

ETHICS AND HUMAN NATURE

A RECONSIDERATION OF ETHICAL NATURALISM IN CONTEMPORARY THOMIST WRITINGS.

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**Thesis presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Philosophy
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

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Cape Town, September, 1993**



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ABSTRACT

It is argued in this thesis that much modern and contemporary moral philosophy has been subjectivist, and that this is largely due to the theory of knowledge that has accompanied the increasing dominance of modern science in the determination of our thought-patterns. The expansion of standards of rational enquiry beyond the confines of empiricism, in the way that B.Lonergan has done, is a necessary part of any adequate contemporary restatement of ethical naturalism.

Two different approaches to the Aristotelian tradition in ethics are discussed: in the one judgments of value are based on a particular human psychology; in the other they are related to the standards of excellence associated with social roles. Two contemporary writers - P.Simpson and A.MacIntyre respectively - are taken as representative of these approaches. Neither account, it is argued, is fully successful: the metaphysical psychology of Simpson fails to take into account variations in social and cultural contexts; while the communitarianism of MacIntyre remains to some extent unjustified.

The basis for a more adequate defence of ethical naturalism is given in Lonergan's account of the normative structure of human self-determination. Two further writers are used to develop this argument. H.Meynell argues that morality is largely a matter of promoting the happiness not just of oneself and one's group, but of people in general, and that this can be objectively specified. R.Johann contends that there is a further necessary condition for moral goodness, viz. the commitment to the realisation of personal community. This is justified, I argue by way of conclusion, because human persons are radically dependent on a certain kind of influence of other persons for the development of their capacity for self-determination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help I have received in producing this thesis from the following persons and organisations:

My wife, for her commitment to personal community;

Augustine Shutte, my supervisor, for sharing with me both his self-understanding and his critical powers;

The members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town, for their professional friendships;

Liz Carlos and Paul Vaughan, for secretarial help;

My mother and father, for being the kind of parents a scholar needs;

Tom Lynn, at the National University of Lesotho, for his generous interpretation of leave conditions;

The Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa), for its financial assistance.

Opinions expressed in this work, or conclusions reached, are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

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CHAPTER ONE

ETHICAL NATURALISM AND MORAL TRADITION

1.1 Introduction: The Use Of Philosophy

There is at present increasing pressure on academic researchers to produce work of more evident relevance to the goals set by society at large. Such goals, so far as concerns academics, are in effect two: increasing the store of objective knowledge; and achieving the successful completion of various practical projects. In each case standards of excellence are clear-cut: in the former, empirical verification; in the latter, contribution to the whole. It would seem to me that such a framework is too narrowly conceived, and that herein lies a clue to understanding what would be involved in formulating and justifying any proposed foundation for ethics. The promotion of an understanding of the objective criteria by which we may evaluate human goals and behaviour, actions and intentions, life-styles and political programs, is clearly of cardinal importance. My argument in this thesis is that this is only possible on the basis of a reformulation of the dominant contemporary conception of standards of rational enquiry, the most persuasive critique of which is to be found in Maxwell (below, 1.4).

I argue that only a particular *kind* of knowledge of human nature - for which moderation by the standards of enquiry mentioned above would be inapplicable - can be justified as a foundation for judgments of moral value. The knowledge that is at issue here is knowledge of human agency, or self-knowledge. Only on the basis of such knowledge will the notion of objective moral values make sense. To neglect to undertake the perhaps arduous descent into such knowledge of self, to rest in the easy acceptance of the rather bleak existence of a professional academic confined within the more conventional standards of excellence, is to risk a troubled conscience. For a neglect of the study not of values as they happen to characterize societies and cultures but of what is truly worth-while is in the long term disastrous for society at large. How is the knowledge gained in the sciences to be used in the achievement of the tasks society sets itself? What is likely is an overly 'managerial' - or even manipulative - attitude with regard to possible applications of the knowledge gained in the social sciences, psychology, business administration, and so on, checked only by considerations of external form, and uninfluenced by important moral values. And this in the long term is bound to lead to social conflict and alienation. The study of how rationality may be re-introduced into practical life can therefore be justified - as it is for example by MacIntyre (below, 1.2) - as filling a logical gap in contemporary conceptions of research.

But clearly the proposal to found judgments of moral value on knowledge of human agency is a controversial one. Some preliminary background must be given.

The traditional legacy of an ethics grounded, as in classical Greek thought, on a normative understanding of human nature has been judged by an empirical age to be uncritical and unjustifiable. Strictly scientific and value-free knowledge has been contrasted with the unjustified suppositions of earlier thinkers about the ends of human life. Contemporary debates on political alternatives, on social change and economic development, on the role of religion and on individual life-styles, have been bedeviled by this assumed dichotomy of facts and values. The substance of society's moral convictions is weakened and substituted, in such discussions, by the thin alternatives of an implausible individualism on the one hand - complemented by a bureaucratic mentality confined to questions of ultimately unjustified rules and 'rights' - and on the other hand by a debilitating collectivism. Proposals for various courses of action are advanced on grounds of ultimately unfounded value commitments, on arbitrary acts of will; or else such choice is altogether excluded from the picture.

Modern moral theory on the other hand, whether consequentialist or deontological, can arguably be thought of simply as an attempt to shore up morality in the face of a social life in revolt against the tradition of values regulating our understanding of human well-being. It has been unable properly to express the objectivity which is of the essence of morality, for this is grounded on an account of human nature or human flourishing, and knowledge of the latter has become problematic. Relativism and subjectivism are commonly held as the most reasonable standpoints in the matter of moral values. Contemporary ethical debate, with modern philosophy as its dubious heritage, is characterized by a plurality of seemingly incommensurable first premises: there seems to be no rational procedure for resolving moral disputes.

In contemporary culture there is, on the other hand, also the contrary evidence of support for a conception of the objectivity of values: the dedication of scientists to the progressive hegemony of science of over uncritically held dogmas of all kinds; solidarity with those opposing unjust and authoritarian regimes; continuing moral debates of every kind. But the established standards of properly constituted knowledge, by excluding from consideration human purposes and values, undermine any proper thematic treatment of such convictions. The teleological concept of human nature as such, which hitherto formed the basis for systematic ethical reflection (aspiring to be cross-cultural), seems to have been discredited by science. The critical investigation of this latter supposition will form the basis for this thesis.

Contemporary attempts at reformulating ethical naturalism can conveniently be divided into two. On the one hand we find attempts to justify a teleological metaphysics of human nature of the Aristotelian kind. On the other hand there are attempts to re-express the idea of *eudaimonia* or human flourishing in terms of a consensus of social goals, of the roles that make one a full member of society. Both interpretations of Aristotle can be justified. According to the psychological approach value judgments are based on a teleological understanding of human nature; the more sociological perspective finds ethical reflection on the values held in common in the society. Perhaps the most well-known example of a philosopher taking the latter approach is MacIntyre. MacIntyre, and the same is true by and large for the many other writers - their numbers seem to be swelling - sympathetic to the Aristotelian tradition in moral philosophy, does not consider a psychological foundation for ethics possible. Indeed he argues, as we shall see, that different understandings of human psychology will reflect societies with somewhat differing goals and for whose members only that conception of human nature will be normative. I consider MacIntyre's argument to be largely correct; as a result, it will be argued, it is necessary to justify a strictly philosophical, rather than psychological, account of human nature, as Lonergan and others do, which will yield an understanding of human being not subject to such criticisms. The understanding of human flourishing associated with a particular tradition can function as a foundation for ethics only if it is critically established. And that means showing that there is a strictly philosophical and normative understanding of the human person or human agency. Only if such knowledge can be critically established can ethics be given a foundation.

The aim of the thesis is to show that it can, and to describe the foundation. That task consists in three parts: a reconsideration of the possibility of founding moral evaluation on our knowledge of human nature; an outline of the content of such a foundation; and a critical justification of this content. Phrased differently, the aim is to consider the questions, Could there be a universal standard for ethics? What is this standard? and, Why would the employment of that standard generate objective moral knowledge? The possibility is established by a consideration of the necessary form of moral reasoning; the foundation is established by actually furnishing the required knowledge of human nature (based on an understanding of the scope of human knowledge in general); the justification is given in the necessary character of the knowledge of human nature in the required sense.

It is the argument of this thesis that only a particular *kind* of knowledge of human nature will furnish the required foundation, that is, one that is critically justified. For only knowledge of the necessary structure of our capacity freely to dispose of ourselves, of the conditions for being a subject and an agent, to make what we can of our lives, will furnish a foundation for moral judgments that cannot be subjected to some further criterion of

evaluation. For such self-disposing grounds the notion of value itself. So far from recourse to the (strictly philosophical) elucidation of human subjectivity resulting in value subjectivism, the reverse is the case. To the extent that some *other* foundation is proposed, or some other understanding of human nature, there will be something arbitrary in the judgments of value that flow from it. The foundation will encompass some but not, in principle, all of our values. On the other hand the conditions for the operation of our freedom, both the central and the peripheral ones, as well as that freedom itself, cover the whole potential range of possible values, of our needs and our desires. Indeed without that notion there can be no proper understanding of freedom, nor growth in our understanding thereof, in its individual and social dimensions.

In order to make the point that such an account is indeed needed, we will firstly give what is hopefully a fair account of an exponent of ethical naturalism (Simpson) who uses the more traditional notion of a metaphysical psychology (Chapter Two). This attempt is, it will be argued, finally unsuccessful, even quixotic, but its failure is so instructive as to make it of some value for our purposes. In Chapter Three MacIntyre's moral theory will be presented in some detail, and certain critical questions raised. I will argue that ethics must necessarily be founded on knowledge of human nature and that the possibility for such a foundation needs be sought in an intentionality analysis of the kind outlined by Lonergan (Chapter Four). The concluding chapter will discuss the development of such a foundation by two other writers, Meynell and Johann, in a way that is consonant with Lonergan's approach. The aim of that chapter will be to deepen our understanding of the actual content of the foundational knowledge of human nature proposed - following Lonergan - in Chapter Four and its use in moral deliberations.

In this first chapter I will attempt to demonstrate that much of modern ethics makes sense only to the extent that it implicitly draws upon that broader ancient tradition from which modern thought was supposed to have broken away. To make this point I will firstly speak of contemporary dilemmas (1.2); then give some examples of the problems arising from this, reflected in contemporary literature and in social analyses (1.3); thirdly identify the root of the problem of giving a foundation for moral judgments, an inadequate way of conceptualizing standards of rational enquiry (1.4); and finally give a brief account of the historical background to the problem in particular in the philosophy of Hume and of Kant (1.5).

In Chapter Two I discuss the attempt to found ethics on a metaphysical psychology. The contemporary anglo-american critique of ethical naturalism (that of Moore, Ayer, Stevenson, and Hare) can be formulated by means of three basic questions, concerning the

nature of moral reasoning, the understanding of 'nature', and the value of human freedom. Our discussion of ethical naturalism considers each question in turn (2.1). Does reasoning from the 'kind of being' we are to value conclusions flounder against Moore's open question argument? I argue that the emotivist critique helps us to see the necessity of determining the kind of context in which practical reasoning and moral dispute takes place; and that Simpson does not fully appreciate this, for according to him the sphere of reason reached through the faculty of the intellect exists beyond the particularities of any context (2.2). Is the understanding of nature that is entailed by ethical naturalism incompatible with empirical method? Modern science has been accompanied by a skepticism about knowledge of 'natures'. Simpson argues that not science but 'natural philosophy', corresponding to a higher level of cognition than that of sense-experience, can furnish the required knowledge of human nature. But it remains unclear how this *refutes* the argument that the scientific understanding of the forces determining the behaviour of any thing seemingly dissolves its unity or distinct 'nature'. An analysis of what it is to understand and to explain is needed, not simply a reference to various faculties or levels of cognition (2.3). Finally, is the concept of human freedom compatible with the notion of the human good being determined by 'nature'? The emotivists tend to think of freedom in terms of a series of arbitrary acts of will; the question is how to formulate a more reasonable conception of human agency. Simpson simply postulates a faculty psychology, one part of the self, thinking, determining another part, willing. But this is to revert to an uncritical dualism (2.4).

In the final section I draw upon MacIntyre's argument that any foundation of ethics in a particular psychology seems ultimately to fall back upon some notion of a 'moral sense' which influences one in *following* that understanding in one's judgments of value. But that sense is then itself uncritically established, and this is evident in the content that Simpson, for example, gives to 'the good life': a life of contemplation (2.5).

Chapters Three and Four have an identical structure to that of Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I discuss the alternative interpretation of the classical approach, the 'sociological'. No modern foundation for ethics, as attempted by the Enlightenment moral thinkers, can be found without a reinterpretation of the concept of the 'function' of human nature, MacIntyre argues (3.1). But it can be shown that reasoning about values presupposes certain social practices with standards of excellence (3.2). The notion of virtue is derived from the necessary structure of the relationships involved in any practice; if one further considers one's life in terms of one's place in a narrative, in terms of a possible future shared with others, then an objective foundation for moral judgments is established (3.3). The problem then lies in justifying the particular communitarian notion of society bound up with this explanation of ethics (the Aristotelian tradition); an arbitrary commitment seems to

undermine human freedom (3.4). Finally, I ask whether such justification could not be found in the self-knowledge that is partially constitutive of one's participation in a practice (3.5).

In Chapter Four I suggest that it can and that the basis for this is provided by Lonergan. The historical awareness that is characteristic of modern culture would seem to undermine any notion of a universal 'human nature', but in knowing one is able to transcend the particularities of one's circumstances to reach an understanding of what is the case from anyone's point of view and likewise one can conceive and attempt to achieve a good which is truly so. In knowledge of the exigencies of moral self-transcendence lies the foundation for all moral judgments (4.1).

In acknowledging as the good that possible course of action which satisfies not only one's own desires and needs but at the same time those of others, and in affirming this as truly of value, one consents to extending the breadth of one's moral sensibility. It is a matter of 'being oneself', or authenticity, which is by the same stroke a making of oneself (4.2). And one can make sense of this kind of knowledge by considering that all scientific enquiry presupposes a structured anticipation of what is to be known, a method which is formulated by means of philosophical reflection on what it is to know. Enquiry into human behaviour in particular is therefore framed within the necessary set of precepts established by philosophical method (retortion) with the further conditions for self-transcendence being investigated by empirical method (4.3). In the structure of human self-determination lies the ground of freedom, and this can be known and appreciated only through attending to our own act of self-transcendence and the ever-new forms in which it finds expression. Ethical naturalism puts no restrictions on human creativity (4.4). Finally, it is noted that Lonergan's account frees ethical naturalism from Aristotelian or Thomist metaphysics while correcting the empiricist bias of much contemporary philosophy (4.5).

In the final chapter Lonergan's understanding of human nature is fleshed out, and a further dimension added to it, which suggests a direction for further philosophical enquiry into the foundations of ethics. Lonergan's transcendental account of human nature in terms of agency and subjectivity needs, it is argued, to be supplemented by an account of the necessary interpersonal conditions for self-realisation (5.1). This becomes clear in Meynell's account of the kind of reasoning involved in moral deliberations, and the connection between value conclusions and the facts of human flourishing (and its opposite, neuroses of all kinds, and alienation) (5.2). But it is Johann who makes this explicit, arguing that moral reasoning is founded on the notion of a possible rational consensus of values, and that this in turn involves a justified commitment to the achievement of personal community (5.3).

Johann's account of the foundation of moral judgments entails an understanding of human freedom and personal growth as being effected through a certain kind of influence of another; and this indicates an important area for further philosophical enquiry (5.4). Finally, I conclude that only when the nature of philosophical enquiry is properly clarified can such further research be fostered (5.5).

1.2 Dilemmas In Moral Argument

Every culture is associated with a certain ethos or a set of values. Ethics can be thought of as mediating between the culture as a whole and its ethos. Our own cultural context is characterized by a significant shift (briefly, from classical to modern), connected with the rise of science, and this has bequeathed a legacy of foundational moral problems to contemporary or aptly termed 'postmodern' philosophy. Modern thought saw itself in terms of a fundamental rupture with the methods of enquiry that characterized previous periods. It is the contention of this thesis, however, that a reference to 'nature' is essential to any ethics; that the required sense of nature can be formulated in a way that is not alien to contemporary culture; and that many of the inadequacies of modern moral philosophy can be attributed to a loss of this concept of nature. One result has been an unhappy dichotomy between conceptual, or philosophical, issues, and substantial moral questions. Even as philosophers turned more and more to the discussion of substantial moral issues - feeling, as with Williams (1976:10), that in twentieth century ethics "all the important issues [were] off the page somewhere" - still as long as the underlying conceptual issues were thought of as somehow put in abeyance, the discussion lacked force. Clearly, according to the distinction proposed in the critique of naturalism and almost universally accepted, one ought not to tackle questions of substance until conceptual issues were properly resolved. And yet the goal proposed by non-naturalists - enthusiastically embraced by those such as Moore and Ayer - seemed more and more a receding horizon.

"The result was that philosophers tended to become so preoccupied with the conceptual questions that they seldom got around to the moral ones; or if they did, their discussion of them was soon attacked by their opponents as flawed because founded on a faulty analysis of the terms employed."
(Simpson, 1988:6)

At the least, among those who resolved to attack substantial issues in spite of this failure to achieve the prior conceptual consensus, one notes, as Simpson puts it, "a certain unease, a certain sense that there was important business left undone".(1988:6) A brief explanation of the change of the cultural context of ethics will further serve to suggest the reasonableness of a re-examination of ethical naturalism.

How the moral dimension of human life is formulated will shift according to the cultural context. In traditional culture ethics is undifferentiated from religion and religion from social norms. To take an example of one tradition, in ancient Israel the 'ban', the law stipulating the complete annihilation of the enemy in war, indicating a primitive sense of morality, was justified by a religious notion concerning the purity of the culture's faith, its freedom from the influence of alien cultures; similarly the progressive law concerning the treatment of employees and slaves was founded on a religious thought: Jahweh the creator and 'owner' gave the Israelites freedom from Egypt, Israel must act likewise towards those in her power (Cf Ex 20:1; Dt 15:12-15).

The genesis of classical European thought is usually taken to be found in the flowering of Greek culture in fifth century Athens. The conceptual apparatus it bequeathed to western philosophy was forged in the debates stimulated by a new awareness of other cultures and of the exigencies of rigorous thought. Thrasymachus and Glaucon proposed that the pursuit of success was more profitable (more worth-while, more likely to lead to happiness) than that of virtue. Plato attempted a justification of a more encompassing end, compatible with the interests of all. The debate concerned the discernment of what was fulfilling of human nature; for classical philosophers such knowledge was the foundation of the objectivity of value judgments. And human nature was understood through science. A change in the notion of science in modern culture has meant that the nature of the debate has shifted.

Classical culture is normative and prescriptive; the social norms passed on in the tradition are taken as by and large reflective of true value, a standard for determining maturity of judgment in matters of value and the nature of the most praiseworthy character. The content of morality could be expressed through characteristic social roles.

Furthermore science is thought of as dealing with the universal essences of things, and its authority taken for granted. The human essence is to be found in its rationality, and human rationality is fulfilled through the social norms, actualized in social roles. Questions and doubts arise as to the compatibility of the individual interest and the social, but are dealt with through the pressure of the law and of common consensus and moral approbation correcting individual bias. 'Why be moral?', the question raised by the sophists, concerns the individual's interests over against the social.

But modern culture is plural and individualistic, not normative and prescriptive. Also, modern science is empirical and 'human nature' is an aggregate, intelligible through proper causal and statistical methods. This creates the task and the difficulties of modern ethics.

The critical procedures at the heart of modern values, operative in the sciences of human behaviour, seem to undermine any foundational, normative idea of human nature.

A development is called for. But a development entails not only going beyond the old but also preserving this while integrating new ideas and values. And this can only happen through a certain attitude towards the tradition, towards the culture from which the new values emerged, an attitude which recognizes the one common goal or set of values, however dimly perceived, animating the past as well as the present quest. In other words an attitude that recognizes a certain solidarity with those going before, and a certain truth in *their* expression of that quest and that goal. And the truth that is recognized is a truth about the fulfilment or flourishing of our human nature, and found in the rules of behaviour, the moral code, expressing (however inadequately) the virtues needed to develop our human potential.

That attitude provides a framework within which a development of the tradition can take place. Without it the greater individualism that is bound to emerge in the course of any civilization, will not be fully integrated into the set of values which make up the tradition, and the upshot can only be a conservative fundamentalism pitted against a relativism or subjectivism according to which the basic moral principles are ultimately unjustifiable. Much of what has happened in moral philosophy in the modern period implies just this: no true insight into the nature of value grounds the moral judgments as described by the modern thinkers. (Below, 1.5) In an important sense the modern understanding of a moral tradition is an impoverished one, and this has meant that moral debates are faced with unresolvable dilemmas. How this is so has been well expressed by MacIntyre, and through him it has become part of the contemporary mainstream debate in moral philosophy.

MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy in *After Virtue* (1981), judging from the response it has evoked, seems to represent something of a watershed in how we think of ethics. (Cf Heller, 1990:63) MacIntyre makes the point that outside of the context of a moral tradition many of the contemporary moral debates do not in fact even make sense, and this would explain what he terms the 'shrill tone' of much contemporary moral writing. Moral debates employ a vocabulary without any possible dictionary. For the dictionary has as it were been thrown away. He illustrates this point by means of an analogy. He invites the reader to consider the situation after a nuclear holocaust, blamed in some way on scientists and leading to a regime which suppresses the teaching and practice of science. Later, people decide they want once more to practice science.

"But all they possess are fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context which gave them

significance; parts of theories unrelated either to other bits and pieces of theory which they possess or to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because torn and charred."(1981:1)

'Science' in such a case would most probably tend to consist in speculation about the meaning of scientific words and the only guide to such speculation would be a supposed 'scientific intuition'. The fragments of scientific treatises that have been preserved would be the cause of the debates, essentially interminable, about their meaning. MacIntyre compares this with the current state of moral debates. The language remains but the substance is gone. In a liberal culture individuals are considered obligated only to the pragmatic minimum values necessary for social regulation and harmony. There seem to be no ends which are valuable universally and in themselves, no character-type to which all could assent as a model of human goodness and as best fulfilling human nature. Such a society would give rise to a certain travesty of ethics and clearly it is contemporary anglo-saxon moral philosophy MacIntyre has in mind. Without a moral tradition there is no ethics properly speaking. For there is no normative background which gives sense to the moral rules. His thesis - in *After Virtue* as well as in earlier and subsequent writings - can be put in two points. Firstly twentieth century moral philosophy, he argues, is written in an unhistorical and thus misleading way, prescinding from the social context in which alone it makes sense. Without explicit reference to the ends and values of the society in which the particular moral questions arise, there can be no coherent notion of the proper procedures for the resolution of such questions. His second point is that, as a result of this, contemporary moral philosophy is largely barren. The dominant mode of philosophy in contemporary western culture has been conceptual analysis. But analytic philosophy is essentially descriptive of our present use of the concepts in question. In losing touch with the ends and values of the tradition, with the roots of the culture, society has lost sight of the point of philosophical reflection - to know what is reasonable to believe in order that one might understand better how to live more fully.

Contemporary moral debates exhibit this fragmentation. What sense could be made in this situation of public debate, say that around the morality of war? One side argues that in modern warfare it is impossible to ensure the safety of civilians, and to ensure that the war is kept within bounds judged to be reasonably proportionate to the goals for which the war is fought; another side argues that to keep the peace one must, even in a nuclear age, be fully prepared to go to war. The former argument invokes principles of *justice* (the harm caused by waging the war should not be of such magnitude as to outweigh the good envisaged through winning) and of not harming the innocent; the major premise of the latter concerns exigencies of *success* and *survival*. Put like this, without reference to any context of common values, what are the grounds for choosing the one criterion for

evaluation rather than the other - or for that matter adopting a third position such as that which argues on grounds of a grand historical dialectic that war is permissible only in the liberation struggles of oppressed peoples? The different sides to the debate argue from 'conceptually incommensurable' first premises, each employing "some quite different normative or evaluative concept from the others..."(1981:6-9) Similar analyses could be given of the debates around abortion, and concerning the rights of private property. In the former, the notion of an act in accordance with the rights of the mother over her own body can also be seen as one violating a principle (universally enshrined in legal codes) as fundamental as that proscribing the taking of innocent life, with the in-between position based on the Golden Rule: putting myself in the position of the individual to be aborted, I am unable to will it for my own case; this would not necessarily entail advocating legal prohibition. In the case of the property debate principles of equality demanding equal opportunity (which would involve abolishing private schools and medical practice) are pitted against those based on the fundamental freedom of individuals to dispose of their property and enter into contracts as they will.

The import of this situation in current debates becomes clear when one notes that all the arguments purport to be *impersonal*. That is to say, they are advocating a certain course of action not simply because it is someone's opinion, even someone of authority, but because of impersonal criteria: 'because it would maximize pleasure', or 'because it is your duty' are typical examples. Clearly the intention of the debates is rational resolution; they can not plausibly be seen simply as a clash of wills. But equally clearly this intention is, within the limits of current debate, not realisable. The criteria put forward refer to some or other value which is itself perforce unjustified. This gives the moral discussion "an air of paradox".

MacIntyre also points to the very different historical origins of the principles invoked in the above debates. To take only the debate on the morality of war, the first argument, suggesting the inadmissibility of war in present conditions, is derived from Aristotle's concept of justice (the idea of proportionality), the second (justifying going to war) from Machiavelli and others, while the third has its origins in Marxist theory. An historical analysis of contemporary moral debates reveals rival tendencies, or movements, in our history, and MacIntyre suggests this needs to be made explicit: the commitments to the various lived values justify the principles evoked. In contemporary society, he concludes, we have each of us "to choose with whom we want to be morally bound" (1967:268). Hence also the reference to "another - doubtless very different - St Benedict" as founder of communities whose nature is not modelled on nor their authority justified by the dominant social system, in his case that of the Roman Empire (1981:244-5); and it is Trotsky, it is suggested, who can supply the justification for this in the failure of what has in the past

seemed to be the only reasonable alternative, that of Marxism. Hence finally the need in a predominantly liberal culture "to begin speaking as protagonists of one contending party or fall silent" (1988:401).

MacIntyre's influential writings are, as we have said, indicative of a mood more favourable to the earlier tradition of ethical naturalism, and are a convenient reference point for the discussion. He argues that moral debate will progress only if founded on our explicit commitments, amounting to the project (variously realisable) of constructing "local forms of community in which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us" (1981:245). His argument for this conclusion will be the subject of detailed analysis in Chapter Three; here it suffices to note that all such commitments take their principles from the broad moral tradition, whence are derived - to mention only the various ideas behind the debate on the morality of war - the principle of justice as proportionality, the imperative to defend what is legitimately one's own, the notion of a responsibility to resist an unjust government, and to make common cause with others so resisting, under certain conditions by force. And an express identification with one or other side raises the question of the grounds for such a choice, and this means that the critical question, 'Why be moral?' changes its sense. In classical times values were always relative to some particular society and the question regarded the authenticity of the society's norms - the extent to which they were indeed justifiable in the light of what, according to the best minds of the time, makes for human fulfilment. This standard was universalized in Christian philosophy but in a religious context. But the idea of 'the law in us by nature' (misleadingly translated as 'natural law', argues McDermott, 1989:177) needs reformulation in a secular age: the question now concerns the reasons for adopting any standard at all for one's actions, with the possibility of human transcendence as such, and so of achieving an understanding of moral value which is in principle universal.

1.3 Value Subjectivism In Contemporary Thought

For Aristotle, the study of human behaviour (ethics and politics) takes place within the framework of an understanding of value derived from the tradition. Ethics reveals to us what we must do, what virtues to cultivate, in order to live the best kind of life of which human beings are capable. What this is can be discovered by enquiring into the essential nature of human beings and thereby the *telos* of human life. Ethics teaches us what we must do in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, to flourish as human beings.

Aquinas' development of this approach is coloured by the biblical understanding of the absoluteness of the revealed will (or law) of God. But revelation builds on nature, and the law in us by our nature, in Aquinas' understanding, has nothing arbitrary about it; it is a

kind of rule or measure for human acts founded on the kind of creatures we are. He argues that the basic precepts of the law are like the axioms of logic: "both are kinds of self-evident beginnings" (1964: IaIIae Q.94,2). As in logic some insight into the nature of the real is included in the first indemonstrable principle, that there is no affirming and denying the same simultaneously, so too on the level of moral debates: an agent bent on *doing* something has a primitive apprehension of the good. Aquinas quotes Aristotle:

"For every agent acts on an account of an end, and to be an end carries the meaning of to be good. Consequently the first principle for the practical reason is based on the meaning of good, namely that it is what all things seek after."(1966:1084a)

From this it can be concluded that the first principle of practical reasoning is that the good is to be done and sought, and evil to be avoided, all other ethical precepts being based on this.

The essential point in the above is the assumption that it is knowledge of the objective moral order, however fragmentary, that grounds all rationality in ethical debate. The Aristotelian approach assumes the value of moral growth, or growth as a person, as the primary given. Ethics is thought of as the very practical exercise of determining appropriate and just means to achieve one's ends, and depends on the existence of common values justifying such deliberations. Aristotle begins by stating that:

"We deliberate not about ends but about means...[we] assume the end and consider how and by what means it is to be attained."(1966:1112b)

In the absence of any notion of common values such deliberation could not proceed. And such common values are determined by some reference to 'nature'. Neither of these conditions, we will now try to show, exist in modern and contemporary culture. Our argument is that the dominant alternatives to ethical naturalism are part and parcel of a culture increasingly individualistic, fragmented, materialist, and bureaucratic, and all amount in the final analysis to an emotivist or subjectivist approach to values.(Cf Milbank, 1988) And without that sense of common, objective values there can be no plausible account of the moral development of character, nor, on the social rather than individual level, could there be a convincing and thorough-going argument against the abuse of power. An index of the former can be found in the depiction of character in the modern domestic novel. So far as concerns the social level an indication of the extent to which there is operative in contemporary culture a coherent standard of justice can be gauged by an analysis of economic development theory and policy. For here we have a situation of a stronger and a weaker partner, a test, as it were, of the state of the 'health' (MacIntyre's term) of contemporary western moral thinking.

Fictional writing serves a variety of purposes (simple entertainment, for one) but there seems no denying that at least one particular strain in modern European novel-writing is concerned in part with offering insight into a human reality common at the least to the privileged classes, and especially through the development of 'character', involving judgments of goals, values and of virtues. In this regard the paradigmatic novel is *Don Quixote*, whose plot is structured by the dichotomy between surface appearance and underlying reality. (Cf Trilling, 1961:209) But insofar as a culture has become individualistic there arise certain obvious difficulties in the depiction and judgment of 'character' as the actor gains or fails to gain knowledge about the nature of the really real, self-knowledge. An individualistic culture suggests a whole society

"governed by the idea of every individual's intrinsic independence both from other individuals and from the multifarious allegiance to past modes of thought and action denoted by the word 'tradition'..." (Watt, 1972:66)

And the disengagement of the individual from social traditions results in a flattening of values previously attached to specific and valued forms of social life, family, social classes, polity and so on. Social status is fragile, often based upon wealth or perceived wealth.

These points are exemplified in the problems faced by the liberal-humanist novel of George Eliot, Henry James, E.M. Forster and others. To take a fairly arbitrary example, *The Mill On The Floss* can be said to be flawed by suggesting to the reader a fantasy resolution of the question of real happiness - the concluding scene depicts the corpses of the two chief protagonists, Maggie and Stephen, floating together down The Floss, united in death. And this obscures the question about the morality of Maggie Tulliver's actions in her relationship with Stephen, which lead to their separation. Whatever can be said about conventions of closure and literary autonomy, still one can ask whether Maggie was right in 'sacrificing herself' by remaining with her fiance, or whether true human value, and happiness, comes from fulfilling one's passion, as would have been thought for example by Stendahl (Cf Sartre, 1973:53-4). In a culture characterized by value subjectivism no answer is attempted because happiness is thought of simply as an ideal and no real dynamic exists in character development which would sustain the reader's interest. Parallel analyses could be made of the resolutions in some of E.M. Forster's plots. The love resolution, for example in *A Room With A View*, seems implausible. There is no longer a clear and well-trodden path for character development which, as was the case for example in the small society of Jane Austen, could be convincingly documented for a particular case, the interest lying in how *this* protagonist will overcome the obstacles of *these* particular moral failings and *these* untoward circumstances.

A further stage in how 'character' is understood in the novel has been noted by Murdoch. Murdoch describes a view of human nature she sees exemplified in "the hero of almost every contemporary novel".(1970:7) The depiction of any hero relies on the reader's capacity to share at least imaginatively his or her world of beliefs, values and so on. But in a subjectivist culture the world is described as far as possible neutrally, without passing judgment on it, as a world of facts not values; and it is only the quality of sheer *success* in that world that can be relied on to find universal empathy among readers. The essential thing about the modern hero is that he is a man of action; furthermore he is a self-reliant man. He is the agent or subject moving in a world of objects. What we admire is the quality of his will. And in the picture of human nature given here the abstract will is isolated from belief, feeling and even reason. Here, to quote Murdoch, "I identify myself with my will". The end-goal furnishing the dynamics of the narrative is either success in one's chosen action, "bringing about a recognisable change in the world"; or else it is consistency in the principle of one's action in the face of failure. The former goal neglects any consideration of *virtue* while the latter reduces virtue to sincerity, resoluteness and commitment only. "Our hero aims at being a 'realist' and regards sincerity as the fundamental (perhaps only) virtue."(1970:8) This image of a human being, Murdoch says, unites the different approaches to action of the behaviourist, the utilitarian (who likewise focuses on the publicly observable side of behaviour) and the existentialist (who eliminates the substantial self in favour of the solitary will). 'Good', what is aimed at, functions in effect as an empty action word and the correlate of the isolated will.

Murdoch relates this picture to the limitation in our thought-world of what we can know to the field of the impersonal. This in turn truncates our understanding of 'the moral' as described above. For the only reality allowed is that which can be established by an observer. "Reality depends on its possibility of being scrutinized, identified by observers from different points of view." The notion of moral responsibility becomes interpreted in a dualistic way: that is as "a function of my knowledge (which tries to be wholly impersonal) and my will (wholly personal)".

In this view the really real is the world of observable facts, the inner life having only a shadow reality. For Murdoch the opposite is the case: we need to look to the inner life in order properly to characterize behaviour. She gives the example of a mother-in-law who feels hostile towards her daughter-in-law. She thinks of the latter as "pert, familiar, vulgar". Yet through the exercise of reflection, attention and justice she changes her attitude and comes to see her rather as "refreshingly simple, spontaneous, gay". The same 'public facts' regarding the daughter, the same outward behaviour of the mother - although what the latter now *means* by her polite smile has changed fundamentally. A simple description of

appearances would bypass the most significant occurrence in this particular piece of behaviour. Underlying a distorted picture of the human will can be found a view of reality which disallows the type of knowledge that is proper to the analysis of values. MacIntyre argues that such philosophical assumptions are typical of contemporary culture. He mentions in particular the character of Ralph Touchett in Henry James' *Portrait Of A Lady*; one could also think, for example, of the pastor in Andre Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale*, or, closer to home, J. Van Melle's *Bart Nel*, all characters unable to realize their potential for moral learning.

Murdoch is concerned to recapture the sense in which the inner, private, life of persons can be subject to *objective* moral evaluation. A similar point, from a somewhat different perspective, is made by C.S. Lewis (1978). Lewis argues that value subjectivism vitiates the emotional life. He illustrates his point by reference to a representative English text-book for high-schools, in which a statement such as 'this is sublime' is explained as shorthand for 'I feel it is sublime', that is, as reporting a feeling. But, as Lewis shows, if a reportage of a feeling were indeed intended by that remark the correct statement would be something like 'I feel humble'. What is lost in an emotivist culture is the idea that, because of the objective order, an emotional state can be in harmony with reason or in disharmony, that something *ought* to be liked. Clearly, Lewis argues, certain virtues - benevolence rather than selfishness - could, without reference to objective values, be justified as socially useful. But whether their cultivation would be fulfilling or not would not be answered, and from the individual's point of view, no answer to the question, Why be moral?, could be given.

Furthermore in order to *be* virtuous a person needs the aid of trained emotions, without which the intellect is, as Lewis puts it, powerless against the animal organism. In the absence of a belief in objective values education would mean not 'initiating' but 'conditioning' - or there would be no distinction between these. In contrast for naturalism - or for those within 'the Tao', Lewis' term for the set of universal norms of behaviour variously expressed in the manifold traditions and cultures - or for the doctrine of objective values, it is held that "certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are".(1970:16) Thus education has the task of training in the pupil "those responses which are in themselves appropriate, whether anyone is making them or not, and in making which the very nature of man consists".(1970:17) That is to say, objects do not just *receive* but *merit* our approval or disapproval, our reverence or contempt.

The wide-spread climate of relativism, so far as concerns matters of value, identified as *the* difficulty in the fruitful teaching of ethics (cf Goldmann, 1981), can be linked to a previous

generation's highhanded dismissal (most notably in nineteenth century colonialism) of the systems of values found in other traditions. The rupture with the tradition of ethical naturalism, the loss of the understanding of the *telos* of human nature, left a foundationless system of morality in nineteenth century Europe, the 'moral ought' as an 'elementary notion' (Sidgwick) without further justification, and so too the fundamental rules of behaviour. What then to make of other systems of rules, the *taboo* rules of Hawaiian culture, for example? (Cf MacIntyre, 1990:178-85; 1981:111-2) They are simply condemned as irrational and primitive. At issue is a concept of rationality: because of the rupture with the premodern moral traditions nineteenth century thinkers were left without adequate conceptual framework to express to themselves the nature and value of their culture. For social rules - this is MacIntyre's argument (1990:185) - make sense only in terms of the basic human goods of which they facilitate the achievement, and any adequate conception of such goods goes hand in hand with a normative concept of human nature. If a concept of rationality is lacking which allows an imaginative exploration into and appreciation of the symbolic world of one's own culture, of the narratives explaining the process towards human fulfilment, then there are no resources for appreciating this in other cultures. But in modern western thought the self is understood as attached to various goods independently of any social involvement, of any *norm* for such attachment. And the moral rules are supposed to derive their rationality independently of any attachment: indeed this is what rationality is supposed to *mean*. It is a concept which excludes the possibility of advancing in one's understanding of objective value (this is excluded from the scope of reason), and in particular of learning from other cultures.

Another voice echoing the above sentiments comes from a rather unexpected quarter: the economist and philosopher Amin argues in his book *Eurocentrism* (1989) that while modern western culture claims to be founded on humanist universalism, in the nineteenth century it became associated with nationalism, negating any such universalism. The conclusion was drawn that the stage of civilization which had been reached by western Europe was simply determined by its unique historical circumstances and nothing else. What was then demanded of other cultures if they too wished to reach that stage was the imitation of that model, and the gradual elimination of "the obstacles posed by their particular cultural traits, responsible for their backwardness".(1989:106) Similarly Tempels, in his pioneering study of traditional African thought, finds it necessary to counter the notion of European culture as "an all against a nothing", and of the educator as needing to clear the ground of worthless notions so as "to lay foundations in a bare soil."(1959:110).

Amin admits to some difficulty in defining eurocentrism, although its manifestations, such as racism, are manifold. The upshot of an overvaluation of European culture is the belief

that the progressive westernization of the world is the only future imaginable. What is of relevance for our purposes is Amin's expression of dissatisfaction with a post-metaphysical culture which refuses to define general laws of social evolution, a culture which thus by default legitimizes the status quo. He is not against secularism as such - indeed disagrees with contentions by some Moslems that Islam as a religion needs no process of secularisation, supposedly a phenomenon unique to Christianity - but only the form it takes in the legitimation of Eurocentrism. For our era, as he puts it, is characterized by a cultural relativism which in the West is expressed by praise for provincialism ("all aspirations for universalism are rejected in favor of a 'right to difference'" [1989:116] and all cultures have their "individual, incommensurable histories" [1989:135]), and in the Third World by a wave of fundamentalisms.

"The view that any person has the right - and even power - to judge others is replaced by attention to the relativity of those judgments. Without a doubt, such judgments can be erroneous, superficial, hasty or relative. No case is ever definitively closed; debate always continues. But that is precisely the point. It is necessary to pursue debate and not to avoid it on the grounds that the views that anyone forms about others are and always will be false: that the French will never understand the Chinese (and vice versa), that men will never understand women, etc; or in other words, that there is no human species, but only 'people'..." (Amin, 1989:146-7)

All this is very close to what various contemporary critics of value subjectivism have argued. Midgley (1989:174) writes that the current moral obsession of western society is that of "a self-righteous preoccupation with putting down self-righteousness": no one, it is supposed in a quite self-contradictory fashion, is, according to popular conceptions of the standards of rationality, justified in censuring anyone else.

Amin concludes that:

"Without a truly universalist perspective founded on the critique of economism and enriched by the contribution of all peoples, the sterile confrontation between the Eurocentrism of some and the inverted Eurocentrism of others will continue, in an atmosphere of destructive fanaticism." (1989:146)

As I understand him, Amin, although critical of much contemporary dialectical materialism, and eschewing 'economism', or economic reductionism, takes the task of philosophy to be the analysis of economics within the context of a normative idea of human development. (This would seem to be the approach of Marx, in some of his writings; cf for example Easton and Guddat, 1967:287-300). Amin also considers that the very *lack* in Islamic culture of the secularisation process characteristic of western society may afford to the former the key to a fundamental critique of contemporary western relativism.

In a study of the modern period in philosophy, largely complementary to the above, Prosch (1966:214-7) points out that the health of the institutions founded by the eighteenth century English reformers - representative democracy and the free market - depended on belief in certain objective values: once this moral capital was used up those institutions were bound to become corrupt. Furthermore, any attempt to foster the growth of similar institutions in other parts of the world would be likely to fail. No attention would be paid to the underlying and important (if in retrospect somewhat limited) values which - *pace* Marxist historicist interpretations - played a not insignificant role in the creation of capitalism and which when institutionalized brought about what we now understand as the 'developed' world. And there is evidence that this is indeed the case at present. Dorr (1984:68) lists a number of ways in which 'development' as an economic policy towards the poorer countries has largely failed, the gap between rich and poor having widened, traditional economic and social structures and cultures having been undermined; in addition the technology required in many 'development' programs has posed a serious environmental threat and used up the resources of the earth at rates which cannot be sustained, causing escalating tension between nations in search of scarce resources.

Here then is another massive illustration of a failure in contemporary western culture to sustain and promote a significant set of values embodied in the tradition, in this case relating to one's treatment of those over whom one has some measure of power. The failure is clearly linked to a lack of adequate standards of rational enquiry, of science or knowledge. Classical economic theory (with its utilitarian connections) prescind from discussion of moral value. The intention of the classical theorists was a progressive one, the reform of outdated laws regulating economic production. Utilitarianism is of course itself a theory of morality and Bentham's identification of the moral good with individuals' determination of their own interests was moderated by the principle - derived from a tradition (supposedly being replaced?) of objective values - that each is to count as one and not more than one. But this principle of fairness became in practice the idea of 'one dollar one vote' (the market mechanism doing the counting), modified by some redistribution of economic benefits.

Marx famously noticed how classical economic theory can conceal certain structural factors militating against the benefits of the economy reaching certain sectors of the population. But he failed to go beyond the conventional understanding of economics as value-free, thus undermining his own insights into how, given the facts about our human nature, the modern economy can be judged as inadequate and in need of radical change. And this failure has been reflected in much subsequent economic analysis, whatever the actual values guiding

any particular study. But in spite of the paucity of studies on the underlying philosophical issues one has nevertheless seen the growing emergence of a critique of the value-neutral assumptions underlying classical economic theory and policy, a critique in particular provoked by the failures of development policy (cf Boyle, 1988; Schumacher, 1974). It is therefore perhaps in the sphere of development economics that the results of contemporary moral subjectivism are most evident (Cf Higgins, 1978; Sen, 1972:16).

Finally, we can refer to problems in academic enquiry in general. Standards of rational enquiry tend to be formulated on the basis of an assumption of value subjectivism, as pointed out by Maxwell (1986) in a study to which we will have occasion to refer to again in the course of this chapter (below, 1.4). Questions of theory are separated from those concerning the practical application of the theory, in a way that is damaging to both. For applied science is clearly of benefit only if it is applied in the most reasonable directions for the most reasonable ends, i.e. determined by considerations of value, as the examples above have indicated. Again, the pure dimension and cultural value of scholarship and science, truth for its own sake, can be properly understood only as part of contributing to people realizing what is of real value. Similar points are made by MacIntyre, 1990, Ch X, and Haack, 1992. Maxwell is not proposing that organized enquiry should be subordinated to what political leaders and technocrats happen to deem of some practical use. He suggests the thought-experiment of finding oneself blind: it is not primarily the usefulness of seeing but the sheer enjoyment thereof that would be regretted above all. 'Value' is not to be identified with 'use'. But values of all kinds are realized only if primary recognition is given to people articulating their personal problems of knowledge and understanding and proposing solutions.

"All this is sabotaged when scholarly and scientific research is sharply dissociated from personal problem-solving in life... Scholarship and science tend to become esoteric, formal, scholastic and decadent, remote from the interests and concerns of non-academic life, pursued for the sake of academic career and status rather than for the sake of shared personal understanding."(Maxwell, 1986:59)

This view of the place of values is one which effectively immunizes itself from philosophical criticism. As Maxwell puts it, "standard empiricism is not itself a testable factual hypothesis" and should therefore be treated as a conjecture not by nature subject to rigorous truth-procedures.(1986:27) We remain locked into an empiricist paradigm (one consequence of this being that any change in the content of philosophy syllabi is difficult to justify). Finally, reason itself falls into disrepute, being seen as "somehow inherently defective, from a moral or human standpoint."(1986:63) It is seen to be the enemy of, rather than essential for the flourishing of humanity, of friendship, freedom, and justice.

These observations indicate a pressing need for a reform of standards of academic excellence.

With this example it becomes evident that the problem of value subjectivism is relevant not just to how philosophical enquiry can be applied but goes right to the heart of how one conceives any project of philosophical research. The examples adduced above, many more suggestive than conclusive, have supported the claim that a turn to the development of an understanding of what we are by nature is sorely needed. We turn now to focus more closely on the core of the difficulty in any such development, namely, contemporary conceptions of what constitutes knowledge.

1.4 A Problem Of Knowledge: Subjective And Objective Points Of View

It is probably true to say that the most important influence on modern philosophy, accompanying and colouring most areas of its debates, has been the development of an ever more self-conscious and widely applicable empirical method. The effect of this on moral philosophy, as already indicated, has not in general been a happy one. The modern understanding of what determines rigour in intellectual enquiry begins with Bacon's *Novum Organum*. As the title suggests Bacon here proposes a method of enquiry which makes a decisive break with the Aristotelian metaphysical framework for science, replacing the rules of a valid syllogism with a series of canons of induction, a value-presuppositionless method of acquiring pure factual knowledge.

For the classical thinkers, science described the eternal, unchanging reality of things. According to Plato our senses give us only 'opinion', how things seem or appear *to us*; through thought, human beings participate in the eternal order of things, the 'Logos'. Reality, it was said, is ordered by a rational principle which can be observed in the regularity of the planetary movements. The laws of the universe are thus the laws of thought, and they are described by the science of logic. Medieval man, as Prosch notes in his study of the origins of modern philosophy, was spared the debilitating modern malaise brought about by the passing of the naive consideration of common-sense conceptions of reason, beauty, and goodness as the *true* standards "in terms of which all things are to be viewed, measured, and valued."(1966:13)

In the new conception of rational enquiry all reference to metaphysical ideas are eschewed (Bacon, 1905:para.39-67). The predictive and explanatory successes of modern science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries secured its dominant status, while this was reinforced by Descartes' massively influential dualism of matter and mind. Descartes posits a radical separation of objective physical reality from the subjective reality of

consciousness, the domain of science from the domain of experienced feelings and desires; the purity and integrity of factual knowledge from suppositions about values. Finally the eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers extended the method, as indicated by the term 'social sciences', to the study of the human world itself.

Contemporary thinkers have declared the modern period over, its presuppositions bankrupt. The aptly termed 'postmodern' approach to standards of enquiry simply draws out the final, relativistic, implications of these presuppositions; it fails however to furnish social scientists with an adequate framework for research. The upshot of reflection on modern inductive scientific method is that science yields models of reality only; the concern is no longer with the question of the adequacy of the model to reality itself but rather solely with its experimental usefulness. Be that as it may, the assumptions about 'science' and 'scientific knowledge' have acquired the status of a contemporary myth, of an unquestioned basis for a whole set of attitudes towards the world. The enunciations of the popular scientist now capture our imagination as did previously those of the popular preacher. (Toulmin, 1980:21) What is not amenable to scientific investigation and verification has acquired a shadowy, peripheral reality. Science, it is supposed, says all there is to say about reality. A blanket of suspicion is thereby thrown over the whole enterprise of moral philosophy; what truth-status can one allow 'human self-determination', what significance the supposed objectivity of the good, in the face of the Running Down Universe or of the overall determining nature of the sociobiological principles of Adaptation, Replication and Survival. To speak of the *quality* of life is to speak subjectively.

The dominant conception of standards of rational enquiry amount to what Maxwell has called a philosophy of knowledge rather than of wisdom. Its central tenet, common to the variety of instantiations of the type from Francis Bacon to Karl Popper (Maxwell [1986:36-7] describes twelve), is that values have no place in rational enquiry. The philosophy of knowledge has as its general aim the promotion of social progress, human welfare and enlightenment. But this broad aim, it holds, can only be achieved by *first* realizing the distinct intellectual aim of producing objective, factual knowledge about the world.

"[O]nly by dissociating itself decisively from the goals, values and beliefs of common social life, so that claims to objective knowledge can be subjected to scrupulously *rational* assessment, can enquiry accumulate genuine knowledge, thus ultimately being of benefit to humanity." (Maxwell, 1986:10)

The implication is that rational enquiry must, as Maxwell puts it, "ignore human need in order to help fulfil such need." One needs to separate standards of *justification* from factors

operative in the context of *discovery*, if extra-rational influences - psychological, sociological, and so on - are not to bias the enquiry.

At first glance this program would seem patently uncontroversial and indeed incontrovertible. Nevertheless the nett result of separating the practice of organized intellectual enquiry from the realm of needs, desires, values and feelings, is to condemn the latter to the domain of the 'shadow' side of modern life, to allow the quality of human life, dependent as it is on systematic reflection and evaluation, to degenerate through lack of attention. Maxwell argues that isolating all problems so far as is possible from matters of personal and social concern would only be plausible if what is of value in life i) were unproblematic, and ii) could not be subject to rational enquiry ("if such questions somehow lay irredeemably beyond the reach of reason").(1986:49) These suppositions are both "utterly false." At the start of the modern period it might have seemed - to Bacon, for example - that desirable social goals were relatively unproblematic. The simultaneous existence of the great power and capacity of contemporary globally organized society, and of the great suffering of and conflict among vast numbers of people in particular in the Third World, gives the lie to this today. By excluding from its ambit such practical problems as the critical formulation of aims and proposals to realize those desirable social goals, empiricism reveals its irrationality. Views about the relative merits of alternative goals are held on some other basis than thoughtful judgment and reasonable conjecture. The basic requirement for rationality is that problems are articulated and solutions are proposed. Empiricism in contrast gives sustained attention to subordinate peripheral problems of knowledge and technology. The result is "a general failure to develop in the world traditions of cooperative rational problem-solving and learning devoted to enabling people to realize lives of value and justice".(1986:50) That oversight of the *problematic* nature of values and human goals, and the fascination with problems of knowledge as such, has led to a neglect of the articulation of problems of *action*; and this neglect has been bolstered by a doctrine stating that such matters are not in principle subject to standards of rational enquiry.

Nagel (1979) has put his finger on the core of the difficulty in formulating an adequate description of what would constitute such a 'life of value and justice', as advocated by Maxwell. The root of the problem lies in the dichotomy between subjective and objective 'points of view'. Nagel argues that our subjective sense of the good and of moral obligation may be well illuminated by whatever moral theory is proposed. But the objective point of view appears to undermine the plausibility of any such theory. Human actions are supposed to be considered, in any such moral theory, from the point of view of being determined by a some or other subjective consideration, that is to say, be undetermined by the network of

causes that form the subject matter of the sciences. Does the subjective point of view therefore involve illusions that should be rejected? or, on the other hand, is the objective conception of the world incomplete in some way? Either way, the idea that 'the good' is definitively interpretive of our behaviour (and thus objectively binding) is undermined: no final answer to the question, 'Why be moral?' is possible. (Cf Nielsen, 1963)

Nagel uses various examples to illustrate the subjective-objective dilemma. He points to the problem of free will. The notion of free agency seems to be undermined by the determination of all actions by antecedent causes. One can of course specify the necessary conditions for agency but even then one can ask whether these conditions are not themselves determined, thus continuing to undermine our notion of free action. "They may be necessary, but they do not seem sufficient." (1979:197) The problem of the dualist account - that is, positing a freedom from determining causes - is that it does not seem to make the attribution of responsibility to the agent any more plausible. As Nagel writes, free agency, threatened by the presence of determinism, is not yet implied by its *absence*. "Uncaused acts are no more attributable to the agent than those caused by antecedent circumstances." (1979:198) The problem lies in capturing the sense of the agent's actual *doing* of the action: *any* explanation of the action's cause, whether it is certain other events *or* the agent himself, fails in this.

"Even if an action is described in terms of motives, reasons, abilities, absence of impediments or coercion, this does not capture the agent's own idea of himself as its source. His actions appear to him different from other things that happen in the world, but not merely a different kind of happening, with different causes or none at all. They seem in some indescribable way not to *happen* at all...though things happen when he does them." (Nagel, 1979:199)

And so far as concerns moral theory, one can contrast an agent-centered view of what is morally right or wrong (what is best to do) with a consequentialist view as to what would be best overall (the maximum good). Each theory is justified from one point of view but undermined by the fact that the other point of view is equally plausible.

Later (Ch 4, esp. 4.4) we will argue that there is indeed a way of describing human subjectivity and agency which draws upon the subjective, experiential, point of view but which furnishes at the same time a decisive critique of the empiricist understanding of the 'objective' point of view. Nagel however is concerned with posing the problem as it presents itself in contemporary philosophical writings. From that perspective, one can ask with equal justification whether it is the impersonal view that encompasses the individual and his personal viewpoint, or whether it is that the impersonal considerations are only a part of the individual's total view of the world. Nagel assumes, developing some ideas of Wittgenstein, that "the subjective ideas of experience, of action, and of the self are in some

sense public or common property".(1979:207) But intersubjective agreement is not the same as the objective viewpoint. Objectivity is just the elimination of distortions resulting from "contingencies of one's own makeup or situation".

"Problems arise because the same individual is the occupant of both viewpoints. In trying to understand and discount distorting influences of his specific nature he must rely on certain aspects of his nature which he deems less prone to such influence. He examines himself and his interactions with the world, using a specially selected part of himself for the purpose. That part may subsequently be scrutinized in turn, and there may be no end to the process. But obviously the selection of trustworthy subparts presents a problem."(1979:208)

For we need to transcend not just our viewpoint as a specific individual but also our 'type' or species: what we deem objective must be true (or of value) in itself, rather than *for* anyone. The problem is left unresolved.

The consequences of this confusion in our understanding of the relation between subjective and objective points of view are well brought out by Maxwell. Maxwell notes that while scientific understanding is agreed to be objective, impersonal, factual, rational, predictive, testable, and scientific, any genuine example of 'person-to-person' understanding would, it is thought, lack all the above features. The latter would, on the contrary be subjective, personal, emotional and evaluative (and thus non-factual), intuitive (and thus non-rational), non-predictive, untestable, and unscientific.(1986:181-4)

And this, Maxwell argues, has disastrous practical consequences, for thereby person-to-person understanding is downgraded. But in order to promote the understanding and achievement of what is of value, the person-to-person understanding must be considered - from an 'objective' point of view - as prior: we need to "enter imaginatively into the other person's life-problems and possible solutions". The Enlightenment aim of promoting individual happiness cannot be achieved "if individual people cannot empathetically understand those different from themselves."

"The great danger is that in a vast, complex and diverse world people, instead of being enriched by diversity, will merely come to feel threatened and isolated by it, and will as a result hunger for some form of collectivism or nationalism (of the left or right) which banishes individual liberty and diversity."(1986:186)

The upshot of this is that practically we seem to be left with the alternative moral outlooks of either 'authoritarian objectivism' or 'liberal subjectivism'. Authoritarian objectivism can be characterized in terms of five points:(1986:255ff)

- 1a) It is not the individual that is of supreme value but something else: the state, God, the masses, an authority figure (Jesus, Napoleon, etc), or an ideal society in the future.
- 2a) It is not the individual who should decide what is of value, but whatever is of supreme value (religious leaders, the Bible, the state, society, etc).
- 3a) The individual should not value what he *desires*, but recognize that his desires are often in opposition to what is of value; he should seek value, *not* self.
- 4a) Value exists objectively.
- 5a) And can be known with absolute certainty.

'Liberal subjectivism', on the other hand, is characterized by the denial of these five points, holding, that is, that the individual - is of supreme value (1b); - must decide for herself what is of value (2b); - should seek to satisfy what she desires (3b); and that value is subjective (4b) and a matter of doubt (5b). Maxwell points out that while the modern values of liberty and tolerance are embodied in this attitude, yet as a set it is incoherent. 4b) contradicts 1b) in that it negates all value including the value of the individual. Furthermore if the individual is of supreme value, then one ought to act accordingly and recognize such value not only in oneself (3b) but in all individuals.

On the other hand authoritarian objectivism seems to overlook the "inconceivably, unimaginably, richly diverse" character of value in human life. Such diversity stems from the rich pattern of *particularities* in any person's life, "the extraordinarily intricate pattern of environment, deeds, perceptions, feelings, thoughts, desires, imaginings, relationships with others."(1986:248) We participate more fully in such value only to the extent that we develop deep person-to-person understanding of the other. Value stems from our individual and cooperative lives, not from anything outside those lives, and our value-judgments

"cannot be assessed in terms of some other set of value-judgements, upheld by some other person or being whether it be the majority, the government, the masses, society, culture, the church, history, posterity, the Bible, a prophet, or God."(1986:249)

In the way it has been presented above the choice before us is that: "either we must accept the supreme value of something other than ourselves, to which we must sacrifice our intellectual independence and our individual freedom; or we must accept that everything is ultimately meaningless and valueless."(1986:257) But this is a false dichotomy. For what is genuinely of value goes beyond any particular individual's judgment: "each of us can

glimpse only a minute fraction of all that there is of value in the world in human life".(1986:248) Value-objectivism, or value-realism, is essential to provide a rational basis for questioning and learning about morals.

Maxwell's observations come at the end of a study of the nature of human knowledge and are not further elaborated. Yet they afford an intuitive insight into the type of proposal in this thesis, all the more telling because Maxwell identifies himself with the Enlightenment tradition rather than any form of Aristotelianism. Advocates of ethical naturalism argue in contrast that the dilemma outlined above is very much the legacy of modern philosophy. In the preface to *Insight* Lonergan speaks of his exposition in terms of an invitation to the personal appropriation of the reader's rational self-consciousness. In some such self-knowledge, it will be argued, lies the foundation for judgments of moral value.

1.5 Historical Background: Modern Moral Philosophy

Two points are central to most accounts of the historical background to non-naturalism in ethics. On the one hand there is the loss of the foundational concept of nature (a metaphysics), and so too the diminishment of the role of the intellect, and this is stressed by Simpson. On the other hand the modern period can be seen as a falling off from a moral tradition which provided overarching standards for evaluation, and for progress in morals, and this is the perspective taken by MacIntyre. Both writers see Kant as the decisive figure in the turn to non-naturalism in modern ethics. Simpson shows that in Kant the idea of the noble and generous (the heart of morality) is cut off from any possibility of being made intelligible; MacIntyre that in Kant the idea is put forward that rules as it were stand on their own. A certain arbitrariness is introduced.

According to Simpson the modern thinkers - from Luther to Bacon - were self-consciously departing from the older tradition. This departure included a rejection of the central idea governing the previous period, that of the highest good, the *summum bonum*, as standard for the evaluation of any life, and goal or end for all lives. For Hobbes there is no supreme good "because human passions are not fixed on any one thing, but are continuously passing from one object of desire to another".(Simpson, 1988:111)

This narrowing of social goals is preceded by Bacon's limiting of the scope of human understanding. In Bacon knowledge comes to mean, in this 'neutral' view of human passions, a means to the attainment of one's ends, whatever they may be, that is to say, a means to power. Nature is denied its inherent intelligibility and value. Bacon repudiates any idea of 'final causes'; nature can be known only by experimentation. Finally Descartes

rejects all assumptions about the natural hold of the mind on the real, and nature is conceived of as devoid of all sensible properties, as beyond experience, simple geometrical extension.

The upshot of these developments is that the notion of 'good' is transformed; it is now classified as beyond the scope of properly justified knowledge. The realm of the 'ought' is separate from the realm of the 'is', as Hume points out. Since it is the subjective realm that constitutes human motivation, 'good' according to Hume cannot be thought of as providing a *standard* for our actions, it lacks the requisite objectivity. 'Good' is another name for custom.

"It is because he confines reason in such a way as to cut off from it its openness to being (which was the central element of ancient epistemological thought) that he denies to it the capacity to know good independently of actual desires."(Simpson, 1988:117)

Furthermore any attempt to give scope to the more noble impulses of human nature (as in Rousseau's nostalgic eulogy to the ancient city-state and its virtues), is bound to fail in the face of a view of human nature which relegates *all* impulses to the subjective realm. The political thinking of the time is individualistic; Hobbes speaks of a 'war of all against all'; for Rousseau a person is by nature solitary and free, and society is mere convention. Similarly for Hume the same fence of subjectivity surrounds all the human impulses, including the more unselfish ones which are still seen in terms of pleasure. This unregulated, self-centred individualism is reinforced by philosophy's inability to give any account of the noble and generous,

"those goods that are acknowledged as goods for themselves independently of any advantage that may accrue from them to oneself; goods, in other words, that are importantly selfless and involve a certain self-forgetting."(Simpson, 1988:118)

For MacIntyre the origins of modern moral philosophy lie in the Enlightenment movement. In a series of books MacIntyre has described, and redescribed, the background to the present situation in terms of the Enlightenment attempt, and failure, to found morality. According to MacIntyre's analysis, Europe inherited a moral vocabulary

"in which to judge an action good was to judge it to be the action of a good man, and to judge a man good was to judge him as manifesting dispositions (virtues) which enabled him to play a certain kind of role in a certain kind of social life."(1967:166)

This social life was the unspoken norm by which actions were judged. But modern individualism made the social life too greatly divergent from the norms for the latter to make any kind of immediate sense to a citizen of that society. The link between duty and happiness was broken. The need for a special justification of moral rules became evident; but without a common understanding of human fulfilment such attempts were bound to fail: no psychological underpinning of morality such as was suggested by eighteenth century British philosophers (Locke, Shaftesbury, through to Hume) could capture the traditional sense of moral objectivity; nor likewise could the invocation of divinity - for to say as with Paley that without God there would be no justification for overcoming selfishness, was to introduce the notion that the moral was justified only by means of a reasonable hope of 'reward'.

For Hume, says MacIntyre, reason is concerned either with relations of ideas (mathematics) or with matters of fact (science, history); it never motivates action. We are moved not by this or that being the case but by the prospect of pleasure or pain. It must therefore be the case that morality, the whole point and purpose of which is to guide actions, is founded on such prospects, that is to say, on feeling. Reason can tell us whether or not the object of passion exists, and how to achieve it; it cannot criticize or judge the passions. It "is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions..." Reason simply describes 'what is the case'; the attribute of 'virtuous' or 'vicious' comes from a subjective feeling of approval or disapproval of what we have observed. For example, reason can describe the facts of a sapling tree destroying the parent oak in the course of its growth, or the facts of a son killing a father; the attribute of 'vice' in the case of the latter but not the former is based on one's feelings.

Hume observes furthermore that there is a free floating 'ought' in much modern moral theory, being brought in without justification and on the basis of a series of statements of fact, of 'is'. But the conclusion of an argument cannot contain more than is in the premises. Only if there is already some end in view (some 'ought' premise) will certain actions, certain 'oughts', be justified. MacIntyre interprets Hume as saying there are two classes of assertion, factual and moral; and that moral statements refer to the end envisaged and the action appropriate for the achievement of that end, action justified by reasons applying to all in the same circumstances. In the age of individualism the shared ideals and accepted roles (the ends envisaged) referred to by such reasons drop away, and as a result "the injunctions have less and less backing".(1967:173) It is this lack of backing (forcing a suppression of the 'ought' premise) which Hume brings to our attention in his critique of the unjustified, free-floating 'ought'. Hume notes that typical moral injunctions refer simply to our feelings *about* ends, and that such feelings are subjective.

We can see then a difference in the historical interpretations of Simpson and MacIntyre. Both stress the separation in modern philosophy of reason from desire. But MacIntyre thinks Hume correctly describes the condition in which our practical reasoning, deriving as it does from our envisaged goals, no longer has any regulative power as society has sunk into extreme individualism, there being no sense of objectively good goals. From their different historical analyses it is clear that while Simpson wants to import the good into reason (which has the capacity to know good independently of desire), MacIntyre wants to import reason into our sense of the good (such that we see the sense of committing ourselves to build a society with common goals, which can serve as a starting point for practical deliberation and moral learning). MacIntyre's analysis suggests that a certain commitment to building up a common consensus of values is implicit in all particular value judgments.

A parallel difference can be seen in their accounts of Kantian ethics. Kant, both agree, represents best the modern mentality insofar as concerns the meaning of morality. Our cultural roots can still be said to lie in the Enlightenment, we continue to believe in the autonomy of the power of reason, and in a dualism of facts and values, of reason and will. Simpson stresses Kant's narrowing of reason, such that he is unable to justify nobility of action, the essence of morality. MacIntyre stresses Kant's detachment of the idea of duty from any fixed social role, enabling it to be interpreted in any way at all, and the consequences of this come out in utilitarianism, in which the remaining links with traditional morality, the sense that morality is somehow based on our capacity for considering more than our selfish ends, are lost. In this understanding of the loss of the true sense of morality Simpson and MacIntyre agree.

Simpson stresses that with Kant it becomes apparent that modern science entails not just a method but also a view of reality, one which hobbles any movement to develop a reformulation of the traditional foundation for value judgments. Given the empiricist view of experience as confined to sense-impressions (plus, according to Hume, their copies in the imagination, or 'ideas'), Kant concludes that the elements of universality and necessity germane to scientific knowledge must come from the mind itself. The categories of the mind organize and unify the manifold of sense-data. As Simpson notes, he is departing here from the older view "that knowledge is above all a matter of coming to grips with self-subsistent beings that have their own natures, their own intelligible order".(1988:122) For Kant, it is the mind that *confers* an intelligible framework on the manifold. What the world is *in itself* (the 'noumenal' world rather than the 'phenomenal' one) we cannot know.

MacIntyre notes that with Kant,

"the word *duty* is detached altogether from its root connection with the fulfillment of a particular role or the carrying out of the functions of a particular office. It becomes singular rather than plural..."(1967:197)

And this detachment from contingent events and needs and from social circumstances makes this understanding of duty typical of the "emerging liberal individualist society", a society in which external authority is rejected, and the individual is morally sovereign, "free to pursue whatever it is that he does, without suggesting that he ought to do something else". The possibility for the improvement of aims seems to be at a minimum. Morality for Kant tells us what would *not* be acceptable from a moral point of view; it gives little direction as to what value in life is; it seems to sanction "any way of life which is compatible with keeping our promises, telling the truth, and so on". It provides a test for moral maxims, but the test is not a reliable one: almost any precept can be universalized without inconsistency. This is clear if one considers Kant's justification of the categorical imperative.

Reason according to Kant can't know Nature in itself; the categories apply to data of experience only, hence our reason gives us knowledge which is limited to the range of our experience. Morality cannot therefore be founded on Nature, on anything external. Kant founds it on pure willing: the only thing good in itself is the good will. On all else goodness is *conferred* - for whatsoever good thing there is, it can be abused if not done from the right motive, for example, feeding the hungry can be done out of pride; the goods of health, wealth and intellect can be abused. But this means that the determination of the moral law has no links with what we can *understand* - about the nature of the fulfilment of persons, for example, what they need, and so on.

For Kant, according to Simpson, it is our sense of the noble that exemplifies what morality is: it has a claim on us which is independent of (not hypothetical upon) our selfish passions; it is 'sublime', valued for its own sake and not for what we may gain thereby (such motivation would demean it); and it is bound up with our freedom or autonomy - in acting on a value judgment one is truly going beyond any *determining* or heteronomous influences. Morality is based on our capacity for free action.

MacIntyre makes the point that it is commonplace to distinguish in this way between an imperative which is hypothetical upon some desired or desirable end, and one is not so dependent (categorical), a moral principle so fundamental that it brooks no exceptions whatsoever. But Kant takes it as definitive of morality as such, replacing all other supposed criteria or standards for judgments of value. In other words his standard for moral evaluation focuses exclusively on the agent's motive, to the neglect of consequences. He *defines* morality in terms of this distinction between inclination and duty, not in terms of anything germane to our human nature or human flourishing. Kant argued that his ethics

was not purely formalistic and thought that it constituted a sound basis for respecting persons (the categorical imperative could equally be expressed in terms of treating every person as an 'end-in-himself'). And to an extent Kant was shielded from the implications of his theory by the theological superstructure he erected on the moral dimension: whereby duty is finally crowned with happiness, if not in this life then the next. The problem is that for an Enlightenment mind no external authority such as God could provide such a standard: I ought (morally ought) to obey the commands of God only if they are right, and I am left to judge that.

But the pure formality of Kantian ethics could have disastrous consequences. For in detaching the notion of duty from ends, purposes, wants and needs, one is rendered - by virtue of the demands of morality - incapable of questioning the ends and norms, the authority, of any social institution; these are put beyond the framework of the moral standard. While this goes against what Kant wanted, it seems to be implicated in his moral theory.

MacIntyre notes that what is missing from Hume is any notion that our feelings, our desires, emotions, etc "can, to varying degrees, be modified, criticized, rejected, developed, and so on".(1967:175) And this could equally well apply to Kantian ethics. In contrast to Hume Kant seeks to *justify* the 'ought' as free-floating, an absolute datum of experience apart from any reference to our wants or needs and to the ends of society.

Simpson likewise notes that for Kant the noble, what is selfless in our nature, is not something that could be *known*. A moral action can only be defined or specified in terms of its *form*. All one can specify about any moral action is that it must be such as to be universally applicable to all rational beings without exception, that is to say, exemplifying in the agent the reason which Kant has narrowly stipulated as 'providing form'. Kant further considered that this 'universalizing' would similarly respect the reason and autonomy of rational beings other than the agent and could be said to be equivalent to the maxim, treat oneself and others always as ends, and never simply as means. But, as MacIntyre argued, there are good reasons for doubting this judgment. The categorical imperative seems empty, any act of the will seems justifiable by elevating its principle of action to a universal law.

As Simpson puts it, Kant is driven to the conclusion that the good cannot be *known*, by refusing to abandon the idea that there *is* indeed something selfless in human action. Practical reason is therefore constituted in terms of the special task of saying 'no' to any prompting of advantage as understood by the subject, the task of acting out of itself, from the principle of autonomy which Kant has identified with morality. But thereby a certain

blindness to one's oversights in the matter of what is truly worthwhile doing, has been elevated into a virtue. And with this the is-ought distinction of non-naturalism comes fully of age. The fundamental role played in all this by an empiricist view of knowledge is clear. Just as the theoretical reason confers on reality an order whose supposed non-arbitrary character it is impossible to justify, so the practical reason as understood by Kant can confer on our actions, whatsoever their content, a law-like character which does not take away their arbitrary nature. As Simpson says, Kant's influential moral philosophy is an attempt "to recover the idea of the noble in the context of a 'realist' understanding of knowledge and nature... The noble is only able to return as an unfounded 'ought'."(1988:129) Moral philosophy has become barricaded within a certain voluntarism.

"These moves in the understanding of good were made because of a narrowing down in the scope of knowledge and because of an abolition of ends from nature. This was the result, in both cases, of the dominance of the methods and values of modern science. It is these 'realist' conceptions of knowledge and nature, combined with the old sense of the noble and of freedom, that lie behind the final emergence in Kant of the doctrine of non-naturalism."(Simpson, 1988:130)

While it is true that the loss of the idea of nature underlies the malaise of modern moral philosophy, nevertheless it is not enough to reintroduce this idea without specifying in what way it can function as a norm, or standard. In a society without authoritative standards of value, the only rational (empirical) conclusion to be drawn about human nature would be something to the effect that the constituents of human happiness are as varied as our human psychological make-up. MacIntyre takes Hume's analysis of the role of feeling in morality and Kant's of the will both as failed attempts to introduce a psychology as foundation for ethics. Indeed any attempt to ground morality on the faculty of the reason would be unlikely to be more successful. The notion that, as Simpson suggests, one can know good independently of actual desires, seems to tie the objectivity of the good to a certain dualism. In the following chapter this argument of Simpson will be subject to more detailed criticism.

From MacIntyre we can take the idea that a certain commitment to a community is needed, indeed presupposed, in judgments of value, and this provides the conditions for moral growth. From Simpson we can take the idea that a concept of normative nature is needed, and in the case of human nature the centrality of the capacity for selflessness. We turn now to consider this latter approach.

CHAPTER TWO

METAPHYSICS AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE RATIONAL WILL

2.1 Making Sense Of Ethical Naturalism: Simpson

In this first of our accounts of the three different approaches to ethical naturalism it is incumbent upon me to state in brief how the three approaches are related, and to put our treatment of Simpson's account into perspective by making some general remarks on the whole argument of this thesis.

After Virtue concludes by suggesting that the fundamental alternatives for contemporary ethics are represented by Nietzsche on the one hand and Aristotle on the other. In MacIntyre's opinion Nietzsche's critique of modern moral philosophy is by and large correct: it fails to justify morality because it fails to ground any answer to the question of what sort of person we ultimately want to become; and any proposed foundation for morality - rules, universalizability, the categorical ought - presupposes some answer to this question.

"We, however, *want to become those we are* - human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves."(In MacIntyre, 1981:107)

Morality, concludes Nietzsche, is a set of rationalisations for various assertions of the will to power, that is, of fundamentally non-rational phenomena. MacIntyre argues that an alternative response is possible to Nietzsche's critique, and that is the justification of the kind of pre-modern approach to ethics as is found in Aristotle, centrally concerned with becoming one sort of person and not another. Such an understanding of ethics is only to be found, he continues, through a certain participation in a common social life,

"by entering into those relationships which constitute communities whose central bond is a shared vision of and understanding of goods. To cut oneself off from shared activity in which one has initially to learn obediently as an apprentice learns, to isolate oneself from the communities which find their point and purpose in such activities, will be to debar oneself from finding any good outside of oneself."(1981:240)

Without a foundation for morality, there is no authority other than that of one's own arbitrary will.

In his study of the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan, Meynell similarly puts a challenge to modern thought: either Nietzsche, or the Aristotelian realism of Lonergan. It is often concluded from Nietzsche's critique that only a complete nihilism in matters of truth and

value, remains. But as is the case with MacIntyre, Meynell too thinks that the critique may in the long term be the basis for a much more positive approach. He argues that Nietzsche's critique can be answered, not with nihilism, but with an understanding of the will to power as truly expressed in terms of "the subordination of all one's energies to the true norm of cognitive and moral authenticity," and that this may indeed be the better interpretation of Nietzsche's own intentions. (1991:181)

In the following two chapters we will trace first MacIntyre's and then Lonergan's arguments that there is a way of making sense of the kind of self-creation that we wish for ourselves by reference to a norm of what it is to be a person and that knowledge of this founds judgments of value. But what *kind* of knowledge or understanding is this? Nietzsche challenges the neglect in modern philosophy of the question of the kind of standards that are chosen in order to posit one theory rather than another, or one set of foundational moral rules rather than another. I will later argue that only through a careful distinction between the realm of theory and that of interiority, as is found in Lonergan's account, can this difficulty be overcome, and this will involve an understanding of human nature which, more than is the case in the classical account, makes necessary reference to a certain norm for being a person (not 'rule-bound'), and a certain kind of society (not at odds with itself, in a state of conflict). But I want to approach this question by attempting to restate ethical naturalism without making this kind of distinction, by canvassing the view - ultimately untenable, I will argue - that one can justify knowledge of 'human nature' understood in terms of Aristotelian psychology, as a foundation for judgments of value, and in which questions of what kind of person one is to become, and the nature of the good life, are treated as secondary.

While MacIntyre sees the present task of ethics as that of bringing reason into the way we think about practical issues, in the case of Simpson the task is seen as bringing the notion of the good within the scope of human reason. In Simpson's account of ethical naturalism, reason is a given, and the task is to show how the good can be properly grasped by reason. The link between reason and the good is, he argues, being. Reason grasps being, and the being of anything is its end, what it characteristically intends. If these connections can be demonstrated then the task of founding moral judgments on human nature will be completed. What we aim at, what we will, is founded on what we understand to be the good, on the reason.

Simpson argues that a loss of the sense of nature as a norm lies at the heart of difficulties in making sense of a foundation for ethics. A central task is to show that this sense of nature, a metaphysical one, can be justified. Thereafter, he argues, one can turn to ethics proper,

"the determination of what in fact is good and what life is really worth living."(1988:229) In what follows I am going to argue, however, that Simpson's approach is useful chiefly to the extent that it brings out the root of any plausible proposed foundation for ethics. The root of the problem lies in the passing of the medieval world-view and with it the loss of a common-sense understanding of objective standards of reason, beauty, and goodness.(Above, 1.4) This entails a reconceptualization of the relation between science, common-sense, and metaphysics, absent in Simpson's account. Simpson's account of how our goals, and our standards, are chosen ("in view of something one holds to be good and worthwhile"; 1988:229) is postponed (1988, Ch 9) until after he has resolved the question of the (in his opinion) proper context of moral deliberations. His account is therefore likely to be somewhat idiosyncratic, lacking a proper discussion of what could be assumed in the case of medieval moral philosophy, the cultural context.

Another way of putting this is to ask in what context a foundation is being sought. To found is to secure against threats, to secure the reasoning, to provide for border-line cases, for some designated context. To provide a foundation for all questions of a particular type is to assume something unquestionable, in that context. Midgley has argued that there is a type of foundationalism which is radically mistaken, and which was put into the spotlight most clearly in Wittgenstein's turn against his earlier logical atomism, infected as it was with Cartesianism, a turn effected largely through his attention to language and his reflection on meaning. Descartes' foundation for philosophy fails in that it is contextless. It is worth quoting at length what Midgley has to say on this.

"Thus, the insight which Descartes took as basic - 'I think, therefore I am' - is not basic at all. It could not be, because it is expressed in language, and a language implies a society. Self-knowledge presupposes a knowledge of how to use that language. And this practical knowledge too would make no sense if it were not itself part of a familiar form of life. As for skeptical doubt, it too is a socially developed concept with its own limited use. It would make no sense except against the background of a prior, publicly established concept of knowledge. It presupposes standards of what can and what can't count as satisfactory evidence - standards which (again) can only be located as elements in an existing form of life. The demand for certainty, like the wider demand for safety, is only understandable as a response to particular kinds of threat and danger. If either of these demands is indefinitely expanded into a call for unconditional protection from whatever evil might turn up, it becomes senseless."(1989:142)

Either the context - in our case a particular view of what one should become - is part of a hidden agenda (this is in large part MacIntyre's critique of a metaphysical psychology as foundation), and what is hidden is not subject to critical judgment, or one makes it explicit by describing the type of social life entailed by one's foundational concept of human nature.

In the latter case there is a notion of the self in terms of the development of certain qualities of character which are commonly affirmed. One finds a good outside of one's arbitrary will.

A further point is made by Midgley: Descartes' program, to found all knowledge on the certainty established only in knowing the self, or subject, and then extending this knowledge by means of mathematical principles to all other areas of knowledge, was furthermore linked to the idea of professionalism and excessively narrow standards of academic excellence, a point already made by Maxwell (above, 1.3). Our foundational project, it should be clear from the lengthy introductory chapter above, takes as context the threat to social disintegration, and to personal moral growth (the two are not separate), and is given content in that way. What we will be arguing is that the foundation lies in a justified reorientation, i.e. in authenticity, in the type of commitment to the concerns of a common social life of which MacIntyre speaks. The reasoning at issue here is common, or practical, sense, the sense that Aristotle's psychology is celebrated in systematizing, the sense that orientates one away from the theory of the mean to the self-knowledge that is necessary in order to implement the mean in my own case, knowledge of what tends to draw *me* away from reasonableness in deliberating what to do. How do *I* need to develop? The fact that casuistry has come to have a bad name is no reason not to reconsider the merits of this approach, and how it could be founded.

In his little-known thesis, *Goodness And Nature* (1988), Simpson has attempted a book-length and systematic account of how ethics may be founded on knowledge of human nature. He has identified three fundamental questions to be addressed, and a serial treatment of these questions, in a non-naturalist way, in contemporary anglo-american moral philosophy. He has provided a useful framework for any treatment of the issue. Any proposed foundation of ethics, he argues, has a) to explain the notion of moral deliberation and the idea of the good; b) to provide a standard for value judgments that is objective and universal; and c) to justify this standard by appeal to the notion of human freedom or self-realisation.

Furthermore, the course of contemporary mainstream moral philosophy (from Moore through Ayer and Stevenson to Hare) can be seen as a series of answers to these questions, answers which are self-consciously non-naturalist. Its *terminus a quo* can be said to be Moore's *Principia Ethica*. It was Moore who articulated the idea that formed the basis for modern proposals for interpreting moral rules, namely that there can be no foundation for moral judgments in facts about a part, or the whole, of natural reality. Moore's own alternative to naturalism, that of intuitionism, did not subsequently find much favour among philosophers. It soon led to emotivist theories of ethics skeptical of any foundation at all.

Our concern will not however be with an analysis of these proposals as such but only of their *grounds*. And these are, or amount to, two basic types. On the one hand there are the theories which lay stress on consequences and on the other those which make prime reference to human agency and intention.

Ayer and Stevenson propose an emotivist theory of ethics but its basic justification is similar to that of utilitarianism, namely that there is no knowledge possible of human nature as an end. Utilitarianism as we have seen might be said not to be an ethics at all properly speaking, and the same is true for emotivism. Hare on the other hand proposes a prescriptivist theory of moral rules whose basis is that morality is founded on human agency; furthermore no *content* can be predetermined for this would take away that grounding freedom. And these latter arguments can be seen to have a broadly speaking Kantian origin.

Two arguments are proffered in support of the non-naturalist approach. The first has to do with the nature of our knowledge about human affairs; the second appeals to our intuitions about the freedom of choice which is basic to our humanity or at least it is supposed to the values of our culture. Their case can therefore be summed up in three central points representing stages in one broad movement in a specific philosophical tradition. There is good reason therefore, from the point of view of a reformulation of ethical naturalism, to consider each point in the critique on its own merits.

(a) The foundation for moral judgments cannot be found in facts about part, or the whole, of natural reality. This is because there is no *a priori* definition of what natural qualities 'good' consists in that would be universally acceptable; and secondly because of whatever object is said to constitute the essence of 'good', it can still be legitimately asked of *this* object (say, the greatest happiness of the majority of people, or, alternatively, justice) whether that, or doing that, is indeed good.

(b) No scientifically verifiable knowledge can be had about the objectively desirable (about what we ought to have 'pro-attitudes' to). Because ethical statements evince attitudes, 'nature' cannot be the standard for judgments, since nature is not a value; it does not give rise to an attitude to anything, it is not a goal.

(c) Human dignity lies in our capacity for free action. We are able freely to follow principles of action and so enact rationality in our lives. Herein lies the element of reasonableness attached, in our understanding, to our moral commitments. But this requirement for what is called the 'universalizability' of our goals is a purely formal

determination of values. The prime value of human freedom is incompatible with a predetermined set of *specific* particular things making up the human good or fulfilment, since that would vitiate our free choice. There cannot be *one* 'good life for man' for there exist many alternative such ideas of the good.

The three arguments can be identified in turn with G.E.Moore's critique of the 'naturalistic fallacy'; Ayer's and Stevenson's defence of an emotivist theory of ethics, arising out of a prior commitment to empiricism; and R.M.Hare's 'prescriptive' account of moral discourse in the light of our essential freedom and capacity for rationality.

Simpson attempts a systematic refutation of these anti-naturalist arguments in terms of the three questions:

1. what is good?
2. what is nature?
3. what is freedom?

These correspond to the points above, although in Simpson they are not formulated in quite the way we have done. They constitute a convenient framework for our comparative discussion of three attempts to found ethics on knowledge of human nature.

It is as well to make the further point that we are not here concerned with engaging in historical exegesis of these twentieth century thinkers, but rather with formulating an argument for ethical naturalism that is convincing to the contemporary mind. For these purposes we employ a triad of ideal-types or representatives of the basic contemporary objections in the three parts that make up the argument. For the sake of presenting these arguments (others could of course be formulated but these seem to be the most telling ones against ethical naturalism) we will take Simpson's summaries of their views as starting point and only occasionally refer directly to their texts. Of course if it is the case that these summaries of their objections are recognized as truly representative the final argument will be all that more forceful. But our direct concern is simply that the objections are well-formulated.

It can be seen that while in each case the argument has shifted somewhat, nevertheless an intelligible sequence can be discerned. For Moore, value judgments are not to be taken as making reference to properties of natural objects. Following on from this Stevenson asks how these values are, then, to be explained. He argues that we can only do this by the purely descriptive scientific investigation of their causes. And there is no proper scientific method which would yield knowledge about *values* or ends as values, about human nature

as a norm, and so the aims of a traditional naturalism in ethics are misconceived. Finally, Hare takes as starting point the incontrovertible fact that we do not only commit ourselves to but also reflect on these values - our reason plays a role in morality. He argues however that there is no one specific content to what we should so commit ourselves to, no one normative 'good life' or end for human beings; morality is founded on human freedom and our capacity for rationality or, what amounts to the same thing, universalizing the principle of our action, abstracting from our particular perspective.

These then constitute three different arguments against basing ethics on human nature. But the later positions presuppose some of the conclusions of the earlier ones. Stevenson accepts and builds on the argument that good refers to nothing natural, and therefore the task of moral philosophy is clearly distinct from the study and discussion of the content of the human good. Hare accepts and develops both this argument and the argument that there can be no true descriptive statements of values or ends as values.

Given this unity it is unsurprising therefore that the triad, Moore, Stevenson-Ayer, Hare, for some time had a type of canonical status in accounts of contemporary ethics. (Toulmin, 1950; Warnock, 1967; Hudson, 1970) While this is in general no longer the case it seems to me that the same issues lie at the heart of the contemporary debates on the status of virtue, of well-being, and of agency in ethics; non-naturalists argue that the content of 'the good life' is not subject to rational debate (MacIntyre, 1981:112; cf Williams, 1985; Birsch, 1992). It will be argued with Simpson that the thread running through all these accounts is in effect an unjustified voluntarism, and that there is no adequate justification for denying the normal use of our investigative powers for determining or rediscovering the standard that is the foundation for ethics. If it can then be shown that knowledge of human nature is perfectly feasible and indeed universal then the assumption of the Kantian argument of Hare that freedom conceived of in the most abstract way as the ability to reason out one's goals, whatever they may turn out to be, is *the* founding value can also be critically evaluated. Perhaps the rationality which gives us the ability to *choose* our behaviour should not be thought of in as abstract a manner; and that paradoxically we develop that ability in part by allowing ourselves to be counselled and influenced by others.

2.2 The Open Question Argument And The Idea Of Good

What precisely is Moore's objection to ethical naturalism? Four points are relevant in this regard. The most important of these is the open question argument. Moore argues that of any particular definition of good, say as 'pleasure' or 'conducive to evolutionary survival', it can always be significantly asked, for example of 'conducive to evolutionary survival',

whether or not it is in fact good. This remains an open question. In reply Simpson agrees that Moore's point is born out by ordinary usage, but argues that this only means that when it is said of pleasure that it is good, one is characteristically not saying that good *means* pleasure, but that pleasure is *one* of the things - perhaps the most significant - that is in general good. But this of course would presuppose some further general identification of good, such as Aristotle's idea of the good life or happiness, which is distinguished from what good is variously *taken as* - wealth, fame, pleasure, and so on - and justifying one's judgment about the worth of, in our example, pleasure. And Moore denies the validity of such a further general identification.

In the second place Moore argues that good cannot be defined to mean something natural (the naturalistic fallacy). Defining good by reference to something about our human nature is a fallacy because it confuses the question of what good *means* with that of what *things* are good in themselves. (Simpson, 1988:12) Moore makes the distinction here between the meaning (given by the ideas in one's head) and real instances of a thing (given in experience and established by the sciences). (Simpson, 1988:29) Later, in the accounts of MacIntyre and Lonergan (esp. 3.2, 4.1) an alternative understanding of meaning will be suggested. At this point it suffices to note that this is a theory of meaning which would not find much favour among contemporary post-Wittgensteinian philosophers. For the later Wittgenstein meaning and context (and thus content) are inseparable. Exactly how one is to make sense of the content of what is the human good is a question which will occupy us for the length of the thesis.

Thirdly, Moore argues that any rational procedure such as ethics needs foundational notions which determine the criteria for good argument. 'Good' is just such a notion, and that is why, given his understanding of defining in terms of a resolution of the *definiendum* into constituent parts, Moore says that 'good' is indefinable. It is one of those objects of thought

"which are themselves incapable of definition, because they are the ultimate terms by reference to which whatever *is* capable of definition must be defined". (Moore, 1903:10)

Moore tends to think of a definition as purely analytic and thus tautologous, grasped by introspection: against any proposed definition of good in terms of something natural he says that "anyone can easily convince himself by inspection that the predicate of this proposition, 'good', is positively different from the notion of..." (whatever is being proposed). (1903:16) For example if one person defines good as 'pleasure' and another as 'that which is desired', any further argumentation on moral issues will be at cross-purposes,

he says. For there is no empirical or scientific way of resolving which is the more correct definition. Thus "good is good and indefinable".

But this objection to defining good is not tenable. A system of meanings and rational connections is not built up, *Tractatus*-fashion, by pegging particular instantiations to ultimate and irreducible constituent terms. It seems more reasonable to suppose that consulting one's intuitions (and the intuitions of those around one) is a guide only to an adequate definition of good and not the ultimate resort, as Moore seems to think. 'Good' in Moore's sense may be an 'ultimate term' but it is not in point of fact foundational, for nothing, in Moore's account thereof, flows from it. In particular the connection between ethics and action is left unexplained.

For Moore the axioms grounding any system of knowledge - and in particular those supposedly grounding natural law ethics - do not give true knowledge and the system remains therefore as a whole unjustified. (Moore, 1903:7) By contrast in Aquinas' development of the Aristotelian ethics the foundational principle of ethics - to follow the good and shun what is evil - *does* give true knowledge and this is because it expresses a truth about our nature, the fact that we have a fundamental desire to do what is good (primarily by exercising a measure of reflection in our choice of behaviour). Thus it could be said that for Aquinas if indeed one were not able to discern such facts of our nature the basic ethical principles would remain ungrounded.

In the fourth place Moore argues that only a purely formal account of good can be properly justified, and that moral philosophy is concerned with clarifying conceptual questions not engaging in substantial issues. However, on the basis of the discussion above conceptual clarification would seem not to constitute the whole scope of moral philosophy but only the first part of an attempt to provide a definition of good (falsely denied to be possible by Moore), which would then be filled in (and substantiated) by reference to concrete examples. How one uses and intuitively understands the notion of 'morally good' would be a guide only to defining it - the first part of any ethics - and not a study in itself ('meta-ethics'); and its 'logic' would have to be discerned by reference to a discussion of the context of particular instances of its employment. Similarly, what *counts* as particular instances of moral issues is a matter of definition, not simply 'given'; ethics is partly a matter of expanding the scope of what we take to be moral issues, the reach of our moral vision, our concept of, or what we mean by, the moral. A previously 'neutral' area, such as gender roles, could well become 'moralized'. A good definition must allow for such expansion: our concept of 'moral' must be subject to a systematic critique in the discussions of moral philosophy. For example our English word 'moral' has to a large extent come to

mean principles of action which remain essentially further unjustifiable - i.e. by reference to what makes for one's happiness, and this would seem an unjustified restriction of the word.

In a further development of the open question argument R.M.Hare argues that naturalism fails to draw a proper distinction between description and evaluation, or fails to realise that there is a difference between saying what properties a thing has and saying that it is good. Naturalism would have it that saying 'S is a good strawberry' is like saying that 'S is a strawberry and S is C', where C is some set of properties. But, argues Hare, we typically want to say that 'S is a good strawberry *because* it is C', i.e. not 'S is a C strawberry because it is C'. With the word 'good' we are therefore saying *more* than that something is X. In Moore's terminology, it would be an open question whether or not it should in fact be evaluated as good. Hare concludes that the non-descriptive element contained in the statement is that of commending.

It is in replying to this version of the open question argument that Simpson formulates the essence of ethical naturalism. He argues that the difference Hare alludes to above between 'good' and the set of properties C, lies in the fact that "to be C is *what counts as the measure of goodness* for S"(1988:61, emphasis added). That is to say, 'good' means "being in accordance with what is expected or desirable for S to be". It is for this reason that saying C is good is to praise it. And this standard of goodness can be described factually. 'Good' must in the first place be understood in terms of the question of being, but related to the will. Unless one relates the question of the good to 'what is', one fails adequately to account for the variety of its meanings. Thus when Hare says good is expressive of desires or choices, he misses the meaning that attaches good to non-human things - the good of an apple, for example, or a cow. He also misses the distinction between what is good for one and what one desires. And finally he misses the sense in which saying something is good provides, other things being equal, a reason for acting in that way: to say something is desirable or one's choice does not as such provide a reason for doing it.

"To give a reason, however, is to direct action by giving information about what is really worth choosing and doing."(1988:137)

On the other hand, Simpson continues, it is true that good cannot signify any one particular empirical fact or set of facts. The correct analysis of good depends on an extension of the scope of what can be known beyond the empirical, namely to 'being'. What this means can be explained by reference to Moore. For Moore 'good' can in principle attach to anything (a definition would restrict its application); it must therefore, he thinks, be outside the realm of things, i.e. a non-natural property.(1988:28) Similarly, for the scholastics good (*bonum*) is of universal application but is for that reason 'convertible' with being (*ens*). Simpson

defends the latter inference by referring to Hare's argument that the criteria by which a thing is said to be good (juiciness in a strawberry, balance, perhaps, in a hockey-stick) is distinct from the *meaning* of the term good. While the former differs from case to case, the latter remains constant. (Hare, 1952:96-7)

But, Hare continues, meaning must be consequential to the criteria: you can't say x and y are alike in every respect save that x is good and y not (as you could in the case of the property of being yellow for example). Thus good is not an independent property of its own but 'supervenient' to the properties identified. And Simpson finds this notion of supervenience a convenient one to translate Aristotle's idea of the 'transcendental' of good. 'Good', like 'one', 'thing' and 'true' is a transcendental rather than a categorial term. Categories pick out properties of the being of the thing, its modifications, such as its quality (for example redness) and its quantity (a certain length). A property is a particular determination of a being. (Simpson, 1988:145ff) But transcendentals signify the same thing taken in a certain respect: so that when a horse is said to be 'one' more is being said than when one says simply 'a horse': one is referring to the fact that as a horse it is undivided in itself, i.e. to horse taken under a certain aspect, that of undividedness.

The example of 'oneness' can also be used to bring out a corollary of this, absent from Hare, that transcendentals are used analogously never univocally. In other words each being is 'one' in a manner determined by the *sort of being* it is. A library is one as a library, a horse as a horse: what exactly about the entity that is undivided is different in each case. 'One book' signifies absence of division with respect to its being a book, though it has many pages and is divided with respect to them. By saying that 'good' is a transcendental one is describing what the thing is by nature, not any one of its properties. The content of what is meant by 'good' will therefore differ from object to object: there is little doubt about what constitutes the good of a dog (health in body and even psyche; growth), what fulfils its doggy nature; or at least one knows when it is being ill-treated. As Simpson explains rather awkwardly, "good signifies the being of things but with the further consideration of a reference to desire and desiring". And 'desirable'

"signifies the being of a thing with a view to the idea of its being, as such, an object of desire, or such as to be desired." (1988:153)

To say of something that it is desirable means what is fitted or adapted to desire, as when one calls a car desirable one indicates that it has "what fits it to be desired (as speed, comfort, efficiency and so on), quite regardless of whether one ought also to desire it." (1988:154) (Other beings, other goods, might have greater merit for one's course of action.) What in particular constitutes the standard for goodness differs from thing to thing; that the thing's nature *is* the standard remains constant (the meaning of good). One can cite

the criteria as reasons for attributing (a therefore supervenient) goodness (or alternatively worthlessness) to the particular thing.

'Good' then refers to being or nature but under the aspect of desire (or 'tending towards', in the case of plants and perhaps animals). The value of this account of ethics lies in its affirmation of how one could predicate value of something *in itself* not simply as 'good for' someone. One's judgment that 'x is good' for oneself can be evaluated according to a standard which is one's good by nature, a good simply because one is 'like that'. For example, willy-nilly one has a desire for life, at least to some extent, and similarly one has a natural desire to fulfil one's nature: that, in the classic tradition, is part of the *meaning* of 'nature'.

Moore argues that the existence of bad desires disqualifies 'the desirable' as a candidate for explaining 'good'. (1903:99ff) But if one attaches the attribute of good primarily to one's being what one by nature is, then 'the desirable' acquires its primary moral meaning of 'ought to be desired', at least in the case of human beings with a certain freedom *not* to assent to 'being like that', which can also be hardened through habit into bad desires. Thus the existence of evil does not constitute an objection to Simpson's idea of the good as the desirable. Good signifies the idea of a standard, and the standard is given by the thing's complete or perfected nature. To the extent that the thing is incomplete it does not, in this aspect of incompleteness, furnish an object fit to be desired. Thus to say that there is real evil in the world is not an objection to finding the standard of goodness, of what is to be desired, in the nature of things.

Moore's arguments depend for their force on what is meant and understood by the terms 'natural' and 'normal'. Moore contrasts 'natural' with 'artificial' whereas in ethical naturalism the contrast is between what is according to a thing's nature and what is not. Ethical naturalism, he says, uses the example of 'health' to illustrate that the natural state of an organism is a norm. But, he goes on, disease too occurs naturally. Simpson argues, on the contrary, that 'nature' must be understood in the sense of 'essence', that is, the structure by which the thing is what it is; and in this sense it is quite intelligible to say that disease is bad - because contrary to the thing's nature. Moore argues further that the *abnormal* is not necessarily bad, as genius is far from the norm yet is thought to be in general good. To argue that "a thing is good because it is 'natural'...is therefore certainly fallacious". (1903:45) In reply Simpson points out that in this argument Moore understands 'normal' in the sense of 'usual', but there is another common understanding in which it means something like 'standard'. We use expressions such as 'Be a man' or 'Act like a human being', in which by 'human being' is understood what a person essentially, or by nature, is,

and this is taken to be a norm or standard. Both usages of 'nature' are acceptable and Moore's arguments do not settle the issue.

The notion of 'standard' brings in the question of the context of the debate about foundations. Standards are set up inter-subjectively; they are related to the rules and regulations of groups, to social institutions. One cannot simply *assume* a tradition of understanding 'nature' in the way intended in classical accounts of ethical naturalism. (Cf Johann, 1975:165) Simpson has therefore only shown that from the role the concept of nature or human being plays in our patterns of thought, it follows that it is not proven that it does *not* operate as a norm. Being *can* be a standard, and in that case particular things would be said to be good only in a secondary sense, i.e. insofar as they further that norm; they are 'good for' that being, contribute to its 'being like that' and conforming to the standard. But a standard is a measure by which one may check one's own performance. In classical culture the sense of our *kind* of being as a standard was uncontroversial, our nature was thought of as static, the same always and everywhere, fitting into the whole cosmic scheme of things, and systematized by theory. But take away the context, and what remains? Only a plurality of value systems each determining one's standard for evaluating possible courses of action. To what does one's theory now refer? Midgley (1989:143ff) explains how in moral philosophy an unreasonable Cartesian demand for a certainty devoid of all context for a long time held sway, and is especially evident in Moore's *Principia Ethica*. In Moore's description of what 'good' is, there is inadequate attention to the type of understanding being sought. Much moral philosophy after Moore can be seen as a corrective to this. The *context* of science is contrasted with that of ordinary human living, and the conclusion drawn that the notion of objective standards of *acting*, of morality, is not a coherent one. Simpson of course disagrees, but we shall argue below that he, like his adversary Moore, fails to pay adequate attention to the contemporary context of any argument for a foundation for ethics.

For Moore ethical concepts are basic and unanalysable. However as we saw they could not be said to be foundational in the sense of giving rise to a pattern of procedure for ethical discourse. For no rational procedure exists: the concepts are simply intuited. The conclusion Ayer draws from this is that they are unanalysable not because they are intuited but because they are not valid concepts at all. There is no criterion by which their application can be regulated. They add nothing to a factual description of any event. They are in fact pseudo-concepts. In Ayer's well-known example, if I say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money', I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, 'You stole that money'.

"In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it." (Ayer, 1946:107)

As Simpson argues, by means of this move Ayer is dealing with two problems arising out of Moore's account: the problem of how intuition of 'good' in fact takes place, and that concerning the relation between moral judgments and action.

Stevenson (1944:4) begins his analysis by distinguishing two types of disagreement, disagreement about how matters are truthfully to be described, and disagreement about how they are to be favoured or disfavoured, and hence how they are to be shaped by human efforts. A mother and her son agree that football can truthfully be described as dangerous, but disagree about whether he ought to play the game or not. Although beliefs may effect one's attitudes, the connection between the two sorts of disagreement is a matter of contingent fact, never logical. Attitudes are logically distinct from, and independent of, beliefs; for after all the facts have been settled, attitudes are still open and may be favourable or unfavourable. And that means that ultimately there is no rational method for resolving them. There are only non-rational methods for procuring agreement. The fallacy of naturalism, he says, consists in representing as rational an approach to the good which is in fact a non-rational attitudinal preference. By means of a persuasive definition naturalism designates what are in reality *particular and limited* facets of what 'good' denotes in conjunction with its primary emotive meaning, viz. 'what we are favourably disposed to'. These facets are then falsely taken as objective and exhaustive of its reference. (Simpson, 1988:40-1)

Stevenson argues that it is this dimension of attitudes that ethics has hitherto largely neglected. In a similar way to that of Ayer he extends Moore's anti-naturalism. 'Good', he agrees, is not definable in terms of anything scientifically knowable. In fact, value judgments are not descriptive at all. They are not *statements* about what is the case but expressions of attitudes or emotions. Ethical concepts have a primary emotive meaning - "they evoke or directly express attitudes" (Stevenson, 1944:33). 'This is good' means 'I approve of this; do so as well' - although Stevenson later adds that its meaning also includes the idea that there are certain reasons for the approval and recommendation (1944:207). Ethical sentences are more like imperatives than statements - they are used more for encouraging, altering or redirecting people's aims and conduct than for simply describing them.

Stevenson argues that there is no valid inference from facts to values such that rational debate would be justified. There are two components in any ethical sentence, a descriptive and an emotive. The giving of reasons for the judgment of value amplifies the second, emotive component. It is an attempt to redirect the attitude of the listener. In saying 'I

approve of this' one is simply describing a psychological fact, reporting on one's attitude. The emotive meaning which accompanies the ethical sentence (expressed by Stevenson as the recommendation to 'do so as well') has nothing to do with truth or falsity.

The upshot of the emotivist approach to ethics, as Simpson points out, is that 'good' is not a matter of cognition. For Ayer all ethical propositions which purport to be synthetic are meaningless. For Stevenson the reasons for value judgments are never conclusive, and by this he means not only that ideas do not necessarily move to action but that any description, in terms of reasons, of what we ought to pursue is misleading. There is no valid inference from facts to values, but through a persuasive definition of the good one can present a particular attitude as if it were objectively worthwhile adopting.

That suffices for a summary account of the emotivist critique of ethical naturalism. It is the task of science to determine the facts of human behaviour; philosophy clarifies the function of ethical discourse, and in part that means understanding why progress in science has not resulted in a similar advance in resolving moral questions. In other words moral philosophy - as Moore argued - deals with meta-ethical issues only, with "definitions of ethical terms, or judgments about the legitimacy or possibility of certain definitions" (Ayer, 1946:103). Philosophical ethics should make no ethical pronouncements, but give an analysis of ethical terms, the logic of their use, understood as intelligible apart from any reference to the actual good. "The most significant moral issues begin at the point where our study must end".(Stevenson, 1944:336)

But this approach to ethics remains unjustified. Most of these writers correctly point out that we can say that a course of action which leads to happiness (for example) is nevertheless 'wrong'. And they conclude that we cannot therefore define good by reference to anything natural. But one could also reason that such a judgment is justified - and compatible with ethical naturalism - because of the existence of some *further* moral end more comprehensive than that of happiness. Ayer, on the contrary, regards such an understanding as beyond the standards of rational enquiry, and he simply regards 'good' as a pseudo-concept, and our behaviour therefore as ultimately without rational foundation. For Stevenson, similarly, only science (dealing with facts *not* ends or values) can determine *what* we in fact do aim at, what 'good' thus *means* in terms of influencing our behaviour.

Simpson answers that this view of questions of 'good' is unjustifiably limited to the context of human actions. According to him non-naturalism fails to take account of the difference between 'good' and 'good for' and is therefore in effect - he doesn't himself use this term - 'speciesist'. It is the *human* good only that is analysed in meta-ethics (our concept of the

good). Moore and Hare are wrong in analyzing good in terms of the "human and doable..., from within the perspective of the good of human choices and actions", rather than in itself, and that means in its full scope (and this is the case, says Simpson [1988:59], in spite of Hare claiming that his analysis is true for both moral and nonmoral contexts). The point Simpson is making is that we can judge the goodness of things in themselves (and not just as 'good for us') because we have the sort of nature that is open to being in its unlimited scope.

But Simpson's explanation of this openness of human nature to being in itself seems to entail a dualism of thought and will. Underlying the critique he has given of the emotivist understanding of the good, is a foundational psychology. Simpson contends that thinking moves willing. Just as the proper object of the eye is the visible, so that of the will is the good. There remains, as he says, "the question of the drawing power of good, or how it moves to action".(1988:155) And this indicates that the status of that foundational psychology is unclear. In classical culture the standard of truth and goodness was thought to be a universal given, exemplified in the best man in the society, for example in Athens. But modern culture is characterized by a plurality of value systems. The notion of being human no longer functions as a norm which is embedded in the shared goods of the society. What then, one may ask, is the role of theory - in particular the moral theory of Aristotle - in one's ordinary living? By what standard is one to judge that theory? The failure properly to address such questions leaves unsupported the categorical 'ought' corresponding (in the theory) to the capacity of willing to follow thinking. The theory is not strictly scientific, for science prescind from interests, and nor is it a matter of ordinary living, for there is an irreducible plurality of such ways of living. These at least are the conclusions of the emotivists. What is needed is a foundation for a type of naturalistic reasoning by means of which one brings practical sense to bear upon one's behaviour, arguing for example that the reasonable response is neither action which is rash, nor cowardly, but which is intelligently courageous, because one is 'that kind of being'. But in his theory Simpson has prescind from the common-sense knowledge of ends and interests which is always bound up with a particular culture. Is he not in danger of subverting that practical sense, that ability to guide oneself and one's actions, by subjugating all to a founding idea of our end, to a theory unjustified any further? It would seem that the division of the question into theoretical and practical spheres reflects an assumed dualism in human nature.

Another writer sympathetic to ethical naturalism but who better appreciates this problem of the status of ethical theory, and hence the grounds for the emotivist critique (cf Simpson, 1988:92), is Foot. She argues (1978:161) that Kant's notion of the categorical 'ought' makes little sense: moral rules are obligatory only to those who do not want to be accused,

or to accuse themselves, of being for example villainous. A different starting point for moral philosophy is needed, not the supposed universal sense of duty (of the "magic ought") but, for example, a common or shared compassion for the sufferings of others, a sense of identification with them.

"In my view we must start from the fact that some people do care about such things, and even devote their lives to them; they may therefore talk about what should be done presupposing such common aims."(1978:170)

If one argues for a foundation outside of the context of such common aims, for what purpose and for whom is one giving a foundation? It could only be that the context is not important because only one part of oneself is engaged in the context, the other part, the reason, by nature above the particularities of context.

Foot argues that reasons are relative to interests, but, Simpson correctly points out, there may be interests of which one is not fully aware, necessary, rather than contingent, interests. If there were such a necessary interest then it would not be the case, he argues, that, as Foot contends, "if a judgment guides choices it can only be if one's will is already engaged in favour of what the judgment is about" (Simpson, 1988:92). For, in Simpson's account, it can be that not one's will but one's *thought* can be thus engaged. But with this we are back with the Cartesian demand for a contextless foundation. On the other hand it is true that, as Simpson points out, Foot has not explained how it is that moral censure does not simply reflect the standards of some individual or group of individuals, in effect forcing everyone else into one's subjective mould, so that, for example, calling people uncharitable would be "like calling everyone who does not follow the teachings of Trotsky capitalist lackeys."(1988:95)

Simpson rightly argues that there is a difference between commanding and advising. One can answer a question about what one should do, with a *statement*: the statement can be normative because thinking has "a direct connection with choice and action"; judgments about good "have *per se* an influence on the will" (1988:67). But this would seem to be true only because judgments about good arise when one is already bent on some good. That is not what Simpson intends. He is putting forward a metaphysical psychology, as argued above. Only if there is a norm of human nature, of which we may not be fully conscious, could the answer to the statement, What shall I do?, be a statement of advice not an imperative. It is for this reason that the standard to which one commits oneself in judgments of moral value is, as Simpson correctly argues "in some sense set up by nature"(1988:74). But he has not adequately justified any such commitment.

In spite of these objections to Simpson's account it remains that emotivism has not proven its case. For example, Ayer's own theory seems to be self-refuting: his statements about ethics and philosophy seem to fall outside the sets of analytic and synthetic propositions and are therefore on his own account void of meaning. (Although Ayer argues that his ethics is valid regardless of this theory of knowledge.) In a similar way Stevenson's own presupposition concerning the value of science, well brought out by Simpson (1988:50-5) tends to undermine the argument that any particular commitment to a value is non-rational. One could of course consider his own commitment to the value of science to be a matter of attitude and not of beliefs or reasons, in which case any theory of ethics based on it must, on Stevenson's own account, be without rational foundation. And in that case there is no reason to take it more seriously than any other rival theory.

Thus Simpson argues that 'good' cannot be explained by reference to willing or preferring only. It requires the correlate concept of nature. Since modern science has as its object nature only in a value-free sense Simpson argues that there must be "some other legitimate method, besides science, of investigating the natural world"(1988:169). He calls this method 'natural philosophy', and compares and contrasts it with that of science. And this is the topic of the following section.

A further argument against ethical naturalism is brought in by Hare. Hare would deny the possibility of a objective determination of the standard in terms of which evaluation makes sense. For such a determination would be formulated by means of a descriptive statement, i.e. one that is free of all evaluative content. In that case it would fail to function as a standard *for choosing*. To evaluate, he says, is to assess with respect to a standard of goodness.

"Evaluation essentially involves accepting, or assenting to, the standard of goodness by which one evaluates. But to accept such a standard is not at all like accepting a fact..."(Simpson, 1988:61)

One's behaviour is not subject to any authority save that which one chooses to follow. The idea of human autonomy would seem to undermine any attempt to found ethics in the way that is suggested in ethical naturalism. The meaning of 'good', argues Hare, lies in its prescriptivity. Similarly in utilitarianism the criteria for attributing 'good' are purely instrumental and ultimately unjustified except subjectively by one's commitment to the end envisaged. Simpson, on the contrary, argues that while the facts of themselves do not determine goodness, what is added to the facts is not an arbitrary act of the will but the perspective of being desirable, or the idea of finality that resides in all being.(1988:165) It is not immediately clear how this would answer the separate objection to ethical naturalism on the basis of the value of human freedom and creativity. We turn to this in section 2.4 below.

2.3 Empiricism And Emotivism

Thinkers after Moore - Ayer and Stevenson in particular - assume that there can be no knowledge of a universal and unquestionable end from which 'good' would then take its meaning. The naturalistic fallacy, says Simpson, charges "that naturalists are confusing two different things: goodness or value on the one hand, and nature or facts on the other." But this contention

"rests on the belief that the two are distinct in the way non-naturalists say they are. This belief is assumed rather than proved..."(1988:109)

How did modern moral philosophy lose touch with the regulative concept of 'nature'? At the heart of the problem lies a view of what constitutes adequately justified knowledge, a view in turn determined above all by how science and scientific method are understood, called variously modern realism (Simpson), philosophy of knowledge (Maxwell), empiricism, or naive realism (Lonergan). The plausibility of emotivism is a function of the truth or otherwise of this view of knowledge.

Ayer's theory of values forms a part of his argument for an empiricist account of truth. All meaningful propositions, he argues, are either analytic, true by virtue of the meaning of the terms, or synthetic, in which case they must be framed as hypotheses which can be verified by appeal to sense experience. His remarks on ethics are intended to show that 'statements of value', which cannot be said to be verifiable hypotheses, are not counter-examples to his theory. And a similar approach to ethics *via* a programmatic empiricism characterizes Stevenson's account too, with its emphasis on scientific method.

Simpson argues on the contrary that our natural observation of things confirms a certain directed dynamism in the world. Things are seen to change from potential to the actualization of that potential, the acorn becoming an oak, the child an adult. Modern thought on the whole dissents from this view: our immediate perception of things is flawed and science needs to uncover the real workings of the thing which lie behind the surface appearance. The suspicion that our senses are not to be trusted was sown in the modern mind by Bacon and then most famously by Descartes. But such skepticism is unjustified: characteristically an error of perception, being recognized as such, leads to a rearrangement of the discrete elements constituting the picture incorrectly interpreted, the whole process testifying to the direct access of perception to the thing perceived. There is no necessary gulf or divorce between human perception and what really is the case.

"[T]hrough the senses we are brought into direct awareness with a real world of objective, self-subsistent things, whose real structure and character is in principle accessible to us in that direct awareness."(Simpson, 1988:168)

A mistaken perception is corrected by another perception; what we thought was a rabbit we now see to be a piece of wood.

Simpson further argues that the very notion of a thing's *identity* is bound up with an understanding of change as inherent in the nature of that thing, and not as simply an interpretation from a particular point of view of observed instantiations of that thing from one moment to another. And change that is inherent is properly called development. To have genuine identity is to endure through the change because that change is the realisation of a potential that already existed in the nature of that thing.

What perception directly experiences is change. Change, specified more precisely as a directedness of things, is a primary reality. It can be seen that the whole natural world is in a state of flux and movement of some sort or another. But just as immediately perceptible are natural patterns or processes in things, changes not only in position but in structure and form: the process of birth, growth and decay in living things, for example. In such cases the change is not a mere succession of discrete and isolatable stages but rather an alteration of one thing *into* another. To think of change as a reconstituting of what are really in themselves discrete but successive elements, is to deny the reality of a thing's natural dynamism and directedness, that it exists 'for becoming something more', that its nature is essentially teleological.

Each natural thing must therefore be properly described in terms of a potentiality for becoming something actual, if the genuine identity of the thing over change is to be preserved. Furthermore, the discernment of the thing's nature, what it is to become, is in principle carried out through working backwards from observation of the fully actualized thing. From knowledge of the actuality one deduces the nature of the potential or capacity of the thing for that actuality. In conclusion, since a *telos* is a good, a correct description of a thing's nature will be a *normative* description, one which

"is both genuinely a description, in the sense that it describes what is the case, and genuinely normative in the sense that it states what the goodness is for that thing". (Simpson, 1988:179)

An empiricist account of knowledge and its scope is therefore fundamentally flawed.

Be that as it may, it is not science, Simpson contends, that establishes this truth of the relation between nature and goodness, but 'natural philosophy'. Modern science fails to confirm our natural observation of the dynamism of things because it is concerned only with the measurable, things in their quantifiable manifestation. A scientific hypothesis - Simpson's example is Newton's postulation of a relationship between mass and distance -

predicts that given one measurement some correlated other measurement will be such-and-such. There is thus no *concern*, he says, with the dynamism of things. To understand the *nature* of things a different discipline, the philosophy of nature, is needed.

How plausible is Simpson's argument? What is the method of the philosophy of nature? How is this justified? Simpson argues that while science is concerned to add bits of knowledge to our existing stock, philosophy proceeds by the intellectual or conceptual clarification of what is first received without such clarification: "an uncovering from within...that is at the same time an ascent to a higher cognitive level".(1988:189) But the assumption of such a higher level, of the existence of a kind of knowing because it corresponds to a certain faculty, remains, as the emotivists point out, unjustified. On an empiricist account we cannot assume any faculty explanation of human action. Stevenson argues that human behaviour must be investigated empirically, and that traditional ethical naturalism, in contrast, assumes that behaviour is determined in accordance with the operation of two posited faculties, with beliefs the function of the intellect, and attitudes "the drives or forces of a totally different faculty", the will.(1944:7) Rather, both beliefs and attitudes have to be analysed with reference to dispositions to action. Simpson fails to address this objection.

Be that as it may, it remains that the modern epistemological skepticism referred to by Simpson is an obstacle to any plausible reformulation of ethical naturalism. In modern thought it is commonly supposed that science investigates not the 'nature' of anything but only 'how it works'. The importance of this difference is made clear by McDermott in introducing his recent "concise translation" of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. It clarifies much of what Simpson only hints at, and indicates a direction for a further, more detailed analysis of the relation between empirical science and philosophy.

The skeptical view has it that it is the business of science to investigate things in terms of their external roles and functions, and implemented by inner component parts, each a mechanism in the larger machine. What really exists, it is supposed, are the most fundamental of these mechanisms, "whatever our contemporary science deems the most fundamental particles of reality at the moment." (McDermott, 1989:xxiii) But for Aristotle and Aquinas a thing can be said to exist at not just one but many levels. It would be mistaken to grant objective status to our description of only the lowest level of existence, regarding other levels simply as more complex organisations of coincidences of such simple objects. For in the real world what is to the physicist only chance interference, can produce novel historically stable entities. Of some such entities - copper sulphate is the example given by McDermott - only the possibility of their existence could be predicted at the lower

level (here, the laws of the physical and chemical interactions of its atomic parts), not their actual coming to be. Of others, such as living organisms, they are not intelligible except within the context of concrete chance world-history. Objective reality refers to "any and every stability of identity which is in natural favour with its environment and the world at large."(1989:xxv) The identity of organisms is not that of a part with a function within a whole, since they themselves are viable wholes, naturally favoured for survival or stable existence. Aquinas uses the term 'form' to describe their nature, but such a form is not simply the observed shape of something imposed on that thing, rather the stable termination of processes of genesis, realisations tended towards or favoured in the historical and concrete world in which alone such tendencies and favours exist.

What the regulative idea of nature contributes to our understanding of reality is, McDermott explains, the idea that there are existing historically stable wholes which cannot be fully explained in terms of mechanisms on a lower level. They are organisms in a favourable environment, and what the environment is must be taken as a natural order. For such organisms are not determined by their function in the whole (they are not organs in a system), but themselves partly determine what the environment is.

"When nature favours the existence of an organism it is not because of some purpose that the organism serves, for organisms have no function. Organisms do, but not organisms." (1989:xxvi)

Even the function of reproducing itself is ruled out: one could always ask, what is the function of *that*? The attempt to fix the defining function is faced with "an ever-receding horizon." Organisms are not therefore organs. We may ask what an eye is for, but it seems ridiculous to ask what a cow is for. Of course cows might be employed to function within some larger whole, say, a farm. But of themselves they are not parts of a machine but members of a what McDermott wants to call an ecosystem.

"In an ecosystem organisms do play roles, indeed many different roles, no one of which is sufficient to define or identify them. For they are not simply implementations of a function that the ecosystem demands of them. Rather they are historical facts that have just proved to be viable in that ecosystem, or rather in the ecosystem as itself changed by their viability."(1989:xxvii-iii)

The root *eco-*, McDermott points out, comes from the Greek for a house, and an ecosystem can be thought of as something 'habitable'. Viable and habitable are complementary: what is habitable allows something viable to live in it, and to be viable is to have the capacity to live in what is habitable.

"So the sort of reality and identity to be accorded to organisms is neither the soft sort of reality that organs and artificial things like machines have - the identity of serving a certain purpose, nor the sort of reality that ultimate

atomic components of things might be deemed to have - the identity of being the only simple, unanalysable and therefore objectively hard things about; but it is the identity of being really viable wholes in a habitable environment, really having and enjoying life at home in a surrounding space suited to them."(McDermott, 1989:xxviii)

This life cannot in the final analysis be broken down completely into component parts (and thus cannot be simulated by a machine); nevertheless it is not independent of its facilitating environment.

McDermott makes the further point that while a machine may achieve everything that an organism does (perform the function of seeing, for example) nevertheless the actual experience of seeing eludes it, and it is this (idle) experience that we value above all. Thus the full existence of a (non-functional) organism, its nature, consists in its doing, or agency. Nature and agency are not opposed, as they are in empiricism, where the agency is conceived of as preceding and 'pushing' the thing, with its 'hard' nature. Its nature is not to serve a certain purpose, but to achieve and enjoy the form that it is, in the matter which constitutes its environment. And what *moves* the agent to implement its form in its matter, is *having* the form as a goal, i.e. as a value. While in artificial things and organs, where form is function, their goodness is identical with their usefulness (in a larger whole or schema of things), in organisms their goodness is the fulfilment of their own being, their being what they are, which we know as their worthiness, and such fulfilment is *accompanied* by delight or enjoyment. The first, self-evident principle of ethics is the basic articulation of what it is to have one's form as goal, as good, the basis of the law in us by nature, namely, follow the good and shun what is evil.

Clearly there is a difficulty with this conception in modern science; nevertheless, as we shall argue, along with Lonergan, statistical science corroborates this understanding of a natural dynamism in things. Furthermore, the social sciences can be interpreted as a study of those forces influencing human behaviour, without this entailing a reductionism. Such an approach is pursued by MacIntyre in his analysis of the virtues. Finally, the truth of these analyses needs to be grounded in a properly justified philosophical method, and that would entail in the first place a cognitional theory.

Simpson restates that, at least for the older thinkers,

"what one wills is a consequence of what one thinks about the good" (1988:43); "thoughts about what is good or desirable, while genuinely matters of belief and cognition, have also a necessary effect on attitudes or volitions".(1988:49)

But reference to a psychology of faculties seems to bypass the concept of nature as a stable unity in an ecosystem, all reference to the forces influencing and co-determining the behaviour being eschewed. It is these very forces to which one refers in speaking of the modern consciousness as characterized by an awareness of a plurality of cultures and value-systems. Any particular psychology, it could be argued, could be true for one particular set of social conditions but not another. And indeed this, as we shall see in the following chapter, is the critique MacIntyre brings against any such attempt to reintroduce ethical naturalism on the basis of a metaphysical psychology: we can ask, which human nature? i.e. which set of social rules?

To speak of one faculty and another faculty is to forget about the unity of the self, and to forget about the context. Stevenson brings our attention to both: he wants to analyze human behaviour as a unity, without metaphysical prejudgments, and to place moral philosophy within the context of disagreements not in matters of fact but in attitudes. In Simpson's account the complex dependence of human agency on the social conditions would be bypassed, implausibly: the elimination of desires (which reflect our dependence upon our environment) would be part and parcel of the moral program. Only thus, would it be supposed, could objectivity in values be established. But the social influences would operate unconsciously, as MacIntyre points out. And knowledge of those influences would make the theory implausible: as Moore's ethical theory is laughed out of court. All this seems to escape Simpson's attention. In the following chapters we will canvass various responses to the emotivist critique. Here it remains only to point out that the emotivist approach does not in principle rule out the possibility of the kind of knowledge necessary to justify ethical naturalism; the emotivists can be read to be in the main concerned to bring our attention to the *context* of deliberations of value.

The emotivists stress they are not claiming that in expressing disapproval of something by means of a statement of values one is thereby *describing* one's, or a general, disapproval of it. 'Wrong' does not designate 'disapproved of', for it makes sense to say x ought to be done although most people disapprove of it. Similarly with any defining description of good, such as 'happiness': something can bring about happiness but nevertheless be wrong. (Ayer, 1946:104-5) Stevenson likewise argues that disagreements about values are not disagreements *about* attitudes but disagreements *in* attitudes. 'Good' does not *mean* 'what we are favourably disposed to'; by the emotive meaning of a term Stevenson means its *use* to redirect attitudes. They are arguing that 'good' is determined by the set of circumstances in which it is used, and that is the context of desiring, and they draw the implications for objectivist theories of the good of an awareness of the diverse character of such desiring. Their discussion is confined within an instrumentalist framework.

In Ayer's account some scope is allowed for rational ethical debate. He argues that one never debates about attitudes, but such debates insofar as they are meaningful are always concealed arguments about matters of fact. We argue about the effects of a particular action which we are judging and the qualities which are usually manifested in its performance, or about the motive of the agent. But in all this we are presupposing adherence to some system of values and a common moral education as the framework within which the argument takes place. Given such common basic values agreement can be reached through discussion of the facts. Without such common value system argument is futile. (1946:21;111) We need to show therefore that implicit in any value system is a reference to universal nature. Ayer of course would not consider this plausible; there is little succour for those who believe in cross-cultural ethics. For such debates as described above concern such questions as whether action A should be condemned since it belongs to a given type t of action accepted as in general blameworthy. Ayer allows scope for moral casuistry in the sense of an analytic investigation of the structure of a given moral system. The system of values itself can only be studied 'factually' and not validly evaluated. Another procedure would be of course simply to *define* 'good' in terms of happiness or whatever but this would not reflect our ordinary usage.

Simpson himself begins the sort of correction to the emotivist view that is needed. According to Stevenson beliefs are fixed by scientific investigation with reference to observable behaviour. Simpson argues that there are great difficulties in fixing, by observation, belief dispositions and attitude dispositions. (A similar critique would be applicable to Ryle's dispositional theory as well as to much recent writing in the philosophy of mind, for example, Smith and Jones [1986]). In the case of a chess-player one can ask whether the cause of the expert's poor opening move lies in his *belief* that it is a good move, or alternatively his *attitude* of compassion to his anxious and weak opponent. But this difficulty seems to dissolve our common-sense distinction between attitudes and beliefs which Stevenson relies on to make his point about the emotive meaning of ethical terms. As Simpson comments, Stevenson's attempt to fix and distinguish beliefs and attitudes by this method (both are said to be 'dispositions') leaves one with the feeling "of sinking without trace into a morass of unsolved, and insoluble, problems". (1988:49) And without this distinction between attitudes and beliefs being clear (i.e. without having to await the outcome of a scientific investigation) what would be the point Stevenson is making with regard to ethics? Could it not equally be that all our value judgments were caused by beliefs? And naturalism was thus possibly true?

There is nevertheless an opening in the emotivist approach for value objectivity. The argument against ethical naturalism is, as we have seen, that it directs people in inappropriate ways. But clearly only if 'good' *did* designate something - what we are favourably disposed to, etc - could the naturalist persuade to a particular action by means of an alternative persuasive definition. If its appeal was on the other hand to the emotions only no amount of defining would effect any change in attitude. If 'good' does *not* designate our attitudes, its naturalistic definition would not be *in principle* fallacious but only wrong if (a) it had not fully represented the emotive meaning or pro-attitude it expresses; and (b) it concealed the implications of the definition for one's attitudes and subsequent actions. What is needed is an account of how human desires are indeed formed by the environment but not, arguably, in such a way as to preclude objective value judgments. We need to unpack the set of circumstances in which questions of value arise, and ask whether this has been adequately described by the emotivists. It is in this context that a critique of empiricism is relevant, and the introduction of the concept of 'nature'. The rise of modern science threw up the problem of the foundation of ethics; MacIntyre notes that contemporary curricular divisions constitute an obstacle to any proposed solution.

"After Kant, the question of the *relationship* between such notions as those of intention, purpose, reason for action and the like on the one hand and the concepts which specify the notion of mechanical explanation on the other becomes part of the permanent repertoire of philosophy. The former notions are however now treated as detached from the notion of good or virtue; those concepts have been handed over to the separate subdiscipline of ethics." (1981:79)

The procedure we have suggested here would seem to overcome this obstacle.

2.4 A Metaphysical Psychology And The Question Of Freedom

According to Hare, human freedom lies chiefly in our capacity to choose the standard by which we subsequently evaluate behaviour. To assent to a standard is to will it for oneself (Hare, 1963:29,219); since the will is free no standard can be set up simply by virtue of the nature of things.

"It is the logical possibility of wanting *anything* (neutrally described) that the 'freedom' that is alluded to in my title essentially consists."(Hare, 1963:110; Simpson, 1988:74)

He argues that to choose a standard is to make it authoritative for one's decisions.

"Otherwise the standard will not operate as a standard, that is, will not actually guide any of one's choices (it will on the contrary be 'external' and 'dead'."(1963:46; Simpson, 1988:74)

All forms of ethical naturalism would have such a 'dead', 'external' concept of what makes for the good life for human beings. The Kantian overtones are clear (cf esp. Kant, 1970). Any foundational value supposedly attaching to a stable, if not rigidly fixed 'nature', would seem to go against the value of freedom thought of in terms of a radical autonomy. Hare wants to defend a completely open-ended notion of 'good'.

A value judgment, Hare concludes, is prescriptive, giving guidance for choosing. And one prescribes by issuing an imperative, not making a statement. Value judgments answer the question, What shall I do? And the answer takes the form of the command, Do this! For Hare, a command which is *moral* is further determined by the principle that one's evaluation must be characterized by universalizability. This specification is not really a foundation for morality, for it cannot be further justified. A certain understanding of human freedom would seem to preclude any further justification. Hare simply explains however what we do when we *do* take the moral stance. The very idea of freedom seems then to militate against the possibility of giving a foundation for moral judgments.

When one deliberates about alternative courses of action one is seeking reasons for choosing one rather than the other. Hare however can only say that the answer to a question of moral value must be (a) an imperative, and in addition, because moral terms are 'supervenient', (b) universalizable, that is, apply to all like cases. "Moral judgments must both commit one to a certain course of action and to doing or approving it universally." (Simpson, 1988:78) The problem with this theory of morality is that it cannot justify being moral in the first place, as Hare later says (1981:182-205, 219). In fact Hare opts for utilitarianism as the best method for calculating actual moral actions, his own account being merely formal. And as we saw MacIntyre argue above, this theory re-invents morality rather than accounts for it. This outcome seems to be implied by the underlying concept of freedom in terms of simple autonomy.

Simpson points out that Hare's account seems to obscure the fundamental distinction between the good that one has set one's heart on, and the good that is truly so.

"The great task of ethics and moral education is to find out what the natural end is, and by practice so to habituate oneself to it that one always does pursue it, and without opposition or pain from within." (Simpson, 1988:75-6)

Clearly it is this sense of a 'goal by nature' that is at stake. Hare interprets a thing's nature to mean its function, and in this sense wants to deny any specific function to any object except artefacts. A horse can be assigned a function as when it is called a charger, but in itself it has no function. But it has a function given by human choice. (Hare, 1952:145)

As we argued in the previous section, the Aristotelian tradition sees things not finally explicable in terms of function but rather as stable unities in an ecosystem, their agency being circumscribed by goals codetermined by their environment. Natural things are not mechanisms within larger mechanisms: their natures are their enduring dimension of agency and this gives them their unity, while at the same time restricting the range of possibilities in which they may operate.

Underlying Hare's analysis of the good there is, therefore, an implausible understanding of human freedom as autonomous of the environment, and it is this fundamental value - held to be denied by ethical naturalism - which needs consideration. Morality, for Hare, is a matter above all of making one's own decisions, rather than relying on traditional conventions. But, as Simpson points out,

"there is a sense of good that precedes the (non-natural) sense of good as the freely chosen, namely the good that means the activity of freely choosing, and which is good, not because it is chosen, but because it is natural, that is, the object or end or function proper to a being whose nature is freedom."(1988:77)

Our nature is to be free, and this is then both affirmed and denied in Hare's account. For in Hare's account, our will is determined "in a way that wholly escapes our knowledge and our control".(Simpson, 1988:81) And this means, says Simpson, that far from the theory supporting human freedom it seems to imply that our actions are the most unfree, determined by fate.

In contrast to Hare's account, Simpson (1988:80) argues that human freedom consists not in spontaneity but in one part of the self, the reason, determining the other part, the will. But, as we saw Nagel point out above (1.4), there is a problem in this way of seeing things with the decision as to *which* part of the self to give preference. It is clear that Simpson does not *notice* this question. Some recent work on agency suggests that it is the notion not of being rational so much as being conscious that is the key to understanding human behaviour and more in accord both with modern psychology and with the Aristotelian tradition. Frankfurt for example argues that human beings should be understood at the most fundamental level in terms of their capacity to identify themselves with their values. The central questions of human responsibility and freedom concern whether

"the desires by which we are moved to act as we do motivate us because we want them to be effective in moving us, or whether they move us regardless of ourselves or even despite ourselves."(Frankfurt, 1987:31)

That is to say, with whether what we can truthfully be said to want to do (for it is the object of our motivating desire), is what we *really* want to do: are our hearts really in it, or do we feel somewhat divided in our relation to what we have chosen to do? If one is not to sink into an infinite regress of postulating ever higher faculties in order to determine our deepest desires, one has, he argues, to construe "some of a person's desires as integral to him in a way in which others are not", and this has to mean not *arbitrarily* integral, i.e. that one just happens to have chosen them. Frankfurt thinks there is indeed a way of explaining how this is so, and thus a way of defending the notion of a 'non-wanton' way of life. It is along these lines that we will pursue our understanding of agency in the following chapters.

2.5 Further Considerations

I have argued that Simpson's method in reformulating ethical naturalism is radically deficient. In the Aristotelian tradition moral judgments are founded on a particular kind of understanding of human nature. In the contemporary context the nature of this understanding has to be clarified; at the heart of the non-naturalist critique is a particular view of knowledge which would disallow any understanding other than empirical. But Simpson's account fails to illuminate this point. In a sense he draws us away from the foundational knowledge that, it will be argued, forms the crux of ethical naturalism, towards an impoverished vision of human nature and the good life.

What is ultimately of value, Simpson argues, is our rationality, the source of any further determination of value. Our rationality is our capacity for the universal. While individuals live radically different lives still what is common is their adaptability and capacity to take on a variety of fulfilling styles of life unavailable to other animal species which are more determined, largely by the nature of their physical attributes, to specific life styles. And the source of this capacity lies in the mind. The different possibilities open to individuals and societies could not be realised

"if human beings were not aware of these possibilities, could not judge and assess them, and could not, according to their judgment, direct themselves with respect to them."(Simpson, 1988:236)

The good life is the life rationally ordered by the mind. Simpson would argue that it does not exclude values - mentioned by Williams (1972:74-5) in objecting to ethical naturalism - such as spontaneity and falling hopelessly in love: it simply gives each of these its proper place and value, "in subordination to mind".(1988:237) The extent to which Simpson is committed to a view which locates mind as the essence of our humanity is revealed when he argues that it is the nature of the whole, rather than human nature, which specifies our

telos and good; and the nature of the whole is accessible to the contemplative, or passive, intellect. His argument is that our openness to a variety of ways of fulfilment depends on forming habits which ensure that we do not attach ourselves unduly to and become absorbed by any one particular possibility in undue excess: sex, food, drink, wealth are mentioned. "It is the balanced individual who will be the truly universal individual." And this has as necessary condition, the "subjection of one's desires and one's passions to the discernment and discrimination of mind."(1988:240-2)

Simpson's dualism is evident in his statement that our active desires cannot of themselves "recognize or impose on themselves any limit or moderation". The disposition "to follow the balance of reason," Simpson calls virtue. The central virtue would then seem to be prudence, the habitual disposition to discern the balance in any particular case. And this balance is a type of order which is part of the order of the universe or of all that exists, the whole. One finds a balance by acknowledging and promoting other persons, when one is drawn out of oneself in friendship and love.

"This expansion of oneself out of oneself is evidently a part of that movement towards the universal that marks human nature."(1988:247)

Nevertheless it is through contemplation of the whole, "what is good independently of one's interest" (1988:253), that one achieves true fulfilment. "The being of the whole and of the cosmos exists independently of our acting and our making..."; the correct attitude toward it is that of contemplation.

The greatest order seems to be found not in human affairs but beyond them: thus we will desire above all to contemplate that, "that whole which contains in itself all that is through its seemingly endless cycles" (1988:256). And put like this, the fragility of Simpson's edifice of ethical naturalism becomes evident. For what is the justification for this view of human fulfilment? Clearly it fits in with a medieval picture of the place and destiny of man in the universe, well described by Prosch (1966), as moving away from the pull of sin inherent in the nature of man on earth, towards the order and harmony only dreamed of by us, the sphere of the fixed stars beyond which lies heaven, the home of God. But what about the values characterizing the modern world, the value at the heart of modern science, of testing the truth for oneself, and the values attached to the particulars of each individual's life and experience, in a sense the *locus* of all value? The shape of some version of 'authoritarian objectivism' seems discernible in Simpson: value lies in something which is finally outside of our full experience of life, namely the universal order of things. His picture of the moral life has a Thomist ghetto feeling about it, its appeal clearly limited. By failing to pay attention to the context of value judgments, he has directed us away from the type of self-

knowledge, gained through participation in common projects with others, and crucial to any defence of ethical naturalism, that has been undermined by the prestige of the sciences.

In a sense Simpson does not hope for more than a ghetto adherence to his doctrine. It is simply assumed that no other way of regarding human beings is possible and that the questions about the foundations of ethics raised by Moore, Stevenson and Hare are by and large unjustified. They should simply have given "a cognitional rather than volitional analysis of good". But clearly *any* analysis at all of good is 'cognitional', as well as being a deliberate act of the agent and thus 'volitional' too. Simpson hopes by means of this oft-repeated argument, straining for sense, to exclude from the agenda the question about moral standards, in contrast to standards of truth: can *values*, or goods, be thought of as objective in any coherent sense? MacIntyre argues that the objectivity is to be found in the shared goods presupposed in a variety of normal human activities. Thomists such as Meynell and Johann argue, as we shall see, that the objectivity can be located in the subject's capacity to transcend to some extent, through considered judgments and responsible action, the influences of the environment. But Simpson thinks that because it is a self-contradiction to deny that one can reach objectivity in matters of understanding, this suffices to show that judgments of *value* are objective. The question however is why the range of objects to be desired should have any limit or boundary, as is suggested by saying that a judgment of value intends objectivity.

Aristotle supposed that human nature is characterized essentially by the capacity for reason, and thus is fulfilled in and through the actualization of one's reasoning powers, in ordering one's life according to one's nature and finally in simple contemplation. But this final good seems to conflict with the good which allows Aristotle to *assume* 'nature' as normative, namely the social structure of the *polis*, a community of shared goods and ideas of the good. For in contemplation one's concern is not longer directed at the maintenance of the community. Simpson likewise supposes that human nature is essentially characterized by, as he puts it, 'the capacity for universality'. And he likewise fails to justify why *this* end should be chosen rather than any other; no reference is made to the shared goods of the community as foundational: rather their goodness flows from our nature. But why we should choose to follow our nature is not clear. As with Aristotle it also seems that such a life of contemplation would only be suitable for a section of the population. It does not operate explicitly as a foundational notion for in a sense no foundation is needed, according to Simpson. What we learn from Simpson's account is that we have to advance beyond Aristotle's account of ethical naturalism if we are to preserve the plausibility of knowledge of human nature as a foundation for moral judgments.

The analysis of Simpson's account has alerted us to problems of any defence of objectivity in moral judgments which is founded on a particular psychology. In the following chapter we will turn to a different kind of justification, that of MacIntyre. Simpson wants to found ethics on 'a sense of the noble' which transcends the vagaries of any particular religion or social circumstance. MacIntyre (1981:212) comments that any such attempt will, in the modern context, be forced to place that 'sense' in opposition to the desires, in a dualism of human nature. For the understanding of how we reason from a sense of our nature (what we are destined to become) as intersubjective or shared, has been lost. MacIntyre comments that any moral theory (for example, that of Moore) which posits a foundation for objectivity beyond the influences of the environment - especially the influence of others - lays itself open to be seen in this way. To a large extent what MacIntyre (1988a, Ch XIV) says about the Scottish seventeenth century philosopher Hutcheson would apply to Simpson, who, holding fast to the universalism implicit in the Aristotelian tradition, is forced into a position whereby he must suppose that one can eliminate desires from cognition of the good.

Hutcheson argues that we are indeed motivated by what is 'natural'; but in fact there is no real sense that this is a *moral* norm. For no belief in the motivating power of *reason* exists: there is a heightened awareness of the complex factors in human motivation, which has come inevitably with the greater freedom of initiative allowed by new economic structures. This is especially focussed on the factor of our relations with others. But what is understood by these relations is not clearly expressed, a persistent theme from Shaftesbury to Kant and beyond being the juxtaposition of the two factors of 'self-love' and 'sociability'. This marks the change from an authoritarian system to a modern one: the increased sense of *self*-motivation, a shift of emphasis from reason to choice in human motivation.

In Hutcheson the foundational 'moral sense', which is "prior to all reasoning" (MacIntyre, 1988a:272), seems to undermine a coherent understanding of moral development. Thus he vitiates the tradition for which the ends desired were seen as rational, and justified by reference to the existing polity (with its consensus of ends) and to human nature. *Phronesis* previously referred to the basic human capacity to decide on practical matters by deliberating within the framework of these reasonable ends. But for Hutcheson *phronesis* turns into prudence, a faculty of non-moral calculating - "a cautious habit of consideration and forethought, discerning what may be advantageous or hurtful in life" (MacIntyre, 1988a:276), which to be moral must be informed by "a high sense of moral excellence". And the latter is beyond the influences of the environment.

"Thus we have to learn what is right from the moral sense prior to learning how to be prudent rather than having to first acquire *phronesis* or *prudentia* in order to judge rightly."(1988a:276)

This moral sense is therefore as vacuous as the 'ought' of modern moral philosophy discussed above. Its content is not controlled in any systematic way: it tends to come to mean whatever people at the time happen to think the moral thing to do. The sense of a social structure providing the education in the virtues necessary according to Aristotle for moral discernment, is lacking. It is replaced by a 'philosophical artefact', the moral sense, available equally to all.

Within such a framework the objectivity of value judgments is going to be undermined by social influences such as interests in property ownership. This is well brought out by Hume. Hume notes that our motivating passions - such as pride/love and humility/hatred - are "responses to others who are in turn responding to us" (MacIntyre, 1988a:292). But he does not *base* values on the conscious goal of actualizing this sociability, this sympathy with others. The dominating factor in the determination of our values is, for Hume, the possession of property. Understanding the point of the regulation of one's desires, central to the Aristotelian tradition, modifying one's claims to rights of property, would depend on participating in a certain way of life with goals framed in terms of values not simply particular interests relating to ownership. MacIntyre argues that a defence of ethical naturalism would entail showing what changes in society are necessary to create the conditions for moral development. It is clear that Simpson's account, which prides itself on its independence from the vagaries of historical change, fails to do so.

In one respect at least we have agreement between Moore and the Thomist thinkers. Moore (1903:6) says that the object of ethics is not so much to state what is good (that would be 'casuistry') but "to give good *reasons* for thinking that this or that is good". For Moore supports his argument for the 'open question' nature of any statement identifying 'good' with something definite by arguing that we need to recognize that

"so far as the meaning of good goes, anything whatever may be good - and so start with a much more open mind. Otherwise we cut our opponent off with, 'This is not an open question: the very meaning of the word decides it...'"(1903:20-1)

And MacIntyre's (1981:241) concerns are similar, namely to restore rationality in ethical debate. His contention is that Moore's explanation of practical rationality or judgments of value is weak, indeed simply reflects the non-naturalist situation in ethics and the culture of the time; and his failure is illustrated by the non-cognitivist and voluntarist ethical theories which predominated in Anglo-Saxon philosophy after him. Again, substantially the same point is made by Simpson with reference to Hare: Hare simply *defines* evaluation in terms

of 'non-description'. He could therefore be said to be working with an unquestioned assumption which invites the formulating of ethical disputes in a way which would be seen to be unresolvable, the different positions being based on a voluntarist approach.

Simpson, in conclusion, is correct in seeing the necessity for bringing in knowledge of 'nature' to ethics, in the face of a certain trend in Thomism (for example Finnis, 1980; cf Simpson, 1988:266-9) to deny this. He fails however to bring rationality back into ethical debate. We turn now to an analysis of MacIntyre's attempt to do so.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL ROLES AND THE VIRTUES

3.1 Making Sense Of Ethical Naturalism: MacIntyre

In his analysis of contemporary moral philosophy, summarized above in Chapter One, MacIntyre argued that current ethical debates tend to appeal to purportedly impersonal criteria which are nevertheless in fundamental conflict with one another - arguments based on the justice of proportionality, for example, pitted against those which invoke principles of success in the matter of war. He goes on to show that this situation is the result of a generally impoverished idea of the meaning of 'good', which leaves it without objective reference, having lost its sense of a regulating standard, what Simpson calls a 'voluntarist' understanding of good. Moore's formally intuitionist idea of good justifies whatever content one happens to find convincing, in Moore's own case, as MacIntyre points out (1981:15), values that seem particular to the Cambridge intellectual circles of the time. Stevenson's emotivism, argues MacIntyre, fails as a theory of the meaning of moral language: it cannot account for the objective and impersonal dimension implicit in moral claims. Nevertheless, the fact that "something very like emotivism's attempted reduction of morality to personal preference" recurs in non-emotivist theories of morality, indicates that there was a general acceptance of the emotivist thesis that in the final analysis there "can be *no* valid rational justification for any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist".(1981:18) MacIntyre cites R.M.Hare's revealing admission to the effect that

"a complete justification of a decision would consist of a complete account of its effects together with a complete account of the principles which it observed, and the effect of observing those principles... If the enquirer still goes on asking "But why should I live like that?" then there is no further answer to give him, because we have already, *ex hypothesi*, said everything that could be included in the further answer."(In MacIntyre, 1981:20)

On this view, as MacIntyre comments, the terminus of justification is always some choice unguided by criteria. "Thus emotivism has not been left far behind at all." Indeed emotivism should be taken as a plausible theory of the *use* of moral concepts in a particular society.

Much of what MacIntyre is arguing can be seen to have been provoked by what is perhaps the counterpart of G.E.Moore as the point of departure for contemporary non-naturalism, at least in anglo-american philosophy, namely Anscombe's article "Modern Moral Philosophy". Anscombe argues that the sense of 'ought' in modern ethics was absent in Aristotle and derives from the biblical tradition in which the assumed premise was one beyond ethics, namely a relation to God: one reasoned, 'If you want life with God, you

ought to obey the divine law'. Without this assumption of a membership of a society or participant in a relationship, no reasoning at all will get to 'ought', in the sense of an objective *verdict* on our actions. Anscombe says that 'ought' is not a universally applicable term, with believers having a *special* premise that 'one ought to obey divine laws'. Rather the *meaning* of 'ought' is determined by the hypothetical premise, 'if you want...'; for the idea is that it is God's initiative which established the relationship and so gives meaning to the 'ought' as well. Thus, she argues, even if you can *show* 'owes' and 'needs' sentences to express a kind of truths, a kind of facts, it

"would still be impossible to infer 'morally ought' from 'is' sentences: because this word 'ought', having become a word of mere mesmeric force, could not, in the character of having that force, be inferred from anything whatever." (In Hudson, 1970:182)

We are not however concerned here with the explicitly historical questions to which MacIntyre applies himself. Indeed the concerns of historical interpretation that frame MacIntyre's arguments tend to obscure the specifically philosophical part, for our purposes the more important dimension of his work. We have argued above that there is scope for further discussion of the nature of moral reasoning within the framework of the emotivists' analysis of the use of moral concepts. MacIntyre from a somewhat different perspective points out that the use of any set of moral terms clearly reflects the historical circumstances of the time and place. Abstracted from that context, the theory would be misleading. For of any explicitly historical account one can ask, what potential for greater value and deeper meaning lies implicit in the behaviour of the time. MacIntyre sees here a certain decline; but as he says,

"many of those who lived through this change in our predecessor culture saw it as a deliverance both from the burdens of traditional theism and the confusions of teleological modes of thought" (1981:58).

We are concerned with the philosophical grounds of any such historical interpretation.

In MacIntyre's periodisation the relevant historical era is that of the Enlightenment. He argues that the dominant Enlightenment paradigm of that time (and still largely of ours) is incoherent so far as its understanding of morals is concerned. It fails in giving a foundation for the moral life, a rational justification of morality, because it has no relevant concept of human nature as progressing towards an end. The Enlightenment thinkers, and this is the case even with Kant, agree that the foundation of morality must lie in some feature or features of human nature which would justify the rules of morality. But the only concept of human nature that could explain the reasonableness of the moral rules would be that concept that it is the mark of the Enlightenment to reject, namely a teleological one. The

moral precepts taken as starting point for the interpretation of the meaning of morality, presuppose an idea of human nature as a norm, as stretched between its potential and the actualization of that potential.

"The precepts which enjoin the various virtues and prohibit the vices which are their counterparts instruct us how to move from potentiality to act, how to realise our true nature and to reach our true end."(MacIntyre, 1981:50)

This concept of human nature was bound up with an understanding of a shared concept of the good for human beings in a particular normative culture. Later it became justified in terms of a religious framework. The modern period rejected both the religious framework and the Aristotelian metaphysical biology. What remained was, as MacIntyre's argues, "a set of moral injunctions deprived of their teleological context".(1981:52) Since those injunctions were justified in terms of the improvement of our untutored nature, they could not be *derived from* that nature as it is. There was a basic discrepancy in the project of the eighteenth century moral philosophers. Thus they necessarily failed to give any coherent interpretation of the moral rules. They lacked the understanding of a shared set of values defining what it is to be an adult member of the society, what it is to be fully a person, as well as any understanding of 'nature' which carries the sense of a norm.

The Enlightenment thinkers reason that ethical naturalism fails to justify arguing from the facts about anything to a judgment of value. MacIntyre notes that Hume voiced this objection only tentatively. He cites the well-known passage where Hume notes the occurrence, "in every system of morality" he has encountered, this transition from statements about God or human nature to moral judgments:

"instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I met with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*".(In MacIntyre, 1981:54)

And Hume notes further that no justification is given for this seemingly inconceivable piece of argumentation. But in contemporary accounts the tentativeness is gone: Hume's objection has been elevated to a truth of logic, namely that nothing may be validly asserted in the conclusion (in this case, statements of value) which is not contained in the premises (containing only statements of fact). MacIntyre shows however that there can be valid arguments in which the premises describe or imply someone's function, or role, and facts about their particular behaviour in the execution of it, and the conclusion draws implications about the quality of that performance. From such factual premises as 'He gets a better yield for this crop per acre than any farmer in the district' and 'He has the most effective programme of soil renewal yet known', one may validly conclude that 'He is a good farmer'.

Anscombe made the point that only when you already are *wanting* something or to reach some end do you deliberate about what it is best to do, and only in this context does one's understanding or judgment in fact influence one's actions. The word 'ought' is misleading because it generally has reference to a religious context no longer determining our wants. MacIntyre's discussion focuses rather on terms such as 'owes' and 'needs' and 'is due to' which are just as subject to purification of meaning by the naturalistic fallacy debate but whose cognitive content and status is far clearer than is the case with 'ought' or the more ephemeral 'morally ought'.

Given MacIntyre's counter-example to the alleged 'truth of logic', it can be seen that the argument against ethical naturalism has to do rather with the fact that it is believed that one cannot properly describe human beings as such in terms of their function or role. Concluding to a value judgment on the basis of factual statements is appropriate to functional objects such as watches and the like: from the premise, 'This watch is grossly inaccurate and irregular in time-keeping', one can validly conclude, 'This is a bad watch'. But one cannot, it is thought, say with Aristotle that the relationship 'man' to 'living well' is analogous to that of 'harpist' to 'playing the harp well'. In other words, the arguments cited above are valid because farmer and watch are functional concepts: the concepts are *defined* in terms of what purpose they are expected to serve, that is to say, in terms of the concept of a good farmer or good watch. The non-naturalists "took it for granted that *no* moral arguments involve functional concepts".(MacIntyre, 1981:56) But this clearly is the case only if the human person cannot be truly described in terms of a function or purpose. MacIntyre comments on this, in a passage which is crucial to his whole project, that

"the use of 'man' as a functional concept is far older than Aristotle and it does not initially derive from Aristotle's metaphysical biology. It is rooted in the forms of social life to which the theorists of the classical tradition give expression. For according to that tradition to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God. It is only when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that 'man' ceases to be a functional concept."(1981:56)

Thus MacIntyre wants to put the notion of a functional account of human nature in a broader context than that of any metaphysical psychology, drawing upon his extensive study of pre-Aristotelian Greek ethics. He poses the question as to whether the notion of function has something of enduring truth about it. For the notion of the individual, prior to and apart from all specification of social roles, would seem to leave us with a shadow only of what has traditionally been valued about being a human person. All that constitutes our freedom and that is valued about the human person is entwined with our social

participation. We have now to turn to the first part of MacIntyre's discussion of these issues and thus his reinterpretation of ethical naturalism.

MacIntyre argues that in some way we continue to make claims to objective moral evaluations and that this conflicts with our presuppositions about the ultimately unjustifiable nature of any absolute moral standard. He brings our attention to the fact that we would find morally unacceptable the characters typically produced by contemporary culture insofar as it is an emotivist culture - the 'bureaucratic manager', for example, or the 'rich young aesthete'. He also undertakes a detailed historical analysis of the fundamentally unitary nature of modern moral philosophy, defined by the Enlightenment break with previous tradition, its essential link with emotivism, and its consequent failure to establish a foundation for objective moral judgments. (1981, Ch 4-6) The former indicates the need to look to the tradition for a wider range of possibilities for conceptualizing ethics - we are not necessarily bound within the limits of an emotivist culture because we are the inheritors of a broader tradition; the latter indicates that for our purposes we should turn chiefly to the premodern or pre-Enlightenment tradition. MacIntyre's task is to reinterpret Aristotle's ethical theory so as to indicate the complementarity of its method with that of the social sciences. This suggests the possibility of an objective moral standard.

It can be argued that besides, almost alongside, MacIntyre's historical thesis is a thesis about the foundation of morality. It is my opinion that the latter thesis has been largely neglected by commentators in favour of the thesis regarding the decline of a certain western tradition, and the reason for this is twofold. On the one hand the argument for a particular foundation for ethics is to be found tucked away in the middle of a larger work (in particular *After Virtue*, Chapters 12 - 'Aristotle's Account of the Virtues', 14 - 'The Nature of the Virtues', and 15 - 'The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition'). On the other hand there is a hesitation on the part of MacIntyre himself to give a concise summary of the argument for the foundational thesis, preferring to allow the relative values of competing moral theories to emerge from a detailed historical account of each. Yet the historical thesis is underpinned by a strictly philosophical one. As MacIntyre himself puts it, referring to the development of the thesis in *After Virtue* from his earlier more historical work:

"But at the same time as I was affirming the variety and heterogeneity of moral beliefs, practices and concepts, it became clear that I was committing myself to evaluations of different particular beliefs, practices and concepts... More particularly I seemed to be asserting that the nature of moral community and moral judgment in distinctively modern societies was such that it was no longer possible to appeal to moral criteria in a way that had

been possible in other times and places - *and* that this was a moral calamity!
 But to *what* could I be appealing, if my own analysis was correct?"(1981:vii)

Indeed a systematic - although excessively abstract - account of such a foundation can be found in a recent article delivered by MacIntyre (1992a) as the 1991 Aquinas Lecture, and it is this account that will provide a framework for our discussion in this section. Any such thesis must needs be expounded, according to what MacIntyre has said in various places, in three stages. Ethics was provisionally defined, in Chapter One, as mediating between a culture and its set of values. For MacIntyre too ethics takes as starting point particular traditions of social life. It needs to articulate

- * the range of goods to which reason directs us;
- * how reference to such goods is implicit in the directives of reason;
- * how such precepts become effective in social life. (Cf 1992b:344)

The dominant liberal culture is judged to be subjectivist in that it fails to articulate properly the conditions for moral progress.

- (a) In the first place its understanding of practical reasoning is deficient in supplying no standard by means of which the subject may measure a particular desire under consideration. 'I want x' is not by itself a premise in a practical syllogism for the determination of value.
- (b) Secondly the rules of behaviour, of justice, stand on their own and are not grounded in a psychology. They are not therefore necessarily the best rules nor are they expressed properly as reflecting the true human good but as simply 'there'.
- (c) Thirdly there is no normative idea of the good life, the end envisaged, and a consequent hierarchical ordering of goods.

MacIntyre understands these three positions to constitute the essence of a liberal culture. They amount to a form of emotivism. The threefold discussion that follows in this chapter and the following two should then provide a detailed critique of liberalist ethics.

The following section treats of MacIntyre's understanding of practical rationality. In moral reasoning one starts by assuming agreement on a range of goods: MacIntyre specifies these goods by means of the notion of a social practice. Then there is the question of how ethics is founded, how reference to those goods is implicit in the precepts of reason, and whether, as in the Aristotelian tradition, knowledge of human nature can furnish the requisite foundation. The goods are shared, but does the notion of their being 'objective' make sense? Bound up with any plausible concept of good moral judgment is the virtue of prudence, but this is a value only if there is indeed some objective good to which one makes reference ("the problem of the vicious circle of prudence"; 1992:342). In MacIntyre's account we reason by reference to our individual and social construal of ourselves, our 'narrative'. Finally, we need to give some account of the plausibility of this

understanding of ethics. We need to show how only within certain limits will ethical reasoning be convincing, but nevertheless the claim to objectivity can be maintained. Every moral theory presupposes a sociology, as he puts it, an understanding of "the relationship of an agent to his or her reasons, motives, intentions and actions", as well as an account of how such an understanding is socially plausible, i.e. can be embodied in the real social world.(1981:22) The directives of reason, and this is stressed in MacIntyre's third fundamental question of ethics, are intelligible only by appropriating one's own experience of being an agent and having a social role, sharing goods, sharing experience of having goals.

3.2 Rules Of A Practice And The Precepts Of Practical Rationality

In the opening sentence of the Nichomachean Ethics Aristotle gives a preliminary definition of 'good'.

"Every art and every enquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim."(1966:1094a)

MacIntyre's own transliteration puts 'practice' for 'action and pursuit', while he restricts the meaning of the good to "that at which human beings characteristically aim".(1981:139) The latter point obviates difficulties in accepting Aristotle's metaphysics: for it allows one, as we shall now see, to interpret the notion of the good by means of sociological concepts alone, in particular through the idea of a 'social practice'.

For Aristotle ethics is the articulation of an account of the virtues implicit in the thought, utterance and action of an educated Athenian.

"He seeks to be the rational voice of the best citizens of the best city-state; for he holds that the city-state is the unique political form in which alone the virtues of human life can be genuinely and fully exhibited."(MacIntyre, 1981:138-9)

Thus philosophy necessarily has a sociological starting-point. Furthermore, as noted by MacIntyre, Aristotle presupposes that statements about what is good "just are a species of factual statement".

"Human beings, like the members of all other species, have a specific nature; and that nature is such that they have certain aims and goals, such that they move by nature towards a certain *telos*. The good is defined in terms of their specific characteristics."(1981:139)

Two points are of note here. Firstly, Aristotle is presupposing a certain metaphysical biology. And secondly he is giving an account of ethics "which is at once local and

particular - located and partially defined by the characteristics of the *polis* - and yet also cosmic and universal."(1981:139) The question that arises concerns the fate of the universality of the ethics once the metaphysical biology is replaced by MacIntyre's own account of the sociology of the virtues. How will the notion of 'the factual', and the problem of reasoning from facts to what ought to be done, be effected?

The context for any ethical deliberation is some social life which presupposes, by the way in which one lives out one's life, some answer to the question, whether or not explicitly raised, What is my good? Ethical deliberation arises out of the normal institutions of society -

"activities as elementary as those which sustain and preserve one's own life, as universal among human beings as those which arise from kin, familial and household relationships, and as open-ended as those which provide one's first education into productive, practical and theoretical arts". (MacIntyre, 1992:6)

One "discovers oneself as a being in norm-governed direction towards goals which are thereby recognized as goods." Such goals, or goods, and the corresponding inclinations or tendencies which constitute our human nature, are given either biologically or socially. I can appropriate them through self-consciously directing my activities to such ends. The rules expressing such conformity of the will are known as the law of our nature, or natural law. "What was mere regularity becomes rule-governedness."

A rule for whom? The question, Why should I follow nature?, occurs when one loses the functional understanding of human nature. Aristotle thinks we follow nature because that is how our reason directs us, and reason is our function. But this presupposes a particular unjustified psychology. The notion of a natural disposition to behave is nevertheless crucial to Aristotelian ethics. The ends to which persons move are 'goods' and their movement to and from the goods are explained by reference to the virtues and vices they've learned or failed to learn. MacIntyre thinks however that following the rules can be justified more simply from another perspective, that is, the perspective of our normal social commitments. According to the pre-Aristotelian account, to judge an action good is to judge it the action of a good man, and a good man is one who fulfils well a particular role in a particular kind of society. This makes it possible to reinterpret Aristotle in terms of a basically sociological notion. There is a necessary appeal to a certain commitment to the shared goals of a society in the account of moral reasoning outlined above. Only for such a committed person would it *make sense* to ask, What is the good for anyone in my situation? What is the human good, i.e. the good for a good person in our society? What constitutes our human nature?

The context in which ethics makes sense is that of a 'social practice'. Ethics in pre-Socratic, or 'heroic' Greek culture - the ethics of Homer - was founded on the notion of the standard

of a good man, understood in terms of the well-defined conceptions of what social roles individuals should fulfil, and what qualities are required to enable an individual to discharge such roles. We find here an ethics framed in terms of standards of excellence which relate to social roles, and which justify the type of reasoning characteristic of ethical naturalism, the objections to which were outlined above. The standards (MacIntyre calls them virtues, but for reasons which will become clear we will introduce this term only later) are those qualities of character

"which are required for sustaining a social role and for exhibiting excellence in some well-marked area of social practice: to excel is to excel at war or in the games, as Achilles does, in sustaining a household, as Penelope does, in giving counsel in the assembly, as Nestor does, in the telling of a tale, as Homer himself does."(MacIntyre, 1981:174)

In Aristotle's ethics the standards of excellence which are foundational for moral reasoning as described above, "attach not to men as inhibiting social roles, but to man as such", regarded in terms of the *telos* of the human species, what Aristotle calls the good life for man. But he too, says MacIntyre, often relates excellence in human activity to some or other "well-defined type of human practice: flute-playing, or war, or geometry."(1981:175) The notion of a form of social life is not alien to his conception of ethics. In a rather humorous example McCabe points out how this notion seems to transcend the fact/value dichotomy. He describes his own appreciation of the goods internal to professional ice-skating with that of a more knowledgeable critic. The occasion is a TV program featuring the British pair Torvell and Dean; McCabe finds himself voicing his appreciation of the performance by means of such 'value' words as 'Beautiful', 'Lovely', 'Marvellous'.

"But with me was an equally enthusiastic but also actually knowledgeable character and he expressed his enthusiasm by saying things like "Say, look at the way she did that..." and then there would follow a stream of quite unintelligible jargon scientifically and I suppose accurately describing what Torvill had just done. It was I, the ignorant amateur, who used what are supposed to be pure value expressions, whereas the person whose opinion and value-judgments were worthy of respect - the one, say, Torvill would have been interested to hear - expressed his view that something was *good* precisely by describing what it *was*."(McCabe, no date:19-20)

The notion that what is properly judged to be good is dependent upon 'how things are by nature' is central to the ethical naturalist tradition.

MacIntyre defines the notion of a social practice as follows:

"By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of,

that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended." (1981:175; cf 1992:7)

In Aristotle's ethics a good action is one which exercises and develops a particular good disposition or virtue and whether this is so or not is determined by comparison with the choice of one who is already virtuous. The concept of a virtue is secondary to that of a metaphysical psychology. MacIntyre on the contrary wants to found the notion of virtue on that of a 'practice', and it will be this, not a psychology or biology, which justifies objective values. We must now see how this is so.

Three points are notable in the above description of a practice. In the first place the activity is cooperative not solitary. Clearly by the nature of things all human life is to some extent dependent upon the cooperation of others, but what MacIntyre is pointing to is that activity which has to some extent the cooperation as part of the goal of the activity. (He has earlier mentioned some problems with Aristotle's notion of the best kind of life being that which is not dependent on others, the contemplative, and in particular how this fits in with Aristotle's notion of 'man as a political animal'[1981:148]; and we will return to this point below.) Presumably something like taking a bath is not an example of a practice, whereas most games are. Examples he himself gives include: the various academic disciplines, painting and music, commercial activities engaged in by for example the crews of fishing-fleets, the activities of members of families making and sustaining the familial community.(1992a:7) Clearly this last category is of a somewhat less defined nature than the previous, at least insofar as concerns the appropriate rules for the achievement of the goods, or even the exact nature of the goods sought. And MacIntyre makes an implicit distinction between the ancient and medieval acceptance of the sustaining of various kinds of human communities as such, as an example of a practice, and the contemporary view of these human communities.(1981:175)

The second point is that there is a distinction in the activity between internal and external goods. MacIntyre gives the example of a child learning to play chess, at first for a reward, and later for reasons which come from appreciating the good of "a certain highly particular kind of analytic skill...", goods which would take away the point of pretending to play (for example by cheating). Perhaps a more pertinent example is, again, given by McCabe: that of learning to read. Once the child has passed from the stage of reading to please her parents or teacher, to finding reading a delight in itself, it would no longer *make sense* to her to pretend to read in order to reap the extrinsic reward: "it is a good *intrinsic* to reading that she seeks, no longer an ulterior consequence".(No date:61) In games the goal of winning is perhaps always part and parcel of the activity: in McCabe's example however the realm of intrinsic goods is more clearly distinct from that of the external goods

associated with the activity. Could there be, following on from this, some objective moral standard simply for living well?

The third point regards the notion that in the course of the activity the power of the participants to achieve excellence, as well as their grasp of the nature of the goods, is systematically expanded. For one hasn't really understood the activity unless one has appreciated the value of the ends involved. Internal goods

"can only be identified and recognised by the experience of participating in the practice in question. Those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods."(MacIntyre, 1981:176)

The activity is not specifiable by reference simply to the external observable behaviour of the participants, but only by specifying the elements involved in the holding of certain ends *as* values and in the assent to such values. There is implicit in this account an answer to Moore's objection to ethical naturalism that of whatever was posited as good, it could still be asked of that whether it really was good. For in the notion of a practice as described by MacIntyre one's role or function is only properly played out *through* the questioning of one's function as currently specified in terms of certain particular standards. Furthermore, a certain foundational view of human agency is present in this description, at least in germ. For on what is founded one's ability to extend the understanding of the ends of the practice?

The notion of a social practice is a kind of 'functional' account of human behaviour. Evaluation of conduct is based on how well a participant in a practice fulfils or fails to fulfil their role or function. But could there be any role or function ascribed to being a person? Or does one have here only a way of evaluating conduct by means of reference to various social practices only? Is there a way of understanding the various practices in some kind of unity? McCabe's comment on this is worth quoting in full.

"The bone of contention is this: To call someone an ice-skater is to speak of them in terms of a role or function or a job they perform which they can therefore perform well or badly. But when you call someone a human being, are you in any sense ascribing some role or function to her, which she could perform well or badly? The answer which I might label 'individualist' is that you are not. The human subject simply exists and that is that. Human beings may, for their own purposes ascribe functions to things - I may make a spoon in order to eat my porridge and it will be a good one if it fulfils the purpose I have given it and a bad one if it doesn't, and in a similar way a group of people may invent the art and institution of ice-skating and similarly decide what makes good skating and what bad; all these purposes are ascribed by the decisions human beings make. We cannot in the same way speak of the human beings themselves as having been ascribed a

purpose or role. Of course, human beings can be given roles, as when we appoint them as teachers or carpenters and then they may be judged on objective grounds as good or bad teachers or carpenters. But we do not appoint people to be human beings and so we cannot on any objective grounds say that they are good or bad human beings. For this way of thinking purposes and roles are always human artefacts, there are no purposes prior to human decisions, there are no purposes for human beings in themselves."(No date:21-2)

The issue turns on whether it is justified to describe human beings in terms of the specific function simply of being a member of a community. How are we to understand human life as a whole? Is there any content to the 'function' of human life as a whole, an end that is unquestionable and thus foundational? Is there any way of rationally justifying a communitarian rather than a liberalist approach, a commitment to the achievement of community? This will be the subject matter of the following section.

3.3 Virtues, The Social Sciences, And Narrative

Is there a way of justifying some understanding of a fundamental social practice proper simply to being human? That activity would seem to found the notion of the virtues in the moral sense, i.e. as distinct from skills. MacIntyre points out that the pursuit of the excellences associated with social practices is dependent - whatsoever the practice - upon the existence of certain key human qualities or dispositions. "Every practice," he argues, "requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it."(1981:178) The practice - in particular the achievement of the excellences which are the intrinsic goods of the practice - is dependent upon the maintenance of this relationship, and that means maintaining a balanced attitude to the external goods attached to the practice. Every practice needs an institutional structure. The practice of chess requires the institution of chess clubs, those of physics and medicine, universities and hospitals.(1981:181) The institution is structured by means of a set of rough-and-ready public rules for the allocation of external goods of power, status and financial rewards attached to the practice. For example, the excellences attached to the practice of the writing and reading of the variety of types of fiction concern in a large part the joys of expanding of the mind through the imagination, of creating or following the (in some way plausible) resolution of a set of circumstances which constituted the tension of the story. This practice is sustained however by the institution of book-publishing, the criteria of merit set up by the publishing houses, the somewhat different criteria governing the choices of books made by committees of libraries and educational institutions, academies of literature, and so on. Such rules have only an oblique relationship to the rules which govern the pursuit of the excellences internal to the practice. In the pursuit of external goods one is essentially in competition with other practitioners: if one is chosen, others are not. As MacIntyre notes, "the cooperative care for

the common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution"(1981:181), and one might add that it is perhaps in the arena of sport that this is clearest today. What MacIntyre now (tentatively) defines as the virtues are those qualities of character (or norms of behaviour) which direct one to overcome the disorder potentially inherent in all practices, viz. the inappropriate elevation of the external goods of reward, prestige, etc. "Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions."(1981:181) A virtue, then,

"is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."(1981:178)

It would seem that the practice of ethics, the pursuit of moral qualities as intrinsic goods, as "necessary components of any practice", must needs be intertwined with the activities of participants in all practices and constitute a shared form of activity which needs to be explicitly recognized as such. The examples MacIntyre gives of the type of moral excellences referred to are those of justice, courage and honesty. In order to recognize what is really due to a certain authority in the field, we need the virtue of justice; courage is needed in order to sustain the progress that is central to our participation in a practice; without honesty one would fail "to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts".(1981:178) Clearly it is possible to find for example a recognised violin-player who largely lacks these virtues, but such a person relies on the virtues of others to sustain the practice.

Such virtues are objectively grounded in the necessary structure of the relationships that are entailed by the notion of a practice. The virtues

"are those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices."(MacIntyre, 1981:178-9)

And MacIntyre repeats that in practices, "whether we acknowledge it or not", our relationships to each other are defined by reference to these standards of truthfulness and trust, justice and courage. The absence of such virtues undermines the relationships which constitute an integral dimension of the practice. He argues that "whatever our private moral standpoint or our society's particular codes might be", we are properly characterized in terms of some such set of virtues in the moral sense.(1981:179) This is compatible with differing ideas of how such virtues are exercised: MacIntyre contrasts the Lutheran idea of the norm of truth-telling as an absolute without qualifications, with the traditional African idea that truth should not be told to strangers for fear of this rendering one's family open to witchcraft. And MacIntyre's final comment draws the important conclusion that the flourishing of practices depends upon there being a recognition of the community as

constituted by the practice of the virtues.(1981:180) This is a normative idea of community as the soil in which practices might flourish and grow, in which *this* way of being human might be realized. For one's relationship to particular practices - chess-playing, sustaining the life of a family, all kinds of cooperative work - depends to a large extent on one's relationship to the wider environment. It is the latter relationship which is controversial and which MacIntyre wants to specify not only in contradistinction to modern liberal (non-normative) conceptions but also to some extent to Aristotle's account thereof. "For liberal individualism," MacIntyre writes,

"a community is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life, and political institutions exist to provide that degree of order which makes such self-determined activity possible."(1981:182)

MacIntyre contrasts this view with that of the ancient and medieval worlds, in which "the creation and sustaining of human communities - of households, cities, nations - is generally taken to be a practice", in the required sense.(1981:175) And as he points out, the notion of a virtue, rather than a skill, seems to be closely tied to this notion of community as a practice. Otherwise the practice of the virtues would be valued only instrumentally, for the sake of the maintenance of particular - contingently valued - practices. And this would seem to go against the notion of a virtue as something which is valued for its own sake, as would be the case if one valued the 'practice' of sustaining the community as such. If on the other hand one regarded community simply as the context for the pursuit of one's own ends, it would be reasonable to practice the virtues only to the extent to which they contributed to the ends of the particular practices one valued. But there seems to be a sense in which we "cannot be genuinely courageous or truthful and be so only on occasion."(1981:185) And this means that the flourishing of practices in a society in which the sustaining of community is not valued as a practice is significantly hampered. The good of the institutions would usurp the good of the practices.

It is also true, argues MacIntyre, that social institutions are only properly explicable by means of the categories of virtue and vice. MacIntyre comes close to suggesting that such a practice has as its particular shared goods the virtues themselves. This seems to have been the view of Aristotle. The shared goods internal to the practice are the goods which are specified in the concept of what it is to be a human being as such. But MacIntyre does not want to specify this in the way Aristotle does: the metaphysical biology of the latter leads to a misconception of the place of conflict in a human life. It is also an a-historical conception of human nature. There is however in Aristotle the important notion of friendship as foundational for community. What does MacIntyre make of this? Are his fundamental

virtues purely procedural, as has been suggested by many commentators (for example, Collins, 1985:103) or insofar as substantive, unjustified (Ferrara, 1990:29-30), or do they link in somehow with the substantive norm that characterizes Aristotle's ethics? If they are purely procedural MacIntyre would seem to fall into the same boat as those thinkers such as Hare who are the object of his criticism.

Is there adequate reason for affirming the substantive norm of the achievement of community? What can be said with justification of human behaviour? MacIntyre turns to the social sciences and the nature of their enquiry. Modern philosophy has judged the knowledge of human nature taken previously to be foundational in moral reasoning, to be uncritical and relative to a particular culture only. MacIntyre sides with this 'critical turn' in philosophy in granting legitimacy to the social scientific method in its ability to gain a critical perspective on human behaviour - including moral discourse itself as a social phenomenon. A study of the *context* of any first principle proposed as a foundation for ethical reasoning, can reveal the probability of that first principle functioning so as to bolster particular values specific to, rather than transcending, that social milieu. But MacIntyre finds that such methods generate a critique not only of classical moral theory but also, and more significantly, of much *contemporary* ethics. For the heritage of present day moral philosophy is a conviction that the realm of values is independent of the realm of facts. And any form of moral reasoning which proceeds, as does contemporary ethics, without reference to the social facts, must be said to be uncritical, and so unjustified. MacIntyre finds support for this, interestingly enough, in a remark of Marx:

"The materialistic doctrine concerning the change of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine must divide society into two parts - one of which towers above." (Third Thesis on Feuerbach; MacIntyre, 1981:81)

For the detached observer, others are objects for his manipulation. The critical perspective on values that grew out of the historical and social scientific consciousness of the modern period, has left contemporary ethics itself without a solid basis!

Considerations of this kind underlie, it is clear, a wide-spread skepticism about the objectivity of value judgments. But the analyses of the social sciences themselves presuppose a certain norm of rationality, of objectivity, in the phenomenon of moral discourse. This is clear from the presupposition that in any particular society the moral language can to a greater or lesser degree be used - or *misused* - for the purposes of bolstering particular standpoints chosen for reason of self-advancement or self-aggrandizement - a type of moral bullying. The limit case of such a society MacIntyre calls 'emotivist'. The sociological critique presupposes the value of a less manipulative social

discourse. Certain values are, then, assumed by the investigation to be still generally the common heritage of at least the academic society addressed in the critique. And indeed MacIntyre argues that it is these values which are still acknowledged (if only implicitly), and which are part of our traditions, that need to be taken as the established points of reference for any moral reasoning that aims at some sort of objectivity. Clearly a certain perspective, an attitude of standing back and judging, is available from an historical overview (MacIntyre's term is 'narrative') of a tradition.

There is furthermore in MacIntyre an indication of the nature of any possible foundation for objective moral judgments. For he suggests that it is emotivism which is at the root of all moral theories which fail to establish rationality or intelligibility in moral debate. It is emotivism which denies the moral worth of the study of the tradition, for it claims that our moral ideas come from our subjective stance. The emotivist claim amounts to "a general implicit recognition in practice, though not in explicit theory, that claims to objectivity and impersonality [in moral judgments] cannot be made good".(1981:18) It is this proposition which underlies all forms of implicit emotivism and whose refutation would have to be at the core of any restatement of ethical naturalism. And clearly its refutation is implicit in the demand for consistency between meaning and use in sound or non-manipulative moral discourse. Likewise in MacIntyre's intuitive evocation of certain aspects of the contemporary emotivist culture and of our sense of moral disapproval thereof. But the Aristotelian framework for founding such evaluation is no longer thought plausible. MacIntyre identifies the empiricist philosophy of knowledge as a major stumbling-block to a coherent theory of ethical rationality. From the seventeenth century onwards, he argues,

"it became a commonplace that whereas the scholastics had allowed themselves to be deceived about the character of the facts of the natural and social world by interposing an Aristotelian interpretation between themselves and experienced reality, we moderns had stripped away interpretation and theory and confronted fact and experience just as they are".(1981:78)

MacIntyre wants to justify an interpretation of human behaviour and human society which will ground progress in the life of the virtues. But, as we shall now argue, his analysis of the methods of the social sciences (1981, Ch 7 and 8) goes only so far as to spell out the problem. (In the Afterword to the Second Edition of *After Virtue* [1983a] he confesses that originally two books were planned: this accounts for the relatively unintegrated nature of these chapters.) Determinism in the social sciences seems to encourage a manipulative attitude to social change. MacIntyre wants to argue that human behaviour has in fact an essentially unpredictable dimension. Four factors are mentioned. Firstly there is the fact of radical conceptual innovation. The example given is that of the invention of the wheel. That

such invention occurred is historical fact: there was a time before it existed. Yet this could not have been predicted, "for a necessary part of the prediction is the present elaboration of the very concept whose discovery or invention was to take place only in the future".(1981:89) The second point concerns the unpredictability of certain of his own future actions by each agent individually. I am faced with alternative courses of action: I cannot predict which I shall take. Of course it might be the case that another person, with greater insight into my character than I myself have, can so predict. But I am always to an extent free to be influenced or not by the information gained from that other person.

The remaining two unpredictabilities are less important; MacIntyre admits that the arguments for them are not watertight. The third concerns the fact that social situations can be mapped in game-theoretic terms: in other words by specifying a finite number of players with defined interests, in a situation with a formal structure which can be clearly described. One problem with this form of prediction, he argues, is that the set of factors comprising any 'situation' is infinite, and this means that *many* 'games' are simultaneously taking place and the players transcend any one game in terms of which their 'moves' are predicted. Another problem concerns the uncertainty of any player with regard to the moves of other players. But in the face of all such objections it could be argued that political analysts do indeed predict with some degree of success. Finally there is the factor of pure contingency. Trivial contingencies influence great events, rendering the outcome unpredictable. But here again it could be argued that statistical laws can even out contingencies: contingencies are contingencies for people, or armies of people and so on. They tend to exert their influence in regular ways.

These factors nevertheless support MacIntyre's contention that laws of human behaviour are not scientific, i.e. of the sort that whenever I can contrive the fulfilment of the antecedent conditions of the law of behaviour, I can predict the outcome. But whatever force they have is undermined by his acknowledgement that this very fulfilling of antecedent conditions is what social planners do and should do, to produce social arrangements which encourage and foster behaviour which is to an extent regular and predictable - to the benefit of all members of society insofar as such predictability is necessary for cooperation. Indeed MacIntyre lists the various factors of systematic *predictability*.(1981:97) His own suggestion is that our freedom is founded in our capacity to remain to some degree opaque to the investigations of others. But this - apart from seeming to be a typical liberalist position somewhat inconsistent with his more communitarian approach - would seem to undermine the notion that moral progress is effected essentially through participation in a social practice in which one learns from others' understanding of basic human goals.

In MacIntyre's mind Aristotle's concept of foundational nature itself in some ways presupposes a false unity. According to Aristotle in ethics one always reasons from some idea of what constitutes the good. And the good for man Aristotle calls *eudaimonia*, explained by MacIntyre as "blessedness, happiness, prosperity".

"It is the state of being well and doing well in being well, of a man's being well-favoured himself and in relation to the divine."(1981:139)

In this concept of the good the virtues feature as central: they are those qualities whose possession facilitates, and whose absence frustrates, the achievement of happiness. Furthermore the goal is not so much a state but an activity, a way of being. And this implies that the virtues are not simply means to an external end but internal to the goal of happiness. It is not simply a matter of contingent fact that *these* means will bring about *these* ends, so that

"means and end can each be adequately characterised without reference to the other; and a number of quite different means may be employed to achieve one and the same end."(1981:139-40)

They are not simply preparatory to the achievement of the good life, but constitute an integral part of it.

All this fits in very well with what MacIntyre has written about a social practice. Of course the excellences attached to practices are not necessarily virtues in the moral sense; but all sharing of goods in a common pursuit would seem to involve not simply excellences attached to that particular practice but virtues germane to being human as such. We have therefore to consider the place of the virtues in "the larger concerns of human life", what Aristotle thinks of as a community unified as a practice. Such an assumption cannot be shared in our very different cultural context.

MacIntyre judges Aristotle's understanding of the unity of all the virtues in a good life as mistaken.(1981:147) The example he cites is that of a man possessing the virtue of courage but lacking the virtue of being socially agreeable. Within a historical perspective it would seem that conflict between the legitimate demands of different aspects of one's life in the community is inevitable. The harmony of the self with its fixed hierarchy of virtues, as depicted by Aristotle, would seem to mask such conflicts. According to Aristotle's metaphysical biology the ultimate fulfilment of the human person must lie in the fullest actualization of his intellect, that is in the contemplative life. This end would subordinate the ends of friendship and material prosperity - which are nonetheless absolutely necessary conditions for the existence of the life of contemplation. Such a hierarchy of ends would thus seem unjustified, and its accompanying ideal of self-sufficiency unrealistic. It would

also mask problems in the widening of the community which constitutes the foundation of the moral life. MacIntyre argues that for Aristotle,

"Individuals as members of a species have a *telos*, but there is no history of the *polis* or of Greece or of mankind moving towards a *telos*."(1981:149)

Aristotle writes as if barbarians and Greeks have fixed natures, and the moral life is of course confined to the latter. He recognizes that the notion of a nature with fixed laws of operation is not strictly assimilable to the legitimate generalisations we make about human behaviour; but he fails to draw the implications for the ways in which any individual might grow in freedom as the society ("plural", in the contemporary sense) becomes more of a *polis*. Our membership of the human species is in some ways fragmented; Aristotle's metaphysical biology, which assumes that our moral ends are unified, thus presents a bogus unity. "There *is* an objective moral order," MacIntyre urges, "but our perceptions of it are such that we cannot bring rival moral truths into complete harmony with each other..."(1981:134) It is through taking upon oneself the conflict arising from seemingly irreconcilable moral demands, he suggests, that one achieves an understanding of our ends and purposes. This occurs through a narrative of the progress of a human life.

MacIntyre argues on the other hand that we need *some* kind of unity. "The claims of one practice may be incompatible with another in such a way that one may find oneself oscillating in an arbitrary way, rather than making rational choices."(1981:188) Even if one admits "sustaining the kind of community in which virtues can flourish" to be a practice, this may, as is well known, conflict with devotion to another particular practice such as music. The moral life might remain, as in emotivism, founded on a commitment which is not further justifiable.

"The modern self with its criterionless choices apparently reappears in the alien context of what was claimed to be an Aristotelian world."(1981:188)

Furthermore certain virtues only make sense within the context of a human life as a whole. Justice for example can be thought of "in terms of giving each person his or her due or desert". But how is one to evaluate the relative worth of various goods attached to different practices, and so recognize what is truly due to the different practitioners? Finally, certain qualities - integrity and constancy - traditionally held to be virtues in the moral sense specify dispositions relating specifically to one's life as a whole.

If one could describe a human life as a whole or unity, in terms of an overriding *telos*, then one would have a foundation for the fundamental virtues, and so for the notion of virtue in a specific moral sense, that is, as important regardless of the specific practice to which they contribute, as part and parcel of what it is to be a good person. Is there more than a

procedural meaning to integrity? MacIntyre argues such a notion is incompatible with the modern concept of selfhood as constituted in itself apart from any particular social roles, and with a radical fragmentation of one's life, for example into public and private spheres. The virtue of integrity as understood by MacIntyre (sustaining the internal goods of the practice) degenerates, in such a conception, to an abstract refusal, to affirm one's identity by means of any social roles (which would be, in Sartre's phrase, 'Bad Faith', unauthentic). A better concept of the self is that in terms of a narrative which links parts of one's life to a whole in terms of which the parts, the particular actions, make sense. By means of this concept MacIntyre complements his critique of determinism in the social sciences with a positive account of how human behaviour is to be understood.

Sociological analysis characteristically uncovers the unintended consequences of any action. This assumes that human behaviour should in general be understood under the category of 'being intended'. MacIntyre takes the example of a man gardening outside his home.(1981:192) This behaviour cannot be specified without an understanding of the agent's primary intention. Is he taking exercise, putting the garden in order, or pleasing his wife? Each of these intentions makes sense only within a wider perspective, a social context or setting with its own specific history. Only within the context of the institution and practice of married life is 'pleasing one's wife' intelligible and is it possible to evaluate any particular instance of such action in terms of its likelihood of success, and so on. Similarly with 'taking exercise', a context which indicates a certain social class; and so on. In MacIntyre's conception 'selfhood' is the locus of interaction of the intentional, the social, and the historical. Life is never simply lived, it is also construed, and that means there is an essential potential for development. As in a particular genre of novel writing the story is typically structured around the dyad appearance/reality, the path from illusion to self-knowledge, so too this is how we should understand our own behaviour. We make sense of an action by means of locating it in a narrative sequence, and that narrative makes reference to the social setting and its history. Moral deliberation presupposes a certain commitment to an end, and that end is described by means of the ends characteristic of my social setting: I ask, what is my part in this narrative? The *telos* necessary for a virtue ethics is, in MacIntyre's account, described in terms of a "possible shared future" with an already partially discernable shape.(1981:200-1) The basic concept in terms of which the self may be understood is that of being a co-author of one's life.

This notion then describes the 'function' or 'role' which characterizes not simply any part of one's life which one has chosen, but one's life before any choosing. The foundational human task is to be a good co-author, and that means to seek to realize the best in the tradition. MacIntyre's provisional formula, that of "the good life for man" as a "quest", as the life

spent seeking to realize the good life for man (1981:204), does not do full justice to his argument. The notion of life as a "quest" contains the idea that in the course of the quest we learn more about the things we really value, we grow in self-knowledge. The social dimension of the quest is made more explicit by bringing in the notion of 'tradition'. The basic human task, one might say, is to realize this good life in conjunction with others in a common enterprise which is understood in a tradition. One's values are always formed through one's participation with others, and that participation has a history: to realize the good life is to reconstitute that history and those attachments in a way that advances the goods characteristic of that tradition. And this means to practice those virtues which are fundamental to *any* shared activity of the kind termed by MacIntyre as practices. "Lack of justice, lack of truthfulness, lack of courage, lack of the relevant intellectual virtues - these corrupt traditions..."(1981:207) And to this list, notes MacIntyre, may be added the virtue of having a sense of one's particular tradition. Later MacIntyre (1988a) develops this notion of one's awareness of tradition. In the original naturalist tradition of the Greeks 'the normal' was taken as a given, and reasons had to be given for deviating from it. The activity of practical reasoning - characteristically framed in terms of the question, what am I to do? - depended upon the concept of the normal way of things, the 'normal' day and so on with its schedule of routine activities and cessation from activity. Reasons are given to make intelligible any departure from normality.(MacIntyre, 1988a:24-5) This differs from the situation in a plural world, where someone taking 'nature' as your objective standpoint will be identified with a *particular* moral tradition, one among others.(1988a:76-7)

MacIntyre is perhaps best considered as being concerned essentially with arguing the *possibility* of a serious reconsideration of the naturalistic or Aristotelian tradition in ethics. For these purposes he has simply to show that the laws established in the human sciences are not *fully* determinative, yet are verified in part and describe a real aspect of human behaviour, one which cannot be ignored by moral philosophy. Although moral philosophical understanding is not independent of sociological interpretation - it "presupposes a sociology" - the laws of behaviour are not absolute, more verified tendencies. And this leaves a space for non-reductionist social interpretation on the moral level. It does not, however, establish the nature of any possible foundational standard for moral evaluation, and thus does not fully coincide with our projected thesis. MacIntyre himself expands his thesis in the direction of ever more detailed confirmation of the 'tradition-dependent' nature of moral philosophy. And the narrative of the tradition itself assumes certain standards or norms, of progress and decline, of order and disorder, themselves not established independently of the tradition. For these reasons we have to turn elsewhere for the purposes of actually formulating a possible universal standard for ethics (and for structuring the narrative of a tradition), namely the reinterpretation of the

Aristotelian tradition to be found in the cognitional analysis of Bernard Lonergan, and its development in the field of ethics.

3.4 Social Roles And Human Flourishing

Any account of moral judgments as founded on knowledge of the 'function' of human beings would seem to deny the values of freedom and creativity, the capacity of persons to bring about something new, the value of choosing their ends. MacIntyre has argued on the contrary that this understanding of freedom - the liberalist - is bound up with the particular kind of social institutions characteristic of the modern period in history, and is radically flawed. One important reason for saying that it is inadequate is the resultant subjectivism in ethics. True freedom entails an objective norm for moral growth. Nevertheless the norm of human nature as described by Aristotle does not allow for the development of a tradition and so must to that extent be pronounced inadequate. (MacIntyre, 1981:137) It is therefore necessary to reinterpret the concept of function so as to complement the modern understanding of the creativity of human development in history. We will argue that MacIntyre's account must be judged to hesitate between the Scylla of a concept of creativity which would be unable to support objective, non-relative, moral values, and the Charybdis of a concept of nature which excludes the values of creativity and diversity. The issue is whether MacIntyre's ethics is founded simply on convention or is able to transcend convention by articulating the ground of those conventional attitudes in a critical norm, our capacity to determine our destinies.

Three questions can be put to Aristotle on the basis of MacIntyre's discussion (1981:152-3):

1. Can there be a teleology without a metaphysical biology? MacIntyre's discussion of excellences, virtues, and objectively justified rules in relation to 'social practices' is his response to this question.
2. Is there a series of such communities as the *polis* which is presupposed in Aristotelian ethics? The notions of a narrative unity of a human life and of a moral tradition respond to this.
3. Could we identify such a series, and justify this identification?

It is this third question which MacIntyre seeks to address in the sequel to *After Virtue*, viz. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, in particular in the final three chapters. The Enlightenment, he argues, failed to unite conviction and rational justification, with the result that fideism has become part and parcel of our culture: conviction has acquired a life of its own, independent of rational enquiry. (1988a:7) There is a need then to find the

conceptual and theoretical resources to reunite on the one hand conviction concerning such matters as justice and on the other rational enquiry and justification.

He argues that the question of what it is to reason practically, what thus *counts* as good reasoning in moral matters, cannot be answered without reference to one or other particular society or form of social life. As example he takes the formulation, typical of the modern social world, of the question of reasons-for-action in a way which makes "no appeal to any agreed conception of *the* good for human beings, either at the level of practice or of theory".(1988a:209-12) Similarly in a society in which the members are typically taken to be pursuing *diverse and incompatible* conceptions of the good (a liberalist understanding of society), the related question of justice would refer to the problem of securing the allegiance of the individual members to the social order. But neither of these questions, formulated in this way, would make sense to an Aristotelian. Thus one can ask of such questions, to whose justice and which rationality one is referring. For an Aristotelian

"it is only the self-identified inhabitants of some social role either within some institution, such as the polis, or within some teleologically understood, divinely legislated order that someone can come to have adequately good reasons for accepting and valuing the constraints imposed upon him or her by the social and political order within which he or she does whatever his or her role requires."(1988a:210)

Traditions with different ways of conceiving of society and of organizing social institutions will tend to formulate questions of ethics differently.

MacIntyre argues that rational enquiry is necessarily

"embodied in a tradition, a conception according to which the standards of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same tradition."(1988a:7)

This is uncontroversial so far as it goes. It would seem to express a formal conception of rationality. It fails however to describe the content of the norm of rationality. Can the Aristotelian or communitarian notions of rationality and justice be justified? How would one know what is to count as progress in a tradition? Some notion or course of action is defective to the extent that it fails to reflect the reality of the situation or fails to do justice to the range of possible worthwhile courses of action. Do the standards which emerge in the course of history reflect truth and falsehood, good and bad? Or is the criterion for judging some theory defective something like 'unworkable', or 'at odds with our present views'? MacIntyre argues that his position is not that of a relativist. A relativist position is self-contradictory, in that it affirms implicitly that the truth and value of relativism is

objective.(MacIntyre, 1988a:367-8) Also, there is common ground for dialogue between traditions, MacIntyre argues.(1988a:352) A tradition justifies itself over against rival traditions by being able to assimilate new insights and values presented by its confrontation with the other tradition. But again this would indicate that there is a norm of rationality (of the true and the worthwhile) which would apply to anyone in any tradition, although the extent to which one was aware of the norm would depend on how accurately it was articulated in one's own tradition.

Earlier, in reply to Gaita's (1983) criticism of the notion of canonicity in ethics, MacIntyre had written of the difficulty in justifying any tradition as canonical. Indeed in a rather extreme formulation he contended that there is not such thing as 'morality' as such, only 'moralities'.(1983b:459) For example in the case of his analysis of the inadequacies of utilitarianism, he claims simply to be observing that this moral theory has redefined the meaning of morality, an historical observation not a philosophical refutation. Incoherences are such for someone in terms of some criterion. Utilitarianism could in response simply alter its standards, and 'save the appearances'. "Moral traditions are never refuted; but they do sometimes decay."(1983b:461) MacIntyre's theory seems to be based on an observation of the resilience of modern and contemporary philosophical agendas. But virtue ethics is now very much on the agenda, and this is in all likelihood partly because, as argued here, it is *true* that the analysis and evaluation of character is at the root of all moral reasoning, and contrary positions are *false*. MacIntyre's is an extreme point of view. In spite of his extended discussion it is evident that he has not, to the satisfaction at least of many of his critics, sufficiently clarified his understanding of the place of tradition in ethics. While exceedingly helpful in putting the naturalist coach back on the rails, the bulk of MacIntyre's writings are not directly concerned with foundational issues, and have a more analytic and critical than synthetic character. The summaries do not entirely do justice to the detail of the analyses, most notably perhaps in the case of the final three chapters of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. What needs to be made more explicit is the argument that it is through a certain social relationship that the capacity for practical reasoning, and for living the moral life, is actualized.

MacIntyre argues that a human being separated from the polis is deprived of his or her essential attributes. Society teaches the virtues; the principles of practical reasoning are standards of behaviour, and reflect these standards. Thus while it is true that "the norms of justice have no existence apart from the actualities of each particular polis", still

"because the polis is defined functionally as that form of human association whose peculiar telos is the realisation of good as such,...the citizens of each polis have the rational resources to judge their own city as succeeding or

failing in doing and being what a polis at its best does and is". (MacIntyre, 1988a:122)

In other words, on the Aristotelian understanding of society, good is thought of as objective, and members of such a society have therefore what is thought of as an objective standard of the good.

What remains to be shown, therefore, is that in the course of one's participation in social practices, individual and group bias of interests will tend to be countered, and that a truly objective understanding of the good can, in principle, be reached. This would carry the implication that MacIntyre's reinterpretation of the 'functional' understanding of human beings in terms of social roles does not overlook the creative dimension of human life but on the contrary fosters this. There are two parts to this task. Firstly, it is necessary to develop and justify the notion of a strictly philosophical understanding of human psychology - a concept of normative human nature reached through understanding what it is to have intentions and purposes. Secondly, it needs to be argued that the actualization and development of the most fundamental human capacities (understood through philosophical analysis) has as a necessary condition a certain kind of influence from other persons. If this can be done, then the tradition of ethical naturalism, and the understanding of society bound up with it, will be justified, and our task will have been essentially completed. The following two chapters will treat of these two questions in turn.

On this account there would be no arbitrary constriction of the range of human invention and creativity in the matter of living the good life. A necessary condition for self-determination and creativity would be shown to be a certain kind of interpersonal interaction, which can be affirmed both as a fact and an objective and fundamental value. The Aristotelian understanding of practical reasoning would be justified over against that of the liberalist. It would be shown that it does not ultimately make sense to think of society as an arena of competing egoisms regulated only by rules of fairness but rather as the product of coming to live out the norm of our true nature only partially expressed by means of such rules. The merits of the corresponding rival concepts of morality could similarly be adjudicated: as MacIntyre argues, for the Aristotelian justice is not to be equated with rules of fairness but refers to the virtue acquired by grasping what is required in each case *for its own sake*; the corresponding vice of *pleonexia* is not simply desire for more than one's share but rather desire for more *per se*, in other words an inability or failure to value things in themselves and accord them this value in one's actions.

The question of a normative human nature cannot then be avoided. MacIntyre's context-dependent reformulation of ethical naturalism, or at least of the Aristotelian tradition, has been criticized for confusing what is simply social convention with morality proper. If a

particular moral imperative is objectively binding it must be binding on all, across cultures and traditions, it is said (for example, George, 1989). Otherwise it is simply convention and convention hasn't the binding force of morality. Critics, from Gaita to Ferrera (1990), have remained unconvinced by MacIntyre's claims not to be a relativist or a perspectivist. The question asked of MacIntyre concerns how it is possible to recognize that a tradition is incoherent, on the decline, the virtues being merely simulacra of true human qualities. Many critics have concluded that no foundational moral theory is possible (nor, say some, desirable). Others (e.g. Phillips, 1986:110-1) conclude that morality can be founded only on principles, not on a substantial concept of the good life. Our argument so far has suggested that what is needed is a comprehensive norm of living well, the existence of a unified set of fundamental virtues in spite of the existence of genuine moral conflict. But this would indicate that the 'sociological' approach was inadequate, and what was needed was a concept of human nature established on strictly philosophical grounds.

As Ferrara (1990:25-6) points out, in spite of his contempt for the Enlightenment MacIntyre is modern in the sense that his proposal is not an account of the essential structures of being, from which our understanding of human being derived, but presents itself as 'the most rational so far' kind of solution. Also, he wants to present quite a critical attitude towards the tradition: having one's identity embedded in a larger tradition by no means prevents one from taking a critical stance to that tradition, and transcending its limitations. Finally, there is the possibility of insoluble moral conflicts, a pluralism of ultimate moral value orientations. The 'good life' as the life spent in seeking for the good life is clearly only a formal definition, compatible with a variety of substantive conceptions of the good.

But here is a dilemma. On the one hand there is a concept of the good life as plural; on the other hand there is the need to find a foundation for moral judgments in a *normative* understanding of human nature. If there is a substantive concept of human flourishing, moral objectivity is well founded. If there is not, then the commitment to the Aristotelian tradition is arbitrary. Within a tradition, the good for a human life is then reduced to the coherence of an identity or life-narrative. But this interpretation would seem to be incompatible with MacIntyre's argument that one *grows* in one's appreciation of the good, and of standards of justice, through learning from others. (MacIntyre, 1988a:108-14,117) I want to argue that there is in MacIntyre the beginnings of a concept of human freedom or self-determination that would supply the necessary justification for a commitment to the Aristotelian tradition. For that commitment is a commitment to social life, life in common, and to the tradition to the extent that it embodies such a commitment and fosters the institutions that enhance one's freedom, understood in this way. And this can be justified.

Furthermore, without that justification, which lies in self-knowledge, human freedom will not be properly understood. "MacIntyre's depiction in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* of the dilemma of relativism among traditions...is only convincing because he, like the liberalism he attacks, ignores the function of self-knowledge."(Norton, 1991:144)

Each virtue corresponds to some aspect of participating well in a community. There is also a sense in which the *central* virtues are unified. If one fails in the virtue of courage through being rash, one is in all probability somewhat of a braggart, failing in the virtue of truthfulness. The virtue of justice entails the virtue of prudence. As MacIntyre concludes,

"this explains why they do not provide us with a number of distinct criteria by which to judge the goodness of a particular individual, but rather with one complex measure". (1981:146)

That measure depends on the notion of a normative set of interpersonal relationships within the framework of a wide range of agreement about goods and virtues. And this measure would apply in some sense to all types of practices, its centrality to the operation of the practice converging to a point which coincides with what Aristotle understands by a *polis*. Aristotle's term for those social arrangements is 'friendship'. Friendship in Aristotle's sense "embodies a shared recognition of and pursuit of a good" and is the bond that constitutes the core of a community or *polis*. It is even more basic to the constitution of a community than is justice. Aristotle notes that one can only have a small number of friends in this sense: the community, MacIntyre argues, is thus constituted out of "a network of small groups of friends".(1981:146)

Elsewhere MacIntyre argues that what is treated separately in Aquinas - the natural law, virtues and practical reasoning - all come together in the ability to engage in sound practical reasoning.(1992a:17-18) The conclusion to a practical syllogism is some action: thus one has to be oriented towards the good or apparent good in order to raise the question of what precisely is the morally praiseworthy action to take. Every practice provides a standard (or set of standards) which furnishes the major premise. But every practice also presupposes that participants can advance that standard in some way. It entails a set of structured relationships with others which one accepts as authoritative and which is embodied in the person one recognizes as the best exponent of the practice, in the case of what Aristotle calls a political community, the best exponent of friendship. Reasoning about the good as such (rather than simply about the goods of a particular practice) must assume that what I am is subject to development and growth. Combining what MacIntyre says in his earlier and more recent writings, the latter notion of development would seem to be the most suitable candidate for a good that is supreme or overriding, one that cannot be questioned or weighed against goods of more temporary satisfaction. (MacIntyre, 1992a:10-11) The

overriding good provides the standard which is specified in the major premise; it also indicates that I have to become a certain kind of character in order to achieve the end envisaged.(1992a:18)

It would seem that we do at least have some agreement as to what would constitute a break with *any* community, a notion of the limits of the possible ways of achieving human goods. MacIntyre points out that there are two types of norms which in part define the community, norms which stipulate what would constitute a fundamental breach with the community - a code of law, and those specifying what would advance the goals - a list of virtues. These two types of rules are distinct although interrelated.

"An offence against the laws destroy those relationships which make common pursuit of the good possible; defective character, while it may also render someone more liable to commit offences, makes one unable to contribute to the achievement of that good without which the community's common life has no point."(MacIntyre, 1981:142-3)

There would seem therefore to be some justification for supposing that the quest for a foundation of the notion of the unity of the virtues, a norm of being a person which would found cross-cultural values, is not misconceived. One's critical faculties are not imprisoned within the norms of a particular practice. MacIntyre notes:

"Justice may be initially defined as a disposition which in its particular way is necessary to sustain practices; it does not follow that in pursuing the requirements of a practice violations of justice are not to be condemned."(1981:187)

And this seems to imply "a larger moral context" - perhaps, one might say, a foundational notion of what it is to be a human being. MacIntyre emphasizes that the popular notion of 'rights' is not well-founded; but it would seem that some such notion could be introduced as expressing a universal understanding of what it is to be a community.

The starting point for MacIntyre's analysis of ethics, the notion of a social practice, contains within it the germ of a solution to the problem of justifying the type of foundation for ethics typical of ethical naturalism. MacIntyre would have us discuss the social context of goods as the first part of any ethical theory. Thus the notion of a social practice entails an account of such goods, virtues such as honesty, courage, and justice, which are required to sustain practices. But this supplies the possibility of *founding* ethics on knowledge of the human capacity to actualize and develop these virtues.

We said earlier in this section that if any theory of morality can be shown to be socially possible, that theory will be justified, at least for the range of social conditions mentioned. Now it can be shown that the set of norms governing any social practice constitutes

precisely those social conditions that make it possible for one to live a moral life, i.e. to act more and more consistently on one's judgment of the most worthwhile course of action, to grow in one's understanding of the good. For a social practice embodies a set of norms governing my relationship with myself (I need to value an unquestionable good) and with others (I need to accept that I can learn from others), and this is what is presupposed in MacIntyre's account of ethical reasoning. Self-identification with others, of a particular kind, is a necessary condition for the actualization of the fundamental human capacities for reasoning and deliberate action, for personal growth. And that means that underlying the particulars of the narrative is the unity of a norm, a norm of the fundamentals of any fulfilled life, and this needs to be spelled out.

The particular (internal) satisfactions attached to particular activities have as a condition of their appropriation a certain commitment to becoming a better person: a commitment made with respect both to myself and to others, a valuing of what it is to be a person (in particular my own person and the persons who constitute my environment). That commitment can surely only be justified (and be effective) if we have by nature a tendency towards that goal. This metaphysical dimension needs to be established by means of a critique of the view of reality and human persons associated with the standard empiricist understanding of science and knowledge in general.

But even if one grants this point, somewhat against MacIntyre, it is clear that much of what MacIntyre has justifiably said here against Aristotle's account could equally well be applied to that of Simpson.

There is no need to spell this out in much detail. For Simpson the good is in the first place defined as being an object of the intellect. The intellect can grasp our nature, and that nature is our good. One moves from potential to actual through grasping the good and assenting to that good. The good, Simpson stresses, is more than the 'human and doable': in grasping it one moves, through the power of the intellect, beyond these categories. In particular one moves beyond one's experience of the particular to reach the universal. Particular cases are subsumed under the general law of our nature.

For MacIntyre on the other hand the human good is understood in terms of a set of norms or a role. The good is specified by a certain role or function in a practice: the understanding of what excellence is, is gained through participation. As one enters more wholeheartedly into the practice, one learns more about the nature of the goods, and about the virtues. Thus there is a history to the recognition and actualization of the human good. But there is no recognition in Simpson that one's understanding of one's nature, of being as good,

depends on one's contingent historical circumstances, on how one is enabled to grow in appreciating the real goods of human living. According to Simpson one recognizes particular goods only as instantiations of a general type. But one can abstract only from a given set of behavioural patterns: the type is bound to be historically contingent, open to modification. On Simpson's account conflict could only be attributable to some fault in one's understanding, not reaching beyond particular experience to the abstract universal nature. And that failure can only be the result of the interference of the desires in the operation of the intellect. Simpson's account is essentially dualist.

Simpson, intent on refuting emotivist theories of ethics, thinks of the good as beyond desire, and objectivity as somehow 'already out there'. And what one understands as 'good', understood in this way, is bound to be unconsciously biased by historical circumstances, as well as to miss the good which is human activity itself in favour of a shadow of that good, an abstract law which could however never determine all cases of the good. No moral progress is possible, for that is dependent upon appreciating the good *in* our circumstances, *in* our desires. For the dispositions of our intellect need to be developed into virtues as much as our other faculties: hence what MacIntyre calls the problem of the vicious circle of prudence. But in Simpson's account there is no reference to the conditions for this development. The intellect *determines* what is the good. A certain moral blindness would seem to follow from this account: whatever does not fit into the universal rule (and this is much of one's life) would be considered to fall outside of the sphere of 'the moral'. A false unity is imposed on our values, for it is not the case that we should always act from reasons of conscience: paradoxically a certain disdain for one's conscience might be the morally praiseworthy attitude to take, as when one tells a lie to a relative stranger in order to protect a friend. One's adherence to this particular good (the friend) must be given priority over what one understands as one of the necessary conditions for the good life (truth-telling). For the reality of the human situation is that there can be no universal law of our nature which can be learned prior to its subsequent application to particular cases. One who always acted from reasons of prudence would be considered a stuffed shirt: a sort of calculation goes into the action which misses appreciating the goodness in the situation. Why is this so? Because one cannot be morally good without developing those dispositions which facilitate one's understanding of the various relevant elements in the situation. And this means developing a critical, realistic, attitude to one's own understanding and powers of judgment. Such powers are only developed through learning to assent to one's deep, constitutive - rather than superficial and peripheral - desires (including the desire for truth); and this is effected through one's participation in relationships of friendship. For MacIntyre, there can be no ethical reasoning without an attachment to goods, in particular the good of friendship as understood by Aristotle. Ethics is based on certain virtues or virtuous

characters: the force of the good comes from one's inclinations educated in the course of one's systematically structured relations with such persons. Thus Simpson omits from his account the moral progress which is the foundation of ethics and which has a social, intersubjective nature, which is actualized through systematic teaching and training.

The concepts in terms of which the notion of the supreme good is explained by MacIntyre are those of a narrative unity of a life and a moral tradition. Without the narrative framework, there is no effective norm. One's moral reasoning, relating to the narrative, is grounded in this norm. One achieves understanding of the norm only through participation in the narrative, being captured by its vision, committed to its members, thus truly believing in the unquestionable good and truly motivated by certain virtues of relationship, justice and so on. Clearly the depth of such understanding is a matter of degree. This aspect of ethical naturalism is missed by the metaphysical psychology, which thinks of the disembodied 'I' as foundation for ethics. But there is no such foundation possible, for the reference to the achievement of the 'I' (the set of virtues that make the foundation possible), and the social conditions for this achievement, are absent. Thus it won't be authoritative in the same way. The supposed absence of a narrative in any particular moral theory is simply a bluff. There is no principle of growth in learning without a narrative, for growth in learning only takes place within the context of ordered relationships with others. These relationships are absent from the agenda, even with an idea of the supreme good. Thus they operate unconsciously, and we have a problem with the abuse of power relationships. For who is serving as the model of the fully developed person? In the absence of the notion of moral learning some kind of moral bullying is likely. MacIntyre's sociological analysis of the virtues has opened up the possibility of a reformulation of ethical naturalism in a way that would integrate what is of value in the dominant liberal conception of freedom with the insight into the dependency of human actualization on a particular conjunction of social influences.

3.5 Further Considerations

MacIntyre has been influential in shifting the attention of moral philosophers towards the idea of character and moral growth, a more objective and substantive ethics than has generally been the case this century. (Cf Gibbard, 1990; Heller, 1990) Many of the objections to MacIntyre's notion of a morally authoritative tradition can, as argued above, be met by introducing a concept of human nature which grounds the progress and decline of traditions and communities of meaning.

What kind of foundation are we seeking? MacIntyre argues that it cannot be some one principle or rule. For any rule or principle specifies the means to achieve the (internal) goods of a practice and the rational foundation for pursuing the practice cannot itself be expressed by means of a rule.

In a practice the goods internal to that activity are of two distinct kinds. There is the excellence of the product and of the activity of producing the product (in the case of portrait-painting the performance and the portrait). And there is the good which the agent discovers in the course of the practice, "the good of a certain kind of life". (MacIntyre, 1981:177) The latter good justifies the adoption of the way of life associated with the practice:

"A practice involves standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice. Practices...all have a histories. Thus the standards are not themselves immune from criticism, but none the less we cannot be initiated into a practice without accepting the authority of the best standards realised so far... In the realm of practices the authority of both goods and standards operates in such a way as to rule out all subjectivist and emotivist analyses of judgment. *De gustibus est disputandum.*"(1981:177)

And from this it would follow that it is not any universal rule which has ultimate authority but rather the best practitioner of those rules. We cannot locate the authority for those rules in something outside of that practice, and it is the same with ethics: no principle can adequately cover all eventualities. MacIntyre mentions in this regard Rawls' well-known principle of favouring the least advantaged, as well as Nozick's principle of just entitlement.(1981:144) There is a certain assent to the ends and means of the practice which requires no further justification or unification of the sort given above. This critique would apply equally to the foundational moral principle suggested by utilitarians. MacIntyre's discussion of the latter in an earlier text (1967, Ch 17) takes us somewhat further in understanding his interpretation of Aristotelianism.

The criterion of utility as ultimate foundation for ethics seems to flounder against the objection that it would seem on occasion to sanction the punishing of an innocent person when this would for example satisfy an angry mob. In reply utilitarians have, MacIntyre explains, distinguished two different types of rules, 'summary rules' and 'rules of practice'. The first type of rule is "a generalization about what is enjoined or prohibited in terms of some general criterion on many particular occasions" and is logically subsequent to the actions prescribed or prohibited; the second defines classes of action and is logically prior

to those actions. A rule forbidding walking on the grass is an example of a summary rule; a rule specifying the ways in which a batsman in cricket may be out, of a rule of practice. We may waive the first rule when we find that its application conflicts with the reasons for its formulation (a park attendant may walk on the grass to confront an offender); but in the case of the second type of rule it does not make sense to sanction waiving it on particular occasions. (MacIntyre, 1967:241-2)

How does this effect the claims of utilitarianism, and in particular of rule-utilitarianism, to supply an objective criterion for moral judgment? Clearly only if it were the case that the principle of justice were a summary rule could it be overridden in certain cases by the principle of utility. Utilitarians argue on the contrary that it is "the whole practice of justice with its systematic protection of innocence" that is justified by the principle of utility. But MacIntyre comments here that we *do* sometimes justifiably waive principles of justice in favour of human happiness. For example, "someone may fail to report a crime or fail to punish a criminal because of the effects on his family". He concludes that "the attempt to shore up utilitarianism in this way is itself a misconceived attempt to give a false unity to our values".(1967:243) For that would be a unity - it can be said in the light of the discussion in *After Virtue* - which is sought outside of the normative unity bound up with the notion of a practice and its set of rules. The notion of a practitioner of excellence, and in Aristotle's theory of a virtuous person and a normative concept of social relationships, what he calls friendship, is fundamental to ethical reasoning and is the foundation (although not quite sufficient a specification) of the unity of the practice. In assenting to the rules one accepts a normative concept of character, and in particular one accepts the centrality of the virtue of judgment, *phronesis*. Another way of putting it is to point out that no summing of goods "in terms of one single formula or conception of utility" is possible in the way that utilitarians hoped to achieve, because of the incommensurability of internal and external goods.(MacIntyre, 1981:185) The virtues, as we have seen, dispose one to overcome distortions in one's practical conclusions through the allure of what must be judged the secondary (external) goods attaching to any practice. The human good cannot be measured in that way, but understood only by understanding what it is to participate well in a practice. And that involves the virtues.

MacIntyre argues that Aristotle's rule of the golden mean exemplifies this point. To understand the excellences associated with a practice one has to be able to interpret correctly the actual circumstances of any instantiation thereof. They cannot be learned apart from such circumstances, through which one learns to judge what is too much of the required attitude and what too little: to each virtue there corresponds two vices. Thus "courage lies between rashness and timidity, justice between doing injustice and suffering

injustice, liberality between prodigality and meanness".(MacIntyre, 1981:144) What determines what is the good course of action is not any rule, but simply "right reason". The development of one's judgment is a development of one's whole character, for in exercising one's judgment one is engaged precisely in transforming one's natural dispositions into *virtues*. Aristotle remarks that one cannot have practical intelligence without being good.

The moral reasoning of 'character ethics' is thus quite different from that of utilitarianism. It is not without a foundation, but that foundation is not abstracted from the tradition. However MacIntyre's theoretical framework is not entirely adequate to the task of describing this foundation. Bound up with the notion of a practice is an idea of the teleological understanding of human behaviour - the distinction between what we take to be our good and what is really our good (our role or function) - and not just in one practice but over a period of history. And this distinction is embodied in the authority of the rules of the practice. And one only has to reflect on the role played in a practice of such rules to see how ethical reasoning can be illuminated by reflection on such practices. In ethics, MacIntyre writes, "the rules governing my fundamental relationships with others...", and allegiance to them, have "to precede any set of arguments, any theorizing". For any theorizing will be "already informed by allegiance to just those rules for which she or he aspired to provide a justification".(1992a:12-13) In ethics we start off with the precepts of practical reasoning, rules expressive of a certain definite structured relationship to others in a common project. However it is not, in the final analysis, in the rules that moral authority resides but rather in the norm for the personal relationship that sustains the practice, the set of virtues of justice, courage, and truthfulness. And these virtues are unified through one's capacity for self-knowledge - for getting a perspective on one's moral allegiances and tradition - and for self-determination.

MacIntyre does not fully succeed in re-expressing the Aristotelian tradition so as to provide a plausible foundation for ethical debates - and this for want of an adequate critique of empiricism, and thus an inadequate assimilation of the necessary metaphysical dimension in Aristotle, failing in some sense to give full due to the sequence: as we truly know, so things really are. He acknowledges the indispensability of the notion of nature; he fails to explain, however, how this concept of nature, in the sense desired, is coherent. This would entail a critique of empiricist standards of rationality.

The answer to the second foundational question, concerning the *nature* of a universal standard for moral judgment, can therefore be arrived at by developing MacIntyre's critique in order to analyse the normative understanding of human agency underlying the sciences of human behaviour and the norm, also clearly based on agency, for evaluating progress in a

tradition. His critique points to the possibility of founding ethics on such agency. For example, the uncovering of mostly unsuspected social consequences of some moral ideas through sociological analysis clearly presupposes the value of being undeceived. Such a value and such analysis suggests a norm for the reform of the institutions under investigation - towards the fostering of free communication enabling the transmission of insights into human behaviour, and the development of community life giving the necessary psychological conditions for the secure growth of critical intellect, proof against cant in moral debate. In such studies the unhindered and effective operation of human agency functions as a norm. What is needed, as MacIntyre concedes but fails to provide, is a suitable concept of nature.

"Take away the notion of essential nature, take away the corresponding notion of what is good and best for members of a specific kind who share such a nature, and the Aristotelian scheme of the self which is to achieve good, of good and of pleasure necessarily collapses. There remains only the individual self with its pleasures and pains. So metaphysical nominalism sets constraints upon how the moral life can be conceived. And, conversely, certain types of conceptions of the moral life exclude such nominalism."(1990:138)

That means rethinking metaphysics in a way that is not uncritical but integrated with modern scientific procedures of enquiry. And that is what Lonergan attempts.

CHAPTER FOUR

VALUE, UNDERSTANDING, AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

4.1 Making Sense Of Ethical Naturalism: Lonergan

We have described two ways of reformulating ethical naturalism, MacIntyre's account in terms of social roles, and Simpson's in terms of psychology, the former stressing the contingent historical dimension, and the latter the metaphysical, of any such account of the foundations of ethics. But difficulties arise in both in providing an adequate justification of the standards thus formulated. It will now be argued that in Lonergan's account the ground is prepared for achieving a synthesis of these two approaches.

His arguments for ethical naturalism are presented within the perspective of a massive but carefully constructed cognitional theory, and its extension into a metaphysics and ethics, in the monumental and influential work *Insight* (1957). *Insight* aims at presenting an argument for the compatibility of Thomist philosophy with a modern scientific outlook; his subsequent book, *Method In Theology* (1972), makes greater reference to the discontinuities between his own reworking of the Thomist tradition and the classical account. Both works contain valuable accounts of how ethical naturalism could be reformulated and how it could be justified. Be that as it may, it remains that his ethics is fairly inaccessible. A difficulty with Lonergan is the overly programmatic character of his writing. To catch Lonergan thinking outside the program is rather rare.¹ The architectonic structure of his philosophy and the mesmeric effect of his philosophical slogans can lend itself to mere repetition rather than appropriation. In the following chapter we will look at other authors largely sympathetic to his approach but who deal more directly with the specific topic of our thesis.

Lonergan argues that the traditional categories employed to express our knowledge of the foundational human nature are inappropriate to our age. A better formulation can be arrived at through an analysis of the elements in knowing and the extension of this into the realm of doing. In modern philosophical thinking, however, there is little scope for understanding human nature or being in the sense required. In neither empiricism nor

¹ An 18 page summary of the central argument of the nearly 800 page *Insight* is to be found in the article "Cognitional Theory" (Lonergan, 1967a). It makes however only a brief reference to the application of the theory to ethics. See also Lonergan, 1967b, 1974. The best summary of Lonergan's philosophy, in particular of his ethics, remains that of Meynell (1991). In addition it contains a useful bibliography of studies on Lonergan's thought.

idealism is there an understanding of our nature or being as subjects rather than simply as objects of scientific investigation - in other words, an understanding of the reality of 'subjectivity'.

In contemporary thought, influenced by the prestige of the methods of empirical science, objectivity is contrasted with the subjective. There is the problem of the duality of objective and subjective perspectives, of reality as verified and public, and, on the other hand, as experienced and private. In Lonergan's account, objectivity is, in contrast, the fruit of fidelity to the norms intrinsic to the process of coming to know anything at all, of authentic subjectivity. Debates on the nature of knowledge have been dominated by either empiricism or rationalism, the former stressing the role of sense-experience, the latter the role of ideas, in the constitution of knowledge. Little attention has been paid to the role of that further questioning which regards not the possible intelligibility to be found in the object of enquiry, its nature or form, but the truth or otherwise of such intelligibility, the extent to which it actually applies - the role of judgment. And this latter notion brings one to an immediate awareness of the unity of the subject, of agency. Judgment, more so than perception or understanding, is clearly a matter of a certain *quality* of performance, a norm to be attained in an ever deeper way. To a question of this latter type, expressed not as 'What is it?' but 'Is it so?', one can always answer that the evidence is not yet sufficient to form a judgment. That itself is a judgment. In such a case, and when one does judge that the understanding mooted is indeed true, probably so or certainly, one commits oneself.

"The variety of possible answers...closes the door on possible excuses for mistakes. A judgment is the responsibility of the one that judges. It is a personal commitment."(Lonergan, 1970:272)

And this leads to a consideration of what the content of such responsibility could be, of a possible norm or standard and its necessary elements. When one judges one is questioning the extent to which one's understanding covers the data. At the heart of knowing is the act of understanding, the insight that grasps the intelligibility in what is presented to the senses. But intelligence is not enough, for without attentiveness to the full range of data the theory will be biased. Furthermore, to pass judgment on what one does not understand is arrogant; while to understand but not to subject one's understanding to critical judgment is, as Lonergan says, "quite literally silly":

"it is only by judgment that there emerges a distinction between fact and fiction, logic and sophistry, philosophy and myth, history and legend, astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy."(1967:223)

Human knowing consists then in the threefold process of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Insofar as one follows the norm of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness, one is knowing.

Furthermore understanding objectivity in terms of a quality of performance leads to the further question of the extent to which one is conscious of and responsibly applying this norm. To objectify this further dimension of our nature as a task, is to understand oneself as responsible not just for one part of oneself (say, for one's passions) but for oneself as a subject, that is, for oneself *as* responsible. One has the capacity not simply to be a knower, that is, as argued above in brief, to stand back and interrogate one's own ideas, but also to be a responsible doer, that is, to consent to or withhold consent from, any particular desire according to one's judgment of its worth to guide one's own course of action. To objectify this capacity (Lonergan's term is 'self-transcendence') is to know the foundation for moral judgments. And it is an understanding which is achieved not by observing one's behaviour 'from the outside' but by a heightening of one's presence to oneself. Here one attends not to data of sense but to data relating to one's conscious activity of being an agent. It is a matter of attending to one's activities as a knower and a doer, understanding them, and affirming the dynamic normative structure understood to be at work to be true. Although the structure operates without our necessarily being aware of it, at least in the more non-challenging areas of our lives, what is understood as the moral life is based on a conscious decision to adopt, more or less, such a norm, that is, on

"deciding to operate in accord with the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of one's experienced, understood, affirmed experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding." (Lonergan, 1972:15)

The norm may be formulated by means of the precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.(1972:20)

To some extent this norm of self-transcendence is universally operative. But without attention to it, our understanding of good will be truncated. Either one will focus on spontaneous desires, and arrive at some form of emotivism or utilitarianism, or on the social order that systematizes the satisfactions of such desires for the many, and some form of rule- or duty-based ethic will be the result. But both the good of the ideal or social necessities and the good that one spontaneously affirms as object of one's desires, are based on certain goals or values bound up with the ordinary patterns - biological, artistic, intellectual, social - of one's life. Failure to advert to such patterns and their underlying norm will result in either an abstract and unreasonable individualism or else a loss of the moral dimension, as in some forms of Marxism, in favour of a one-sided concern with social order. And such a failure is bound up with mistaken views of human knowing: unless

one acknowledges besides sensation and besides understanding, not simply some combination of these two but the foundational movement of distancing oneself from oneself, most evident in judging, then one is unlikely to acknowledge that valid reasoning can proceed from the facts of our ordinary living and its fragile unity, to conclusions of value. As all reasoning has been considered abstracted from its context and in terms of further ungrounded canons of induction, deduction, and verification, so practical reasoning too would be considered abstracted from the context of living and the nature of the intending subject, proceeding by means of further ungrounded rules perhaps of duty or else the felicific calculus.

To understand human nature as subject, to affirm the dimension of subjectivity in the sense in which it has been here described, is to affirm an understanding of human nature characteristic of modern rather than classical consciousness. As noted above in Chapter One the modern period is characterized by the loss of the sense of a predetermined place in the cosmos; by an awareness of cultures other than that of Europe; by the awareness of historical change within a single society; by the imperative, thrust upon us by the availability of the appropriate technology, to choose our life-style, to remake our environment. The upshot of these changes has been the emergence of a heightened sense of 'subjectivity'. All that we do today, the little and the great events, is photographed or otherwise recorded, for our self-scrutiny, our further consideration. The centrality of an abstract concept of human nature is gradually replaced by an historical awareness of how human beings *see* themselves in different periods, what they value, how they create meaning. One's nature is to participate in forming history, modifying and transcending to some extent all determining causes, not only in the 'large' ways such as political revolution but also in every act of deliberate choice.

The classical view, in contrast, sees human nature as the same everywhere and always, contrasting the abstract and universal truths with the concrete and particular instantiations. Casuistry is the application of the universal truths about human nature (metaphysical and moral) to particular cases. But as the word *casus* indicates, the particular is inexplicable except by the stipulation of a chance occurrence, the way things chance to fall, and what is a chance occurrence is not subject to scientific explanation: the laws of human nature are not subject to change. Human consciousness is biased towards the formulation of an idea of human nature in terms appropriate to one culture only, but is unaware of such bias which is indicated in the neglect, in such formulation, of any account of the cultural (and historical) *variation* in the pattern of particulars characteristic of human behaviour.

A good example is the way in which the place that sex occupies on the moral map has, in classical ethics, been taken to be a constant. The writings of Foucault have served to disabuse us of that notion: modern conceptions differ radically from those of ancient Greece. In that culture, Foucault points out, male homosexuality, for example, was not in itself considered 'unnatural'. What might have been considered unnatural (and thus wrong) in such a relationship would have been the 'unmanly' attitude of passivity on the part of one of the couple, less likely in the case of (controlling) man and (controlled) woman. (1985:esp.187ff) It is therefore unclear how the understanding of human nature used as a standard in one culture could be compared with a different concept of a normative human nature in another culture. It becomes commonplace, for example, that while Athens saw human nature as essentially social, modern Europe is characterized by individualism. The heightened historical awareness seems to undermine objectivity in ethics.

Lonergan's ethics is a response to this situation. The empiricist concept of objectivity implies a duality of the subject and her perspective (her needs and desires) and those of others. But to affirm oneself as morally self-transcendent is to affirm oneself as orientated towards an end which is *truly* good, i.e. one which takes into consideration the reality of the other's intentionality, their needs and desires too. To affirm one's nature as a good to be pursued, is to affirm this as objectively so, i.e. from anyone's perspective. We can say what pertains not just to 'my' reality, but to 'our' nature. And the conditions for the flourishing of the collective subject in a plural society are largely neglected in the classical account of ethical naturalism, as Lonergan explains (1972, Ch 2).

Human operations in general, he argues, are mostly related to their objects only mediately: as imagination, language and symbols are acquired our performance of operations relates in the first place to the image, word and symbol, and only mediately to the object represented. In this way our horizon of operations is not confined to the world of our immediate surroundings and to the present time, as is largely the case with a child, but includes also "the past, the future, the merely possible or ideal or normative or fantastic".(1972:28) Feelings too are subject to some extent to regulation by meaning. Apart from non-intentional states such as tiredness, irritability, bad humour, and so on, some feelings respond to what is represented. One may feel not only hungry but hopeful, not only tired but fearful, one trusts or distrusts, loves, hates, and so on. We respond to values, to a good person, to moral evil.

Furthermore, he continues, one can chart a general cultural development in terms of how such mediation is conceived. Lonergan defines a lower culture as one lacking controls over meaning, with a consequent tendency to magical and mythical understanding of operations.

A higher culture is one that "develops reflexive techniques that operate on the mediate operations themselves in an effort to safeguard meaning."(1972:28) Thus for example dictionaries and grammars fix the meanings of words and their combinations, while logic promotes rigour of argument. *Classical* cultures think of the control of meaning "as a universal fixed for all time", while for modern culture the controls are themselves subject to development.

Aristotle considered this social mediation of human operations as part and parcel of human nature, but in the modern period 'nature' has come to designate the *pre*-human dimension of reality, and is contrasted with the social and historical.

"History, then, differs radically from nature. Nature unfolds in accord with law. But the shape and form of human knowledge, work, social organization, cultural achievement, communication, community, personal development, are involved in meaning. Meaning has its invariant structures and elements but the contents in the structures are subject to cumulative development and cumulative decline. So it is that man stands outside the rest of nature, that he is a historical being, that each man shapes his own life but does so only in interaction with the traditions of the communities in which he happens to have been born and, in turn, these traditions themselves are but the deposit left him by the lives of his predecessors."(1972:81)

Here Lonergan suggests a new way of interpreting the social mediation of human actions. In Aristotle the 'invariant structures' of meaning are specified according to controls thought of as unchanging, in terms of law. But the modern dichotomy of 'natural' and 'historical' leaves meaning without any structures at all, and ethics without foundation. We need therefore to build upon the Aristotelian understanding of human behaviour as circumscribed by 'the way things are by nature', but without adhering to the categories in which he expressed this naturalism, i.e. in terms of a faculty psychology. The genius of statistical science, in contrast to classical science, to be considered in 4.3 below, lies in its ability to give an account of regularities which pertain to our *experienced* reality. It is able to capture the nature of the social influences which constitute the making of humanity. And it is only mistaken conceptions of human knowing, argues Lonergan, which understand these influences in a deterministic way, overlooking the underlying dynamic and normative structure of human knowing and doing, our capacity to be self-transcending.

This new awareness of what we are is not one abstracted from and contrasted with all historical particulars, but rooted in those very circumstances. The understanding of 'our' (i.e. intersubjective) nature, is of a subject's precarious self-creation; it is concerned with the intimate reality of the subject as making himself or herself by his or her actual choices. It is a knowledge which only comes about through the other person revealing what he or she is, and by coming to know oneself through the other person.

Lonergan argues in *Insight* that an adequate account of how judgments of value are founded on knowledge of human nature will have to address the three issues of

- * the general method of ethics, derived from the nature of such notions as good, will, value, obligation;
- * the actual knowledge of human nature;
- * the justification of this foundation through a consideration of the question of the possibility of the realization of essential human freedom.

We turn now to consider each of these topics in turn, in the light of the above remarks on Lonergan's analysis of the kind of knowledge of human nature that is foundational for moral judgments.

4.2 Good As Value

The notion of the good derives from the way our living takes place not in some framework which is neutral towards our intentions, but within various patterns. The notion of a sensation in the abstract is a fiction; immanent in our experience there is always the factor "variously named conation, interest, attention, purpose". (Lonergan, 1970:182) In sleeping and eating a biological drive is operative; in play and song nothing other than an intention to enjoy the experience; and so on. As we live we have to do with ends or goals; the experience is teleologically organized. Lonergan relates the notion of the moral good to what he calls the "dramatic pattern of experience": in ordinary human living our activities - eating, drinking, wearing of clothes, sexual activity - have, besides biological purposes, the goal of living not just adequately but enjoyably, with dignity and to some purpose. Moral reasoning is the application of the set of transcendent norms to the business of living intelligently, considerately, and well.

We reach values when we question our courses of action (our commitments): the possibility of objective moral judgments is based on our capacity for performing a set of operations that constitutes moral self-transcendence. That capacity is our nature or 'kind of being'. As we have seen, in Lonergan's analysis of ethics nature is *contrasted* with the historical; nevertheless he does affirm an objective norm for human living. And it is this norm of being human that grounds the categorical 'ought'. Bound up with the empiricist notion of objectivity, on the other hand, is an understanding of rational standards of enquiry which makes no reference to the structure of the subject's intentionality; it follows that on this account no meaning could be assigned to the notion of reasonableness in judging matters relating to human ends, bar that which was restricted to questions of effectiveness. But empiricism is mistaken, as shall be shown in the following section.

It is the fact that this 'nature' is implicitly or explicitly affirmed in every judgment about possible courses of action that allows one to speak coherently of moral objectivity. While in Aristotle the foundation of judgments of value lies in what he refers to as the virtuous person, for Lonergan this role is played by the self-transcending subject. In judging X to be a value, one implicitly or explicitly affirms the norm of self-transcendence for oneself, and the value of growing in accordance with this norm. One takes a stance with respect to one's own desires or scale of preferences. By judging that something 'ought' to be done, or to be avoided, one affirms one's nature as able-to-value, and as able to bring about the good. Clearly in the absence of any such understanding of human nature as normative, there could be no licit passing from certain factual considerations about the situation, its consequences, etc, to values. Such reasoning begins to make sense once one comes to a realization that one "not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an unauthentic one."(Lonergan, 1972:38) The process of practical reasoning participates in the movement of the subject towards moral, and not simply cognitive, self-transcendence. A judgment of value is not a performance. But it is "a reality in the moral order"; for by it,

"the subject moves beyond pure and simple knowing. By it the subject is constituting himself as proximately capable of moral self-transcendence, of benevolence and beneficence, of true loving."(1972:37)

Value is intended when we ask what to do, or what is worthwhile doing. In practical reasoning we grasp a possible course of action. Mostly this will be in accordance with roles to which we are accustomed. Nevertheless we do not fill such roles without understanding their point. Clearly routine courses of action might not be the best in view of considerations of justice, happiness, and so on. Thus further questions arise for reflection, to the extent at least that one is prepared to assume responsibility for the consequences of one's non-routine action.

One may question the object of one's intended action, its consequences, alternatives, feasibility, and so on. One may also question one's motives for the proposed course of action. Does one find it agreeable, or alternatively disagreeable but with other compensating factors? Does the worth of the proposal rest on its usefulness, and usefulness for what? One may turn to considerations of the relationship of the proposed action to the social order. If it doesn't fit into any normal scheme of cooperation, is it egoistic, or alternatively does it initiate some improvement in ways of cooperating. Does the social order need improving? One may question also the strength of one's willingness or otherwise to perform the action. A habit enables me to perform more easily what needs to be done. But might not my habits be improved? "Are the values to which they commit me

true or false?" Am I blind to the larger implications of my action or way of living? (1972:610-11) As Meynell comments,

"the individual's intelligence and reasonableness enable him to conceive a general good, in which the fulfilment of his own needs and desires has some place, though not a unique or exclusive one."(1991:115)

Meynell himself develops the argument that adherence to the transcendental precepts is a necessary condition for reaching the truth of the matter not only in the field of science but also in practical deliberations. He gives the example of trying to understand whether or not his daughter is made happy as a result of what he does or says. The truth is not simply intuited: it is a matter of observing her behaviour, considering in which ways that behaviour might be accounted for, and of coming to a reasonable assessment of the plausibility of such accounts in the light of the evidence. Is she really unhappy, or is she shamming? Is it the case that she is in the habit of shamming, her expression changing abruptly when she thinks she is no longer being observed, and so on?

"In the everyday case of the kind relevant to morality, as in the scientific and historical cases, I am liable to err so far as I fail to attend to the evidence available to my sense, or so far as I fail to think up a sufficiently wide range of ways in which it might be accounted for, or so far as I fail to select from within that range the hypothesis which best does justice to the evidence."(Meynell, 1981:18)

The knowledge one has is a knowledge of how to set oneself against those tendencies within us deriving from our personal or social situation and history, to overlook part of the available evidence relevant to a decision, or one of the possible explanations for it, and so on. "Sloth, fear, desire for comfort, love of power, even a half-conscious relish for the sufferings of other people" may impose blocks on our reasonableness, or on how well we apply ourselves in considering how best to interpret the evidence. Meynell's example (1981:18) is of a university teacher who has taught the same course in the same way year after year. Will the suggestions of a student about the relevance of a certain new book to the course be fairly considered, in particular if that book offers a perspective which will involve a radical reshaping of the whole structure of the course? Or will the temptation be to 'forget' what the student has said, or to attribute to the student the conceited intention to take his teacher down a peg? Clearly to the extent that I keep in mind the dialectical analysis of which Lonergan speaks, the norm of reasonableness and the information that is available to me about the need to practice the virtues of attentiveness and intelligence, and about the imperfection in my own past practices in this regard, or that of people in general, derived from moral traditions, myths, literature of all sorts, religions, to that extent am I likely to set myself against such biases. And once I *understand* clearly what the best, most worth-while and reasonable, thing is to do, then I am more than likely to put it into effect.

In contemporary understanding, in both individualist and more communitarian conceptions of human behaviour and its well-springs, there is an oversight of the extent to which such understanding is a necessary, if not sufficient, element in the authenticity and freedom that characterize human life at its best.

The possibility of ethics stems from our willingness to implement what we understand, to put into practice what we know. In his chapter on ethics in *Insight* Lonergan discusses this willingness in terms of consistency between knowing and doing (1970:598ff); in *Method In Theology* it is analysed by means of the notions of self-transcendence and authenticity. The latter terms clarify the former. The notion of authenticity has its origin in the idea of 'genuineness' introduced in the context of a discussion of human development in the earlier book, and to which we will return later.(1970:475-9; below, 4.3) The term is to be preferred over 'consistency between intellect and will' in spite of its subjectivist connotations.(Cf Murdoch, 1970) Indeed to fail to found ethics in some such notion as genuineness may be to fail to acknowledge historicity, and in this way to overlook the full dimensions of human freedom. The term authenticity refers to the quality of one's relation to oneself, considered as a project, to the depth of one's commitment to personal or moral development. In making such considerations fundamental to morality, Lonergan avoids any possibility of his foundational notion of self-transcendence being misunderstood as a rationalist conception. The self-appropriation at the heart of ethics includes as fundamental an affective dimension. The understanding has to grasp above all the central and enduring human drive to moral development. There is no question of a rationalistic superstructure being imposed (for example, for social reasons) upon a pre-rational set of natural desires. The achievement of a disposition to take not only one's own but also the needs and desires of others into account, is at the same time the fulfilment of one's affectivity.

The norm of self-consistency or authenticity is evident in the common enough ways in which it may be denied or its sting drawn. Clearly one can avoid the knowledge of self, of one's real motives, that is necessary for developing one's consent to what is truly of value. "How much simpler," Lonergan remarks, "to pour oneself out in 'worth while' external activity and, if praise and blame must be administered, then administer them not to oneself but to others."(1970:599) Or one can construe one's action in terms of a false consistency, a rationalisation. Finally one might fall into despair about the possibility of moral living at all.

Furthermore, in the course of our development we may develop blocks to our understanding of the good in certain areas of our living. Before one is an adult one's character is being formed by a process in which deliberate choice plays only a minor part.

Prior to conscious deliberation one's behaviour is patterned according to a particular arrangement. We are liable to accord our own individual needs and commitments or those of our group an unjustified priority, at the expense of what may later be recognized as the equally legitimate claims of others. Indeed our terms of reference, our ideals, may at the worst be patterned so as to exclude those claims of others, and social conflict is the result. We may fail to unblock any obstacle to psychological integration acquired in the course of our preconscious and self-conscious development, and some or other form of neurosis will be the result. In both these ways our common-sense is robbed to some extent of the intersubjective dimension to human living and growth in self-knowledge is stunted.

Besides insight, then, there is what Lonergan terms the phenomenon of a 'flight from understanding'. The norm of intelligence is ineffective and our imagination fails to throw up the full range of possible courses of action; the norm of reasonableness is inoperative and we conclude incorrectly that a particular action is worth-while. Our appropriation of our rational self-consciousness is not equally secure in all areas of our life. But the failure to govern our lives by the intelligent thing to do in the light of our desires and values is to invite psychic disintegration; on the social level the result of a failure to adhere to the norm is not simply the maintenance of whatever social order happens to be the status-quo but also long term decline and exacerbated group conflict.

Our needs and desires are patterned within various spheres of life. The particular good refers to the anticipated satisfactions of individual participants in the patterns. We may also grasp possible orders for the *systematic* achievement of the general good, expressed by means of a body of moral rules. Neither can be said to be more basic than the other. Both are grounded in our own possible transformation to acknowledge and follow the truly good. To will the latter is to adopt my particular good, the good of the social order, and of my own transformation, *as values*.

"Each choice we make, whether of a true value or of a false, modifies our habitual willing and our effective orientation in the world, and so our contribution to progress or decline."(Meynell, 1991:124)

The human good is achieved then through a process which is in an important sense a self-creation. Most of what we seek to achieve is possible only through cooperation. The social order assigns roles to participants and those roles are filled either freely and intelligently or reluctantly and with resentment.

"The process is not merely the service of man; it is above all the making of man, his advance in authenticity, the fulfillment of his affectivity, and the direction of his work to the particular goods and a good of order that are worth while."(Lonergan, 1972:52)

The notion of the good of value is not the adding together of the good of the group and of the individual. Common-sense relates things to us; but there is also the question of what is *really* so, of the truly good, not simply seemingly so. Individual bias is corrected by asking, what about other individuals? Group bias is corrected by asking, what about other groups? In both cases, one is asking after the truly good. And thus one needs also to attend to moral development, which is founded on the asking of the above questions. In our everyday living rules are indispensable, but so is a sense of how my group is placed within the broader human community. Psychic adjustment is good and its reward is health; social reform is good, and justice is its fruit.

The basic criterion for value is then the fulfilment of our human nature, and this is seen to include the element of justice (cf below, 5.2). Rather than there being in our natural desires an obstacle to the recognition of the needs and desires of others, moral values are affirmed by Lonergan as what one truly *wants*. When we reach beyond the data and mere ideas to judge the truth, we know that we know the truth, i.e. we know something about the range of our own intellectual grasp (cognitional self-transcendence). When we reach value, we *affirm ourselves* as aiming at something (moral self-transcendence). The self in both cases that is known and affirmed is by nature affectively oriented. One consents to being a certain kind of person (not simply to having true ideas, or valuable projects). This affective dimension is thereby appropriated, and more attention is paid to this in *Method In Theology* than is the case in *Insight*, where the desires are treated to a large extent only as obstacles to the achievement of rationality (but see below, 4.3, on the tensions of development). Our feelings respond only ambiguously to objects of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, of the agreeable or disagreeable (what is agreeable or satisfying may not be what is the truly worth-while, but only appear so), but the ambiguity can be resolved because we have deep, enduring feelings which are unambiguous. These, what Lonergan terms "apprehensions of value", respond to what we are by nature (the law in us by nature), to objects of true value. Our *lasting* feelings regard personal value. We desire personal growth and integration, and by the same token, truly mutual personal community.

In the following section we will argue that the self is properly understood in terms of the categories not of the natural sciences alone, nor of these *plus* those of mind, but in terms of those of intentionality. And such categories apply in all three dimensions of human being, intellectual, volitional, and affective. In other words, our affectivity, and not only our thinking and willing, is oriented towards objects of value. This third and fundamental dimension of self-transcendence - and its intersubjective conditions - is further elucidated by Johann (below, 5.3).

Lonergan likens his explanation of the foundation for moral reasoning, which he calls transcendental method, to the psychotherapeutic facilitation of the appropriation of one's feelings: just as such appropriation is blocked by a mistaken view of what one spontaneously is, so the method is blocked by misconceptions of human knowing. (1972: 34, note 6) And this is the topic of the following section. According to emotivist theories of ethics, there can be no such knowledge of human nature as is here mooted. For it could not be verified. What people in general need and desire is an empirical matter and could not in any way be considered a moral norm. The analysis of human understanding in *Insight* shows that this view is mistaken.

4.3 Scientific Method, Retortion, And The Precepts Of Self-Transcendence

How is one to make sense of this notion of human nature in a scientific age? What is needed is an account which places this kind of knowledge on a map of the modern understanding of science and common sense, and thus makes possible a response to the problematic discussed above in terms of Nagel's subjective-objective distinction. This, in part, is the intention of Lonergan in *Insight*. He argues, as we have mentioned before, that the empiricist conception of objectivity is not a fully coherent one. And he does so by referring to actual empirical method.

Lonergan's cognitional theory, built upon the methods of contemporary science, is a highly nuanced explanation of how empirical investigation is related to the kind of understanding of human agency that is foundational for judgments of moral value. He distinguishes what he calls 'classical' method from statistical, and argues for their complementarity. Both are further distinguished from the genetic method applicable to the study of living things and their development. All explanations of method assume that an understanding can be reached of an objective set of norms by which our understanding may be judged adequate, and this is a kind of self-knowledge, or knowledge of cognitional self-transcendence, which can be extended into the realm of doing and thereby provide a foundation for any further judgments of value.

Scientific explanation relates terms not to the subject but to one another (the difference between, for example, 'heaviness' and mass, or 'hot' and 'cold' and temperature), and is pronounced true to the extent that it thereby accounts for the data. Thereby two distinct questions are distinguished and related, the question for intelligence, What is it?, What is its nature?, and the question for reflection, Is it so?, To what extent is it so? To grasp the connections which explain the diverse observed phenomena is to perform an act of insight, while grasping that to some extent the theory does not apply is related to what Lonergan calls "inverse insight". There will necessarily always be data that remain unaccounted for,

since the theory abstracts from the particularities of the here and now (the laws of chemistry often do not work when we try them in the laboratory), and these constitute an empirical residue, inviting explanation on a higher level of systematization.

It follows that two types of laws may be formulated and verified, classical and statistical. Although for a long time classical method, the method of Galileo, Newton, of Clark-Maxwell and Einstein, was considered the unique mode of scientific investigation, this changed with the development of quantum mechanics, in which the basic *axioms* are statistical. The conjugates of classical science are determined by asking and answering the question, What is it? What is its functional equation? But besides such questions there are also those that ask simply, Are there...? An *event* is the answer to such a question, when the answer is affirmative. Such questions are answered simply by 'yes' or 'no'. Probability expectations or statistical laws are formulations that answer the question, How often?, and they are verifiable by appealing to actual frequencies.

It can be concluded from this that all forms of determinism are mistaken. For there is no one set of (classical) laws to which scientific explanation aspires. Classical laws do not determine reality, for reality is always particular; but they do *apply* to reality. They operate according to the deductively valid argument, *If A, then B. But A. Therefore B.* Clearly however there are always conditions which have to be met before one can say that A will occur, and thus before B will occur. Such conditions are investigated by statistical method. They form a cluster of facts which is random, not a systematic unity but simply a coincidental aggregate. Statistical method grasps something real: the probability of particular events actually occurring; and unless the classical laws are denied those events *will* indeed sooner or later occur as stated in the probability fraction. Statistics is not therefore a mere cloak for ignorance about the actual (classical) laws operating in any phenomenon, still to be discovered. Nor is the nonsystematic indeterminate. It can be assigned a probability fraction, an ideal frequency. From this ideal frequency actual frequencies can be expected to diverge but not systematically (this non-systematic divergence is chance, and *is* indeterminate). (Cf McShane, 1970:125-6)

The two methods, classical and statistical, are complementary. Classical science proceeds by interpreting the data in terms of laws and functions; and statistical science assigns probability ratios to the empirical residue. The various sciences operate autonomously on their particular levels, not being reducible to one fundamental science. And each level of science corresponds to a real level of reality, characterized by a dynamic power by which the manifold pronounced 'statistical' on a lower level is variously organized.

The upshot of this understanding of scientific explanation is that there can, in the nature of things, be real development, an emergence which is creative in the sense that it could not be predicted in advance from classical laws alone. In nature, as well as in human affairs, there are to be found cycles of regularly interacting and codetermining occurrences, what Lonergan terms schemes of recurrence. The ecological pyramid is a series of such schemes or cycles, with the higher cycle (animal life) only occurring if the lower cycles are already operative (plant life and chemical processes) but not vice versa. The higher emerges according to probability fractions; what is probable sooner or later occurs, given large enough numbers and sufficiently long time-scales. This then explains one aspect of the puzzle of evolution, namely the possibility of something more being created from or emerging from something less. To the extent that the laws explaining the lower levels are not fully determinative of what occurs, there is, at that lower level, real potential (determined by the probability fractions) for further development. As Lonergan writes:

"There can be autonomous sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology, because on each earlier level of systematization there are statistical residues that constitute the merely coincidental manifolds to be systematized on the next level. It follows that higher laws and higher schemes of recurrence cannot be deduced from lower laws and lower schemes of recurrence, for the higher is engaged in regulating what the lower leaves as merely coincidental. Moreover, since there are statistical residues on every level, it follows that events on any given level cannot be deduced in systematic fashion from the combination of all the laws and all the schemes of recurrence of that and of all prior levels."(1970:608)

Such are the elements in empirical method, as it is found in mathematics and natural science. Much from the first five chapters of *Insight* has been left out. But enough has been said to justify the suggestion that common conceptions of the conflict between our ideas of teleology and the assumptions of scientific method might be mistaken. Lonergan expresses an understanding of 'nature' of the kind we noted (with McDermott) was typically Thomistic (above, 2.3), that is, in terms of viability within an habitable ecosystem. According to Lonergan the understanding of the reality of emergence indicates that a further stipulation of empirical method is necessary, one which takes development as its specific object of enquiry; this method, genetic, is appropriate to the study of living things. One can consider the development of any organism from the moment of conception. The classical laws that can be verified in the fertilized ovum are not identical with those verified in the adult organism.

"One set of conjugate forms has given place to another. The process from one set to the other is regular. But this regular process is not in accord with classical law, for there are no classical laws about changes of classical laws; nor is it in accord with statistical law, for it is not an indifferent choice

between a set of alternative processes; and so one is forced to recognize the fact of a third type of process to be investigated by a third, genetic method."
(Lonergan, 1970:481-2)

Plant, animal and human life differ according to the complexity of the development of each, from the single development of the organism in the case of a plant, to the threefold development of organism, psyche, and intelligence in the case of human beings.

We are concerned here only with the implications of this perspective for human development. One's development may be initiated on the organic level, as with the transition from baby to toddler to child, and as biological needs call for the construction of housing and systems of food production; or the psychic, as when one is stimulated to reconsider one's urban life-style after the experience of the quiet of a week in the country; or the intellectual, when one conceives first of a problem in present modes of living and employs one's intelligence to find an solution. Whatever the case, unless there is a corresponding adjustment on the other levels, one's attempt to strike out anew is bound to remain merely a flash in the pan. For example, to the pressure of material necessity one may make adjustments in one's behaviour, at best, as Lonergan says, tolerated by the inner subject. Again, the demands of the organism are registered by neural signals, "but the signals need an interpreter and the interpreter an intelligent and willing pupil."(1970:472) Finally, an excellent resolution can be frustrated because one's imagination is full of schemes of living that allow scant place for such an ideal and one lives then not a new but only a dual life.

To the problem of human development there is no facile solution in the intellectual level integrating the psychic, and the psychic the organic. For one cannot say the pure spirit of enquiry, the ineradicable and pure desire to understand that is the clue to the whole thesis of *Insight*, is the true 'I' while the sensitive psyche is an 'It' on which one may operate as an object.

"Both are I and neither is merely It. If my intelligence is mine, so is my sexuality. If my reasonableness is mine, so are my dreams."(Lonergan, 1970:474)

There arises then "the necessity of avoiding conflict between the unconscious and the conscious components of a development." This necessity can be formulated by means of the term, genuineness. To adopt genuineness as a norm is to acknowledge in one's development the tension between transcendence and the limitations of that transcendence due to the existence of relatively autonomous schemes of recurrence compounding the human self. To fail to acknowledge this tension is to block any further sustainable development.

The question of the possibility of slow but thorough development and the norm of genuineness brings us to the role of a further, philosophical or dialectical treatment of the human subject. Besides scientific method, classical, statistical and genetic, there is philosophy: there is reflection on our conscious acts. And indeed our analysis of the insufficiency of classical laws alone, and of the insufficiency of statistical laws alone, is a matter of saying that besides understanding there is the question of judgment, that answering the question, Is it so?, makes no sense out of the context of the question, What is it?, and the whole analysis of the interdependence of such inquiries is not scientific but philosophical. This type of understanding is presupposed in any reflection on science. The method, philosophy, yields a conclusion, a norm of what it is to know. Similarly we may arrive at a norm for human agency. Human development, indeed, is properly expressed as the achievement of what is truly of value. The dominant conception of standards of rational enquiry is not a coherent one. According to such a conception, objectivity is achieved by as far as possible excluding aims and purposes from one's enquiry. Lonergan has shown how all scientific enquiry presupposes that there is a norm for human behaviour on the cognitional level. This norm is adopted as a value by the scientist insofar as he or she is being responsible. Meynell (1981) explains this well.

Any enquiry into an event, of whatever nature, he argues, will have as its goal one of two basic types of explanation. On the one hand it could be properly explained in terms of its causes; such is the case when one's object of enquiry is something like a hailstorm or an attack of measles. When on the other hand one seeks to understand human action the usual explanation would be in terms of purposes: "Why did he spray those roses?' 'Because he was trying to kill the greenfly on them.'" (1981:9) The first kind Meynell proposes to call 'type A explanation' and the second 'type B explanation'. Clearly traditional ethical naturalism relies on an understanding of 'nature' in terms of a dynamism, moving towards an end, for which type B explanation seems to apply. It is equally clear, as Meynell points out, that explanation B is a type of more primitive approach to explaining natural phenomena, and has been rejected in the natural sciences, even in the case of biology. But it is not clear that the same trend should, as proposed for example by Skinner, be applied as far as is possible to the study of human action too.

Meynell argues that behaviourism of any kind cannot be held without self-contradiction. "Does scientific explanation bid fair to rule out or render out of date or superfluous explanation in terms of agents, their motives and purposes?" He answers no. For on what grounds should the scientific world-view itself be accepted?

"The answer is, presumably, because human investigators, over the course of several centuries, have come to assert its constituent propositions as a

result of having tested them by means of observation and experiment, against their rivals. To have done this, they must *deliberately* have carried out the experiments and made the observations, *in order to* determine whether the propositions in question were probably or certainly true. But such a process is certainly a matter of agents acting in accordance with motives and purposes, in fact, of what is subject to B explanation. Thus to rule out B explanation, allegedly because it was incompatible with the scientific world-view, would in fact be to rule out the possibility of oneself, or anyone else, accepting the scientific world-view because there was good reason for him to do so."(Meynell, 1981:12)

Thus the argument is self-destructive. One cannot both hold to the scientific world-view and (consistently) hold that it rules out explanation in terms of purposes and the like. But Meynell makes the further point that nothing is said here about the relation between the two types of explanation, that the one is, or is not, in some or other fashion reducible to the other and so on. It is sufficient for the purposes of establishing the validity of the kind of knowledge that is needed for ethical naturalism to state only that in principle type B explanation is not mistaken.

It is by reflecting on the human person as subject of science, its creator, rather than as its object, that we understand how there is an understanding of human behaviour that is foundational, yet non-scientific, and unrevisable in its essentials. There is a basic purpose or set of purposes that human beings have by nature rather than by choice. Lonergan has drawn our attention to the role of the further question for reflection and judgment, Is it so?, complementing the question for intelligence, What is it?, and of the consequent complementarity of classical and statistical methods of enquiry in one scientific enterprise. As long as knowing is thought of in terms of sense-experience, knowing is likely to be misunderstood as something happening to the subject, and human behaviour in general will be thought to be explicable by means of type A explanation. The element of judgment in knowledge brings out more clearly the active role of the subject. One knows by conforming to the standard of reasonableness in judgment. The same standard applies to the case of understanding what it is to be a subject. One can reasonably affirm oneself to be a knower. One judges that this understanding of oneself is a reasonable one. To deny it would be to contradict oneself, and that would be unreasonable.

"Am I a knower? The answer, Yes, is coherent, for if I am a knower, I can know that fact. But the answer, No, is incoherent, for if I am not a knower, how could the question be raised and answered by me? No less, the hedging answer, I do not know, is incoherent. For if I know that I do not know, then I should not answer."(Lonergan, 1970:329)

What is the content of this standard of knowing? Lonergan argues that knowing consists in the threefold activity of experiencing, understanding and judging. These three basic

elements in knowing are, in an important sense, undeniable without self-contradiction. However interesting one's ideas if they are not founded on experience one is merely dreaming. But however broad one's experience without understanding it is mere gaping. Finally unless one subjects one's understanding to critical judgment and moves from entertaining an idea to affirming it, either as probably true or more certainly so, one remains in the realm of speculation. All three together constitute knowing. Meynell comments:

"Suppose someone were to say that he knows that it is not the case that one comes to know by attending to evidence, by thinking out possible explanations for it, and judging as certainly or probably true the explanation which best fits the evidence. Is his claim to knowledge justified? If it is, it can only be because he (or perhaps his authority) has attended to the evidence which bears on the subject; has envisaged the possible explanations for this evidence; and judged to be so the explanation that best fits the evidence. In what else could such justification consist?"(1981:15)

The denial of the truth of this account of the structure is therefore self-destructive. If one is justified in disputing it, one's argument contradicts itself. If not, the argument does not merit serious consideration.

This capacity to know what is the case from anyone's perspective is 'cognitive self-transcendence'. Furthermore, in judgments of value we reflect on the worth of our own desires or aspirations, and the capacity to withhold consent from one's desires (or alternatively to follow those desires), according to one's judgment of their relative worth, constitutes 'moral self-transcendence'. To allow the operation of one's judgment to influence one's behaviour is to act responsibly rather than irresponsibly. Such is the case with holding and asserting that something is true because one believes on good grounds that it is in point of fact true, and not, for example, because such assertion would please one's listener.

The existence of moral self-transcendence cannot be denied without that denial being self-destructive. Either it is held to be implausible on the basis of a responsible decision to assert what is indeed believed on good grounds to be true, in which case the assertion contradicts the performance, or else there is no reason to take it seriously. I follow what is good to do (in this example, what is it is right to believe and assert) not just from my perspective but by the nature of things. Once the unity and relations of the elements in self-transcendence are formulated, they are found to be simply the routines that characterize our conscious living and doing. The norm operates, in an important sense, spontaneously. It cannot be set aside without, as Lonergan puts it, "amputating our own moral personality, our own reasonableness, our own intelligence, our own sensitivity."(1972:18)

A more technical term for the role played by philosophy in the study of human agency is that of 'dialectical analysis', or more commonly, that of retortion. Retortion is a technique which demonstrates that the attempt to deny something involves one in an inconsistency: the content of what is denied is involved in the act of denial itself, and thus at the same time as explicitly denied it is implicitly affirmed. (Cf Arndt, 1987:47) Any conclusion reached through retortion is unrevisable in its essential elements (though not of course in its expression). For any revision would have to appeal to those elements that are being denied as necessary and constituent of the conclusion. Thus there would be a contradiction between performance and what is explicitly stated. Thus 'self-referential consistency' (the term is Moleski's) is a norm and well-spring of thought, as well as of human activity in general.

'Dialectic' names any process which is determined by linked but opposing principles. In our case we have the determining distinctions between attentiveness and mere gaping, between being intelligent and merely interesting or else dull, between reasonableness in one's conclusions and merely speculative, between responsible action and that which is blind and unmotivated. Lonergan further stipulates the dialectic in terms of basic philosophical positions on knowing, reality, and objectivity. Knowing is not 'taking a look' but the threefold activity of attending, understanding and judging; being is not the 'already-out-there-now-real' but the objective of experiencing, understanding and judging; objectivity is not a matter of extroversion, sense experience, but the fruit of authentic subjectivity. Lonergan thus identifies the basic philosophical principles ('positions') to which subjects adhere, insofar as they are intelligent and reasonable, and from which they dissent (the 'counterpositions'), insofar as they are not, and which in the former case determine historical progress and in the latter, decline.

In spite of the important distinction between history - the proper context for the study of human beings - and nature, it is a central contention of Lonergan that "[t]o inquire and understand, to reflect and judge, to deliberate and choose, are as much an exigence of human nature as waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, talking and loving." (Lonergan, 1970:474) It is true that some of our spontaneous responses are only the effects of causes, as in the case of non-intentional feeling-states such as irritability and hunger, which do not "presuppose and arise out of perceiving, imagining, representing the cause or goal" of the feeling. But we also have intentional feelings which relate us not to causes but to *objects*, and these answer "to what is intended, apprehended, represented". (1972:30) We are primarily oriented, as argued above (4.1), in a world mediated by meaning. The knowledge of our human nature (and of its development) that is foundational for moral judgments is

knowledge of our deepest, most enduring, feelings and desires. And it is the whole edifice of his philosophy of science that enables Lonergan to justify this contention.

In the modern conception the control of meaning is not thought of as uniform and unchanging but as differentiated according to the various autonomous sciences. Science does not investigate the necessary laws of operation of the object, but the contingent laws which operate only according to statistical regularities, and the data falling outside the laws are subject to probability fractions, indicating the possibility of a more regular synthesis once fresh data are called into play by the adoption of a higher perspective. Modern empirical science is concerned not with the abstract and general, the unchanging essence of things, that which can be known with certainty, so much as with the concrete and particular, the emerging and dynamic, of which knowledge is necessarily approximate and subject to revision. It is an attempt to capture not so much our nature as our experience, objectifying this in always tentative but verifiable hypotheses. This understanding of the concrete and particular has supplied the means for - in the long run astonishingly successful - technological applications. Yet the norms governing the practice of scientific method are not verified *within* any science. To the extent that this is recognised there will occur a development of an understanding of human agency, a more intense awareness of the part played in the attainment of truth (and of value) by *qualities* of understanding (intelligent or dull), of attentiveness (broad or narrowly directed), of judgment (reasonable or hasty). The emergence of the empirical scientific method is part of a general shift in consciousness, towards making thematic the concrete, subjective, historical dimensions of human reality. And this notion of human subjectivity can furnish a concept of human nature which is rooted in social traditions and thus does not bypass the insights into the human good which come pressing in from all sides (through - amongst other things - progress in the human sciences), and which the classic formulation of human nature seems to exclude as marginal.

4.4 Human Development And Self-Determination

Any foundation for ethics must not only actually found ethics but also justify that foundation. We have argued that the above account cannot be refuted without that refutation being self-destructive. To affirm that something is of moral value is, if one is affirming what one believes to be true, to perform an act that conforms to the norm of responsibility. To be responsible is to consent to acting from a desire - in this case, to affirm what is *true* - that one has judged to be worth-while. To venture that this knowledge is *not* the foundation for moral judgments is to undermine the claim that one's assertion should be taken seriously.

Therefore the foundation is not some arbitrary value, or set of values. Human ends are manifold, but the capacity for freely disposing of oneself is rooted in one's nature, and cannot be thought of in terms of the arbitrary power of the will. And the appropriation of that nature is a matter of finding out for oneself that one has to decide for oneself, and one has to have "proved oneself equal to that moment of existential decision; and one has to have kept on proving it in all subsequent decisions, if one is to be an authentic human person." (Lonergan, 1972:121)

That knowledge is itself a development of one's willingness, a turn to what is of value, a consent to a desire to know oneself and a challenge to one's more or less habitual lack of reasoned priorities and the absence of a properly thought-out direction to one's life. In *Insight* Lonergan speaks of the moral imperative in terms of a consistency between intellect and will but this, as we argued above, does not adequately clarify the kind of knowledge that is at issue here, and it could be interpreted in terms of a perspective as it were 'from the outside', an observed relationship between distinct faculties. The moral imperative would consist in cultivating the virtues corresponding to the higher faculty of reason, and the tendency would be to think of morality in terms of the blind will striving to conform to the mind or reason. The knowledge that Lonergan argues is foundational for ethics is of a different kind: being authentic to one's nature is a matter in the first place of seeing the point of making self-understanding a priority. Instead of a dualism and legalism of the type found in the ethical admonitions of certain ancient writers - most notably, perhaps, on sexual matters (cf Parrinder, 1980:225-6), there is a focus on moral maturation. Authenticity is a matter of developing the range of one's 'effective freedom', a matter of achieving psychic health and of living out the kind of life in which the interests of others are taken into account.

No human achievement is possible without the application of the principle of genuineness to one's own development. The term self-determination still seems to imply something arbitrary and a better word to describe human agency is, as argued by Shutte (1982), 'self-enactment'. One can determine oneself to live whatever life one should choose but only if one enacts what one is by nature will one achieve psychic health and contribute to social justice. MacIntyre (1981:191) objects to Sartre's notion of genuineness as empty, but those objections do not apply to Lonergan. For MacIntyre's point is that in Sartre 'genuineness' is a notion which fails to give unity to a human life. Here on the contrary we have a notion whose very point is to pay attention to the necessarily slow achievement of that deep unity and integration without which one's attempts to bring about change in oneself and in society are bound to remain frustrated. We can expect our moral self-transcendence to be fully realized, not as Kant supposes finally in some other world in which virtue is crowned

with happiness, but in this world where human nature operates under certain conditions described by Lonergan in terms of the tensions of development.

Classical moral philosophy was concerned with disputes about the priority of will or intellect, central, as we have seen, to Simpson's approach. But as Lonergan points out, the capacity to reach through the intellect the essence of what is observed is not the decisive point in seeking a foundation for ethics. What is determining is the capacity to become responsible for oneself, a matter not of a distinct faculty of the will but of the degree of one's self-appropriation, a matter of development or effective freedom. This is a matter of consenting to moral change in oneself.

"Therewith vanish two notions: the notion of pure intellect or pure reason that operates on its own without guidance or control from responsible decision; and the notion of will as arbitrary power indifferently choosing between good and evil."(Lonergan, 1972:121)

By basing ethics on the norm of authenticity, giving priority to the dimension of existential choice and responsibility, Lonergan anticipates much of what is said by Heller (1990). The modern person, Heller argues, is characterized by 'contingency'. Whereas for premodern persons, "the socially allotted telos was a *typical* end in the world", the end of the modern person is contingent, dependent upon his or her choices among a variety of sets of values. Ethics is only possible because every person has to choose himself or herself as a person who chooses between good and evil - i.e. has to choose to choose on ethical grounds; and by such choice one opens up the possibility for moral growth, for becoming, to use Heller's preferred term, a 'decent' person. Heller argues that to choose oneself in this way is to choose oneself in all one's determinations. If I choose for example to identify myself with my tribe but cut off my parents, if I do not rechoose the sufferings of my childhood or my disappointments, then that which I have left behind will partially determine my life and fortune: I will have allowed myself the excuse, 'I did it because of my unhappy childhood'. In other words, I will fail to affirm moral responsibility in its full sense.(Heller, 1990:14)

But how exactly are one's determinations through one's existential choice thereby, as she argues, "transformed into autonomy"? Is one not, as in Hegel's truncated account of morality, simply choosing necessity, the semblance of freedom? In Lonergan's account one reaches freedom through overcoming individual and group biases and this is effected through the transcendental precepts which give expression to the explanatory conjugates operating at a higher level than the experiential only, the level of one's determinations. Heller too has a notion of authenticity, and this justifies those virtues, by which one reaches freedom or autonomy. For example, courage and honesty, mentioned by MacIntyre, are in

this way justified as fundamental. This provides a useful bridge between virtue ethics and the transcendental account. Lonergan would assent to Heller on the need for a new understanding of virtue.

"Being contingent, modern men and women cannot be moulded into the ready-made social pattern of a 'telos'; so, for them, 'becoming virtuous' must, in so far as there is still such a process, be completely different from what it used to be."(Heller, 1990:63)

We are now also in a position to dispute Nagel's suggestion that the distinction between objective and subjective points of view creates an obstacle to objectivity in value judgments. In Lonergan's account the notion of objectivity is not opposed to that of subjectivity but founded upon it. The meaning of objectivity is nuanced. Objectivity can denote the givenness of the data to be understood; but it can also denote, as we have seen, the norm of intelligence and rationality in the process of knowing. Any view of scientific method denying this (as Nagel's view seems to do) must be rejected. As presented by Nagel the notion of the objective account of something, which we require "before admitting its reality" (Nagel, 1979:196), is clearly one derived from the empiricist view of rational enquiry or knowledge, i.e. it confuses extroversion with objectivity. Nagel, to be sure, does not suppose that to understand what it is to know one should 'peer inside'. He affirms the autonomy of subjective experiential understanding. But he also considers that it makes sense to speak of the capacity for such experience as a subpart of our objectively conceived human nature.

In his celebrated critique of Descartes, Ryle (1973) indicated that howsoever one locates the source of the capacity we understand as the mind, it is of a different order or category from any physical capacity. That is to say (and putting aside Ryle's own dispositional theory of human action), mind is incommensurable with a material reality which divides into parts and subparts. It is what in part defines that nature (cf above, 2.4). There is a necessary human interest or tendency which grounds the notion of objectivity and makes science possible: scientific procedure *presupposes*, if it is to make sense, certain goals and norms to which the subject is attached. These subjective considerations, although not normally alluded to, determine how one is properly to understand 'the objective'. A proper consideration of statistical knowledge leads to an affirmation of the various sciences as genuinely autonomous. Objective, real, although partial knowledge is attained by each autonomous science and the sciences attain their unity only through the anticipations of the scientist, not through some reduction to one overall science. Specifically human behaviour must be thought of in terms of distinct *levels*. What is affirmed as true of our nature at any

level of empirical science does not conflict with the understanding of our nature as self-transcending but is taken up within the latter.

Lonergan's cognitional theory challenges the dominant conception of the social sciences. MacIntyre has argued that ethics must take into account the fundamentally time-conditioned and context-dependent nature of human behaviour. It can now be seen that the study of such social conditions should properly be taken as furnishing knowledge of aspects of human flourishing, understood as a norm. This point is well developed by Meynell. Meynell argues that we do seem to have some basic understanding of "what it is to be a fulfilled human being, and what it is to fail to be such", which is derived from our moral traditions, but which has to some extent been amplified by modern methods of investigation.(1981:1) He points out that unless a way is found of integrating this new knowledge with the older, philosophers will continue to conclude that there is no such thing as 'human nature' or human fulfilment as a foundational moral norm. It is this integration which is achieved by Lonergan's cognitional theory. The social sciences are in disarray, Meynell contends, partly because this norm has been neglected, and this has biased the interpretation of the evidence. For example, if one understands human behaviour from the 'objective point of view' (in Nagel's sense; above, 1.3), as behaviourists do, then one concludes that the habitual beating of a child by its drunken father, for example, carries no value element; and no immediate connection can be made, according to such standards of rationality, with how one should act. The insights of Freud and Marx, for example, should be taken not as undermining the notion of human self-transcendence but rather as elucidating the *difficulties* in meeting such a norm, the difficulty of self-transcendence.

Meynell refers to a test for social viability, devised by Heimler, which seems to overcome the subjective-objective problem canvassed above by Nagel. Individuals were questioned on their subjective experience of satisfaction in the areas of finance, sex, family relationships, friendship, and work and interests. A correlation was found between high scorers (greater than sixty per cent positive answers) and a random group of respondents, and between low scorers (less than thirty per cent) and persons resident in mental hospitals, with an intermediate score registered by a group of persons of some concern to their local health departments. It would seem reasonable to conclude that the questionnaire fairly accurately identifies the, or some of the, basic constituents of human happiness and adequately compensates in the wording of the questions for bias due to the artificialities of the interviewing situation, (wider testing could make one's conclusion more certain) and it could therefore be used as a device to measure the extent to which a society promotes, or fails to promote human flourishing. A society whose members on average score low would be judged 'unhealthy'. It is important to note that unhappiness is here understood not

simply as a failure of adaptation, but objectively. Indeed the areas identified as crucial to happiness or satisfaction correspond to basic kinds of satisfaction available to a small child: financial to the security of having one's basic needs met, friendship to the feeling of being with someone and not alone, and so on, in other words to the various elements necessary to proper human development. (1981:6) Meynell concludes that

"Heimler's test and the scale that results from it...offer some prospect of finding a clear set of criteria by which not only an individual's adaptation to his society, but also a society's adaptation to the requirements of individuals inside and outside it, can be reliably assessed." (1981:8)

Meynell argues that all the recent discoveries about the exigencies of the human organism (as example he takes Lorenz's investigations into aggressivity), of our psyche (Laing, Freud, and Jung), and of social stratification (Marx), must be taken as elucidating the conditions for human cognitive and moral self-transcendence, for effective freedom. And this means that such insights into human behaviour do not undermine the notion of a normative human nature. Against the conclusion that no such thing as normative human nature exists, Meynell argues:

"But though it may be true that there is no single set of necessary conditions which must be fulfilled by a flourishing and fully realised human individual or community, it is surely the case that such individuals and communities must at least approximate to some kind of norm." (1981:2)

And this would accord with a common-sense view that there are certain universally applicable limits to the possible conditions making for human fulfilment: the conditions of Auschwitz or the Warsaw ghetto, for example, do not qualify. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to affirm some form of ethical naturalism.

"To the degree that human nature is basically homogeneous, the very general principles according to which human beings may be happy or fulfilled, or fail to be so, whether individually or as groups, will also be homogeneous. And these principles seem centrally constitutive of morality." (Meynell, 1981:2)

Does ethical naturalism necessarily propose or at least give rise to a set of principles or an ideal which fosters a constrictive uniformity which denies human freedom and variety? It is true that it proposes an objective norm for being human, the norm of moral self-transcendence, and it is one which challenges our egoism, our self-centredness in a way that is mostly absent from rule-based ethics as well as consequentialism. But this norm is precisely the norm of human creativity. Creativity has a structure: there is the need to use the possibilities in the material at hand intelligently, and in this way bring into being what amounts to a partial self-creation. Thus what is peculiar to modern consciousness is given

recognition. The classicist, on the other hand, as Lonergan says,

"knows that circumstances alter cases but he is far more deeply convinced that circumstances are somehow accidental and that, beyond them, there is some substance or kernel or root that fits in with classical assumptions of stability, fixity, immutability. Things have their specific natures; these natures, at least in principle, are to be known adequately through the properties they possess and the laws they obey. Over and above the specific nature there is only individuation by matter, so that knowledge of one instance of a species is knowledge of any instance."(1972:301)

The diversity of peoples, of cultures, of social arrangements would involve only differences of the dress in which the same essential principles are clothed. Moral reasoning was perhaps bound to fossilize into the barren and legalistic casuistry well described by Jonsen and Toulmin in their historical study (1988). Aristotle's distinction between *episteme* and *phronesis* aimed at undercutting the establishment of ethics as a universal theoretical science. Clearly it needs to be formulated in a different way if that aim is to be realized. Lonergan argues that the requisite knowledge of human nature can only be gained through a personal appropriation in one's own time and place. A general justification of cognitional and moral self-transcendence can only be a transcendental one, some form of the retortive argument. This establishes a foot in the door which can then be gradually opened to expose the wider expanses of the moral challenges as they are presented to one in the different areas of one's life.

Is the notion of freedom suggested here as the essential factor in the nature of human beings actually operative? There is the problem of the willingness to develop. To the degree that such willingness is absent, the subject, regardless of his or her essential nature, is in Lonergan's phrase, morally impotent. Development requires effort: can one justify that effort, not in general but in any individual case, and how would one do so? There is in general a justification, as argued in this thesis, for setting oneself to acquire and put into practice the knowledge of self that is a necessary condition for development. It is not, however, in the intellectual activity of philosophy that any particular individual finds an ultimate reason to make that effort (for there is still the problem of one's willingness to pursue philosophy), but in a personal relation engaging the will, the intellect, and the emotions. It is in this way that Lonergan makes sense of religious symbols. Religion is concerned with our willingness, with the possibility of the attitude of, in Lonergan's phrase, 'being in love'. Within the limits of our thesis nothing further need be said on this topic. It suffices to make the point that the type of questioning and of the understanding characteristic of religion understood in this way, are not in any way discontinuous with philosophical and *a fortiori* scientific enquiry. And philosophy can show this.

4.5 Further Considerations

Lonergan's understanding of the foundation of moral judgments needs to be distinguished from that of Simpson. Lonergan achieves a perspective on the Thomist tradition lacking in Simpson. Metaphysics for Lonergan is the heuristic structure of being proportionate to human experience, i.e. the ordered set of notions of how the unknown will be known. Metaphysics presupposes no more than is asserted in the statement of how one knows (to deny any part of which is self-contradictory); it is not the basic science but the complement of what is understood to be the necessary structure of knowing. 'Nature' comes to mean simply the term of one's investigation.

Classical ethical naturalism has been associated with an understanding of the determination of good through a particular theory of the human psyche, although as we have argued, this is not the full story. Lonergan describes 'the Greek discovery of mind': the drive towards systematizing one's perceptions, and the development of the appropriate context for such systems, of theory. For Plato and Aristotle common sense attributions of courage, temperance, justice, could be systematized by means of a theory of virtue. The notion of acting according to a mean is precisely defined and the virtues described by means of that notion. Particular virtues are correlated with the faculty of the will, or the intellect, or the emotions.

Theory meets the exigence for systematizing our perceptions. But there is also an exigence for being critical, for there arises the question of how true the theory is, and what theory means. What exactly *is* science, and what is its relation to common sense knowledge?

"Is common sense just primitive ignorance to be brushed aside with an acclaim to science as the dawn of intelligence and reason? Or is science of merely pragmatic value, teaching us how to control nature, but failing to reveal what nature is?" (Lonergan, 1972:83)

Is there any such thing as human knowledge? By means of such questions the realm of subjectivity is brought to the fore. The place of theory in the conception of ethics is altered. Being is not correlated with the mind (and good with the will following reason). Rather, we know by adhering to a *transcendental* set of precepts, i.e. those precepts that constitute our transcendence, our capacity to go beyond the perspective we occupy by virtue of our historical conditioning. We know what is true for anyone. The same is true for the case of the good. We can grasp a possible action which satisfies not just what we want and need but also takes into account the wants and needs of people in general. In doing so we affirm that good as a value, and so affirm growth in our moral sensibility. And morality comes to

centre on such growth, not on any particular psychology, style of living, or personality type.

Thus the foundation for ethics is an understanding of human being which is not circumscribed by a prior metaphysics, as is Simpson's, but builds on our experience of being subjects and agents. In Lonergan's analysis the question, What are we doing when we are knowing?, is placed *before* the question, What is there?, or, What is there to be known?, or, What do we know when we perform the operations that constitute knowing? The former, epistemological, question invites the reader to a self-affirmation, to an affirmative answer to the question, Am I a knower? Finally, one asks the metaphysical question, What do we know when we are knowing? (Lonergan, 1972:25,261) It is a method based on a *critical* understanding of what we are, i.e. one that is rooted not in a metaphysics but in the procedures of the sciences. From this perspective, then, the analysis of mental acts is prior to any metaphysical theory. It understands and defines *what theory is*.

The classical categories for understanding human nature - intellect and will, speculative and practical intellect, theoretical enquiry and practical execution - are, therefore, inadequate for dealing with the modern consciousness of the subject. For the theory systematized a particular way of social living, and a consciousness of the relativity of one's way of living necessitates an awareness of how to formulate new theories. The human sciences give an understanding of the forces conditioning our actual achievement of self-transcendence, not adequately systematized in the classical framework.

Aristotle's psychology is metaphysical, for he considers the various sciences as further determinations of basic philosophical concepts. But common sense is left out of the picture as the theory overcomes opinion, necessity supersedes contingency. In Lonergan's account the contingent, the experienced, the felt, are subject to integration. Because there is an unchanging dynamic structure to human agency, changing situations can be dealt with in correspondingly changing ways. Lonergan argues that his account steers "a sane course between the relativism of mere concreteness and the legalism of remote and static generalities".(1970:604)

What is random (or rather 'chance') from the point of view of Aristotelian science can, in modern science, be seen to be subject to a norm from which particular events will not diverge systematically, and this enables the scientist to predict a certain verified trend, to pronounce a 'form' (not yet fully actualized) to the subject investigated. Such methods therefore affirm a dynamic structure to reality and so can encompass our human, self-

developing, reality too. Indeed they are an *expression* of our ability to grasp the nature of things and so re-act on the world, thus altering the conditions for our further development.

No false unity is imposed on human behaviour, as seems to be the case with Simpson's analysis. For the reason which is the arbitrator in Simpson's moral theory is conceived of in terms of a faculty which is known through metaphysics, or first philosophy, without the crucial discrimination between types of knowledge, scientific and philosophical. It is thus liable to be taken simply as standing alongside scientific knowledge, and as abstracting from the understanding of the good life for human beings embedded in traditions and through statistical analysis verifiably operative in human lives. And indeed there has been - to some extent because of the above conception of moral theory - a turn away from the attempt to systematize, through theory, our moral intuitions. (Cf Pincoffs, 1986; Loudon, 1990)

In an explanatory article (1967b) preceding and anticipating the publication of *Insight* Lonergan himself has described his intention in the book very much in these terms, as supplying the perspective we have seen is lacking in Simpson. He points out that the same structural relation of elements is to be found in Thomist metaphysics and in the presuppositions of contemporary empirical method. They are isomorphic. As Moleski explains:

"Lonergan correlates the expressions that are peculiar to our age with the classical categories of Aristotle in order to show how the invariant substructure can, over time, give rise to better answers to the same questions. Such is the case with the progress of science and reformulation in the language we have available for posing and answering questions about meaning."(1987:230)

In Lonergan's approach, meaning is revealed not through metaphysics but through the various sciences and through the method that unites them. But it is one and the same understanding as object of enquiry that unites ancient and modern philosophies. The key to the enterprise is understanding what we are doing when we are understanding, and how scientific knowledge differs from common-sense; and both from what we can specify as philosophical knowledge. It can be shown that the type of understanding that is at the heart of ethical naturalism can be vindicated, because *it is not tied up with the particular view of science* of Aristotle or of Aquinas. For example, in modern science, hypotheses need verification because we cannot base science on *a priori* necessities, and we need to submit every possibly true explanation of the sensible data to rigorous testing before accepting it as true. In a parallel manner a Thomist will point out that

"a finite essence exists not necessarily but contingently, that divine wisdom can select any set of finite essences and arrange them in any of a vast variety

of world-orders while divine will is free to choose any whatever of the possible orders..."(Lonergan, 1967b:143)

For both traditional Thomist and critical realist the intelligibility of being has a dynamic threefold structure: there is a manifold to attend to, there are natures to be understood, and there are existing things to be judged truly so. As we know through judgment and understanding and presentation, so the universe is existing as the realisation of form in matter, or, as described above, as a dynamism or emergence found in the development of living things. Thus the differences between Thomism, with its focus on 'natures', and scientific thought which affirms the changing and historical are to be found in the *manner* in which each system derives from understanding, from the differences in the scientific context that each experienced. Aquinas reflecting on the act of understanding arrived at "a rational psychology in harmony with an equally fundamental metaphysics". Modern scientists bring to light in their practices a methodical structure.

We can also now distinguish more clearly Lonergan's notion of the good from that of Simpson. For both the term has a broader denotation than simply the human good, and this is because both in some sense relate 'good' to 'nature'. For the latter, 'good' is dependent upon 'being'. For the former, what is good is "identical with the intelligibility that is intrinsic to being" (Lonergan, 1970:604), since it is by investigating human being, and its self-transcendence, that the foundational norm for ethics emerges. Lonergan argues that not only the object of human desire and human intentions may be named good. The intelligible orders (the natural as opposed to the human world) that underlie and condition this invention of social order are also good, as forming part of what is objectively desirable, the human good, although, because known and appreciated for what they truly are in themselves, not therefore subject to arbitrary manipulation by the human will. Thus there is a way of speaking of the good in a more general sense than the human good. For Lonergan being is simply the objective pole of the dynamic structure of rational self-consciousness. Good as the realisation of value, the overcoming of disorders and false values, can be seen as an instance of the more general emergence of intelligible order. In the case of Simpson, in contrast, being is the proper object of the faculty of the reason. The goodness in all things, whose nature is known by the reason, is not related - as it is in Lonergan's account - to the human good, to human development, but is, as it were, posited alongside the latter. His account is thus a less satisfying, even dualistic, interpretation of ethical naturalism.

It is clear that the approach here advocated is incompatible with a dominant contemporary approach to epistemology. In the first chapter reference was made to an assumed physicalism in contemporary philosophy of mind. A well-known definition explains knowledge in terms of 'justified true belief' (for example, O'Hear, 1985:97-111); but

insurmountable difficulties arise in trying to make sense of 'justified' in the absence of any reference to knowing as a purposeful, aim-oriented activity, and without an understanding of the ability to stand back and assess, in the act of judging, the coherence, scope, and reliability of one's ideas and hypotheses. Only on a non-physicalist assumption can it be shown that while there is a difference between (1) 'I know that p', and (2) 'I know that I know that p', there is no essential difference between what is expressed by the latter proposition and the further statement (3) 'I know that I know that I know that p'. The first statement expresses the act of considering as object to be understood some proposition p. The second considers as object to be understood the act of knowing and takes (1) as a concrete instance of that act. The argument from retortion does not imply an infinite regress, a senseless multiplying of 'I know's indefinitely, for (3) considers in the same way as the second the act of knowing but takes as example of knowing not (1) but (2). Lonergan distinguishes (1) from (2) by referring to 'data of sense' in the case of (1) and 'data of consciousness' in the case of (2).

In 1.4 above we noted Maxwell's critique of empiricist standards of rational enquiry and of the notion that knowledge is attained by as far as possible excluding values and purposes. Lonergan's cognitional theory adds something to this critique. Maxwell makes the distinction between those aspects of reality that can only be known through the experience of being a subject and agent - sights, sounds, moral values, aesthetic qualities of things, and those aspects which can be known without engaging the full range of one's subjectivity. All the laws of physics, for example, can be understood by a congenitally sightless, or an emotionless, person. (Maxwell, 1986:201) All that is of value in existence is to be associated with the former aspect of reality; standard empiricism, however, provides knowledge only of the latter aspect of reality. Understood along empiricist lines the social sciences, psychology, anthropology, etc, give knowledge only *about* - rather than *of* - experiences, feelings and so on.

One could ask, could there then be *two* methods of rational enquiry, of assessing claims to knowledge, for the two different areas of human reality? This way out is closed by Maxwell's contention that empiricism does not apply even to the natural sciences themselves. There is no need here to dwell on his argument, largely consonant with that of Lonergan. Maxwell takes the example of theoretical physics. The conjecture of comprehensibility is required for progress in physics. And if there is this, untestable, conjecture at the foundations of theoretical physics, why not others? Why not conjecture the universe is value-directed? or governed in parts by the supernatural power of witches? Maxwell's advocacy of what he calls 'aim-directed rationalism' thus establishes itself by empiricism's inadequacies.

The identification of the broader dimension of understanding, which Maxwell calls wisdom, and which grounds values, means that the present structures of rational enquiry need to be reformed if the norm of rationality is to be observed. In the absence of such reform, academic institutions will continue to undermine rather than foster the flourishing of the intelligence and reasonableness that ground human creativity. The reform will take the form of greater dialogue with the non-academic community, not simply a study *of* them but the fostering of common understanding, and *a fortiori* a dialogue among colleagues in which standards of professional excellence are founded on the broader conception of human agency discussed in this chapter.

It is in particular in the case of the social sciences that the 'philosophy of knowledge' has its most devastating effects. Maxwell argues that a re-orientation is needed in the aims and procedures of social scientists, once the evaluative understanding of human purposes (of the type discussed above with reference to Meynell) is accorded its properly foundational place. He gives an example of the two methods, empiricist and aim-oriented, for the case of a study of inner-city deterioration. The empiricist or positivist will proceed by means of testing some provisional understanding of the problem by gathering data, by getting a randomly chosen sample of the population to fill in carefully prepared questionnaires. Finally "he will arrive at certain empirical conclusions...but he will not come up with a proposal as to how the problem can be solved. His task is to solve a sociological problem...not a social problem." Maxwell comments:

"Presenting the data as objective, value-neutral, politically-neutral, empirical results, when in fact value-judgments and political judgments are bound to be implicit in decisions as to what sort of data are significant and relevant, will have the effect of influencing the reader of the eventual report to accept uncritically the underlying understanding of the social, political problem."(1986:107)

The aim-oriented social scientist sees the problem differently. Her approach (the change of pronoun is deliberate: Maxwell notes [1986:280] that gender plays a not insignificant role in the acceptance of, or resistance to, his proposed reform) "will be much more like that of a good journalist than that of an orthodox academic social scientist."(1986:164) She recognizes "that a major problem that confronts any attempt to resolve the social problem in a cooperatively rational fashion arises simply from the number of people that are involved." The institutional machinery for such rational, cooperative, problem-solving in the modern world has not been sufficiently developed. The advocacy social scientist sees her task as that of enlisting the help of as many as possible of those involved in the problem in order to improve her understanding of the problem, and her ideas "as to what policies might be developed which, if put into practice, would help solve the problem." She would

attempt to provoke people into getting involved in thinking about the problem: "house-owners, flat dwellers, property developers, businessmen, government officials, politicians, social workers, the police, pressure groups, shopkeepers". And finally in writing up the report she will be concerned to leave a record of a possible solution to the problem, of the ideas and the actions of those interviewed. The report will be as clear, interesting and readable as possible, and should be published in a generally available form: "so that it in turn may stimulate more enlightened public discussion of the issues involved."(1986:165)

The role of philosophy in the operation of the philosophy of wisdom and the reform of standards of evaluation is crucial. Empiricism ranks the intellectual disciplines in a hierarchy which places theoretical physics as the most fundamental of studies, with the social sciences the least fundamental to our understanding of the world and the least rigorous of all academic disciplines. This, argues Maxwell, is mistaken. Physics tells us "nothing whatsoever about the rich, diverse experiential dimensions of reality," designated by empiricism as 'subjective'.(1986:262) On the contrary the most fundamental of intellectual disciplines is clearly that which has as its particular domain of study various alternative formulations of the framework of the most rational *aims* as such. And this is the particular task of philosophy, while the various social sciences, argues Maxwell, should be considered as inquiries into the aims and methods of various social institutions and activities (education, family, economy and so on).

In his understanding of the dominance of empiricism in our organized intellectual life Maxwell thinks he has identified the symptoms of a neurosis of the mind, an irrational fear of subjecting our aims and methods to rational scrutiny. Philosophy examines such aims and methods of enquiry and thus has a definite role to play in the reform of academic life. Parallels with Lonergan's account are evident.

Is this reform realisable? Thinkers as different as MacIntyre and Lonergan concur that it is necessary; both would see ethics in part in terms of creating that space for moral philosophy, for the dialogue and discussion in which the development of character makes sense as the foundational norm or standard of excellence. Of course moral action is not confined to the reform of academic institutions, and the need for such reform should not be taken out of the context of the conditions of contemporary society at large; but an implicit commitment to such reform, and the transformation of all social structures out of harmony with the norm of moral self-transcendence, would seem to be implicit in the argument that value objectivity makes sense in the way suggested by contemporary Thomists discussed above, perhaps with the exception of Simpson. This connection is well brought out by Johann, and we will conclude this thesis by an account of how he sees it, and of the implications for the pursuit of philosophical understanding.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOUNDING ETHICS ON INTERSUBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE

5.1 Making Sense Of Ethical Naturalism: A Summary

The rationale for this study of the possibility of a reformulation of ethical naturalism is, as stated in Chapter One, the inadequacy of the dominant conception of standards of enquiry, and the resultant subjectivism in moral thinking. The critical methods of modern science, and a sense of historical perspective, have undermined the naive understanding of objective norms of human behaviour. Three questions have been put to ethical naturalism, regarding the nature of practical reasoning (how to derive a value judgment from an understanding of certain facts about human fulfilment), of our knowledge of human nature, and of human freedom. A summary of our conclusions so far is now appropriate.

Two approaches to the justification of ethical naturalism in the face of these questions were canvassed. Our study of Simpson showed that the arguments of contemporary anglo-american moral philosophers, amounting to a value-subjectivism, are not entirely convincing: an unexamined notion of knowledge in terms of description (contrasted with evaluation) underlies Moore's, Stevenson's, and Hare's critique of ethical naturalism, and the positing of some finally unjustified attitude or commendation as the determining element in the meaning of 'good'. Simpson argues that there is a sense in which the nature of a thing means its standard for being what it is, its being in accordance with what it is expected for it to be, its kind of being, and this is the thing's good. Thus the good of an apple, or a dog, are objectively determinable by reference to their natures. There is a normative sense of 'desirable' (what it is proper or fitting to desire) and not only a descriptive sense (what one happens to desire).

But Simpson fails to explain why assenting to a standard of goodness, a standard for evaluation, is subject to rational criteria (unproblematic in a normative culture, but not so in a plural society). He offers a theory of human psychology as foundation for judgments of moral value, the intellect determining the nature of anything, and the will following the intellect in choosing among courses of action. However the question of the status of this theory, its place within the context of the scientific enterprise and its relation to common-sense knowledge, is neglected. There are standards for resolving issues of truth within science, as there are such standards in any common social life: Simpson's psychological approach to reformulating ethical naturalism seems to neglect this question of context.

How is human behaviour to be investigated? How do we arrive at knowledge of anything at all? Simpson posits the existence of a higher cognitive faculty (to which corresponds an autonomous branch of knowledge, philosophy of nature) by means of which one understands the natures of things in their finality. But he fails to clarify the standards of enquiry of such a discipline, and justify their primary importance in any hierarchy of values.

The upshot of this failure is that Simpson's foundational psychology is uncritical. The scientific and historical perspective on any conception of normative human nature, characteristic of the modern period, is left out of the picture. Indeed, his account is dualist, failing to capture our unitary *experience* of value, since assent to the determination of the intellect is understood as necessitating a withdrawal from the influence of our desires, which reflect our dependence upon our conditioning environment. The notion that human behaviour and values are conditioned by their environment has gone hand in hand with a determinism. But as was pointed out with reference to McDermott's analysis of a Thomistic notion of 'explanation', this is not a necessary link. If we think of science as explaining not how a thing works, the forces determining its behaviour, but how it is viable within an ecosystem, then nature is seen to be not opposed to agency, the organism achieving and enjoying the form that it is, through the matter which constitutes its environment. Value can be understood by means of the concept of agency, and this means how it is viable within its environment. In the case of human nature, this would mean giving an account of the set of social conditions which constitute the primary human environment. Ethical naturalism is not necessarily explicable only by means of some or other version of dualism.

Human dignity, according to the non-naturalists, lies in our freedom to choose anything at all as our goal, rather than having this imposed upon us from the outside. Simpson points out, however, that the way in which we determine ourselves must be done intelligently rather than blindly, if this is to be free in any real sense. Our freedom itself must be affirmed to be both our nature and the most fundamental - and necessarily affirmed - value. Without this being made explicit the moral point of view is ultimately without foundation. But understanding freedom, as Simpson does, by means of an uncritical psychology, one part of the self, the intellect, determining the other part, the will, is misleading. It places the moral imperative ultimately beyond criteria of critical understanding. It also carries the implication that the withdrawal from the historical and changing, and the development of one side of one's life, the contemplative, is of primary value. But this would seem to block any possibility of further personal growth, growth in self-understanding and in the hierarchy of one's values, which is brought about through one's participation in a personal community.

The second approach to ethical naturalism was that of MacIntyre. MacIntyre accepts the notion that human beings are radically dependent upon their social environment. But he points out that only in Aristotle - and not in modern and contemporary moral theory, infected with Cartesian dualism - does this insight play a central role in the account of the determination of moral values. MacIntyre concedes that the metaphysical psychology of Aristotle is uncritical. But, he argues, there is a way of giving an account of the development of character, and of the notion of an objective norm of human behaviour, and consequently of virtue, which is consonant with the critical procedures of the human sciences. For any enactment of a social role presupposes some understanding of the 'practice' in terms of which the role makes sense, some understanding of the values common to the participants and of the distinction between goods external to the activity (the rewards allocated according to criteria fixed by the needs of sustaining the institutional framework for the practice - running the chess club, for example), and those internal to, and definitive of, the activity. For any practice at all, the virtues of intellectual honesty, of justice in one's attitude to other practitioners, and of courage, are necessary. Without these qualities of character, there could be no systematic fostering of the standards of excellence associated with the practice. The question is whether there is a reason for thinking of 'living well' as such in terms of this kind of participation, whether such a 'function' or role could properly be ascribed simply to being human, by nature. For Aristotelians, community itself (and not just cricket or chess) is a practice and thus provides a foundation for objective value judgments, for virtues. For liberals community is only a site for a contest of claims: there are thus no grounds for any specifically moral judgments. Thus implicit in moral judgments is a commitment to the Aristotelian understanding of community. If the communitarian conception of human nature, and the critique of the liberalist understanding of freedom in terms of autonomy, remains unjustified, then moral values are without a foundation. Skills could be objectively specified, but no special meaning attached to the idea of virtue. In the matter of war, for example, one might reason that there is an objective moral imperative to limit one's warring within limits set by the probable goals of the war, given the overall criterion of justice as proportionality. Justice, and not success and competitive survival, is the ultimately decisive factor. That would mean committing oneself to the promotion of a certain kind of community, a harmonious and just rather than a socially divided one. But such commitment remains unjustified.

MacIntyre argues that Aristotle's concept of the (normative) *polis* can be translated by means of the idea of a narrative unity of any human life, an understanding of one's behaviour within the overarching perspective of its contribution to the development of a 'shared future' with others. But why should one conceive of oneself in these terms? It has to be shown that one's identity as a self is inseparable from one's self-identification as a

member of a particular community, and that through such participation one is enabled to transcend the particularities of time and space in order to affirm and follow a good not just for oneself and one's group but for people in general.

To MacIntyre's account, therefore, was added Lonergan's notion of a foundational norm of human subjectivity and agency. Lonergan argues that a historical consciousness calls for a dynamic and transcendental formulation of the foundation for ethics. Aristotle was concerned to distinguish *episteme* from *phronesis* (above, 4.4), but he did so by invoking theory, and theory was thought of as the speciality for attaining truth. Aristotle's aim, to distinguish the method of ethics from that of a universal theoretical science, remained thus largely unfulfilled. Abstracted from its context of the *polis*, this foundation for ethics was bound to be misunderstood as a set of logically first propositions which could be learned and then applied to particular cases. But a set of propositions is foundational only for another set of propositions. If on the other hand what is to be founded is, as Lonergan says, an ongoing, developing reality, then the foundations will be "the immanent and operative set of norms that guides each forward step in the process".(1972:270)

Theory specifies a set of invariant structures, thought of as unchanging and law-like, by which human actions are determined. On the other hand the empiricist contrast of 'the historical' with 'nature' leaves human behaviour without a regulating norm. The standards of rational enquiry associated with empiricism restrict questions to those concerning effectiveness. If however one derives these standards from the structure of the subject's intentionality, then objectivity is seen to be founded on our capacity to perform a certain set of operations constituting self-transcendence, that is to say, on our nature as agents. The various sciences are unified through the anticipations of the scientist, not through a reduction to one overall science. Specifically human behaviour must be thought of in terms of distinct *levels*, and the 'self' is not to be identified with the mind alone. Instead of a dualism and legalism, there is a focus on development.

Lonergan wants to establish the difference between *episteme* and *phronesis* by means of transcendental analysis, a set of norms for achieving the understanding and responsibility requisite for the fully moral living of an adult member of society. This gives a handhold by which one may then reach solutions to the particular moral challenges one faces. This knowledge is reached not by prescinding from one's interests when one acts (as seems to be suggested by Simpson) but in the act itself of intending something. It is a self-knowledge acquired through attending to, understanding, and judging the exigencies of one's interpersonal living, never, as is the case with scientific knowledge, by abstracting from the set of necessary conditions for being self-determining, or self-enacting. Philosophical

analysis is based on the method of retortion: the transcendental account of the norm of human behaviour cannot be refuted without that refutation being self-destructive.

Underlying and justifying the good of order, well-described by MacIntyre, is the self-transcending subject, and it is the capacity to reach an understanding of what is truly good, and to live by that understanding, that creates the possibility for a common life. The achievement of cooperation finds institutional form; it is fixed by the allocation of roles to be fulfilled. But such cooperation, Lonergan points out, is much more than the institution, it is the product

"of all the skill and know-how, all the industry and resourcefulness, all the ambition and fellow-feeling of a whole people, adapting to each change of circumstances, meeting each new emergency, struggling against every tendency to disorder."(1972:49-50)

In Lonergan's understanding underlying all human aspirations to value is a capacity for self-transcendence. It enables one to achieve community of the kind of which MacIntyre speaks.

"People are joined by common experience, by common or complementary insights, by similar judgments of fact and of value, by parallel orientations in life. They are separated, estranged, rendered hostile, when they have got out of touch, when they misunderstand one another, when they judge in opposed fashions, opt for contrary social goals."(1972:50-1)

And such community of insight is founded on the norm of authenticity.

Lonergan has shown that any supposed dichotomy of the pairs 'social and communitarian' versus 'metaphysical and individualistic', does not hold water. The realm of values is interpersonal because of our nature, because of what we must affirm about human being. Implicit in self-affirmation, which is the subjective foundation for moral growth, is a commitment to community as a practice, to joining with others in the pursuit of common goals. But we have also to make our affectivity a deliberate project of self-appropriation, our deep desire for personal growth and for a community embodying justice. Our deepest feelings, properly developed and awarded their due primacy in our scale of preferences, join us to others in community. The capacity for cognitive, moral, and above all affective self-transcendence grounds the possibility for true community.

"The basic premiss of Lonergan's moral theory is that the fully intelligent and reasonable subject may grasp a possible state of affairs in which the needs and desires of people in general, and not only those of himself and his group, will tend to be satisfied. To conceive and will such a state of affairs is to conceive and will the good."(Meynell, 1991:155)

Being true to oneself is being true to 'our' nature. This creates the possibility, and indeed necessity, of forging, in one's life-choices, a consensus, of living according to common

values. This valuable insight into the nature of human fulfilment, and of human freedom, will be further developed in this chapter.

Firstly, I will discuss Meynell's argument that, contrary to the contention of the non-naturalists, it does indeed make sense to found moral judgments on the facts of human happiness or flourishing as these are experienced (and as such experience is documented in the human sciences). But such facts, argues Meynell, 'loosely entail' judgments of moral value, these being further specified according to the norms of cognitional and moral self-transcendence.(5.2) This seems to indicate, it will be argued, that a further, strictly philosophical account of how it is that human happiness includes the dimension of justice, or due regard for others, if ethical naturalism of the kind advanced by Lonergan is to be fully justified. Secondly, then, I will summarize and comment upon Johann's argument to the effect that a 'dialogical account' of human behaviour furnishes this required account (5.3).

For Lonergan, it is true, our affectivity is fulfilled through being appropriated, and its appropriation means that one allows considerations of the *true* good and the *social* good to moderate one's consent to one's various and sometimes conflicting desires as they are experienced. There is a necessary reference to our emotional life in foundational ethics because there is a deep emotion or desire which is related to our being persons (a desire for growth), and the existential discovery of oneself as a moral being is crucial for Lonergan.(1972:38) Johann develops this idea, arguing that without a reference to one's commitment to a mutually-enriching personal community the moral point of view does not make sense. But this is to anticipate.

Lonergan does not fully bring out that, apart from our self-knowledge (cognitional self-transcendence) and self-affirmation (moral self-transcendence), there is the unity of the self itself, expressed in our feelings and desires, which is at once known and affirmed as a whole and does the knowing and affirming. And we have a fundamental desire to be ourselves, to grow (to gain greater self-knowledge and a more whole-hearted self-affirmation), and thus for personal community. The notion of human freedom bound up with this also needs further elucidation: justice has typically been thought of as somewhat apart from the achievement of happiness, not as a deeply fulfilling attitude. It needs to be argued that one truly develops in freedom through the influence of others and not vice versa.(5.4)

It has, in other words, to be shown that a certain kind of dependency upon one's personal environment, of influence of another person, is a *necessary* condition for the actualization of one's capacity for self-transcendence. In other words, there is a standard of action or

behaviour *by nature*, because, as Shutte (1982) argues, the achievement of self-determination (which entails self-knowledge) is in direct and not inverse proportion to this influence of another person. In this chapter we will be concerned not with elucidating the details of such dependency, but only with arguing that an understanding of the link between knowledge of this 'interpersonal causality' and judgments of moral value is necessary for any contemporary reformulation of ethical naturalism. Our concern is to show that only a certain kind of - strictly philosophical and necessary - knowledge of human nature will found moral judgments, and that such knowledge has as content an integration of both the aspects of human nature canvassed in this thesis: the capacity for rationality, and the radical conditioning of all human development by its social and personal context. Finally, I close with certain remarks about the nature and use of philosophical analysis (5.5).

5.2 Happiness And Moral Reasoning: Meynell

Meynell, developing Lonergan's account of practical rationality, argues that the flourishing of human communities is dependent upon the adherence of their members to an objective norm for coming to know anything at all, adherence to the precepts of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness, and to the precept of responsibility in deliberations about what to do.

According to Moore, the moral reasoning characteristic of ethical naturalism is invalid, confusing what good means with what things are good. Meynell (1981, Ch 6) argues that while it is clear that good cannot be defined in terms of any one property, it would seem to be nevertheless true that its meaning is fixed by a *range* of such properties. It is almost a truism, he notes, that we ought on the whole to do what promotes happiness, and the qualification is crucial to the argument. Meynell is concerned to develop a 'logic of happiness' in a way that would answer the anti-naturalist arguments of Moore and others. He argues that it was a mistaken theory of meaning - one on which some crude and mistaken versions of naturalism could also be based - that led to any doubt about the place of the idea of happiness in moral reasoning. An action can be good, as Moore notes, while it does not lead to happiness, or while it is not a duty, and so on.

"But suppose I say that an action is good, though it promotes and is intended to promote no one's happiness, though it is intuitively approved by no one, though it makes no contribution to man's evolutionary progress however conceived, and though it is against the revealed will of God - if I make all these qualifications, do I not in effect virtually reduce to nonsense my original statement that the action is good?" (Meynell, 1981:161)

It is only if one thinks of the meaning of a word in terms of the one element 'common to all instances of the word's use', as Hare in fact does, that one is misled into thinking that 'good' must mean something *non-descriptive*. The logic of the word good is such that it 'loosely

entails' a range of facts. In other words the statement A (that something is good) entails statements p, q, r, and s in the sense that to assert A and at the same time to negate p is not a contradiction (that would be a matter of 'strict entailment'), whereas "to assert A and to negate p, q, r and s all together is either to contradict oneself or to talk so eccentrically as to be unintelligible".(1981:162)

To illustrate his point Meynell uses the example of a six-legged table constructed so as to be able to stand on any five of its legs. Any one of the legs could be removed and it would continue to stand. Its continuing to stand does not therefore depend on any *one* of the legs, but it does not follow that it does not depend on any leg at all (the emotivist view that goodness is not a property at all), or that the leg it presumably does depend on is invisible (Moore's view of goodness as a non-natural property; cf Midgley, 1989:155). Clearly it does depend on the six legs collectively. One can deny any one of a list of properties to something of which one has predicated goodness: it does not follow "that its goodness is something logically quite independent of its possession of the properties making up the list".(1981:163)

The meaning of a word is understood through entering into the context in which it is used. The fact that the use is objective is indicated by the qualifications one normally makes when affirming that attribute in any particular case. Thus for example in the case of statements about a person's character there is a loose entailment of certain statements about how he or she behaves. One says that 'He was a good general, *though* his conduct of one campaign was positively disastrous'; or 'My daughter is a very intelligent girl, *though* she cannot achieve even the average proficiency in mathematics for her age', to use Meynell's examples. Similarly a good action, Meynell points out,

"is not characteristically an unkind one, or an infringement of the law; *but* in special circumstances, as in getting rid of somebody's illusions or resisting an unjust piece of legislation, it may be good to act unkindly or to break the law."(1981:166)

Evaluation loosely entails commending the performance of what is evaluated as worthwhile or good. This is because to evaluate is at the same time to describe, not simply because, as Hare has it, there is a connection (of 'supervenience') between evaluation and description. If a sunset is good, this is because sunsets characteristically give delight to many people and this makes them worth commending.

"That the sunset gives satisfaction of this kind is what it is for it to be good; we do not merely *elect* to commend sunsets which have this particular set of characteristics, in such a way that we might just as well have elected to commend sunsets with quite a different set."(1981:168)

There is a standard that transcends or runs through all evaluation and this is what Meynell refers to as the fostering, or alternatively frustrating, of human needs and desires.

This then removes one objection to the possibility of founding ethics on knowledge of what makes for human flourishing. Such knowledge founds our moral judgments not by means of a strict entailment but through a reasonable assessment of its applicability to any situation at hand. Indeed Meynell holds with Lonergan that there is an objective set of standards which govern our understanding of anything which is not a matter simply of sense-experience nor of coherence but can be expressed by means of the precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and finally responsible. Furthermore it can be shown that the capacity to know what is truly the case and act on one's true beliefs constitutes one as self-transcendent. If one adopts the precepts that can be formulated from an understanding of what it is to come to understand anything, one is already to a large extent assenting to one's nature. Deciding to act on one's understanding of one's responsibility is a further stage in such an assent. In acting morally one is, on this account, implicitly affirming an understanding of human nature.

Human nature cannot, however, properly be described in terms of a specific function. In the case of functional objects to know what an X is is to know what a good X is; thus a knife is that kind of object whose function is to cut, and a good knife can without further reflection be understood to be one that cuts well. But to know what a good sunset is, or horse, or man - all non-functional objects, is to know how "each of these kinds characteristically contribute to the satisfaction of rational and sentient beings".(Meynell, 1981:169) Everyone has some idea of what makes for happiness or satisfaction and a growth in such understanding is possible because there are certain objective standards for knowing anything at all.

Meynell, following Lonergan, has spelled out the conditions for coming to know anything at all, for overcoming bias. He points out that such knowledge is a more important element in human goodness than has often been supposed. Our moral development is in part "a matter of acquiring, or perhaps rather of not losing, a kind of knowledge", namely knowledge of what tends to promote the satisfaction of persons.(1981:13)

We can only be free if our choice is informed. And if it is informed, it is likely to be good, too. To act "at once clear-sightedly and irresponsibly is at least rather rare," argues Meynell. We can recall his example (above, 4.2) of the rather habit-bound lecturer faced with a bright student's suggestion about the need to take into account a new and pertinent book which would challenge the professor's current approach to his particular field.

Meynell questions the plausibility of the latter reasoning, 'Yes, the student is quite right, I ought to change my course, and perhaps my whole method of teaching. But I'm just too damned lazy'. For one thing, such operative efficiency in the exigencies of cognitive self-transcendence would necessitate a reconstruction of the facts so that the further norm of responsible action is put into a more favourable light, and one would have to set out equally clear-sightedly to act on the theory that the student's motives are suspect. In other words one would have clear-sightedly to provide oneself with an excuse for one's action or rather lack of action. And that would undermine the spontaneous operation of one's intellect and reason, the source of one's capacity to know what is truly the case. Much the same goes for situations in which the interests of one's group threaten to cloud the equally legitimate interests of other groups. The task of the morally aware is in a large part that of bringing to public consciousness the interests of the marginalized.

Facts about human happiness determine, in a loose way, judgments of moral value. This is the primary, though not sole, criterion for judging an action as morally good. In the course of our discussion of MacIntyre's reformulation of the functional understanding of human nature in terms of social roles, we noted the problem of conflicting roles and obligations. An action could be considered in some respects good, in other respects bad. Meynell's analysis seems to go some way toward resolving such conflicts, without falling into the trap of bringing in the notion of the contextless subject. For in cases of a conflict between different criteria of morally good action, the criterion of happiness is normally decisive. It makes sense to say that a certain law is bad because it fails to promote the general happiness, or that certain intuitions about good are mistaken for the same reason; but the converse does not hold: it would make little sense to subject the notion of happiness to the criterion of its conforming to certain laws, or to certain intuitions about value (secondary conditions for goodness). Even if one brings in the religious dimension, believers in God characteristically hold that what God wills and our ultimate happiness coincide.

The possibility of a certain type of knowledge, an understanding of happiness (and justice), would seem to be entailed by the use of moral terms in our traditions. And this would indicate that questions of moral value could be rationally resolved. As argued above, such a contention does not depend on goodness being *defined* in terms of happiness (the strong utilitarian thesis), but argues rather that considerations of happiness have a *vital bearing* on the question of moral goodness. Meynell's proposed method parallels that of Bentham, but the latter failed, he contends, because of the lack of a clear understanding of the type of knowledge which is here to the point. The data now available through the human sciences augur for the possibility of a more successful outcome of such a project. The primary and secondary conditions delineate the meaning of the term 'good' in our traditions. They do so

in a 'loose entailment' way, such that the actual predication of good in any particular case is correct only if the exigencies of the attentive and inquiring intelligence and of the considered judgment of the subject have been consistently brought to bear on the question. It is this latter knowledge of 'self-transcendence' that grounds the objectivity of the project. Meynell outlines four possibilities in judging actions: objectively morally good, objectively morally ambiguous (when some criteria are met, and yet the action promotes the contrary of others), objectively morally bad, objectively morally neutral (no criteria met, the contrary of none are promoted).

"Which actions fall within which categories is in no sense a matter of decision by the individual or by society or any part of it; it is to be determined by the kind of attentive, intelligent and reasonable assessment of the relevant data which was sketched in the first chapter; the relevant data include the material which has been surveyed in the intervening chapters."(1981:175)

Meynell's chapters 2-5 deal with the findings of some of the more influential of social scientists - Lorenz, Laing, Freud, Jung and Marx - in an effort to show how these contribute to our understanding of human fulfilment, and so of morality. This is a controversial interpretation of the human sciences, but it is justified if the argument for the criteria of assessment of happiness or flourishing proffered by Lonergan and, following him, Meynell holds good.

Knowledge of the relevant facts about people's happiness in general is not a sufficient condition of acting well. But equally clearly it is a necessary condition. He continues, "the cultivation of the kind of knowledge, and avoidance of the kind of self-deception, which I have described, are a large part but not the whole of moral goodness." In addition one has to act responsibly on the basis of such understanding. It remains that one cannot act responsibly if one is ignorant about the nature of what is at stake in one's action.

"To be responsible is not only to have the disposition to come to a fully attentive, intelligent and reasonable judgment as to what is good, but to have the disposition to decide and act accordingly."(1981:20)

Nevertheless it is evident from Meynell's own formulation of what he calls 'first-class conditions' of moral goodness, that something has been left out of his account of human flourishing. Such conditions he specifies as the tendency of anything to promote happiness among rational and sensitive beings and to contribute to justice between them. And the addition of justice to the criterion of happiness indicates that there is a further necessary condition for human self-actualization, presupposed by the human sciences and given content in them. As argued above, the correct use of any moral term is determined only loosely by a certain set of criteria; there might always be considerations which determine

that a certain criterion - for say, being courageous - is not met in a particular case. Once all such considerations are taken into account then the moral judgment is action-guiding. To be morally good is not only to know what is good but also to have the disposition to act on that knowledge. Meynell has established that the use of moral terms is (loosely) fixed by a set of factual considerations, and in that sense value subjectivism is overcome. Certain facts (say, what promotes justice and diminishes suffering) will always *per se* constitute good reasons for acting in a certain way, although good action is not defined in terms of those facts. In any particular case such action may be *per accidens* not what one ought to do. The standards for the correct use of the word reflect the exigencies of our participation in the particularities of different moral situations, exigencies which were neglected in those crude forms of naturalism that posited a strict entailment between certain factual statements and a statement that something was morally good. Nonetheless moral reasoning as such (reasoning from the moral point of view) remains unfounded unless there is sufficient reason for acting out of consideration for not only one's own happiness but also that of others.

It seems to make little sense to ask, Why should I act in a way that leads to happiness? The affirmation that a certain course of action will lead to one's happiness supplies, other things being equal, a reason for deciding to act in that way. But one can ask, with sense, why one should act in a way that leads not only to one's own happiness but to that of people in general. 'Yes, I ought to do it; so what?', one might say. (Meynell, 1981:164) The meaning of the word 'ought' contains the idea that one *recognizes* a reason as action-guiding; the implication is that such recognition may be absent, hence the sense of the above question. In calling something good one is usually commending it. It remains that the moral point of view would seem justified only if it is true that there is good reason to act not only on one's own happiness but that of others too.

But what would that reason be? What would constitute good reason for caring about the happiness of others? Hare pointed out that moral judgments are action-guiding because we are committed thereby to an end which furnishes the standard by which we evaluate courses of action. That end, Meynell has pointed out, is determined by a set of objective criteria to do with human flourishing. These *necessarily* include the achievement of the standards of cognitional and moral self-transcendence. But there is an aspect of these standards that is not fully brought out by Meynell's, and Lonergan's, accounts thereof. For the responsibility that one necessarily affirms in any act of deliberate choice is a responsibility to act so as to promote the happiness of others, to act with justice, not simply to act in a manner consistent with one's own flourishing.

It would seem, then, that there is contained in the meaning of moral terms as elucidated by Meynell, the idea that there is good reason to act from the moral point of view. It is not simply that, as evident from the findings of the human sciences canvassed by Meynell, our biological, psychological, and social contexts determine, as a matter of fact, important elements in human flourishing: a norm of interpersonal relations, it has to be shown, is a necessary element in our self-realisation. The way Meynell's argument is set out seems to deny this. But if this is not the case, our moral traditions - which reflect the action-guiding character of moral terms - would seem to be mistaken. What is determined to be the morally good course of action must be in accordance with *all* the necessary conditions for self-realisation. There is good reason to act on the knowledge of what one ought to do, because one has an interest by nature in the promotion of the true happiness of the other person, not simply an interest in the promotion of one's own development understood apart from that of other persons.

Meynell argues that it is reasonable to attribute happiness to one who acts with effective freedom in relation to his or her own interests; and goodness to one who does so in relation to that of people in general. To the criterion of happiness as the primary condition for an action to be good, Meynell has added that of justice. But there are two ways of understanding justice as a standard: a calculation of how much we have to modify and reduce our own demands in the face of those of others; or the fulfilment of our nature as a being-with-others. Two different ideas of what is reasonable will emerge: one will only regard as reasonable an act in which one's own happiness (understood *prior to* that of the other) is juxtaposed with considerations of fairness; the other will sanction acts of generosity, which have as primary concern not fairness but the welfare of the other and the promotion of the relationship. In the latter case, MacIntyre's communitarianism is justified: isolating oneself from the community is not a reasonable option. Moral reasoning makes sense only if there is an end or interest to which we are committed by nature, and which necessarily includes the promotion of justice.

In the following two sections it will be argued that it is only through a particular kind of personal relationship that one is enabled to develop one's fundamental capacity for self-transcendence, to develop as a person. I should act in the interests of the other because it is through the promotion of their true interests that personal relationship is sustained or made possible. What constitutes reasonableness must be an understanding of what lies in our deep interest, and this, it will be argued, is the promotion of personal community. And this means that we have to interpret happiness in terms of other-dependency, if morality is to make sense. Clearly, on MacIntyre's account, one is other-dependent. But this is not fully explained: how is such determining influence compatible with human freedom? Lonergan's

cognitive theory has gone some way towards assisting in such an explanation: we explain anything not by positing some force behind what is to be explained but by postulating and justifying a set of explanatory conjugates of a classical, statistical, genetic, or dialectical nature. Nor is MacIntyre's account of the foundation for moral judgments specified in a strictly philosophical, rather than empirical, way, and it is faced with allegations of being relativistic. We turn now to Johann's account of the necessary interpersonal dimension of the moral point of view.

5.3 Dialogical Knowledge Of Human Nature: Johann

Johann (1975) points out that judgments of value are intrinsically dependent on human interests. Moral judgments, he argues, have an objective foundation only if there is by nature an interest in personal community, if human beings should properly be thought of as not just "a collection of atomic individuals" but rather as "an ever-to-be-created community of persons". Whereas Meynell's starting point is the existence of a common understanding of human happiness and its role in moral thinking, Johann wants to focus on the subjective attitude involved in all moral deliberations, and on the necessary implications of such an attitude about the objective end intended. Johann begins by asking:

"Is there an objective moral order binding on all men regardless of the way they think or feel about it, or are moral norms simply cultural constructs which derive whatever validity they enjoy solely from the allegiance given them in particular times and places?"(1975:155)

He argues that the role played by interests in moral deliberation is not an insurmountable obstacle "to their genuine, even if sometimes limited, objectivity". This common enough yet false conclusion is linked to a false "identification of objective reality with the findings of scientific enquiry". On the contrary, there is an interest which transcends any particular scientific finding, "which defines the human as such and is the objective basis for universally valid judgments of moral value".(1975:156)

When I deliberate, I intend that I arrive at an understanding of the rightness or wrongness of my intending what I do intend, and that implies that I implicitly affirm or commit myself to my 'self-transcending' nature as a subject capable of such deliberation. Thus, "our very capacity to engage in moral deliberation implies an awareness on our part...that our very nature as subjects is normative for our conduct".(1975:169) Here is an interest which transcends all particular interests and grounds moral deliberation, justifying morality. This can be spelled out in more detail in terms of the standards implicit in judgments of value.

A judgment of value answers a question for deliberation. Unlike a question for reflection, one is not asking what is the case "regardless of the aims and intentions of the inquirer".

"Deliberation...looks precisely to the realization of those aims and interests."
Value judgments "are always, at least implicitly, about the steps to be taken to realize a goal to which the judger is already committed."(Johann, 1975:157)

The end, therefore, provides both the motivation for undertaking the deliberative process, and the standard for its execution. "Its attractiveness to the inquirer is what motivates his efforts, whereas its being the sort of end it is enlightens and guides them." What is rational, or good, to do is determined by the kind of end that is intended. Clearly one can and does deliberate about ends themselves, but as Johann points out, any such deliberation (about "what goals we should commit ourselves to and in what order of priority") itself presupposes some further end to which the inquirer is already committed.

Thus far Johann can be seen to be in broad agreement with the analysis given by MacIntyre. And Johann finds space within this perspective for genuine objectivity in judgments of value.

"To evaluate something is to answer a question about its worth... It is to answer, for example, the question: Is this object, which may be good in the sense that I like it, really good, i.e. something which it is rational to want?"
(1975:160-1)

In other words, while I may term 'good' that which I simply like and find appealing in that case I would be answering a reflective question about my likes and dislikes; but that is not to evaluate it. The latter presupposes some standard determined by an already intended end. Johann's point is that, "contrary to a widespread assumption",

"[t]he presence of personal interest as a determining factor in such enquiry does not...preclude the objective validity of the conclusion it reaches."
(1975:162)

The moral judgment is about the means to the desired end, and the correctness of the means is determined by its relation to that end. If this relation is as is stated in the moral judgment then the latter is objective. But what is needed if one's judgment is to be morally binding, absolute and not relative, is a standard, an end or interest, that is universal. Johann gives the example of a school in North America which the authorities have undertaken to integrate through bussing in more black children from the ghettos. Some white parents are angered at this action and decide to close the school down by organizing a sit-in.

"From their point of view, the proposal which calls public attention to their grievance looks like a good thing. For the authorities, anxious to keep the school open and running smoothly, it is a bad thing. For the black parents,

who want their children to have the advantages of a better school, it is a bad thing. For some of the schoolchildren, who like nothing better than a holiday, it is a good thing."(1975:161)

Here it is evident that the lack of moral consensus is the result of differing interests motivating the differing evaluations. If the project of rational moral discussion is to make sense, then it has to be shown that there exists an implicit interest which is universal and necessary. It would make no sense to prescind from interests, as would be the temptation for ethical naturalists - to look for example in the findings of science for a basis for universal consensus in values. The end or interest provides the ground and *standard* for moral deliberation: what is of central concern is then what the adoption of such an end, and its reaffirmation in one's deliberations and conclusions, says about the subject (as is clear from our example above).

"To say unconditionally that something is good or bad is implicitly to affirm that I, who make this claim, am bent on a goal in the light of which the appraisal is made. It is to acknowledge that I am the sort of person who not only finds such a goal attractive but who has committed himself to its realization."(1975:158)

This commitment is implicit in what is meant in statements of moral value, in their 'logic'. The question remains whether there is an interest transcendent of particular interests which would provide a foundation for advancing to moral consensus. The bare fact of commitment itself as a dimension of judgments of value does not mean that the latter are "simply disguised statements of personal bias and without objective warrant". For while it is true a standard cannot operate without someone adopting it as such, still, as Johann puts it, "it is not *my* adoption of a standard or *my* intending an end which grounds the judgment made with respect to it; it is the adopted standard itself, the intended end itself, which does this."(1975:160) The judgment is objectively valid if it affirms consistency between the projected action and the interests of the judge when such consistency is indeed what is the case. Anyone else sharing that interest (and therefore that standard) could be expected to reach the same conclusion. And whereas Aristotle assumed certain overriding interests germane to his concept of a normative culture, our question regards the possibility of affirming an interest which transcends all particular interests to which we might be committed. Knowledge of such an interest, if it exists, would provide a foundation for value judgments of the type we are seeking.

Johann then sketches the nature of such an interest. All deliberation, he has pointed out, is about ways and means to achieve an already intended end. "Conflicting interests, therefore, can be rationally adjudicated only on the basis of another interest, to the fulfillment of which their pursuit or rejection is relevant."(1975:163) If that further interest is to perform

its role as adjudicating particular interests on a rational basis it must be an interest of a different order from those under consideration: it cannot come into rational conflict with those. It must be a 'transcendent interest'. In the first place it must be unquestionable: it must be an interest one experiences as a standard of value whose force one cannot rationally dispute. This does not imply that one limits the scope of the intended objects of one's enquiry, but that since in all enquiry one sets oneself the goal of abiding by certain standards, that enquiry presupposes certain ends. Furthermore, the intending subject would necessarily intend that unquestionable end. What is not necessarily intended is a matter of choice and an end which is open to question. Thirdly the interest would be universal, one in which all subjects necessarily share. And finally it would be absolute in the sense of being incapable of being subordinated to anything else.

If such an interest exists it means that "man by nature *is* the intention of an end in relation to which all his choices can be weighed". It means that there is such a thing as "normative human nature", human nature not as an observable fact nor as something simply that is created historically, but as an objective norm. Johann argues that since such a concept is precisely what is required "if disputes are to be settled rationally, it is perfectly clear that any attempt to bypass the idea of man's nature...is doomed to failure."(1975:164) Moore's 'open question' objection to ethical naturalism is faced head on: it exhibits a fundamentally mistaken conception of moral deliberation.

According to Johann, most contemporary moral philosophers think that there is no evidence for the existence of a normative nature in the sense required if moral disputes are to be rationally adjudicated. But clearly one does sometimes use the concept of human nature normatively, as when one counsels someone to 'act like a human being'. Is such use justified? Or is the norm to which one is referring simply relative to some or other cultural *notion* of what it is to be a fulfilled or flourishing human being, in which case it would seem unjustified. Nothing can be concluded about what one ought to do from the facts about how people in some cultures tend to behave. With this, we are back with the question of the scope of human knowledge. If one thinks that all one knows is scientific knowledge, knowledge through observation and experiment, then no such thing as knowledge of human nature in the sense proposed is possible. But Johann, similarly to Meynell and Lonergan, argues that scientific investigation itself presupposes such knowledge of human nature. The observations the scientist makes are not simply the result of staring blankly; to observe

"is to be engaged intentionally in the activity of collecting data relevant to some hypothesis. But...to be engaged intentionally in an activity is to know oneself as so engaged. The observer knows himself as observer, not by observing himself, but in the very act of making observations."(1975:166)

The type of knowledge that is relevant here is not scientific knowledge but the self-awareness that is presupposed in all intentional activity. "The evidence for man's normative nature is his consciousness of himself as an intentional subject."(1975:167) In order to grasp this nature one needs not simply to analyze concepts nor observe behaviour, but to attend to and objectify this self-awareness.

To be consciously deliberating about alternative courses of action is to be aware that our choices must meet certain objective requirements if the deliberation is not itself to be undermined, i.e. to be good or right they must be consistent with the end at which one is aiming: it is this end that is the rational basis for our choices. But apart from considering whether what is accomplished by the action is good, consistent with the end, we may also evaluate whether the intention is good, i.e. whether one's pursuit of *that* particular project is a worth-while commitment to make. And that means one judges the project which constitutes one's very nature; for the chooser, as Johann says, "it is his very selfhood, the sort of person the choice will make him, which is coming under judgment."(1975:168) Johann concludes that in moral deliberation we are implicitly aware that it is our 'nature as subjects' that is normative for our conduct. An end that is transcendent is one to which one is committed by nature, which one necessarily shares with other subjects, the ground of all rational action, unquestionable, and absolutely final.

In a later article (1976) Johann further elucidates the kind of knowledge or understanding of human nature that is here to the point. It is only when one consciously engages in a strictly personal interaction with another subject that such understanding is achieved, for only then does it make sense to treat one's nature as subject as a standard for a set of deliberations. Johann distinguishes three fundamental possible 'standpoints for reflection', those of thought, action, and communication, each one more comprehensive in its scope than the previous. It seems uncontroversial that the range of one's attention is determined by one's preoccupations. "To speak of a standpoint is to speak of a disposition of an experiencing subject which in some way determines what is given in his experience."(1976:46) For example, while as a philosopher I necessarily occupy the standpoint of a thinker, I may *intend* what I experience not only when I am thinking but also when I am acting to get things done.

"To think from the standpoint of the agent is to do one's thinking in terms of what is disclosed, not to one thinking, but to one involved 'hand to hand' with the other, to one as an agent of change."(1976:48)

In thought, one detaches oneself from the concerns of people; one is concerned with modifying not the objective situation but one's grasp of it. This standpoint can be taken to

correspond roughly to the empiricist notion of standards of enquiry, which entail abstracting from all value. In action, on the other hand, one is concerned with the other person as a resource in the accomplishment of some task (and this corresponds to the idea that standards of rationality are determined by something's or someone's function within the whole). In neither case, notes Johann, is one concerned with the other as subject, as intending something. It is of course true that this latter concern *involves* getting something done, but the primary concern lies in creating the possibility of a project that is truly common, i.e. with the other as intending something. While thought prescind from agency, and agency from the communicative attitude, the last involves both agency and thought.

It is only from the standpoint of communication that the moral point of view can be justified. Clearly this attitude is appropriate to the level of analysis Lonergan terms dialectical, and which he describes in terms of the structures of intentionality and cognitional, volitional, and affective self-transcendence, but Johann adds something to this by spelling this out in terms of the 'communicative attitude'. In the communicative attitude my concern is not simply with what can be achieved through our common understanding but with that common understanding itself. Does it occur? "For the first time something is disclosed as significant, not only in terms of *what* it is or *what* it leads to, but precisely in terms of its being meant, its being something intended." (Johann, 1976:49) I am concerned with the subject, with the other person not only hand to hand but face to face.

To illustrate this distinction Johann gives the example of someone knocking off his hat. This transaction may be viewed simply as an event, "something which is not done but simply happens", a determinate change in the world, or, as is perhaps more likely, as a deed, i.e. as something intended. "The presence or absence of intentionality [i.e. purposefulness] makes no difference to the way the transaction rearranges the determinate factors in the situation." (1976:52) Nevertheless, as he says, it makes all the difference to the relationship of the persons concerned whether the hat was knocked off purposefully or by accident. Johann concludes that "intentionality and the communicative or dialogical relationship go together". For of any act it can be said that - apart from its being an acceptance of a relationship or its rejection - it makes not the slightest difference that the act is intentional. That fact matters only to another subject. "What calls for and justifies an act as intentional is the achievement of a relation of subjects, of persons." (1976:53) Only from this perspective, that of our nature as subject, as communicating with another subject, is it clear that the moral point of view is the most rational. For here what is meaningful is the act from the point of view of its contribution to making one one sort of person rather than another. Here one has reference to a world which transcends and includes the subject as intending. The subject is ordered by nature to the dialogical standpoint, that concerned

with the communication of meaning. In this analysis Lonergan's elucidation of the normative structures of intentionality and their foundational role in moral judgments, is supported by the argument that purposefulness is properly understood intersubjectively rather than individualistically.

Meynell argued that the knowledge of normative human nature is knowledge of how to overcome individual and group egoism; similarly Johann explains such knowledge in terms of the ability to see reality to some extent from the point of view of another person. But for Johann this ability is normative because it is a condition for the achievement of personal community. It is knowledge of the normative structure of the achievement of a commonly affirmed project or end, and in moral deliberation one implicitly affirms as standard for one's behaviour the sort of person who embodies such norms as dispositions.

So the choice to be moral is not arbitrary.

"[T]he adoption of the moral point of view is precisely the subject's commitment of himself to his objective End, that in responsive relation to which alone his life as subject can be finally grounded."(Johann, 1976:57)

To be a subject is to be able to choose one's course of life; and one cannot be said to choose, to form intentions, unless one has grounds for forming one intention rather than another. Those grounds must lie not in some further chosen end but in an objective reality for which choice is somehow significant, i.e. not in any state of affairs simply as such. What does require choice for its accomplishment is precisely the type of relation of subjects of which Johann has been talking, a relation requiring for its accomplishment certain particular attitudes from the subjects, thus, in Johann's word, 'transobjective'. 'Being-as-subject' is ordered by nature to the reality of personal community which alone can ground subjectivity (the capacity to form intentions). All actions which go against the norm of deciding according to criteria of good and bad, and thus against the fostering of personal relationship, must be judged, for these reasons, "irrational and essentially frustrating". For it is irrational to opt for a course of action that at the same time denies the grounds of one's moral choice.

Finally, while acting morally is in the subject's interest, it is clearly not a question of a self-interested prudential calculus. The moral point of view has an unqualified claim on one's allegiance because through it something unconditioned is reached, namely the ground of one's subjectivity, that fellowship, in principle universal, in terms of which purposiveness makes sense and which fosters the growth of self-transcendence or effective freedom.

"In other words, reason is not morally normative for the subject because it is his nature; on the contrary, his nature is morally normative because it is reason, i.e., a capacity for the all-encompassing and absolute."(1976:59)

In this expression we have a way of preserving the essence of ethical naturalism while avoiding the interpretation that one is presenting a foundation in an uncritical (and dualist) conception of human psychology. At the same time, the unconditionality that is part and parcel of our understanding of acting morally (Simpson's notion of 'the noble') is given a central place, without it implying a dualism or denying the importance of the element of happiness or satisfaction.

According to Johann the end that grounds the rationality of moral debate is an interest in community.

"My life, what I do, the commitments I make are all rationally grounded only to the extent that they are regulated by this interest, informed by this intention, are determinate embodiments of *our* relationship. What is done must be *our* doing, not mine alone... To be grounded, they must be determinate realizations of *us*, determinate realizations of community."
(1975:170)

The absence of this kind of concern in agents lies at the root of social conflict. Justice, as Johann says, is in the final analysis the product of communication, of both sides intending it - not a matter of rules for adjudicating claims. There is therefore a way out of this situation and it is the way pointed to by Aristotle and classical virtue ethics. We are in conflict with one another because we are in conflict with ourselves, with our own nature. We need to articulate and take to heart those virtues which lead us to live better what we are.

The tradition of ethical naturalism has been faced with the question of the applicability of modern scientific methods to human behaviour. It is true that human beings are to a large extent determined by their environment, and act in accordance with it. Our task has been to show why this fact is not incompatible with the transcendence of the human person, and how therefore moral judgments are not without foundation or basis. Such a task has been achieved by showing how the concept of nature as a norm continues to apply.

As argued above, implicit in one's moral deliberations is a commitment to a harmony of interests, for underlying the deliberation is an affirmation of one's capacity to reach, in one's understanding and one's willing, the truly worth-while. In other words, one commits oneself to one's nature as a norm, and thereby one intends a harmony of interests rather than getting one's own way regardless of the objective merits of one's proposed course of action.

Clearly the existence of such an interest does not in any automatic fashion ensure the resolution of moral debates. The point is that its neglect would always lead to a failure in such debates. It is therefore of paramount importance that such an interest be brought to

the fore of moral philosophy. Moral growth requires effort: the question, which we have now answered, is whether the effort is justified.

Johann argues that objectivity in ethics cannot be attained by abstracting from interests; it is these aims and interests that provide the context, the motivation as well as the standard, for moral evaluation. This does not mean that judgments of value are subjective. But they would be relative unless one could discern in all human intentions an interest that was universal. Johann's analysis supports and clarifies MacIntyre's moral theory, according to which virtues, like skills, are defined in terms of participation in social practices, rather than any metaphysical psychology prescinding from the commitments of the will. The formulation of the distinct standpoint of communication as more fundamental and comprehensive than those of thought or action, has brought our attention to an interest, which we have by nature, in the overcoming of egoism through the adoption of the moral point of view.

We have argued that human nature as subject is a norm antecedent to any choice we make. But that means that it is not something determinate and therefore manipulable but something to which we have to respond and with which we have to reckon in our actions. We find ourselves constituted by a relation to other persons, a relation whose demands on us do not figure as equal among other demands but to which the appropriate response is a self-appropriation. Living morally is appropriating our nature as constituted by a personal relation ("as constituted by a relation to You", in Johann's rather runic phrase). It involves a positive affirmation of this relation, "my choice to embody in my life and actions that relationship which constitutes my being a person in the first place."

"The moral order is that order of exigencies which stems from the fact that to be a person, an I, is to be in relation with You. No act can be an authentic realization of myself unless it is at the same time a realization of this relationship."(1975:172)

This order transcends my intentional life since it grounds the very constituent elements thereof (the existence of objective standards of achievement). It is not simply passively being like this (human nature) that is the subjective foundation for moral judgments but clearly also the commitment to live out that nature. This is not to say that the adoption of the moral point of view is matter of a further unjustifiable choice. It is a choice, or rather a matter of self-appropriation (as Lonergan puts it, of 'choosing to choose'), but a justifiable one. Such self-appropriation is largely a matter of a reorientation towards the priority of the personal life above other aims, a changed perspective, being in touch with a personal reality. That personal reality is one in which one's ends are determined by the intention of

creating a genuinely common life. Conflicts of interest (one may recall Johann's example) are resolved by "coming to common and mutually acceptable terms."

"For, since our empirical interests have objective worth only as subordinate to and regulated by our interest as persons (our interest in community), it is in the ultimate interest of neither party to a conflict of interest simply to have his own way."(1975:173)

The real interest of each lies in coming to understand "what modification of his project would render its realization something acceptable to the other."

Johann's concern is the ultimate possibility of resolving conflicts between individuals and groups. If no such possibility exists then morality in the traditional sense, which supposes "the achievement of social cooperation on the basis of insight rather than by force or psychological conditioning" is an "idle dream".(1975:155-6) And he concludes:

"Reason can replace force as the shaper of the world only if each of us is more interested in maintaining and developing a common life than in simply having his own way."(1975:173)

Johann has argued that this interest is one we have by nature; and only on the basis of this interest in communicating does the notion of having intentions, and or that of expressing meanings, make sense. This brings to the fore the properly intersubjective nature of the normative structures of agency that form, for Lonergan and Meynell, the foundation for moral judgments. The promotion of personal community is justified because self-realisation is achieved only through such community. And this understanding of human freedom challenges the dominant notion in modern non-naturalist ethics, and suggests a way of integrating the approach of MacIntyre with that of Lonergan and Meynell. Johann's account of the foundation of ethics brings out the importance of a philosophical account of the intersubjective conditions of human growth. Our study of ethical naturalism in the writings of various contemporary Thomists will conclude with a suggestion that it is this dimension of human nature that could be said to be foundational in moral theory and most deserving of further philosophical enquiry.

5.4 Freedom, Communication, And Other-Dependency

In the previous chapter it was argued that the foundation for moral judgments lies in the adherence to and appropriation of a set of norms constituting self-transcendence; we have now brought out the intersubjective context of this norm. Insofar as concerns its formal structure, and its actual content, this foundation needs no further justification: it was argued that moral judgments can be given a foundation only if the notion itself of justification is reformulated. We found, on the other hand, that Simpson's account of a foundational metaphysical psychology could not be fully justified. In the latter case any defence of ethical naturalism would seem to entail a curtailing of the spontaneous operation of human

creativity, making the standpoint of thought, or contemplation, the most fundamental attitude, and drawing the subject away from the appropriation of the necessary social conditions for self-transcendence.

For all the Thomist thinkers canvassed in this and the previous chapters - Simpson, MacIntyre, Lonergan, Meynell, Johann - freedom flows from our nature, and this perspective, they suggest, corrects contemporary oversights in the concept of freedom understood simply in terms of autonomy. Our capacity for freedom or self-determination lies in our nature. Simpson correctly pointed out the inadequacies of a notion of freedom in terms of the act of an arbitrary will. But only with Lonergan's multi-levelled enterprise of rational enquiry, could freedom be understood not dualistically but in terms of the complexities of human development. Once one turns from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis, argues Lonergan, two misconceived notions disappear, that of the pure intellect or reason operating without guidance from responsible decision, and that of the will as "arbitrary power indifferently choosing between good and evil".(1970:121) Conceiving the intellect as autonomous in the way here criticized - the incoherence of which was further shown by Maxwell - leads to the notion of an objective nature as the 'already-out-there', that posed a seemingly intractable problem to Nagel. According to such an understanding of nature, freedom (a quality of human nature) would be seen simply as one (special) fact among others, a cause among causes. And on the basis of such a notion little sense can be made of the moral dimension of life.

The characters depicted in such modern works of fiction as Van Melle's *Bart Nel* or Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale* are governed by the notion of will as arbitrary power, as are the characters referred to by MacIntyre as embodying modernity's ethos (Voltaire's nephew of Rameau, Henry James' Ralph Touchett), and finally this conception lies at the root of the popular notion of the 'hero' as analysed by Iris Murdoch. The value of integrity or sincerity governing the behaviour of such characters is one which is a mere shadow of those fundamental human virtues of courage, honesty, and justice described by MacIntyre, or of genuineness and authenticity as explained by Lonergan. The upshot of such a mistaken notion is a certain willful ignorance or self-deception, the antithesis of what is described in MacIntyre and Lonergan's account of ethics. Meynell brings out the extent to which the fundamental value of freedom entails a different concept of the will, one far more closely linked to self-understanding and the overcoming of self-deception. It is the faulty concept of human freedom which has undermined the role played by moral considerations, which are seen as based simply on another arbitrary choice, on certain further unjustifiable rules of behaviour.

MacIntyre has questioned the coherence of the notion of self-realisation when this is understood as abstracted from any social context or moral tradition; the distinction drawn by Lonergan between the realm of theory and that of interiority and intentionality analysis, it was argued, enables one to integrate the particularities of the situation, the context-dependent nature of all human good, in one's conception of self-realisation. Lonergan, and following him Meynell, defines effective freedom in terms of the degree to which one has appropriated one's cognitional and moral self-transcendence, the quality of one's disposition to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable in judgment, and responsible in action. Johann's analysis of the further necessary conditions, the specific content, of the norm of self-realisation, adds something to this understanding of freedom.

Johann's argument is that a commitment to the achievement of personal community - the appropriation of a necessary and unquestionable interest - can alone found objective moral judgments. A corollary of this is that the moral dimension (revealed in the dialogical attitude) adds something to our understanding of freedom. From the dialogical standpoint freedom is seen as the capacity to participate in an intersubjective reality, and moral judgments as an expression of such freedom. What is central to one's concerns when communicating is what the subjects in the dialogue intend. More exactly, the focus is on the intending itself rather than on what is intended. What is intended is important *as* intended rather than for its own sake. Here one experiences an order of reality in which our intentionality makes sense, or has significance. Johann develops and brings out the social implications of Lonergan's notion of a foundational act, or experience, of self-appropriation, by means of which the reality of the self as knower and as responsible is affirmed. In the dialogical standpoint one experiences at once freedom and communication. Intending, as an act of self-disposition, "presupposes a context in which such self-disposition is meaningful, a context, that is, within which a being active as a self has a place." And, as we have seen, "[s]uch a context...can be provided only by other selves, other beings capable of deliberate initiative and of responding to such initiative when invited to do so."(Johann, 1976:54)

Meynell draws our attention to the central role played by a properly informed judgment in the constitution of freedom; Johann to the genuinely common life that grounds all freedom and to the attitude necessary to foster such mutual understanding and dialogue. It is shown that ethical naturalism does not necessarily involve a dualism and individualism of the kind that was found to some extent in Simpson's account.

Lonergan argues that our freedom lies in being authentic to our nature, and that means living at the level of responsibility, i.e. appropriating this level, being responsible for oneself

and one's self-determination. Johann develops this notion further. If one acts according the norm of certain *kinds* of action, as is the case roughly in the classical understanding of ethics, then the reality of the subject, the intender, he argues, is missed. The good of order, of certain kinds of arrangement for systematically meeting needs and desires, can be justified in the final analysis only by reference to the context of the intending subject. Outside of that context, which is the context of communication, what is regarded is only the kind of actions taken, not the fact of their being intended. From the standpoint of action as such, Johann concludes, "freedom gets equated with something called choice, which itself is interpreted as an event in a causal sequence." When one adopts the standpoint of communicating, on the other hand, what is important is the freedom itself of the subjects.

"If freedom is in fact our capacity to mean what we say and do, which in turn has import only in the context of personal relationship, then short of being approached from the standpoint of communication, it is bound to be misunderstood."(1976:54)

Freedom, he continues, is our capacity for personal relationship. The actualization of one's effective freedom and a certain kind of dependence on the influence of another, are, it can therefore be concluded, complementary. Those formative social influences that are the subject matter of the human sciences are thereby revealed to be aspects of this foundational, structured, interpersonal relationship. An ethics based on human nature concludes to those dispositions which foster the affirmation of this relationship. The conditions for the actualization of our freedom are therefore twofold: a natural capacity which defines our humanity, and the existence of a personal community of a particular kind. Only when the latter is brought to the fore does one properly advert to the depth of one's commitment to the reality that constitutes one as subject and agent, namely the relationship with another subject, in Johann's expression, 'with You'. In other words, apart from 'effective freedom' being affirmed as an objective norm, the question remains as to its actualization over time, the question of one's capacity for sustained development. In Johann's account it would be reasonable to act according to a precept that counselled affirming the other person in their subjectivity in the reasonable hope of bringing into being a reciprocal affirmation and so an operative set of transactions that further fostered self-transcendence.

Implicit in specifically moral judgments is, as Johann argues, a notion of human nature as an ever-to-be-created community of persons, and of a commitment to the achievement of this personal community. Self-determination only makes sense in the context of the dialogical relation, and from the standpoint of communication. Moral judgments are objectively founded only if it is true that human freedom is in direct, rather than inverse, proportion to

a certain kind of influence of another person. That this is so is the thesis of Shutte (1982), in an enquiry into the possibility of integrating the classical notion of human nature in terms of rationality, with the insight of post-Hegelian philosophy into human intersubjectivity. Shutte thereby furnishes a philosophical account of persons in terms of their necessary relations with other persons. Using the models of mother and child, of two friends (one more developed in his fundamental capacity for self-realisation), and of the mutuality of lovers, Shutte describes the necessary path of a progressively maturing interaction with another person, and of the subject's coterminous growth of freedom.

Shutte's study, and its discussion of the many writers, in particular those within the phenomenological tradition (an exception being MacMurray [1959]), would seem to link up and complement the conclusions we have drawn from our analysis of the various approaches to reformulating ethical naturalism among contemporary thinkers. In order that our own capacities are developed we have the need of the influence of another person in whom those capacities have already been developed. This is perhaps best illustrated in through the model of two friends, one more developed in the understanding and use of his most fundamental powers for cognitional and moral self-transcendence than the other. Shutte writes:

"At the same time as this progressive identification with the other increases, so does the completeness of the growing person's possession of himself. The law of personal causality, that self-enactment and identification with the other increase in direct rather than inverse proportion, is more fully exemplified in this description than in that of the mother and child. The more the life of the other is entered into, the more self-control and autonomy increases. The more the difference in the character of the fundamental system of insights and choices is obliterated, the more the growing person possesses his own life. The more the growing person suffers the personal causality of the other, the more it becomes his own, the more he is freed from the determinism of his own impersonal nature and the inevitable conflicts it produces in him."(1982:166)

There is then a fundamental structure in personal or moral growth, pre-empirical and normative because it consists in the necessary elements in the self-transcendence that characterizes human agency. It must be the case that self-realisation and dependency on certain kinds of influences of others are compatible. Such dependency is usually described in terms of social roles. Yet the type of dependency one is speaking about here is a dependency that goes to the core of human agency - one grows *through* others, in strict dependence on them or not at all - and the term 'role' is inadequate for this strictly interpersonal relation, the existence and normativity of which is not rationally questionable. Such relations ground and enable social roles to exist, for the individual to aim himself or

herself in a way which secures the good not just of himself but, through the cooperation of others, the good of many. It is only when one has to account for personal growth that the existence (and normativity) of such interpersonal relations is noticed. The tension in Marx and Freud between determinism and human freedom is partly the result of this real problem lying at the heart of the social sciences, and the use of scientific method to explain human behaviour. MacIntyre has shown how moral values must needs be discussed in terms of social roles, and has attempted to describe such roles in a fundamental way so as to affirm the description of human action in terms of its objective moral quality. We have now grounds for justifying such an affirmation.

On the basis of our discussion it can be shown that there is a natural desire for the personal community that secures moral growth. The capacity for rationality, or, as described in this thesis, self-transcendence, that characterizes human beings, is the contribution of the western philosophical tradition. It has become dualist (and individualistic), as the cultural outlook became more dominated by modern science. But that is not a necessary interpretation. It can be shown that our rationality lies in our capacity to share a universal life with another.

We can link this insight to Lonergan's discussion of self-transcendence, and in particular to his discussion of the development of feelings. (Lonergan, 1972:30ff) Self-realization develops only through the emotional life: I need to get to know my most fundamental desires, and these express my dependency on others. Unless I have a fundamental desire for personal community, the notion of authentic personal development would not make sense. But my moral efforts - to act now in a way that is consistent with my insights into the good, and to reflect on how such insights cohere or do not cohere with my present emotional attachments - do seem to make sense. Thus it can be concluded that my freedom does indeed come about in direct and not indirect proportion to my dependence on a certain other. The object of my desire exists, i.e. personal community. There is by nature order in one's emotional life. In committing myself to the other person I am enabled to grow, in self-insight and self-affirmation. My mind and heart are opened because they are by nature a capacity for sharing the other's personhood. My capacity for self-knowledge and self-affirmation can only be developed as an affirmation of 'our' human nature and its *value*, and that means as part of a love or respect for another person who is in turn affirming oneself as a subject, and affirmation of *their* other-regarding orientation. The central importance of such analysis for the further development of moral theory is evident. We conclude with an account of the shape of the philosophical framework of such enquiry.

5.5 Conclusion: Philosophy And Its Use

It has been argued that the foundation for moral judgments is to be found in a particular kind of knowledge of human nature. Such knowledge is possible, it was argued, only once the restricted standards of rational enquiry associated with naive realism or empiricism are replaced by the more inclusive standards of a 'philosophy of wisdom' (Maxwell). Enquiry that proceeds along truly rational lines, argues Maxwell, seeks not knowledge *per se* but wisdom: it is devoted "to enabling people to realize what is of most value to them in life". Absolute priority, he contends, must be given to "articulating our problems of living, proposing and criticizing possible solutions, possible and actual human *actions*." (1986:65) Only then will the *true* value of knowledge and understanding be acknowledged and understood, in both the aspects of a value in itself and as a use for achieving certain other desired ends (technical knowledge). And although wisdom is personal rather than impersonal, it is not individualistic in the sense of excluding the institutional or social dimension: "the basic task of rational enquiry is to help us develop wiser ways of living, wiser institutions, customs and social relations, a wiser world". (1986:66)

Maxwell's notion of rational enquiry in terms of wisdom about ordering priorities when deciding among possibilities of action, opens up the possibility of giving a foundation for objective moral judgments. There is today a widespread consensus, in particular in the Third World, that the social sciences should contribute to social transformation and serve to meet identifiable social needs. Under the regime of an empiricist philosophy, however, 'going local', or inculturation, would not serve such ends, but, as Amin noted (above, 1.3), simply foster an inverted Eurocentrism. We can now see more clearly why this is so. In the first place there is a marginalisation of the value dimension of human life. Values are not seen as the incremental and hard won creative achievement of any society or community in its journey towards the goal of a better life within its particular geographical and historical circumstances, its contribution towards interpreting and fashioning human meaning; but rather as produced and determined by the circumstances (only thus could such values indeed be the proper object of value-presuppositionless social science!). In the second place, this being so, a manipulative attitude to that society is appropriate. To change the society one alters the circumstances: dialogue is not required.

We have claimed to show that value-oriented enquiry does not, as claimed by various writers, undermine the notion of peer evaluation by means of objective standards of excellence. Maxwell's philosophy of wisdom is one interpretation of the cooperation needed for such enquiry.

"Only by cooperatively imagining and criticizing many possible actions (the heart of reason) can people discover those rare, complex, coordinated actions which permit everyone to benefit."(1986:51)

Maxwell has given the example of a study of inner-city deterioration, and the implicit, or preferably explicit, value-oriented agenda of any such study. But he has failed to explain how the value framework of such enquiry is ultimately justified. What would the justification be for introducing the value dimension in, say, a study of urban problems in a deeply divided society, i.e. where the *willingness* to face such problems in a rational way is lacking, or not present to a sufficient degree? In other words one needs to advert to the justification of the moral point of view as such. As Midgley argues in her critique of the modern concept of knowledge - largely complementing that of Maxwell but applying the argument more specifically to problems of the foundations of ethics, in the classical tradition knowledge is not thought of as all on a par.

"Knowledge about what goodness means must be the centre, because it is what shows the point of all other knowledge, indeed of all other activity... [O]ur sense of value-contrasts is needed for the very possibility of our perceiving anything else. The polarity of good and bad is an essential dimension of our world, the condition of our knowing it at all. The value of understanding the difference between good and bad cannot therefore be reduced to, and equated with, the value of any other particular thing, not even of knowledge. It has a different kind of place in the world and in our thinking."(1989:14)

This complements Maxwell's argument and points to the need for an explicit foundation for the moral point of view. Lonergan's intentionality analysis indicates how such a foundation could be conceived and developed so as to give knowledge of how to overcome individual and group egoism. Maxwell suggests that philosophy is the study of the most rational aims as such, grounded in experiential knowledge. But there is a certain fuzziness in Maxwell's concept of experience. Within that experience of value, argues Johann, one can and should distinguish between the ends one has simply as an agent and those revealed from the standpoint of one intent on communicating. Maxwell's argument for a reorientation in one's conception of rational aims does not go far enough. Is it rational to pursue a reorientation that traditionally has been identified with the moral point of view? Only in such a case would the social scientist be justified in formulating suggestions as to the overcoming of conflicting interests in a way that took into account the actual underlying foundation of justice, not rules but the cultivation of interests and dispositions that included rather than excluded the other group, a network of friendships.

Ethical naturalism is the standpoint that values are based on 'the nature of things'. A widespread dissatisfaction with attempts to bypass this notion in ethics has opened the way for a

reconsideration of the tradition of ethical naturalism. The notion of normative human nature seems necessary if one is to make sense of the idea, universally found in moral traditions, that there can be an objective judgment of the relative worth of aims, intentions and desires. But the success and prestige of modern science, and a notion of objectivity which relegates aims, intentions and desires to the subjective realm only, has created in the contemporary mind set a mental block to such a notion. This is evident, it has been argued, in the moral theories of Moore, Ayer, Stevenson and Hare; it is referred to by McCabe; while both Lonergan and Maxwell describe their aims by means of a psychoanalytic metaphor. In psychoanalysis the patient is cured once he or she has been enabled to express to another person those feelings which have hitherto lain unintegrated ('blocked', 'subconscious') by his or her conscious living and which because of their force have been the cause of a malfunctioning in the person's intentional life, the frustration of the subject's aims. What is important is that the patient has a clear understanding of the change in himself, or herself, that has come about in the course of analysis. This metaphor expresses a particular role for philosophy.

It is clear that different roles are assigned to philosophy by the different interpreters of the tradition of ethical naturalism. For Simpson, philosophy is metaphysics, basic categories affirmed by correlating them with an a priori psychology. For MacIntyre, philosophy 'clears the ground' for the business of the sociology of traditions and, for adherents, the casuistic application of the values and moral rules which in part constitute those traditions. For Lonergan, the role of philosophy is more than preparatory. Intentionality analysis yields a transcendental method unifying the sciences and so far as concerns moral deliberation a set of qualities or dispositions which constitutes moral self-transcendence and the knowledge which is necessary to found judgments of value. Contemporary ethics, forced into a formalism by its oversight of the connection between the facts relating to the development of the human person, and moral values, has neglected the human subject; the type of self-knowledge one is talking about is well brought out by Meynell, indicating how the social sciences can be reconsidered as giving knowledge of those virtues necessary to overcome egoism. Johann points to the centrality of the personal relationship in moral living. Both give content to the foundational attitude of authenticity, without which no moral development is possible, and which is based on the nature of the subject as characterized by a dual relationality to oneself and to what is not the self. MacIntyre's foundational virtues of courage, honesty, and justice are grounded in a way that fits in better with Aristotle's notion of society as a network of friendships.

The naturalistic tradition, as found for example in Aristotle, sees itself as giving expression to the values embodied in social institutions and a cultural tradition, such values being systematized by means of a metaphysics of human nature. However without the benefit of

the statistical methods of modern science, complementing and applying the insight into the structures of reality afforded by classical scientific methods, such a metaphysics was bound to remain somewhat unreflective of the concrete dynamism of human reality, even to an extent dualistic, as we saw in our analysis of one restatement of such a 'metaphysical psychology'. Only a particular kind of knowledge of human nature will furnish the required foundation for judgments of value. A reformulation of the traditional understanding of human nature is required.

In the post-Hegelian philosophical tradition, and in the emergence of the social sciences, the basis of such a reformulation can be found. An awareness of the socio-economic and historical conditions determining the *various* beliefs about human psychology - the material of the human sciences - seems to discredit any argument that ethics can be founded on knowledge of human nature. We have argued on the contrary that an understanding of the sociology of knowledge and in particular the concept of a social practice can justify an Aristotelian conception of 'the good life for man', and consequently of virtue. For the social sciences are based on an insight into the distinct realm of causality (of explanatory conjugates) that is our human reality, namely, the interpersonal realm, and it is the methods of statistical science - documenting actual trends or tendencies in various concomitant interacting factors influencing human behaviour - that make possible the verification of such causality, without entailing a determinism. But it needed a further distinct argument to make good this claim.

The various arguments that purport to refute all forms of ethical naturalism have their root in an unjustifiably narrow view of what it is to understand human behaviour, in turn based on a misconceived empiricist view of science and knowledge. Only by means of a refutation of these views can the thesis be substantiated. The refutation proceeds by asking what it is to come to a justified knowledge of anything. This is attained by reflection on one's own conscious acts, thereby appropriating one's capacity to know. Clearly apart from knowers we are also doers, and such reflection can be extended so as to reach an understanding of human agency or of responsibility. In this way one gains knowledge of one's human nature as a norm.

In its method the attempt to found ethics on a metaphysical psychology fails to reflect or advance the standards of enquiry developed in the modern period; insofar as the content of its understanding of human nature is concerned this seems to entail an unconvincing dualism. On the other hand given a subjectivist approach to ethics discussions of individual and social ethics seem to boil down to an individualism which would confine the discussion to questions of the application of ultimately unjustified rules or 'rights'; or alternatively to a determinism which entails a collectivist exclusion of rational debate about moral choices. In

this thesis we have suggested a method that is congruent with the statistical procedures of the human sciences and with the accompanying insight into the social dimension of human flourishing, and the exigence for a more whole-hearted and intelligent social participation. It would suggest the fruitfulness of further investigation into the conditions of personal growth or maturation.

Both Meynell and MacIntyre see the contemporary philosophical scene in terms of an impasse. Meynell thinks Lonergan's analysis of the normative structure of subjectivity is the way out of the impasse. The alternative is some form of philosophy destructive of our traditions and of our freedom.

"What could be more important for culture than the articulation and implementation of general principles of truth and goodness in relation to which language, thought, and the human institutions based on them can be radically and comprehensively criticized? But it is just the existence of such principles that the most salient representatives of contemporary philosophy, whether 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Continental', seem driven to deny. Short of the existence and availability of such principles, the many rival claims which besiege and torment us on the rather important questions of how the world is, and how we ought to live our lives, can be supported in their strife against one another by nothing but arbitrary methods of persuasion, or shouting one another down, or violence and bloodshed." (Meynell, 1991:184)

We have not had occasion to spread our net as wide as this, but insofar as concerns the dilemmas mentioned in Chapter One, as well those encountered in the course of our examination of the suggestions of Simpson and of MacIntyre, it would seem that Meynell is largely correct in his judgment of the place of Lonergan's foundational moral theory in contemporary philosophy and culture.

If Lonergan's argument is sound, then in transcendental analysis we have an essentially invariant foundation for knowledge of anything and in particular for concluding to judgments of value. The critical foundation for affirming one's capacity to know the real and the good has brought to the fore what is only implicit in classical accounts of ethics but made thematic in the contemporary social sciences, namely the dependence of self-determination on certain factors in one's natural and social environment. The explanatory conjugates regarding one's biological make-up, the determinates of one's social roles, and so on, are constitutive of the self in the sense that they must be integrated into any successful personal development; and such integration necessitates the norm of genuineness. Human agency is a kind of taking control of oneself, but it has as condition a relation of a special kind to the environment of the self and in particular to other persons. There is no pure intellect which operates apart from the responsible decision of the subject,

nor is the will the power of arbitrarily choosing between alternatives. Being responsible entails judging whether or not a particular course of action is the truly worth-while action to perform. And that means taking into account the needs and desires of others, and the moral rules that express the social order that fosters the satisfaction not of one individual or group only but of all.

The conditions for agency are therefore two: a natural capacity defining our humanity, and a community of a peculiar sort. It is the never completed task of philosophy to re-express our fundamental human nature so that a critique of the quality of the community, of the interpersonal milieu, is thereby grounded. Such a critique is characteristically carried out by the various human sciences - psychologists reveal destructive manipulation in family relationships, sociologists structural injustices in educational, economic and religious institutions, and so on. But these sciences cannot escape the issue of the status of the knowledge of human behaviour, of human nature, gained therein: is this value-free - or alternatively is it not rather close to the naturalism of an Aristotelian ethical investigation in the sense that it assumes certain fundamental norms of psychological health, of a just and happy society, and so on? All such critiques acquire confirmation of the objectivity of their judgments from the basic philosophical understanding of agency, the analysis of the normative as such.

But much of contemporary western culture remains characterized by a different notion, dating back to the metaphysical dualism of Descartes and the ethical voluntarism of Kant, according to which human agency and freedom is equated with the achievement of independence of one's conditioning environment, including other agents. The notion of the social genesis of human agency has, furthermore, been accepted only in a reductionist form in nineteenth century social science and psychology. But this understanding, an obstacle to any coherent formulation of the foundation for moral judgments, is not perhaps present to the same degree in cultures less affected by developments in the modern period in the west. And this makes a proper understanding of the nature of philosophical enquiry of paramount importance for the promotion of a more coherent concept of ethics than has been generally the case this century. Philosophical understanding, while it reaches its term in an abstract, formal and systematic expression or objectification of one's experience, is not tied down to the experience of participating in any one particular culture or to that culture's particular formulation of its beliefs and values. For the starting-point in philosophy is not some set of propositions but the experience of the normative as such.

Philosophical knowledge, unlike scientific, does not consist in situating a particular piece of information, by means of an explanatory theory or concept (and verifiable in experiments),

within a set of other theories and concepts generally applicable in that field. Because it engages with subjective experience as such philosophy only makes *sense* within a cultural context. Mere assent to the bare abstract phrasing of any philosophical truth is likely to be notional not real; to miss the truth intended in the formulation, one concerning the subject's personal self-appropriation and thus entailing a value. Ethics, as argued in this thesis, is founded on an understanding of agency, and as such needs to engage with the particular cultural form taken by the impulse to achieve something in life, in any individual case and cooperatively for any society. But inculturation would not imply simply inverted Eurocentrism.

Because philosophy is non-scientific, in the sense described above, that is, it deals with a normative issue *as such*, the nature and quality of the subject's own thinking and choosing, it can not be pursued without engaging the subject's own capacity to self-reflect. One is called upon to consider as primary data one's own intellectual and moral abilities; to understand, and judge one's own understanding, to affirm one's own intellectual nature and to do this with the consistency necessary to sustain a prolonged task such as the pursuit of philosophical truth. That involves a consideration of one's own will to do it, including the unity of one's desires in this respect. But one already has an understanding of the most basic or important things to desire, and of the nature of the human person, derived from one's own culture and family background. Thus one has to engage with this background in order to do philosophy well. A critical attitude to the political, educational, religious and economic institutions making up one's culture is part and parcel of that. One engages with a tradition, or a body of beliefs, attitudes and practices, perceived to be more or less coherent or more accurately presupposing a certain degree of coherence.

It is particularly evident from a non-western perspective that philosophy cannot be thought of as a body of doctrine which can then be applied to various contexts. As we have seen in the case of ethics, the institutions of a culture will tend either to express or alternatively to undermine the practice of the norm which constitutes the subject's rational and moral self-transcendence. To 'do philosophy' within a set of concepts which never engaged with the thinker's own culturally influenced subjective experience, would be to fail to do philosophy properly or well. One has to draw upon the particular narrative in which those concepts are revealed as expressing or alternatively failing to express one's subjective experience of being an agent. Only a strictly philosophical analysis of agency, of the type outlined above, can provide a set of critical principles by which to evaluate a culture's set of beliefs and hierarchy of values.

Philosophical analysis, in whatever cultural context it is pursued, is a type of self-examination. One comes to a judgment about one's most basic beliefs and values, and one's character, behaviour, and commitments. It provides one of the necessary conditions, self-knowledge, required if one is to effect a change in oneself. Philosophy aims at providing a greater coherence to one's beliefs, enabling one to be more conscious of them, and between those beliefs and one's desires. One grows in the breadth of one's judgment on the truth of one's beliefs and quality of one's desires. Ethics in particular aims to provide a critical foundation for personal growth and integration. I hope to have contributed to this task, and to have gone some way in describing its content, in this thesis.

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