciter. I argued that we have been given no compelling reasons to believe in it and that given most moral realists accept the existence of good in an attributive sense, and given that we can build an intuitively plausible ethical theory on the basis of this (and thus that it can do everything we need it to) the idea of goodness simpliciter or goodness as a predicative adjective is simply unnecessary and explanatorily otiose. Given this then, Ockham's razor suggests we should avoid postulating all together and should simply stick with an Aristotelian account of goodness such as the one I argued for at the start of this chapter.

When we combine this chapter with chapter one, which was on metaphysics, we can see what I have attempted to establish so far. In the first chapter I argued that the Aristotelian metaphysical schema remains a plausible candidate in modern metaphysical debates and that modern science does nothing to undermine it and may indeed support it in certain areas. In this chapter I showed how goodness fits into this metaphysical schema. I outlined an account

of goodness in which all goodness is relative to the thing in question and in which there is no such thing as goodness simpliciter. I then argued that competing accounts of goodness face a number of difficulties and that there are no good objections to my Aristotelian account of goodness. If I have been successful in this then only two further things remain for me to do in order to outline a full ethical schema. The first is to explain what things are going to be good for humans. We have now established what goodness is but we still need to establish what things are good (for humans). I will engage with this in the next chapter and will do this by attempting to establish what the form of human beings is and what ends flow from that. This should then give us an account of what things are good (for us). Finally, I will then need to explain how we should relate to these goods and that will be the goal of the final chapter. We should then be left with a complete ethical schema.

Chapter 3: What Things Are Good?

1. Introduction

So far then, in my previous two chapters, I have done a number of things. In chapter one I outlined an Aristotelian metaphysical schema. I showed how within this schema living creatures will all have a substantial form which defines the sorts of things they are. Flowing from this form come a series of ends which define the sorts of things that they should do. In my second chapter on the nature of goodness I showed how goodness fits into this metaphysical schema. I explained how things could be good examples of their kind, how things could be intrinsically good for an agent and how things could be instrumentally good. In order to arrive at an ethical theory we now need to turn our attention purely to humans. We need to work out what the form of humanity is and what our ends will be. From this we can arrive at a series of human goods. The human goods will be the sorts of things that we should have in our lives and that make for a complete and full human existence. If we then explain how humans should relate to these goods we should then have the basic outline in place for an ethical theory.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the human goods. I will do this by identifying the form and ends of humanity in section three. Once I have done this, in section four, I will then try to sketch out a number of basic human goods. In section five I will respond to various criticisms and various competing accounts of the human goods. In section six I will then summarize and bring everything together. First, though, in section two it is worth revisiting the idea of form and ends.

2. Substantial Form and Ends Revisited

For the purposes of this chapter I am going to use the words form, essence and nature interchangeably. This is because the essence or nature of material objects is simply their form instantiated in matter. As such, the form of humanity would be the form considered in abstract whereas the essence of an individual human would be that form instantiated in matter. As such, with regard to this chapter we need not distinguish between the two.

The form of a thing is the ‘what it is’. It explains why something is what it is and not something else.²² Within the idea of form we can distinguish between accidental form and substantial form. It is the substantial form that we are interested in here. A thing’s accidental form simply modifies an already existing substance. With regard to humans it would be things like the length of your hair and your weight. A thing’s substantial form is what makes it specifically what it is. It is what makes you, you and it’s what makes all of us human.

Recall that in chapter one, particularly in my discussion of essence and evolution, we established that a thing’s essence (or substantial form) is a series of capacities for change or changes directly present in the thing. It is a source of stability and mutability directed at certain general outcomes despite varying environments. The fulfilment of each of these capacities considered in isolation are a thing’s ends and when considered together they make up a thing’s form. This shows that the concepts of ends and form are inextricably linked. Part of having a form is to have ends and to have particular set of ends is to have a particular form. A thing’s ends and a thing’s form cannot be fully understood in isolation. This means that when we identify a thing’s ends then we will have identified something about its form.

A thing’s ends, then, are to fulfil a series of potencies (capacities for change) which it has intrinsically because of the sort of thing that it is, rather than because something external has altered it in some way. It should be noted that it is not simply having a particular capacity for change which is a thing’s end; rather it is the exercise of that capacity which is the end. As an example, a bee has the capacity to live successfully in a hive and it has various features that allow it to do this such as the ability to communicate through dance and scent. One of the ends of bees then is to live in a hive. It is one of the things that it ‘should’ do. However, there is more to a bee than this. They are also directed at other things such as producing honey (at least in the case of honey bees) and reproducing and so on. When all of these ends are considered together we will have a good idea of what it is to be a bee. This is because when a bee fulfils all of its ends it will be, and will be doing, everything that bees ‘should’ do. It will be fully, completely and perfectly being a bee. It can be said to be ‘flourishing’ in Aristotelian terminology. This, then, is the form of the bee considered in abstract. It is a series of capacities or ends which are distinctive and defining of bees. As such, in order to identify a thing’s form we must first identify its individual capacities and thus ends. From now on I will

²² See chapter one for more details.

often refer to a thing's ends and capacities interchangeably, however, it should be noted that technically a thing's ends are the fulfilment of its capacities rather than simply its capacities themselves. To summarise then, a thing is fulfilling its ends when it is exercising the various capacities which it has because of the sort of thing that it is.

When individuals share a form and have the same set of identical ends or capacities then they can be said to be members of the same Aristotelian biological kind. Similarly as well as grouping individuals together by examining their capacities we can also separate individuals. Bees can produce honey. You cannot produce honey and therefore you are not a bee.

As such, we can then group and separate individuals into Aristotelian biological kinds and species according to their shared and differing intrinsic capacities. Now it should be noted that this Aristotelian sense of biological kinds and species does not necessarily need to correlate to any particular modern biological account of kinds and species of which there are many. This is because when we identify an individual as a member of a particular Aristotelian biological kind and species we are interested in deep metaphysical truths about that individual, namely, what is it and what should it do? However, the modern biologist may be interested in something else entirely. According to Mayden (1997) there are at least twenty-two species concepts within modern biology and each of these is interested in a subtly different question. For example the cladistic species concept is interested in genealogy and common descent and individuals are labelled as members of a particular species on the basis of this. The biologist who uses this particular species concept is presumably more interested in questions about where the individual came from and how it fits into an evolutionary story of the world. Another example would be the biological species concept where interbreeding is critical. The biologist who uses this particular species concept is presumably more interested in a particular individual's ability to produce (fertile) offspring. Another example is the phenetic species concept which emphasizes overall similarity between individuals. This particular species concept is arguably closest to the Aristotelian conception of species, but either way the biologist who is using this species concept is presumably more interested in questions about what the individual looks like and how it behaves. Whether or not this plurality of species concepts is a problem and, if so, which of them is correct is a live question within biology and philosophy of biology. Personally, I'm inclined not to think it is a problem as long as the distinctions between each of the species concepts are made clear.

Now, I won't go into this question further as it is not directly relevant for my general thesis and, due to the complicated nature of this question, I won't be able to answer it without devoting a large amount of space to it. However, if we are happy to accept this plurality of species concepts then we can simply accept the Aristotelian account as being one amongst many (albeit one that is interested in metaphysical and philosophical questions rather than biological questions). If we think that this plurality of species concepts is problematic then there are two options available to the Aristotelian. The first is to argue that the Aristotelian species concept is the correct one and that biologists should abandon the others. The second option is to argue that the Aristotelian species concept is fundamentally interested in different sorts of questions (philosophical questions) than the other biological species concepts (which are interested in biological questions) and that the biologists should therefore stick to their species concept (whichever one turns out to be correct) and the philosophers should stick to theirs. Either way then there isn't a problem.

As such, in order to identify the form of humanity we must first identify the capacities which we all share and which make us human. What can we do that marks us out from other things such as other animals, plants and minerals?

Here it is important to note that we are trying to identify our ultimate ends. The fulfilment of a capacity which is directed at further more general ends will only ever be an instrumental end. For example our capacity to move to a particular location is not ultimate. This is because it is part of our broader more general capacity to have a healthy functioning body (more on this later). It may well be good for us to move to a particular location at a particular time (for example to avoid a speeding car) but being in that location simpliciter will never be good. It will only ever be good for instrumental reasons. This means that our ultimate ends will be the fulfilment of general capacities which are not inherently directed at, or part of, further more general capacities. The fulfilment of these capacities is good in and of itself. They will be the sort of things that we should do entirely for their own sake (and not as part of something that we should do more generally). This should hopefully become clearer later on when we start to explore some examples.

An obvious Darwinian objection can be raised here. This objection can be best illustrated with a quote from Richard Dawkins. He writes "They are in you and in me; they created us, body and mind; and their preservation is the ultimate rationale for our existence.

They have come a long way, those replicators. Now they go by the name of genes, and we are their survival machines” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 20). I think there are two ways of interpreting this passage only one of which poses a problem for us. This is because there are different ways of understanding the word “rationale”. The first way of interpreting this passage, which I suspect is the interpretation Dawkins really had in mind, is that genes, DNA, evolution and so on explain why humans came to be here and why they have the sorts of properties that they do. In this case, by “rationale” Dawkins really means explanation and thus to put it in Aristotelian terms he is really making a claim about, at least some of, the efficient causes of humans i.e. where we came from, rather than a claim about our final causes. Further, as I’ve already explained in chapter one, the truth of the theory of evolution does not actually pose any serious problems for the Aristotelian. As such, if this is what Dawkins had in mind then there is simply no problem here for us to worry about.

However, there is a second stronger way of interpreting this passage. One way of interpreting “rationale” in this passage would be to read it as ‘reason’ understood more akin to ‘purpose’. The objection that might be raised here is that the ultimate goal or purpose of human existence is simply to pass on our genes through reproduction because this is the driving force behind evolution and explains why we are here. Now, I don’t think that Dawkins actually is making this claim, but let’s imagine that he is and consider some potential responses.

There are a number of responses that I would like to make. The first response would be to agree that we can (and should given the scientific consensus) grant the full evolutionary story whilst insisting that the conclusions that Dawkins and others like him are potentially drawing from the theory of evolution are above and beyond what the science implies. As I showed in chapter one the truth of the theory of evolution does absolutely nothing to show that Aristotelian metaphysics is false. As such, the Aristotelian can accept the truth of the theory of evolution whilst fully holding on to his Aristotelian metaphysical schema. If the Aristotelian metaphysical schema is true then a number of conclusions about human ends will follow from this and, as we shall see later on, one of these conclusions is that humans have ends other than reproduction. As such, it seems to me that, if Dawkins is making this claim, then the conclusions that he draws from the theory of evolution about the ultimate ‘rationales’ (understood as ‘purposes’) for human existence are philosophical conclusions which are above and beyond what is implied by the science. As such, we have been given no good

(philosophical) reasons to think that the sole purpose of human existence is to reproduce and to pass on our genes. Instead, we have simply had Dawkins state that because the evolutionary story about where we came from involves genes therefore our sole purpose is to reproduce and pass on our genes, and this simply does not follow. As such this criticism need not concern us further until it is better developed.

The second response I would like to make would be to point out that we are not our genes. Our genes undoubtedly are part of us and have a large influence on the sort of thing that we are. Further, an evolutionary story involving genes may also explain a great deal about where we came from and it may well be the case that our genes in and of themselves are directed at their own reproduction. However, we are not our genes. As such, when a biologist studies genetics and observes that genes are directed at their own reproduction we need not extrapolate and apply these conclusions to humans as a whole. Indeed this would seem to commit the fallacy of composition. Instead, if we want to work out what the form and ends of humanity are we must study humans as a whole. We must examine intrinsic human capacities and so on and so forth. When we do this it will become clear that we have a number of ends above and beyond reproduction and the passing on of our genes.

Third, it seems to me that this sort of criticism makes an error in that it confuses questions about where we came from with questions about what we are.²³ The story about where we came from may well be evolutionary and genetic in nature and, of course, where we came from will have influenced the sort of thing that we are. However, questions about the nature of humanity are different to questions about where humanity came from and it follows that one set of these questions can be answered without necessarily having to answer the other.

Murphy engages with a similar concern to the one raised by Dawkins. He writes “I am going to concede that living or living-and-reproducing is one aspect of human flourishing ... The question that is more pressing is whether ... there are any other aspects of human flourishing” (Murphy, 2001, p. 37). Murphy explains that we might be tempted to believe that living-and-reproducing are entirely constitutive of human flourishing because “the functions of the parts of humans can be made intelligible as contributors to one or another of these functions” (Murphy, 2001, p. 37). Put another way everything about us looks like it is

²³ My thanks go to David Oderberg for originally pointing this out.

designed in some way to aid us in living and reproducing. This observation naturally supports the evolutionary concern that our sole purpose is to reproduce and pass on our genes.

However, Murphy believes that this conclusion is false. He argues that other aspects of human flourishing (ends) are implicit in particular function judgements. Thus, when we make function judgements about humans, and parts of humans, we can identify ends other than life and reproduction. He gives the example of the brain. He claims, not unreasonably, that in some way the human brain contributes to our ability to know things. He then distinguishes between two sorts of propositions; helpful and unhelpful. Helpful propositions contribute to our survival (for example, 'I can drown under water'), whereas unhelpful propositions do not (for example, 'The Battle of Hastings took place in AD 1066'). Murphy then writes "I shall assume that it is a function of the brain to keep the human of which it is a part alive. Further, when one's brain is function properly, it has the capacity to understand and evaluate the truth of unhelpful propositions. Now, suppose that one's brain is functioning properly up to a certain time. At that time, its activity changes: it becomes incapable of knowing unhelpful propositions. Any piece of information that is useful for survival gets processed; and piece of information that is not useful for survival goes unprocessed" (Murphy, 2001, p. 38). Thus, at least normally and usually, when the brain is functioning properly it also contributes to our ability to know unhelpful propositions. The question now becomes "whether the activity of grasping the truth or falsity of unhelpful propositions is also an aspect of human flourishing, or simply a side effect of it" (Murphy, 2001, p. 38). Murphy then points out that if the previously described change in the activity of the brain would occur (that the brain would begin to function in such a way that, although the human of which it was a part would survive, the human would no longer be able to process unhelpful information) then we would all agree that the brain is seriously malfunctioning. Thus, part of the normal function of the brain is to help us know unhelpful propositions and thus that must be one of our ends. He writes "That the capacity to grasp the truth is part of the human function is suggested by reflection on what we would think if the change in activity described previously were to occur. I have described the case so that ... the brain is not contributing to the knowing of unhelpful propositions. I imagine that most of us would agree that in this case ... the brain is seriously malfunctioning. This leaves us with the following conditional: if it is the case that the brain could be in a condition in which it is not seriously malfunctioning with regard to the human's living in such a case, then the brain's function is also that of

contributing to the human's knowing unhelpful propositions ... it follows that there are other aspects of flourishing besides living – at least that of speculative knowledge” (Murphy, 2001, p. 39).

As such, if our critic wants to deny that knowing unhelpful proposition is one of our ends then they would have to deny that a human brain which is incapable of this is malfunctioning. It seems highly unlikely that they would bite this bullet. As such, we can safely conclude that human beings have ends other than survival and reproduction. Further, from this discussion we can see that one of the ways to identify human ends is to look at the constitutive parts of humans and to try to identify their function and purpose i.e. what capacities they give us. This is what I shall do in my next section when I try to identify human ends. Let us now turn to the question of what the form and ends of humanity are.

3. What is man?

What capacities do we have which make us human? Here we are interested in the capacities which we will all share, unless some serious mishap prevents us from developing or fulfilling them, because we are human. We are looking for the capacities which come from our form as human beings. Further, as I have explained earlier once we have identified a human capacity we will have identified a human end because a human end is simply the fulfilment of a particular human capacity. In order to answer this question I will begin with our most general capacities that we share with all living things. I will then turn to questions about what capacities we share specifically with animals. Finally, I will turn to questions about what capacities are uniquely human. When we consider these capacities and ends all together we should have a good grasp of what it is to be a human being.

I would suggest that like all living things, including plants and animals, we have the capacity for life and health. Put another way, living things have the capacity to have well-functioning bodies and (in our case) minds and this distinguishes them from non-living things which simply are. Like all living things when we sustain damage then our bodies are naturally directed at repairing themselves and achieving a state of homeostasis. This shouldn't be a contentious idea. Modern medicine has highlighted a myriad of ways in which the body responds to damage and infection and fights to restore the body to a stable and

healthy state. As such, I think it is reasonable to conclude that we have the capacity/end of life and health. This end is one that marks us out from non-living things.

A further capacity that marks us out as organisms from non-living things is our ability to reproduce. Aristotle in book one of the *Politics* (Aristotle, 2013, p. 2) similarly highlights that this is an end unique to living things. An objection that might be raised here by a biologist is that some insects do not directly reproduce. As an example, worker bees and ants don't directly reproduce only the queen bee or ant does this. I would make two responses. The first response I would make would be to point out that worker bees and ants do indirectly reproduce through their queen indeed their whole lives are directed at allowing her to focus on reproducing. Another way of conceptualising this response would be to argue that it is something of a mistake to view a single bee or ant in isolation and to instead point out that the hive or nest reproduces even if the individual insects which make up its constituent parts do not. A second, much simpler, response would be to simply point out that, even if some insects do not reproduce, humans obviously do. I take it that we all have biological parents and that a great many of us will go onto become or already are biological parents. I am not sure that any more proof is then needed of our capacity to reproduce. As such, I think we should conclude that we have the capacity/end of reproduction which is another end that marks us out from non-living things. Let us now turn to the question of what distinguishes animals from plants.

What capacities distinguish animals from plants and other living organisms such as fungi? It seems to me that an obvious one is the ability to have sense experience. In humans this is our capacity to see, hear, smell, taste and touch. However, whilst the capacity for sense experience is distinctive of animals the end of sense experience itself is not an ultimate end. This is because animals have sense experiences for instrumental reasons such as in order to survive, to seek goods and to avoid harms. Animals need to know at least a little bit about the world in order to survive, for example they need to know where food is and whether predators are nearby, and the capacity for sense experience aids them in this. As such the capacity for sense experience is goal directed at further goods and thus it does not qualify as an ultimate end. However, in humans our capacity for sense experience, when combined with our rationality (more on this later), generates a further truly ultimate end; the end of aesthetic experience. We can have aesthetic experiences entirely for their own sake (although there may also be additional instrumental reasons to have them) and having them greatly enriches

our lives. As such, the end of aesthetic experience, which emerges out of our animal capacity to have sense experience, is an ultimate end.

A further capacity that most animals have that plants (arguably) lack is the ability to self-move. However, I won't consider this to be a distinct human end for two reasons. The first is that I think that the ability to self-move can be subsumed under the end of health. A healthy human body has the ability to move and so these two ends need not be considered separately. The second is that most plants can self-move to some extent, just much slower than most animals, and some animals can hardly move at all such as mussels and clams. As such, this doesn't seem to be a very distinctive or interesting end particularly when it can be included under the more interesting end of health. Let us now turn to the capacities that we have which mark us out as distinctively human.

A capacity which marks us out from some, although not all, animals is our capacity to live in communities. I will offer three arguments to support the claim that this is a human end. The first is common sense observation. When we observe human beings around the world and throughout history we find that the vast majority of them live and have lived in communities. There are obvious exceptions such as hermits, but these individuals are unusual and this suggests, although it does not prove, that there is something about being human that means we tend to live in community. This lends support and credibility to the idea that living in community is a human end. I will now offer two further arguments to support the idea that living in community is a human ultimate end.

The second argument that can be put forward to support the idea that one of the ends of humans is to live in community is to point out that humans are very rarely (if ever) entirely self-sufficient and that this suggests that we are directed at living in community. Socrates in book two of Plato's *The Republic* highlights that "A State, I said, arises, as I conceive, out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants ... Then, as we have many wants, and many persons are needed to supply them, one takes a helper for one purpose and another for another; and when these partners and helpers are gathered together in one habitation the body of inhabitants is termed a State" (Plato, 1991). This shows that there is something about human nature that is directed towards living in community. Aristotle makes a similar point in book one of the *Politics*. He argues that animals that are self-sufficient have no part in, or need of, a community/state. He points out that, with regard to

humans, although the state is self-sufficient individual humans are not and therefore we have need of the state. We can reformulate Socrates and Aristotle's argument along these lines:

P1. All animals are either social or non-social.

P2. Non-social animals are self-sufficient (at least on a day to day basis and with regard to members of their own species).

P3. We are not self-sufficient.

P4. Therefore, we are not non-social animals.

Conclusion: Therefore, we are social animals.

I think this argument then lends further support to the claim that humans are naturally sociable animals. Now it might be objected that premises one and two are false or at least overly restrictive. Someone might object that some animals although not necessarily completely self-sufficient do not need a full-blown community to support them and that perhaps they are somewhere between social and non-social animals. Perhaps these animals only live in pairs or perhaps they are parasites needing a host organism of a different species. It would perhaps be strange to view situations like this as instances of a community. I am inclined to agree with this criticism with regard to some animals. However, when it comes to humans we need to live in groups, usually of a reasonable number, and we can label groups of humans like this a community.²⁴ In the same way that wolves need to live in packs and bees need to live in hives humans need to live in communities.

I will now put forward a final argument which I think is the strongest of the three. The argument is originally put forward by Aristotle in book one of the *Politics*. He points out that humans have a unique ability or capacity, which is directed at engaging and interacting with other humans. This is our ability to speak. He writes "That man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech speech serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and unjust. For it is peculiar to man as

²⁴ Perhaps we might then view a state as a formalized governed community. However, the precise definition of a state goes beyond the scope of this thesis and so I won't explore it further. From now on, unless I am quoting somebody else, I will simply talk about the community.

compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things of this sort; and partnership in these things is what makes a household and a city” (Aristotle, 2013, p. 4). Our capacity to communicate sophisticated ideas to each other is far greater than that of any other known species and, of course, communication requires groups of individuals to come together and this is the beginnings of a community. Aquinas in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics* summarizes the argument like this “Nature gives speech to human beings, and speech is directed to human beings communicating with one another regarding the useful and the harmful, the just and the unjust, and the like. Therefore, since nature does nothing in vain, human beings by nature communicate with one another about these things. But communication about these things produces the household and the political community. Therefore, human beings are by nature domestic and political animals” (Aquinas, 2007, p. 17).

I have now put forward three arguments to support the idea that one of humanity’s ends is to live in community. The first was the simple observation that humans tend to live in communities. This by no means proves that one of the human ends is to live in community but it is precisely what we would expect to see if this were the case and so it does support my claim. The second argument I put forward was that human beings are not self-sufficient and that we can only survive when we live in groups. This shows that part of being human is to live in groups and thus that community, in some sense at least, is one of our ends. Finally, I put forward Aristotle’s argument which observes that human beings inherently have the ability to speak and that speech is inherently directed at communication between individuals which is the beginnings of a community. This shows that human beings themselves are inherently directed at living in community. It should also be noted that each of these arguments is self-standing so even if you only find one out of the three persuasive then this is still enough to support my claim that one of humanity’s ends is community. Let us now turn to what I believe is the final human end.

I believe that humans also have the end of rationality. By rationality I mean very broadly the various intellectual and cognitive abilities which we all possess: the ability to form true beliefs/knowledge,²⁵ the ability to imagine, plan and create, the ability to store

²⁵ The definition of knowledge is, of course, a contentious issue within philosophy. For my purposes here it doesn’t particularly matter which definition we use or, indeed, we could simply rely on the idea of true beliefs. As such, I won’t weigh in on these difficult epistemological questions here.

memories and so on and so forth. It seems to me that the fact that we have this capacity is fairly obvious. Right now we are engaging in an exercise in rationality in that we are trying to think about and to analyse difficult topics and therefore we must have the capacity to do this. However, we need not even rely on anything as complicated as philosophy; a child learning simple arithmetic is also an example of a human engaging in rational activity. This activity is something that humans can do to a far greater extent than any other known species. Further, it is something that unites all of us in that we can all engage in rational activity to some extent or other unless we have suffered some serious mishap such as severe brain damage or something along those lines. From this line of reasoning we can conclude that one of the ends of humanity is rational activity and that part of our form is rationality.

Aristotle himself agrees that rational thought is one of the ends of humanity. Indeed he seems to think it is unique to, and defining of, humans. In book one of *The Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that rationality is man's 'proper' function i.e. what separates man from all other things. He writes "Clearly life is a thing shared also by plants, and we are looking for man's proper function; so we must exclude from our definition the life that consists in nutrition and growth. Next in order would be a sort of sentient life; but this too we see is shared by horses and cattle and animals of all kinds. There remains, then, a practical life of the rational part" (Aristotle, 2004, p. 15). Now it should be noted that precisely how to understand Aristotle, particularly in these passages, is a disputed and interesting topic within historical philosophy and I do not want to make any strong claims about how Aristotle historically should be interpreted. However, one thing that Aristotle is clearly saying is that humans uniquely out of all animals, and living things more generally, can engage in rational activity and thus this is one of the ends of humanity.

A biological objection that could potentially be raised here would be to argue that some animals to some extent can engage in rational activity and thus rational activity is not uniquely distinctive of humans. Now whether or not this is actually the case in the real world is an interesting question and can only be answered by empirical biological and psychological research. However, even if it is the case that some other animals can to at least some extent also engage in rational activity then this does nothing to show that rationality is not therefore one of the ends of humanity. All it would show is that there are other creatures that, to some extent at least, also have the end of rational activity. Thus, it would simply show that we are not as unique as Aristotle thought we were, but it would do nothing to undermine his claim

that one of the ends of humanity is rational activity. Rationality would still be a capacity which we have because we are human. We would still intrinsically have the capacity to engage in rational thought and thus rational activity would still be one of our ends. It would still be part of what makes us what and who we are.

3.1. A Psychological Objection

Bertrand Russell once said “Man is a rational animal — so at least I have been told. Throughout a long life I have looked diligently for evidence in favour of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it” (Russell, 2009, p. 45). Russell was not unique in his skepticism about the idea of man as a rational animal. Within modern psychology there is a growing body of research to suggest that, particularly under certain circumstances, humans are prone to logical errors in reasoning, subconscious biases and so on. Some instances of this type of research include Evans, Barston and Pollard (1983) who showed that people often fare poorly when it comes to identifying valid arguments if they already have strongly held beliefs about the conclusions. As an example, test subjects will often assume that a technically invalid argument is valid as long as it has a plausible conclusion. Another piece of research which suggests that humans may, in fact, be poor reasoners was done by Johnson-Laird and Savary (1996) who showed that humans often fare very poorly at certain types of probabilistic reasoning. Perhaps one conclusion that could be drawn from research like this is that we rarely come to beliefs or decisions for (entirely) rational or logical reasons. This, so somebody could claim, shows that we are not really rational animals. If rationality is not part of our substantial form then it won't be one of our ends and my belief that one of the ends of humanity is rationality will therefore be false. How can we respond to this?

I think that this style of criticism confuses and overestimates what it means to have an end and what it means for something to be part of a thing's form. To have an end is simply to have an intrinsic capacity to be that way. This does not mean that we will always fulfil that capacity nor does it mean that when we do fulfil that capacity we will always do it in an ideal way. As such, we only need to be capable of engaging in some valid reasoning some of the time in order for it to count as one of our ends and I take it as uncontentious that on occasion

humans do engage in logical reasoning. Indeed these experiments themselves show that humans did reason correctly some, but sadly not all, of the time.

It also seems to me that this style of criticism is fundamentally self-defeating. The psychological papers themselves, and any arguments based on their conclusions, presuppose that the persons creating, hearing and engaging with the arguments or papers are capable of rational thought. If this were not the case then there would be little point in trying to do the research or to put forward the argument because no human could rationally understand it. Further, if no human is capable of rational thought then we cannot have been given a rational argument by a human against the possibility of humans engaging in rational thought. As such, once we understand what an end is we will see that any attempt to criticise the idea of rational activity as a human end is going to be self-defeating.

It seems to me that the only way to argue against rational activity as one of the ends of humanity would be to argue against the idea of ends and teleology altogether. However, I have already sketched out Aristotelian teleology and defended it against criticisms stemming from the findings of modern science in chapter one in greater detail. As such, I do not think that this style of criticism need concern us further and I think we should conclude that one of the ends of humanity is rational activity.

3.2. A Lean Mean Killing Machine?

An objection that might be raised here would be that humans, and indeed all animals, have the ‘capacity’ to kill. Further, killing is distinctive of animals and some plants and so perhaps killing is one of our ultimate ends and things like murder are therefore basic human goods. This would seem to be deeply counterintuitive and so I need to respond and explain why killing is not an ultimate end. I will respond in three ways.

The first response would be to point out that killing is, at least normally, directed at further goals and so although it may be a contingent end it cannot be an ultimate end. A tiger kills a deer, but it does this in order that it might eat and continue to survive. As such, the tiger’s ultimate end is survival not killing. A lion may fight another lion, but they do this in order to settle a dispute which is part of living in a pride/community. As such, the lion’s

ultimate end is living in a pride/community. Now, there may be occasions when domesticated pets kill entirely for pleasure or for no apparent reason. However, under situations like this I would argue that these animals are simply acting out a hunting instinct which, at least originally, was directed at providing them with food and keeping them alive. As such, once again the ultimate end for these pets is survival. It is simply that because they are living in unusual circumstances there are going to be odd outcomes and behaviours.

The second response would be to point out that killing other humans cannot be an ultimate end because it is mutually exclusive with the end of living in community. I have given us a number of arguments to show that living in community is a human end and if any of these are successful it therefore follows that killing cannot be an ultimate end.

The final response I would like to make is best illustrated by imagining this objection in a little more detail and then responding to it. Suppose somebody were to claim that hands are directed at strangling other people, particularly children. Thumbs are well placed to crush windpipes and adult arms are strong enough to easily choke a child. Thus hands certainly give us the capacity to kill other people; indeed they give us the capacity to do it with ease. Therefore, so this person might claim, one of the ends of humans (or at least the ends of hands) is to kill other humans. How am I to respond?

The reason this person is mistaken is that killing is too specific an activity to be an ultimate end. Hands allow us to do a great deal of things. Yes, they allow us to strangle people, but they also allow us to hug people. They allow us to make weapons, but they also allow us to make medicine. Indeed, it seems that the act of strangling a child is inherently incompatible with the act of trying to heal a child with medicine or to comfort a child in distress. Why then should we think that hands are (ultimately) directed at strangling rather than administering medicine? There doesn't seem to be any reason to favour one over the other. As such, it seems that hands allow us to do lots of things many of which are mutually exclusive. This shows that acts like killing and hugging are all too specific to be the ultimate ends of hands. Instead in order to find out what hands are ultimately directed at we must look for a broader capacity which killing, hugging and making medicine can be subsumed under. With this in mind hands seem to be directed at manipulating the physical world to achieve our goals. This then is the ultimate end of hands and, although humans may have the capacity to kill as a result, killing itself cannot be one of humanity's ultimate ends because no part of

us is inherently directed at it. This illustrates that when identifying a human end although we are trying to identify inherent capacities that we have because we are human we must get the level of specificity correct. We do not want to label as ultimate capacities we have that are mutually exclusive with other capacities and which can be subsumed under more general capacities. Instead, our ultimate ends will be the fulfilment of our capacities broadly conceived and individual acts like killing, or indeed, giving hugs or administering medicine are too specific to be ultimate ends. As such, killing is not one of humanity's ultimate ends.

On the basis of these considerations we should not view killing as an ultimate human end nor should we think that murder or killing are basic human goods. At most we may have to grant that for some animals, and potentially humans, killing on occasion is appropriate in order to achieve some further goal (such as in order to eat or in self-defence) and this does not seem to me to be a strange conclusion. As such this objection need not concern us further.

3.3. One End to Rule Them All?

I believe I have now outlined the human ends. These are: life and health, reproduction, aesthetic experience, community and rationality. We all have these capacities in common (unless some accident has prevented us from developing them). Other biological species may then share these ultimate ends with us to a greater or lesser extent and thus will be more or less like us. However, particularly with regard to the end of rational activity it seems that humans are largely in a league of their own. As a result, the human end of rationality seems to be particularly defining and unique.

A question now remains as to whether each of the ends are equally significant and important or whether one of the ends is going to have priority. I have already engaged with the Darwinian worry, in section two, that our only ultimate end will be reproduction. I responded in a number of ways and showed that we can grant the full evolutionary story without having to grant that the end of reproduction is our only ultimate end, or even of pre-eminent importance amongst many. As a result, we need not engage with this particular worry further. So within my Aristotelian schema are any of the ends going to have priority?

I cannot see any particular reason as to why any of them should take priority. In some sense the end of life and health is obviously going to need to be fulfilled to at least some extent before any of the other ends can be fulfilled, and so in this sense it is going to be a foundational and grounding end. One may then wish to label all additional ends what Sorabji calls “luxury functions” (Sorabji, 1964, p. 294). In that they are functions above and beyond the bare minimum needed to biologically survive. However, even if we grant this then these “luxury functions” would still be of immense importance and their fulfilment would still be key to human flourishing. Beyond this I see no reason why any of the ends should take priority. They all seem to be equally important human capacities that make us what and who we are.

One potential further question would be; is there an even more general end that each of these ends can be subsumed under? Put another way; is there a more general end which includes and binds together all of the ends identified earlier? In a sense, there is. Recall that when a thing is fulfilling all of its ultimate ends, and thus is doing and being everything it should, it can be said to be flourishing. Aristotle then names human flourishing *eudaimonia*. A *eudaimonic* human being is fulfilling all of their ultimate ends and is doing and being everything that a human being should. Achieving *eudaimonia* is then, in a sense, the true ultimate end of humanity. It is being truly and fully human. However, to be truly and fully human requires fulfilling a number of ends. As such, depending precisely upon how you want to conceptualise it you may consider there to only be one ultimate human end (*eudaimonia*) or many ultimate human ends all of equal importance. For our purposes here, however, it does not really matter. From now on for simplicity I will simply refer to ends like health and rational activity as ultimate ends.

A clarificatory note is needed here in order to respond to a potential objection that could be raised here by thinkers such as Scanlon. Scanlon objects to the idea that well-being (or *eudaimonia*) is a “master value” and that “other things are valuable only insofar as they contribute to individual well-being” (Scanlon, 1998, p. 142). He objects to this because this would require us to think that well-being is “a good separate from other values, which are made valuable in turn by the degree to which they promote it” (Scanlon, 1998, p. 142). Scanlon is uncomfortable with this idea because the goods that contribute to well-being seem to be important and reason providing in and of themselves without reference to well-being. He explains “if you ask me why I listen to music, I may reply that I do so because I enjoy it.

If you asked why that is a reason, the reply ‘A life that includes enjoyment is a better life’ would not be *false*, but it would be rather strange. Similarly, it would be odd to explain why I strive to succeed in philosophy by saying that my life will be a better life if I am successful in my main aims, insofar as they are rational. Again, this is true, but does not provide the right kind of reason. It would make more sense to say that I work hard at philosophy because I believe it is worthwhile, or because I enjoy it, or even because I long for the thrill of success. But these things in turn are not desirable because they make my life better. Enjoyments, success in one’s main aims, and substantive goods such as friendship all contribute to well-being, but the idea of well-being plays little role in explaining why they are good” (Scanlon, 1998, pp. 126-127). As such, Scanlon thinks that when we explain why something is good we can do this without reference to well-being and thus well-being cannot be a “master value.” Instead Scanlon thinks that well-being should be called “an ‘inclusive good’ – one that is made up of other things that are good in their own right, not made good by their contributions to it” (Scanlon, 1998, p. 127).

Someone may then think that because the true ultimate end of humanity is eudaimonia that I am then obliged to say that it is a “master value” and that the other goods are only instrumentally valuable insofar as they contribute to well-being, and thus they might think that Scanlon and I are in conflict. In reality I don’t think that we are. I actually agree with everything that Scanlon says here. First of all I agree that eudaimonia is an inclusive good. This is because the fulfilment of all of our ends is called eudaimonia and we will only fulfil all of our ends if we have a number of goods. Therefore, being in a state of eudaimonia is simply having a number of different goods and responding to them appropriately. A human in a eudaimonic state is simply a human being who has all of the goods that they should and who responds appropriately to them with regard to their behaviour. As such, I can agree with Scanlon that well-being, or eudaimonia, is an inclusive good made up of various constituent goods.

I also agree, in a sense, with his claim that it is not the fact that they contribute to eudaimonia that explains why the various basic human goods are good. Instead the reason why the various basic human goods are good is because they fulfil our ends in and of themselves and because we have reason to adopt a pro-attitude towards them (see chapter two for more details). Instead eudaimonia is simply the word we use to describe a human being who is fulfilling all of their ends and who is partaking in all of the goods that they should.

Thus, eudaimonia is an inclusive good at which all humans are ultimately directed, but each of its constituent parts (the basic human goods) are made good without reference to eudaimonia. As such, Scanlon and I are not in conflict. We both agree that well-being or eudaimonia is an inclusive good and we both think that the reason the various basic human goods are good is not (at least not directly) because they contribute to eudaimonia or well-being. As such there is simply no conflict here between Scanlon and myself.

The concept of eudaimonia also explains why humanity's ultimate end is not 'mere' survival. Someone might think that all of our capacities, and thus ultimate ends, are all directed only at allowing us to survive. We have the capacity to think only because it helps us find food, avoid being eaten and thus survive.

In a sense, this train of thought is correct. All of our ends are directed at helping us survive. However, they are directed at helping us to survive in a substantive and full sense rather than in a minimal sense. Our capacities allow us to do much more than merely continue to exist. Instead they allow us to flourish (eudaimonia). If a human fulfils all of their capacities then they will be engaging with and enjoying a variety of goods which fulfil those capacities and which go far beyond the bare necessities needed to live. This will become clearer as this chapter continues, but a simple example would involve reading a book. Reading a book is a rational activity because it involves using our minds. As such, reading a book is fulfilling of our end of rational activity and thus is good for us. However, our continued existence very rarely, if ever, depends upon our having read a particular book! Instead when we read literature it enhances our existence because it is a good above and beyond the bare minimum needed to survive. It, amongst other things and depending upon the individual, makes our lives worth living. I will expand on this later, but hopefully this is clear enough for now. To conclude this section, the ultimate ends of humanity are: life and health, reproduction, aesthetic experience, community and rational activity.

4. It's Good!

Recall that in my previous chapter I showed that things which fulfil an agent's ultimate ends will be intrinsically good for it. What things, then, fulfil the human ends of life and health, reproduction, aesthetic experience, community and rational activity? Put another way, what

things are good for us? What are the human goods? In this section I will try to identify a clear cut good that correlates to each of our ultimate ends. In reality, and as will become clear in this section, the goods often fulfil multiple ends and the distinctions between each of the goods is rarely clear cut with each of them blurring into one another. Further, when we consider the things in the real world that actually instantiate these goods things get even messier! This, however, is no bad thing and simply shows the variety of goods that are out there and the myriad of ways that humans can live good lives.

The goods that correlate to the end of life and health are going to be (obviously) life, a healthy body and a healthy mind. This, I think, is fairly straightforward and uncontentious. By a healthy body, I simply mean a normally functioning body free of pathogens, illness, disease and damage. A healthy mind is much harder to define, but we can make some general claims about what a healthy mind should look like. Presumably a person who is mentally healthy will not suffer undue distress for no reason, will respond positively when good things happen, will be able to function and adapt normally and will have a normally functioning brain. In a sense life and health will be one and the same good (perhaps 'healthy life' might be a better description of this good). This is because life and health are intrinsically linked and go hand in hand in a way that life and other goods (such as knowledge) do not. Part of being healthy is to be alive. The whole point about a healthy body or a healthy organ is that it remains alive and keeps the organism of which it is a part alive. Your heart is supposed to pump blood around your body in order that you continue to live. As such, life and health go hand in hand in a way that life and knowledge (for example) do not. Being alive is obviously going to be a background condition that is necessary in order for a human to know something, but the two can still be conceptually separated in a way that life and health cannot. This is because knowledge, at best, indirectly contributes to your continued biological life. Health, on the other hand, directly contributes to your continued biological life. As such, health and life should be considered two aspects of the same good.

One objection that could be raised here involves people who are technically alive but in states like permanent comas. Jonathan Glover explains the objection as "I have no way of refuting someone who holds that being alive, even though unconscious, is intrinsically valuable. But it is a view that will seem unattractive to those of us who, in our own case, see a life of permanent coma as in no way preferable to death" (Glover, 1977, p. 45). This powerful objection could be understood in two ways. Both start out by highlighting that

someone in a permanent coma with no chance of recovery is technically alive. As such, they seem technically to be participating in the good of life. There are two ways of then interpreting this criticism. The first interpretation would think that Glover was saying that we would not think that a person in a permanent coma is any better off than a person who is dead. As such, perhaps life itself cannot really be a good in and of itself; otherwise the person in a coma would be better off. However, they are not and thus life is not a good in and of itself and instead it is simply a condition needed to access other things that are in and of themselves good.

The second more defeasible way of interpreting this criticism would be to think that Glover is saying that he, and presumably others, would not personally prefer for themselves to be in a permanent coma rather than dead because it would make no subjective difference to them. This sidesteps a potential response to the first interpretation. Potentially, in response to the first interpretation we could argue that, even though the patient may not be aware of it, they are in a better position. We would think it better and preferable for a particular patient to be in a coma rather than dead even if the patient himself has no preferences either way. In effect, we would be digging in our heels in response to the first interpretation and insisting that the person in the coma really is better off.

However, if we adopt this second interpretation then Glover is simply making a point about his own subjective preferences and these preferences seem to clash with the idea that survival is a basic good. This is because if survival was a basic good then surely we would all prefer to be in a coma but technically alive rather than dead. This is because we naturally want good things for ourselves and if survival is a good we should want it. Glover does not have this preference (at least not for mere survival). Therefore, either Glover is being unreasonable in some way, or Glover is being entirely reasonable and survival is therefore not a basic good. Intuitively many of us will think that Glover is being reasonable. Further, if someone thinks he is being unreasonable then it is incumbent on them to explain why. Without any such explanation we should therefore take the second option and conclude that survival is not a basic human good. This then poses problems for my belief that life is a basic human good. I will now offer a response to Glover's objection that works against both interpretations. As such, it does not really matter whether Glover intended the first or second interpretation as I am responding to both in the same way.

I think that Glover's argument is an excellent criticism of the idea that mere biological survival is a good. However, it should be noted that we are directed at much more than mere survival: instead we are directed at both life and health (and a variety of other things). As such, this means that somebody who is in a permanent coma is not really and truly instantiating the good of life and health (at least not in any way more than a very minor, trivial and uninteresting sense). As such, I can grant Glover's objection and simply respond by pointing out that we are not directed at mere biological survival. Instead we are directed at life and health in a substantive sense. Glover's objection therefore equates mere biological survival with life and health in this more substantive sense and this is an error. Therefore, Glover's objection need not trouble us further.

Potentially some people may still object. They may claim that, whilst I have presented a metaphysical argument in favour of life (in a substantive sense) as being a basic human good, it is still a counter-intuitive conclusion. As such, they may still want an argument which is independent of the metaphysics in order to respond to these intuitive misgivings and to justify the claim that life is a basic good. They might claim that if they imagine a person who is alive in this substantive sense but without any other goods in their life then they still cannot see why their being alive is inherently good. I will respond to this in three ways.

The first response I would make is to question what they are actually imagining. We must be very clear that we are not directed at mere biological survival. As such, a person who is instantiating the good of life will not be permanently lying unconscious in a bed in a coma. As such, if this critic is imagining a person lying unconscious in a bed then they have merely restated Glover's objection to which I have already responded. Perhaps the critic is not making this mistake and is imagining somebody who is fully healthy and capable of moving, thinking, sensing and so on. However, it is then unclear to me what the critic is actually objecting to. Surely this individual is better off because of his health than the individual who is in a coma? This is not to say that just because this individual has the good of health that their life overall and all things considered is going well. It may well be that they are being held in a prison cell, unable to access any other goods such as knowledge or beauty. As such overall they are living a bad life, but none of that stops the fact that their being healthy and alive is a good thing. As the slightly glib saying goes, "at least he still has his health!"

The second response I would make is to argue that I, and hopefully some others, do have the intuition that life is good in and of itself even if the critic does not share this intuition. Imagine two worlds which are almost completely identical and almost completely empty. They are both devoid of all living things except for one of them which has a single living healthy tree whilst the other has a single dead tree. Intuitively it seems to me that, to at least some extent, the world with the living tree is better than the one with the dead tree. I for one think that real Christmas trees are better than fake ones, and one of the reasons why I have this preference is that real Christmas trees are alive (albeit in the process of dying once you chop them down!) Similarly, I prefer real flowers to plastic ones and again the most obvious reason I can think of is that real flowers are alive. As such, I do have the intuition that life (in a substantive sense) is good in and of itself and hopefully these examples will either result in you sharing these intuitions or at least understanding why I have the intuitions that I do. If whilst considering these examples a critic still insists that he finds the idea of life as a basic good intuitively puzzling then I do not know what more we can say to each other. It seems we simply have differing intuitions and I shall trust mine unless I am given a reason not to. It should be noted that I am not saying here that the world with the living tree is better simpliciter (or indeed better for humans) than the world with the dead tree. Instead what I am saying, and can affirm, is that the world with the living tree is superior to the world with the dead tree because at least in the world with the living tree the ends of one living thing are being fulfilled whereas in the world with the dead tree none of the ends of any living thing are being fulfilled. Thus, the world with the living tree is better in this sense at least than the world with the dead tree, and this seems to me to be intuitively plausible.

It also seems to me that the very fact that we are having this debate counts in favour of my claim that life is a basic good and that many people have this intuition. This is because if it was intuitively obvious that life had no intrinsic value then why do philosophers and the public at large have such difficulty agreeing about the ethics of things like euthanasia and end of life care? At least a considerable number of people must have the intuition that life is valuable in order for this debate to even take place. This shows that a great many people must have the intuition that life (in a substantive sense) is valuable in and of itself and this supports the idea that life is a basic human good. As such, it seems to me that it is incumbent upon my opponent, not on me, to explain why he does not have the intuition that life (in a substantive sense) is good in and of itself.

My final response would be to point out that I have given us a metaphysical argument in favour of life and health as being a basic human good. The idea that life and health are a basic human good simply follows from facts about human nature and ends. Given, then, that I have argued for the Aristotelian metaphysical schema and given that I have argued for a particular account of human nature then I have quite clearly presented an argument as to why life and health should be considered a basic good. Further, given that I do not have any intuitive difficulties with this (and have hopefully illustrated why) it seems to me that a critic owes me more than simply highlighting that he personally has intuitive issues with this conclusion. It seems to me that more is needed from a potential critic. Therefore, until we are presented with a stronger argument against this claim we should think that life and health are a basic human good.

The good that correlates to the end of reproduction, particularly when combined with community, will be the good of family. Precisely how to define a family is a tricky question and I am not sure whether a really clear cut answer can be given. Nevertheless, I think we can still draw some broad outlines of what will constitute a family. At one extreme will be a mother and father with two or three biological children who all live together and support each other financially and emotionally. I will take it that this definitely counts as a family. I also take it that a homosexual or heterosexual couple with adoptive children who have raised them from a young age in a loving supportive manner will also count as a family. At the other extreme would be a collection of unrelated adult strangers who perhaps have nothing in common and may not even like each other. I take it that this will definitely not count as a family. Between these two extremes come a whole variety of other combinations.

Perhaps, things then get a bit less clear cut when it comes to things like adult adoption. In some historical and contemporary cultures it was and is customary on some occasions for an adult man to 'adopt' an adult son whose biological parents are still alive and on good terms with him. It might for example be a businessman or political leader keen to adopt his protégé and natural successor. I am not so sure whether this would count as a family in the sense that I am interested in and no doubt it is an interesting question. Perhaps some may feel strongly that as long as everybody involved views themselves as a family then this would count as a family and perhaps others may think this is ridiculous and that a family bond is only forged under a number of very specific circumstances. For my purposes here I am not going to address this question further as it goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

However, it seems to me that the difficulty in saying whether situations like this count as families or not does nothing to detract from my general thesis that family is a human good and we can clearly point to some relationships and situations that will count as instances of a family.

The good that correlates to the end of aesthetic experience is (obviously) aesthetic experience. I don't want to make any claims here about the objectivity or subjectivity of beauty itself, but what I do claim is that the experience of beauty is a universal human capacity the fulfilment of which greatly enriches our lives. The sorts of things which humans find beautiful in the real world are vast in number and highly varied. They include things like seeing the Sun setting, snow covered mountains from a distance, a brightly coloured flower, a well choreographed and performed dance, or a fine work of art. Similarly hearing music and birdsong can be beautiful experiences, and so on.²⁶ The creation and appreciation of these sorts of things greatly enriches human life.

The goods that correlate to the end of community I shall label friendship and community. By friendship I mean those close bonds that we share with a handful of individuals. We will share our interests, concerns and beliefs with these people. We will mutually care for each other and enjoy each other's company. Friendships clearly enhance our existence.

By community I mean the larger social groups we are part of. Large groups of humans who broadly share some values and who interact with each other. By being members of the same community their goods and welfare will be closely interlinked. In the real world we will belong to multiple overlapping communities such as the nation state we belong to,²⁷ the town or city in which we live, our work colleagues, and quite possibly any religious or political communities we choose to join. In the modern world this will also include to some extent the global community. In the modern world the economic decisions, both historical and current, made by one nation will impact upon the people in another. Similarly, international

²⁶ Quite possibly someone might also want to include sense experiences other than sight and sound as beautiful. For example, the smell of good perfume, the taste of a good meal or perhaps even the feel of fine silk could be considered beautiful.

²⁷ It should be noted that this does not morally necessitate the existence of nation states at all. Quite possibly other legal and political systems, which do not rely on distinct nation states, could also accommodate and fulfil this end and provide us with robust communities of which we could be members. It is simply that, the world being what it is, the nation state will be one of the largest communities we are actively involved with.

communication, the spread of ideas, the sharing of cultures and the movement of individuals between nations is far greater than it has ever been. This brings with it a great number of advantages but, as we shall see, it also brings with it some responsibilities to care for distant others. Community enhances human existence. It gives us a sense of belonging, (hopefully) supports us in times of need, and provides us with security and a base from which to make friends and to pursue other goods. It also allows us to accomplish things we could not hope to accomplish on our own.

The good that correlates to rationality when combined with our capacity for sense experience and aesthetic experience is creativity. Our rationality allows us to create and to imagine things above and beyond what we actually encounter in the real world. This can often be done for instrumental reasons, for example when planning how to get our next meal, but these things can often be done purely for their own sake, for example when story telling. These creative outlets will often overlap with aesthetic outlets because aesthetic outlets will often be creative in nature, but some creative outlets may not necessarily be beautiful. It might well seem odd to describe a well-produced horror movie or a well-crafted joke as beautiful (although some may think this is an appropriate way to describe them). However, both comedy and horror are quite clearly creative outlets which greatly enhance our lives. They involve imagining, creating and experiencing a number of different sensations and ideas in a way that surprises and entertains us. Further some aesthetic outlets are not creative outlets. Watching the Sun set is beautiful but it doesn't require any creativity on our part. As such, I think a subtle distinction should be made between aesthetic and creative outlets although the two will often blur together.

The goods that correlate to rationality (in isolation) are too numerous to name individually so I shall, rather lamely, label all of them knowledge. I will label them knowledge because I think that the pursuit of knowledge is the most quintessentially rational activity. As I said earlier, I am not interested here in the precise definition of knowledge, but pursuing true beliefs (or knowledge as I shall call it) through empirical investigation and abstract thought is a prime exemplar of rational activity. As such, learning, engaging in research and teaching will all be worthwhile activities which enrich our lives.

There remains a potential question about the relationship between knowledge and theoretical and practical rationality, and whether they should be considered two aspects of the

same good or entirely separate goods. Many Aristotelians think that rationality and knowledge naturally go together because they would claim that rationality and our human capacity to be rational naturally aims at knowledge. Oderberg explains “Being rational creatures, having an intellect, we naturally have a tendency to use it. More exactly from the moment we *can* use our intellect we *do* use it in the pursuit of one thing – truth ... just as life and health are what perfect our bodies (and fulfil us thereby), so knowledge and understanding perfect our minds” (Oderberg, 2000, pp. 41 – 42).

On the other hand, other thinkers, some Aristotelians amongst them, argue that knowledge and rationality are distinct and that the two may come apart. For example, Finnis (2011), an Aristotelian, lists knowledge and practical reasonableness as separate goods. Broome points out that “Some philosophers think that rationality consists in responding correctly to reasons” (Broome, 2007, p.349). With this sort of account in mind it is entirely possible that rationality may require us to believe false propositions. This might occur when we have reason to believe something false. Perhaps a reliable expert informs us of something, but it later turns out that the expert was mistaken. It seems we were reasonable to believe the expert but, because the expert was mistaken, that means we were reasonable to believe something false. As such, it seems that in cases like this, and with this definition of rationality in mind, it is entirely possible for rationality and knowledge to come apart. Further there are also issues about the rationality of false but useful beliefs and so on.

As such, it becomes clear that whether or not knowledge and rationality can come apart, and thus whether they should be considered separate goods, will mostly depend upon your definition of rationality. The precise definition of rationality goes beyond the scope of this thesis and so I won’t weigh in on these contentious issues here, although it should be noted that I have begun to sketch out a theory of reasons (at least with regards goodness and normativity) in chapter two when I discussed the relationship between human ends and reasons. A full theory of rationality, however, would go beyond this and I won’t attempt to answer these questions here as it goes beyond the scope of my thesis and because it doesn’t matter very much, either way, for my overall project.²⁸ This is because if we think that

²⁸ It would also be good to further articulate the relationship between practical and theoretical reasons, whether, for example, they are distinct sorts of reasons or simply two sides of the same coin (I am inclined to believe the latter). However, I won’t explore this further because it will have little bearing on my conclusion and my project more generally.

rationality and knowledge are distinct then we can simply consider them to be two distinct goods that may occasionally clash like any of the other basic goods can. It may occasionally be that we have to choose between the good of rationality or the good of knowledge and that as a result we can't always have both. However, this is no problem. This is no different than the fact that sometimes we may, for example, have to choose between pursuing knowledge and pursuing friendship. The fact that they may occasionally clash does not stop either of them being good. So there is simply no problem here. On the other hand, if we agree with Oderberg and we think that rationality and knowledge go hand in hand then we can simply say that they are part of the same good and will never clash. As such, we can accept either option without any difficulty and without it affecting my overall thesis.

I think there is a further good which stems from the end of rational activity which is very tricky to name. Finnis in his book *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, whilst acknowledging that it is a poor label, calls it 'religion' (Finnis, 2011, p. 89) and I shall follow him in this. By 'religion' neither Finnis nor I are making any claims about a particular religious belief system or any claims about the existence of God, the supernatural or an afterlife. Buckle helpfully explains that religion "is not meant to pick out a specific set of beliefs, but all those beliefs that can be called matters of ultimate concern; questions about the point of human existence" (Buckle, 1993, p. 171). Put another way, by religion we mean 'the big questions.' Finnis argues, and I agree with him, that it is entirely reasonable, understandable and important to have thought about and to have views on 'the big questions.' These questions include: what am I doing here? Where have I come from? What's the point of it all? And what happens after I die? Now, I am not making any claims about what the correct answer is to these questions. All I am claiming is that it is important to us as rational humans to think about these questions and the answers that we give will shape, change and hopefully enrich our lives even if we largely come to negative or pessimistic views. Finnis writes, "But is it reasonable to deny that it is, at any rate, peculiarly important to have thought reasonably and (where possible) correctly about these questions of the origins of cosmic order and of human freedom and reason – whatever the answer to those questions turns out to be, and even if the answers have to be agnostic or negative?" (Finnis, 2011, p. 89). As such, neither Finnis nor I am claiming that one must subscribe to Islam/Christianity/Scientific Humanism/Buddhism etc. in order to live a good life. Simply that one must have considered these sorts of questions and come to a coherent (and in an ideal world correct) answer. These

are the sorts of questions that atheistic existentialists wrestled with, such as Sartre in his 1948 essay *Existentialism and Humanism*, and if their conclusions are correct then understanding and embracing those conclusions will contribute to a good life. Hopefully this is not too contentious. As Oderberg points, “Religion is as old as humanity itself” (Oderberg, 2000, p. 44) which suggest there may be a human need to ask and answer these questions. For believers of more formalised and traditional religions their faith is usually an important factor in their lives which shapes the way they see and interact with the world. Further, even for those who subscribe to no particular faith their views on these big questions will still usually be deeply held and important to them and their world view. As such, it seems to me that religion, conceived in this broad sense, is a human good.

To conclude this section then, things which fulfil human ultimate ends will be intrinsically good for them. The human goods are life and health (both physical and mental), family, friendship and community, aesthetic and creative outlets, knowledge and religion. The things which instantiate these goods in the real world will be numerous and varied. Some examples would include things like beautiful art due to its aesthetic value, an education because it is a source of knowledge, a loving family and so on. Further many things will instantiate more than one good. For example, playing team sports will yield both health benefits and a sense of community,²⁹ playing a musical instrument can be both aesthetically pleasing and intellectually challenging, going for a walk in the countryside can be good for both physical and mental health and on a sunny day it can often be a beautiful experience enjoying the sights and sounds of nature, and so on. From this it should become clear that there will be many different ways to live a good life and that natural law theory in no way binds us to one particular lifestyle choice and so on.

5. Engaging with Competing Accounts of the Human Goods

In this section I will engage with competing accounts of the human goods. I will engage with both natural law theorists and also thinkers from other positions. I will explain why I disagree with their accounts of well-being and the good life. I will begin by discussing why I have not

²⁹ I have also heard football described as ‘the beautiful game’ so clearly some people appreciate some sports aesthetically.

included pleasure on my list of the basic goods. I will start with pleasure because for many it is obviously a basic good and for some thinkers, like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, it is seen as the sole good. As such, engaging with whether pleasure should be seen as a good is going to be extremely important particularly when comparing my Aristotelian ethical theory to other competing ethical theories. I will then move onto things like freedom, equality and justice which I shall argue should be seen as political goods rather than human goods. Finally, I will engage with other prominent natural law theorists and explain why I disagree with them.

5.1. Pleasure: It Feels So Good

Many thinkers have thought that pleasure is obviously a good amongst others. Further, some thinkers have argued that pleasure is the only good. Why then have I excluded it from my list of the basic human goods?

The basic reason I have excluded it from my list is because when we analyse the nature of pleasure we will see that it does not stand in the same relationship to us and our nature as the basic goods. Recall that for something to be an intrinsic human good it must fulfil one of our ultimate ends. Things like friendship, for example, fulfil our end of community. The end of community is an ultimate end because we can fulfil this capacity entirely for its own sake. It is one of our most general capacities which make us distinctively us. Hence friendship which fulfils the human ultimate end of community is a basic human good.

Pleasure, however, does not seem to operate like this for the simple reason that pleasure cannot (under normal circumstances) ever be pursued entirely in isolation. Instead we must pursue something or engage in an activity which brings us pleasure. If you asked somebody what they were planning on doing that evening and all they said in response was “something pleasurable” you would not know what they were planning on doing. You would probably then assume that they were either trying to conceal what they had planned from you by being vague or that they had not yet decided what they were going to do and were simply making a very general claim. Pleasure then can only be pursued indirectly whereas the basic

goods can (and should) be pursued directly. As such, pleasure cannot be considered a basic good.

What role then does pleasure play in my account? In a sense, pleasure will still be occupying a central role in my account. In a normal individual who is mentally and physically healthy pleasure will be derived from the pursuit and attainment of the basic goods. Pleasure will be derived from meeting friends, playing a game, reading a book and so on, and each of these activities is instantiating the basic goods outlined earlier. Further, it doesn't seem unreasonable to say that part of truly experiencing a good thing is to take pleasure in it. If someone had a really good book, but felt no pleasure in reading it then we would naturally feel that they had missed out on something. Perhaps, they were not able to really understand the book or perhaps the plot and the genre were not suited to that individual. However, whatever the reason, we would naturally think that they had missed out on something that someone who enjoyed reading the book was able to access. As such, we might well want to say that part of truly and fully experiencing a good is to enjoy it and somebody who derives no pleasure from a good has not truly experienced it. As such, pleasure in accordance with the basic goods will be a goal of human existence and a eudaimonic life should be a generally pleasant one.

It follows then that, in a sense, pleasure in accordance with the basic goods is good for you. This is because taking pleasure in a basic good (for example taking pleasure in listening to a good piece of music) is part of fully and truly experiencing that good and is the natural human response to them. As such, taking pleasure in good things, or virtuous pleasures³⁰ as I shall call them (for reasons that will become clear in a moment), is good for you (i.e. it contributes to your flourishing/eudaimonia/welfare/the good life and so on). It also follows that taking pleasure in bad things, or evil pleasures as they have been called, is bad for you. This is because the human capacity to experience pleasure is naturally directed at working in conjunction with the basic goods rather than being opposed or entirely separate to them. As such, you should take pleasure in the basic goods and part of experiencing a basic good is to enjoy it.

³⁰ I considered labelling these sorts of pleasures 'moral pleasures' but this may be confusing as we will be discussing the morality of these pleasures. As such, I chose to label them 'virtuous pleasures' to hopefully keep things clearer.

However, Iain Law in his 2007 paper ‘Evil Pleasure is Good for You!’ argues that evil pleasure, whilst not necessarily being morally permissible or morally desirable, is as good for the subject as virtuous pleasure. If Law is correct then this poses problems for my account given that I distinguish between the goodness of virtuous pleasure and the badness of evil pleasure. As such, it is worth engaging with Law.

Law states that “The way to test whether something makes a contribution to wellbeing is to think of two people whose lives are alike in every respect other than whether they have this enjoyment. If the person who experiences the enjoyment is thereby benefited, then the enjoyment contributes to wellbeing” (Law, 2007, p. 4). Law then creates a thought experiment to test this. He asks us to imagine that three people are in the vicinity of a public torture session. The first person is a good person who is repulsed and upset by the sight. The second person is a sadist who enjoys watching the victim scream in pain. The third person is also a sadist who would have enjoyed a similar amount of pleasure to the other sadist had he witnessed the torturing, but he was unaware that the torture was taking place and passed by without witnessing it. Law is happy to grant that the first person is the best off of the three and that this person will overall enjoy the most welfare. However, what about the second and third person? Which of them is the better off?

Law suggests that the reason we may want to say that the first person is better off than the second person is because his more virtuous disposition will result in more long-term welfare.³¹ As such, even though he derives no pleasure from witnessing the torture, unlike the second person, in the long run he will have access to more and greater pleasures than the second person. However, it seems that the second and third person are both in an equally bad position in this regard. Neither of them will have access to these additional virtuous pleasures due to their sadistic nature. The only difference between them seems to be that the second person has an additional bit of pleasure.

A natural response that some might make would be to argue that the third person is better off because the pleasure the second person derives from watching the torture victim only worsens and exacerbates his sadistic nature. This drives him further from virtue and thus further from the greater long term welfare of the virtuous first person. The third person is

³¹ Law does raise some doubts as to whether this is necessarily proven but is prepared to grant it for the sake of argument.

then in a better position than the second person because he has not had his sadistic impulses stimulated and encouraged.

Law responds by asking us to imagine that both sadists are already “long-confirmed in their vice, such that one occasion to enjoy another’s suffering makes little or no difference to their degree of depravity. In such a case, it is extremely implausible to say that the sadist who sees the torture is harmed thereby, in that it hardens his sadism. Each man is as hardened already as it is practically possible to be” (Law, 2007, p. 6).

Law then pre-empts a potential response open to the utilitarian. He suggests that some may doubt whether the figure of the hardened sadist is plausible. These people may insist that even the most hardened sadist can be reformed given the right circumstances or they might insist that even the most hardened sadist must feel some measure of guilt at his crimes. Thus, a potential response open to the utilitarian would be to insist that the pleasure the second person took in watching the torture will always be outweighed by the pain that results. The second person may gain pleasure from watching the torture victim, but he is sure to be wracked with guilt later on and taken even further from a virtuous happy life thus it would be better for him never to have seen the torture. As such, the utilitarian may still be able to insist the third person is better off than the second.

Law responds to this in three ways. His first response is that it rests on a worryingly empirical claim. Perhaps it is true, but can the utilitarian be sure of this? His second response is that even if it is true it still seems uncomfortably contingent. As Law points out “There is no obvious reason to think that it must be true for all possible agents” (Law, 2007, p. 7). Perhaps it is the case that all sadists currently on Earth are like this, but what about future sadists, or sadists of a different species, or sadists in other possible worlds?

Law then says that “It would be uncomfortable to think that causing pain to others for the enjoyment of oneself and other sadistic witnesses is wrong only because it so happens that sadists hate themselves afterwards. Most of us would tend to think that such acts are wrong quite irrespective of what happens to be true about whether the perpetrators are later filled with bitter self-recrimination” (Law, 2007, p. 7). Now, I think that Law has phrased this passage clumsily. Technically, the utilitarian, regardless of whether hardened sadists will feel guilty, will always think that sadistic acts are wrong because the pain caused to the victim will always outweigh the pleasure of the sadists. As such, no utilitarian, regardless of whether

or not they agree with Law's claim that the hardened sadist is a possible or plausible character, will think or is obliged to think "that causing pain to others for the enjoyment of oneself and other sadistic witnesses is wrong only because it so happens that sadists hate themselves afterwards" (Law, 2007, p. 7). This is because they will think that torturing others is wrong because of the pain caused to the victim.

Instead I think that what Law is trying to say is that it would be uncomfortable to think that the pleasure gained from causing pain to others for the enjoyment of oneself and other sadistic witnesses is not good for (i.e. does not contribute to the welfare of) oneself and other sadistic witnesses only because it so happens that sadists hate themselves afterwards. This is because most of us tend to think that the pleasure gained from such acts is bad quite irrespective of what happens to be true about whether or not the perpetrators are later filled with bitter self-recrimination. Granted this way of phrasing Law's response is a bit more wordy, but it stops the utilitarian from having an easy counter-response and thus strengthens Law's argument.

The final response that Law makes is that even if sadists will always be worse off after taking pleasure in a sadistic act (whether this is due to them feeling guilty afterwards or because their sadistic tendencies will be exacerbated taking them still further from true virtuous happiness) this does nothing to show that the pleasure gained is not, in and of itself, good for the sadist. The utilitarian's response has been that the second person in Law's thought experiment is worse off because, all things considered, the consequences of him seeing and taking pleasure in the act of torture will be negative and will outweigh the momentary pleasure that he took at the time. However, this does nothing to show that the pleasure gained from the sadistic act is not good in and of itself even if it is always outweighed by the resulting pain. Thus, "There is no reason why we should not see the pleasure gained as being beneficial in itself" (Law, 2007, p. 7). The fact that the sadist's pleasure counts as a good thing seems to be an uncomfortable result, and this holds quite regardless of whether or not overall and all things considered it is good or bad for sadists to take pleasure in torturing people.

As such, there seems to be no distinction between evil pleasure and virtuous pleasure and so we must conclude that, if virtuous pleasure is good for us, then evil pleasure must also be good for us. Law concludes that because the utilitarian can forge no relevant distinction

between evil pleasure and virtuous pleasure he must conclude that “the wrongness of a sadistic act inheres in the balance of harm over benefit to all subjects. That there is such a balance is established by placing the well-being produced and lost by the act onto the utilitarian scales. Onto the negative side go the pain suffered by the victim, and the subsequent pain suffered by the sadist. Onto the positive side goes the sadist’s pleasure. This remains true even if we accept that all sadists in the end do themselves more harm than good. This is the truly objectionable feature” (Law, 2007, p. 7).

As such, it becomes clear that the aim of the paper is to highlight an objectionable feature of utilitarianism. The problem for the utilitarian, so Law is claiming, is that because they think that pleasure is the sole constituent of welfare they must therefore accept that the pleasure the sadist takes from torture is good, even if the goodness of that pleasure is always outweighed by other factors, and this is a troubling conclusion.

What we should do with this conclusion is left up to the reader. There are two obvious responses that the reader can make. The first response the reader could make is to accept that, as troubling as it may be, evil pleasure is good for us. They could argue that virtuous pleasure is obviously good for us, that evil pleasure is no qualitatively different to virtuous pleasure, and therefore evil pleasure is also good for us. This response is doubly troubling for me because, not only would I have to accept the uncomfortable claim that evil pleasure is good for us, but I would also potentially have to accept that pleasure counts as a basic good. It would follow from this that my list of the basic goods is incomplete.

The second response the reader could make would be to claim that neither virtuous pleasure nor evil pleasure contribute to our welfare. They could argue that it is obvious that evil pleasures cannot contribute to welfare, that virtuous pleasure is no qualitatively different to evil pleasure, and therefore it follows that virtuous pleasure also cannot contribute to welfare. This response is less hostile to my account because I would not then need to add pleasure to my list of the basic goods.

However, this still seems overly strong. Surely pleasure must be playing some role in a eudaimonic life. We would be rightly concerned if an individual experienced no pleasure in anything even when engaging in virtuous activities. As such it must be good in at least some sense for people to take pleasure in virtuous activity. However, we need to find a way to say this without having to say that evil pleasures also contribute to eudaimonia otherwise we risk

making the first response. As such, it is very important that I find a relevant distinction between virtuous pleasure and evil pleasure which allows me to do this. How am I to do this?

I think that a relevant distinction between virtuous pleasure and evil pleasure can be forged if we accept the Aristotelian claim that nature is infused with teleology. I am happy to grant that Law has shown that there is no subjective difference between evil pleasures and virtuous pleasures. However, we can still forge a relevant normative distinction between them if we simply accept the claim that in humans pleasure is inherently directed at being experienced in accordance with the basic goods. It follows from this that when someone experiences virtuous pleasure our capacity to feel pleasure is functioning as it should. However, when someone experiences evil pleasure our capacity to feel pleasure is not functioning as it should. It is attaching itself to the wrong sort of activity as defined by our nature or essence. It follows from this that virtuous pleasure is good in that everything is functioning as it should and that that evil pleasure is bad because it is not functioning as it should.

As a result, Law is wrong to say that “The way to test whether something makes a contribution to wellbeing is to think of two people whose lives are alike in every respect other than whether they have this enjoyment. If the person who experiences the enjoyment is thereby benefited, then the enjoyment contributes to wellbeing” (Law, 2007, p. 4). Instead in order to work out whether something makes a contribution to well-being we also need to carefully consider whether and in what way that thing will interact with human nature. We must ask ourselves whether it fulfils or clashes with a human end. If it is in accordance with a human end then it contributes to well-being. If it clashes with a human end then it does not. Only then will we know whether somebody is benefitted by something and whether it contributes to their well-being. As such, simply showing that there is no subjective difference between two pleasures tells us nothing about whether or not those pleasures equally contribute to well-being.

As a result, I can agree with the hedonist that the pleasure someone takes from reading a good book or talking to a friend is a good thing and yet I can also share in, and explain why, Law has the feeling that pleasure derived from sadistic acts is inherently bad and this seems to be a positive result. It also follows from this that, although virtuous pleasure

will be an important part of the good life, pleasure simpliciter need not be considered a basic good.

I think further intuitive support can be found for this Aristotelian view of pleasure when we consider the results of certain experiments in neuroscience. David Linden in his book *The Compass of Pleasure* recounts some interesting experiments done during the mid-twentieth century on rats. In these experiments electrodes were inserted into the brains of rats. These rats were then able to directly stimulate the pleasure centres of their brains by pressing a lever. Linden reports that the “Rats would press the lever as many as seven thousand times per hour to stimulate their brains ... this was a pleasure center, a reward circuit, the activation of which was much more powerful than any natural stimulus. A series of subsequent experiments revealed that rats preferred pleasure circuit stimulation to food (even when they were hungry) and water (even when they were thirsty). Self-stimulating male rats would ignore a female in heat and would repeatedly cross foot-shock-delivering floor grids to reach the lever. Female rats would abandon their newborn nursing pups to continually press the lever. Some rats would self-stimulate as often as two thousand times per hour for twenty-four hours, to the exclusion of all other activities. They had to be unhooked from the apparatus to prevent death by self-starvation. Pressing that lever became their entire world” (Linden, 2011).

I think it would be an error with regard to philosophy to read into these experiments too much. This is for a variety of reasons. For example, it involves non-human animals under highly unusual circumstances and it is unclear how much control rats under normal circumstances have over themselves let alone circumstances like this. Further, there are also a variety of epistemic issues around what it is like to be a rat in these circumstances and so on. Nevertheless, if we take this experiment at face value then it seems to me intuitively obvious that these rats were not living well and very few of us would want to experience a human equivalent (at least not for any prolonged period of time). It also seems that the hedonist has a tough time explaining why we might have these intuitions. If pleasure really is the sole constituent of the good life then it seems that these rats were living excellent lives as these rats were experiencing huge amounts of pleasure. However, our intuitions tell us that these rats were living bad lives and this shows that our intuitions clash with hedonism.

It can also be argued that this experiment poses some difficulty, although to a lesser extent, for thinkers who think that pleasure (*simpliciter*) is a partial constituent of the good life. For example, a natural law theorist who included pleasure as a basic good could not deny that these rats lived lives completely devoid of goodness. At most all they could say is that the rats lived unbalanced lives experiencing one good (pleasure) to the exclusion of all others, but it is unclear whether this necessarily means that it was a bad life for them to live. Perhaps an unbalanced life is a bad life, but this remains to be shown and the natural law theorist who includes pleasure as a basic good will need to show this in order to avoid this intuitive objection.

However, if we accept the Aristotelian schema that I have outlined and we say that pleasure in accordance with the basic goods is good for us then we can easily explain what was going on here and why we have the intuitions that we do. These rats lived bad lives because, although they were experiencing pleasure, they were not experiencing that pleasure in the way that they should experience it. Pleasure should be experienced in accordance with the basic goods (or the rat basic goods in their case whatever those may be). Further, because this pleasure was not being experienced in accordance with their nature and ends it was actively a bad thing. It was depriving them of goods rather than leading and guiding them towards them. As such, when considering experiments like this it seems to me that the Aristotelian can account for our philosophical intuitions about the importance and role of pleasure in animals' lives. As a result, this lends at least some support to the Aristotelian account of pleasure and thus to the Aristotelian account more generally. To conclude this section then, pleasure *simpliciter* should not be considered a basic good. At the same time part of truly and fully experiencing a genuine basic good is to enjoy it and somebody who derives no pleasure from a good has not truly experienced it. As such, pleasure in accordance with the basic goods will be a goal of human existence and a eudaimonic life should be a generally pleasant one.

5.2. Freedom, Equality and Justice: The Political Goods

Many may wonder why freedom, equality and justice have not made it onto my list of the basic human goods. After all, wars are fought and revolutions held in the name of these concepts and throughout history thousands of people have died to defend them. The

importance of these ideas is written into many nations' constitutions and there are countless declarations, organisations, treaties and charters designed to protect them. Why, then, are these not included on my list of the basic human goods?

By freedom I simply mean something along the lines of being free from interference and control by the government and other members of the community when making decisions and taking actions which don't involve anybody else.³² By equality I mean something along the lines of being treated as equals under the law and being treated with the same level of respect as everybody else. By justice I shall simply adopt a broadly Aristotelian definition of proportionately rewarding the good and punishing the bad.³³ With this usually being overseen and enforced by a legitimate authority, official or leader. Now, of course, these are all hugely important concepts within political philosophy and it is impossible for me to offer a definition of each of these that satisfies everybody and which is not contentious, but hopefully the definitions I have offered here are at least reasonable ones and they should allow me to illustrate the ways in which freedom, equality and justice (as I have defined them) are and are not important within a natural law ethical schema.

The basic reason none of these are included on my list of the basic goods is because I think they only make sense and only become important when considering political communities. I do not deny that at a political level these concepts are extremely important and I do believe that they should be considered 'political goods'. However, at the level of the individual I am not sure that it even makes much sense to talk about them.

Recall that for something to be a basic human good it must fulfil one of our ultimate ends in and of itself. Things like knowledge, for example, fulfil our end of rational activity and thus knowledge is a basic human good. However, freedom, equality and justice do not

³² As such, I'm not interested here in questions around freewill and determinism. This is because these questions are extremely philosophically complicated and go beyond the scope of this thesis.

³³ Aristotle has a lengthy discussion of justice in Book 5 of *The Nicomachean Ethics*. It is too lengthy for me to summarize fully here and it goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, Aristotle distinguishes between distributive justice and rectificatory justice. Distributive justice is concerned with fairly distributing shared resources. Aristotle summarizes justice in this context as "What is just in this sense, then, is what is proportional, and what is unjust is what violates the proportions. So one share becomes too large and the other too small. This is exactly what happens in practice: the man who acts unjustly gets too much and the victim of injustice too little of what is good" (Aristotle, 2004, p. 120). Rectificatory justice is concerned with righting wrongs. Aristotle's basic account is that a just judge should try to 'equalize' the 'inequality' of an injustice with the help of things like a penalty (See Aristotle, 2004, p. 121 for more details). I am not convinced Aristotle explains this very clearly here, but his basic point is that when two individuals come into conflict a just judge should proportionately reward the good and punish the bad.

correlate with or fulfil any of our ultimate ends in and of themselves. This means that if freedom, equality and justice are to be good then this must be in a different way and at a different level than the basic human goods like knowledge and health. Further, it does not make sense to talk about an individual human in isolation being benefitted by increased equality (with whom?) or freedom (from what?). This is unlike the basic goods such as health and knowledge which would benefit a human in complete isolation. It does, however, make sense to talk about a society or state, and thus the individuals within that society or state, being benefitted by increased equality, freedom and justice. As such, because of these considerations it seems to me that freedom, equality and justice become important and valuable when considering communities and states rather than when considering an individual in isolation. As a result of this they should be considered state level 'political goods' rather than basic human goods.

To illustrate this further, equality in some sense and measure will be important because all humans have a very similar form and thus there will be few inherently morally relevant differences between them. Further, it will only make sense for a person to submit themselves to a state and community if they are likely to benefit from it and so it makes sense on the basis of this to treat everyone roughly as equals with their best interests in mind. Freedom will be important because the role of the state will be to help humans live good lives and so it is important that individual citizens are free to pursue the goods in the ways that best suits them (of which, mostly likely, they will be the best judges). Further, because the basic human goods are what provide humans with reason for action the state's commands will only have normative force, so to speak, when they are promoting or defending a basic human good. As such, there will be important limits to what the state can and cannot legitimately order. Finally, justice will be about fair interactions between individuals with the goal being to proportionately punish wrong deeds and to reward good deeds. However, this requires an existing community in which these interactions can take place and a well-functioning state to monitor and solve disputes. As such, freedom, equality and justice become important and valuable at a community and state level rather than at the level of the individual.

Of course, more could be said and objections could be raised and I am not claiming in this brief section to have unquestionably demonstrated that freedom, equality and justice are politically important and some thinkers may still reasonably disagree with me about their importance. Further, much more could be said about what is meant by freedom, equality and

justice given that there are many different ways of conceptualising them. However, hopefully this is still sufficient to illustrate the point that, whilst freedom, justice and equality are potentially very important within a natural law schema, they should not be considered basic human goods.

A classical account of liberalism was first put forward by Mill. He states that “the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant” (Mill, 1859, ch. 1, par. 9). Put simply, society should be organized in such a way that everyone is free to do whatever they want without the state interfering so long as it does not harm others or limit their freedom.

With this definition in mind it should become clear from what I have said earlier about the importance of freedom, equality and justice within a natural law schema that there is nothing, at least in principle, to stop a natural law theorist from subscribing to a form of political liberalism. Further, it could potentially be argued that natural law theory actually prescribes some form of liberalism. In order to establish this we would need to establish two things. The first is that freedom, equality and justice are state level political goods. The second is that people are usually the best judges of the ways they should pursue and instantiate the basic goods in their own lives and/or that people cannot be forced into enjoying a basic good against their will. I have already argued for the first premise and the second premise seems to be intuitively reasonable. If both of these premises are true then we could potentially argue that natural law theory prescribes some form of political liberalism. This would be because the state should respect our freedom and allow us to pursue (or not to pursue) goods as we see fit and that they can only limit our freedom when we hurt another person. Now once again, more could be said and I am not claiming to have unquestionably demonstrated that natural law theory prescribes some minimal level of political liberalism, but hopefully I have shown that the natural law theorist is by no means forced into adopting some form of totalitarian view of the state or something along these lines. There is nothing then, at least in principle, to stop the natural law theorist from being a political liberal. To conclude this section then, freedom, justice and equality should be considered important state level ‘political goods’ but they should not be considered basic human goods.

5.3. Other Natural Law Theorists and Other Goods

As Oderberg points out when discussing the agreement amongst contemporary natural law theorists on the basic human goods:

“It is both surprising and satisfying (given the state of contemporary ethical theory) to observe the extent to which they agree on just what those basic goods are. Here are some examples:

- John Finnis: Life; knowledge; play; aesthetic experience; friendship; religion; practical reasonableness.
- Alfonso Gomez-Lobo: Life; the family; friendship; work and play; the experience of beauty; knowledge; integrity.
- Timothy Chappell: Life; truth, and the knowledge of the truth; friendship; aesthetic value; physical and mental health and harmony; pleasure and the avoidance of pain; reason, rationality, and reasonableness; the natural world; people; fairness; achievements; the contemplation of God (if God exists).
- Mark C. Murphy: Life; knowledge; aesthetic experience; excellence in play and work; excellence in agency; inner peace; friendship and community; religion; happiness
- In my book *Moral Theory* I gave: Life; knowledge; friendship; work and play; the appreciation of beauty; religious belief and practice.

All of the above theorists, myself included, agree that life, knowledge, friendship, and aesthetic experience are on the list. This is encouraging, but there is also quite a bit of disagreement. It is unrealistic to expect all NL theorists to agree on all of the basic goods, but it is desirable that as much agreement be reached as possible” (Oderberg, 2008, pp. 128 – 129).

I think that Oderberg is quite right. It is encouraging to note that contemporary natural law theorists often come to similar conclusions, but he is also correct to think that we should strive to have as much agreement as possible. As such, it is worth my engaging with other natural law theorists over where we disagree on the basic goods. I shall begin by engaging with Oderberg, in particular his claim that work and play should be considered basic human

goods. Further, many other contemporary natural law theorists include work and play in some form and so hopefully my criticisms of Oderberg will also apply to them.

I shall begin by outlining the argument that Oderberg gives for work and play being a basic human good and then I shall explain why I find it unpersuasive. Oderberg explains, “Many people think that the only reason they work is to obtain enough money to support themselves and their families. These people tend also to think that the only reason they relax is to forget about work ... But on both counts people who think this way are wrong, because work and what we might term play (in the broad sense encompassing leisure and relaxation) have their own intrinsic value. They occupy and exercise our minds and bodies, engage us in enjoyable endeavours, and bring their own special satisfactions. In this sense work and play are but two aspects of a single component of the happy life and are plausibly distinguished from other goods, with work at its best a form of play and vice versa, although they both serve, of course, in the promotion of other goods such as life, knowledge and friendship” (Oderberg, 2000, p. 43). In a sense I want to grant Oderberg much of what he says here, but still challenge the idea that work and play should be considered as basic goods. I have two reasons for this. The first is that Oderberg has not actually pointed to any features of humans or any aspect of our form to make us think that work and play in some way correlate to a human end. This is important because the fact that something correlates to a human ultimate end is precisely what makes it a basic human good. So in order to justify something as a basic human good we must first have a clear analysis of human ends. Only then can we discuss the goods that correlate to them and I am not convinced that Oderberg has done this. This should also illustrate why, when formulating my list of the basic goods, I tried to outline as clearly as possible what our ends are and which goods correlate to them.

The second response I would want to make would be to argue that work is inherently goal directed and that this both explains why Oderberg attaches the importance to it that he does, but also excludes it from being a basic good. If we imagine any worthwhile job we will see that it is directed at some goal. Now, as Oderberg points out, many may instinctively agree with this, but then pessimistically say that the only goal of some people’s work (at least as far as they are concerned) is to make enough money to support themselves and their families. Oderberg then responds to this by saying that, despite this, work and play still “have their own intrinsic value”.

However, I would argue that work is only worthwhile when it pursues something intrinsically good/valuable. Further, work that does not pursue something intrinsically good is worthless. Hence work is often instrumentally good but never intrinsically so. Thus, Oderberg is wrong to view work as a basic good because basic goods are intrinsically valuable in and of themselves. For example imagine a medic, who may feel called to medicine as a vocation regardless of pay, their work is inherently directed at the good of health and the good of community. Similarly teachers, who in contemporary society are unlikely to be earning nearly as much as they could in other professions, their work is inherently directed at spreading knowledge which is itself intrinsically good. As such, their work is instrumentally good, but only because it is directed at things which are themselves intrinsically good. I think this also explain why some sorts of work are inherently worthless. For example, prisoners being made to break rocks for no reason other than to break rocks. This ‘work’ is not valuable because it is not directed at anything intrinsically valuable.³⁴ If Oderberg wants to respond to this then he will either have to claim that breaking rocks can be inherently valuable or he will have to claim that breaking rocks does not count as work. In which case he will have to explain why it does not count as work and the natural answer is that it does not count as work because it is not directed at anything intrinsically valuable. However, this would show that ‘proper’ work is inherently directed at pursuing things of intrinsic value and this is precisely my original point.

As such, whilst work can be instrumentally valuable, it is not intrinsically valuable and thus it is not a basic good. However, I don’t want to belittle the important role that work can play in people’s lives. Work can be of immense instrumental value. For many people it is the main medium through which they pursue certain goods. For example, a teacher may have an active social life with other teachers and colleagues, and thus they will gain a community and friendships through work. It will also stimulate their mind and allow them to spread knowledge to children. As such, they will also benefit in terms of the good of knowledge through their work. As such, a teacher’s work may very well be a vocation and a passion in their life. In this sense Oderberg is right to think that work is important although he is wrong about it being a basic good. This second response has focussed more on work than play, but (particularly if they are two sides of the same coin) much or all of what I have said about

³⁴ Arguably perhaps it derives some value from it being (potentially) a just punishment. However, in this case, it is the justice which is valuable not the work itself. Further, whether or not breaking rocks is ever a just punishment is another question and I won’t try to answer that here.

work can also be said of play. Play (as Oderberg conceives it) is directed at helping us to relax and to exercise our minds and bodies, it can be a sociable activity, a creative activity and so on and so forth. Hence play is also goal directed and this also prevents it from being a basic good.

5.4. The Virtues

Given that Aristotle devotes the bulk of *The Nicomachean Ethics* to a discussion of virtue, and given that my theory is Aristotelian in nature it would be remiss of me not to outline the role that virtue will play in my theory. In a sense virtue, much like pleasure, whilst not technically qualifying as a basic good will play a central role in my ethical theory and perhaps even more so than pleasure. First of all, it is worth clarifying what is meant by a virtue. Hursthouse explains that, “A virtue is a character trait a human being needs to flourish or live well” (Hursthouse, 1991, p. 226). With this definition in mind it will become clear why virtue will play such a big role in my account. If virtue is needed to flourish (to achieve eudaimonia) then it follows that in the same way that a eudaimonic human life must be full of the basic goods a eudaimonic human life must also be full of virtue. As such, virtue will be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for living well and in this sense it will play a central role in my ethical theory. However, if virtue is so central to my ethical theory why technically does it not qualify as a basic good?

The reason for this, it seems to me, is that if we carefully analyse what the virtues will do we will see that they do not stand in the same relation to human ends as the basic goods. To illustrate this I will examine an example virtue. Finding an uncontentious example in philosophy is often a tricky thing but let’s take the example of kindness in some way and to at least some extent. Kindness is going to be an essential character trait humans need to flourish because without it friendship is impossible. Two people cannot be friends (at least not authentic friends) if one or both of them is entirely selfish. A person who never had any regard for another person’s welfare and who was never prepared under any circumstances to ever put the other person’s welfare above his own can hardly be called a friend. Now, as I have already established, friendship is going to be one of the basic human goods and thus kindness will be an essential character trait in order to access and enjoy this good. As such, it is friendship which is the basic human good and kindness is good in a more secondary and

instrumental sense. As a result, kindness technically would not be a basic good. I think that this basic way of conceptualising the importance of kindness can probably be applied to all the virtues and as such virtue would not be a basic good.

I think there is another way to conceptualise this relationship which might reinstate, so to speak, virtue as a basic good. If instead of imagining that kindness is a necessary condition for friendship we imagine it to be a constituent part of friendship then it would follow that we are directed at kindness as part of being directed at friendship. This way of conceptualising it does not strike me as being too strange. It seems quite reasonable to say that part of friendship involves being kind to another person and having them be kind to you and thus kindness would be a key part of friendship (perhaps along with things like having shared interests and so on). If this is the case then kindness, and potentially the other virtues, would relate to our ends in the same way as the other basic goods. Virtue would therefore qualify as a basic good in and of itself as well.

However, I am still not sure whether this line of reasoning is correct and whether virtue would qualify as a basic good because, returning to our example of kindness, although we might be directed at kindness, and thus it would be one of our ends; it still may not qualify as an ultimate end. Being fulfilling of a specifically ultimate end was the defining characteristic of the basic goods. Therefore, it would follow that kindness would not be a basic good if it was not fulfilling of a specifically ultimate end.

The reason why kindness might not be fulfilling of an ultimate end is because it could be subsumed under the more general end of community and the good of friendship. Recall that when we are trying to identify ultimate ends we are looking for capacities at their most general and perhaps one might want to see the capacity for kindness as part of the more general end and capacity to live in community and to have friendships.

Now, I am not sure whether this line of reasoning is precisely correct. I suspect it will depend a great deal on how one conceptualises friendship and kindness. However, I won't explore this further because I am not convinced it matters very much. The virtues will be playing a key role in a flourishing human life and as a result they will provide us with reasons for action. As such, to all intents and purposes they should be considered as basic goods. This will become clearer in my final chapter when I explain how the virtues will often play a role

(both supplementary and pivotal) in explaining why we have certain duties and why certain acts are right and wrong.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the aim was to identify the basic human goods. I did this by identifying the form and ends of humanity in section three. I concluded that the ultimate ends of humanity are: life and health, reproduction, aesthetic experience, community and rationality. In section four, I then sketched out a number of basic human goods that correlate to these ends. These goods were: life and health (both physical and mental), family, friendship and community, aesthetic and creative outlets, knowledge and religion. In section five I then responded to various criticisms and various competing accounts of the human goods. I showed how pleasure, justice, equality and freedom whilst being extremely important within my schema do not qualify as basic goods. I then engaged with other natural law theorists and argued that their inclusion of work and play as basic goods was a mistake. Finally, I examined virtue and I argued that whilst it might not technically qualify as a basic good it should be considered one for all intents and purposes.

Chapter 4: What Should I Do?

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain how we can move from an account of the basic human goods to a reasonably complete ethical schema with clear guidance for action. In order to do this I will need to do a number of things. In section two I will respond to critics of Aristotelianism who claim that it is fundamentally egoistic. I will show that the Aristotelian is by no means committed to a form of egoism (at least not in any negative sense of the word) and thus any criticism of Aristotelianism based on the claim that it is egoistic must ultimately fail. This will also demonstrate why an Aristotelian ethical schema will provide us with many other-regarding duties. In section three I will spell out the limits of the moral community. This section will also clarify issues around partiality and the ethical treatment of animals. In section four I will explain why consequentialist ethical theories are fundamentally flawed. In section five I will then sketch out a reasons-based account of obligation and duty in order to show what our duties will be both to ourselves and to others. Finally, to complete this chapter I will then sketch out an account of human rights and explained their importance and significance within an Aristotelian ethical schema.

2. What About ME!? Are Aristotelians Egoists?

An objection that is often raised against Aristotelians is the claim that they are egoists. Ethical egoism is the claim that “my own good is the ethical standard for what it is right for me to do, the dispositions I should have, and so on” (Annas, 2008, p. 205). Shafer-Landau offers a similar account. He explains that ethical egoism “claims that *actions are morally right just because they best promote one’s self-interest*. On this view conflicts between self-interest and morality are impossible, because our fundamental moral duty is to maximize self-interest. If, among all of the options available to you, there is one that will serve you best, then that is the option that morality requires” (Shafer-Landau, 2012, p. 105). Put simply, the goal of ethics and the rightness of an action is solely determined by whether or not it will benefit the agent. This is an objection because we cannot help but feel that ethics must, at

least in part if not fundamentally, be about the good of others not just my own good. Further, if ethics obliges us to do that which benefits us regardless of the impact on other people then potentially acts that strike us as deeply and obviously wrong may be, not only permitted, but required. If I can steal a loaf of bread from a starving orphan and get away with it unpunished and it will benefit me (perhaps because I am a bit hungry) then ethical egoism would require me to do so. This seems to be obviously false. If your ethical theory is prescribing actions like this then it is so far divorced from the original intuitions that may have originally motivated us to adopt moral realism in the first place that the theory must have gone wrong and so it must be false. If this is what an ethical theory is prescribing then it has fundamentally clashed with and destroyed the very phenomena it was trying to explain. Namely that some acts seem obviously permissible and some seem impermissible, and that acts like stealing bread from starving orphans falls into the latter category of those that are impermissible. As a result, the charge of egoism must be taken very seriously indeed.

Why do some critics accuse Aristotelians of being egoists? Annas explains, when discussing virtue ethics, that according to Aristotelians “the virtues will contribute to the overall final end I have in living my life as a whole; this is variously called *eudaimonia* ... It is at this point that charges of egoism begin to get a grip. The virtues are valuable because they contribute to my final end – but this is *my* final end, not yours, and so it looks as though it is my good, or interests, or whatever, which is justifying my acquisition of the virtues, and so they owe their ethical justification to their contribution to my good” (Annas, 2008, p. 207). Virtue ethicists are also Aristotelians and for our purposes here the same criticisms and responses can be raised against both virtue ethicists and natural law theorists. Simply replace the word ‘virtues’ with ‘partaking in the basic goods’ or something to this effect and the criticism is now directed at natural law theorists. This line of argument has led philosophers such as Hurka to write that virtue ethics (and Aristotelian ethics more generally) is “foundationally egoistic” (Hurka, 2001, p. 232).

The charge of egoism as a criticism can be made in two different ways. The first version, Annas explains, says that “if my reason for having the virtues [or partaking in the basic goods] is that they benefit me, contribute to my flourishing, then virtue ethics will come up with wrong recommendations as to what I should do” (Annas, 2008, p. 208). The argument here would be that given Aristotelianism seems to be egoistic it must on occasion require us to do acts that seem wrong. Annas gives the example of courage. She suggests that

if the only reason we should be brave is in aid of our own flourishing then courageous behaviour that involved standing up solely for the interests of others would not be virtuous particularly if it involved risk or danger to ourselves. Basically, you should be brave when you are standing up for yourself, but the moment you have nothing to gain and are at risk it is always virtuous to retreat. However, this seems to be obviously false. There are occasions when, even if it involves risks to ourselves, we are required to protect others (indeed arguably that's going to be a key part of bravery depending on your account). We can articulate this in natural law terms with relative ease. If the only reason we are required to be part of a community is that it is good for us to be in a community then the moment membership of that community requires self-sacrifice or risk it is in our interests to abandon it. We should only ever be 'fair-weather' members of a community. The moment things get tough it's 'every man for himself' so to speak. This seems to be obviously wrong.

Annas responds to this objection by highlighting that "courage is a *virtue*, that is, a disposition to stand up for what is worthwhile even against temptation to avoid danger, difficulty, and so on. I have not so far specified how we are to identify what is worthwhile, but it is clear that, however we do this, courage is not a disposition which can be switched off when my own interests are not at stake" (Annas, 2008, p. 208). The basic response here is that it is in our best interests to display the virtue of courage. However, the virtue of courage requires us on occasion to stand up for others even if that involves risks to ourselves. As a result, the recommended action need not be (at least directly) self-interested. We may be required by the virtues to stand up for others even at risk to ourselves. As a result, "we have to take the virtues as they are, taking into account the point that virtuous action may often lead to loss of various kinds on the agent's part, and so is not egoistic" (Annas, 2008, p. 208). Again, we can articulate this in natural law terms with relative ease. We can simply give the example of the good of friendship. Friendship is a basic good, and part of being a friend involves standing up for our friends (other people) even when that involves risks and potential losses to ourselves. As such, we should form friendships, but part of being a friend involves potential self-sacrifice for our friends. As such, the recommended action may well be selfless and other regarding. We can run similar lines of argument involving the good of community and family and so on and so forth. This means that we may well pursue the goods of friendship, family, community and so on because it is good for us to pursue those things, but part of having those things involves caring for others. As such, we will be required by any

Aristotelian account of ethics (whether that be a virtue ethic or a natural law theory) to care for others and potentially to make sacrifices on their behalf. Thus, the objection that Aristotelianism is egoistic and will lead to the wrong recommendation for right action need not concern the Aristotelian because it simply is not the case.

However, the charge of egoism as a criticism of Aristotelianism can be made in a second way. This objection says that “even if someone is virtuous in the sense of acting virtuously, still, if their reason for so acting is that being virtuous benefits them and is in his interests, he cannot have the right ethical *motivation*” (Annas, 2008, p. 208). This way of formulating the objection from egoism is aimed at the Aristotelian’s motive for helping others. It does not seem unreasonable to think that when we help others our motivation for helping them should be that our act will help them and not that our act will help us. If our only motivation for doing a ‘selfless’ act is that we will benefit from it then it can hardly be called a selfless act. The motivation seems to be fundamentally wrong.

There is a potential easy response that the virtue ethicist can make here. Annas explains “The obvious answer ... is that if my motivation is egoistic then I am not acting virtuously, I could, of course, do an action which is such that a virtuous person would do it, but do it only because I have an eye on my own flourishing. But then I would not be virtuous, because a virtue is not a disposition that can be exercised in the absence of the right kind of motivation. If I have my eye on my own flourishing, then I am not acting from courage, or generosity, or whatever. The thesis that the virtues benefit their possessor cannot show that the virtues themselves lead to deliberations with egoistic content, or egoistic motivation” (Annas, 2008, p. 208). The basic point is that if we are truly engaging in an act of charity, and thus exercising the virtue of charity or beneficence or whatever, then our motivation will be other regarding. At that moment we will be giving to charity purely because we want to help others not because we want to flourish ourselves. Potentially this style of response could be adapted for a natural law theory. We could potentially say that if we are to truly partake in, for example, the good of friendship then we will help our friends purely because we want to help them and not because it will lead to our own flourishing.

However, this response has a serious weakness. As Hurka points out if the virtue ethicist makes this response then they are committed to a ‘two-level’ theory when it comes to motivation and if they don’t make this response then they are committed to saying that virtue

ethics must involve egoistic motivation. A ‘two-level’ theory of motivation is problematic because it would require us to be motivated not by our true aim (our own eudaimonia) but by something else entirely (the good of others). The reason why we should give to charity is that it will promote our own virtue and flourishing but our motivation has to be completely divorced from this and instead should be about the good of others. This, Hurka claims, “requires the theories to be what Parfit calls *self-effacing*, telling agents not to be motivated by or even to think of their claims about the source of their reasons” (Hurka, 2001, p. 246). This fragmented account of practical reasons and ethical motivation will strike many as undesirable because we would like there to be at least some link between our reasons and our motivations. This concern could be spelled out in a number of different ways. We might worry that in some way it makes moral motivation disingenuous, for example, we have to pretend that we are motivated by the good of others but really we are only interested in our own flourishing because this is the source of our reasons. Alternatively, we might simply worry that this ‘two-level’ account of motivation is unparsimonious and surely it would be simpler to have our motivation and our reasons go hand in hand. As such, this ‘two-level’ account of motivation is troubling.

However, if the virtue ethicist tries to avoid this ‘two-level’ theory then they are committed to saying that our motivation should be our own flourishing and this motivation seems to be fundamentally wrong and misplaced. As Hurka explains, “A flourishing-based theory ... says that a person has reason to act rightly only or ultimately because doing so will contribute to her own flourishing. If she believes this theory and is motivated by its claims about the source of her reasons, her primary impetus for acting rightly will be a desire for her own flourishing. But this egoistic motivation is inconsistent with genuine virtue, which is not focused primarily on the self ... Someone motivated by the theory’s claims about reasons will therefore be motivated not virtuously but in an unattractively self-indulgent way” (Hurka, 2001, p. 246). As a result, the simplistic response given earlier by the virtue ethicist leaves them in the horns of a dilemma; either embrace an unappealing ‘two-level’ theory of motivation or embrace a counterintuitive and self-indulgent account of motivation.

How then am I to respond? It seems to me that this whole critique of Aristotelian ethical theories on the basis of motivation oversimplifies the nature of human motivation in the real world. In reality it seems to me that there are multiple layers to motivation and these are in no way conflicting or clashing. I think this is best illustrated with an example: suppose

that my friend Paul and I are sharing a pizza which has been cut up into an even number of slices. He has already eaten his half of the pizza and I am about to start my final slice. However, as I reach for it I catch his eye and I notice that he is looking slightly longingly at the final slice. He, of course, being well behaved doesn't say a word, but I know that he loves pizza and wasn't able to have lunch that day due to work commitments and thus he is likely very hungry. I am feeling reasonably content and so I offer the slice to him which he eagerly accepts. In situations like this, which strike me as perfectly normal and realistic, my motivation for giving Paul this slice of pizza is that I want Paul to have that slice of pizza! I care about him and I know that he will enjoy it more than I will. So I give it to him. This motivation seems to be other regarding and entirely reasonable. If somebody asked me why I cared about Paul and his well-being I might reply that it is because he is my friend.³⁵ Somebody could then potentially ask me two questions. The first would be; why is Paul in particular your friend? In which case the answer would involve various biographical details about how we met and various psychological details about our shared interests and compatible personalities. The second would be; why do you want to have friends (particularly given they are costing you pizza!)? The answer to this would be because having friends is good! It makes life worth living and contributes to my happiness and well-being.³⁶ This shows, I think, that there are multiple layers to human motivation (and to reasons themselves) and this is in no way vicious or troublesome. My motivation for giving Paul the last slice of pizza (let's call this my proximate motivation) is that I care about my friend. I then also have other more distant and general motivations (let's call these my ultimate motivations) about my own well-being but these in no way preclude my proximate motivation which is other regarding.

A critic may then accuse me of having simply adopted a 'two-level' theory of motivation. This was one of the horns of the dilemma outlined earlier and we've already seen why this is troubling. However, I would respond to this by arguing that I haven't really adopted a 'two-level' theory of motivation at all, or, if I have, the 'two-level' theory of motivation will have been modified to such an extent that it's no longer problematic. It's not the case that my only reason to give Paul the last slice of pizza is that it will benefit me but

³⁵ In a different example we could insert 'family member', 'member of my community' or 'member of the human race' or whatever is most appropriate.

³⁶ We could potentially then ask why friendship does this in which case we could appeal to our ends and form. See chapter three for more details.

that, despite this, my motivation must then be completely divorced from this. Instead my (ultimate) reason for having friends like Paul is that having friends is part of living a good life. My (proximate) reason for giving Paul the last slice of pizza is that he is my friend and he will enjoy it more than me. Further, in some sense at least, my motivations can track this! My (proximate) motivation for giving Paul the pizza is that I want him to enjoy it and he is my friend. At the same time my (ultimate) motivation for having friends is that I enjoy their friendship. A life without friendship would be (at least in this regard) a miserable life. Having friends therefore makes life worth living and contributes to everybody's well-being. However, this ultimate motivation to have friends doesn't in any way stop me in the here and now from being motivated by Paul, his happiness and his well-being when I offer him a slice of pizza. I still want to give Paul, and thus I am motivated to give Paul, the last slice of pizza because he will enjoy it and because he is my friend. As a result, this doesn't seem to be troubling in any way and so I think any objection to Aristotelian ethical theories based on the claim that they have egoistic motivations is unlikely to succeed.

To conclude this section, we have carefully examined criticisms of Aristotelian ethical theories which start by accusing them of being ethical egoists. We explored two ways of formulating these objections. The first was that because Aristotelians are egoists Aristotelian ethical theories will recommend the wrong action. We found that this was not the case and that an Aristotelian ethical theory will prescribe selfless and other-regarding acts. We then examined whether Aristotelians are committed to an egoistic account of motivation and we found that this was not the case. Now let us return to the opening question of whether or not Aristotelians are egoists. It seems to me that this will all come down to how we define egoism. If we take a very broad definition of egoism and say that any ethical theory which claims that the ultimate goal of the ethical life is for us to live good lives then, yes, Aristotelians are egoists. However, it is hard to see how this is in any way an objection or problem. Aristotelian ethical theories will require us to engage in many selfless acts and to consider the needs of others and if egoistic theories require us to do this then it is unclear whether there is anything wrong with egoism. However, if we take a narrower definition of egoism and say that any ethical theory which requires us to serve others and to consider their needs cannot be egoistic then Aristotelian ethical theories are far from egoistic since they require us to do both of these. Either way there is simply no problem for the Aristotelian.

2.1. The Ultimate Sacrifice

Although I have shown that the Aristotelian is not committed to an overtly egoistic account of motivation or right action potentially the problem can be reformulated in a more subtle way. Perhaps it can be shown that certain, very specific very selfless actions are impermissible even if selflessness in general is not. The most obvious example here is the problem of somebody making the ultimate sacrifice. Someone might argue that given our ULTIMATE goal is to LIVE a eudaimonic life making the ultimate sacrifice will always be impermissible. Someone might argue, in a sense correctly, that even when your death will save many lives, and thus in a sense your sacrifice will be for the greater good, you are still not permitted to sacrifice your life for these other people. This is because you are not directed at maximising the good (in general or for your community) instead you are directed at living a good life and this is always incompatible with dying. As such, making the ultimate sacrifice will always be impermissible. This will be because, even though each individual good in isolation is of equal importance and provides you with reason for action, you will always have a stronger reason to protect yourself than to protect others because ultimately you 'should' (or 'have reason to') live a eudaimonic life. Some people may happily accept this, but I think it will strike many, including myself, as an unappealing conclusion. We might happily accept that one can never be morally obliged to make the ultimate sacrifice, but surely we would still want to commend those who do risk and lose their lives for others and this seems incompatible with the idea that it might be morally impermissible. As such, a response is needed.

I think we can explain why making the ultimate sacrifice is sometimes permitted if we remember two basic and interrelated points. The first is that a longer life is not necessarily a better life, and the second is that to truly partake in certain goods involves being prepared and willing to sacrifice yourself for other people. I will begin by defending each of these points in turn and then I will turn to some examples.

Why is a longer life not necessarily a better life? By and large it will be the case that a longer life is better. We are directed at living and at pursuing various other goods in the process. As such in living longer, generally, we will be able to access and enjoy more goods more fully. Thus, usually a longer life is a better life. However, this is not always the case. There may be times when we have to choose between a short but eudaimonic life filled with

goodness and a long but impoverished life with very little or no access to the various goods. Under circumstances like this it is perfectly reasonable for an individual to choose the short but eudaimonic life rather than the long but impoverished life.

In reality, of course, we are never given a clear-cut decision like this. However, if we imagine someone being offered a choice: On the one hand, they can live to the age of fifty whilst having a successful career, good friends, a loving family and children, they can see the world and take up hobbies and up until their death they will enjoy good health. On the other hand, they can live to the age of ninety but they will have a boring low paid job, they will be alone with no friends and family, they will be unable to pursue hobbies and interests and so on and so forth. It seems to me that someone is perfectly reasonable to pick the first life. It would be fantastic if they could live the first life but for ninety years rather than fifty years. However, if that is unavailable to them and they must choose between the two options outlined then it strikes me that someone is more than justified in picking the first life. It may be shorter but it is better. This shows that a longer life is not always a better life.

What about my second point? What about the claim that to truly enjoy certain goods involves being prepared to sacrifice yourself for others? It seems to me that this becomes clear when we consider some example goods particularly when considered in the real world. I would claim that part of being, for example, a father or mother involves being prepared to risk your life for your children. Similarly part of being married involves being prepared to risk your life for your partner. It seems to me that if someone is to truly be a parent, a sibling, a husband or wife, or possibly even a close friend then one must be prepared to sacrifice oneself for the other person. Being prepared to do that is simply part of the nature of those relationships and goods. As such, it seems to me that part of truly partaking in certain goods involves being prepared to sacrifice yourself for others.

Aristotle himself makes some similar points. Aristotle also thinks that sometimes it is commendable to make the ultimate sacrifice and his justification for this seems to have many of the same themes and ideas that I have highlighted earlier. He writes “But it is also true to say of the man of good character that he performs many actions for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary even dies for them. For he will sacrifice both money and honours and in general the goods that people struggle to obtain, in his pursuit of what is <morally> fine. For he would rather have intense pleasure for a short time than quiet pleasure

for a long time; rather live finely for one year than indifferently for many; and rather do one great and glorious deed than many petty ones. This result is presumably achieved by those who give their lives for others; so their choice is a glorious prize” (Aristotle, 2004, p. 245). Now precisely how to translate, interpret and understand Aristotle is a complicated topic and I don’t want to argue for any particular interpretation here, but what we can see coming through in this passage is an explanation, similar to my own, as to why making the ultimate sacrifice is sometimes permissible (and indeed in Aristotle’s eyes commendable).

Aristotle’s basic point is that a longer life is not always better than a shorter life. It might sometimes be better to “have intense pleasure for a short time”, to “live finely for one year” and to “do one great and glorious deed” rather than to have “quiet pleasure for a long time”, live “indifferently for many” years and to only do “many petty” deeds. His reference to “the man of good character” also suggests that virtues such as bravery will be playing a role in the justification. As such, it is encouraging to note that Aristotle and I are coming to similar conclusions about why making the ultimate sacrifice is sometimes permissible and commendable.

Philippa Foot raises a similar response in her book *Natural Goodness*. In chapter six she explores the relationship between human happiness and the good life and argues that although happiness simpliciter is not the only constituent of the good life it must in some way be related to the good life. Ultimately, she gives an account of happiness and the good life that is similar to the Aristotelian conception of eudaimonia. Along the way, she explores the example of “some very brave men who opposed the Nazis” (Foot, 2001, p. 94). She begins with some historic examples but then adapts the examples to keep things simple. She asks us to imagine that these individuals, whom she labels ‘the Letter-Writers’, had a clear choice between living short but morally good lives ending in their execution or submitting to the Nazis. She suggests that had these individuals been able to live as they would have wished then we would have expected them to “have had especially happy lives” (Foot, 2001, p. 95). As such, in refusing to submit to the Nazis and thus condemning themselves to be executed it seems that we could potentially say that “they knowingly sacrificed their happiness in making their choice” (Foot, 2001, p. 95). However, Foot then points out that this is not the only thing we could say and the only way of seeing it. We may also think there was “a sense in which they did not, sacrifice their happiness in refusing to go along with the Nazis” (Foot, 2001, p. 95). This is because the good and happy life that they wanted to live could not be

achieved “by just and honourable means ... Happiness in life, they might have said, was not something possible for them” (Foot, 2001, p. 95). As such, we may have the intuition that their lives after surrendering to the Nazis would not have been happy, good or eudaimonic.

The obvious explanation that one might give of this is that had these individuals submitted to the Nazis then they would have been wracked with intense guilt afterwards potentially for the rest of their lives. As such, we could argue that the Letter-Writers were right to sacrifice their lives resisting the Nazis because in so doing they avoided a great deal of ‘badness’ in the form of the guilt and mental torment they would have felt had they submitted. As such, on balance their shorter but more moral lives were happier and more eudaimonic than the longer but immoral lives they could have had. In a sense this explanation is fine because allows me to explain why making the ultimate sacrifice is sometimes permissible. However, it seems worryingly contingent on facts about human psychological make up. It basically relies on the claim that humans cannot live with themselves if they betray their ideals and this seems contingently true at best. As such a better explanation would be ideal.

Foot agrees with me that this explanation is not sufficient and also thinks there must be more to the explanation than this. She writes “It may seem that one can get to the bottom of this matter simply by thinking about the shame that men of the Letter-Writers’ calibre would no doubt have felt in later life, had they gone along with the Nazis. This is of course important, for they might have felt that everything that came later was corroded by the fact that it had been gained by acting in this way. Yet this is not the heart of the matter. For supposing they had been offered a ‘Lethe-drug’ that would have taken from them all future knowledge of the action? They would not have accepted. And there would have been a way in which they would not have felt that happiness lay in acceptance. It is the latter difficult thought that I want to hold on to, and to understand. At the very least its presence gives us a clear indication that happiness isolated from virtue is not the only way in which the concept is to be found in our thoughts” (Foot, 2001, pp. 95 - 96).

Foot’s basic point is that many of us have the intuition, even if we cannot clearly articulate why, that had these men submitted to the Nazis and abandoned their sense of morality although they may have lived long lives they would have been worse off for it. This is the same basic response that I made earlier. It seems that under certain circumstances an

individual that behaves badly (for example, in a cowardly manner) in order to prolong their own life loses more than had they resisted and died. This is because a short but virtuous life filled with good things is better than a long life without them. As such, it would be better for them to live a shorter but better life than a longer but worse life. To conclude, it is encouraging to note that Aristotle, Foot and I all come to similar conclusions about why it is sometimes permissible and commendable to make the ultimate sacrifice.

We can now consider a few examples of when somebody might commendably sacrifice themselves for others. A mother who sacrifices herself for her children is commendable and has done a very good thing. Here she is responding appropriately to the good of family and the fact that she had the good of family suggests that (at least in this regard) her life, although it may not have been a long one, was a good one. This is because family is a basic human good and the fact that she was prepared to do this suggests that she was fully committed to it and thus (hopefully) enjoying and partaking in it. A soldier who lays down his life for his friends and country fighting an oppressive regime is also commendable and has done a good thing. He is responding appropriately to the good of the community and the (hopefully) respected role (as a soldier) that he plays in that community. He is also responding appropriately to the good of friendship which (hopefully) he shares with his fellow soldiers. Finally, he is also responding appropriately to a whole host of other goods that are potentially at stake if this oppressive regime were to take over. As such, this soldier is also to be commended. On the other hand, the father who lays down his life for the family pet is not to be commended. We may wish to praise him for his selflessness and bravery, but ultimately the act itself was unjustified and foolish. Whilst pets may be important parts of our lives they are not instantiating goods in the same way that humans do and thus this was not an appropriate response. This shows that whilst it is sometimes permissible and commendable for someone to make the ultimate sacrifice it has to be for something deeply important and the act of laying down your life for something should only be done under very unusual and unpleasant circumstances. To conclude this section, it seems to me that it is perfectly reasonable and in accordance with our ends on rare occasions for humans to sacrifice their lives for others even if they are never morally obligated to do so.

3. The Scope of the Moral Community

As we have seen the sorts of things that are good for us and, as we shall see, ultimately whether acts are permitted, impermissible or obligatory will be defined by our form or nature. Similarly, the scope of our moral community, the individuals to whom we will have moral obligations, will also be defined by our nature. What then is the scope of our moral community?

First and foremost we will have a great many obligations to ourselves. Ultimately, we are directed at living a good life and in order to achieve this we need to fill our lives with good things (the basic goods). As such, we have a duty to care for ourselves, to better ourselves, to look after our own welfare and to fill our lives with good things.

We will also have a great many obligations to other human beings. As we have seen we are directed at living in community with other humans. As such, we will have a large number of obligations to the members of our community. We are obliged not to harm them, to consider their welfare and, where possible, to promote the basic goods in their lives. We will also have some obligations to more distant human beings. In the modern world all of us are interconnected. The actions and decisions that somebody makes at home can affect somebody on the other side of the planet and vice versa. We also live in age with increasing amounts of travel, communication and sharing amongst and between different, often quite distant, cultures. If we live in any even moderately large city then the odds are that some of our neighbours may well have been born or have their origins in different countries and communities. This then connects our community with that community to at least some extent. As such, modern technology, travel and politics as well as our shared history binds all human beings together. In some sense then we are all part of a global community. As such, we also have some obligations to distant others. These are not as great as the obligations that we have to our immediate neighbours. This is because we are in much closer communion with our immediate neighbours than somebody on the other side of the planet. However, we do have some obligations towards them in as much as we are all members of a global community. Here I am not going to explicate precisely the limits of these obligations as it is complex question that goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but at a basic level it is reasonable to assume that we are obliged not to harm distant others and in times of desperate need to help them in some way and form.

We will have even more obligations to those whom we consider to be our close friends and family members. Our lives, goods and wellbeing are intimately linked with these people. We are directed towards the special care of our friends and family. As such, we have reason to care for them a great deal. We will have strong obligations not to harm these people and to promote the goods in their lives. These people will have greater priority in our lives than more distant human beings. This is because part of being a good friend or family member involves showing them preferential treatment under some, but certainly not all, circumstances.

This shouldn't be contentious. If a father only has enough resources to, for example, educate one child then all other things being equal it is reasonable for him to favour his son over a complete stranger. Similarly, if a mother only has enough time to nurture and care for one child, to hear their concerns and fears and to offer them affection and comforting words, then all other things being equal it is reasonable for her to favour her daughter over a complete stranger and so on. As Cottingham points out, "To choose to save one's own child from a burning building when an impartial consideration of the balance of general utility would favour rescuing someone else first, is *not* (as impartialists must claim) a perhaps understandable but nonetheless regrettable lapse from the highest moral standards; on the contrary, it is the morally correct course – it is precisely what a good parent *ought* to do. A parent who leaves his child to burn, on the grounds that the building contains someone else whose future contribution to the general welfare promises to be greater, is not a hero; he is (rightly) an object of moral contempt, a moral leper" (Cottingham, 1986, p. 357). Partiality, as Cottingham labels it, when applied appropriately is not a bad thing, indeed it is often morally required.

However, an objection that might be raised here would be to point out that sometimes partiality is a bad thing. As Cottingham points out, "To say without qualification that it is morally correct to favour one's own clearly will not do" (Cottingham, 1986, p. 358). Nepotism and favouritism can be immoral and damaging to society. A judge who allows a guilty criminal to go free simply because they are friends is not a just judge.³⁷ Cottingham

³⁷ Of course, in countries like the UK judges would not be allowed to preside over a case involving friends or relatives as there would be an obvious conflict of interest. As such, a situation like this, in theory, would never happen. Nevertheless, my point still stands, and indeed is supported by the observation that we have practices like this, that there are times when partiality is impermissible.

also gives a number of other examples. He writes, “A civil servant who in placing a contract shows favouritism to his friends or relations is (rightly) liable to be dismissed. Nor is the case of the public official the only type of case where partiality is impermissible. The personnel manager of a privately owned company may be censured for cronyism or nepotism even though he has sworn no oath of office to serve the public impartially” (Cottingham, 1986, p. 358). How are we to reconcile the claim that partiality is often a good thing with the observation that sometimes impartiality is required?

We can do this by remembering that the agents in the cases outlined above (the civil servant, judge and personnel manager) are under either an explicit or implicit duty to be impartial. This is because they are representing organisations that need to be impartial rather than themselves as private individuals. The civil servant and the judge are acting on behalf of the state which should be impartial between its citizens. Further, the civil servant and the judge will most likely have taken an explicit oath or signed an explicit contract promising to be impartial when carrying out their duty. The personnel manager, whilst perhaps not having made an explicit commitment to be impartial, is acting on behalf and in the interests of a company which will need to be impartial in order to best serve the company and society at large. As such, the personnel manager also has a duty to be impartial. As Cottingham explains, “The situation in these various different cases, then, is that *either*, in what I shall call the “direct” case, (such as that of the public official) the agent is under a specific duty to be impartial; *or*, in the “indirect” case (such as that of the personnel manager) the agent is under a duty to perform an activity or job the requirements of which involve a duty to make non-biased assessments based on a range of objectively determined criteria. To take account of these complications, we need to redefine partialism as the thesis that *unless one is under a direct or indirect duty to be impartial, it is morally correct to favour one’s own*” (Cottingham, 1986, p. 358).

Another objection that might be raised here is that an ethical theory which endorses partialism is liable to endorse racism, xenophobia and possibly sexism. After all, in some sense two white Englishmen have something in common that a person of African or Asian decent does not. Therefore, perhaps the two white Englishmen should view each other as ‘one of their own’ and favour them over people of other ethnic backgrounds. This would seem to be a troubling conclusion because this seems to be racist and racism is morally impermissible.

I shall put aside questions of whether patriotism is a virtue and instead I shall focus just on ethnicity in order to keep things simple. What would an Aristotelian account of partiality have to say about the importance of ethnicity? The answer is that under an Aristotelian schema a person's ethnicity would be morally irrelevant when considering their moral worth and our obligations towards them. As such, all forms of racism would be impermissible. As we have seen, humans are directed at entering into community with other human beings and the colour of our skin and our geographical origins have nothing to do with our shared humanity. As such, the precise same rules, so to speak, will apply to everybody of every race. Two people of different ethnicities are as capable of, and directed towards, entering into community and friendship with each other as two people of the same ethnicity. Their race is simply irrelevant. Therefore, racism will not be permissible under an Aristotelian ethical schema. There is simply no reason for a person of European heritage to favour another European over a person of African heritage and there is no reason for a person of African heritage to favour another African over a person of European heritage and so on. Therefore, the claim that partiality is bad because it may lead to racism is simply false. Aristotelian partiality will not lead to racism.

What about animals? So far we have seen why we will have obligations to human beings but this tells us nothing about how we should treat animals. Most of us are uncomfortable with the idea that everything and anything is permissible when it comes to animals. Whilst most people are happy to say that animals are not morally equal to human beings it still seems intuitively obvious that some acts involving animals, such as their pointless torture, are wrong. However, given that, at least in the case of wild animals, they are in no way members of our community or species it is unclear why this is the case. We don't seem to be tied to animals through the good of the community in the way that we are with other human beings. As such, it is unclear why we have any reason to consider their welfare. Why then are some acts involving animals wrong?

With regard to wild animals the reason why torturing them is immoral becomes clear when we consider their form. As Barad points out, when discussing Aquinas, "Moreover, Aquinas makes it clear that animals have a rich affective life, complete with emotions and desires. In all these diverse ways, animals can have experiences that are similar to many human experiences. Following Aquinas' principle that a thing's mode of activity is proportionate to its mode of existence, if animals resemble humans in their mode of activity,

they must resemble them in their mode of existence” (Barad, 1988, p. 107). Put simply, animals have a great deal in common with us. As such, the form of animals is such that they are midway between us and mere objects. This is because they share a number of capacities with us which are not possessed by inanimate objects. At the same time and on the other hand there are certain capacities, such as rational thought, which are unique to human beings. As such, our treatment of animals should reflect the fact that they resemble us, but are not identical to us, in their mode of existence.³⁸ Now the precise limits of our duties to animals is a complicated question that goes beyond the limits of this thesis, but what we can see is that acts like the torture of animals for our amusement would be deeply immoral because they deserve more than that in as much as they resemble us. On the other hand, animals are not entitled to the same level of respect and the same kind of treatment, nor do they have the same rights, as human beings. Further, human life and needs should, all other things being equal, take priority over animal life and needs.

When it comes to tame animals then we will have other additional reasons to consider their well-being and good. If an animal is owned by another human being then killing or hurting that animal will hurt its owner and thus it is (at least *pro tanto*) impermissible to kill people’s pets. Further, in as much as some animals can become members of our community, for example in as much as a dog really can be ‘man’s best friend’, then we will have obligations towards them through the good of friendship. As such, if it really is possible for a man and his dog to be friends (which I assume it is) then that person is obliged to consider the welfare of his pet dog to at least some extent. This will never be to the same extent as with another human being because animals can never become full members of our community in the way that human beings can, but a pet owner is still obliged to feed and care for his pets for these basic reasons.

Humans will also have some obligations to the environment and the planet at large. Excessive and pointless pollution, the pointless destruction of wildlife and habitat will all be (at least *pro tanto*) wrong. This is because we have plenty of reason to care for the planet.

³⁸ It should be noted that this is not Aquinas’s explanation of why certain acts involving animals are immoral. However, in Barad (1988) she argues that Aquinas is in fact committed to this explanation of why certain acts involving animals are immoral due to his metaphysical schema. She then goes on to sketch out what she sees as a consistent Thomistic doctrine about the nature and treatment of animals and I have broadly adopted her account here. As such, whilst this account is not the one that Aquinas adopts it is still in accordance with Aquinas’s thought more generally.

Some of these reasons are prudential (we need to live here), some are aesthetic (nature can be extremely beautiful), some will be based around the wrongness of cruelty to animals, some may be based around the good of knowledge (the study of the natural world is an interesting and important source of knowledge) and some will be based around our obligations to future generations (they will want to inherit a reasonably preserved planet for their own sake). As such, there will be limits to what we can do to the planet and the environment.

An odd but very important question involves the possibility of intelligent aliens. If there are intelligent aliens on other planets then presumably they are not, from a biological perspective, *Homo sapiens* (excluding some freakish cosmic coincidence or act of design). As such, it is unclear whether, from a moral perspective, we should treat them like animals or like fellow human beings. They don't seem to be members of our species (at least not from a genetic point of view) and this might suggest we should view them as fundamentally 'other' and treat them in the same way we would a wild animal. However, this strikes many of us, as fanciful a scenario as it may be, as deeply wrong. What is the correct answer, then, with regard to the moral status of intelligent aliens?

The answer is that, if they really are intelligent, then they are sufficiently like us that we should treat them as our fellow human beings and moral equals. This is because if they are intelligent then in an important respect their form is the same as ours. They too are rational animals and in this respect they are one of us. As Oderberg explains when discussing the possibility of a rational parrot, "being a rational animal simpliciter is sufficient to make the so-called rational parrot one of us, that is, sufficiently like us to count as one of our species. The reason is that all rational animals share the two characteristics that matter most in constituting the way in which they fundamentally live and act in the world. Being rational, the rational animal has the capacity for such things as: abstract thought ... language ... knowledge ... reflection, meditation, puzzlement ... and a moral life ... We can easily add to the list, of course: humor, irony, aesthetic sensibility, the creation and maintenance of families and political societies ... we all know the sorts of things we rational animals are capable of" (Oderberg, 2014, p. 216). Oderberg's full list is even longer than this, but what I have listed here is more than sufficient to illustrate my point. The point is that rational animals, regardless of their genetic makeup and the layout of their bodies, are like us in all important respects. As such, there is nothing about their most fundamental nature to stop them from becoming full members of our community, as well as our friends, advisors,

colleagues and (who knows?) family members. Therefore, they are one of us and we are one of them and we should treat each other as such.

However, two pieces of clarification are needed in order to sidestep some potential objections. The first is to clarify what would be the case if such an intelligent alien, despite being intelligent, was unable to communicate with us. Perhaps this is due to radically different ways of communicating between our species, for example they communicate using very fine microwaves which even our most sensitive technology fails to pick up. Alternatively, perhaps there is some physical difference between us that prevents any real communication, maybe they live their whole lives in under a second or over a million years and we simply move too fast or too slow compared to them in order to actually communicate, either way the precise details don't really matter. It seems that in cases like this we are incapable of truly entering into a community with these aliens. Therefore, one might argue that as a result of this we cannot have any obligations to them and thus we should treat them like we would wild animals.

From a practical perspective there may well be a grain of truth in this. If we really are incapable of communicating in any way then from a practical perspective the best action may well be to live and let live. We should leave them alone and they should leave us alone because we are incapable of doing anything more than this. However, from a theoretical perspective we would still have the same obligations towards them that we would to other human beings. This is because their form or nature is still that of a rational animal and the differences between us (for example in modes of communication) are contingent and accidental with regard to this. The fact that they communicate using microwaves and we communicate using sight and sound does nothing to change the fact that with regard to our most fundamental nature we are the same. We are all rational animals and the fact that they communicate using microwaves rather than sight and sound is no more relevant to their moral status than the colour of a human being's skin. Despite this, from a practical perspective, it may well be that true communication and thus true communion is impossible and thus realistically speaking with regard to aliens like this it may well be the case that the best thing to do is to just leave them alone and vice versa. Of course, all of this is pure speculation and rather fanciful speculation at that. As such, the best advice is probably to cross that bridge when and if we come to it.

The second piece of clarification that is needed is to clarify whether or not intelligent aliens really would be members of our ‘species’. Oderberg has been quite insistent that any rational animal (including a rational parrot) should be considered a human being. When discussing the possibility of rational parrots he writes “my claim is that it would be not only a person but a human person, i.e., a human being” (Oderberg, 2014, p. 215 - 216) and many may find this strange. Many would be happy to acknowledge that a rational parrot is a person, but surely saying it is a human being is a step too far!

I suspect that the reason for this confusion is simply that, as Oderberg points out, the word ‘human’ creates a substantial “roadblock to thinking in this way about exotic rational animals” (Oderberg, 2014, p. 220). I suspect that in our everyday talk we tend to think of ‘Homo sapiens’ and ‘human being’ as being interchangeable terms and if we think they are then it is entirely reasonable for us to be confused by the claim that a rational parrot is a human being. This is because a rational parrot, whilst being rational, is in no way a Homo sapiens. At the same time if we take the Aristotelian definition of a human being as a rational animal then a rational parrot would be a human being. This is simply because a parrot is a type of animal and a rational animal is a human being. As such, whether or not a rational parrot or an intelligent alien is a human being will all come down to whether we are using a more everyday definition of human being (in which ‘human being’ and ‘Homo sapiens’ are interchangeable) or whether we are using a strictly Aristotelian definition of human (as a rational animal). Oderberg in his article wants to claim the Aristotelian definition is superior and is the one that we, and indeed biologists, should all be using. However, many may find this a strange claim. I’m not going to weigh in on this question here as it isn’t really relevant for this thesis. The important thing to note is that any rational animal is in an important way like us. They are in principle, if not in practice, capable of becoming members of our community. As such, they are one of us and should be treated as such.

This discussion of rational parrots and intelligent aliens may seem to many readers to be an odd thing to discuss. However, as well as allowing me to answer some, admittedly rather fanciful, concerns about the possibility of alien life it has also allowed me to clarify some important questions about the scope of the moral community and this is worth doing. The basic thing it allowed me to clarify is that it is not our membership of the biological species Homo sapiens that makes us members of each other’s moral community, instead it is our shared form as rational animals. Further, there is no reason to suppose that just because a

creature is not a biological *Homo sapiens* that it therefore could not share in our form as a rational animal and thus be an important member of our moral community.

To conclude my discussion on the scope of the moral community; we are at the centre of our moral lives. This is because Aristotelian ethics is unashamedly eudaimonic and thus our ultimate goal is to live a good life. Close to the centre of our moral lives come our friends and family. Our good and theirs are closely intertwined and we have a great many obligations to them. We then have some obligations to humans more generally because of our shared humanity and membership of a global community. It should be noted that impartiality may sometimes be required when an agent is representing an impartial organisation, but by and large partialism rather than impartialism will give the correct recommendation when it comes to right moral action. As a result, we should favour those to whom we have a special relationship. Finally, cruelty to animals will always be impermissible. This is because animals resemble us, but are not identical to us, in their mode of existence. As such, they are midway between us and inanimate objects and our treatment of them should reflect this. They do not have the same moral status as we do, but cruelty towards them will still be impermissible.

4. The Bigger the Better? The More the Merrier? Why Not Consequentialism?

In this section I am going to explain why I am not a consequentialist. First, I will explain what is meant by consequentialism. I will then show that consequentialism is committed to certain claims about the commensurability (or comparability) of the basic goods. I will then present an argument against this commensurability and this will show that consequentialism is false.

Before we go any further it is important that we define consequentialism. Consequentialism comes in two major forms; act-consequentialism and rule-consequentialism. Slote and Pettit explain that “Act-consequentialism is generally characterized as a certain sort of view about the relation between an act's rightness and its consequences. An act-consequentialist holds that states of affairs (outcomes, consequences) can be objectively or impersonally ranked according to their goodness and that any given act is morally right or permissible if and only if its consequences are at least as good, according

to the impersonal ranking, as those of any alternative act open to the agent--the doing of an act being itself included among its consequences” and that “act-consequentialism holds that a right act must be optimific” (Slote and Pettit, 1984, p. 139). On the other hand, according to Law, rule consequentialism “states that an act is right if it is one prescribed by a rule which would, when followed, produce the best consequences” (Law, 1999, p. 263). I shall be focussing primarily on act consequentialism in order to keep things simpler although much of what I say will also apply to rule consequentialism.

Consequentialism is committed either to the claim that there is only one good or to the claim that the various goods (whatever they happen to be) are in some way commensurable. Schauer explains that “Those who argue for commensurability maintain that all values, reasons, options, or norms are reducible to some common and thus comparable metric ... According to this position, the value or reason having or producing more of the property measured in the common metric is better than the value or reason having or producing less of that property” (Schauer, 1998, pp. 1215 – 1216). I have already explained why we should think there is more than one basic good. As such, I won’t engage with this possibility further (see chapter three for more details). Therefore, primarily I will be interested in the claim that the various goods are in some way commensurable. Consequentialism needs to make this claim because if the goods cannot, at least in principle, be compared and weighed up then the best result (and optimific action) cannot be calculated and identified even in principle. This would be because the very idea of the ‘greatest good’ or the ‘best results’ would simply make no sense. As Grisez explains “To speak of the ‘greater good’ as consequentialists do is to imply that goods are measurable and commensurable” (Grisez, 1978, p. 29).

Therefore, if it can be shown that the goods are not commensurable and cannot be added together then it will have been shown that the idea of the ‘greatest good’ is meaningless. If this is the case then consequentialism must be false. Act consequentialism would be false because we could no longer, even in principle, weigh up the various options available to us and pick the one which would have the ‘best consequences’. Similarly, rule consequentialism would be false because there could be no rule, even in principle, the fulfilment of which would result overall in the ‘best consequences’. As Grisez explains, if it can be shown that the goods are incommensurable then “consequentialism is rationally unacceptable because the phrase ‘greater good’ as it is used in any consequentialist theory necessarily lacks reference” (Grisez, 1978, p. 29). As such, consequentialism is committed to

the commensurability of the basic goods and it is this that I deny. If I can show that the basic goods are incommensurable then I will have shown that consequentialism is false.

4.1. The Incommensurability Thesis

In order to establish incommensurability three things need to be done. The first is that a clear definition needs to be offered.³⁹ The second is that it must be explained how and under what circumstances this can come about, and the third is that we need to offer at least something of an argument in favour of its occurrence in the real world. I shall now offer a definition of incommensurability.

What does it mean to say that two goods are incommensurable? Raz offers a simple definition of incommensurability “A and B are incommensurate if it is neither true that one is better than the other nor true that they are of equal value” (Raz, 1986, p. 117). Similarly, two options can be incommensurable if the goods that are at stake in both are mutually exclusive and incommensurable. Chang explains that in some situations “Incomparabilists ... insist that even omniscience will not yield a true comparison of the items with respect to all the relevant considerations: hard cases are difficult precisely because there is no comparison of them – neither is better than the other, nor are they equally good” (Chang, 2002, p. 660) and that in cases like this “incomparabilists think it is false that one is better than the other and false that they are equally good” (Chang, 2002, p. 660).

Now that we have a clear definition of incommensurability it is important that we can also explain why and when it occurs. Incommensurability will occur between options when both options are supported by significant but very different mutually exclusive reasons and goods. Similarly, goods will be incommensurable when they correlate to very different and mutually exclusive ends. For example, the good of health and the good of knowledge are incommensurable. This is because they correlate to different ends; rational activity in the case of knowledge and health in (obviously) the case of health. At the same time, it also follows

³⁹ In the literature both the term ‘incommensurable’ and ‘incomparable’ are used. Some writers use the two interchangeably, whereas others treat them as distinct concepts. Often incomparable is used when considering two or more concrete bearers of value, whereas incommensurable is used when considering two or more abstract values. For my purposes, however, I shall use the two terms interchangeably.

from this that two instances of the same sort of good i.e. two goods that correlate to the same end may well be commensurable. For example, two different medicines may well be commensurable. If they both cure the same disease but one does so quicker and with fewer side effects whilst being cheaper to produce and so on then it makes perfect sense to say that one of the medicines is better than the other. Similarly, two pieces of knowledge may well be commensurable. A single trivial fact is of considerably less value than an in-depth knowledge of an important subject with implications for other fields and so on.

This all follows from the metaphysics of goodness that I have outlined in previous chapters. The basic goods are what they are (i.e. are basic goods) because they fulfil our ultimate ends and because of this they provide us with reason for action (see chapter two for more details). However, there is nothing about our ultimate ends or about the goods themselves to suggest that there is a single unit by which we can measure goodness or a clear hierarchy of goods by which to decide between them and their comparative worth. After all, as Gomez-Lobo points out, the “Basic goods cannot be reduced to units that it would then make sense to maximize. Are there more units of friendship in having fifty relatively distant friends than in having a few close friends? How many units of work are balanced by how many units of inner harmony? I trust you will agree that the quantitative approach ... hardly makes sense for basic human goods” (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, p. 39). All we can say about the goods is that they are all things that fulfil our ultimate ends and which provide us with reason for action. Thus, in a sense they are ‘equally’ valuable in that none is more valuable than the other. However, they are not equally valuable in the sense that they are each worth a set amount and that amount just so happens to be the same for each of them.⁴⁰ If we start thinking about them in terms of units or set amounts of value we have simply gone wrong. All we can say is that they are valuable but in different ways.

In a similar vein Finnis explains that “no determinate meaning can be found for the term ‘good’ that would allow any commensurating and calculus of good to be made in order to settle those basic questions of practical reason which we call ‘moral’ questions. Hence, as I said, the consequentialist methodological injunction to maximize net good is senseless, in the way that it is senseless to try to sum up the quantity of the size of this page, the quantity of the number six, and the quantity of the mass of this book ... the different forms of the goods,

⁴⁰ Thus, we can affirm all of Raz’s definition of incommensurability as long as we are clear on what we mean by ‘equal’.

like the different kinds of quantities, are objectively incommensurable” (Finnis, 2011, p. 115). Finnis puts it differently to the way I do. I have appealed to how the different basic goods correlate to different ends, and thus are good in different respects, to explain why they are incommensurable. Finnis has instead suggested that the meaning of the term ‘good’ is different when describing different basic goods (this occurs when he writes that “no determinate meaning can be found for the term ‘good’”).⁴¹ His basic point, however, is very similar to mine. The different basic goods are good in different ways and it makes no sense to try to add them up or to maximize them as a result of this. Thus, we should conclude that because the basic goods correlate to different ends and are good in different ways we should consider them incommensurable.

With this definition and explanation in mind we can consider some examples to make it clearer. Thomson when considering the possibility of incommensurability writes, “I commend this idea to those who have been saying, in recent years, that goods are, as they put it ‘incommensurable’. Which is better, Russell’s Theory of Descriptions or chocolate? Not which do you prefer thinking about when you can’t get to sleep at night; rather, which is pure, unadulterated better. It’s a crazy question. One is good in one way, the other in another” (Thomson, 1994, p. 12). There are some situations in which it simply makes no sense to compare the goodness of two options. They are just plain different. Raz also gives a number of examples “People are likely to refuse to pronounce on the comparative value of a career in teaching and in dentistry. They deny the comparability of playing a musical instrument and cycling to visit old churches as pastimes, etc.” (Raz, 1986, p. 129). With these examples in mind the concept of incommensurability between two goods or two options should hopefully become clear.

To sum up what we have established so far, incommensurability occurs when of two goods or two options neither is better than the other nor are they equally good. This incommensurability will occur between two options because in some circumstances there will be entirely different and mutually exclusive reasons in favour of two mutually exclusive

⁴¹ As such, Finnis is illustrating the incommensurability of the basic goods in a similar way to Thomson when she explains that “If, as I am suggesting, all goodness is goodness-in-a-way, then so also is all betterness betterness-in-a-way” (Thomson, 1994, p. 12) and that an argument for incommensurability follows from this “namely that all goodness being goodness-in-a-way, so also is all betterness” (Thomson, 1994, p. 12).

actions. Further this incommensurability will also occur amongst the basic goods because they correlate to very different and mutually exclusive ends.

We can illustrate this with an example. Suppose you have a choice between listening to music or talking to a friend. Both options have at least one reason in their favour. Listening to music will allow you to (for example) access the good of aesthetic experience. Whereas, talking to a friend will allow you to access the good of friendship. The two goods at stake here are very different and correlate to different ends. Further, there is no single overarching value or unit we can use to decide between them. As a result, the reasons for both actions are quite different and thus the two options themselves are incommensurable.

However, just because two goods or two actions are incommensurable does not mean that there will never be a practical reason to favour one over the other. The good of aesthetic experience and the good of friendship are incommensurable, but it may well be that under certain circumstances when we are forced to choose between them we should favour one over the other. If, to return to our earlier example, the friend that we can talk to is on his death bed then it seems reasonable to say that we have stronger, albeit very different, reasons to go and talk to him rather than to listen to music. The point is simply that there is no single unit of value which we can use to declare that talking to our friend will maximise value. As such, there may well be better and best choices even if there is not a better and best state of affairs.

I have now defined incommensurability and explained how and why it will occur. I will now present a very simple argument in favour of its actual occurrence in the real world. This argument is originally presented by Raz. He argues that it is an obvious and universal feature of human moral experience and that we should trust obvious and universal features of human moral experience. He acknowledges that, although sometimes people refuse to compare the value of two options because they wish to withhold judgement until they acquire more information or else simply because they do not want to answer the question, sometimes they refuse to compare the value of two options because they think that the two options are genuinely incommensurate. He goes on to say:

“Is it possible that on all occasions when people judge significantly different options to be incommensurate they are mistaken? I believe that universal features of human thought do not need justification. We have to explain why they exist and what is their significance in human life, but there is no room for the thought that they may be entirely wrong. Therefore, since, as

the examples above illustrate, there are types of options members of which are often held to be incommensurate then though people may sometimes be mistaken when judging two particular members of the class to be incommensurate they are not generally mistaken, i.e. options of that type often are incommensurate” (Raz, 1986, pp. 133-134).

The argument is simple. Although we may not label it as such we experience incommensurability frequently. The fact that many people experience it counts in favour of its existence and occurrence. All other things being equal we should trust our shared moral experience. Therefore, given that we have a coherent account and explanation of incommensurability and given that we experience it in the real world we should believe the incommensurability thesis.

I have now defended and presented an argument for the incommensurability thesis. What does the incommensurability thesis mean for the truth of consequentialism? Well, as we have seen, consequentialism is committed to the claim that the basic goods are commensurable. It needs to say this because if the goods are not commensurable then the whole concept of ‘maximising the good’ is meaningless. Given then that the goods are not commensurable, because they are incommensurable, consequentialism must be false. This means that the rightness of an action will not be determined by whether it ‘maximizes the good’ or whether it follows a rule that ‘maximizes the good’. Instead the rightness of an action will be determined by whether it relates to the goods and the reasons they provide in an appropriate way. How we should respond to the basic goods and thus what will be permissible, obligatory and impermissible (i.e. morally right) is precisely what I aim to answer in my next section.

If the incommensurability thesis is true then this must mean that the basic goods are incommensurable. However, a potential problem arises for my position here. After all, it might be said that the only structural difference between act-consequentialism and my view is that on the one view the agent ought to maximise the impartial good (act-consequentialism), and on the other the agent ought to maximise their own eudaimonia (my view). If there are incommensurate goods then this would seem to be equally a problem for both.

We established that if the incommensurability thesis is true then act consequentialism must be false because the agent could no longer, even in principle, weigh up the various options available to them and pick the one which would have the ‘best consequences’.

However, potentially, the Aristotelian is in an equally difficult position since they can no longer weight up the various options available to them and pick the one which would maximise their own eudaimonia. This could mean that the incommensurability thesis is a problem for the Aristotelian as much as it is a problem for the consequentialist.

I think, however, that on closer examination we will see that this is not the case. This is because, unlike the consequentialist, I do not think the Aristotelian is committed to the commensurability of the basic goods. This should become clear when we closely examine the nature of eudaimonia.

A eudaimonic life is a life in accordance with human ends/filled with, and relating appropriately to, the human goods. None of this implies that there is a single scale or metric by which to weigh up competing goods. It may well be the case that one option (for example a choice of career) will contribute to your eudaimonia in one way and another option (an alternative career in a different industry) will contribute to your eudaimonia in an entirely different way. As such, I'm not committed to the claim that the goods are commensurable simply because I believe in the concept of eudaimonia. As such, I can still subscribe to the incommensurability thesis.

At the same time, we can still say that one individual's life is more eudaimonic than another individual's. This is because one individual may fill his life with the basic goods, and respond appropriately to the reasons that they provide, to a large extent (or even perfectly) whilst another individual may do quite the opposite. One individual may fill his life with family, friendship, beauty, knowledge (and so on) and then preserve and promote these goods (in an appropriate way) for as long as he lives, whilst another individual may consistently and always shun all that is good in the world. In a scenario like this, when comparing these two individuals, we can reasonably say that the first individual is more eudaimonic than the second, even if we cannot precisely quantify by how much this is. What this reveals is that, although the goods are incommensurable and thus the rightness of an action cannot be determined by weighing up the goods, there is something important about the reasons provided by the basic goods when weighing up the merits and demerits of an action (and indeed a life). This gives us an important clue about how we can arrive at a criterion of rightness which is what I shall discuss in the next section.

5. Duties, Obligations and Rights

In this section I will do a number of things. The first is I will explain in abstract how we move from an account of the basic goods to an account of moral norms or duties (I will use the two terms interchangeably). I will then give some example duties to illustrate what this actually looks like. Finally, I will then briefly explain how my Aristotelian natural law schema can explain the existence of human rights.

As we have seen the basic goods are the sorts of things that are intrinsically good for us. This is because they are the sorts of things that fulfil our ultimate ends in and of themselves. We've also seen that they are the sorts of things that provide us with reason for action. We all have reason to promote that which is good and to avoid that which is bad (and by bad I mean anything that destroys or frustrates that which is good). Thus, we can affirm Aquinas's dictum that "Good is to be done and pursued, and bad avoided" (*ST I-II q. 94 a. 2*). However, more guidance is obviously needed. As McNerny points out, "we certainly need more fine-grained guidance than is contained in 'Good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided'" (McInerny, 1997, p. 43). After all, this guidance is still perfectly compatible with act consequentialism and I've already presented an argument against this. As such, more specific guidance is needed. I will now adopt a reasons-based account of obligation that will provide us with the necessary guidance.

If the basic goods provide us with reason for action then there is nothing in principle to stop us from sketching out a reasons-based account of obligation. A reasons-based account of obligation assumes the following principle, originally put forward by Stratton-Lake, "If F explains why I ought to Φ , then F will be a reason for me to Φ " (Stratton-Lake, 2013, p. 4).⁴² This principle basically states that it is reasons which make actions obligatory, impermissible or permissible and so on. As such, a correct analysis of the relationship between reasons and duties will show us how we can move from the reasons provided by the basic goods to actual recommendations for moral action. We should then be left with a relatively complete ethical theory.

⁴² It is worth noting that Stratton-Lake is writing from a non-naturalist intuitionist perspective and the fact that I can affirm his principle acts as further support to my earlier claim, made in chapter two, that there is nothing in principle to stop us from creating a non-natural version of natural law! See chapter two for more details.

A simple and relatively intuitive way to explain the relationship between reasons and duties is represented by the following principle, originally put forward by Raz, “P1: It is always the case that one ought, all things considered, to do whatever one ought to do on the balance of reasons” (Raz, 1975, p. 484). This principle basically states that an action will be obligatory, permissible or impermissible because of the various relevant reasons in favour of and against the action. In order to work out whether something is a duty (obligatory) we simply consider all of the relevant reasons. If the combined weight of the reasons in favour of doing the action are stronger than those against then the action is obligatory i.e. we ought to do it. If the combined weight of the reasons against doing the action is stronger than those in favour of the action then it is impermissible i.e. we ought not to do it. As Raz explains, “When conflicting reasons bear on a problem we determine what ought to be done by assessing the relative strength or weight of the conflicting reasons. In the presence of conflicting reasons, we say, the agent should act on the balance of reasons. He should act on the reason or combination of reasons which override those conflicting reasons which apply to the problem facing him” (Raz, 1975, p. 482). Finally, an action will be merely permissible when the reasons for and against doing the action are of equal weight. This will occur when there are no reasons either for or against doing the action or, when there are, the reasons for doing the action have the same weight as the reasons against doing the action.

However, in its current form this principle is too simplistic. As Raz points out, “it is not normally applied to many quite common conflict situations” (Raz, 1975, p. 484). Raz points out that there are many situations when we think that certain reasons, whilst normally applying, are excluded from relevant consideration. He suggests that some reasons are excluded when there are, what he calls, exclusionary reasons at work. Exclusionary reasons are reasons which exclude other reasons from consideration. He gives a number of examples but the one I shall focus on involves promises. Raz asks us to imagine “the case of Colin who promised his wife that in all decisions affecting the education of his son he will act only for his son’s interests and disregard all other reasons” (Raz, 1975, p. 486). Colin is then faced with a difficult decision. If he sends his son to the school which is best for him this will negatively affect both Colin and the community at large but not his son. As such, sending his son to the school will definitely be in his son’s best interests, but there are other (potentially weightier) reasons against sending him there. Thus, it seems that there are both reasons for and against sending his son to this particular school. Raz then explains that Colin “believes

that because of his promise he should disregard such considerations [those not involving his son] altogether (unless, that is, they have indirect consequences affecting his son's welfare)" (Raz, 1975, p. 486). Here Raz is claiming that because Colin has made a promise then he may well believe that certain considerations (in this case the reasons against sending his son to the school) should be disregarded. As a result, it seems that Colin believes that his promise acts as an exclusionary reason against the various reasons not involving his son i.e. because Colin has made his promise this excludes from consideration the various reasons which do not involve his son's welfare.

Now it should be noted that Raz is not claiming that Colin is right to view his promise as an exclusionary reason. You may well think that Colin's promise isn't binding or, like me, you may well think that Colin was foolish to make such a promise (without certain caveats being added implicitly or explicitly) and is now in a lose-lose situation. Raz's point is simply that we often view certain considerations as exclusionary reasons. I am inclined to agree with Raz although I am not sure what I think about his example involving Colin's promise. I think that there are much less contentious examples involving physical and mental incapacities. I think that if there are reasons in favour of a course of action but we are mentally or physically incapable of acting on them (or mentally incapable of considering them in the first place) then they are excluded from relevant consideration. I think this is best illustrated with an example.

Imagine you are out for a gentle afternoon stroll in the mountains. After turning a corner you come across a child being crushed to death by a boulder. It seems that you have a strong reason to go and rescue him and no comparably good reasons against such an action. Thus, it seems that according to P1 you really ought to lift the boulder off the child. You have a duty to rescue him. However, on closer inspection it turns out that the boulder is too heavy for you to lift. It would now seem strange to condemn you for not rescuing him and thus it seems that you no longer have a duty to rescue the child.⁴³

Why is this? It seems to me that because the boulder is too heavy for you to lift this then excludes the reasons in favour of lifting the boulder from relevant consideration. In a

⁴³ In the real world, of course, we would then expect an individual in circumstances like this to then phone or run for help, but for the purposes of simplicity lets imagine there are no phones and that this event takes place miles away from help or something to this effect.

sense those reasons are still there and so in a sense there is still reason to save the child, but because this is no longer possible those reasons no longer apply to you, as such a different course of action is required (whatever that may be). If we do not say this then under circumstances like this we would have to morally blame somebody for not lifting a boulder which they are physically incapable of lifting and this seems absurd. As such, it seems that the reasons to lift the boulder off the child are excluded from consideration when one is physically incapable of acting on those reasons and to deny this would be to deny Kant's dictum that 'ought implies can'. We can generalise this principle and say that reasons are excluded from relevant consideration when one is physically incapable of acting on them.

I think this sort of principle also applies to mental inability. I think this is best illustrated by considering our treatment of children and the severely learning disabled and the ways in which we do and do not hold them to the same moral standards as healthy adults. Young children, for example, whilst perhaps being capable of understanding some reasons are incapable of understanding others. Perhaps a certain child at a certain age has grasped that her actions can harm another child but has not yet grasped that her words can also hurt others. As such, once again the reasons are still there, in that there is still reason not to say something hurtful, but because the child is incapable of understanding these reasons (and thus acting on them) they are excluded from consideration. The child does not deserve condemnation and reprobation for saying something hurtful. All we can do is help her to understand that words can also be hurtful and in time she will then be capable of acting on those reasons. As such, it seems to me that physical and mental disabilities clearly act as exclusionary reasons. Thus, Raz is correct to posit the existence of exclusionary reasons.

However, the existence of exclusionary reasons clearly has implications for our duties and P1 now looks far too simple. As Raz points out the existence of exclusionary reasons implies "P2: One ought not to act on the balance of reasons if the reasons tipping the balance are excluded by an undefeated exclusionary reason" (Raz, 1975, p. 488). P1 in its current form is incompatible with P2. Therefore, according to Raz, P1 should be amended to: "P3: It is always the case that one ought, all things considered, to act for an undefeated reason for action" (Raz, 1975, p. 488). An undefeated reason is a reason which has neither been outweighed by other reasons nor has it been excluded by an exclusionary reason. As such, P3 seems to avoid the difficulties that P1 faces, and it seems to give us an intuitive and clear answer for the relationship between duties and reasons.

With P3 in mind it should now become clear that actions will fall into one of three categories impermissible, permissible and obligatory. An action will be impermissible when there is an undefeated reason against doing such an action. An action will be obligatory when there are undefeated reasons in favour of the action. Duties will only apply to impermissible and obligatory actions. Duties will be positive in the case of obligatory actions (we will have a duty 'to do' them) and negative in the case of impermissible actions (we will have a duty 'not to do' them). Finally, an action will be merely permissible when there are no undefeated reasons against the action and no undefeated reasons for the action. As Gomez-Lobo points out, "If no basic good is negatively affected, the corresponding action is permissible or OK to do. No norms are needed for permissibility; hence, permissible actions constitute something akin to a default domain: If no norm states than action is either impermissible or obligatory, it follows that it is permissible" (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, pp. 58 – 59). There is no duty either way when it comes to permissible actions.

Some thinkers then add a final category which is called supererogatory. Supererogatory actions are actions that are good, but which are above and beyond the call of duty. We are not to be condemned if we do not perform a supererogatory action. Raz offers a definition of supererogatory. He writes, "A supererogatory act must be construed as an act which ought to be done but which people are not in a normative sense, expected to do. It is not just that we know that in fact the act is rarely performed, but that there are normative considerations explaining why performance need not be expected in many cases" (Raz, 1975b. p. 165). Raz's account basically means that an act will be supererogatory when there are strong reasons in favour of doing it, but because it extremely demanding and beyond what we can reasonably expect of most people we cannot be blamed for failing to do it. In a sense this definition is quite vague. This is because it is unclear when there will be "normative considerations explaining why performance need not be expected in many cases" (Raz, 1975b. p. 165) i.e. it is unclear under what precise conditions an action is beyond what we can reasonably expect of most people. However, this vagueness may not be vicious. Raz explains, "I have no quarrel with this very vague formulation. It is, however, commonly taken to mean that people are normally excused for not doing what they ought to have done if it is a supererogatory act. Supererogatory acts, it is often said, call for rare qualities: great courage or self sacrifice, or great presence of mind, or some other rare skill or character trait. Therefore, though these are acts which ought to be done one can be excused for not doing

them. One is not to be blamed for lack of a measure of greatness in some aspect of one's character" (Raz, 1975b, p. 165). Raz's point is simply that although his definition is a bit vague this is not a problem because it does the work that we need it to. Acts that are supererogatory are acts that involve a level of virtue (for example, bravery, generosity and so on) above the capabilities of most people and above the level we can reasonably demand of them. This level is hard to pinpoint but most of the time we have a clear enough sense for day to day moral discourse.

This definition fits in well with an Aristotelian schema. Nobody is perfectly eudaimonic and nobody perfectly instantiates the goods and the virtues in their lives. As such, there is a certain minimum level that we can expect of most people in order that we all might live together reasonably well, but there is always more that could be done to more perfectly instantiate the basic goods. As such, people who behave in a supererogatory way are more perfectly instantiating the basic goods and are more eudaimonic than your average person. As such, those individuals who do perform a supererogatory act are to be commended but there is no condemnation for those who do not perform these supererogatory acts. This account of supererogation also explains why making the ultimate sacrifice will rarely, if ever, be morally obligatory. It simply requires a level of selflessness and bravery beyond most people's abilities. As such, by and large we can't reasonably condemn someone who fails to make the ultimate sacrifice.

With this in mind we can now identify a number of pro tanto moral duties and some examples of supererogatory and permissible acts. There will always be strong reason not to kill another human being and thus killing another human is generally an impermissible act. As such, there will be a pro tanto duty not to kill. There will also always be strong reason to tell the truth and to keep promises because these would damage the good of the community and the good of knowledge as such telling the truth and keeping promises is generally obligatory. Therefore, there will be a pro tanto duty to tell the truth and to keep our promises. Thus, in general any act which destroys or damages a basic good will be impermissible and any act which will promote a basic good (at no cost to us as individuals or others more generally) will be obligatory. As a result, we have a general duty to preserve and promote the basic goods. These duties will be pro tanto because they are simply general statements of what, all other things being equal, we will have an undefeated reason to do. However, under certain circumstances other reasons may come into play that override and change these

duties. As such, these duties should be considered *pro tanto* duties not absolute duties. We may consider there to be some absolute duties if we specify our terms clearly enough. As an example, murder may be absolutely impermissible if we clarify that by murder we mean an unjustified killing. As a result, murder, by definition, would go against what we have an undefeated reason to do and thus murder would always be impermissible. Therefore, we could potentially say that we have an absolute moral duty not to murder.

Acts like giving to charity will often be supererogatory, but they may sometimes be obligatory. This will depend upon the wealth of the giver and the neediness of those (potentially) receiving. If someone has far more wealth than they need but others are in complete poverty then it is probably obligatory for the wealthy person to give to charity. On the other hand, if somebody is comfortable but far from well off and others are in need but not in complete poverty then perhaps it is a supererogatory act. This is because in the second case the level of generosity required is very high. Most of us lack the ability to be this generous and we cannot reasonably demand this level of generosity from most people. I won't say more than this here because it will be very variable depending upon the individual circumstances involved and it will need to be identified on a case by case basis. Further, it is worth remembering Aristotle's dictum that we should never "expect more precision in the treatment of any subject than the nature of that subject permits" (Aristotle, 2004, p. 5), and, as Raz's definition of supererogatory implies, identifying when an act becomes supererogatory is an imprecise art. As such, the act of giving to charity will often be supererogatory, although under some circumstances and with some individuals it may be more obligatory.

Finally, most day to day activities will be merely permissible. As an example, going for a walk this afternoon will, all other things being equal, be permissible but not obligatory or impermissible. There is some reason for me to go for a walk this afternoon (after all it will be good for my health) but these reasons aren't particularly strong. Further, there are no reasons directly against going for a walk as it won't damage any of the basic goods. There are also plenty of other mutually exclusive worthwhile things I could do during this time (such as reading a book) for which there are also no undefeated reasons either way. As such, because there aren't any (particularly strong) undefeated reasons at work in favour of or against going for a walk this afternoon it will be merely permissible but not obligatory or impermissible. In general most day to day activities (like watching television, dancing, having a nap, reading a

book or going for a walk) will be merely permissible because there is very little at stake when we engage in these activities.

5.1. Clash of Titans: When Duties Conflict

On some occasions two duties will conflict. Given that there are positive and negative duties there will only be two ways that duties can clash. The first is between two positive duties. This will occur when we have two pro tanto duties which require us to do two mutually exclusive actions. The second way duties can clash is between a positive and a negative duty. This will occur when our duty to do something (for example keep our promises) will clash with our duty to not do something (such as harm somebody). There will never be a conflict between two negative duties because negative duties are duties to not do something, and if we are required to not do two or more things then we can easily fulfil all of those duties by not doing anything. As Gomez-Lobo points out, “negative norms ... cannot conflict. If an individual has an obligation not to kill A and not to physically harm B, both requirements can be fulfilled impartially at the same time simply by not performing the relevant acts (i.e., by taking no action at all)” (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, p. 75).

What do we do when there is a clash between two positive duties? It seems to me that a precise answer in abstract cannot be given. To want clear advice precisely about what to do in all situations asks too much of a moral theory and is demanding more precision than the subject matter permits. Instead I think that all we can reasonably ask is some general prudential guidelines about how to go about attempting to resolve these dilemmas and this is what I shall try to provide.

As I’ve already argued the basic goods are incommensurable and as a result trying to work out performing which of the two (or more) conflicting duty would result in the ‘most good’ makes no sense. However, as we’ve seen, this does not mean that practical rationality will never have anything to say about which of two conflicting duties we should fulfil. I think that this is best illustrated with an example. Suppose we agree we are under a general duty to save a life (we have this duty because of the good of life and the good of community) and a general duty to keep our promises (we have this duty because of the good of knowledge and the good of community). These two duties might clash under some circumstances. For

example, let's imagine I promise to meet a friend for lunch at midday. I now have a duty to do just that in order to keep my promise. However, let's imagine that as I'm walking there I witness a terrible accident. At minimal risk to myself I can go and rescue some of the people involved in this accident. It now seems I have a duty to go and rescue these people. However, if I do this then I will be late for my lunch. If I keep my promise I will fail in my duty to rescue the accident victims. If I rescue the accident victims then I will fail in my duty to keep my promises. I seem to be in a lose-lose situation. These two positive duties are clashing and I cannot fulfil them both.

It seems to me that in a situation like this I should rescue the accident victims over meeting my friend for lunch. This is because relatively little is at stake if I don't meet my friend. I will cause him some annoyance, but that's about it and I can make it up to him later. On the other hand, a lot is at stake when it comes to saving a life. This is because although the goods themselves are incommensurable their instantiations may be trivial and relatively insignificant, or important and very significant. My promise to my friend and the goods of friendship and knowledge are providing me with some reason to go to lunch, but our friendship is unlikely to be destroyed by my failing to meet him for lunch and nothing else is at stake (other than mild annoyance on the part of my friend). As such the reasons to keep my promise are relatively weak. On the other hand, saving somebody's life will preserve a whole series of goods in both their life and the lives of others. As such, there is strong reason for me to save the accident victim. Therefore, my duty to save a life trumps my duty to keep a promise under these circumstances. This is not because I am maximising the good. It is simply that there is more reason for me to save the accident victim than there is for me to keep my promise. This shows that when two duties clash it may be the case that one is more important than the other and that we should then fulfil that one over the less important one. In order to judge which is more important we will simply have to look at what is at stake and what the particular circumstances are. As Gomez-Lobo points out in situations like this our "resolution of the conflict should be based primarily on a consideration of the goods and circumstances" (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, p. 75). Under other situations two duties may be equally strong in which case it does not matter which we pick as long as we fulfil one.

However, as Ross points out in conflict situations like this we have still failed in a duty (our duty to keep our promises) and because of this some degree of remorse is appropriate. Ross explains, giving the example of someone who must break a promise in

order to relieve someone else's distress, "we do not for a moment cease to recognize a *prima facie* duty to keep our promise, and this leads us to feel, not indeed shame or repentance, but certainly compunction, for behaving as we do; we recognize, further, that it is our duty to make up somehow to the promisee for the breaking of the promise" (Ross, 2009, p. 28). This strikes me as entirely correct. After saving the accident victims, catching my breath and emotionally collecting myself I would feel under an obligation to phone my friend and to explain my absence. I would also feel some regret that I had to take the course of action that I did and would want to make it up to my friend. As such, when two duties conflict it is not the case that one is nullified it is simply that we have to pick one over the other. It also seems to me that this is a weakness of act consequentialism because they cannot account for my feelings of remorse when I fail to keep my promise. According to them I have done my duty (I have maximized the good) but this doesn't seem right when we actually look at how we think and behave in situations like this when two duties conflict. This, I think, is another reason to doubt the truth of act consequentialism.

To summarize then, when two positive duties conflict no easy answers can be given for how to decide between them. Instead we will simply have to carefully weigh up the various goods and the particular circumstances and come to a sensible decision about which duty to fulfil. What about when a positive duty and a negative duty conflict? How do we decide in situations like this?

In general, negative duties will take priority over positive duties. This is because of the nature of responsibility. When an agent violates a negative duty then the agent is the direct cause of the harm and thus is directly responsible. On the other hand, if the agent refuses to violate the negative duty (and thus violates the positive duty) then the agent is not directly responsible for the consequences that follow. To illustrate this imagine that an agent through no fault of their own finds themselves in a situation in which they can actively kill one person in order to save two persons. We can imagine lots of different scenarios when this might happen but let's imagine that a gunman has threatened to kill two people if the agent doesn't kill a stranger. If the agent kills the stranger then they are directly responsible for killing that person. On the other hand, if they refuse to kill the stranger then it is gunman who is directly responsible for the deaths of the two people. The agent is not directly responsible for the death of anybody. As Gomez-Lobo points out, "a person has a direct responsibility for

what she intentionally does, not for what others do or what happens accidentally” (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, p. 76). As such, in general negative duties will take priority over positive duties.

Of course, this general principle may not always hold. There may be some situations in which the good protected by the negative duty is relatively insignificant and trivial whereas the good protected by the positive duty is extremely important and valuable. As such, we would have stronger reasons to act on the positive duty than on the negative duty. In situations like this we may prudentially decide that the positive duty should take precedence. As Gomez-Lobo points out, “Sometimes, however, we have to decide prudentially whether a negative norm takes precedence or not. If the good protected by the negative norm is clearly of lesser importance than the good protected by the positive one, the positive norm may be the one that should guide one’s choice. A firefighter trying to reach a person trapped in a building certainly should not follow the norm forbidding the destruction of property. An external [instrumental] good such as a window or a door is not on a par with human life” (Gomez-Lobo, 2002, p. 77). As a result, prudence and sensible judgement will be needed in tricky situations and there may not always be a clear answer.

5.2. Human Rights

A significant part of modern moral discourse is concerned with human rights. Rights can be both moral and legal. A legal right is simply a right that is recognised and upheld by the law of a particular nation. A moral right, on the other hand, is a right that somebody has intrinsically because they are a person whether or not these are recognised in law. I will be primarily interested in moral rights.

Rights can be both negative and positive. Negative rights are rights not to be interfered with or damaged in some way, for example the right not to be killed or the right not to be illegally imprisoned. Positive rights are rights to things, for example the right to an education or the right to healthcare. Rights can also be pro tanto or absolute. An absolute right is a right that must never be violated. A pro tanto right is a right that can be outweighed by other factors. I will defend the existence of a number of pro tanto rights both positive and negative focussed around the preservation and promotion of the basic goods.

It seems to me that the Aristotelian can account for the existence of a number of pro tanto rights both positive and negative using the same sort of explanation as that which explains why we will have certain pro tanto duties both positive and negative.

We can justify the existence of negative rights in two ways. First, as individuals, ultimately we are directed at living a good life and in order to achieve this we need to fill our lives with good things (the basic goods). As such, we have a duty to protect ourselves if others try to harm us by destroying one of the instantiations of the basic goods in our lives. Therefore, it will always be pro tanto 'right' for us to defend ourselves. Second, other members of our community are also directed at pursuing and preserving our good because part of living in a community is to mutually care for and support each other. Therefore, it is impermissible for others to harm us by destroying any of the basic goods as they instantiate themselves in our lives. On the basis of this it makes sense to talk about human beings as having certain moral rights. We will have the 'right to life' because it is always going to be pro tanto wrong for another person to kill us and it will always be morally permissible (or 'right') for us to defend ourselves. We will have the 'right to family' because it is always going to be pro tanto wrong for another person to deprive us of our families and it will always be morally permissible (or 'right') for us to defend and protect them. We can run a similar line of argument for the existence of other human rights concerning the other basic goods. This shows how the Aristotelian can explain the existence of negative rights. It also shows that duties and rights go hand in hand and are simply two different ways of looking at the same thing.

I think we can move from negative rights to positive rights under certain circumstances by making the same sorts of observations which meant that giving to charity will sometimes be supererogatory and sometimes obligatory. It seems to me that talk of positive rights is only going to be reasonable in situations where the nation or society is more than capable of fulfilling them. I think this is best illustrated with an example. Let's suppose we agree that children all have the right (in at least some sense) to an education. In a relatively poor society perhaps all that can be asked of the state, or community at large, is that nobody actively prevents these children from being educated. If large swathes of society are starving to death the parent who demands that their child receives a free education from the state seems to have their priorities confused. As such, the right to an education should be

interpreted as a negative right. You have the right to an education in that nobody is allowed to actively prevent you from educating yourself.

On the other hand, in a wealthy society where there is money to spare then it might well be reasonable for a parent who is unable to afford it to demand that, given society is supposed to promote the good of everybody, their child is provided with a free education. Considerations of impartiality and equality on the part of the state might then demand that all children are offered a free education. This seems to be a reasonable conclusion and most wealthy Western societies do provide at least some level of free education to their children. In a sense these positive rights are the same as the negative rights in that they both ultimately flow from the basic goods. It is simply that what we can reasonably demand of a state or society will depend on the circumstances. Sometimes all we can reasonably ask is to not be harmed but sometimes we can reasonably ask for more. As Lisska points out, “one might argue that some positive rights can flow consistently and coherently from Aquinas’s account of human essence. Some limited positive rights, such as the right to health care, the right to education, right to integrity of personhood, etc., would be based on the dispositional properties [ends]. For example, if the rational disposition [end] can be developed only through the acquisition of sets of true propositions, and if this acquisition ordinarily depends on education, one might argue that access to some level of education is a fundamental human positive right” (Lisska, 1996, p. 243). As such, it seems to me that we can talk about positive rights but only under certain situations. In this sense negative rights will be more important than positive rights because all societies regardless of circumstances should consider and respect people’s negative rights, but only some societies will be able to consider and respect people’s positive rights.

So far I have argued for the existence of a number of pro tanto rights. It is, however, worth clarifying whether or not any rights might be absolute. It seems to me that rights by their very nature will be pro tanto. Pro tanto duties are simply statements about the sorts of things we will, all other things being equal, generally have an undefeated reason to do. Similarly, moral rights are simply general statements about what is owed, all other things being equal, to other human beings. There is no reason to think that either duties or rights can’t be overridden, waived or outweighed under certain circumstances. As Oderberg points out, “rights are not limitless. There are no, so to speak, ‘sky-blue’ rights” (Oderberg, 2000, p. 76). This being said we may wish to treat certain rights as absolute. The right to life is the

most plausible example here. If we deprive somebody of their life not only do we deprive them of the good of life and health but also all the other goods! As such, there will always be extremely good and powerful reasons against killing people and in the real world these reasons will very rarely, if ever, be outweighed or excluded. As such, the right to life may well be absolute to all intents and purposes. However, this is a difference of degree not of kind.

I have now explained the nature of moral rights under an Aristotelian ethical schema and have sketched out a number of examples such as the right to life, the right to family and the right to education. I won't discuss legal rights in any particular depth as this goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but what I will say is that we would expect a sensible and just legal system to uphold these moral rights in order to promote the good of its citizens. As such, from a legal and political perspective the existence of legal rights which aim to promote and protect our inherent moral rights will be extremely important and valuable. Therefore, we should expect there to be a close correlation, in a well-functioning and virtuous society, between moral rights and legal rights.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to explain how we move from an account of the basic human goods to a reasonably complete ethical schema with clear guidance for action. In order to do this I did a number of things. In section two I showed that the Aristotelian is by no means committed to a form of egoism (at least not in any negative sense of the word). This showed us that an Aristotelian ethical schema will provide us with many other-regarding duties. In section three I sketched out the limits of the moral community. This then showed us who we will have these obligations towards. In section four I explained why consequentialism is false and defended the incommensurability thesis. In section five I then sketched out a reasons-based account of obligation and duties in order to show what our duties will be both to ourselves and to others. Finally, to finish off this chapter I then sketched out an account of human rights and explained their importance and significance.

In terms of my whole thesis I have now sketched out a reasonably complete ethical schema. In chapter one I outlined the broad metaphysical schema I am working with. I then

defended it against arguments based on the findings of modern science. In chapter two I explained the metaphysical nature of goodness within this schema. In chapter three I showed what things are in fact good (the basic human goods). Finally, in this chapter I showed how we move from the basic goods to an account of obligation and a list of pro tanto duties and rights. There are still further questions that are raised by this thesis. I have only included a very brief discussion of the moral status of animals and no doubt this could and should be expanded upon. I have also only sketched out a very simplistic account of our duties and I haven't considered the possibility of strong and weak deontic necessity modals. As such, this section could also be expanded upon. Finally, although I have argued that natural law theory would imply that freedom, justice and equality are state level political goods and that natural law theory would justify the existence of at least some human rights I have not fully explored the implications, if any, that it would have for political philosophy more generally. Quite possibly natural law theory might tell us a great deal about politics and how we should structure and organise society. As such, there is more work to be done here. However, I have successfully completed the main goal of this thesis which was to move from an account of Aristotelian metaphysics to a basic ethical theory which includes both a number of pro tanto duties and rights.

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