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Virtue Ethics for Relational Beings

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Abstract

In *On Virtue Ethics*, Rosalind Hursthouse outlines an account of virtue ethics and human flourishing grounded in an understanding of human beings as emotionally complex, social, and rational animals. These attributes give rise to a set of ends against which the goodness of our behavioural, affective, and intellectual dispositions are measured, namely, 1) survival of the individual, 2) continuance of the species, 3) characteristic enjoyment of pleasures (and avoidance of pain), and 4) the good functioning of the social group.

I contend, however, that this picture is incomplete. More specifically, I outline the psychological effects of prolonged solitary confinement to make the case that Hursthouse's model excludes an important and morally salient human attribute: relationality. Moreover, as a result of this exclusion, Hursthouse's model also leaves out an important end against which to measure the goodness of character traits, namely, the granting of recognition.

Taking seriously the role of recognition in evaluations of goodness gives rise to a number of virtues that are not normally foregrounded by virtue ethicists. I identify and discuss six of these virtues of recognition. The first three are reflexivity, reflectivity, and attentiveness. I characterize these three as "virtues of cognizing" insofar as they play a role in apprehending (with reasonable accuracy) the ways others experience the world. The other three character traits I offer as examples of virtues of recognition are epistemic temperance, deference guided by humility, and a moralized notion of etiquette. I characterize these as virtues of recognizing since they are involved in communicating to others our recognition of the character of their experiences.

Keywords

Natural Goodness, Rosalind Hursthouse, neo-Aristotelian ethics, virtue ethics, natural normativity, relationality, recognition, contemplation, solitary confinement, epistemic injustice.

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Chapter 1

1 The Natural Goodness Model: Twenty-first Century Neo-Aristotelian Ethical Naturalism

In this chapter, I lay the theoretical groundwork for my project of formulating a relational account of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics based on the natural goodness model of virtue. I begin, in Section 1, by considering the first explicit formulation of this theory, found in the late works of Philippa Foot, especially its final articulation in 2001's *Natural Goodness*. One distinctive feature of Foot's account of natural goodness is that, following Elizabeth Anscombe, she makes the concepts of basic human needs and practical rationality central to her moral theory. I will attempt to shed light on the rationale for her appeal to basic needs rather than a more comprehensive picture of human nature, as Aristotelian naturalism would seem to warrant. In Section 2, I summarize and defend the adoption of Hursthouse's account of natural goodness in *On Virtue Ethics*. Hursthouse's model is an elaboration on Foot's and departs from hers mainly in grounding our evaluation of the virtues in a more elaborate conception of human nature.¹

Defending Hursthouse's elaboration of natural goodness will open up space to further complicate it, as I will in subsequent chapters. Beginning in Chapter Two, I will argue that there are certain ends against which we can evaluate the goodness of individual character traits that can be derived from the fact that humans are rational beings. In Chapter Three, I argue that there is an important aspect of human nature that isn't represented in Hursthouse's focus on human beings as emotionally complex, social, and rational animals, namely, the fact of human relationality. Armed with a fuller conception

¹ I confess to a slightly loose and ahistorical use of the term "human nature." It is a concept that has a storied and checkered history and much has accrued to it along the way. I don't mean to adopt all of its baggage with my usage, but I find it a difficult term to do without. Something like "human function"—a term I may avail myself to from time to time—is also close to the mark but is similarly burdened. For one thing, I don't mean anything so narrow as Aristotle did (I have no interest in picking out the one characteristic that is going to serve as *the* human function). For another, I by no means wish to endorse the distinction he drew between the characteristic functions of men and women. And yet, I have struggled but not found any suitable terminological substitute. So, I will employ the language "as is" and hope that my intended meaning takes clear shape as the reader progresses through these chapters.

of human nature, I turn, in the last three chapters, to the task of roughly sketching what the natural goodness model (its Hursthousean variant, at any rate) entails once we factor in relationality. In Chapter Four, I make the case that the goodness of character traits of relational beings like ourselves should be evaluated in light of how conducive they are to securing recognition of others. It would, however, be a pity to leave things at such a very abstract level, so I devote the final two chapters of this thesis to outlining some of the particular virtues that correspond to our need for recognition, tackling what I call the virtues of cognizing in Chapter Five and those of recognizing in Chapter Six.

1.1 Foot's Ethical Naturalism

Foot's account of ethical naturalism begins from the observation that judgments that attribute goodness to any object fall under two broad categories. There is, first, a "natural goodness" that can only be appropriately attributed to living things and, second, a "secondary goodness" that is a derivative of natural goodness and can also apply to inanimate objects. Natural goodness is attributed to individual living things—either to whole, individual beings or to their parts, characteristics, and operations—when they are evaluated in light of their relation to some features of the species of which they are a member. Secondary goodness, on the other hand, is derivative, since it is ascribed to individual things on the basis of their relation either to some living thing or, if it is itself a living thing, to some member of a species other than its own. The derivative nature of this secondary goodness is most evident in the case of artifacts, which are only good insofar as they serve the interests of the animals that make use of them. It is also, perhaps, still rather clear when it comes to non-living natural objects. Good soil, after all, is judged as good only in relation to some living thing. It might be, for instance, good as a source of nutrients for the basil growing on my windowsill or good as terrain for cycling, but it would be rather odd to speak of the soil as being intrinsically good, independent of its relation to any living being. Finally, while living beings can possess natural goodness, we still ascribe secondary goodness to them whenever we evaluate them in light of some species other than their own. To use one of Foot's examples, we ascribe natural goodness to a horse by evaluating it in relation to its species, but we can also ascribe secondary

goodness to it by judging it well suited to "carry us as we want to be carried."² There is, in other words, a difference between a good horse (*simpliciter*) and a horse that is good for riding or that serves as a good muse for poetry.

To better understand the role that the concept of species plays in ascribing goodness to living beings, it is important to arm ourselves with a few concepts defined by Michael Thompson, whose work heavily influenced Foot's. In "The Representation of Life," Thompson discusses what he calls "natural-historical judgements," which are species-level claims, the sort found in works of natural history, such as Aristotle's *History of Animals*, and in "the voice-overs on public television nature programmes."³ They are characteristically expressed in what Thompson calls "Aristotelian categoricals"—sentences with the structure "The *S* is (or has, or does) *F*," where "*S*" stands in for a term that designates a particular species, as in the sentences "The American black bear hibernates during the winter season" and "The beaver builds dams." It is important to note that while these types of sentences express some general truth about a species, they are not simply statistical claims. The statements above about beavers and American black bears might well be statistically true—perhaps there are no American black bears who abstain from hibernation or beavers who do not build dams, at least among those that live through the characteristic life span of their species—but the statistical truth of Aristotelian categoricals are only incidental. Elizabeth Anscombe highlights this fact in "Modern Moral Philosophy" by pointing out that the statement that adult human beings have thirty-two teeth is true despite the fact that the average number of teeth possessed by adult human beings is certain not to be so high.⁴ The whole of what these natural history judgments and their expressions in Aristotelian categoricals capture about a species is what Thompson calls that species' life-form. Life-forms, then, consist of the whole set of characteristics and behaviours that can rightly be ascribed to living things at the level of the species, rather than at the level of individuals.

2 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 26.

3 Michael Thompson, "The Representation of Life" (1998), p. 280.

4 G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958), p. 14.

There is, for Thompson, a certain normative upshot to this analysis. Having this concept of species life-form at hand allows us to go beyond judgments that ascribe goodness to members of the non-human living world solely on the basis of human interests or even the interests of members of other species—what Foot calls secondary goodness—and enables us to ascribe natural goodness to individual living things, a goodness of individuals in their own right, independent of the interests of members of any species other than their own. These evaluations begin by placing the individual within the wider context of the life-form of its species and then ascribing to it a "natural defect" insofar as its characteristics, parts, or operations do not correspond to those of the life-form (and, conversely, a "natural goodness" to the extent that they do). Drawing on the structure of Aristotelian categoricals, Thompson summarizes the normative inference as follows:

"From 'The *S* is *F*' and 'This *S* is not *F*' [we] infer 'This *S* is defective in that it is not *F*'."⁵

One striking consequence of accepting this model of ascriptions of goodness (and defect) to individual living things, and the one that animates Foot, is that it can be applied to the goodness of human beings. Rather than requiring some entirely *sui generis* form of evaluation to account for and evaluate human goodness, including all we would place in the category of moral goodness, Thompson's analysis shows us that we can employ judgments that have the same underlying structure as those used in evaluations of goodness across all animal and plant species. Vices, in other words, are fundamentally types of natural defect.⁶

Foot adopts Thompson's account of natural goodness and defect but points out that an important distinction is missing from it—perhaps not surprisingly, given that Thompson himself describes his brief, two-page treatment as "a few unguarded remarks on concepts

5 Michael Thompson, "The Representation of Life" (1998), p. 295.

6 The Aristotelian ethical naturalists' penchant for discussions not only of human defects but human defects as the basis of negative moral evaluations should strike every reader as jarring and unsavory, at least at first glance. The worry that the entire theory is ableist arises even at this preliminary stage and it is not clear that Thompson, Foot, and Hursthouse are sensitive to this problem. At least, none of them attempt to answer the charge. I will set this problem aside for the moment, but will address it in a later chapter, once I have defended some claims about human relationality.

of good."⁷ As Foot notes, not just any natural-history judgment will be relevant to the evaluation of the natural goodness of a living being, but only those that concern the aspects of an individual that are teleologically related to its development, self-maintenance, and reproduction. Foot illustrates this by drawing a distinction between the colouring of the peacock's tail feathers and the patch of blue feathers on the head of a blue tit.⁸ Both of these features can be captured by an Aristotelian categorical, but only the former can be captured by an Aristotelian categorical that admits of a teleological or functional qualifier.⁹ We do not, in other words, have to simply say that "The peacock has a brightly coloured tail;" we can go further and add that "The peacock has a brightly coloured tail *in order* to attract a mate." No such teleological qualifier is appropriate in the case of the blue tit's blue patch, assuming, as Foot does, that the patch's presence or absence has no consequence for its development, survival, or reproduction.

Since both are features characteristic of a species that can be formulated as Aristotelian categoricals, the presence of a characteristic pattern of colour in the feathers of the peacock and the blue tit bear a superficial similarity. But the fact that only the peacock's colouring plays a role in reproduction makes the two patterns significantly different when it comes to evaluations of goodness. The absence of the characteristic colouring on the peacock's tail will have an impact on its reproductive life since it will be less likely to successfully engage in mating rituals with peahen. This absence, then, counts as a natural defect, since it does not live up to the life-form of the peafowl. The absence of the characteristic blue patch on the blue tit's head, on the other hand, is rather inconsequential. We might say, then, that the absence of the blue patch makes a blue tit merely atypical—an anomalous or abnormal member of its species, perhaps, but not a defective one. Likewise, the presence of the characteristic colouring makes it a typical member of its species but it is far too incidental a feature to serve as the basis for a judgment that the individual that possesses it is a good member of its species. We may, at

7 Michael Thompson, "The Representation of Life" (1998), p. 295.

8 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), pp. 30-31.

9 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 31.

most, ascribe to it, and to any non-teleological characteristic, a goodness dependent on the interests of members of other species. If the absence of the blue patch compromises the goodness of the blue tit at all, it will only compromise some secondary goodness—say, if the discoloured patch offends the aesthetic sensibilities of a birdwatcher or does not make the atypical blue tit a good prey for some predator that relies on the blue colouring to track it.

Like Thompson, Foot extends the analysis of natural goodness to human beings. This is not to say that Foot denies that there is a realm of specifically moral evaluations that applies only to rational beings. She holds that "[t]here is nothing wrong with using the word 'moral' as Mill does,"¹⁰ namely, to denote a contrast with prudential considerations. Morality, on this definition, would simply designate the realm of voluntary human actions that have other individuals or societies as their objects, particularly those that involve "special relationships... for example, that of having rights, obligations, or duties."¹¹ However, despite being a realm of evaluation that is unique to human beings, Foot denies that evaluations of moral goodness require us to abandon or transcend the model of natural normativity in favour of some special form of evaluation. In other words, although human rationality is *sui generis*, moral evaluations are grounded in the same underlying theoretical structure that explains not only the goodness of prudential behaviour but also the goodness of non-rational, living beings. The evaluation of human beings, as is the case with members of other species, involves assessing the parts and operations of individuals that are relevant to their survival and reproduction against the background of the life-form of the species. As rational beings, humans characteristically achieve the end of survival and reproduction by means of practical reason. A human that fails to reason well, then, is not a good human being, or is, in Foot's terminology, a defective one. There is, for Foot, a very close relation between evaluations of rationality and those of morality. In fact, she goes so far as to state—"baldly," as she puts it—that

10 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 68.

11 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 69.

"there is no criterion for practical rationality that is not derived from that of goodness of the will"¹² so that "goodness... set[s] a necessary condition of practical rationality."¹³

The connection between moral goodness and practical rationality originates from Foot's realization that her early work, especially "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," was founded on two mistaken assumptions.¹⁴ The first is that, being beholden to a Humean account of action, she assumed that the motivation for any action requires that the agent has some desire to engage in that action. In her later work, however, she argues that some actions can be motivated entirely by the recognition of reasons, "based on facts and concepts, not on some prior attitude [or] feeling."¹⁵ The second mistake was to begin her inquiries into the rationality of morality by first postulating an account of practical reason independent of morality, one that understands practical rationality "to be self-interested action,"¹⁶ and only then attempting to explain moral actions on the basis of it. Foot's approach in her later works is to "turn the problem on its head: to start out not from a theory of practical rationality but from the idea that justice is a virtue."¹⁷ Having discarded the notion that practical rationality must be self-interested and based on the desires of the agent, Foot holds that it is irrational not to act in accordance with the virtues since doing so means failing to recognize an appropriate reason for action.

Just what Foot means by this becomes clearer in the final chapter of *Natural Goodness*, where she formulates a response to Nietzsche and other immoralists. Those whom Foot classifies as immoralists are not moral skeptics who deny the truth of any and all moral

12 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 11.

13 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 63.

14 Late in her career, Foot described herself as having, in that article, "made such a mess of things" ("Rationality and Virtue" [2002], p. 169) and having "made a rotten job" of explaining why it is rational to follow the rules of morality but not "silly rules of etiquette" ("Does Moral Subjectivism Rest on a Mistake?" [2002], p. 200).

15 Philippa Foot, "Does Moral Subjectivism Rest on a Mistake?" (2002), p. 206.

16 Philippa Foot, "Rationality and Virtue" (2002), p. 160.

17 Philippa Foot, "Rationality and Virtue" (2002), p. 160.

claims. Rather, they are purveyors of rival moral theories or outlooks that value what are ordinarily considered vices.¹⁸ Nietzsche's subversion of commonly held values and Thrasymachus's praise of injustice can serve as exemplars of immoralism. Against such immoralists, Foot points out that human life must be "lived according to norms that are known and taken as patterns by those whose norms they are," and that these norms must not be those of a Nietzschean *Übermensch* or of one who equates goodness with power, as Thrasymachus¹⁹ does, but "must largely be formulated in terms of the prohibition of actions such as murder and theft."²⁰ This is due to the fact that human life requires at least some confidence that "a stranger [who] should come on us when we are sleeping... will not think it all right to kill us or appropriate the tools that we need for the next day's work."²¹ Considerations such as these point to a basic conception of human needs, one that is sure to be widely shared and unlikely to rouse much controversy, except, perhaps, for the needs it excludes rather than those it includes. From these basic needs we can then derive a "broad vision of the virtues"²² by identifying the dispositions that humans must possess if they are to meet these needs. This focus on basic needs provides Foot with a close connection between morality and rationality, since failing to recognize or act upon considerations of basic human needs is to act in a way that is both immoral and irrational. Considerations of our basic needs, however, seem a bit too thin for a theory of human goodness. It is not unreasonable to want to extend our thinking about morality beyond our most basic needs, or to want to get something more precise and detailed than a "broad vision" of virtue. There are indications that Foot has a richer picture of moral life than her

18 This should be no surprise; as Richard Hamilton puts it, Aristotelian ethical naturalism has no aspiration to convert moral skeptics since "[v]irtue only speaks to someone immersed in an ethical life" ("Naturalistic Virtue Ethics and the New Biology" [2014], p. 46). We should not expect Foot, then, to engage seriously with such skeptics.

19 Of course, Thrasymachus equates, at least to some extent, what he considers the appropriate use of power with injustice. I do not, however, mean to imply by my use of "goodness" that Thrasymachus endorses any traditional list of virtues but that his favorable evaluations are reserved for those who succeed in exercising power unjustly.

20 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 114.

21 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 114.

22 John Hacker-Wright, "What Is Natural About Foot's Ethical Naturalism?" (2009), p. 321.

theory might suggest, at least on its surface. This richer picture shows up, for instance, in her comment that "human beings... need powers of imagination that allow them to understand stories, to join songs and dances—and to laugh at jokes."²³ She does not, however, provide much elaboration on these suggestive comments and the reader who wishes to fill in the gaps is left to draw inferences on their own.

It is likely the case that this non-elaboration of the richer picture of moral life is not an omission on Foot's part but the result of her holding a somewhat conservative view about the role of theorizing in moral matters. Theory may demonstrate a link between normativity and human needs or function, but fleshing this out might lie beyond its purview. Grasping the relevant human needs and understanding which virtues would adequately meet them may be, in Foot's view, something that philosophy has little to tell us about and that, instead, we must hope that we, like Aristotle's intended audience for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, have lived in such a way that our experiences have furnished us with a vague but accurate understanding of human nature and the virtues.²⁴ On this reading, then, much of Foot's account remains suggestive because it points to something that is to be grasped by practical reason rather than articulated by moral theory.²⁵

1.2 Hursthouse's Ethical Naturalism

1.2.a: Hursthouse's Functions Model

23 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 43.

24 Aristotle states that the lectures that are recorded in the *Nicomachean Ethics* are, along with any other "lectures on political science," intended only for those who are experienced in, and hence good judges of, "the actions that occur in life" (1094b28-1095a4. This and all subsequent citations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are from the W.D. Ross translation).

25 I owe this interpretation, in part, to a comment made by John Hacker-Wright about the role of practical reason in Foot's late works (personal communication). It is, moreover, in keeping with Foot's career-long attempts to convert the immoralists and subjectivists. Decades spent sparring with recalcitrant interlocutors may very well have left Foot to concur with Alan Gettner's assessment that "The very fact that [moral] theory must be adjusted to prior moral conviction and not vice versa... suggests the moral priority of considered convictions over the general principles of moral theory," leaving moral theory with a value that "is only theoretical" ("Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" [1976], p. 243). This pessimism about theory is, at the very least, compatible with Foot's conservative view that moral philosophy can defend the claim that human beings need the virtues, but any adjustment to moral convictions beyond this very basic one will have to be performed by other means.

Hursthouse's account of virtue theory in *On Virtue Ethics* takes Foot's natural goodness model as its starting point. Hursthouse, however, sees the model as somewhat limited and elaborates it by identifying aspects of species function other than their parts and operations, along with ends or needs other than the most basic ones of survival and reproduction. Indeed, Hursthouse restricts the application of Foot's basic needs model of natural goodness to plant species. In the case of plants, evaluations of natural goodness involve nothing more than judging how conducive their parts and operations are to the individual plant's survival and the continuance of its species. But evaluations of animals—or, at any rate, some animals; sponges, barnacles, and the like²⁶ might be evaluated in the same manner as plants—requires a larger set of considerations. At "some indeterminate point,"²⁷ the adequate evaluation of an individual animal must take into account the fact that it does things in ways that plants cannot. As such, we must evaluate whether their actions as well as their operations contribute to the ends of survival and reproduction.

It is not immediately clear that this first step in elaborating on Foot's model of natural normativity is significant. After all, Foot includes actions as part of an individual's operations. By specifying action as an aspect of species function, then, Hursthouse seems to be drawing a distinction only to emphasize a nuance that Foot has not spelled out in detail but does, nevertheless, recognize. Hursthouse characterizes the move from operations to actions as one that involves greater complexity. As she notes, in order to survive, plants need to passively absorb nutrition, but for many animals this is a far more complex process, involving not only absorption and digestion but also certain perceptual

26 There is, perhaps, a different taxonomy at play in Aristotelian naturalism. The line that divides plants from animals might not be the same as the one employed in the life sciences. That is to say, it might be that for the purposes of natural normativity anything that can only be evaluated by considering its parts and operations and their relation to survival and reproduction counts as a plant, while anything that is evaluated according to more complex criteria counts as an animal. Although this departs from existing biological classifications and the way the terms "plant" and "animal" are commonly applied, I don't think the suggestion is absurd. After all, it makes sense to think of sponges in the context of ethical reasoning as being "like a plant". However, I won't pursue the matter in the context of this paper, although it would allow me to avoid the occasional bulky qualifier (e.g. "plants *and members of simple animal species*"). Given that where the line is drawn is likely to be a merely terminological point—at any rate, one that I do not think makes any non-rhetorical difference—I will employ the ordinary uses of the terms.

27 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 199.

capabilities, locomotion, and the good functioning of claws, arms, jaws, or whatever other characteristic physical apparatus is employed in the gathering and consumption of food. Likewise, most animal species contribute to the continuance of their species in a way that "involves a great deal more than just, so to speak, the scattering of seeds,"²⁸ and includes activities such as engaging in mating rituals, laying and protecting eggs, and gathering food for their offspring. There is, to be sure, a degree of complexity that is not found in the species that Hursthouse characterizes as living by operations alone. And there are, indeed, rather significant and evident differences between romaine lettuce photosynthesizing and a hawk swooping to capture a field mouse, and these differences might seem, at least intuitively, to be the kinds of things that require different models of evaluation. However, despite these differences, it is not clear that distinguishing them has any serious theoretical implications for the basic structure of natural normativity. After all, it is difficult to see what theoretical changes would result from abandoning Foot's claim that the operations (understood as including actions) of animals are to be evaluated in light of their contribution to survival and reproduction in favour of Hursthouse's claim that the operations (understood as excluding actions) and actions of animals are to be evaluated in light of such contributions.

Hursthouse's next addition to Foot's model, however, does have clear theoretical implications. Animals whose psychology is complex enough that they are able to experience pleasure and pain are to be evaluated by a third end, beyond the ends of survival and the continuance of the species. This third end is "characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic pleasure or enjoyment."²⁹ As Hursthouse emphasizes, the qualifier that the only pains and pleasures that are relevant here are those characteristic to the species is important. This is not, as Hursthouse calls it, a "utilitarian [approach] to animal suffering"³⁰ that counts each instance of pleasure as a good and each experience of pain as a defect, but one that is derived from considerations of the life form of the species. As

28 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 199.

29 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 199.

30 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 200.

she notes, a dog that is insensible to pain is not a better dog than the members of its species who do experience pain in the usual manner. In fact, far from being better, since the experience of pain often functions as a survival mechanism, the insensible dog would count as having a natural defect. Similarly, an animal does not count as defective because it experiences pain while giving birth, so long as the degree of pain is within the range that is characteristic of its species.

The psychological complexity that allows for the experience of pleasure and pain also tends to be paired with another aspect of animal function, namely, emotions and desires. As Hursthouse points out, animals of sufficient psychological complexity may well have the parts, operations, and abilities that make them well-suited to, say, find and consume adequate sources of nourishment, but would still count as defective if they did not want to nourish themselves. Likewise, individuals who do not fear their natural predators, or who are terrified of their natural prey, may count as defective for not "feel[ing] fear in the right way,"³¹ that is, in the way characteristic of their species.

Hursthouse posits a fourth end that comes into play when we evaluate the natural goodness of animals who are not only affective but also social, namely, "the good functioning of the social group."³² As Hursthouse points out, this end is relevant primarily to the evaluation of actions, emotions, and desires, going so far as to confess that she "do[es] not know enough animal physiology to be sure of any examples of their parts being evaluated with respect to this fourth end."³³ The good functioning of the social group is characterized by Hursthouse in terms of the other three ends she has already identified. A social group that functions well is one that enables its members to live well by "foster[ing] their characteristic individual survival, their characteristic contribution to the continuance of the species and their characteristic freedom from pain and enjoyment of such things as is characteristic for their species to enjoy."³⁴ The traits

31 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 200.

32 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 201.

33 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 201.

34 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 201.

of social animals, then, can be defective insofar as they tend to impede the functioning of their social groups, either by behaving in an antagonistic or abusive fashion or simply by failing to participate in the activities that allow the social group to flourish or contribute to the proper development of its members. What these defects are and the specific ways in which they manifest themselves will, as is the case with every type of defect, vary across species, but they can involve, to use Hursthouse's examples, not participating in the pack's hunts, not grooming others, or refusing to engage in play.

For social animals, then, assessing the natural goodness involves evaluating an individual's parts, operations, actions, and desires and emotions in light of their role in achieving the ends of survival, continuance of the species, freedom from pain and enjoyment of pleasure, and the good functioning of the social group. Social animals are, as Hursthouse puts it, the most sophisticated of the non-human species—or, perhaps, of the non-rational ones, if we wish to ascribe rationality to great apes, dolphins, pinnipeds, and other species. They are not, however, the pinnacle of sophistication, a title reserved for rational beings. We might expect, then, that there would be an increase in the sophistication of the model of natural normativity corresponding with the increased sophistication of the function of the species, in the same way that new ends were added, first when psychologically complex animals were the objects of evaluation and, second, when consideration turned to social animals. Hursthouse, however, denies that rational beings are evaluated by a more sophisticated model than the one employed in the evaluation of social animals. She raises and hastily dismisses two traditional candidates for a fifth end, specific to rational beings: the preparation of the soul for the afterlife and contemplation.³⁵ The first of these she takes to be implausible because "to adopt [it]... is to go beyond naturalism towards supernaturalism."³⁶ As for the second, she simply states that "even philosophers have balked at following Aristotle and endorsing [it]."³⁷

35 In the next chapter, I will consider Hursthouse's objections to these in more detail, but for now, in the interest of providing a summary not too cluttered with evaluative digressions, I will simply state them.

36 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 218.

37 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 218.

Despite her denial that there are any plausible ends corresponding to rationality, Hursthouse does hold that moving from the evaluation of the natural goodness of social animals to that of animals that are also rational marks a change in the structure of the evaluation. Simply put, the evaluation of rational animals must take into account the fact that their "characteristic way of going on... is a rational way," that is, "any way that [they] can rightly see as good, as something [they] have reason to do."³⁸ This seemingly unassuming statement is in fact rather significant, since it ushers in two important changes to natural normativity, one that has to do with our methods of evaluation and the other with the prevalence of natural goodness and defect within the species. When it comes to non-rational species, the evaluative methods we employ are somewhat straightforward; merely collecting physiological information about its members along with ethological facts about their behaviour is sufficient to paint an adequate picture of the characteristic features of those species. Rationality, however, complicates naturalistic evaluation and frustrates any hope of such simple evidence-gathering, since those who possess it do not live lives entirely constrained by nature and biological instinct but can "contemplate alternatives and decide to change things."³⁹ What it means to be a good human being and to live well, then, cannot entirely be illuminated by ethological findings about the way human beings typically and ordinarily behave and organize their lives since "we have room for the idea that we might be able to be and to live better."⁴⁰

The freedom brought about by rationality entails another, related break in evaluations of natural goodness. Hursthouse notes that the things that are characteristic of non-rational species may well not be merely statistical—recall the claim by Anscombe, related above, about the number of teeth humans have—but, nevertheless, in most, or at least many, instances it will be the case that the behavior of the majority of the members of a species conforms to what is characteristic of it. In other words, we can expect that what is characteristic of a species is also typical of its members. Consequently, natural defects,

38 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 222.

39 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 220.

40 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), pp. 221-222. Italics in original.

while not exactly rare—we can expect to find them in any fairly large population—are still likely to be less common than natural goodness. It is true that this is not always the case and that we must sometimes resort to something more normative than mere empirical observation to identify the characteristic behaviour of a species. We could, for instance, find a species that is near extinction and almost all of its members dwell in some form of captivity. If there is a discrepancy in behaviour between those members of the species who are captive and those who are free-living,⁴¹ we would surely think that the best way to understand what sort of behavior is characteristic of the species is to observe the behaviour of the minority who dwell in their natural habitat, rather than that of the majority living in captivity. It would seem rather misguided, after all, to judge such a species as one that characteristically does not mate because its members are reluctant to do so while housed in zoos. There would be something amiss in the behaviour of those living in captivity and we could point to the behaviour of the free-living members of the species to bolster that fact. Still, there is a nagging sense that, despite this conceptual possibility, it is almost always the case that the behaviour of the majority of the members of a species will be in conformity with what is characteristic of that species. This is not, however, the case with human beings.⁴² Far from being typical, it is uncommon for "human beings [to] do what it is 'characteristic' of human beings to do."⁴³ That the characteristically human way of behaving is not typical of humans means that we cannot, as is usually the case with non-rational beings, simply look at how we live in order to understand what it is for us to live well, nor can we account for the discrepancy between

41 I use "free-living" instead of "wild" in keeping with the language policy recommended by Andrew Linzey and Priscilla N. Cohn in their editorial for the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Animal Ethics* ("From the Editors: Terms of Discourse", *Journal of Animal Ethics* 1:1 [2011]). Linzey and Cohn characterize the word "wild", along with other terms and idioms, as derogatory and "saturated with the prejudgments of the past" (ix), and caution that using such language "has major implications for how we conceptualize and think about the many worlds of animals" (vii). For a discussion, and response to, the subsequent criticism in the popular press of Linzey and Cohn's language policy see Linzey and Cohn, "From the Editors: Those Who Toil and Those Who Spin", *Journal of Animal Ethics* 2:1 (2012).

42 I won't pause to consider whether it is the case with other rational species, if there are any, or whether those species, while rational, are "significantly less or differently rational" (Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* [2007], p. 23) than we are. My project is about specifically human virtue and vice and, more importantly in this context, Hursthouse equates "rational" with "human", suggesting that she believes our species to be the only rational one.

43 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 223.

typical and characteristic behaviour by claiming that the majority of the species lives in captivity. Rather than treating this assertion as shocking, Hursthouse simply takes it to be common sense. In support of her contention, she offers only a set of rhetorical questions:

But isn't this exactly what we should expect a plausible naturalism to yield? Does anyone think that most human beings are good human beings? Does anyone think that, regarding ourselves as a collection of social groups or as one global one, we are flourishing, living well as human beings? Surely not.⁴⁴

Perhaps it is, as she seems to suppose, common sense. At least, it seems to be among virtue ethicists, who may be a bit more pessimistic about the prospect of human goodness than their counterparts in other sub-disciplines of moral philosophy.⁴⁵ Christian Miller's assessment of the literature concurs with this view. In his response to the much-vaunted situationist challenge to virtue ethics,⁴⁶ Miller mentions that those issuing the challenge have not provided evidence "that there actually are any virtue ethicists who accept [the] assumption [that most people are either virtuous or vicious]."⁴⁷ It is, moreover, as Miller points out, an attitude that is grounded in the origins of the tradition of virtue ethics, since both Plato and Aristotle held that the cultivation of virtue requires an upbringing and education that few were fortunate enough to receive.⁴⁸ It is, at any rate, no problem with Hursthouse's theory that it involves a sombre assessment of the goodness of human beings, given that her goal is to contribute to an accurate understanding of what it means

44 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 223.

45 This pessimism may well extend to virtue theories in non-Western traditions as well. Owen Flanagan, for instance, claims not only that Mencius holds that developing the cardinal virtues is "not normal in the sense of 'usual'" but that this view is also held by "Confucius and every other classical Chinese philosophers, [who are] nostalgic for a past Golden Age when virtue was normal in the sense of 'usual'" (*Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies* [2014], p. 35 n.).

46 The main proponents of this challenge are Gilbert Harman, in papers such as "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology" (1999), and John Doris, in his book *Lack of Character* (2002). Briefly, it holds that social psychology provides evidence that the majority of human beings do not have the kind of stable character traits that virtue theorists ascribe to the virtuous.

47 Christian Miller, "The Problem of Character" (2014), pp. 420-421. Emphasis in original.

48 Christian Miller, "The Problem of Character" (2014), p. 421.

to be good and to live well, not to pander to or assuage her readers with assurances of their moral success.⁴⁹

The difference rationality makes to evaluations is quite large, but Hursthouse still locates these evaluations within the system of natural normativity. Despite the far more "normative notion of 'a characteristic way of going on'"⁵⁰ that is appropriate to rational beings, she retains the naturalistic structure. A good human being is, as with other social animals, one whose behavioural dispositions are conducive to achieving the ends appropriate to social animals and these ends delimit what can count as a virtue for human beings. Adopting character traits and endorsing them as good is not sufficient to make us good members of our species, even if we adopted and endorsed them en masse. Unless those dispositions are also genuinely conducive to the ends of survival, continuance of the species, characteristic enjoyment of pleasure, and the good functioning of the social group, they will not count as human virtues.

1.2.b: An Assessment of Hursthouse's Model

From this summary of Hursthouse's natural goodness account of virtue, it is evident that her version of Aristotelian ethical naturalism draws heavily on Foot's but also departs from her in significant ways. The primary difference is the greater number of aspects of animal function and corresponding species ends that Hursthouse treats as having theoretical significance. For Foot, only the parts and operations of individuals matter and they are only evaluated in light of their role in fostering individual survival and the continuance of the species. On Hursthouse's account, this is only true of plants and very simple animals, like bivalve mollusks and sponges; more complex or sophisticated living beings require a correspondingly more complex method of evaluation. There is, however, a conspicuous silence in *On Virtue Ethics*: Hursthouse elaborates on Foot's account

⁴⁹ I would, however, quibble with Hursthouse's occasional use of the first-person plural (on page 223, for instance) which seems to imply a bit more optimism about her audience than her theory seems to warrant. At least in most cases, this is likely a mode of address employed rhetorically rather than an assumption about the goodness of the readers of her text.

⁵⁰ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 224.

without either mentioning the reason an elaboration is needed or why she was motivated to depart from Foot's austere version of the theory.

Whatever the reasons behind Hursthouse's modifications, the results of them are evident. Recall that my interpretation of Foot explains her simpler model of evaluations of natural goodness as the product of the constrained role of theory in her moral philosophy. Briefly, Foot gives theory a conservative role in moral life: theory can provide a basic justification of morality by appealing to the basic needs of living beings, but a detailed picture of moral life can only be grasped through experience and practical wisdom. Hursthouse, on the other hand, allows theory to play a more pervasive role. This is no surprise—not only because she is the author of articles with titles like "Applying Virtue Ethics"⁵¹ and "Virtue Theory and Abortion"⁵² but she also explicitly states that her more complicated theoretical structure "really does constrain, substantially, what [she] can reasonably maintain is a virtue for human beings."⁵³ Hursthouse's decision to elaborate on the theory, then, appears to be, ultimately, the result of her comfort with a broader role for theorizing in morality.

Hursthouse has provided us with a significant elaboration of Foot's theory—that much is clear—but this raises the question of whether it is not only a modification but also an improvement on it. Rather than a single theory, perhaps summarized with different emphases, we have two distinct ones and if we wish to adopt this particular brand of Aristotelian ethical naturalism, we must choose which will serve as our starting point. There are some advantages to adopting Foot's theory over Hursthouse's. For one thing, it is the sleeker model of natural normativity. Not only is Foot's naturalism far more parsimonious, positing as few aspects of function and species ends as any proper account of virtue would require, but it also applies, without modification, across all forms of life. Moreover, the concluding pages of *Natural Goodness* reveal another attractive feature of her theory, namely, its persuasive power. Foot's final chapter makes the case that an

51 In *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory* (1995).

52 In *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20:3 (1991).

53 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 224.

Aristotelian ethical naturalism focused only on the primal needs of survival and reproduction provides us with resources to convince a receptive and intellectually honest immoralist—who, after all, is quite likely to agree that humans have these basic needs—that their moral outlook is irrational. If Hursthouse, on the other hand, is to win over her philosophical opponent she must convince them that for a human being to live well they must not only be part of a social group and a recipient of its benefits, but also live in a way that contributes to its proper functioning. This would, at the very least, be a tough sell to those whose intuitions harmonize best with ethical egoism. To be sure, Hursthouse does provide arguments meant to convince immoralists and other skeptics of virtue, but none are as direct or forceful as those allowed by Foot's grounding of virtue in basic needs. Take, for example, the appeal to what she calls "the smile factor." The immoralist, Hursthouse contends, should recognize that the virtuous enjoy a flourishing life because they display various signs of well-being that any immoralist would find familiar, such as doing things "with zest and enthusiasm, anticipated and recalled in certain tones of voice with certain facial expressions, and in a certain vocabulary."⁵⁴ However, it is easy to imagine an immoralist wryly dismissing these signs as evidence not of flourishing but of, say, self-deception brought on by an eagerness to believe that virtue is its own reward—perhaps to mask the fact that they are motivated not by a wish to do good but by some form of self-righteous pride. Moreover, even if immoralists were to accept the "smile factor" as evidence that living virtuously does lead to flourishing, this would not be as devastating to their own moral position as a realization that holding that position is irrational.

Despite the merits of Foot's theory, I nevertheless favour and adopt as my theoretical starting point Hursthouse's variant of natural goodness. My main reason is that Hursthouse's more comprehensive picture of animal function seems to be what a naturalistic approach would entail. Naturalistic moral theories, at least the Aristotelian variants, are derived from considerations about human nature, specifically, about the relation between aspects of human function and the ends and needs that correspond to

54 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 185.

them. Any claim that we must exclude from consideration certain aspects of function or certain ends and needs that correspond to these would seem to require arguments that lie outside of the core of naturalistic moral theory. There may well be such arguments, but Foot does not present them and in their absence we have no reason to deviate from naturalism's expected course. Of course, Foot does tell us that only those aspects of function that are teleologically relevant fall under the purview of natural normativity, and that only those that are related to development, self-maintenance, and reproduction are teleological, at least in the appropriate sense. The worry I raised, however, still stands since it is not clear why considerations about the good functioning of social groups and the enjoyment of pleasure are not teleologically relevant. If certain species do have emotional and social needs, then surely this is something that should be reflected in our evaluations of natural normativity. It is not, moreover, only the fact that Hursthouse's theory follows naturalism to its expected conclusion that makes it favourable; it has advantages of its own. What it sacrifices in simplicity it makes up for in greater scope. In other words, by allowing theory a wider role, it provides us a means of justifying and explicating far more aspects of our moral lives, rather than relying on the tacit knowledge involved in practical wisdom. It also has the advantage of reflecting an intuition that is difficult to shake, namely, that there are significant differences between plants, simple animals, social animals, and rational animals and that these differences have implications for our models of normative evaluation. This intuition, furthermore, harmonizes particularly well with natural normativity. Given that naturalistic evaluations are grounded in the natures of various species, it would be somewhat surprising if the structure of the evaluation does not change in keeping with very broad changes in the nature of the species whose members are the objects of such evaluation.

Even with these considerations in mind, Foot—at least as I interpret her—does seem to have a point. Moral life and the lived experience of virtue—not to mention the associated ones of vice, weakness of will, and self-control—are quite complex and difficult to capture or distil. We should worry, then, that ethical theory might be a clumsy tool that invariably and crudely oversimplifies virtue and flourishing. This concern, however, should not necessarily lead us to throw out theorizing altogether or to put overly strict limitations on its application. Rather, we can hold onto theorizing but do so with at least

two caveats. First, given that moral theories will never provide a comprehensive picture of moral life, we must proceed as Aristotle advises in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3 and take much of what our theory tells us as indicating—if we are successful, at any rate—"the truth roughly and in outline."⁵⁵ Second, we must also recognize that theory is always to some extent in dialogue with lived experience and they are mutually affected by this interplay. Theory can explicate and lead us to revise the moral judgments we make "on the ground," while those judgments can, in turn, influence what we take to be plausible or important aspects of a moral theory. These caveats reflect the fact that moral theory does, indeed, provide us only the contours of a moral life. The disagreement, then, is not about whether theory can inform us of only the contours of moral life but about just how thick those contours are, that is, how much of the lived experience they leave untouched and unarticulated. Still, the reasons I gave for favouring Hursthouse's account over Foot's stand, and I see no compelling reason to be restricted to an articulation of only the thinnest contours.

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have summarized the two primary accounts of the natural goodness variant of virtue ethics, namely, Foot's model based on a conception of basic human needs and Hursthouse's model based on a fuller conception of human nature. I then gave reasons to favour the adoption of Hursthouse's model over Foot's. My ultimate aim is to formulate a natural goodness theory that reflects an even more complex understanding of human nature than the one Hursthouse provides in *On Virtue Ethics*. As such, in the next chapter, I consider Ronald Sandler's proposals in *Character and Environment* for expanding the structure of natural normativity by adding three ends according to which we should evaluate the character dispositions of rational beings: meaningfulness, the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, and autonomy.

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Chapter 2

2 Revisiting Rationality: Sandler's Challenge to Hursthouse

In *Character and Environment*, Ronald Sandler provides a natural goodness account of environmental virtue ethics. His first chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the book by outlining the natural goodness approach to virtue, as found in Hursthouse's writings rather than Foot's, but Sandler does more than merely summarize the available theory. Near the end of the chapter, he raises a number of challenges to Hursthouse that, although at times so brief as to be opaque, are worthy of serious consideration.

While I am not convinced by all of Sandler's arguments, considering them at length will serve two important functions. First, my defence of Hursthouse against Sandler's charges will afford me the opportunity to elucidate some of the details of the theory I have adopted and clear up some potential misconceptions about it. Second, and more importantly, Sandler is the only philosopher I know of who has attempted, at least in print, to expand on Hursthouse's natural goodness model. Since my project is to provide such an expansion, considering Sandler's attempt to do so will serve as something of a first attempt at testing just how far—and in what direction—the natural goodness theory can be pushed.

I begin this chapter by briefly responding to Sandler's first two challenges to Hursthouse's model of natural normativity. In Section 1, I consider Sandler's claim that the existence of a plurality of scientific approaches entails that Hursthouse cannot rely on scientific naturalism to do much of the metaethical heavy lifting required to justify the theory of natural goodness. I dispense with this challenge rather swiftly, since I contend that it arises from a misunderstanding of the kind of naturalism on which Hursthouse's theory relies, which is more Aristotelian than scientific—although Aristotle would no doubt have considered it to be both and it is by no means *unscientific*. In Section 2, I respond with skepticism to Sandler's claim that the natural goodness model appears to be more flexible than is warranted given the potential for the technological enhancement of human

capabilities and transformation of human nature. Section 3 is devoted to Sandler's attempt to expand the model of natural normativity by positing three species ends for rational species. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hursthouse posits additional species ends with every significant jump in the complexity of the species' form of life; however, she denies that there is any such end that corresponds to rationality. Sandler, however, contends that, just as there are species ends relevant only to species that have sufficiently complex emotional lives (the end of characteristic enjoyment of pleasures and freedom from pain) and to those that are social (the end of the good functioning of the social group), there are three species ends for members of rational species: meaningfulness, the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, and autonomy. I will consider and discuss each of these individually.

While I reject Sandler's proposals for ends correspond to rationality, I too break with Hursthouse in holding that there are no such ends. In Section 5, I revisit the two candidates that Hursthouse rejects, namely, the preparation of the soul for the afterlife and contemplation. Although I agree with her rejection of the preparation of the soul as an appropriate end for rational beings—albeit for a different reason than the one she provides—I argue that her rejection of contemplation is too hasty. I conclude by examining some of the features of Aristotle's account of contemplation and defending the adoption of a (neo-)Aristotelian conception of contemplation as a species end for rational beings.

2.1 The First Challenge: Varieties of Naturalism

Sandler challenges Hursthouse's appeal to naturalism by stating that it fails, at least on its own, to justify an appeal to the life-forms of species in the evaluation of goodness. The problem is that scientific naturalism provides us with "quite a lot of ways to divide the natural world up into kinds other than by species."⁵⁶ While ethologists and botanists are concerned primarily with making species-level claims, the practitioners of other branches of the life sciences do not share this focus. Appealing to scientific naturalism to ground

⁵⁶ Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 19.

normative evaluations, then, is not so straightforward since it requires us to explain why we privilege the scale of classification that is of interest to ethology and botany, namely, that of species, over others that would lead us, instead, to "evaluat[e]... a living thing as a member of a genus, a bearer of a particular genotype, or a member of a local group or population."⁵⁷ Sandler claims that this shows that much of the naturalistic picture is justified by a set of ethical commitments rather than by scientific naturalism itself and that, as a result, "[t]he theoretical underpinnings of the structure of evaluations of human goodness are thus somewhat different than advocates of the natural goodness approach suppose."⁵⁸ We can, then, alluding to the title of Prichard's famous paper,⁵⁹ say that Sandler's worry is that natural goodness rests on a mistake.

It is, however, Sandler's critique of the virtue theorists' appeal to naturalism that rests on a mistake. Foot and Hursthouse both provide theories that they label as variants of "ethical naturalism" but neither of them claims to be grounding their work on any form of reductionist scientific naturalism that would delegate all moral questions to the findings of scientific inquiry. Sandler is perhaps not to be faulted for this confusion; after all, the neo-Aristotelians who employ the term "naturalism" do so in a rather idiosyncratic way. When neo-Aristotelian ethicists appeal to naturalism, they mean simply that their normative evaluations of individuals or their traits and dispositions are grounded in facts about the nature or function of the species of which those individuals are a part.⁶⁰ To speak of naturalism in these contexts, then, is not to invoke the natural sciences, nor is it to rest moral claims on any kind of scientific naturalism. What Analytic philosophers typically mean when uttering the term, on the other hand, really does tie it quite closely and directly to scientific naturalism, so it is to be expected that some readers of

57 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 19.

58 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 20.

59 H.A. Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" (1912). The paper is perhaps nowadays more famous for its title than its content, but famous nonetheless.

60 Hursthouse, for example, defines "ethical naturalism" as "broadly, the enterprise of basing ethics in some way on considerations of human nature, on what is involved in being good *qua* human being" (*On Virtue Ethics* [1999], p. 192).

Hursthouse's *On Virtue Ethics* will import this notion into their interpretation of natural goodness.

Some of the fault for this misinterpretation lands on Hursthouse's own shoulders. There is a passage in *On Virtue Ethics* that is likely to mislead. It states that "the truth of [natural goodness] evaluations.... are, in the most straightforward sense of the term, 'objective'; indeed, given that botany, zoology, ethology, etc. are sciences, they are scientific."⁶¹ Sandler is not the only one to have been misled by this passage. David Copp and David Sobel zero in on it and take issue with Hursthouse's "suggest[ion] that her account of natural evaluation has a scientific status."⁶² In an earlier passage, however, she mentions that Aristotelian naturalism is not scientific "in any ordinary understanding of the term[]," meaning that "[i]t does not seek to establish its conclusions from 'a neutral point of view.'"⁶³ What Hursthouse means by calling her brand of naturalism "scientific," then, is something other than implying that ethical claims are to be reduced to findings from the natural sciences. We can begin to see why the appeal to scientific naturalism would be a misreading of her view by noting what is conspicuously absent from her claim that there is something scientific about natural goodness: she selects botany, zoology, and ethology as the sciences that best exemplify the scientific nature of natural normativity, but she leaves out biology, behavioural psychology, and neuroscience, even though these would be more evident candidates for fields of inquiry whose deliverances could give us material relevant to a reductionist ethical approach. There is, of course, the "etc." appended at the end of the list, but it is not clear that it is meant to imply a much wider range than what is presented in the list. After all, she defends the claim that natural normativity is scientific by appealing, first, to the use of Aristotelian categoricals as they are employed in "many excellent gardening and nature programmes available on television,"⁶⁴ and then to the fact that "[f]armers, and people concerned with domestic

61 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 202.

62 David Copp and David Sobel, "Morality and Virtue" (2004), p. 534. I won't rehearse Copp and Sobel's objection here since it is, so far as I can tell, the same one that Sandler raises.

63 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 193

64 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 203.

animals, have always had a special kind of vested interest in arriving at a subset of such [natural goodness] evaluations correctly; botanists and ethologists are now just interested in arriving at true ones for their own sake."⁶⁵ What Hursthouse has in mind, then, is scientific insofar as it relies on observations about the way various species live, but it is decidedly not scientific in the way Sandler believes she intends it to be.

2.2 The Second Challenge: Transhumanism

The second challenge to the natural goodness model concerns its appeal to a defined conception of the life form of human beings. Here, Sandler raises the spectre of transhumanism, stating that the model of natural normativity propounded by Hursthouse has a certain flexibility to it, such that "[t]he thesis can... be modified as necessary to accommodate ends that go beyond a strictly naturalistic conception of human flourishing."⁶⁶ What he has in mind are not ends that are supernatural but, rather, those that are artefactual. Although careful to note that it is still too early to know whether technological developments that allow radical human enhancement will prove to be "science fiction or science in progress,"⁶⁷ he does evince a certain optimism about the prospect of "technologies that alter our life form in ways that require de-emphasizing some naturalistic ends or recognizing some artifactual ones."⁶⁸ His brief musings on the subject end with a hint at what sort of modification of human nature he envisions coming about as the result of cognitive technological enhancements. The widespread implementation of these, Sandler tells us, may well usher human beings into a new form of life in which we are "living, sentient, social, rational, *networked* animals."⁶⁹

Even with the development of sophisticated cybernetic implants, however, it is difficult to see how we would be able to bring about a radical change in human function. After all,

65 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 203.

66 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 25.

67 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 26.

68 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 26.

69 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 26. Emphasis mine.

we already employ a number of rather sophisticated technological tools so frequently that they have become so mundane that they are often counted as necessities, but they are just that: tools. How we make use of them is something that is to be scrutinized by natural normativity. We can ask, for instance, whether the dispositions we cultivate in our use of smart-phone technology, our engagement in various social media platforms, or even writing with a keyboard rather than a pen or pencil are conducive to the good functioning of the social group. There is nothing about that, that requires updating our model of the evaluation of the natural goodness of human beings; we are still simply determining which behavioural dispositions are virtues or vices and then deciding which uses of technology encourage or are manifestations of those virtues and vices. There is no need to posit new aspects of function, nor any need to posit new ends corresponding to existing ones, to evaluate our use of technological devices and—to return to Sandler's challenge—there is no reason to suppose we would have to do so simply because those devices have been engineered so that they are located within the skull rather than without.

Sandler is not wrong to suppose that changes to human nature are a possibility and that such changes could bring along with them modifications to our conception of naturalistic virtue ethics. It may be instructive to look at an issue analogous to the one raised by Sandler, namely, evolution. Human beings, along with all living beings, are subject to evolutionary processes and, as such, our account of the evaluation of human goodness may become outdated once humans evolve into a rather different life form than the one they are currently.⁷⁰ This is, of course, not a problem for the theory itself, since its evaluations are sensitive to differences across species and, as such, function somewhat like sets of conditional claims (it states, for instance, that *if* the species is a social one, *then* evaluations of the goodness of its members must consider the good functioning of the social group). Sandler, then, is right that the theory remains flexible and that needing to exercise that flexibility would have significant implications for our evaluations of human beings. The outcome of evolutionary processes may mean that we gradually cease

70 Setting aside, for the sake of simplicity, the question of whether the species that results from this process would still be human rather than a descendant of humans.

being rational beings and become more like (merely) social animals. If that is the case, the model of *human* evaluation would need to be modified so that what it considers to be the characteristic way for humans to go about no longer involves acting for reasons endorsed and assessed as good.⁷¹ If the outcome, however, imparts upon us a new aspect of function, one not currently found in nature, the way sociality and rationality had emerged in the distant, prehistorical past, then this would result in the kind of radical change that Sandler envisions. When it comes to theorizing about this kind of modification, however, we are entirely unmoored. It would be quite bold to attempt to predict the character of an entirely new form of life, and I leave such a task to the authors of speculative fiction rather than muddy philosophical waters with it. I remain, moreover, skeptical that we can fabricate sufficiently radical modifications to human nature and, as such, feel no sense of urgency in theorizing about it.⁷² Furthermore, although the theory of evolution gives us the conceptual room for the modification of human nature, if a new type of animal function were to arise, it would not be as Sandler envisions it. To be networked, in the relevant sense of the term, is not equivalent to evolving into a new species or form of life, but simply to surgically implant ourselves with smaller and more sophisticated versions of our current digital instruments so that they are more readily accessible and an even more ubiquitous feature of our interactions with the world.

2.3 The Third Challenge: Three Proposals for Ends Corresponding to Rationality

Sandler's third challenge is to Hursthouse's claim that there are no species ends corresponding to rationality. Hursthouse holds that we should evaluate the parts, operations, actions, and desires and emotions of social animals according to how well they serve the four ends of survival, continuance of the species, characteristic enjoyment

71 Although, in the absence of our rationality, it is unclear who would still be theorizing about goodness.

72 After drafting this sentence, I had the good fortune to come across a video from a panel discussion in which Hursthouse seems to express this view. Although the video's editing makes part of the discussion a bit ambiguous, Hursthouse refers to the notion that we are "at a crossroads"—which, given the context of the discussion, I take to mean the point at which the reality of employing technology to manipulate the human form of life is within our grasp or, at least, close at hand—as "rather overblown and inflated" (Auckland Museum, "Species Identity: Now and Future" [2010]).

of pleasures and freedom from pain, and the good functioning of the social group. Hursthouse holds that the evaluation of rational beings involves no additional end. Sandler, however, posits not only one, but three such ends, namely, meaningfulness, the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, and autonomy. I will consider his case for each of these individually.

2.3.a: Meaningfulness

Sandler considers meaningfulness to be a plausible candidate for an end corresponding to rationality since rationality enables us to be "concerned with the meaningfulness of our lives in a way that bears, pigeons, squid, and gophers cannot be about theirs."⁷³ Contrary to Hursthouse's charge that preparation of the soul for the afterlife cannot count as a naturalistic end for human beings because it involves an appeal to the supernatural, Sandler holds that lives whose meaningfulness is tied to some supernatural conception or aim do not fall outside of or violate the norms of naturalistic evaluation since that meaningfulness is still "understood through what goes on in this world: our projects, endeavors, and relationships, and our efforts and accomplishments regarding them."⁷⁴ Meaningfulness, then, as it is understood by Sandler, is a state that is caused by or supervenes upon the way we live our lives.

There is something compelling about this; indeed, as Sandler points out, it is hardly a controversial view that meaningfulness is constitutive of a good human life and it is one that "finds strong support within common beliefs about human flourishing."⁷⁵

Nevertheless, I hesitate to include it as an end for rational beings because it strikes me as one that would be superfluous. There seems to be, after all, a very direct correlation between flourishing and meaningfulness. The idea that there are meaningful lives that are not also flourishing lives and flourishing lives that are not also meaningful strains credibility. To say that in order to flourish we need to live in a way that is conducive to

73 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 23.

74 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 23.

75 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 23.

the end of meaningfulness, then, is sort of like saying that in order to flourish we need to live in a way that is conducive to flourishing. This is, of course, true, but hardly interesting or informative. In fact, even Sandler's claim that the need for meaningfulness in a flourishing life receives widespread assent may simply reflect the fact that the two concepts play roughly the same role in eudaimonistic ethics. It is possible that Sandler has a thicker concept of meaningfulness in mind than the one I am attributing to him and that it identifies something that is not already captured in the notion of flourishing, but he says too little on the topic for us to be able clearly to draw out any alternative interpretation.

2.3.b: The Acquisition and Transmission of Knowledge

The next candidate for an end corresponding to rationality that Sandler considers is the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. It is, as both Sandler and I maintain, something of a truism that a flourishing life is a meaningful one, and Sandler's case for knowledge as an end rests on a fact that is perhaps even less controversial than that claim, namely, that knowledge plays a central role in human life. The activities related to knowledge-gathering are incessant: "[w]e continually process data and information, and form, sort out, choose among, deliberate upon, and accept and reject beliefs."⁷⁶ Not only is our form of life saturated with knowledge but, as Aristotle famously recognizes in the opening passage to his *Metaphysics*,⁷⁷ we also assign great value to it such that "possessing knowledge is commonly considered to be a human good."⁷⁸ Sandler is cautious here, however, and qualifies his endorsement of knowledge as a species end. Some of our knowledge is valuable not because it has intrinsic value but because it plays an instrumental role in helping us fulfill our other species ends, while some of it will simply be too trivial—Sandler's example is "the number of blades of grass in my backyard"⁷⁹—to have any influence on how well we are living as human beings. With

76 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 24.

77 "By nature, all men long to know" (980a21). I employ the Hugh Lawson-Tancred translation.

78 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), pp. 23-24.

79 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 24.

those caveats in place, Sandler gives two reasons for maintaining that knowledge is still an appropriate candidate for a species end. First, while we can find ourselves cogitating about rather trivial matters, it is nevertheless the case that "in general and under most circumstances, more knowledge is preferable to less knowledge, and a belief that is true is preferable to a belief that is false."⁸⁰ Second, there are a number of character traits generally considered to be virtues, such as "studiousness, openness, innovativeness, articulateness, patience, and humility, [that] are considered virtues in part because of their conduciveness to the production, transmission, and reception of knowledge."⁸¹

As for the first argument, it is indeed the case that we generally favour increasing our stores of knowledge and the number of true beliefs we possess, but this does not by itself show that these things are valued in the way that Sandler purports them to be. After all, he has already conceded that much of our knowledge is valuable because it is conducive to survival, continuance of the species, pleasure, and the good functioning of the social group. Surely those instrumental benefits by themselves provide us with a very strong reason to increase our store of knowledge, to acquire true beliefs, and disabuse ourselves of false ones. Knowledge acquisition may be valued, then, because it fulfills the ends already defended by Hursthouse. Given this, there is yet no reason to elevate knowledge acquisition to the status of a species end.

Sandler's second reason, that many of the traits considered to be virtues are concerned with knowledge, has another problem, namely, that it puts the cart before the horse. Recall the way that the natural goodness approach to ethics determines which character traits count as virtues: we evaluate an individual's character trait in light of the role the trait plays in fulfilling the two (as Foot would have it) or as many as four (as Hursthouse maintains) ends appropriate to the individual's species. Sandler, however, does not identify virtues in light of the ends appropriate to the evaluation of the natural goodness of members of the species; instead, he slips into inferring such an end from the virtues it

80 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 24.

81 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 24.

ostensibly possesses. Of course, as a heuristic of sorts, that is not a terrible procedure. It is certainly a useful exercise to ponder the sorts of things we consider to be virtues in order to seek out gaps in the structure of our natural normativity. Sandler is right, then, to look at the fact that many virtuous traits are concerned with knowledge and raise the question of whether Hursthouse has overlooked the acquisition and transmission of knowledge as an end relevant to the evaluation of human natural goodness. The problem, however, is that Sandler moves directly from this interesting suggestion to a robust and, at least in the pages of his book, unjustified claim about Hursthouse's model of natural normativity—that it is lacking this particular end. Sandler, in other words, has found his way to the beginning of an investigation into the role of knowledge in the structure of evaluations of natural goodness, but, unfortunately, treats it as the conclusion to one.

2.3.c: Autonomy

The last end for rational species that Sandler defends is autonomy. While Sandler begins his paragraph on autonomy with a rather simple formulation—an autonomous life is one that is lived not only in a way that is endorsable but also in a way that the person living it has, in fact, endorsed—things get a bit more complicated by the end of it. Sandler's concept of autonomy has three separate features: understanding, freedom, and control. It will be easiest to properly assess autonomy as a species end by unpacking this rather thick notion, that is, by examining each of its components individually.

I will begin by considering understanding, which Sandler characterizes as "a person's basic practical knowledge of her social, political, technological, and ecological environment."⁸² This sort of understanding is, indeed, required to successfully and effectively execute our intended actions and carry out our life plans, but this sort of practical knowledge strikes me as being something more like the means or instrument by which we can achieve our ends rather than an end itself.

⁸² Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), pp. 24-25.

The other two components of autonomy are freedom and control, which are the "internal capabilities of a person to reflect upon and choose her desired realization of the ends, as well as the social and material resources to pursue them."⁸³ Sandler's decision to treat freedom and control in a single sentence makes it a bit ambiguous which of these labels applies to which of the components of autonomy. I will assume that control is meant to connote something like self-control and is concerned with the agent's internal capacities, while freedom refers to the external conditions that may aid or impede the successful undertaking of the agent's course of actions.

Control, the ability to deliberate and choose the means to fulfilling our ends, seems to be reducible to doing things in a characteristically rational way, in Hursthouse's sense. In other words, it seems to simply amount to living in a way that we can reasonably see as good, which is already a feature of Hursthouse's natural goodness model. Although, it may be that Sandler has something more basic than this in mind. Perhaps control is the bare ability to choose rather than to be led about by the sub-rational parts of our natures, as is the case with other animals who are guided only by natural instinct. If this is what Sandler means, however, we come to the very threshold of rationality, at least as it is characterized by Hursthouse. That is to say, lacking control would not be to fail to live up to an end for rational beings; it would be to cease being rational altogether. Lacking control, in Sandler's sense, would not entail that an individual has a natural defect when it comes to the achievement of the species ends of a rational being; instead, it would render the ascription of either natural goodness or natural defect with respect to any end corresponding to rationality a category error. Control in this more basic sense, then, is part of the life form or function of a species and not one of its ends.

As for freedom—the social and material conditions required for the successful execution of our actions—it is tempting to see it as simply reducible to the end of the good functioning of the social group. After all, it is difficult to see what it would mean to act in a way conducive to the end of social and material freedom if this would not simply

83 Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 25.

amount to the improvement of the social and material conditions in our environment, or, in other words, of the good functioning of the social group. As with control, however, Sandler's comments are brief enough to allow an alternative interpretation of his claim. We may, then, understand the end of freedom not as the good functioning of the social group, but, instead, as a literalist reading of Sandler's claim would. On the literal reading, freedom amounts to the social and material conditions that enable us to live in the way of our choosing. This would not, however, resolve the problem, since, as was the case with the "understanding" component of autonomy, this would not itself be an end but an instrument that enables and eases the achievement of other ends. Moreover, supposing these material conditions to be a species end would not only be conceptually suspect but also troubling. Recall that species ends serve as benchmarks against which we measure the goodness or defect of individual living beings. If we were to accept freedom as a species end—although doing so seems even on its surface to be a category error—then we would have to conclude that a number of character traits are evidence of natural defect because of the environmental conditions in which they are exercised. Consider the case of honesty under conditions of political oppression. If political conditions are such that the publication of true claims about the regime in power is an act that is likely to lead either to imprisonment or execution, we can certainly employ the language of "defect" here and hold that there is something defective about all of this. The defect, however, is located in the social conditions that make it such that honesty results in harm, rather than in the character trait of the honest individual. There is something amiss in claiming that an honest human being is naturally defective or that honesty is a vice simply because honesty brings about unfavourable outcomes under certain conditions, but this is what is entailed by Sandler's inclusion of freedom—at least as he defines it—in the structure of natural normativity.

The suggestion that autonomy is an appropriate end by which to evaluate members of rational species is an attractive one. We have, however, reason to exclude each of its components, namely, understanding, freedom, and control. If autonomy is to be plausibly

included in the structure of natural normativity, we will, at the very least, need a different account of it than the one Sandler provides.⁸⁴

2.3.d: The Third Challenge and Sandler's Faithfulness to Hursthouse's Model

Some of my criticisms of Sandler's proposals would, to be sure, lose their force if he had not set out to adhere closely to Hursthouse's brand of natural normativity. He does, indeed, build on Hursthouse, but that, by itself, should not lead us to conclude that even some fundamental aspects of Hursthouse's natural goodness account will remain intact. Sandler, however, preserves too much of the original theory to allow us to read him as advocating a radical overhaul of it. In fact, Sandler concludes his discussion of the three rational ends by simply slotting them into Hursthouse's original model. It is worth highlighting this by quoting in its entirety what he claims is the outcome of "[i]ncorporating the ends appropriate to us as rational beings into the natural goodness thesis":⁸⁵

A human being is ethically good (i.e., virtuous) insofar as she is well fitted with respect to her (i) emotions, (ii) desires, and (iii) actions (from reason and inclination); whether she is thus well fitted is determined by whether these aspects well serve (1) her survival, (2) the continuance of the species, (3) her characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, (4) the good functioning of her social groups, (5) her autonomy, (6) the accumulation of knowledge, and (7) a meaningful life—in the way characteristic of human beings (i.e., in a way that can rightly be seen as good).⁸⁶

There is one significant change to this summary of the structure of natural normativity beside the addition of rational ends: Sandler has excluded parts and operations from the

⁸⁴ Self-legislation has been suggested to me as a contender. However, I take it that this is roughly what Sandler has in mind with the notion of control, of deliberating upon and choosing our own ends, so I take it that my comments about control likewise apply to self-legislation.

⁸⁵ Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 25.

⁸⁶ Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment* (2007), p. 25. For comparison, here is the corresponding paragraph from Hursthouse's *On Virtue Ethics*: "So now we have, for the more sophisticated animals, four aspects—(i) parts, (ii) operations/reactions, (iii) actions, and (iv) emotions/desires—and three ends with respect to which they are evaluated—(i) individual survival, (ii) the continuance of the species, and (iii) characteristic pleasure or enjoyment/characteristic freedom from pain. If we now move onto another rung, and consider, specifically, social animals, we find that a fourth end comes in, namely (iv) the good functioning of the social group." (pp. 200-201).

list of relevant aspects of function. This may be because he is only discussing a narrower notion of good than the one that is the province of the more general theory of natural normativity, signaled by his use of "*ethically* good," or it may be that restricting his summary to the evaluation of human beings—rather than all social animals—makes emotions, desires, and actions salient in a way that parts and operations are not. Regardless of the reason behind these changes to the aspects of function under evaluation, the fact remains that the structure of natural normativity remains unchanged: what counts as a good human being is determined by how conducive their dispositions are to fulfilling the ends relevant to their species. Sandler, then, does not employ Hursthouse's theory as a stepping stone to developing some alternative variant of virtue ethics, but is himself a proponent of the natural goodness approach and we are, therefore, warranted in evaluating his proposals in accordance with it.

2.4 Revisiting Hursthouse's Candidates for Ends Corresponding to Rationality

Before moving to the following chapter, I want to pause and consider more generally Sandler's challenge to Hursthouse's claim that there is no species end that corresponds to rationality. While I have not been convinced by any of Sandler's proposals, I share his view that Hursthouse has not given the question of whether there is such an end sufficient attention. I will, then, pay the subject the closer attention it deserves by reconsidering the ends that Hursthouse dismisses and will show that the end of contemplation is not one of the features of the Aristotelian tradition that we should abandon.

2.4.a: Hursthouse's Candidate Ends Reconsidered

The first end Hursthouse considers is "the preparation of our souls for the life hereafter," which she denies has any place within neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism since "to adopt [it]... is to go beyond naturalism towards supernaturalism."⁸⁷ This, however, is not a terribly convincing reason to deny the legitimacy of a species end. After all, if we were to become, or already are, convinced that humans are not simply rational beings but also

⁸⁷ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 218.

ensouled beings, it would not only be a relevant fact in evaluating the natural goodness of human beings but it would also fall within the purview of the natural goodness models of ethical naturalism. It would, after all, be an appropriate subject of natural history judgments, one that could be captured by the Aristotelian categorical "Human beings are ensouled animals" and which might well give rise to new ends corresponding to this aspect of human nature. I do, however, share Hursthouse's position that the preparation of the soul for the afterlife is not, in fact, an end corresponding to the rational aspect of human function. This is not because I agree with her that considerations pertaining to immortal souls are to be excluded in principle from evaluations of natural goodness; rather, it is simply because it is not part of my conception of human nature—I do not believe that human beings, or members of any other species for that matter, do, in fact, possess immortal souls.⁸⁸ In other words, I exclude this end from my model of natural normativity for metaphysical reasons, rather than metaethical ones.

The second candidate Hursthouse considers for an end corresponding to rationality is contemplation. She dismisses this one by simply stating that "even philosophers have balked at following Aristotle and endorsing [it]."⁸⁹ This statement is a bit puzzling since it is unlikely that Hursthouse really meant what a superficial reading of her words implies, namely, that contemplation is not to be taken seriously as a candidate end simply because it is an unpopular view. In fact, if this surface reading was precisely what Hursthouse meant, then by following the same rationale she would likely be led to deny much of the moral theory she defends, given that Aristotelian ethical naturalism is still quite a long way from becoming a widely held philosophical position. Rather than dealing with such an uncharitable reading, it is better to take her reference to Aristotle as hinting at the reason for her excluding the end contemplation from evaluations of natural goodness. The reason for the exclusion is likely to be that Hursthouse simply does not find Aristotle's comments about the contemplative life in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to accurately reflect human nature. There is, indeed, one way in which this is very

⁸⁸ This is not something for which I will provide arguments; I will, for the purposes of this project, simply assume a secular view of human nature.

⁸⁹ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 218.

much the case. As Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches perceptively note, there is something about Aristotle's arguments for placing the contemplative life at the pinnacle of human flourishing that "rings strange" since they "base human happiness on something godlike."⁹⁰ Although one of Aristotle's reasons for privileging the contemplative life is that "reason more than anything is man,"⁹¹ he also claims that "reason is divine,"⁹² that we must engage in contemplation in order to turn ourselves away from our humanity and "so far as we can, make ourselves immortal,"⁹³ and defends these claims by indicating that contemplation is the activity of the gods.⁹⁴ Given those statements, I would go even further than Hauerwas and Pinches: Aristotle's case for the life of contemplation does not merely ring strange but completely violates the natural normativity model since it appeals not to the life form of human beings directly but to that of another species (if the term is even applicable): the gods.

There is a further reason Hursthouse may be hesitant to follow Aristotle on this matter. The life of contemplation that Aristotle lauds is likely to be too aristocratic and, let's be frank, elitist for anyone who holds even moderately egalitarian values. The Aristotelian contemplative life is one that requires such a high degree of leisure that we cannot engage in it if we have to work to sustain ourselves—not to mention others—materially.⁹⁵ Spending our weekends leaning back in our armchairs deep in contemplative appreciation of truth will not suffice to achieve the sort of life Aristotle has in mind. The life of contemplation, then, must be restricted to a small leisured class who are sustained by the

90 Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues* (1997), p. 11.

91 1178a8.

92 1177b30.

93 1177b34.

94 1178b8-23.

95 Aristotle sets a very high bar for leisure, one that could never be attained by anyone who has to give any serious consideration to practical matters. He characterizes the second best life, the political life concerned with the practical virtues, as unpleasurable even when it aims at happiness (whether one's own or that of others) because this—along with, it would seem, just about any activity other than contemplation—is act for the sake of something beyond the activity itself (1177b3-26).

unleisurely toil of others⁹⁶—and, perhaps, also to those who adopt the lifestyle disclaimed by Macheath in *The Threepenny Opera* and "just... starve [themselves] and do a lot of reading."⁹⁷ Aristotle's account of the contemplative life, then, has the undesirable feature of condemning some class of workers or population of helots to a life in which their own species-specific end of contemplation could never be realized. Given these features of the life of contemplation as it is described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hursthouse has good reason not to take it on board or even to give it much consideration.⁹⁸

2.4.b: Aristotelian Contemplation

It would be a bit hasty, however, to deny that contemplation is the end corresponding to the rational aspect of human function simply because we do not find Aristotle's description of a life spent in the monomaniacal pursuit of it all that appealing. It would, in fact, even be hasty to write off Aristotle altogether at this point, since his comments about the *activity* of contemplation can be mined fruitfully for insights even if the same cannot be said of his account of the *life* of contemplation. The characterization in Book X of the activity as being the contemplation of truth,⁹⁹ specifically, of what is divine and immortal rather than of "mortal things,"¹⁰⁰ is perhaps too narrow in scope to serve as a plausible candidate for the end corresponding to rationality. Moreover, it is not simply the

96 This connection between the life of leisure and the toil of others is more explicit in *Politics* 3.5 than it is in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Politics*, Aristotle mentions that not only contemplation but even the "virtue of a citizen... cannot be spoken of as belonging to everyone or even to every free person, but only to those who have been relieved of necessary sorts of work. Those who perform necessary services for one person are slaves; those who do so for the partnership are vulgar persons and laborers" (1278a8-13).

97 Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, "Ballad of the Easy Life" (2000).

98 It is not clear even from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that Aristotle really thought that the contemplative life he describes should be sought in practice. In one passage, for instance, he states that "such a life would be too high for man" (1177b27) and that the activities that characterize the second-best life, that is, the political life, are those that "befit our human estate" (1178a10-11). As Dorothea Frede puts it, "his preference for pure *theôria* must be taken with more than a pinch of salt" ("The Political Character of Aristotle's Ethics" [2013], p. 33). Nevertheless, even if Aristotle thought the ideal philosophical life to be unattainable for us, this is still the account of contemplation that Hursthouse seems to take aim at in her very brief comment on the matter.

99 1177a22.

100 1177b30-1178a1.

narrowness of the scope that is a problem but just what is contained within that scope, given that we are unlikely to think that there is something amiss—let alone defective with respect to the life form of human beings—in those who do not spend their time contemplating first principles and the like. However, Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* provides us with a far more useful suggestion. There, Aristotle explains why those who are happy—and, as such, are "self-sufficient and need nothing further"¹⁰¹—nonetheless need friends. One of the reasons friends are needed is that those who are lovers of excellent activity have difficulty contemplating their own excellent actions. Aristotle does not defend this claim, but perhaps the first-person vantage point is simply not the ideal one from which to observe most kinds of conduct, or it may be that the activity of contemplation is itself distracting and impedes the proper execution of actions undertaken simultaneously. Since our own activities are poor objects of contemplation, we require the company of others who engage in their own excellent activities and execute joint actions with us. The excellent activity of friends allows us to engage in appropriate appreciation, since "we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their actions better than our own."¹⁰² This suggests that contemplation can be, even for Aristotle, far more down-to-earth than the portrayal of the contemplative life in Book X would lead us to believe.

Looking even further afield, beyond the *Nicomachean Ethics* to its companion piece, the *Politics*, provides further confirmation that this is an appropriate interpretation of Aristotelian contemplation. The *Politics* concludes by considering what type of common education legislators should establish to benefit their city-state. Aristotle accepts a customary division of education into four categories: letters, gymnastics, music, and drawing. The young are to be educated in letters and drawing because these arts are "useful for life"¹⁰³ and in gymnastics because proper physical training fosters good health and the development of a courageous disposition. As for musical education, its purpose is

101 1169b4-6.

102 1169b30-35.

103 1337b25.

to provide citizens with a "liberal and noble"¹⁰⁴ activity with which they can occupy themselves during their leisure hours. While Aristotle, in his discussion of the value of musical training, identifies three powers in which it shares—education, play, and pastime¹⁰⁵—I am concerned here only with its educational role. Musical training is educational insofar as those who undertake it in their youth are able, in adulthood, to properly judge fine musical performances. This aim of developing good judgment places some restrictions on musical education: it is not to impart expertise on the learner (since "difficult and extraordinary" performances are fit for participation in contests rather than musical appreciation and are, therefore, more befitting of laborers than free persons),¹⁰⁶ involve the use of flutes (an instrument whose playing is frenzied and, as such, useful for "purification rather than learning"),¹⁰⁷ or include harmonies in the Phrygian mode (like the music of flutes, they are "characteristically frenzied and passionate").¹⁰⁸ A proper education in music, then, according to Aristotle, is undertaken for the sake of engaging in aesthetic contemplation. While musical appreciation also involves pleasure, Aristotle carefully distinguishes among music's various powers and effects, making it clear that the goods of contemplation and pleasure are, at least in principle, separable. Indeed, in his discussion of musical education in the *Politics*, Pierre Destrée identifies the co-occurrence of these two separate goods (the "exercising of an intellectual faculty and the emotional correlative to this")¹⁰⁹ as a feature of both aesthetic and philosophical contemplation.

Aristotle's claims about contemplation in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in Book VIII of the *Politics* are less famous than those found in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* but they leave us with a far more mundane picture of contemplation.

104 1338a32.

105 1339b13-15.

106 1341a9-17, 1341b9-18.

107 1341a21-24.

108 1342b2-3.

109 Pierre Destrée, "Education, Leisure, and Politics" (2013), p. 318.

The discussions of friendship in Book IX and of musical education in Book VIII of the *Politics* reveal that Aristotelian contemplation is neither an activity whose object is entirely abstracted from lived reality nor the preserve of some leisured class of philosophers. Contemplation is, rather, accessible to anyone with at least some leisure to engage in the appreciation of aesthetic objects and the appreciation of the performance of skilled tasks. We contemplate, in other words, by directing our attention to the experiences that we have and the knowledge that we have gained. To flourish as humans requires this kind of appreciative, aesthetic exercise because we are more than mere cognitive trawlers who insatiably amass information without ever stopping to simply examine or enjoy it.

Considering this more comprehensive account makes it difficult to follow Hursthouse's contention that contemplation is not worth taking seriously as a so-called "fifth end."¹¹⁰ The good that encompasses the appreciation of the virtuosity of a musical performance (*pace* Aristotle and his holding up his nose to expert performers), of the euphonic cadences of speech or poetry, of the discernment involved in temperate acts, and so on seems to be a rather fitting candidate for an end appropriate to rational beings.

2.4.c: Contemplation and Pleasure

Of course, Hursthouse may agree that such mundane contemplative appreciation is something that, unlike the contemplation of first principles and abstract eternal truths, is part of the evaluation of the natural goodness of rational beings. It may simply be that she conflates the good of contemplation with the pleasure that typically—and perhaps almost invariably—accompanies it. If that is the case, then she would simply subsume this kind of end to that of the enjoyment of pleasures characteristic to human beings. Here, we run into an interpretive problem: pleasure is under-theorized in *On Virtue Ethics*. Hursthouse describes the role of pleasure in evaluations of natural goodness but does not pause to

¹¹⁰ The language of "fifth end" is Hursthouse's: "So we might expect that, having reached creatures who are rational, their aspects would be evaluated in the light of some fifth end which relates to this new, transforming, capacity" (*On Virtue Ethics* [1999], p. 218).

give her readers an account of just what she takes pleasure to be.¹¹¹ Her brief treatment of the topic does, however, contain a few suggestive comments that may allow us to grasp what she may have in mind. The end of characteristic pleasures arises once Hursthouse moves from considering animals that can act to those whose psychological complexity also allows them to experience pleasure and pain. Her explanation of the qualifier that the pleasures and pains must be *characteristic* (as I already discussed briefly in Chapter One) raises the point that freedom from pain *simpliciter* is not a good since much of the pain experienced by animals acts as a survival mechanism, a signal that their bodies have been damaged and may be at risk of further damage. In this context, the examples of non-characteristic pains that she provides as illustration are of pains that result from physiological abnormalities, namely, a ram whose twisted horn "grew into his cheek and caused him lots of pain" and "[a]n animal whose teeth had grown in such an abnormal way that it couldn't chew without pain."¹¹² Later, when evaluating a number of candidates for virtues, she mentions that "[w]ithout honesty, generosity, and loyalty we would miss out one on of our greatest sources of characteristic enjoyment, namely loving relationships."¹¹³ This is, again, not much material from which to piece together a theory of pleasure, but it does seem to point to a notion of pleasures as rather simple positive affective states. The mention of loving relationships might seem to hint at a more complex account; however, there is little even in that passage to suggest that human pleasures are any different than those of more psychologically rudimentary animals who are also capable of pleasures but who partake in a life form that is far removed from rationality or even sociality. Notice, for instance, that Hursthouse mentions that loving relationships are a source of pleasure in the same way she might say that loving relationships are one of the most effective ways humans have of ensuring the continuance of the species. Loving relationships, then, are perhaps a very reliable source of large quantities of pleasure, and they are characteristic insofar as they are an ordinary feature

111 Even assuming that Hursthouse's broadly Aristotelian approach to ethics justifies turning to Aristotle's works to fill in the gaps in her theory would give us little help—Aristotle notoriously and frustratingly provides two incompatible accounts of pleasure in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

112 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 200.

113 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 209.

of the form of life of humans, but there is no reason to suppose that the pleasure, considered by itself, is any different than those enjoyed by, say, dogs engaged in play or qualitatively distinct from the pleasure of satiating thirst and hunger. In other words, while there is surely something special about loving relationships, there seems to be nothing special about the pleasure that arises from them, at least nothing that can readily be identified from Hursthouse's account.

If my interpretation of Hursthouse is correct, then the intellectual activity of contemplation is not a special instance of pleasure. However, even if my interpretation is mistaken, we still should not subsume the end of contemplation to that of pleasure, since this would result in evaluations of natural goodness that miss the mark. To see why this is so, suppose—as would be the case whether we were to accept a separate end of contemplation or treat it as a sub-class of the enjoyment of characteristic pleasure—that some individual counts as having a natural defect because they fall short of the human form of life in not being suited in some way for the appreciation of skilled actions or fine artistic products. The source of that defect is not likely to be that the individual lacks the proper affective disposition toward the object of appreciation, but, rather, that they are unable to fully understand or perceive their value or aesthetic qualities. The defect, then, would be more intellectual than affective and, as such, it would not be related to pleasure—at least, not directly—but to contemplation.

This distinction between the roles of pleasure and contemplation in evaluations of natural goodness can be made more evident by considering the contemplative appreciation of types of music that were not available for consideration by Aristotle. The advent of modern experimental and avant-garde music has provided us with a number of rather cerebral works that elicit contemplative appreciation from us without also being clear sources of amusement. One example that allows us to more easily tease apart these two facets of musical appreciation is the performance of John Cage's "Organ²/ASLSP"¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ It has been pointed out to me that there seems to be a tension between my repudiation of elitism in Aristotle's account of contemplation and then using Cage's work—which is frequently thought to be elitist insofar as it is snooty or inaccessibly cerebral—to illustrate a feature of my own account of contemplation as a species end for humans. Although avant-garde art like Cage's does strike something of an elitist note, I

currently under way in a church in the German town of Halberstadt. The performance began on September 5, 2001 and is scheduled to end in the year 2640. The note being played on the church's organ at the time of this writing has been playing since October 5, 2013 and will only be changed to the next note of the composition in the year 2020. If we were to visit Halberstadt and confront the sound of a years-long note continuously droning out of the organ's pipes, we would be unlikely to think the perception of the sound emitted from the organ itself to be pleasant. However, this confrontation would undoubtedly provide us with an opportunity for intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of the performance and the composition, and this would certainly satisfy the end of contemplation. Some pleasure might accompany the act of contemplation but subsuming the whole value of the experience to the fulfillment of our need for pleasure is to mistake the incidental affective accompaniment to the act for one of its central properties.¹¹⁵

Contrary to Hursthouse's contention, then, I hold that contemplation is an at least plausible species end for rational beings. Now, I may seem to be splitting hairs and harping on a rather minor point, especially since I have conceded that Hursthouse may be

believe it's a false one. Or, if it is elitist, it is so in a very different way than Aristotle's account of contemplation is. The life of contemplation in Aristotle is elitist precisely because it is restricted to an elite: the exploitation of an underclass for the flourishing of a few is built right into the account. The same cannot be said of Cage's work. Although it's true that a composition like ASLSP is unlikely to be as widely appreciated as songs composed by Willie Dixon, Cole Porter, or Holland-Dozier-Holland, there is no principled reason why it could not find more widespread appreciation or why the appreciation of it should be barred to anyone outside an elite class.

¹¹⁵ The point also could be reinforced by drawing on Foot's comments on Wittgenstein's death bed pronouncement that he had lived a wonderful life. Foot states that the pronouncement "rang true because of the things he had done, with rare passion and genius, and especially on account of his philosophy" but adds that "[i]nterpreted in terms of happy states of mind it would, however, have been very puzzling indeed if a life as troubled as his had been described as a good life" (*Natural Goodness* [2001], p. 85). It would be quite plausible to locate as the source of Wittgenstein's happiness his fulfillment of the end of contemplation, even if it was not coupled with a corresponding intense and consistent experience of pleasures. As useful as it is to my argument, however, I hesitate to employ it if only because it relies on an image of Wittgenstein as a rather sour individual that is not uncontested. While the anecdotes about him that are popularly traded among philosophers and students of philosophy, as well as his portrayal in Derek Jarman's film *Wittgenstein*, do paint him as such a character, Norman Malcolm's memoir of his friendship with Wittgenstein is apt to leave us with a different impression. Malcolm's portrayal of Wittgenstein includes, among other things, his fondness for Carmen Miranda films, his love of detective stories, and his invention of games during long walks with friends (*Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* [1958]).

subsuming the phenomena I am describing under the wider category of pleasure, but this is not a merely superficial disagreement. While Hursthouse and I are, indeed, attempting to classify the same fact about human life within the same kind of system of natural normativity, the classification will involve either a system with, in Hursthouse's case, four ends relevant to the evaluation of human goodness or, as I contend, one with at least five such ends. Opening up space for a mode of contemplation whose value is, at least in principle, capable of being divorced from pleasure adds another dimension to the evaluations of the natural goodness of human beings, one that is likely to be given too little direct attention or prominence if it is not seen as discrete from the other four. Evaluating dispositions according to how conducive they are to contemplation will also yield a set of intellectual and aesthetic virtues that are different than those that would be endorsed simply on the basis of the pleasures to which they give rise.

2.4.d: Contemplation and Sandler's Knowledge-Based Ends

There may seem to be a tension or even a contradiction in my rejection of Sandler's suggestion that we make the acquisition of knowledge an end corresponding to rationality and my subsequent defense of contemplation as such an end. Contemplation is, after all, quite directly concerned with knowledge. There is, however, a difference between the two proposed ends and making that difference salient should dispel the worry about any tension in denying one while adopting the other. The difference between the two ends is that the value of contemplation lies in what we do with the knowledge, with the ways which we bring our thoughts to bear upon it, while Sandler's proposed end is concerned, instead, with the acquisition and possession of stores of knowledge. The role of knowledge in contemplation, then, parallels that of the role of knowledge in the achievement of other ends. Just as Sandler admits that the value of acquiring knowledge is, in many cases, reducible to how well a healthy store of knowledge is conducive to survival, continuance of the species, the enjoyment of pleasure, and the good functioning of the social group, so the value of knowledge is also reducible to how well it enables our acts of contemplation. The acquisition of knowledge is important for the end of contemplation, since it allows us to be like Aristotle's virtuous person who finds their own company pleasant in part because their "mind... is well stored with subjects of

contemplation."¹¹⁶ It is not difficult to see why a healthy stock of knowledge helps us fulfill our contemplative nature: the richest and most rewarding moments of contemplation are often those that draw together disparate pieces from our store of knowledge in unexpected and creative ways. This does not, however, mean that the very acquisition of knowledge is itself an end appropriate to the species. It is, after all, far easier to grasp how engaging in acts of contemplation is conducive to living a good, characteristically human life than it is to grasp how amassing an idle vault of unaccessed information and experiential data could be relevant to such a life.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defended a first elaboration to Hursthouse's model of natural normativity, namely, the addition of the end of contemplation for rational animals. The addition of contemplation, however, still leaves us with an insufficiently comprehensive account of natural goodness. In the following chapter, I will propose and defend a further elaboration to Hursthouse's model of natural goodness. I argue that human beings are not just social but also deeply relational and that natural goodness evaluations of human beings must account for that fact. This will form the basis and justification for the final three chapters, which argue that our character traits should be evaluated, in part, in terms of how well they fulfill the end of recognition (Chapter Four). Relationality and recognition are concepts that have been articulated and fruitfully applied by feminist philosophers for a few decades now.¹¹⁷ The insights of these philosophers, however, have rarely been taken up in the works of neo-Aristotelian ethicists. As a result, the work of virtue theorists still largely present the virtues as the character traits of, and those

¹¹⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1166a26.

¹¹⁷ For feminist approaches to relationality, see Susan J. Bison's *Aftermath* (2002) and the anthologies *Relational Autonomy* (2000) and *Feminists Rethink the Self* (1997). For feminist approaches to recognition, see Iris Marion Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* (1991), especially her discussion of controlling images and the importance of self-definition. Although I have not drawn directly on these works in this thesis, they have influenced my thinking on recognition and my approach to questions about the self.

appropriate to, independent, bounded, or atomistic individuals.¹¹⁸ Drawing on the concepts of relationality and recognition, as they have been understood by feminist philosophers, I will make a preliminary attempt to update this picture of the virtuous life by identifying and elevating to prominence a set of virtues that I will call the virtues of recognition (Chapters Five and Six).

¹¹⁸ One notable exception is Alasdair MacIntyre, whose *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999) treats dependence and vulnerability as a central feature of the human condition. Nevertheless, even MacIntyre's conception of human dependence falls into what I will call social animality rather than the kind of relationality I will defend. Likewise, his virtues of acknowledged dependence (those meant to complement the virtues of independent rational agency) do not include those that I will be discussing under the umbrella of "virtues of recognition," namely, virtues concerned with the apprehension and communication of another's experience of the world.

3 Relationality

In this chapter, I continue my project of elaborating the structure of natural normativity in neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. I began, in the first chapter, by summarizing the two main variants of the Natural Goodness theory, namely, those defended by Foot and Hursthouse. According to Foot, the goodness of individual living beings or their traits—that is, their parts and operations—are to be evaluated in light of the way members of that individual's species characteristically meet the ends of individual survival and the continuance of their species. The traits that are conducive to achieving these ends bear what Foot calls a natural goodness, and, conversely, those that impede the achievement of those ends are natural defects. In the case of human beings, dispositions related to the exercise of practical reason that display natural goodness will be classified as virtues, and those that are evidence of a defect in practical reasoning will be classified as vices.

For Hursthouse, the method is largely the same: individual traits are, likewise, evaluated according to how well they tend to achieve certain species ends. Hursthouse's evaluative model, however, is more complex than Foot's insofar as it posits ends beyond the basic ones of survival and the continuance of the species. For social animals, their parts, operations, actions, and desires and emotions are to be evaluated in light of their suitability for achieving—in ways characteristic of their species—the ends of survival, continuance of the species, (characteristic) freedom from pain and (characteristic) enjoyment of pleasure, and the good functioning of the social group.

For rational animals, Hursthouse adds no new species end relevant to evaluating the goodness of individuals or their traits. However, in Chapter Two I have defended the addition of contemplation as a species end corresponding to rationality. Thus, the character traits of rational animals must also be evaluated according to whether they fulfill or impede acts of contemplation.

In this chapter, I will propose and defend a further addition to the structure of natural normativity. Specifically, I will conclude that we must evaluate virtues and vices in light of the fact that we are not only social and rational animals, but also relational beings. To bolster my case for this claim, I will examine the psychological effects of the prolonged

social isolation of prisoners held in solitary confinement. These effects, I will contend, go beyond the harms that we would expect a (merely) social animal to suffer from the deprivation of interpersonal contact but are the sort we would expect relational beings to experience.

The chapter begins, in Section 1, by clarifying Foot and Hursthouse's conceptions of social animality. Section 2 will detail the living conditions of those housed in solitary confinement units within American supermax prisons and summarize some of the documented psychological effects of prolonged confinement within these units. In that section, I assess the concepts of social animality discussed in Section 1 in light of the psychological effects of confinement and conclude that this assessment gives us reason to posit a new aspect of human function relevant to the evaluation of natural goodness, namely, relationality. Sections 3 and 4 are responses to a pair of objections about drawing conclusions about the effects of social isolation from studies of the effects of solitary confinement, specifically, that solitary confinement's effects may be the result not of isolation *per se* but of the restricted sensory stimulus or the violence and forced confinement that are characteristic of solitary confinement.

3.1 Social Animality

So far in my analysis of the natural goodness variant of virtue ethics, the question of whether Foot and Hursthouse have a conception of human beings as relational remains unanswered. To be sure, both posit that we are social animals, and Hursthouse makes this fact an explicit part of the structure of natural normativity, but this does not, by itself, provide us much of an answer. That we are social animals is a truism. Yet, as is the case with many widely accepted assertions, there is not always a clear sense of what it denotes. Few would, for instance, follow Aristotle in claiming, as he does in *History of Animals* I.1, that we are social insofar as we have, as a species, "one common end in view."¹¹⁹ Still fewer would accept Aristotle's specification from the opening chapters of *Politics* I.2 that we are social insofar as we have as our common end the *polis*. The

119 488a9-10. Quotations from the *History of Animals* are from the Thompson translation.

modern understanding of what it means to be a social animal is better captured, I would venture, by Aristotle's other characterization of our species in *History of Animals* I.1 as being gregarious in addition to social (in his technical sense). Yet describing ourselves as gregarious animals does not seem to quite capture all that we mean, or can mean, by the claim that we are a social species. For one thing, that we are drawn to others and pleased by their company does not capture the extent to which we depend on others for our various needs and for the achievement of various goods.

Given this lack of specificity, the assessment of the extent to which Foot and Hursthouse conceive of us as relational beings requires us to clarify just how they understand our social animality. Accordingly, I will begin this section by examining Foot's claims about social animality and show that she understands it in a roughly Hobbesian way, as a matter of interdependence in meeting our basic needs combined with a natural affection for our loved ones. I will then examine Hursthouse's claims about social animality and show that she, too, ascribes to a Hobbesian interdependence and natural affection, but goes further than this by also conceiving of us as being what Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar call "causally relational,"¹²⁰ that is, individuals whose character traits and dispositions are in a significant way the result of the social influences that impinge on their development.

Before proceeding to my interpretations of Foot and Hursthouse, I should briefly clarify—lest I be accused of awkwardly slotting their theories into overly rigid categories—that ascriptions of human relationality are a matter of degree rather than absolutes. As Misha Strauss rightly notes, it is very rare to find a philosopher whose image of human nature is not relational in some way.¹²¹ To this I would add that it is also quite rare to find a proponent of relationality who will also entirely disavow some notion of bounded individuality, even if those boundaries are quite porous. The more precise and illuminating interpretative question, and the one that guides my discussion in this section,

120 Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured" (2000), p. 22. The concept of causal relationality, and its counterpart, constitutive (or intrinsic) relationality, is also discussed and elaborated upon in Natalie Stoljar's "Informed Consent and Relational Conceptions of Autonomy" (2011), most explicitly at page 377.

121 Misha Strauss, "The Role of Recognition in the Formation of Self-Understanding" (2002).

is not whether Foot or Hursthouse hold that human beings are relational, but in just what way and to what degree they think humans are relational.

3.1.a: Foot's Hobbesian Social Animality

Unlike Hursthouse, Foot does not make the fact that we are social animals part of the structure of natural normativity. As described in the first chapter, for Hursthouse, the fact that a species of animal is a social species complicates the theory by adding to it the end of the good functioning of the social group. Foot's theory, however, undergoes no such modification and remains concerned only with the ends of survival and the continuance of the species, even when the evaluation of goodness is trained on the parts and operations of social animals. Still, she does not deny that this feature of a species has moral significance. In *Natural Goodness* Foot makes only a single explicit reference to human beings as "social animals" and in that instance she employs the term to denote our need for cooperation in order to satisfy our basic needs. Here, Foot compares our interdependence to that of wolves who must hunt in packs to acquire nourishment, although she adds that our particular form of cooperation "depend[s] on special factors such as conventional arrangements."¹²²

The topic of our social nature comes up again later in the book where Foot defends Peter Geach's claim that human beings need the virtues as bees need to sting. In agreement with Geach, she mentions two sets of needs that humans have along with the corresponding sets of virtues that are required to meet these needs. The first set of social needs is the "pursui[t of] human ends having to do with love and friendship,"¹²³ which requires the virtues of industry and tenacity of purpose. The second set is the "ability to form family ties, friendships, and special relations with neighbours," which requires the exercise of "virtues such as loyalty, fairness, kindness, and in certain circumstances obedience."¹²⁴ This seems far loftier than the earlier comment that we cannot meet our

122 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 16.

123 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 44.

124 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), pp. 44-45.

basic needs without assistance and might suggest that there is more to our social animality than the sort of thing that wolves do when they hunt in packs. It may, however, only be an elaboration of the same kind of interdependent cooperation mentioned in the earlier passage. This is clearest with the second set of needs under discussion, those involving the formation of social bonds. Our friendships and special relations with neighbors might, after all, be particular instances of the conventional arrangements that Foot mentions as a characteristically human form of cooperation. The need to form various social bonds, in other words, is one that might be derivative insofar as we need these bonds not for their own sake but only so that we can cooperate to achieve our more basic needs of survival and the continuance of the species. It is less clear that this is the case with the first set of needs mentioned, since these are not concerned with the formation of bonds *per se* but with the ends of love and friendship. We have here admittedly thin textual grounds on which to base our judgment of Foot's conception of our social nature, yet, given the basic structure of her theory, the most natural reading is that the ends of love and friendship are also derivative. They are, that is, simply part of the ways our species meets the basic needs that are fundamental to Foot's moral theory. For the purposes of evaluations of natural goodness, then, this mention of the need for social bonds, love, and friendship is not much different from the earlier comparison to the cooperative activities of wolf packs.

If my reading of Foot is correct, her account of natural goodness has very little room for relationality, or makes room only for relationality understood in a rather thin sense. This contention can, in fact, be further strengthened by noting how her account of the social nature of human beings is similar to that of one of philosophy's most notorious social atomists: Hobbes.

For Hobbes, the pre-societal state of nature is characterized primarily by insecurity. It is, famously, a state not of violence but of "war of every man against every man,"¹²⁵ that is, a state in which all are known to be ready to engage in battle to secure the objects of their

125 *Leviathan* I.xiii.13.

desires.¹²⁶ The result of this insecurity is that the "fruits [of industry] is uncertain," which leads not only to the neglect of any long-term projects such as agriculture, the development of various arts, and exploration, but results also in a solitary life, one with "no society."¹²⁷ Interactions between people in the state of nature, moreover, provide "no pleasure, but... a great deal of grief" since each person "naturally endeavours... to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage, and from others, by the example."¹²⁸ In the absence of the security provided by the presence of a "common power to fear,"¹²⁹ humans live "dissociate[d]"¹³⁰ from one another. In order to meet their basic needs, then, those in the state of nature band together, forming civil society by appointing over them a sovereign authority. The Hobbesian account of the social bonds of human beings is, in this respect, much like Foot's. Both the Hobbesian citizen and the Footian social animal are beings who need to form social bonds primarily to ensure cooperation in meeting their basic needs and to be assured that "if... a stranger should come on [them] when [they] are sleeping he will not think it all right to kill [them] or appropriate the tools that [they] need for the next day's work."¹³¹

It may appear that I am uncharitable to Foot in comparing her notion of human social animality to that described by Hobbes, given that she mentions family ties and love as part of her defense of the need for virtues. However, this worry, should it arise, is itself likely to be the product of an uncharitable reading, although of Hobbes rather than Foot. Writing only about the heads of households in the state of nature is, after all, not an innovation of Rawls¹³² but can be traced back to *Leviathan* and further still. Although

126 *Leviathan* I.xiii.8.

127 *Leviathan* I.xiii.9.

128 *Leviathan* I.xiii.5.

129 *Leviathan* I.xiii.11.

130 *Leviathan* I.xiii.10.

131 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001), p. 114.

132 I refer here to Rawls' suggestion that "heads of families" should be the only parties in the original position (*A Theory of Justice* [1999], p. 111). It is, I suspect, a stipulation that is primarily associated with Rawls and which is given salience thanks to Susan Moller Okin's work. However, she has not overlooked

Hobbes writes about the state of nature in a way that suggests that his comments are meant to apply to all of those who dwell in it, they primarily apply to the adult males who exist outside of civil society. This is evident in two passages from his discussion of the state of nature. First, Hobbes claims that men in the state of nature "use violence to make themselves masters of other men's persons, *wives, children,* and cattle."¹³³ The second passage is Hobbes' aside that populations who do not live under a common power have no government save "the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust."¹³⁴ Life in the state of nature is, indeed, described as being solitary but what we find in the Hobbesian state of nature is nevertheless collections of families rather than collections of unattached individuals. In the fuller picture of Hobbes' account of human social bonds, then, human beings cooperate to meet their basic needs by forming social relationships, and family ties are presupposed and accounted for by natural affection.

There are, of course, some discontinuities in the two accounts. Hobbes is inviting us to imagine a pre-political existence, one in which people are organized in family units, and perhaps even tribes or clans,¹³⁵ whereas Foot is, instead, imagining an anti-social existence, one in which people are selfish agents. The remedy to these conditions are, correspondingly, different. For Hobbes, those in the state of nature exit their insecure way of life by the establishment of a sovereign power "to defend them from the invasion of

its precursors in the likes of Hobbes, since she mentions that it is an assumption that runs "throughout almost the entire liberal tradition" ("Justice and Gender" [1987], p. 44).

133 *Leviathan* I.xiii.7. My emphasis.

134 *Leviathan* I.xiii.11.

135 Hobbes' mention of "the savage people in many places of America" (*Leviathan* I.xiii.11) as an example of contemporary people living in the state of nature might suggest that he has something like tribes in mind when discussing the state of nature, rather than the first establishment of households described by Aristotle in *Politics* I.2. It is not clear, however, from the *Leviathan* what Hobbes believed about the people of America and it remains possible that he thought them to have no social arrangements beyond those of the household.

foreigners and the injuries of one another."¹³⁶ As for Foot, she holds that "the virtues... are corrective, each one standing at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good."¹³⁷ The virtues, in other words, are the character traits we develop in order to act against our more selfish tendencies. We avoid living in a state characterized by intense insecurity, then, by developing virtues which temper our callous self-interest, and by promoting their development in others. Still, despite these differences, the important affinities between the two accounts of our social natures remain, at least when we take into account all of Hobbes' claims about the state of nature rather than rely on the more popular summaries of it.¹³⁸ It is the case, for both Hobbes and Foot, that we are social beings both insofar as we have natural affections for our family members and insofar as we need some form of cooperation to meet our basic needs. Both philosophers posit a different corrective to our self-interested natures—government in the case of Hobbes, and virtue in the case of Foot—but when it comes to Foot's understanding of social animality, there is nothing inaccurate or uncharitable with labeling her view "Hobbesian."¹³⁹

3.1.b: Hursthouse's Aristotelian Social Animality

136 *Leviathan* II.xvii.13.

137 Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices" (1978), p. 8. Her comment that the virtues are corrective was, of course, published well before the post-Humean turn in her career (referring to the point at which she claims to have abandoned a Humean conception of practical reason), but I see no reason to think that she abandoned this view by the time she published *Natural Goodness*. In fact, her continued focus on the joint problems of showing that human beings need the virtues and that the immoralist moral outlook poses a real danger to us—presumably because their views appeal to some natural tendencies in human nature—seems to suggest that she still thought of the virtues as corrective.

138 As Edwin Curley notes in the opening of his introduction to the *Leviathan*, "Hobbes has suffered a fate shared by many classic authors. His greatest work is more often quoted than carefully and thoroughly read" ("Introduction to Hobbes' *Leviathan* [1994], p. viii). As we can see from the popular mischaracterizations of Hobbes' state of nature, it is a fate that befalls not only the whole of the *Leviathan* but also its parts.

139 There is a reading of Foot according to which her theory implies a deeper relationality than the account of social animality I have summarized here. In "Rationality and Goodness" (2004), Foot argues that moral considerations, including those concerning our particular relationships with others, are intrinsically reason giving. From this material, it is possible to develop an account of social animality that is less Hobbesian in nature. John Hacker-Wright's work on ethical naturalism provides an especially good account of how Foot's natural goodness might require non-instrumental investment in relationships (see, especially, "Human Nature, Personhood, and Ethical Naturalism" [2009]).

In her discussion of the four ends relevant to the evaluation of the natural goodness of social animals, Hursthouse's statements about the social nature of certain species takes on the same character as Foot's Hobbesian comments. Hursthouse first provides a set of examples of animals who are defective with respect to the end of the good functioning of the social group. A number of these concern the need to cooperate in order to meet certain needs, such as the "free-rider" wolf that does not participate in the group hunt or the ape who does not participate in mutual grooming.¹⁴⁰ Hursthouse then notes that a social group functions well simply insofar as it enables its members to achieve the other three ends relevant to the natural goodness of social animals, so that "[t]he individual survival of social animals is in general served by their sticking with the group" and "[t]he continuance of the species depends on the group's functioning well."¹⁴¹

Hursthouse's emphasis on interdependence in matters of our individual and collective survival is in part the result of her hesitance to define human social animality in a way that is discontinuous with that of other social species. When she considers the question of what is characteristic about our species's way of functioning as a social group, she brings up the fact that we communicate by means of language and notes that, while "there is something very significant about that fact about us as a species," nevertheless "it is not easy to see what the significance is"¹⁴² and concludes that there is nothing characteristic about our way of being social. When not dealing with that question directly, however, Hursthouse reveals that, while it is the case that "[t]he way' human beings live varies enormously from place to place, from time to time,"¹⁴³ she is willing to commit to some views about our uniquely human form of social animality. In her criticism of ethical egoism, for instance, she notes that, as social animals, we survive both individually and as a species not only through social co-operation but also by the upbringing that provides

140 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 201.

141 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 202.

142 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 219.

143 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 219.

children with a sense that "morality [is] more than mere convention."¹⁴⁴ To get a better grasp on Hursthouse's understanding of what it means for humans to be social animals, then, we must look to more unguarded moments like this one.

We can locate one of these unguarded moments by considering her denial of the significance of language in explaining what makes our social animality a characteristically human one. This denial might seem to cut our social animality off at the Hobbesian interdependence described by Foot. Her comment, however, is also evocative of Aristotle's answer to the same question, that is, the question of what difference language makes to our particular social species. In *Politics* I.2, Aristotle states that many animals have a voice, but only humans have speech. Animals able to make vocal sounds employ these to communicate to each other their perception of what is pleasant or painful, but the ability to employ language in addition to simply vocalizing allows humans to communicate to each other what is "good and bad and just and unjust and other things [of this sort]."¹⁴⁵ Although Hursthouse seems to disclaim the significance of language in explaining what makes our social animality a particularly human one, this ability not only to perceive but to communicate a variety of normative distinctions does, in fact, play an important role in her conception of our social lives. This is most evident in her comments about the training of the emotions, particularly in her paradigm case of such training put to bad ends, namely, the inculcation of racism. There, her comments show that her understanding of what it means for us to be social animals goes beyond the fact of our interdependence in meeting our basic needs and also includes the view that we are causally relational beings.

Hursthouse shows that the training of the emotions is a process in which the rational and the non-rational are intertwined. It is rational for two reasons. First, it is rational insofar as it involves teaching children specific applications of normative terms by employing evaluative statements in their presence, such as, to use some of Hursthouse's own

144 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 253.

145 1253a17-18. The bracketed words are a clarificatory amendment added to the text by Lord.

examples, "such people are *dangerous, ignorant, perverted*," and "she wouldn't have anything to do with him/she pushed him over?, quite *right* too, how *brave*, how *sensible*."¹⁴⁶ Second, in addition to encountering such baldly stated evaluative comments, children will occasionally hear these comments paired with some rationale meant to bolster them; it is not simply that members of certain races are said to be dangerous, for instance, but that they are said to be so "*because* they can't control their passions, *because* they hate us, *because* they are cunning and devious."¹⁴⁷

Of course, these two rational aspects to the education of the emotions would have little force on their own, especially in cases where the evaluative claims and their attendant rationales could not be sustained in the face of much scrutiny. The influence of these types of statements is strong because the young are disposed to be receptive to them, in part due to "unconscious imitation."¹⁴⁸ Imitation, however, may seem to be an odd sort of culprit for the inculcation of racism. After all, there is nothing unusual about someone who, taking on the role of a villain in a play, imitates immoral actions and utters base sentences without thereby becoming wicked themselves. To get a better grasp on the kind of imitation Hursthouse seems to have in mind—a kind that can play the educational role she ascribes to it—it is helpful to borrow from Aristotle's account of imitation, or *mimesis*. In *Poetics* 4, Aristotle claims that human beings are not only "the most imitative creature[s] in the world"¹⁴⁹ but that the first forms of learning that each individual engages in are imitative in nature. Imitation is educational not only because we acquire a variety of skills by imitating the actions of those who exercise those skills, but also because humans delight in imitative behavior.¹⁵⁰ The pleasure we get from imitation is

146 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 115.

147 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 115.

148 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 115.

149 1148b7-8.

150 Aristotle only specifies that "it is... natural for all to delight in *works* of imitation" (1148b8-9, emphasis mine), and therefore delight in representations of things even when we would not care to witness the things that are being represented or imitated. The point of his discussion, however, is to show that we gradually

not an insignificant matter, since learning to take pleasure in the right things is partly what virtue consists of, and associating pleasures with their proper objects is, for that reason, "the right education."¹⁵¹ Imitation, then, is not simply the playful aping of others, but a process that shapes the character of individuals.

Imitation, moreover, is later accompanied by what Aristotle, in *Rhetoric* II.11, calls emulation. While taking pleasure in the parroting of the evaluative language of those around us is a significant part of our moral development, emulation gives our imitations normative force. Emulation arises from the admiration of a character trait "in others like [us] by nature,"¹⁵² combined with the awareness that we lack that particular character trait. The awareness of this lack gives rise to "a kind of distress"¹⁵³ that motivates us to acquire the relevant character traits by attempting to act as we would if we possessed them. This differs from simple imitation in two important respects. The first is that imitation is concerned with actions, while emulation is concerned with the character traits that give rise to actions. Imitating someone, then, entails copying their behaviour, while striving to emulate an admired friend's wittiness, for instance, might entail developing our own idiosyncratic sense of humour rather than telling the same sorts of jokes they do or adopting some feature of their persona. Emulation also has an evaluative component that is absent from imitation. While we can imitate actions without endorsing them or even while thinking them base or shameful, we only strive to emulate the character traits we deem admirable, noble, and good. The evaluative nature of emulation further entails that we are "contemptuous of others... who have the... attributes that are opposites of the

"created poetry out of [our] improvisations" (1148b23-24), which seems to imply that we take delight in the act of imitation itself, a fact that is a bit obscured by his decision to focus his demonstration on the pleasure we get from the witnessing imitations rather than the pleasure we get from engaging in them

151 *Nicomachean Ethics* II.3, 1104b8.

152 1388a30-31.

153 1388a30.

emulated... ones,"¹⁵⁴ whereas the actions that are the opposites of those we imitate are not, thereby, objects of scorn.

It is this kind of Aristotelian imitation, rather than a simple copying of speech and behaviour, Hursthouse appeals to in her account of the training of the emotions. We begin, then, by adopting the evaluative language of those around us and learning, by making repeated use of it ourselves, to find it pleasant and comfortable. Gradually, we come to admire the characters of those who employ or embody the evaluative language with which we have been familiarized. Our disposition to imitate, combined with this admiration, gives rise to emulation and its cementing of the evaluative language that we have grown familiar with, since it is no longer simply the language we find pleasant or comfortable (and evaluative language that conflicts with it is, conversely, a source of discomfoting disorientation) but is now also taken to represent what is noble, good, and right (and, conversely, the conflicting language is taken to represent what is shameful, bad, and wrong).

I may seem to be equivocating by using "pleasure" and "comfort" more or less interchangeably in the previous paragraph. This is not carelessness on my part, but, rather, a feature of Aristotelian philosophy of mind. In *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12, Aristotle defines pleasure as unimpeded activity.¹⁵⁵ When it comes to the pleasures related to our ideas and their expression, much of the pleasure involved will be of a tranquil kind, a kind of comfort that accompanies our use of familiar and well-worn thought patterns. This tranquil pleasure is disturbed by the discomfort that arises from challenges to these thought-patterns, as occurs when we confront applications of evaluative terms that conflict with our own normative ascriptions. My interpretation of the pleasures of unimpeded cognitive activity as involving this kind of comfort in familiar thought patterns is further reinforced by a comment Aristotle makes in *Politics*

154 1388b21-26.

155 1153a14-15. I will set aside the question of how the accounts of pleasure in Book VII and Book X are related as dealing with it in this context would be an unproductive digression.

VIII.5, where he states that children should not be educated for the sake of play since "[t]hey do not play when they are learning, as learning is accompanied by pain."¹⁵⁶

It is clear from this discussion of imitation and emulation that the results of this training of the emotions cuts rather deeply. As Hursthouse notes, there is another way in which the inculcation of racism is non-rational: "it is... non-rational, or *irrational*, in the sense that the whole system of the application of [normative] terms, their putative explanations and justifications, is a tissue of falsehoods and inconsistencies."¹⁵⁷ However, recognizing this irrationality will not itself undo the emotional training. Not only will we not shed the affective dispositions that we have developed simply because we come to learn that they are irrational or shameful—at least, not in a short span of time—but Hursthouse also maintains that "we still do not know" whether it is possible to "re-train [racist] emotional reactions... into 'complete harmony' with reason."¹⁵⁸

The affective dispositions that make up an important aspect of our character are shaped by others in a way that is deep, long-lasting, and difficult to overcome. Hursthouse does, then, hold that, in addition to being social animals in the way that bees, ants, wolves, and elephants are, we are causally relational beings. Her claims about the training of the emotions, however, might not by itself warrant modifications to the structure of natural normativity. That we are causally relational beings might simply have implications for what it means to raise children well, in ways that avoid the kind of bad training of the emotions that Hursthouse describes, and this could be accounted for by appeal to the four ends that Hursthouse ascribes to social species. Having the dispositions that make one a perverse influence on the emotional development of children could count as failing to contribute to the end of the good functioning of the social group. After all, it is clear from Hursthouse's response to the ethical egoists that she believes a proper moral upbringing is an important part of meeting our basic needs.

156 1339a27-29.

157 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, p. 115.

158 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, p. 115.

3.1.c Relationality

Foot and Hursthouse's discussions each highlight a different aspect of social animality. Foot's comments draw our attention to our interdependence, while Hursthouse focuses more closely on causal relationality and cogently shows that we are beings who not only need others to meet our ends but whose character is also shaped in response to and in conjunction with the influences of others. These two accounts of social animality, however, do not constitute an exhaustive characterization of the forms of relationality. If we take into account what Natalie Stoljar calls "constitutive relationality," we can think of the descriptions of social animals we get from Foot and Hursthouse as supplying us only with two components of the trichotomy of relationality.¹⁵⁹ We must ask, then, whether we should rest content with these two components or whether we are also warranted in positing a deeper form of relationality than the ones discussed so far.

Unlike causal relationality, constitutive relationality describes features of ourselves that are not only the result of our interactions with others, but features that have these interactions as ongoing necessary conditions for their instantiation. The salient difference between these two types of features, in other words, is whether the influence of others is required to *establish* them or to *sustain* them. For example, if the explicit biases harbored by my family members impart upon me early in life some implicit biases that will colour my actions and reactions even once I have moved into social circles where I am no longer exposed to their explicit manifestations, then we can think of these implicit biases as being causally relational insofar as they arose from interaction with others but persist without constant re-exposure to those forms of interaction. This is not the case with features of ourselves that are constitutively relational. Consider, for instance, Stoljar's example of self-trust. Self-trust relies heavily on our own self-interpretation—if only because we can only trust in our abilities, our understanding, and our decision-making if we believe ourselves to be the kind of person who is capable of exercising these capacities reasonably well—and our self-interpretation relies, in turn, "on the

¹⁵⁹ That is, the one composed of interdependence, causal relationality, and constitutive relationality.

interpretation of the self by others.”¹⁶⁰ Self-trust, then, is causally relational insofar as it requires ongoing feedback from others and the absence of the relevant kind of feedback can be sufficient for undermining this disposition.

Being deeply or constitutively relational animals (in addition to being social animals in the sense of being interdependent and causally relational) means that in the absence of confirmation from others, our subjective apprehension of the world will retain a sense of subjectivity. It will lack the concrete and stable phenomenal character of things that have objective reality. Our interactions with others, then, are indispensable to us not only because we must cooperate to meet our needs or because it is in such spaces that our character is forged, but also because our sense of the world as stable and concrete can only be sustained with at least semi-regular interactions with others.

We are, in some sense, in the same position of Berkeley’s knower. As Berkeley noticed, we cannot, by ourselves, preserve the stable and concrete character of the phenomena we experience. However, unlike Berkeley, those operating from a secular worldview cannot rely on the ubiquitous and constant vigilance of God to ensure the objective character of our ideas (in the Berkelean sense). We must, instead, rely on the occasional—albeit usually regular—confirmation from others, whether implicit or explicit, that we are experiencing the world in common, that is, in roughly the same way they experience it. Unlike Berkeley’s knower, then, we rely not on the infallible eye of God but on our assessment of other humans’ experiences—and perhaps also those of other perceivers in the animal kingdom—against which to check and calibrate our own. The absence of a divine grounding for our experiences and our need to rely on other finite beings for this grounding is the source of our phenomenological vulnerability, that is, the possibility that, in seeking confirmation of our experience of the world, we can confront the flawed apprehension of it by others or the absence of others altogether.

I will discuss some of the implications of this vulnerability for the natural goodness model in the next chapter. For now, I will endeavour to bolster my claim that the natural

¹⁶⁰ Natalie Stoljar, "Informed Consent and Relational Conceptions of Autonomy" (2011), p. 379.

goodness model of evaluation should account not only for our social animality but for a deeper form of constitutive relationality by examining the effects of one of the aspects of our vulnerability, namely, the possibility of being deprived of social contact.

Accordingly, in the next section I will survey and discuss some of the literature on the effects of the long-term solitary confinement of inmates. Showing that the effects of prolonged solitary confinement are not those that we would predict to befall a social animal but are precisely those that we would expect to afflict relational beings will provide us grounds for holding that humans are deeply relational and that we are constantly playing a role in sustaining the stability of one another's character, sense of self, and grasp of external reality.

3.2 Solitary Confinement

In this section, I will first describe the conditions in which inmates in solitary confinement are kept and then discuss some of the typical psychological effects of being housed under such conditions for extended periods of time. I will discuss solitary confinement in rather clinical terms, not because I believe we should be unperturbed by the practice but because I marshal the psychological findings with a very precise and narrow aim in mind. My current purpose is not to convey either the extent of the damage suffered by inmates housed in solitary confinement or the horror of living in such conditions. I am, instead, concerned with showing that there is something fundamental to human nature that is not fully captured by Foot and Hursthouse's comments about social animality and with the revisions to natural normativity that should follow from recognizing this. As such, I will need only to describe how solitary confinement radically restricts interpersonal contact and to discuss only a small, specific subset of the psychological effects of this restriction.

Before I proceed with my discussion of the psychological effects of solitary confinement, there are two terminological matters that should be settled. First, there is the question of what name to apply to the practice itself. Solitary confinement goes by many names. Ivan Zinger, Cherami Wichmann, and D.A. Andrews, for instance, list "administrative segregation, dissociation, isolation, seclusion, protective custody, and solitary confinement" as terms that are often employed interchangeably and treated as

synonymous.¹⁶¹ Of these, the terms "administrative segregation" and "solitary confinement" are most commonly used to identify the practice in question.¹⁶² However, I have reservations about labeling the practice "administrative segregation," since it does not identify its defining features. As Julian V. Roberts and Robert J. Gebotys remark, "[s]egregation implies collective separation, as in racial segregation."¹⁶³ Inmates kept in so-called administrative segregation, however, are not housed communally as a small contingent of inmates that are kept separate from the prison's general population. Rather, they are each separated from every other inmate and their opportunities for interpersonal contact are deliberately curtailed. It is, then, isolation and solitude, rather than segregation *per se*, that are the defining features of this form of confinement. As such, I take "administrative segregation" to be a euphemistic term that obfuscates the nature of the practice. For this reason, at pains of some slightly repetitive prose in the rest of this chapter, I will refer to the practice as "solitary confinement" and avoid the use of synonyms that do not connote the deprivation of human contact.

The other terminological matter concerns the name applied to the institutions in which solitary confinement is practiced. As with the practice, the institutions are referred to by a number of terms taken to be synonymous, such as "penitentiary," "prison," and "correctional facility." The terms, while taken to be synonymous, have an etymology that reflects different understandings of the purpose of incarceration. We can see this in the way the various terms reflect the shifting rationales behind solitary confinement. Solitary confinement in the United States has waxed and waned since the 19th century and can generally be seen as having come in three separate waves.¹⁶⁴ The first wave of solitary confinement arose in the 19th century and was aimed at reforming the prisoners' thoughts

161 Ivan Zinger *et al.*, "60 Days in Administrative Segregation" (2001), p. 50.

162 I should note, however, that these are sometimes distinguished from one another, as in the claim by the government of Canada that "'administrative segregation' in Canada is different than solitary confinement, because inmates can sometimes still have TV and staff visits" (Josh Wingrove, "Canadian government rejects solitary confinement limits" [2014], n.p.). This distinction, however, is rarely made in the literature I have reviewed, almost all of which uses the terms interchangeably.

163 Julian V. Roberts and Robert J. Gebotys, "Prisoners of Isolation" (2001), p. 86.

164 These three waves are discussed at length in Lisa Guenther's *Solitary Confinement* (2013).

by isolating them in order to encourage introspection and repentance. It is this wave, in which the prisoner was thought of as a penitent working toward spiritual repair, that gives us the term "penitentiary." The second wave took place from the 1950s to the 1970s and focused only on modifying the behaviour of criminals, rather than their souls. This aim of correcting deviant behavior is reflected in the term "correctional facility." The third and ongoing wave of solitary confinement differs from the first two insofar as it does not purport to reform inmates, either spiritually or behaviourally. Rather, it is a method employed simply to manage inmates deemed to be potentially dangerous to others or themselves, a potential target of abuse from other inmates,¹⁶⁵ or troublesome to the correctional officers. As the phenomenologist Lisa Guenther puts it, the current American system is one in which "the immobilization of prisoners has become an end in itself."¹⁶⁶ The term that most reflects this wave of solitary confinement is "prison," with its root meaning, derived from the French term "pris" (which may translate to "held"), implying mere captivity. This term, then, is the most apt for the kind of facility I will be discussing. Nevertheless, I am concerned with the effects of isolation on inmates rather than the rationale behind the practice and, as such, I will employ the terminology quite freely, reflecting the common usage that takes all or most of the terms for facilities in the penal system to be equivalent rather than restrict myself to the more technical or even pedantic taxonomy.

3.2.a: "a well-built machine": Solitary Confinement in American Supermax Prisons¹⁶⁷

Inmates in solitary confinement spend their days in three small areas. The holding cells that house them for most of their confinement are small cells whose dimensions range in

165 In many cases, this is done preemptively, as in the common practice of housing transgender women in male prison facilities and placing them in solitary confinement in order to "separate [her] from general population for her own protection" (American Civil Liberties Union, *Worse than Second Class* [2014], p. 9).

166 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. xvi.

167 The quotation in this subchapter heading and the next are from Hans Christian Andersen. After witnessing the condition of prisoners in solitary confinement after a tour of a prison, Andersen commented that "It is all a well-built machine, a nightmare for the spirit" (qtd. in Smith, "The Effects of Solitary Confinement" [2006], p. 460).

size from 48 square feet to 80 square feet.¹⁶⁸ More evocatively, the size of the cells have been compared to, among other things, "the size of a parking space"¹⁶⁹ and "almost exactly the size of a standard king mattress."¹⁷⁰ Visual perception of activities that take place outside the cell is typically obstructed by the presence of a door made of solid steel rather than steel bars or a plexiglass pane. Inmates also have controlled access to an exercise yard, which is surrounded either by a fence or a cement wall and often the only sight available to the prisoner beyond the walls of the enclosed space is the sky above them. While the term "exercise yard" may have spacious connotations, these are typically quite small, so much so that Craig Haney reports that they "are so constraining they are often referred to as 'dog runs'"¹⁷¹ and Laura Gottesdiener refers to them as "kennels" that are "too small to do anything except pace back and forth."¹⁷² Finally, some of the inmates have controlled access to showering facilities if there is no shower in their cell.

A stay in solitary confinement tends to be quite lengthy. The average length of a prisoner's stay in solitary confinement varies across states and figures compiled by *Solitary Watch* range from an average of 5.3 months in New York to 6.8 years in California.¹⁷³ While some of the prisoners are held for a few weeks, others are housed in solitary confinement indefinitely and may be held for decades, as is the case for Albert Woodfox, who has been housed in solitary for 43 years—longer than any other US prisoner.¹⁷⁴ While there is quite a variety in the length of stay across prisons and

168 The dimensions of the cells will vary across penitentiaries. Craig Haney describes them as being "60- to 80-square-foot cell[s]" ("Mental Health Issues" [2003], p. 127), while Bruce A. Arrigo and Jennifer Leslie Bullock claim that the cells are "often 6 X 8 feet" ("The Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement" [2008], p. 624), or 48 square feet. In my survey of the literature on the psychological effects of solitary confinement, I have encountered no reference to cells that are smaller than those mentioned by Arrigo and Bullock, or larger than those described by Haney.

169 Laura Gottesdiener, "The Unbelievable Inhumanity of Solitary Confinement" (2012), n.p.

170 Thomas Silverstein, quoted in Jean Casella and James Ridgeway, "America's Most Isolated Federal Prisoner" (2011), n.p.

171 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary" (2003), p. 126.

172 Laura Gottesdiener, "The Unbelievable Inhumanity of Solitary Confinement" (2012), n.p.

173 Sal Rodriguez, "*Solitary Watch* FAQ" (2012), n.p.

174 Alan Yuhas, "Angola Three: court expands Albert Woodfox's 43-year-long imprisonment" (2015), n.p.

sentences, the daily and weekly routines of prisoners held in solitary is far more uniform. Inmates spend almost all of their time in their cell, usually 23 hours a day, although Jeffrey L. Metzner and Jamie Fellner report that some days do not include the one hour reprieve spent in the exercise yard.¹⁷⁵ Prisoners are allowed to leave the cell to go to the exercise yard, usually for one hour each day. Access to the exercise yard, however, may be far more infrequent than this. Thomas Silverstein, for example, reports that while he was housed at United States Penitentiary Atlanta his time in the yard was limited to one hour a week.¹⁷⁶ Those who do not have showers in their cells are also allowed occasional access to showering facilities. For those whose cell is equipped with a shower, its use may still be regimented. The shower might, for instance, only be activated for fifteen minutes three times per week.¹⁷⁷

Those housed in solitary, then, experience only a slow rhythm to their days, with their time in the cell broken up only by the daily access to the exercise yard and three meals that are inserted into their cells by a slot in the door or wall. How inmates spend the rest of their time within their cells will depend on what they are allowed to have in it. Many of the cells have nothing but "Furniture... made of poured concrete... consist[ing] of a fixed bunk, desk and a stool, as well as a shower and a toilet."¹⁷⁸ This, it is obvious, severely restricts the kinds of activities the prisoner can engage in during their confinement. In certain facilities, some inmates will have the opportunity to spend their time in one or two additional ways. Some, for instance, may be allowed to have books—in some cases, only a bible, as was the case with the earlier Pennsylvania model—or be provided with a radio or television. While the time in the exercise yard does provide a slight change of scenery—although it may be little more than a change from being enclosed by blank cement to being enclosed by blank cement walls—the yard is devoid

175 Jeffrey L. Metzner and Jamie Fellner, "Solitary Confinement and Mental Illness in U.S. Prisons" (2010), p. 104.

176 Jean Casella and James Ridgeway, "America's Most Isolated Federal Prisoner" (2011), n.p.

177 Laura Gottesdiener, "The Unbelievable Inhumanity of Solitary Confinement" (2012), n.p.

178 Amnesty International, "USA: Prisoners held in extreme solitary confinement in breach of international law" (2014), n.p.

of exercise equipment and, therefore, affords an even narrower range of activities than are available within the cell.

Throughout this whole time, steps are taken to ensure that the inmates are kept isolated from other human beings. As part of solitary confinement, inmates are alone in their cells, and only access shower facilities and the exercise yard when no other inmates are present. The design and management of solitary confinement units ensures that the prisoners are not only housed in single-person cells but also deprived of contact from one another and the guards. The isolation imposed upon them is primarily a deprivation of the sight and touch of others. The doors and walls of their cells prevent them from seeing anyone who may be passing by. Their meals are delivered to them through a slot in the door or wall, which renders it difficult to glimpse much of the body of the person providing the food—if it permits prisoners to see any of it at all—and does away with the potential for physical contact that other methods of meal delivery would afford. The prisoners are monitored by camera, eliminating the need for guards to check on them in person, which might involve a face-to-face encounter. In some facilities, moreover, their movement can be regulated remotely, by means of "computerized locking and tracking systems."¹⁷⁹ Cell extractions can involve physical contact, but even in cases where tactile interaction is required the contact is either minimal—typically "limited to being touched through a security door by a correctional officer while being placed in restraints or having restraints removed"¹⁸⁰—or violent in nature, as usually occurs when the extraction is the result of an infraction committed by the inmate, in which case they "are subdued with batons, shields, Tasers, and rubber bullets."¹⁸¹ As the nature of these interactions show, Peter Schraff Smith is right to point out that "[t]he reduction of stimuli is not only

179 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 126.

180 Chase Riveland, quoted in Peter Schraff Smith, "The Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 443.

181 Bruce A. Arrigo and Jennifer Leslie Bullock, "The Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2008), p. 626

quantitative but qualitative," that is, "the occasional social contacts are seldom freely chosen, are generally monotonous, and are not typically empathetic."¹⁸²

Unlike the Pennsylvania system of the 19th century, there has been no great effort to ensure that the prisoners live in a silent environment. While they are not able to converse with anyone, they may nevertheless be exposed to a number of cacophonous sounds. The guards of modern prisons do not wear woolen socks over their shoes as did their predecessors, and the prisoners may be exposed "day and night" to the sound of "shouts [and] muffled cries" as well as non-vocal sounds that nevertheless signal the presence of another person, such as "the sounds of closing gates and rattling meal carts."¹⁸³ Silence was a key feature of the early penitentiary, since it was meant to be conducive to the introspection that would—or so it was hoped—reform wayward souls. The presence of auditory stimulus is no longer a concern in the modern supermax prison, where the object of solitary confinement is simply to confine and manage inmates. As was the case with the visual and tactile stimuli available to the prisoners, none of the auditory stimulus that is experienced in the cells approximates ordinary human interaction. The prisoners may be able to hear each others' screams but they cannot speak to each other in any meaningfully communicative way.

We have, then, in these supermax housing units a total or almost total isolation from meaningful human contact. Moreover, this isolation is not simply, as Lisa Guenther puts it, "the empirical absence of other people"¹⁸⁴ but also the elimination of the very possibility of a meaningful significant encounter with another person, whether for weeks or, for some of those who are held indefinitely, decades. This situation provides us with a population of human beings who have been deprived of relational interactions and examining the effects of this deprivation should provide us with insights into what kind of social animals we are.

182 Peter Schraff Smith, "The Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 449.

183 Lorna A. Rhodes, "Questioning Supermax" (2010), p. 48.

184 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. 147.

3.2.b: The Isolation of (Merely) Social Animals

Before proceeding to an examination of the reported psychological effects of prolonged solitary confinement, it will be helpful to consider what sorts of effects we can predict would befall social animals under these conditions. Comparing this prediction with the actual effects of confinement will give us a sense of whether Foot and Hursthouse's comments about social animality fully captures human relationality or whether we can go further and posit a deeper, constitutive form of relationality as an aspect of the life form of the species.

Solitary Confinement and Foot's Hobbesian Social Animality

The Hobbesian conception of social animality articulated by Foot is, as we have seen above, three-fold. It consists, first, of an interdependence requiring us to cooperate with others in order to meet our basic needs; second, of a natural affection toward family members; and, third, a desire for love and friendship. Even on this somewhat minimal conception of social animality, it is clear that we cannot be isolated from others without some harmful outcomes.

As concerns the first aspect of Hobbesian social animality—our dependence on others for the satisfaction of our basic needs—total prolonged solitude would ordinarily leave us unprotected and unable to provide for ourselves in any adequate manner. If we imagine someone in a state of even greater solitude than is found in Hobbes' state of nature—say, an individual fending for themselves in some remote wilderness, entirely disconnected from other human beings—the importance of this interdependence is clear. Without any cooperation from others, the outcomes of this individual's industrious endeavours would likely be far less bountiful than they would be as part of a group effort or an economic network. Moreover, without the aid of others, such an isolated individual would face periods of great vulnerability during which illness or injury leaves them incapable of repairing their shelters, harvesting or scavenging for nourishment, and evading or confronting predators. Prolonged solitary confinement differs from this state of lonesome industry insofar as the needs of the inmates are met without much contribution from them. Indeed, while our imagined wilderness dweller would likely be compelled by

necessity to spend most of their days exerting themselves, it is difficult to find an existence less productive than one confined to a solitary housing unit and its adjoining exercise yard. Yet, despite this, the basic needs of these prisoners are met with the help of others, albeit from one-sided dispensations rather than co-operative activity. Perhaps contrary to expectation, then, the first aspect of Hobbesian social animality—the dependence on others for the provision of our basic needs—is satisfied adequately in the radical isolation of solitary confinement.

We should not conclude from this, however, that our Hobbesian social animals can flourish in these kinds of arrangements. Although the means for survival are provided, the second and third aspects of Hobbesian social animality will be frustrated in any situation of extended isolation. Our natural disposition to affection for loved ones is one that we could imagine will emerge intact after a stay in solitary. This affective disposition might function like the muscle memory of skills that we can execute expertly even after prolonged periods of disuse. That is to say, even without the presence of loved ones to call forth our affection for them, this affection may still be felt strongly once we are reunited with them. It is also not clear that there are absolutely no opportunities for this affection to manifest itself. We can, after all, rouse such feelings by thinking of our loved ones, rehearsing our memories of them, or imagining our future with them. Moreover, our disposition to affection might well increase as a result of isolation, since the resumption of contact with family members after such a prolonged absence of human interaction might be a source of overwhelming emotion. While it is possible to imagine that absence really does make the heart grow fonder, or at the very least leaves its tendency to fondness intact, we can also easily imagine that having no direct contact with the objects of our affections could dim our emotional responses to them. Craig Haney's work suggests, albeit indirectly, that this latter outcome is often the case. Haney has identified five "social pathologies"—patterns of behaviour observed in released prisoners who have formerly endured lengthy stays in solitary confinement—three of which might indicate lasting damage to our natural affection. In some cases, the imposed inactivity of the prisoner's housing unit can translate into a lack of "personal initiative" upon release,

which can manifest itself as "[c]hronic apathy, lethargy, depression, and despair."¹⁸⁵ A second social pathology is "social withdrawal," which is an alienation from others that results in "being disoriented and even frightened by [social contact]."¹⁸⁶ Finally, a third social pathology is the experience of "intolerable levels of frustration that, for some, turns to anger and then even to uncontrollable and sudden outbursts of rage."¹⁸⁷ While none of these symptoms directly indicates a loss of affection for loved ones, it is quite possible that chronic apathy and depression, social withdrawal, and uncontrollable anger and rage either result, in part, from such a loss or bring about such a loss.

The frustration of the third aspect of Hobbesian social animality, that is, of our desire for love and companionship, is even more obvious. It is true that ties and bonds may survive an extended stay in solitary, and that friendships and romantic engagements can resume and new ones can be forged once a prisoner is either returned to the prison's general population or released from incarceration altogether. However, the desire for love and companionship is not a desire for a latent connection but for a certain level of intimacy or closeness with particular others. The satisfaction of this desire, then, requires not only an affective disposition toward another person but actual physical proximity to them, or at the very least some sort of direct, mutual interaction with them even if it is mediated via a telephone line or computer monitor. While there may be some interaction between inmates in solitary confinement and the staff who provide them with material necessities, this will typically involve either minimal contact—as is the case when trays of food or soap are dispensed through the cell door's cuffport—or violent contact—as is the case when correctional officers will subdue an inmate or extract them from their cell and apply severe restraints to them. Although some inmates engage in rule violations such as

185 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 139.

186 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 140.

187 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 140. The other social pathologies suffered by former prisoners of solitary confinement are a total "dependen[ce] on institutions to organize their existence" and "a feeling of unreality that pervades one's existence in [social contexts]" (pp. 138-139).

throwing their bodily waste through their cell's cuffport¹⁸⁸ in order to provoke the guards to come into violent contact with them, this is—even if deemed preferable by the inmate to a total absence of physical contact—an act of desperation and not one that will result in the meeting of a social animal's need for companionship.

Solitary Confinement and Hursthouse's Aristotelian Social Animality

Hursthouse's Aristotelian account of social animality is more complex than Foot's. However, despite this, it is not likely that someone who ascribes to Hursthouse's conception should expect individuals in solitary confinement to flourish even less than would be predicted by an adherent of Foot's Hobbesian version. Hursthouse's account of the training of the emotions in children and youth shows that an important component of the social aspect of our species is that we have strong tendencies to imitate the behaviour of others and, beginning a bit later in our lives, to emulate their character traits. These components, however, are causally relational, that is, they play a role in establishing character traits and dispositions. As such, they show only that some aspects of the development of our behavioural, affective, and epistemic dispositions are strongly influenced by our interactions with members of our social circles. The causally relational processes described by Hursthouse will remain totally inoperative in conditions of radical social isolation, unless they operate weakly in response to our memories of the behaviour and character of others we have previously encountered. This does not mean that changes in emotional dispositions, or in character more generally, will not occur while someone is cut off from all social contact. All such development, however, will occur according to non-relational processes such as the formation of new habits (something that is inevitable given how alien the lifestyle of intensive confinement is in comparison to the ways of life found outside the prison system or even in the prison's general population), introspection, and the gradual attenuation of existing dispositions brought about by their inactivity.

As interdependent social animals, then, prolonged isolation impedes our flourishing, and as causally relational social animals this kind of isolation cuts us off from some of the

188 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. 188

influences that help establish and shape our character. The literature on the psychological effects of solitary confinement, which I will summarize in the next section, shows, however, that there is more to our relationality than this.

3.2.c: "a nightmare for the spirit": The Effects of Solitary Confinement

The pioneering 20th century work on the psychological effects of solitary confinement is a study by the psychiatrist Stuart Grassian. In 1982, Grassian conducted a series of interviews with prisoners held in solitary confinement at the Walpole State Penitentiary (since renamed the Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Cedar Junction) as part of a class action law suit alleging that the conditions in the prison's confinement units were unconstitutional.¹⁸⁹ The inmates reported a series of symptoms that Grassian calls "strikingly consistent"¹⁹⁰ and which he has labeled "SHU syndrome," named for the Special Housing Units in which the prisoners were isolated. Seven symptoms collectively make up the SHU syndrome:

- a) a gradual inability to tolerate ordinary external stimuli
- b) perceptual distortions, illusions, and hallucinations
- c) severe panic attacks
- d) difficulties with thinking, concentration, and memory
- e) unwelcome and intrusive aggressive and violent thoughts
- f) paranoia and fear of persecution
- g) outbursts of violence and loss of impulse control.¹⁹¹

Grassian remarks that these symptoms are not only significantly consistent among the inmates he interviewed, but also "strikingly unique; [since] some of the symptoms... are found in virtually no other psychiatric illness."¹⁹² This is especially the case with the perceptual disturbances reported by the prisoners, which are "almost pathognomonic of the syndrome, meaning they are symptoms virtually found nowhere else."¹⁹³ For the

189 *Libby v. Commissioner of Correction*, 432 N.E.2d 486 (Mass. 1982).

190 Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 335.

191 Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), pp. 335-336.

192 Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 337.

193 Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 337.

purposes of this chapter, I will discuss the perceptual disturbances associated with solitary confinement rather than the other symptoms of the SHU syndrome, not only because of its uniqueness but also because it illustrates well the loss of the inmates' grip on reality as a result of intense isolation.

The loss of perceptual constancy is a characteristic feature of the hallucinations experienced in isolation. In the case of auditory constancy, this loss means that sounds become louder or softer without a corresponding change in the intensity of the auditory stimulus. In the case of visual constancy, the loss results in "objects becoming larger or smaller, seeming to 'melt' or change form."¹⁹⁴ One of Grassian's interviewees, for example, reports an experience in which he receives pancakes in his meal tray and witnesses them seeming to shift in size, "get[ting] real small, like silver dollars."¹⁹⁵ Other prisoners have reported seeing their cell doors vibrating and "the surface of the wall seem[ing] to budge."¹⁹⁶ Given the loss of perceptual constancy, it is no surprise that Silverstein claims that, while housed in solitary, he "lost some ability to distinguish what was real" and ceased to be able to differentiate between his dreams and his waking reality.¹⁹⁷

The illusions experienced by the inmates do not only affect their ability to accurately perceive their surroundings, but also result in uncertainties about their own persons. As Arrigo and Bullock put it, not only does "complete lack of social contact make it difficult to distinguish what is real from what is not" but also "what is external from what is internal."¹⁹⁸ Grassian's interviewee who seemed to witness his pancakes shrinking also reports instances of being unsure whether someone has hit him or not (despite,

194 Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 337.

195 Anonymous inmate, quoted in Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 335.

196 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. 35.

197 Thomas Silverstein, quoted in Jean Casella and James Ridgeway, "America's Most Isolated Federal Prisoner" (2011), n.p.

198 Bruce A. Arrigo and Jennifer Leslie Bullock, "The Psychological Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2008), p. 627.

presumably, being entirely alone at the time).¹⁹⁹ Guenther states that the prisoners' "basic sense of identity" is so threatened by prolonged confinement that inmates can lose features so fundamental to their own self-perception, such as the ability to know whether or not they are experiencing pain and the capacity to "distinguish their own pain from that of others."²⁰⁰ She further notes that, isolated from social contact, inmates in solitary lack the capacity "even to tell where [their] own bodily existence begins and ends."²⁰¹

3.2.d: Solitary Confinement and Relational Beings

Foot and Hursthouse's theories allow us to predict some of the quite serious effects that inmates in prolonged solitary confinement might undergo as a result of their social isolation. Yet they do not allow us to predict one of the most striking consequences of solitary confinement. These accounts of social animality give us neither the grounds to predict that isolation will lead to a hallucinatory disconnection from external reality and the loss of concrete boundaries in one's sense of self, nor does it provide us with the resources to explain why such effects arise. To account for these effects, we need to posit a deeper relationality than the social animality described by the natural goodness theorists. We are, then, not only social animals who must engage in cooperative endeavors, feel affection for others and seek companionship, and develop our character in response to the example of others; we are also relational beings who can only experience the world and our selves as objective, solid, and stable when we experience them jointly with others. We are beings for whom the deprivation of others is not only dreary and distressing, but also alters our experience of the world, so that, as Guenther puts it, it "become[s] equivocal for [us], as if phenomena have dissolved into mere appearances."²⁰²

199 Anonymous inmate, quoted in Stuart Grassian, "Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement" (2006), p. 335.

200 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. xi.

201 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. 146.

202 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. 239.

Moreover, while the psychological studies of the effects of solitary confinement rarely venture hypotheses about what causes us to lose our grip on reality in the absence of others, there is one notable exception: Craig Haney. After discussing the results of his interviews with 100 randomly selected prisoners confined in solitary at California's Pelican Bay State Prison, Haney offers an explanation for the prevalence of perceptual distortions in the interviewees. Commenting on his findings, he states that the "feeling of unreality that pervades one's existence in these places" is due to the isolated prisoners having no "routine and recurring opportunities to ground [their] thoughts and feelings in a recognizable human context."²⁰³ Since "so much of our individual identity is socially constructed and maintained," the prolonged frustration of these interpersonal acts of grounding "leads to an undermining of the sense of self."²⁰⁴ It is this need for these routine and recurring opportunities that makes us constitutively relational beings. Our sense of the concrete and stable character of our selves and the external world is not simply established by our interactions with others, but must be regularly sustained by renewed contact. As Lisa Guenther puts it, the fact that our sense of a stable external reality and our concrete sense of self can be undermined simply by the absence of others indicates that we are "hinged subjects," that is, beings whose subjectivity is not an atomistic "point"²⁰⁵ and who can, therefore, "become unhinged when the concrete experience of other embodied subjects is denied for too long."²⁰⁶

What we have here, then, is not merely a terminological dispute over how to define "social animals;" there is a significant difference between social animality and this deeper, constitutive relationality. Yet it might be tempting to preserve the simplicity of Hursthouse's theory by simply redefining social animality so that it includes this deeper relationality—as Hursthouse herself seems to have added complexity to Foot's definition

203 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 139.

204 Craig Haney, "Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and 'Supermax' Confinement" (2003), p. 139.

205 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. xiii.

206 Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), p. xii.

by adding to it a causally relational dimension, rather than positing a separate imitative aspect of human function. This is a temptation, however, that I believe we should resist. For one thing, there does seem to be something qualitatively different between, on the one hand, our drive to live with others communally and, on the other, our being incapable of keeping a cognitive grasp on the world without the at least occasional presence of others, and this difference seems to indicate that they should be thought of as discrete aspects of the human life form and, consequently, referred to using different terminology. There is also the fact that including this kind of relationality in the structure of natural normativity—whether we include it as a component of social animality or count it as a separate aspect—will give rise to a new end or set of ends against which we must evaluate the goodness of an individual's dispositions. While there is no rule dictating that a variant of the natural goodness theory should not posit more than one end per aspect of a species' life form, prudence also dictates that we should not risk conflating the end corresponding to social animality with those corresponding to relationality. In other words, whatever the ends corresponding to relationality turn out to be, they will not be equivalent or reducible to the end of the good functioning of the social group, and our theoretical classification of them should reflect this. Finally, we must also remember that the theory of natural goodness is one that is employed not only to evaluate the goodness of human traits, but also those of all living beings. We should be careful, then, not to import too much into our concept of social animality that we might doubt applies to non-human social animals. We find cooperation, imitation, and affection across various social species, and while emulation might seem to be a specifically human trait, we can reasonably consider it to be a type of imitation that arises when the imitative disposition of rational beings is exercised in conjunction with the kinds of normative evaluations enabled by rationality. When it comes to experiencing the objectivity and stability of the world in relation to others, however, it is far less clear whether this extends to elephants, gorillas, dogs, and other non-human social animals. We should, therefore, leave open the possibility that there are at least some social animals who are not also relational animals and our theory should reflect this by making social animality and relationality discrete components of the structure of natural normativity.

3.3 Solitary Confinement and Minimal Sensory Stimulation

My defense of the claim that we are relational beings has relied in great part on the effects of the social deprivation that is imposed on inmates in solitary confinement. A difficulty arises, however, from other features of solitary confinement that could be the source of at least some of the effects I have discussed in the previous section. One feature of solitary confinement is the minimal sensory stimulation that is a characteristic feature of life within secure housing units. The conditions, it is true, do not amount to sensory deprivation—the inmates are afforded, after all, an illuminated environment, within earshot of the activity outside the cell and the shouts and screams of other inmates, and unlike those who float in sensory deprivation tanks they have constant opportunity for tactile interaction with solid objects—but the objects of their sensory experiences are rather bland and intensely routine. To put it more crudely, they are not deprived of seeing but they are not given much to look at. While not amounting to deprivation, this minimal sensory stimulation may nevertheless give rise to perceptual distortions that approximate those that result from sensory deprivation. If it is the case that the unstable character of our experience of the external world and of features of ourselves that result from prolonged solitary confinement can be attributed to the lack of sensory stimulation and not to the deprivation of human contact, then I have missed the mark in identifying it as evidence of a constitutive relationality, even if it would still indicate a need for revising Hursthouse’s model of natural normativity.

This problem is compounded by the difficulty in prising apart isolation and minimalistic sensations in ordinary conditions. It is rare to find situations in which there is social interaction and also sensory minimalism²⁰⁷ given that the mere visual perception of another human being provides us with rich sensory stimulation, and this richness is magnified if we also hear them speak, sing, or hum, or if we touch or are touched by them. More common are situations in which there is ample sensory stimulation but no

²⁰⁷ The term “sensory minimalism” may seem an inappropriate gloss of “minimal sensory stimulation” if the term “minimalism” is taken to suggest a kind of intentionality, as is the case, for instance, with works of art described by this adjective. I have no qualms in using the term, however, because there is nothing adventitious about the limited stimulus available in the deliberately designed solitary housing units.

contact with other human beings. However, even relevant cases of this sort should be difficult to find, since most would not likely choose to prolong their isolation to the point of incurring any distressing or damaging effects from it. Even Thoreau, who famously sought some measure of remove from society by living for more than two years in a cabin by Walden Pond, did not attempt to live in any kind of radical isolation. In fact, he follows his praise of solitude in *Walden* with a chapter describing the visitors to his cabin, noting that “I had more visitors while I lived in the woods than at any other period of my life.”²⁰⁸ Moreover, even when cases of isolation with rich sensory experience can be identified, we face a problem regarding the sample size. In analyzing the effects of solitary confinement, we benefit from an artificial and carefully constructed institutional situation which ensures that there are a large number of people undergoing similar conditions for extended periods of time. *Solitary Watch* reports estimated that there were 80,000 to 100,000 inmates housed in solitary confinement in American prisons in 2015.²⁰⁹ The American penal system, then, provides researchers with a large population on which to study the effects of extended isolation, allowing them to eliminate the occasional outlier or individual whose experimental conditions have somehow been compromised. No such experimental luxury is afforded to those who wish to study extended isolation outside these kinds of strict institutional confines.

Nevertheless, while there is no perfect population on which to study the effects of isolation in the absence of minimalistic sensory stimulation, there are studies of a few situations, helpfully compiled by Grassian, that approximate some of the features of solitary confinement and can provide us with some preliminary evidence. Grassian notes that those who spend time confined in small groups, in situations that offer limited environmental stimulus, such as cases of “men isolated on a Pacific island, in submarines, and on Arctic expeditions,” show “dramatically increased levels of hostility, interpersonal conflict, and paranoia.”²¹⁰ Not surprisingly, the smallest possible groups, those

²⁰⁸ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1962), p. 222.

²⁰⁹ Sal Rodriguez, “*Solitary Watch* FAQ” (2015), n.p.

²¹⁰ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 357.

composed solely of two individuals, proved to be the situation that is “the most pathogenic of all” and is “associated with especially high rates of mutual paranoia and violent hostility.”²¹¹ Grassian focuses a bit more closely on explorers and researchers living in Arctic and Antarctic habitats. This situation in some ways provides a closer parallel to solitary confinement than do the other small groups mentioned above. While those living in polar habitations are not entirely cut off from human contact—Grassian mentions that they usually house groups of “fewer than fifty members”—they are confined for long periods of time, given that “winters can last for up to nine months with weather conditions so cold... that leaving the confines of the indoors is dangerous.”²¹² Individuals living in these conditions have been reported to be afflicted by “winter-over syndrome,” the symptoms of which are “progressively worsening depression, hostility, sleep disturbance, impaired cognitive functioning, and paranoia.”²¹³ Individuals in small group confinement, then, display some of the symptoms that are characteristic of the SHU syndrome that results from prolonged solitary confinement. However, it is notable that the symptoms highlighted by Grassian as characteristic of group confinement do not include the kind of perceptual disturbances experienced by isolated inmates. Things are different, however, in cases of restricted stimulation that are coupled with isolation. Military pilots who undergo lengthy solo flights report not only the kind of anxiety experienced in polar habitations but some also describe “[f]eelings of derealization, feelings or detachment from reality, and perceptual distortions.”²¹⁴ Grassian also discusses the reported experience of individuals undertaking long solo voyages by sea and sailors who find themselves alone as the result of shipwreck. Of these, he notes that they “have generally described ‘disturbances in attention and in organization of thought, labile and extreme affect, hallucinations and delusions.’”²¹⁵

²¹¹ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 357.

²¹² Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 358.

²¹³ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 359.

²¹⁴ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 356.

²¹⁵ Stuart Grassian, “Psychiatric Effects of Solitary Confinement” (2006), p. 361.

As mentioned above, these studies do not provide a perfect counterpart to serve as a kind of makeshift control group for extended solitary confinement. Nevertheless, the differences in the characteristic symptoms experienced by small groups in conditions of restricted sensory stimulation and those experienced by isolated individuals in such conditions suggest that the experience of the self and the external world as unstable or unreal is primarily caused by the isolation imposed by solitary confinement rather than its accompanying sensory minimalism.

3.4 Solitary Confinement and Forced Incarceration

Minimal sensory experience is not the only feature of solitary confinement that might cause trouble for my analysis. Violence and imposed confinement are also entangled along with sensory minimalism and social isolation. Prisoners in solitary confinement, in the first place, find themselves in their situation as the result of the wills of others. The involuntariness of their condition means that they are not in the same kind of situation that those who have confined themselves voluntarily, to work in submarines or polar habitats, for example. They are, additionally, in a different situation than those of others who are isolated involuntarily. Shipwreck survivors or those adrift at sea, for instance, are, like prisoners, in situations they have not chosen to enter, but unlike inmates in solitary confinement they find themselves in those situations as the result of impersonal forces rather than the deliberate decision of other human beings. Additionally, the prisoners know that the only substantial contact they can provoke from the correctional staff is violent in nature, as was described in Section 2.a. There is, then, a violence that suffuses solitary confinement and it may be this violence that accounts for at least some of the effects I contend are the result of isolation.

There is one consideration that might mitigate our worries about the violent nature of the confinement imposed on inmates. It is, namely, the difficulty in knowing whether we should, in the context of this inquiry, treat violence as a feature of the confinement that is separate from the isolation or, rather, as a component of that isolation. There is something social or relational about the violence (both its threat and its execution) and imposition experienced by inmates in the penal system, but its involuntary nature means that it cannot have the character of cooperation and cannot be experienced as a joint endeavour.

The violence experienced in solitary confinement, in other words, ensures that there is always a rift between the inmates and the correctional officers with whom they might have some kind of contact. While it is, then, a feature of solitary confinement that is distinct from the physical isolation of inmates, we can nevertheless understand it as propping up the sense or experience of isolation.

I do not, however, have to hang my hat on this response alone; it can be supplemented by considering the case studies described in the previous section. Something at least analogous to the hallucinatory effects experienced as part of SHU syndrome have been reported by those who undertook lengthy solo flights, solo sea voyages, and by shipwrecked sailors. The shipwrecked sailors, it is true, found themselves in their situation involuntarily, although not as a result of another's will, but this was not the case for the military pilots or the solitary seafarers. The fact that those who undergo isolation voluntarily for some period of time experience at least some small or preliminary loss of their grip on reality suggests that it is the inability to engage in social reality checking, to borrow a phrase from Haney, and not the violence or forced confinement that is the source of the perceptual disturbances experienced in prolonged solitary confinement.

3.5 Conclusion

After spending time in jail for refusing to pay the poll-tax, Thoreau mocked his jailers' attempts to punish his transgression by locking him up:

as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help but being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up.... As they could not reach my mind, they had resolved to punish my body, just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog.²¹⁶

It is clear from the effects of solitary confinement described above that Thoreau had significantly underestimated the psychological harm that could be inflicted upon a person

²¹⁶ Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1962), pp. 102-103.

with little more than thick and solid doors and walls.²¹⁷ It is precisely because we are more than mere flesh and blood and bones that prolonged confinement in isolation from others can cause us to lose our grip not only on the external environment but also on our sense of self. As I have shown in this chapter, we are harmed in this way by radical isolation because we are constitutively relational beings, rather than the kinds of atomistic beings Thoreau supposes us to be.

I concluded Chapter One with Hursthouse's model of natural normativity. For Hursthouse, the evaluation of the goodness of plants, either as individuals or of their specific parts and operations, is conducted in light of the species ends of survival and the continuance of the species. For animals capable of emotion and desire, the evaluations of their parts, operations, and actions must also take into account the species end of the avoidance of pain and the enjoyment of pleasure in ways that are characteristic of that species. For our evaluations of the goodness of parts, operations, and actions of social animals, we must also consider how conducive these are to the good functioning of the social group. While Hursthouse posits no fifth end that arises in the evaluation of rational beings, I concluded Chapter Two by defending the addition of contemplation as an end relevant to the evaluation of the goodness of rational animals. At the close of this chapter, I have added a new aspect of species function to the structure of natural normativity by defending the claim that human beings are deeply relational, that is, relational in a way that goes beyond the relationality of (mere) social animality. This metaphysical view, however, does not have normative pay-off for the natural goodness theory until we draw out some of its implications for the assessment of the goodness of character traits. This chapter ends, then, with an unanswered question: should the structure of natural normativity include some new species end corresponding to the relational aspect of the human life form? I devote the next chapter to providing an at least partial answer to this question by positing recognition as an end relevant to the evaluation of the dispositions and traits of relational beings.

217 Thoreau's pronouncement on the harm of imprisonment was based on a far easier stay than the one a typical supermax prisoner faces. Not only was Thoreau imprisoned only for a single day, but he had a cell mate with whom he spent that day in conversation.

Chapter 3

4 Recognition I: From Relationality to Recognition

As we saw in the first chapter, Hursthouse's model for evaluating the goodness of human beings rests on an understanding of humans as possessing a few relevant traits: the ability to perform actions, the psychological complexity required to feel pleasure and pain, the collective organizing and needs that arise from being social animals, and the rationality that enables us to endorse things as good or bad. In the previous chapter, I appealed to reports on the psychological phenomenological effects of prolonged solitary confinement. One thing that is clear as the result of that discussion is that Hursthouse's model should be supplemented with another important but easily overlooked feature of human function, namely, our relationality.²¹⁸ In this and the following chapters, I will draw out some of the implications of this relationality for an account of the virtues.

My exploration of whether Hursthouse's model can be expanded continues in this second and final part of my project. Chapters One to Three were concerned with laying the metaethical and metaphysical underpinnings of the virtues, first by outlining the natural goodness model for the evaluation of character traits and, second, by adding nuance to the account of human nature posited by Hursthouse. Chapters Four to Six are devoted to drawing out the normative consequences of the constitutive relationality discussed in the previous chapter. I begin that work in this chapter by explaining and defending my contention that, as relational beings, the goodness of our character traits must be evaluated partly in terms of how conducive they are to meeting our need for recognition. I will then add precision to the concept of recognition and isolate a few of its components by drawing some conceptual and terminological distinctions. The final two chapters will be devoted to providing an outline of the virtues of recognition, starting with what I will

²¹⁸ In the previous chapter, I drew an explicit distinction between causal and constitutive relationality. While that distinction is still in play here and in subsequent chapters, I will, for the sake of simplicity, use "relationality" to denote constitutive relationality unless otherwise specified.

call the virtues of cognizing (Chapter 5) followed by those I will call the virtues of recognizing (Chapter 6).

4.1 Recognition

Now that we have established that human beings are relational animals we must ask what implications this has for our model of natural goodness. The addition of relationality to our account of the morally salient aspects of human function opens up two theoretical paths, but it is not immediately clear down which of them the conclusions of the previous chapter should lead us. Human relationality may, on the one hand, give rise to additional ends relevant to the evaluation of natural goodness, in the same way that all of the aspects of the human form of life discussed so far have. That is, just as evaluations of the natural goodness of emotionally complex animals must factor in the individual organism's tendency (or, more precisely, its parts', operations', and actions' tendencies) to promote the enjoyment of pleasure and avoidance of pain in ways that are characteristic to the species of which it is a member, so relationality could give rise to some new end against which we are to measure the natural goodness of human individuals (or, to be more precise once again, their cognitive, affective, and behavioural dispositions). On the other hand, it is possible that the addition of relationality leaves the evaluative structure unchanged. Like rationality as it is understood in Hursthouse's account—although not in the account I defended in Chapter Two—it would modify our understanding of human morality and flourishing without positing any additional ends against which to evaluate character traits. In the case of Hursthouse's account of rationality, this means that, unlike non-rational animals, humans are capable not only of desiring and pursuing certain things but also of endorsing them as good. This ability to engage in normative endorsement entails some modifications in our understanding of human goodness, such as giving rise to a concept of moral responsibility that is absent from our evaluation of the goodness of the members of other species. What it does not entail for Hursthouse, however, is any change in the ends against which we measure the goodness or badness of some character trait. If this is the sort of change that is brought about by taking relationality into consideration, then there will be implications for our understanding of human goodness,

but whatever those implications will be, they will leave our “table of the virtues,” and possibly even their ordering, intact.

We are proceeding into uncharted territory (uncharted within the fields of Virtue Ethics and Natural Goodness, at any rate) and it will be easier to begin mapping out the implications of relationality—of the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 3, we are beings for whom the very objective character of the world requires uptake of our experiences from others—by focusing on the question that is central to Foot’s approach to ethics, and to Anscombe’s for that matter, namely, the question of what needs we have in virtue of the kinds of beings we are. As social animals, for instance, we are beings who need friendship, love and affection, and co-operation in securing our means of survival. Whatever may be our conception of the virtues of social animals, it must be understood as being conducive to fulfilling those needs. Framing the question of what relationality means for natural goodness in these terms will reveal that the proper approach to implementing human relationality into our system of natural normativity will be to modify the structure of that normativity and, correspondingly, our understanding of some of the virtues. In the previous chapter, we have seen that our experience of the world and ourselves as concrete, stable, and objective depends on receiving some confirmation from others of the features of our experience. One of our central needs as relational beings, then, is recognition from others, specifically, acknowledgment that others perceive the world as we perceive it, at least to some extent. As will be clearer after the discussion of relational harms, including gaslighting, in the next section, our ability to flourish requires some confirmation or uptake of our experience.

Recognition is no simple idea but, rather, a family of concepts that operate at various social levels and perform a number of functions. Much of the philosophical discussion of recognition concerns recognition at the macro-social level. At the level of politics, recognition has been promoted in part as an antidote for the indifference that is built into the notion of toleration. As Judith Butler remarks, toleration can be considered “a weak instrument, often presupposing a disdain for those toward whom it is directed.” Those who acknowledge and approve of political and legal safeguards against discriminatory and prejudicial treatment afforded by toleration yet find its built-in disdain troubling or

harmful in itself “favor recognition as a more robust and affirmative alternative.”²¹⁹ The political recognition that is advocated as an alternative ranges from simple economic redistribution motivated by concerns for equity, as Rasmus Sommer Hansen has proposed,²²⁰ to a legal protectionism of marginalized or threatened culture, as promoted by Charles Taylor,²²¹ and, of course, models of recognition that lie between these or, as in Nancy Fraser’s account of recognition, encompasses them both.²²² Outside the realm of economics and state politics there is also a macro-social form of recognition operating at the less formal level of culture. Cultural recognition can take the form of representation, that is, of contributions to the social imaginary that gives certain religions, cultures, ethnicities, and various forms of social identities more social visibility. We have, for instance, thanks to the Hollywood Code, entire decades of American cinema during which cinematic depictions of homosexual characters were either entirely absent or conveyed only in minor and heavily coded ways.²²³ More recently, cultural representation has received widespread news coverage when a selection of only white actors and actresses were nominated for the 2016 Academy Awards, prompting critiques of both the awards themselves and the representation of race and ethnicity in mainstream cinema more generally.²²⁴

My concern, however, is with recognition as it operates on a much smaller scale, namely, in the personal interactions of individuals. I want to briefly acknowledge, albeit only to set it aside, that there is no clean separation between micro- and macro-social

²¹⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), p. 141.

²²⁰ Rasmus Sommer Hanson, “Equality of Resources and the Problem of Recognition” (2011).

²²¹ Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition” (1994).

²²² Fraser holds, more specifically, that the distinction between cultural and economic injustices “is analytical” and that “[i]n practice, the two are intertwined” (Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” [1998], p. 72).

²²³ Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet* (1981).

²²⁴ Jillian Kestler-D’Amours, “#OscarsSoWhite? Fans decry lack of diversity in Oscar nominations” (2016).

recognition. After all, institutional structures, laws, and cultural representation are the products of the efforts, promotion, or indifference of a number of individual actors. On the micro-social side, the influence of the larger scale is evident as well. We are mimetic and emulative beings and our individual acts of recognition or non-recognition can be informed by the conduct promoted by the laws, the institutional normalization of certain features of society, and by the content and tenor of political discourse. We also easily succumb to enculturation, so that our perspective is always conditioned by the cultural products we imbibe. Despite this interplay, I will focus quite squarely on interpersonal recognition in isolation, with only rare allusions to recognition as it operates at the macro-social level. I do this not in an effort to over-simplify the matter but to pin-point the virtues that arise from our need for interpersonal recognition. As such, I will, in what follows, obviate two obvious questions that arise from my inquiry, namely, how we are to conceptualize and understand the interaction between the micro- and macro-social forms of recognition and whether collectives such as institutions can also be the bearers of virtues and vices. In what follows, then, “recognition” of an individual will denote only the acknowledgment or corroboration of their experience of the world, and the virtues that arise from consideration of such recognition will apply only to individual agents and not the various collectives in which they may find themselves operating.

4.2 Recognition and Relational Harms

The previous chapter dealt with conditions in which experiential uptake is almost entirely withheld. Although I appealed to the psychological outcomes of solitary confinement in order to make a general point about human experience—that some of its features that are easily taken for granted as simply given are, in fact, products of a constantly renewing but discreet process of corroboration—it may not be evident that the harms suffered by those who are housed in such extreme conditions have much relevance to the flourishing, let alone the virtues, of those who are fortunate enough to have avoided such intense incarceration. We are not, however, beings whose relationality can be used against them only as a form of prolonged torture; we can suffer relational harms in far more mundane contexts. A brief consideration of what is known in the psychological literature as “gaslighting” will suffice, I hope, to show that relational harms associated with failures of

recognition occur in ordinary situations and that taking them seriously should have implications for our understanding of virtuous conduct.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting owes its oddly non-clinical-sounding name, lacking the medical gravitas of terms derived directly from Latin or Classical Greek, to a 1938 stage play titled *Gas Light* and a more widely known 1944 film adaptation by George Cukor of the same name (albeit rendered as *Gaslight*). Both depict a murderer who attempts to cover up his search for his victim's valuable jewelry by convincing his wife that she is merely hallucinating when she perceives evidence of his activities, including the dimming of the titular gas lights in her home. The psychological phenomenon that bears the name refers to similar attempts to discredit a person's apprehension of some features of the world.

Kate Abramson defines gaslighting as a form of “emotional manipulation” with the aim of “induc[ing] in someone the sense that her reactions, perceptions, memories and/or beliefs are not just mistaken, but utterly without grounds—paradigmatically, so unfounded as to qualify as crazy.”²²⁵ Gaslighting differs from the mere dismissal of someone, “for dismissal simply fails to take another seriously as an interlocutor, whereas gaslighting is aimed at getting another not to take herself seriously as an interlocutor.”²²⁶

Two clarifications are important at this point. The first concerns Abramson's choice of language in describing the effects that gaslighting and gaslighters “aim” at producing. This intentional language can be misleading since those who engage in gaslighting often do so without any aim in mind. As Abramson herself points out, while some cases of gaslighting are deliberate, the typical cases are those perpetrated by individuals with no conscious intention of eliciting its effects in another.²²⁷ The second clarification concerns

²²⁵ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 2.

²²⁶ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 2.

²²⁷ Although it should be noted, as Abramson does, that while there is not always a conscious aim, there is typically some interest of the gaslighter's that is being served (“Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” [2014], p. 8). Whether that is to gain some advantage over someone, by instilling doubt in a competitor, for

the distinction between dismissal and gaslighting. They are, indeed, separate phenomena, but they are related insofar as dismissal is one of the causes of gaslighting. While a single or occasional instance of dismissal will be unpleasant, any kind of systematic or pervasive dismissal risks producing the effects of gaslighting. Abramson illustrates the way that individual dismissals can pile up and come to have this greater cumulative effect in one of her examples of gaslighting. The example takes the form of a quotation from an anonymous and possibly fictional (although the formatting of the quotation, with its use of an elliptical mark, suggests otherwise, as does the prevalence of such accounts)²²⁸ source:

I moved out of one field of philosophy in grad school due to an overwhelming accumulation of small incidents... When I tried to describe to fellow grad students why I felt ostracized or ignored because of my gender, they would ask for examples. I would provide examples, and they would proceed through each example to ‘demonstrate’ why I had actually misinterpreted or overreacted to what was actually going on.²²⁹

Here we have a case of a person whose experience of sexism is dismissed by her colleagues. It is not difficult to imagine how the pervasive dismissal of her experience among her peers could lead her to doubt not only her interpretation of her experience but also her capacity to assess such situations properly. Abramson also mentions that gaslighting “frequently involves isolating the target in various ways”²³⁰ and this, too, exacerbates the effects of the dismissals since it decreases the odds that the person facing frequent dismissal will find others who will give uptake to their experiences, serving as a

example; by promoting deferential behaviour in a spouse; or simply to shore up their own misperception of things by calling into doubt those who perceive things aright, as might be the case with someone who is made uncomfortable by the prospect of acknowledging their social privilege and avoids doing so by casting doubt on the existence of all but the most egregious forms of, say, ableism and classism.

²²⁸ The blog *What is it like to be a woman in philosophy?* (<https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com>) alone compiles many accounts of this nature.

²²⁹ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 5.

²³⁰ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 2.

counter-narrative of sorts to the one promoted by the gaslighters. It would not be a stretch to read the example cited above as one that involves a certain degree of isolation, albeit not one deliberately promoted by those dismissing the student's experience of sexism. After all, attending graduate school will entail for many, if not most, students some significant geographical uprooting, so that they will no longer have regular encounters with family members and old friends. It is not uncommon, then, for one's graduate school colleagues to become one's only real social circle, the only group of people with whom there is significant and regular interaction. Given this, for the student to get no corroboration or uptake of her experience from her colleagues may well mean that she gets none at all.²³¹

Gaslighting, as we have now seen, exploits our relationality in much the same way that extreme isolation curtails it. While the person who has been successfully gaslighted may not experience the kinds of hallucinatory effects that an inmate in solitary confinement can suffer, there is nevertheless some feature of their perception of the world or of themselves that they are no longer able to experience as unequivocally objective or certain. This may be, on the one hand, what we could call episodic doubt, where the perception of some event that we once experienced as certain is called into question as a result of encountering pervasive challenges to our understanding of it. Regularly experiencing such episodic doubt brought on by a lack of corroboration of our experience, however, could give rise to a more constitutive doubt, that is, a doubt that calls into question not our perception of some particular event but our very capacity to perceive things adequately. In this case, it is not that I am left with a sense that I have misjudged some situation; rather, I am left with the sense that there is something flawed with my judgment in general, that I am incapable of judging things properly.

²³¹ Although my discussion of this scenario has speculated on the effects the gaslighting would have on the student if it were a case of "successful" gaslighting, that is, gaslighting that has been effective in visiting its full array of potential psychological effects on its target, there is no essential success criterion to gaslighting. If the graduate student mentioned above suffers no self-doubt as the result of these frequent dismissals—and I should point out that there is no clear indication from the scenario whether she has or not—or if she has frequent contact with a social circle outside of her philosophy department that provides her with an effective counter-narrative to the one her colleagues communicate to her—again, something which the scenario leaves undiscussed—she is nevertheless a target of gaslighting.

Direct Harms from Loss of Reasonable Certainty

The harms that arise out of this loss of reasonable certainty—of the constitutive sort—are two-fold. The first harms are the direct effects this lack of recognition has on our well-being. Some distress will invariably accompany the sense that our epistemic agency has been undermined. Abramson characterizes this distress in terms of grief: the gaslighted person is “grieving the loss of her independent perspective, her ability to form and maintain her own reactions and perceptions.”²³² She also puts the matter in starker terms by appealing to clinical language, noting that the person who experiences this type of grief can be described as having “severe, major, clinical depression.”²³³

Even if being on the receiving end of non-recognition (understood as the withholding of experiential corroboration and uptake) does not lead someone to a state of severe depression, there are still other ways that it can compromise well-being. One way is by preventing a person from drawing as much enjoyment as they could from intellectual pursuits. It is not only that the motivation to engage in such pursuits will flag as a result of the discomfort that accompanies over-abundant doubt. It is also that such doubts will crowd out the enjoyment of what Peter Goldie calls the intellectual emotions.²³⁴ Take the emotions that Goldie associates with caring about the obscure topic of Polish notation in logic:

We are frustrated in our slowness to grasp a new theorem, and jubilant when we finally do grasp it; we delight in its capacity to simplify sentential logic; we are surprised and thrilled when we realize how readily it can be adapted in

²³² Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 23.

²³³ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 23. Abramson is sensitive to the connotations that accompany this kind of clinical language and cautions the reader to avoid the assumption that depression, insofar as it is a clinical condition, involves some kind of maladjustment to a situation. Clinical depression, in other words, may be—and in the case of significant gaslighting, is—an appropriate affective response to living in bad conditions or experiencing poor treatment from others.

²³⁴ By this language, Goldie, and myself for that matter, do not mean to capture only the emotions involved in highfaluting pursuits. Early in his discussion of intellectual emotions, he cautions that he means “no elitist connotations in the term ‘intellectual,’ no requirement that the person be, or consider himself to be, *an intellectual*” (Peter Goldie, “Loss of Affect in Intellectual Activity” [2012], p. 122. Emphasis in original).

computer programming; we are angry when other logicians mock its supposed utility; and so on.²³⁵

Now, this generalizes to other kinds of intellectual pursuits—Goldie chose Polish logical notation to illustrate that his account applies to local as well as global concerns—and what is key, at least for my purposes, is the balance of pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Intellectual endeavours involve their share of displeasure—in the form of frustration and anger in the passage quoted above—but these are compensated for by the enjoyment we receive as a pay-off for our dedicated pursuit—the jubilation, delight, and thrilled surprise. Being plagued by doubts, however, leaves us with an overabundance of displeasure that is only meekly compensated by the pleasures we do acquire from intellectual activity, as might be the case for a student who, perpetually frustrated in their attempt to understand what has been assigned and taught in their philosophy course, might react to finally grasping the concept of the synthetic a priori not with jubilation and delight but with relief at no longer having to ponder about it and perhaps the nagging question of whether coming to understand the question was worth the struggle. There is, furthermore, greater potential for doubt in activities that do not have clear success criteria. The scholar attempting to master Polish logical notation can have clear evidence of their success when they have employed it in their coding and produced functioning computer software as a result, someone trying to learn Italian will be able to verify their fluency by attempting to read a text or hold a conversation, and so on. However, when it comes to, say, grasping the meaning of a poem, assessing the viability of comprehensive but untested political theories, or figuring out just what one should make of an Abstract Expressionist painting, there is far more room for self-doubt, even to the point where a person can fully and accurately succeed in acquiring the understanding they seek but, unlike the person whose successful coding or ability to decipher texts provides them with incontrovertible evidence of their achievement, might still remain uncertain about whether they have actually accomplished what they set out to do. In such cases, it is not only that the pleasures associated with intellectual pursuit might not adequately

²³⁵ Peter Goldie, “Loss of Affect in Intellectual Activity” (2012), p. 123.

compensate for the abundant displeasures, but that the compromising of epistemic confidence prevents delight, excitement, and pride from manifesting when they should.

Indirect Harms from Loss of Reasonable Certainty

The second type of harm that arises from the effects of withholding uptake are the indirect impediments to our well-being that arise from difficulties in exercising the virtues. There are a number of ways that a loss of confidence in our own epistemic agency can compromise virtuous activity. Some virtuous acts involve risk-taking. This is obvious in the case of the Aristotelian virtue of courage, which is concerned with facing death and bodily harm in battle, but far less dramatic instances of risk-taking are also involved in, for instance, the possibility of incurring social or professional penalties for speaking up about the racist behaviour or comments of an acquaintance, work colleague, or boss. To the virtuous agent, these risks appear small when the alternative courses of action allow them to be avoided only at the cost of cowardice or disregard for those most directly harmed by the conduct. Without the feeling of certainty that comes with confidence in our epistemic abilities, however, the risks will likely be weighed more heavily than they should. Consider, for instance, the person who witnesses what they believe is racist behaviour, or even a pattern of racist conduct, but is constantly worried that what they perceive to be racist might be nothing more than a series of uncouth but ultimately inoffensive actions. The risks of acting are bound to be weighed more heavily when the course of action involves not simply making an accusation of racism, but making what we worry might be a false accusation of racism. As such, lack of confidence makes us less likely to act as virtue dictates.

Compromised confidence in our epistemic abilities also poses a problem in situations that provide us only a small window for acting well. In *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.6-8, Aristotle describes some virtues relevant to ordinary social interaction. That these require speedy action and reaction is perhaps most evident in the virtuous disposition of those who display a witty but tasteful sense of humour, one that hits the mean between, on the one hand, the excess of “vulgar buffoons, striving after humour at all costs, and aiming rather at raising a laugh than at saying what is becoming and avoiding pain to the object of their

fun” and, on the other, the defect of the “boorish and unpolished” who are incapable of producing much levity.²³⁶ Far less controversial than this virtue is the more general one of friendliness—so named because it “most resembles friendship” but falls short of it insofar as “it implies no passion or affection for one’s associates.”²³⁷ The virtue of friendliness consists simply of causing pleasure and not causing pain in social life, in a manner constrained by “reference to what is honourable and expedient.”²³⁸ There will, in many cases, only be a brief opportunity to exhibit this kind of virtue and too much hesitation, or any at all, could mean squandering it or, worse, acting in conformity with vice. Take, for example, a scenario in an office setting where “The conversation is lively and a topic comes up that embarrasses your colleague.” In order to spare the colleague this embarrassment, it is necessary to act swiftly “and turn the conversation away from the topic,” perhaps “with a humorous remark.”²³⁹ Without reasonable confidence in our own judgment, however, our speedy reaction will likely be supplanted by hesitation, often lengthy enough for us to miss the opportunity to perform the right action.²⁴⁰

Having too low a sense of confidence in our own epistemic abilities can also interfere with the formation and maintenance of consistent character traits, at least consistent character traits of the right kind.²⁴¹ A person who does not put much stock in their ability

²³⁶ 1128a4-10.

²³⁷ 1126b20-23.

²³⁸ 1126b28-29.

²³⁹ This example is Francisco Varela’s, quoted by Bronwyn Finnigan (“Phronesis in Aristotle” [2015], p. 675).

²⁴⁰ For a critical discussion of attempts to make spontaneous virtuous action an important part of neo-Aristotelian ethics in light of Aristotle’s repeated insistence that deliberation is crucial to acting virtuously, see Bronwyn Finnigan’s “Phronesis in Aristotle” (2015). Two important proponents of the spontaneity of virtuous action are John McDowell and Julia Annas. For McDowell’s account of virtue as involving a perception of moral options as salient, see his “Virtue and Reason” (1987). For Annas’ account of virtuous activity involving an experience of “flow,” see her “The Phenomenology of Virtue” (2008).

²⁴¹ I add the specification “of the right kind” on account of the fact that, although we may speak of a person of the sort this paragraph describes as having no consistency, no character of their own, or some other similar expression, what we sometimes identify by such descriptions is not the absence of any consistent character traits. Rather, by use of such expressions we often identify particular consistent

to perceive or reason well about various aspects of their social environment could become prone to wavering in their judgments. This is especially so if not putting much stock in themselves leads them to develop a tendency to defer to the judgment and perception of others when their own should suffice. We can safely assume that there is no uniformity of judgment across different people and this means that the overly deferential agent will be a person whose decisions and assessments of situations will lack consistency. This inconsistency and wavering in judgment and action will prevent the formation, or interfere with the maintenance, of virtuous dispositions, which require, as Aristotle notes, not only acting in conformity to virtue, either in an incidental fashion or because of momentary moral inspiration, but acting as the virtuous person would, which includes doing so from a “firm” character.²⁴²

I do not intend this list of ways that non-recognition can have a negative impact on well-being to be an exhaustive summary of its potential harms. However, I believe that it is sufficient to demonstrate the importance of taking it seriously as a need that all relational beings have. Withholding uptake and corroboration where granting it would be warranted can result in a dampening of our epistemic agency. This can affect our well-being directly or by preventing us from engaging in virtuous activity, which hampers our flourishing by leaving us without one of the necessary conditions for achieving it. North American beavers require a well-functioning colony to flourish, African bush elephants require a well-functioning herd, and mandrills require a well-functioning troop; but a beaver, elephant, or mandrill can flourish without confirmation of the character of their experience from other members of their species. If there are some among us who find ways to flourish without that kind of confirmation—a question I leave open despite my doubts—they are surely the exception rather than the rule.

features of a person’s character that make the other aspects of their character less easily predictable. We can, in other words, say of a person who consistently and predictably wavers or defers to the influence of others in their judgment that this forms part of their character, even if the outcome of these traits is a more general fluidity of behaviour.

²⁴² *Nicomachean Ethics* II.4, 1105a30-1105b8.

I am, as I imagine is evident by now, not advocating an understanding of the virtues that is Stoic in nature. I will not counsel that we aspire to the detachment and disinterest of the Stoic sage and strive to become inured to the effects of non-recognition. Even if some relatively small degree of stoic fortitude would be desirable—something that falls short of the cold ideal of the classical Stoics but that can nevertheless immunize us against some of the vagaries of human interaction—it is not clear how we can expect anyone to develop and maintain it in adverse relational conditions, that is, in the face of a serious and pervasive lack of recognition. Rather than allowing us to do without it, I suspect that this kind of fortitude requires far more recognition than is usually acknowledged. In her discussion of the harms of gaslighting, Abramson states that “[s]uffering on account of [gaslighting] is not a sign of fragility, weakness, or an exceptionally damaged psyche; it is a sign of being human.”²⁴³ Indeed, to add some specificity to this claim in light of the previous chapter, these harms are precisely what we should expect to befall a human *qua* relational being. Considering vulnerability to non-recognition to be a sign of fragility or weakness is to assess harm in light of a truncated account of human nature or human function, perhaps one that puts all of its focus on the fact that humans are rational beings and only occasionally grants small supporting roles to the other aspects of the human form of life. Whatever our understanding of the virtues will be, it must include virtues that promote interpersonal recognition in the form of reasonable experiential corroboration and uptake, rather than those that would purportedly allow us to flourish without it.

4.3 Apprehending, Cognizing, and Recognizing

I want to add further precision to the concept of recognition by dividing it into two components, or movements, that instances of recognition bear in practice. To label these

²⁴³ Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” (2014), p. 6.

movements, I will borrow a pair of terms from Axel Honneth and refer to one of them as “cognizing” and the other as “recognizing.”²⁴⁴

Cognizing is the first part of the process of recognition, if not always temporally then at least conceptually.²⁴⁵ It is the epistemic component of recognition, the one that involves an apprehension of another’s experience in some way, whether by tell-tale signs in their behaviour or facial expression; the proper receipt of their testimonial utterances; or by extrapolation from prior knowledge of the individual, their previous experiences, and their past assessments of those experiences. By the concept of cognizing I mean to imply a success criterion, that is, not merely a perception of some situation but successfully reading that situation insofar as we correctly apprehend what is being communicated to us about another’s experience or perception. It is, then, different from what we might call, borrowing from Judith Butler, mere apprehension, which “can imply marking, registering, acknowledging without full cognition” and is, as such, “a mode of knowing that is not yet recognition.”²⁴⁶ It is not merely the acknowledgment that we are confronted with some object, person, or feature of our social environment, but a proper understanding of its relevant meaning to another. To use an impersonal example—that is to say, one that does not directly involve an interpersonal encounter—someone seeing the words “*arbeit macht frei*”²⁴⁷ atop the gates of Auschwitz or Dachau while visiting the sites or seeing them in photos can be said to apprehend them insofar as they see the words and even understand their literal meaning. There will be something missing from their understanding, however, if they read the statement not as accentuating the cruelty

²⁴⁴ Axel Honneth, “Invisibility: On the Epistemology of ‘Recognition’” (2001), p. 115. I should note that in borrowing the terminology from Honneth I do not intend to thereby import more robust features of his conception and analysis of recognition.

²⁴⁵ Although there is a certain neatness to considering cognizing as always preceding recognizing, cognizing does not always lead directly to acts of recognizing, nor does recognizing necessarily occur prior to cognizing. Although both of these complications make the language of priority a bit awkward, I will not refrain from it since I treat acts of cognizing followed by, or paired with, acts of recognizing as paradigmatic of recognition.

²⁴⁶ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), pp. 5-6.

²⁴⁷ “Work sets you free.”

and horrors of the concentration camps, but in some positive and encouraging way, perhaps in light of an industrious notion of the virtues inspired by Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack* aphorisms. They have, in that sense, not properly grasped the meaning of the terms and how others have understood them—especially those who were imprisoned behind the gates. Similarly, cognizing another is more than merely apprehending their utterances, noticing their facial expressions, and perceiving some of the contextual features of our encounters with them. Rather, it is apprehending these things while also grasping what they entail for another's experience or perception of things. This is, in other words, the private cognitive aspect to recognition, including, among other things, an understanding of what others intend to convey by their verbal and non-verbal communicative acts, and how others might be affected by various social, cultural, or institutional dynamics that have either a different impact on our lives or one whose character allows it to easily escape our notice.

In paradigmatic cases of recognition, these private acts of cognizing are followed or accompanied by public acts of recognizing. Recognizing is, essentially, the communication to another of our act of cognizing them. It is, in other words, not simply recognition of another's experience in the sense of grasping or making mental note of some aspect of it; rather, it is recognition of that grasping and noting by making it known, often in a very subtle way, to the person whose experience has been cognized that an act of cognizing has occurred. These subtle acts are no small matter, something which Honneth makes evident in his discussion of recognition and social invisibility. Someone is socially invisible if they are “not accorded social approval” or treated as though they are not “possess[ors of] social validity” in the way that is appropriate for their specific social roles—“friend, cleaning lady, fellow traveler.”²⁴⁸ When I encounter someone who is, or has the potential to become, socially invisible, I may become aware of their physical presence, notice their movements, and hear their words. In doing so, I have apprehended them. However, if I also privately and internally acknowledge not only their presence but also their social validity and evaluate them as being worthy of social

²⁴⁸ Axel Honneth, “Invisibility: On the Epistemology of ‘Recognition’” (2001), p. 119.

approval, then I have not merely apprehended them but cognized them. Such an act of cognizing, on its own, will not fulfill the needs of a person who is or is at risk of becoming socially invisible. As Honneth remarks,

the criterion according to which [the individual seeking recognition] ensures his visibility in a figurative sense is an expression of specific ways of reacting that are a sign—an expression—of taking notice of something or someone in a positive sense. Consequently, the absence of such forms of expression is an indication of the fact that he is not visible for his counterpart in this specific sense²⁴⁹

Although the term “recognition” has a certain epistemic or cognitive ring to it—at least, to those for whom it is not an almost entirely political concept—recognition that stops at cognizing without the further communicative act will not fulfill another’s needs as a relational being.

Honneth’s account of social visibility is, to be sure, a different matter than the one under discussion in this chapter. I am concerned with the communication of shared experience and with the acknowledgment of disparate but plausible understandings of particular situations. Neither of those interpersonal dynamics requires a social invisibility of the kind Honneth has in mind. That kind of invisibility, however, overlaps with the subject of this chapter insofar as the complete refusal to engage with another will prevent the relevant communicative exchanges from taking place. I cannot, evidently, communicate to you any of the ways that I grasp the situations I perceive, even those we are currently perceiving at the same time, if you do not allow me to communicate my perception of the world to you. Nor can I receive the kind of feedback about my experience if you react to me with complete contempt when we do find ourselves in a communicative exchange. There is, moreover, some communication that does occur in a refusal to engage me as a person in social space, one that conveys to me that we do not share an understanding of myself as a person worthy of some respect, as a bearer of dignity—or, should I have had my dignity trampled enough for me to have internalized this kind of disrespect, what may be conveyed is a shared understanding of my lack of social worth.

²⁴⁹ Axel Honneth, “Invisibility: On the Epistemology of ‘Recognition’” (2001), p. 114.

Of course, unless it is especially fragile, a single instance of someone refusing to engage with us will not send our sense of self, or the certainty of our experience of the world, into a tailspin. Securing recognition from other sources may allow us to develop the kind of resilience by means of which we can resist the more damaging effects of non-recognition, although these encounters may still leave us justifiably feeling insulted, irritated, or enraged. Furthermore, not every decision not to engage with someone will count as a *refusal* to engage with them.²⁵⁰ I may, for instance, pay no attention to a fellow traveller on the city bus and cast my glance away from them but not because I feel any contempt toward them. I might, for example, be desperately trying to mentally rehearse a presentation I have to give to work colleagues later that morning, be too exhausted from lack of sleep to want to engage socially with others, or be stewing in my own sour mood following an unpleasant morning. Yet, despite not giving attention to another, cases such as these tend to be associated with their own subtle acts of communication that mark them off from the active refusals to engage with another that arise from contempt. If my reasons for not engaging with my fellow commuter are innocent, I am unlikely to treat them as a contemptuous person would, staring at them coldly; refusing to give them sufficient space, and entirely ignoring their attempts to convey their discomfort to me; or scoffing under my breath if they attempt to initiate a conversation with me. Instead, if I am focused on memorizing my coming presentation, I might stare at my notepad, silently mouth the key phrases I want to cement in my memory, or look upward and enumerate with my fingers as I try to recall the bullet points I jotted down the night before. Likewise, if I am riding home in the morning, exhausted after a long night of revelry, I might supplement my frequent yawning and eye-rubbing with a kind of mock sleeping pose consisting of crossed arms, leaned-back head, and closed eyes. These are usually acts that we would not perform if we were alone, at least not so ostentatiously. We are often at least intuitively aware of our inability to render to

²⁵⁰ Such refusals, assuming they are not based on, for instance, animosity against a particular individual as a result of their past transgressions, are likely to be manifestations of the vice that Hallvard Lillehammer names “negating indifference.” This form of indifference is “an attitude taken towards another person when some strict ethical boundary is drawn and the other is regarded either as falling into a less favoured category of ethical concern, or is denied the status of ethically significant altogether” (Hallvard Lillehammer, “Who Is My Neighbour?” [2014], p. 572).

others the acts of recognizing that we owe them and perform small gestures, including simple configurations of our body language, to display that we are withholding recognition that we would grant under different circumstances—conveying that, to put it colloquially, “it’s not you; it’s me.” This is, in a sense, neutral insofar as it does not provide another with a confirmation of their experience of the world, but is simply an act of excusing oneself from the kinds of interaction in which the granting or withholding of the relevant forms of corroboration can occur.²⁵¹

I have spoken thus far about recognition—in the technical sense that I am employing—as a process of uptake and corroboration of another’s experience of the world, and the notion of cognizing and recognizing allows us to pry apart those two interrelated features of it. The process of uptake can be understood as a personal acknowledgment of another’s way of seeing the world, or at least of their testimony concerning their experience of it, and, as such, it is a type of cognizing appropriate to this particular type of recognition. Recognizing corresponds to the corroboration of another’s way of seeing the world, the communication to another of some confirmation that their experience of the world is either shared by us or that we take seriously the difference in our perspectives and do not simply reduce theirs to some mistake, delusion, or cognitive error.

Each of these movements of recognition will have corresponding virtues. These will be virtues that will increase our likelihood of success in granting recognition where it is due and that are not already accounted for, or not given sufficient prominence, by the other aspects of the Natural Goodness model. They are, in other words, virtues that are especially salient and important to beings whose flourishing depends on recognition and not only on the good functioning of their social group. In the next two chapters, I will consider the virtues that are appropriate to proper cognizing, especially in the form of

²⁵¹ This neutrality, however, will depend on some other factors. It can be experienced as a counter-narrative rather than an innocent withdrawal from interaction if, for example, it occurs with great frequency or in a discernible pattern (say, if this kind of withdrawal from interaction occurred mostly and almost always in one’s encounter with men, or with people racialized as white).

uptake (Chapter 5), and, second, to proper recognizing, especially in the form of corroboration (Chapter 6).

4.4 Heading Some Objections Off at the Pass

Before proceeding to give an account of the virtues relevant to recognition, I want to deal with a pair of objections that might have occurred to the reader at this point. First, that my account of recognition and its role in natural normativity has confused an external good for what Hursthouse characterizes as species ends. Second, that the virtues of recognition are too other-directed to be justified by a moral theory that makes flourishing one of its central concepts.

4.4.a: External Goods and Ends

The first objection is that, while I have given recognition a place in the structure of natural normativity, it seems to have features different than those of the ends posited by Hursthouse. As we saw above, recognition forms part of the external conditions for flourishing. Aristotle held that flourishing requires certain goods that are not themselves virtues. In some cases, they are instrumental to performing virtuous actions, such as “friends and riches and political power,” and in other cases they are goods the absence of which “takes the lustre from happiness—good birth, goodly children, beauty.”²⁵² While I am not claiming that the lack of good birth or beauty mars flourishing, Aristotle’s dyad of types of external goods maps on quite well to the harms associated with the absence of recognition as long as we equate taking the lustre from happiness with the more prosaic concept of a decrease in well-being. The reader may wonder, then, whether I have misclassified recognition: perhaps it should be considered an external good rather than an end in the structure of natural normativity. In other words, it might be that recognition should form a kind of background condition that must be in place if we are to be able to exercise the virtues and, hence, flourish rather than something against which those virtues are measured. This makes no small difference, since the former, the external goods, do

²⁵² *Nicomachean Ethics* 1099a31-1099b4.

not modify our understanding of what makes for good or bad conduct. We simply have to think of Aristotle's list of external goods: there is no conduct that can affect whether or not I am of good birth.²⁵³ If recognition is simply an external good, then, there will be little reason to proceed with these final chapters since there will be no virtues that arise from it.

Thankfully, there is no reason to conclude here. For one thing, the ends that Hursthouse posits share some of the features of external goods that we have discussed here. It is plain that we cannot act virtuously or flourish if we do not survive, nor if we are brought up and live in a social group that does not function well. Moreover, we could make the case that not being assured of the continuation of our species prevents our flourishing by visiting existential dread upon us and taking away some of our opportunities to act virtuously by imbuing our long-term projects and future-directed activities with an acute sense of futility. My own addition of the end of contemplation, likewise, can serve as a condition for flourishing, albeit in a less dramatic way than individual survival or species continuance. A life that is devoid of regular opportunities for intellectual or aesthetic appreciation is one that is missing an important human good. It is, thereby, a life with some of its lustre taken out, to borrow Aristotle's phrase. Recognition's role as a condition for virtuous activity and flourishing, then, makes it no different than the other ends of natural normativity.

Still, one issue remains: it is like those other ends in serving as a condition for virtue and flourishing, but it—along with the other ends—shares that feature with the external goods. We have yet, in other words, to properly distinguish the ends that serve as a condition for virtue and flourishing from the external goods that do the same. The proper distinction between the two, however, is neither mysterious nor complicated; it lies simply in the fact, as my comment about good birth above highlighted, that, while both

²⁵³ In *Rhetoric* I.5, Aristotle defines good birth both for cities and individuals. A good birth for an individual is one that “may be traced either on the father's or mother's side and includes legitimacy on both lines” as well as being part of a lineage whose “earliest ancestors were known for virtue or wealth or another of the things that are honored and [that] there have been many outstanding men and women in the family, both among the young and the older” (1360b).

serve as conditions for virtue and flourishing, only the ends and not the external goods are achievable through the exercise of the virtues. We might disagree with Aristotle on some of the details here. Contemporary developmental psychology, for instance, may leave us with a far less hopeless picture of the effects of good parenting. Most of us believe that we can do something to at least make it more likely that we raise good children. The underlying distinction remains despite our disagreements with Aristotle about the details: external goods are features of our lives that are subject to fortune and are beyond the reach of the virtues, while we have greater control over the ends of natural normativity since they are subject to the influence of the virtues. Of course, this is a matter of degrees rather than absolutes. We are likely to consider wealth an external condition while also recognizing that certain character traits might make us more likely to acquire it. Yet, in this case, luck seems to play a disproportionate role, which sets it apart from, say, the case of the good functioning of the social group, which corresponds much more closely to the virtues of the members of that social group. It is my contention—one that I will defend more comprehensively in subsequent chapters—that recognition is far more a matter of virtue than luck.

4.4.b: Dependence and Eudaimonism

A second objection is that the virtues involved in recognition are far too other-directed to be appropriate for or justifiable under a eudaimonist ethical framework. Since recognition is an interpersonal process, it is like the other ends of social animals insofar as securing it is a communal endeavour. Survival, the continuance of the species, and, most evidently, the good functioning of the social group are not goods that are secured through the self-sufficient efforts of lone agents. This might be less obvious in the case of contemplation, save for the fact that contemplation—except of a kind so fleeting that labelling it so practically makes it a misnomer—depends on leisure and this leisure, in turn, can only be secured by co-operation and social organization. There is, however, one thing that marks out recognition as unique among these ends, namely, the fact that the individual seeking to meet their need for recognition is far more dependent on others than they are when seeking to achieve the other ends. While individual effort will not suffice to secure one's own survival, the leisure required for contemplation, or the existence of a social group

that functions well, we can nevertheless contribute to securing these ends for ourselves in rather straightforward ways. We can, for example, improve our chances of survival by choosing the healthiest lifestyle available to us; make room for contemplation by developing habits that ensure that we do not squander our leisure hours with distraction; and contribute to the good functioning of our social group through political engagement, community involvement, and helping to raise children well (whether our own or those of others). When it comes to securing recognition for ourselves, however, there is no activity that we can individually undertake that will straightforwardly bring it about. At best, we can hope to secure our own recognition by granting it to others and hope that they return the favour. Even in this case, however, we are relying entirely on others to react reciprocally to our acts of recognition. We are, then, more totally at the mercy of others than is the case with the fulfilment of the other ends of natural normativity.

Given that recognition is so other-directed, the virtues that are relevant to securing it will also be almost entirely other-directed, rather than the mixture of other- and self-directed virtues that are derived from consideration of other ends.²⁵⁴ How, then, can a eudaimonistic account of virtue, one that treats the notion of flourishing as central, be motivating if our efforts can do so little to guarantee our flourishing? Even someone who is won over by the metaphysical claims that undergird the Natural Goodness theory might wonder why anyone should adopt its prescriptions if doing so does not secure the well-being it promises.

One way to respond to this objection is by reference to the phenomenology of virtue. The virtuous agent does not exercise the virtues for merely instrumental reasons but because they perceive the virtuous actions as good, as the only kind of action they can endorse. Moreover, the virtues are dispositions of character, meaning that they are habits of the most entrenched kind. It would be no easy business for a virtuous agent to reverse course and begin acting in a weak-willed or vicious manner, so even the absence of flourishing

²⁵⁴ Barbo Fröding, for instance, argues that “we ought to recognize that almost all the virtues include both other-regarding and self-regarding aspects” (“Hope As a Virtue in an Aristotelian Context” [2012], p. 184).

would be too weak a goad to motivate them to abandon their virtuous way of living. Nor would it make sense to allow their character to deteriorate in such a way even if it were easy, since the absence of flourishing is a lack that the weak-willed or vicious person must live with as well, and while the popular imagination is filled with notions of vicious people securing goods such as wealth and power because of their vice (which, it is presumed, they would not have secured had they behaved according to the dictates of the virtues) it is difficult to imagine how a person could secure more recognition by being weak-willed or vicious.

These comments, however, are only about those who have acquired the virtues and they may be of little or no help to the moral neophyte standing at a hypothetical crossroad, wondering whether setting off down the path to virtue is worth the effort. Setting aside the old chestnut that those who seek happiness directly will rarely find it, there is still a consideration that can hearten the neophyte in their endeavour. A flourishing life, as Aristotle defined it, is the zenith of well-being because it is a life that lacks nothing. It is, in other words, a self-sufficient life insofar as it would be little improved by the addition of goods since it already boasts a full complement of them.²⁵⁵ What we can draw from this is that the ideal state of flourishing lies on the far end of a continuum of well-being. To speak of a full complement of goods, in other words, implies that we can acquire a partial set of goods. Although being or striving to be virtuous does not guarantee that we will live a flourishing life, it will at the very least bring us closer approximation of it. While this still falls short of the ideal, it is, of course, preferable to falling still further

²⁵⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b15-20. Aristotle adds that “by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, for a man is born for citizenship” (*φύσει πολιτικόν*, which could, in keeping with the more Hursthousean terminology, be translated as “a social being by nature”) (1097b9-12). I would also add the further caveat that whatever it means to live a life with a complete set of goods, it will not be a complete set of *all* possible goods, but a set that is as complete as a finite being could hope it to be. The Natural Goodness theorist is, after all, far more of a pluralist than Aristotle when it comes to these matters, and is, as such, more generous with their categorization of what kinds of lives can be understood as flourishing. Or, to put matters more crudely, while one person may never enjoy much in the way of the goods related to creative and artistic expression, the one who does may not have as much opportunity to pursue the goods related to politics and civic engagement, yet both could be said to have a full complement of goods insofar as they have achieved as much as could reasonably be expected for one person.

away from it. Those at the moral crossroads can also take heart from Hursthouse's analogy between physical health and flourishing. As she points out, when a doctor advises a patient to give up smoking, drink moderately, and exercise regularly, it is on the "grounds... that that's the way to flourish physically, to be healthy, to live a long, healthy life."²⁵⁶ What the physician offers is not a guaranteed formula for a clean bill of health and a lengthy life. Yet, it remains the only sensible course of action: "if perfect health is what I want, the only thing to do is to follow her advice and hope that I shall not be unlucky."²⁵⁷ Likewise, virtue provides no airtight guarantee of flourishing, but if the moral neophyte wishes to live well "they are the only reliable bet."²⁵⁸ Although whether this is heartening or not probably depends on the moral neophyte not being the sort of person who disregards their doctor's orders.

There remains, finally, a simple conceptual response to the objection. While a eudaimonist moral theory does take flourishing to be at least one of its central concepts,²⁵⁹ it does not have to play a motivating role. Eudaimonism, in other words, appeals to flourishing in order to provide an account of the proper conduct of one's life. It provides a moral theory that takes seriously the question of how to live well, but it does so primarily in order to explain the good life, not to entice others to follow it. Although many theorists, I am sure, hope that this explanatory function will suffice to motivate others to strive to live virtuously, a moral theory could promote, or even require, some

²⁵⁶ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 172.

²⁵⁷ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 172.

²⁵⁸ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (1999), p. 172.

²⁵⁹ I include the qualification "at least one" since it does get side-lined to some extent in Natural Goodness theory, where something like function or human nature take centre stage (although the reference to *human* nature here is a bit misleading; Natural Goodness provides, at base, not a theory of human goodness but of the goodness of all living beings). For Hursthouse, however, the concept of flourishing nevertheless gets co-billing, as it were, as is evident in her discussion of what she calls the Platonic criterion for a theory of virtue, namely, that the virtues benefit their possessors, that they make them good human beings, and that these two features are interrelated (Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* [1999], p. 167). This kind of co-billing is also present in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle seems to provide us with not one but two foundations for his ethical theory. It is, at once, derived from a conception of human function and from a conception of eudaimonia (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.7).

other form of encouragement in response to the question of what should motivate a person to become virtuous and, nevertheless, still retain its eudaimonistic status. Since eudaimonism does not have to play the persuasive role in a moral theory, the fact that our flourishing as relational beings is nearly completely dependent on the virtues of others is no objection to a theory that purports to be eudaimonistic.

Chapter 4

5 Recognition II: The Virtues of Cognizing

In the previous chapter, I have argued that, as relational beings, the goodness of our character traits and dispositions must be evaluated in light of how conducive they are to recognition, understood broadly as the corroboration of another's experience (or, at least, an acknowledgement of its plausibility). I have also made the case that acts of recognition have two components: an epistemic one that I have labeled cognizing and a communicative one I have labeled recognizing. This chapter and the next will be a preliminary exploration of some specific virtues relevant to cognizing and recognizing. The virtues of recognition are undoubtedly manifold but since my purpose is not to catalogue the virtues of recognition but to provide some illustration of what difference adding relationality and recognition to the model of natural goodness does in practice, I will not attempt to display a panoply of them. Instead, I will discuss only a few virtues that I take to be in some way paradigmatic of cognizing and recognizing.

A good starting-point for considering the virtues and vices of cognizing is Miranda Fricker's celebrated and influential account of epistemic injustice, a form of injustice that occurs when "someone is wronged specifically in their capacity as a knower."²⁶⁰ Fricker divides epistemic injustice into two branches: testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice. Each of these has its corresponding corrective virtues that, by mitigating epistemic injustice, assist in securing the recognition of others in the form of the uptake of their experience. Even with these epistemic virtues in place, however, there will remain a further step to a complete act of recognition, namely, the corroboration of another's experience that follows our private, cognitive uptake of it. I will reserve discussion of that second movement of recognition for the following chapter.

²⁶⁰ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 20.

5.1 Testimony

Fricker's first type of epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice, consists of a kind of improper transaction in the economy of credibility, one in which another's testimony is given insufficient value. In her words, testimonial injustice arises when we grant another's testimonial utterances a "credibility deficit."²⁶¹ Such a deficit occurs when a speaker "receiv[es] less credibility than she otherwise would have"²⁶² as the result of some prejudice harboured by the hearer. What Fricker calls the "central case of testimonial injustice" is, more precisely, "identity-prejudicial credibility deficit."²⁶³ It is prejudice related to social identity that serves as the backbone of testimonial injustice because it is the main type of prejudice that "track[s] the subject through different dimensions of social activity—economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on."²⁶⁴ It is, accordingly, the kind of prejudice that can account not only for discrete and transitory testimonial wrongs that may be inflicted upon individuals, but the ones that, because they are frequent and "connected, via a common

²⁶¹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 17.

²⁶² Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 17. Fricker also notes that a hearer's prejudice can, conversely, grant a speaker a credibility excess, in which they are given more credibility than they should. Perhaps the hearer associates the speaker's accent with upper-class sophistication or some exotic but ill-defined national characteristics and, simply as a result of this, believes them to be wiser or more knowledgeable than they really are. She holds that this is, like the granting of a credibility deficit, a form of "prejudicial dysfunction in testimonial practice" (*Epistemic Injustice* [2007], p. 17), but denies that it is a form of injustice. This is on account of the fact that credibility is not a finite good and, as such, ill-suited for a distributive model of justice according to which there is an unfairness to the mere fact that "someone has got more than his fair share of a good" (*Epistemic Injustice* [2007], p. 19). This strikes me as correct only with some qualification. It is always the credibility deficit that is unjust, but a credibility excess can often bring about a credibility deficit. This is clearest in cases when someone has to weigh the rival testimony of two people. In the case of judge or jury weighing the testimony of the plaintiff and defendant, of a teacher who must decide which of two clashing students has instigated the dispute, or of a pair of friends imploring us to believe *their* side of a story, inflating the credibility to one party because of their clean-cut attire, posh accent, or winning smile is to grant the other party's testimony insufficient weight. Still, while I think that Fricker treats the dangers of credibility excess too lightly, I do agree that the epistemic injustices related to it are reducible entirely to credibility deficits that arise in tandem with them.

²⁶³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 28.

²⁶⁴ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 27.

prejudice, with other types of injustice,”²⁶⁵ can qualify as systematic epistemic wrongs or injustices. This notion of identity prejudice allows us to distinguish between various types of cases that the notion of prejudice *simpliciter* would, at least at the theoretical level, run together and treat identically. Fricker illustrates identity-prejudicial credibility deficit with the trial of Tom Robinson in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in which the members of an all-white jury give Robinson’s testimony far less weight than it deserves because of their prejudiced attitudes and beliefs about black men. This is a far different matter, and a greater epistemic wrong to an individual—not to mention a greater wrong *simpliciter*—than the kind of “highly localized” and “incidental” testimonial short-changing that might occur from a prejudice that is not tied to social identity, such as that of “a panel of referees on a science journal who have a dogmatic prejudice against a certain research method.”²⁶⁶

Although it might be the case that someone we might label “fully virtuous” would have the kinds of epistemic, affective, and behavioural dispositions that would lessen their tendency to commit or be implicated in acts of even incidental testimonial wrongdoing, I will focus only on the more systematic sort that is grounded in identity prejudice. I do so because suffering highly localized, incidental forms of testimonial wrongdoing will not, unless the person falling victim to them is especially hapless, cumulate into severe non-recognition.

In cases of testimonial injustice, we have, as Fricker puts it, a “hearer [who] perceives the speaker in an epistemically loaded way—she sees him as more, or less, credible in what he is telling her.”²⁶⁷ In order to identify the virtues that are most directly involved in correcting tendencies to engage in testimonial wrongdoing, we must, then, identify those that will epistemically unload or re-calibrate the hearer’s perception. In cases of credibility assessment there is usually an element of spontaneity—we evaluate the

²⁶⁵ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 27.

²⁶⁶ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 27.

²⁶⁷ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 28.

interlocutor rapidly, automatically, and often subconsciously. This spontaneous judgment is often coloured by prejudices we harbour, including those that we disavow but that permeate our social and cultural environment thoroughly enough to change our perception of others regardless of our conscious distaste for them. Fricker's virtue of testimonial justice is, accordingly, a corrective disposition that allows virtuous agents to modify their spontaneous judgments of credibility. It is a virtue that is both reflexive and reflective in its structure. It is reflexive insofar as it combines the other-directed identity-based judgment with a more self-directed "reflexive critical awareness of the likely presence of prejudice."²⁶⁸ The virtue of testimonial justice, then, involves not assessing the credibility of others entirely on the basis of our perception of them but also on the basis of our understanding of ourselves and our susceptibility to making identity-prejudicial judgments. It is, I should specify, not simply a sensitivity to social differences that makes salient the ways in which our identities are differentially positioned (such that we recognize when our own identity is socially or culturally dominant while our interlocutor's is socially or culturally marginalized) but also requires an awareness of the kinds of prejudices common within our own environment that might make us grant a credibility deficit to someone who bears the same marginalized social identity as we do. There is, in other words, no necessary reason why being a woman would serve as a prophylactic against down-grading another woman's report of their experiences on the basis of her gender, no necessary reason why being a person of colour would prevent a tendency to take testimony more seriously when it comes from a white speaker, or no necessary reason why being poor or working class would ensure that we do not deem the wealthy to be more trustworthy. We should not, then, mistake the reflexivity involved in testimonial justice for an awareness of social difference—although that is certainly part of it—since it is, more generally, an awareness of the kinds of identity prejudices that may be at play in testimonial situations, including prejudices about people within our own social categories that we may have internalized from frequent exposure.

²⁶⁸ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 91.

While testimonial justice is *reflexive* insofar as it disposes us to a certain self-awareness, it is also *reflective* insofar as it corrects not only for the presence of an identity-prejudice but does so in part by correcting for the spontaneity of credibility assessments.

Testimonial justice, then, involves a “shift[ing of] intellectual gear out of spontaneous unreflective mode and into active critical reflection.”²⁶⁹ It is a virtue that requires a thoughtful recalibration aimed at amending the perceptive and affective reactions that often provide us with a judgment about the credibility or trustworthiness of another before we can engage in a more deliberate and reasoned assessment of the matter. Fricker is careful to specify that the goal of this recalibration, its “guiding ideal,”²⁷⁰ is not a perfect and confident judgment of credibility but the “neutraliz[ation of] the impact of prejudice in [the hearer’s] credibility judgments.”²⁷¹ This may, of course, result in a correction that allows us to unequivocally believe the speaker’s testimony despite our initial hesitance to do so. Yet it could also simply “render our judgement more vague and tentative.”²⁷² To put it another way, there are times when the only way we can correct for the influence of an identity-prejudice is to recuse ourselves from making a firm judgement, knowing that our attempts to make up for the influence of prejudice are rarely perfect.²⁷³

Fricker understands the virtue of testimonial justice primarily as a kind of cognitive compensation that we will perform in the heat of the moment, that is, within the span of testimonial encounters. These encounters will often begin with the hearer making a spontaneous judgment about the credibility of the speaker, and over the course of the

²⁶⁹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 91.

²⁷⁰ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 91.

²⁷¹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 92.

²⁷² Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 92.

²⁷³ Of course, in cases where such abstention is impossible or might cause more harm than it prevents—depending on our relation to the interlocutor, or perhaps our occupation of some position of authority, there may need to be a firm judgement and it may need to specifically come from *us*—then we may simply have to bite the bullet and risk under- or over-compensating for our initial spontaneous judgements.

conversation the hearer will come to doubt the accuracy of that judgment in light of the kinds of prejudices that may have triggered certain features of their perception and affect. This realization will be coupled with an adjustment to our judgment so that it is more likely to approximate one that we would have formed in the absence of prejudice. In fact, Fricker notes that a person who has successfully acquired the virtue of testimonial justice may implement these corrections even more rapidly than this, such that their “testimonial sensibility would spontaneously furnish them ready-corrected credibility judgments” because “the requisite social reflexivity of her stance as hearer has become second nature.”²⁷⁴ There is surely more to the virtue than this, however. We will, after all, often find ourselves in situations that are ill-suited for such rapid-fire corrections. The bustle of our frequent and brief everyday encounters with diverse strangers and acquaintances along with the demands on our attention called for by lengthier and more focused interpersonal interactions can leave us little opportunity for adopting a reflective mood adequate to correcting our visceral judgements. In such cases, the reflective disposition that is part of the virtue of testimonial justice will take the form of reflection in a cool hour, of the sort counselled by Bishop Butler. We will, in other words, adjust our judgement after the fact, and if we do so frequently enough, and do so in the spirit of contrition as opposed to a merely intellectual exercise, we will decrease the influence of the relevant prejudice or prejudices in our future interactions with others, whether by supplying us with ready-corrected credibility judgements or by allowing us to both detect and correct for the influence of the prejudice in a less effortful manner.

²⁷⁴ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 97. There exists, however, a vast number of identity prejudices, each of which tracks its own constellation of stereotypes. These stereotypes, moreover, either change over time or the cues that signal them do. For instance, witnessing someone use a credit card to pay for goods or services has shifted from being a visual cue for the credit card user’s high wealth and status to activating a different stereotype for some, the credit card serving no longer as the cue for wealth but as a symbol for irresponsible spending among the financially precarious. Given the vastness and ever-renewing novelty of identity-prejudices, Fricker claims that the ideal virtuous hearer will not be one who comes to the testimonial situation only with spontaneously accurate or ready-corrected judgements, but one who is also disposed to engage in the more deliberate, “ongoing active critical reflection” (Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* [2007], p. 98) that is best suited for dealing with the unfamiliar.

5.2 The Social Imaginary

The second kind of epistemic injustice that Fricker analyzes is hermeneutic injustice.²⁷⁵ Unlike testimonial injustice, it is less focused on particular interactions between interlocutors and is, instead, concerned with the conceptual resources available in what we might call the social imaginary. Fricker's central case of hermeneutic injustice is the absence of the concept of sexual harassment prior to its coining and formulation in the 1970's. Without this concept, there was a "lacuna" in the "collective hermeneutical resources" that prevented the naming and communicating of "a distinctive social experience."²⁷⁶ As Fricker remarks, however, a merely epistemic account of this lacuna is not sufficient to highlight the injustice of its absence. After all, it is not only those who suffered sexual harassment who had access to impoverished conceptual resources by means of which to explain their experience; rather, "harasser and harassee alike are cognitively handicapped by the hermeneutical lacuna... but the harasser's cognitive disablement is not a significant disadvantage to him."²⁷⁷ Indeed, far from being disadvantaged by this conceptual fuzziness or blank, "there is an obvious sense in which it suits his purpose."²⁷⁸ The injustice lies, as it did with testimonial injustice, not in the mere epistemic fact but in the influence of identity prejudice on that fact. Identity prejudices, in this context, exclude marginalized individuals who bear certain social identities from the process of creating and contributing to collective conceptual resources. It is, in other words, unjust insofar as it is the product of withholding epistemic authority, positions of influence, and means of widespread communication from groups of people on the basis of their social identities. Systematic hermeneutic injustice, then, is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from

²⁷⁵ Fricker uses the adjective "hermeneutic" simply to denote the fact that this kind of epistemic injustice has to do with the interpretive resources that members of marginalized groups have available to understand the world and communicate that understanding. She does not employ it to stake a claim in the field of philosophical hermeneutics, nor does her book contain any reference to it or its well-known proponents.

²⁷⁶ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 150.

²⁷⁷ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 151.

²⁷⁸ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 151.

collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource.”²⁷⁹ To stay with Fricker’s central case, it is not simply the fact that there was a conceptual lacuna that made it more difficult to demarcate, say, flirting, harmless fun, and employer favouritism from something more troubling but as yet unnamed; it is the fact that one of the social experiences remained unnamed in part because of the absence of women’s authoritative participation in defining the norms of interpersonal conduct, establishing legal definitions, and articulating their experiences in the popular press (or, to the extent that they did participate in the creation of hermeneutical resources, that the effect of their input was minute given that the understanding of their social experience was “unduly influenced by more hermeneutically powerful groups.”)²⁸⁰ This unequal contribution to the collective hermeneutical resource creates a hermeneutical inequality that sets the background condition for the epistemic injustice that occurs when the marginalization results in “a more or less doomed attempt on the part of the subject to render an experience intelligible, either to herself or to an interlocutor.”²⁸¹

The structure of the hermeneutic injustice is a bit complex, but in essence it occurs in three steps. There is, first, an identity prejudice that leads to the marginalization of members of certain social groups from authoritative, powerful, and influential social positions. Second, this marginalization results in a collective hermeneutical resource—a social imaginary—that is shaped primarily by members of socially dominant or powerful social groups. Finally, members of the marginalized social group are then unable to fully understand or to explain to others some features of their social experience. As a result, it was, and often continues to be, more difficult than it should have been for people of colour to explain why being praised for being articulate is often more an insult than a compliment, for transwomen and transmen to explain why certain language is offensive

²⁷⁹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 155.

²⁸⁰ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 155.

²⁸¹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 158.

or harmful rather than innocent grammatical convention, or for women to explain why forced sexual intercourse with their husband is rape rather than just an unstated and reasonable aspect of the marriage contract. This final step, then, highlights the way that the initial hermeneutical powerlessness, that is, the lack of influence on the collective conceptual resources, culminates in a compounded powerlessness, an inability to take what is known intuitively or suffered and voice it as a proposition that is publicly intelligible, entirely decipherable by means of ordinary, commonplace, and widespread conceptual resources.

The resources being collective rather than particular or local is especially important when it comes to the cognizing involved in recognition. Marginalized social groups, or pockets of people within them, may formulate concepts adequate to articulate their unique social experiences, and this is of no small value as it allows greater self-knowledge, the building of solidarity within or across social groups, and a more careful management of social relations in order to minimize personal harm. However, the struggle to make one's experiences intelligible to those outside the social group will require more than a localized language that has traction only with the disempowered. For certain hermeneutical resources to be collective in a robust sense—part of *the* collective rather than *a* collective—they must have some currency within the wider society and culture. The struggle to make one's social experiences intelligible is, after all, not always a matter of lacking understanding of one's condition—the very fact of actively trying to communicate it indicates some awareness of what one is struggling to convey—but if the conceptual resources employed are not common currency it will serve to render one powerless to some extent. If the hearer has no notion of, say, whitesplaining, intersectional oppression, mis-gendering, or marital rape, then the struggle to explain one's experience is unlikely to end in success since it will require either beginning at square one with a laborious attempt to impart the conceptual resources to the hearer or by having to use widely-held but clumsy and ill-fitting concepts that are more likely to make the speaker's claims seem implausible or confused rather than clear and illuminating.

Like testimonial justice, the virtue of hermeneutic justice acts as a corrective to the effects of identity prejudice, or more precisely as a corrective to the hermeneutic lacunae

that result from them. It is not, however, a disposition to fill those lacunae any more than testimonial justice is a disposition to eliminate a society's identity prejudice. It will not, that is, render its possessor an inventive philosophical hero who can remedy a speaker's struggle for intelligibility by filling in the conceptual void and coining, defining, and imparting to them the necessary tools to render every nuance of their social experiences transparent and public. In fact, attempting to play the philosophical hero in this way is likely to do more harm than good, not only by encouraging others to slot their experiences into re-packaged, inadequate commonplace categories but also by silencing those who are already struggling to find the right way to voice some feature of their experience by claiming that their struggle for expression is pointless since the hermeneutical lacunae have already been filled. Rather than filling these gaps, the virtue of hermeneutic justice is characterized by the awareness and acceptance that such gaps exist. It is, in effect, a disposition not to dismiss someone's struggle for a comprehensive expression of a social experience as "due... to its being a nonsense or her being a fool" and remaining sensitive to the possibility that "the speaker is struggling with an objective difficulty and not a subjective failing."²⁸² Those who are hermeneutically just will respond to this struggle for expression or faltering attempts at communication not by attempting to provide suggested formulations to the speaker but by attempting to "generate a more inclusive hermeneutical micro-climate through the appropriate kind of dialogue with the speaker."²⁸³ This is not an entirely silent role, but it is not characterized primarily by the act of speaking since it is not the hearer who is privy to the tacit knowledge that the speaker is labouring to explicate. It is, rather, characterized by "a more pro-active and more socially aware kind of listening than is usually required in more straightforward communicative exchanges."²⁸⁴ This kind of good listening will create a space in which the speaker has the opportunity to deliberately and carefully craft and try out formulations. Good communication will be facilitated by the hearer refraining

²⁸² Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 169.

²⁸³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 169.

²⁸⁴ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 169.

from taking too large a role in the formulation and, instead, offering mostly questions and tentative interpretations in order to ascertain how well they understand the speaker's intent.

It is, of course, not always possible to carve out such a careful and productive micro-climate but this does not mean that the virtue of hermeneutical justice is inoperative in fleeting or distracted encounters. The defining feature of hermeneutic justice is a presumption that there is a strong possibility that the apparently confused or hazy accounts of social experience provided by individuals from marginalized groups may be the result of conceptual obstacles that exist at the level of the social imaginary rather than only within the speaker's personal hermeneutical resources. When circumstances do not permit translating that presumption into the kind of interpersonal space in which the speaker can either impart to the hearer the conceptual tools that will allow them to understand the social experience under discussion or in which the hearer comes to some approximate understanding by a lengthy discussion that makes cautious and judicious use of the hermeneutical resources already shared by the interlocutors, the presumption of sensibility on the part of the speaker might simply lead the hearer to withhold judgement.²⁸⁵ By doing so, the hearer does not make any hasty assessments simply due to the fact that we are wed to our potentially skewed and flawed epistemic tool-kit, so to speak, but also does not believe just any old thing that is told to them. In other words, withholding judgement in hasty situations instead of simply assuming that everything reported by people from marginalized social groups is the behaviour that best corresponds to presuming that they are sensible knowers rather than oracles whose pronouncements, though mysterious to our ears, always proves to be truthful. Moreover, the withholding of judgement is appropriate given the fact that the interpretations of social experience provided by members of marginalized social groups will rarely be monolithic. Since any hearer encountering a sufficient number of speakers within a particular social group will be given competing interpretations of various social

²⁸⁵ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 169.

phenomena, the hearer must be disposed not to credulity but to honest attempts at understanding.

5.3 Differentiating the Virtues of Epistemic Justice

There are some similarities between the virtues of testimonial justice and hermeneutic justice that may make it difficult to distinguish them. Perhaps their most obvious commonality is the shared “mediate end” of “neutraliz[ing] the impact of structural identity prejudice on one’s credibility judgement.”²⁸⁶ Furthermore, that shared mediate end is achieved, in both cases, by developing a sensitivity characterized by “a certain reflexive awareness on the part of the hearer.”²⁸⁷ They are, however, not identical virtues, nominally distinguishing the same corrective disposition as applied to different effects of prejudice. Rather, they are discrete dispositions or sets of dispositions. It is easiest to draw this out by considering whether these two virtues could, at least in theory, be prised apart.²⁸⁸

Let us suppose that a hearer is testimonially just and, as a result, never discounts the credibility of a speaker simply because that speaker bears a perceived marker of some particular social identity. The hearer, then, may discount the credibility of a speaker’s testimony but never because that speaker is, say, a woman, disabled, or working class. Despite such a perfect display of the virtue of testimonial justice, the hearer could nevertheless fail to display the virtue of hermeneutic justice. In cases where someone from a hermeneutically marginalized social group attempts to convey something novel to the hearer, they may fail to believe them simply because they assume that commonplace conceptual resources are adequate for understanding all social dynamics. Imagine, for

²⁸⁶ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 173.

²⁸⁷ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), p. 172.

²⁸⁸ I intend to make no substantial claim in this paragraph and the next about the unity or disunity of the virtues, whether in its strong or weak form. I present the cases that follow not in order to make a point about the overall character of the imagined interlocutors that populate my examples but only to show the different kinds of behaviours that are characteristic of the virtues of testimonial justice and hermeneutic justice.

example, that prior to the existence of the notion of sexual harassment in the collective hermeneutical resources a male hearer is told by a female work colleague that the boss's ostensibly playful and flirtatious behaviour really constitutes the far graver conduct that we now term sexual harassment. The hearer may dismiss this report as entirely implausible because it is ill-fitting with the worldview sustained and promoted by the collective hermeneutical resources. Crucially, however, he does not dismiss the report or discount its credibility because its source is a woman or because of any prejudices he harbours about women. We can further suppose that he would give equally flimsy weight to the report had it been delivered to him by a worried male colleague. In such a case, we have a hearer displaying perfect testimonial justice while failing to display the kind of sensitivity characteristic of hermeneutical justice.

We can further prise apart the two virtues by revising the example to show how someone could display hermeneutical justice while being testimonially unjust. Suppose, again, that a work colleague is attempting to get our pre-1970's male hearer to understand that the behaviour of their boss constitutes sexual harassment rather than innocent flirtation. In this case, however, the hearer is a good listener who, when confronted with another's attempts at making something intelligible, will keep an open mind and allow them the time and attention required to make an honest attempt at understanding them. Our hearer does just this with the report of sexual harassment, and tries as best as he can to understand what is being conveyed to him by his colleague. In other words, he displays the virtue of hermeneutic justice. Suppose, however, that he is disposed to take little, if any, corrective action with regard to the identity prejudices that colour his perception of others. After making an honest attempt at understanding what his colleague wishes to convey to him, he nevertheless discounts her testimony, not because he has failed to listen to her or because he failed to realize that there is a possibility that she is working with inadequate conceptual resources, but because his prejudicial attitudes and stereotypical beliefs concerning women lead him to discount her testimony. Unlike the former case, our hearer will lend an honest ear to the speaker but will judge the testimony they provide more credible if the work colleague raising the concern is a man rather than a woman. Here, then, we have a case in which the hearer displays the virtue of hermeneutic justice while also displaying the vice of testimonial injustice.

Both of the epistemic virtues Fricker discusses are concerned with remedying the effects of identity prejudice on our perception and assessment of others. As the examples discussed in the two previous paragraphs highlight, however, the virtue of testimonial justice concerns itself primarily with the proximate effects of identity prejudice—the way that those prejudices are likely affecting the way the hearer sizes up the speaker—while hermeneutic justice concerns itself primarily with its distal effects—those conceptual lacunae that are caused by a long-term marginalization and that can remain in play even if none of the parties in the communicative act hold, even implicitly, the relevant prejudices. This distinction can help us come to a clearer picture of the particular dispositions that enable individuals to act according to these two forms of epistemic justice. Both virtues are characterized in part by a reflexivity, that is, a critical awareness of our social location and its relation to that of our interlocutors, along with some notion of the kinds of stereotyping and marginalization associated with various social dynamics. As we saw above, since testimonial justice is a corrective to the proximate acts of identity prejudice that we might be committing in discursive exchanges, its reflexive character is paired with a reflective disposition that promotes an introspective consideration of our own contribution to epistemic wrongs and encourages us to remedy them. Since hermeneutic justice is concerned with the distal effects of identity prejudice rather than the ones that the interlocutors bring to the table, its focus will be not on the skewed perspective of the hearer but on the difficult situation that the struggling speaker finds themselves in. Introspection will do little to counter the conceptual roadblocks that arise from hermeneutically unjust situations; they will remain present whether or not I am prejudiced. As such, the reflexivity of hermeneutic justice will not be paired with the kind of reflection that is a central feature of testimonial justice but, rather, with a disposition to be attentive to the speaker. It is by a disposition to this kind of attentiveness that the hearer helps carve out a discursive space in which either an adequate formulation, or at least an approximation of one, can be produced.

5.4 Summary of the Virtues of Cognizing

We began with the broad concept of the virtues of cognizing. Through Fricker's work, we added precision by sub-dividing it further into the two categories of virtues corrective of

testimonial injustice and virtues corrective of hermeneutical injustice. Finally, my analysis of these two sets of virtues has yielded and named a trio of particular dispositions that form at least part of the virtues of cognizing, namely, reflexivity, reflectivity, and attentiveness. There are undoubtedly more—and it is not evident to me whether the reflexivity in both sets of virtues is the same disposition paired with a different one or whether it admits of further sub-division—but insofar as these three are correctives to some of the epistemic effects of identity-prejudicial judgements and hermeneutic marginalization they serve as important corner-stones for the proper recognition of others.

While my analysis has provided something of a small taxonomy, this is not only meant to be a lexicographical exercise of simply spelling out our shared definition of a concept. Cognizing is a concept that is at once more capacious than I have treated it but also more nebulous, so that it could admit, in the hands of other theorists, virtues and concepts that I do not wish to attribute to it. This is a feature of virtues in general: we all agree that justice and courage are virtuous traits but when we set ourselves to the task of explicating them we often come to figurative blows over exactly what counts as just or courageous action. Yet there is also a practical purpose to this analytical exercise: specifying more precisely the individual dispositions involved in properly cognizing others gives us something of a preliminary guide to the habits we should strive to develop in order to better ensure the acquisition and exercise of the virtues of recognition.

Identifying and giving some definition to the virtues of reflexivity, reflectivity, and attentiveness has made the concept of the virtues of recognition more concrete. As I mentioned earlier, however, recognition can be understood as having two movements: cognizing and recognizing. We cannot, then, have a proper grasp of the virtues of recognition without knowing something about the virtues of recognizing. I conclude, then, in Chapter Six with a discussion of three of these virtues, namely, epistemic temperance, deference guided by humility, and a moralized account of etiquette.

Chapter 5

6 Recognition III: The Virtues of Recognizing

Now that I have said something about acts of cognizing and the virtues that best dispose us to engage in them more frequently and with greater success, I must now deal with the other movement of recognition, namely, recognizing. While cognizing is a kind of glimpse into another's experience of the world—whether through their behaviour, their testimony, or the laborious process of cooperative description and definition—recognizing is the communication of that act of cognizing to the recipient of recognition. It is, in other words, the public expression of its private counterpart and what turns cognition into *recognition*.

Cognizing is crucial but by itself it is not sufficient for my purpose of identifying the virtues conducive to recognition (understood as the corroboration of another's experience of the world) since recognition is only achieved when there is an awareness of having been recognized. We are, after all, beings who have a far more fundamental need to be recognized by others than to grant recognition to others, as Chapter Three's discussion of the effects of solitary confinement have made clear. As such, this chapter will present two sets of virtues that are concerned with the communication of our private acts of cognizing. I set aside for now the virtues that are more obviously associated with broadcasting our uptake of another's experience or perspective, such as the courage to tell someone, in clear and direct propositions, that we have acknowledged their way of experiencing things. I do so partly for considerations of space and partly because these overt declarations are a comparatively rare medium for communicating our uptake, but also because a discussion of the subtler forms of recognizing will give the reader a better sense of just what recognizing is and how it is exercised in ordinary interactions. I will restrict my discussion of the virtues of recognizing, then, to those associated with Cynthia Townley's concept of "epistemophilia" and those inspired by Amy Olberding's moralized, neo-Confucian account of etiquette. As with the virtues discussed in the previous chapter, these will be by no means exhaustive but I take them to be paradigmatic

insofar as they concern the most common acts of recognizing: the subtle and often unstated ones that infuse our ordinary conduct.

6.1 Simple Ignorance and Epistemophilia

The discussion of hermeneutic injustice in the previous chapter touched on a kind of ignorance, specifically, a failure or inability to understand something because the marginalization of certain groups of people have left gaps in collective epistemic resources. This section will focus, instead, on a much more innocent kind of ignorance, one that is neither willful nor the result of identity prejudice. This is the kind of ignorance Cynthia Townley calls “simple ignorance,” an ignorance that, unlike its more insidious or wicked counterparts, consists of simple lack of knowledge, of merely not knowing. Far from a sign of bad character, it is simply part of our lot as finite beings. On its surface, this may seem like a topic with little relevance to the virtues of recognition. There is ordinarily nothing vicious—or even virtuous, for that matter—about the way simple ignorance accumulates in us; we simply cannot know everything. Yet the concept is relevant to the discussion of recognition because there are good and bad ways of managing our ignorance, and it is in its management that we can either communicate or fail to convey to others our recognition of them.

Townley makes the striking and counter-intuitive claim that responsible epistemic practices do not always aim at reducing the knower’s ignorance. Rather, she contends that “global devaluation of ignorance should be resisted,” since some forms of ignorance “contribute[] positively to epistemic responsibility and a lack of knowledge is not necessarily a regrettable epistemic flaw.”²⁸⁹ One reason for this is that some forms of ignorance have instrumental epistemic value. For instance, a teacher may withhold the answer to a question or solution to a problem from a student as a pedagogical exercise aimed at encouraging the student to discover the answer or work out the solution on their own. Scientists may also employ instrumental ignorance when they create “double-blind” experiments or drug trials that involve temporarily shrouding some features of the study

²⁸⁹ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 38.

to the participants and researchers alike in order to decrease bias and improve the likelihood that the experimental results and the conclusions drawn from them are sound. Interestingly, Townley also lists Rawls' "veil of ignorance" as an example of this kind of instrumental ignorance, since those who make this thought experiment part of their political or moral methodology do so in an attempt to gain new knowledge by creating cognitive conditions meant to bring about "insights similar to an outsider's view of a family, culture, or institution."²⁹⁰ These examples render uncontroversial Townley's claim that ignorance is not always an epistemic flaw. As she notes, these kinds of ignorance-generating practices are those that even an epistemophile could endorse since they employ ignorance that is either of a small magnitude or that remains with us only temporarily in order to build an overall greater store of knowledge.

The epistemophile will not be so eager to endorse the other kind of epistemically responsible practices of withheld knowing, those that involve the generation or maintenance of non-instrumental ignorance. While ignorance is (epistemically) instrumental when put in the service of knowledge-gathering, it is non-instrumental when we deliberately refrain from knowing as "part of inherently valuable epistemic relationships."²⁹¹ The instrumental use of ignorance cannot serve as a proper substitute for the role its non-instrumental counterpart plays in allowing and sustaining these kinds of relationships since those seeking only to bolster their store of knowledge will take a "spectator/collector" stance toward other individuals, treating them merely as epistemic instruments.²⁹² This is the epistemic stance that is characteristic of the knowledge-gathering enterprises of science, bureaucracies, and colonial administrations.²⁹³ Non-instrumental forms of ignorance differ from this insofar as they are characterized by treating others as epistemic agents. Townley's two primary examples of relationship

²⁹⁰ Cynthia Townley, "Toward a Reevaluation of Ignorance" (2006), p. 39.

²⁹¹ Cynthia Townley, "Toward a Reevaluation of Ignorance" (2006), p. 38.

²⁹² Cynthia Townley, "Toward a Reevaluation of Ignorance" (2006), p. 42.

²⁹³ Cynthia Townley, "Toward a Reevaluation of Ignorance" (2006), p. 43.

types supported by non-instrumental ignorance are those of trust and those that involve what she calls “epistemically responsible empath[y].”²⁹⁴

As I will show in my discussion of each of these types of non-instrumental albeit valuable ignorance (in Sections 1.a and 1.b), epistemophilia is a disposition that tends to impede rather than encourage recognition (it may also corrode the good function of the social group, but since my purpose here is to begin mapping out the virtues of recognition, that is a discussion for another day). As such, it qualifies as a vice on the natural goodness model. Specifying just what makes it vicious will allow me to identify the virtues that lie at the mean between the extremes of epistemophilia and a disregard for truth, namely, epistemic temperance, humility, and deference.

6.1.a. Ignorance and Trust

Relationships of trust, such as friendship,²⁹⁵ require a certain amount of ignorance. As Townley states, “[i]f I insist on investigating to confirm or corroborate what you tell me, you might rightly accuse me of not trusting you.”²⁹⁶ Nor is trust upheld if I believe what the trusted person tells me only if it corresponds to what I already know or conforms to my intuitions about the relevant subject. The epistemophiliac’s violation of trust can be understood as a sub-set of what Heather Battaly calls the vice of epistemic self-indulgence. Battaly models this vice on Aristotle’s account of moral self-indulgence—the vice of deviating from temperance by seeking out excessive or inappropriate bodily pleasures. Correspondingly, the epistemically self-indulgent person can run afoul of epistemic temperance in one of three ways: such a person either

²⁹⁴ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 44.

²⁹⁵ Other types of relationship like romantic relationships, family ties, and those built from repeat commercial interactions can also be characterized by trust, but I write this section with friendship in mind. Partly out of personal philosophical preference but also because I take it that we often consider trust to be foundational to friendship in a way that it is not for other types of trusting relationships: without trust, a romantic affair could still be sustained by passion, family ties can remain knotted by a sense of duty, and repeat commercial transactions can be sustained by a reliability grounded in the self-interest of the parties, but friendships would seem to crumble in the absence of trust.

²⁹⁶ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 41.

(ES1) desires, consumes, and enjoys appropriate and inappropriate epistemic objects; or (ES2) desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects at appropriate and inappropriate times; or (ES3) desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects too frequently, or to an inappropriately high degree, or consumes too much of them.²⁹⁷

Epistemophilia in the context of would-be trusting relationships can best be understood in terms of ES2 and ES3. While it seems, on its surface, that ES1 could explain a breakdown of trust, Battaly's account of what makes an epistemic object appropriate or inappropriate shows that it is a distinction irrelevant to trusting relationships.

Battaly considers but rejects two candidates for the inappropriate epistemic objects that characterize ES1.²⁹⁸ The first are theoretical truths that have no practical use. It is certainly possible to pursue these in excess—we need only think of Thales tripping into a well while gazing up at the heavens—however, Battaly maintains that this excess is not epistemically inappropriate, but only pragmatically so. Her second rejected candidate is the pursuit of knowledge that is harmful rather than helpful, such as nurturing an interest in biology by acquiring the knowledge required to construct biological weapons rather than the knowledge required to practice medicine. Here, as with the head-in-the-clouds theorist, there is something worrisome about the knowledge that is being consumed, but, again, not because there is something epistemically inappropriate about it—*qua* knowledge, there is nothing untoward about biological facts, no matter what practices they are associated with. Instead, what is troubling about the pursuit of knowledge required to construct biological weapons is that it is part of a larger course of action that is itself vicious (assuming that the knowledge is acquired in order to aid in producing such weapons and not with the aim of discovering some way to identify, disarm, and dispose of them).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 224.

²⁹⁸ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 228-229.

²⁹⁹ Even in the absence of nefarious plans, we might also worry about the acquisition of this kind of knowledge if it was merely for the satisfaction of a morbid curiosity. It is an interesting question whether morbid curiosity could be considered an epistemic vice but, unfortunately, musing about it would take me too far off my current course and I must leave it aside for now.

Having eliminated *prima facie* plausible candidates for inappropriate epistemic objects by separating off their moral and pragmatic features from their epistemic ones, Battaly proposes a distinction that focuses squarely on the epistemic appropriateness of knowledge, namely, one between trivial truths and important truths. She does not provide us with a way of distinguishing between the two, save to note that the distinction has intuitive force and that we can presume that some truths, such as those of science, “will actively contribute to valuable epistemic ends,”³⁰⁰ whatever those may be. It is no vice, of course, to pursue trivia. As is the case with the bodily pleasures kept in line by moral temperance, trivial knowledge has its place in the life of an epistemically temperate person. What makes the consumption of trivial truths epistemically self-indulgent is the pursuit of them without moderation. The epistemically temperate individual does not have to abstain from learning detailed hockey statistics, memorizing the release dates of Frank Sinatra’s studio albums, or satisfying their curiosity about the red carpet attire of celebrities. To be epistemically temperate, however, is to approach these sorts of things as “epistemic treats”³⁰¹ and not let them serve as our primary source of intellectual nourishment. ES1, then, is a form of epistemic self-indulgence that consists of over-valuing truths about trivial matters. We do not need to delve further into this issue and formulate an account that allows us to identify just what sorts of knowledge counts as important or trivial; it suffices to note that the kind of epistemophilia that quests after trivia is not the kind that will shut someone off from potential trusting relationships. In fact, a relationship may even be strengthened, without detriment to its level of trust, by bonding over joint trivial pursuits, such as knowing the dining habits of past Canadian Prime Ministers.

Considering the irrelevance of ES1 to trust shows that if epistemic self-indulgence plays a role in dismantling trust it will not be because it encourages epistemically inappropriate behaviour but because of the pragmatically or morally inappropriate conduct that arises

³⁰⁰ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 230.

³⁰¹ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 230.

from the epistemophile's consummate distaste for ignorance. It is this kind of conduct that is captured by ES2 and ES3.

An epistemically self-indulgent person who “desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects at appropriate and inappropriate times,”³⁰² regardless of whether they are trivial or important, displays epistemic self-indulgence of the ES2 type. This kind of self-indulgence could tarnish relationships of trust, since it can manifest itself as tactless social conduct or disregard for the interlocutor's needs and desires, which might cause others to hesitate when deciding whether to place their trust in the epistemophile. If, for example, I am in distress after nearly being run over by a car and I seek some comfort or reassurance by telling someone what has just happened to me but they interrupt my story to run to their laptop because something I have just said made them curious about when it is grammatically appropriate to use “lay” instead of “lie,” I may conclude that this person doesn't care enough about me not to betray me should the opportunity arise. More directly, ES2 can be ruinous to trusting relationships by disposing the epistemophile to refuse to simply believe someone—to take them at their word—at a time when doing so would be of the utmost importance to them. After all, the trust another places in us is not likely to remain strong if they come to us for support when others refuse to believe them and we respond with skepticism or an insistence on verifying their claims.

Epistemic self-indulgence of the ES3 type, since it is also a pragmatic violation, is similar to ES2. It concerns the self-indulgent person who “desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects too frequently, or to an inappropriately high degree, or consumes too much of them.”³⁰³ While there is no reason to suppose that a person possessed of an ardent intellectual curiosity would not be able to enter into trusting relationships, a person whose epistemic self-indulgence leads them to constantly seek confirmation of an interlocutor's claims is unlikely to come across as trusting them. This example might seem to make ES3 shade into ES2 a bit—like the case of ES2 discussed in the previous paragraph, the

³⁰² Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 224.

³⁰³ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 224.

violation of trust results from seeking confirmation of the truth of speaker's claims—but, unlike conduct displaying ES2, ES3 self-indulgence does not have to involve poorly-timed quests for evidence. A relationship of trust could break down if the epistemophile seeks confirmations from the speaker that, on their own, are perfectly harmless and appropriate, but whose accumulation makes them so frequent that they betray the belief that the speaker is trustworthy.

Maintaining trusting relationships, then, requires a virtue to counteract the tendency to the vice of (ES2 and ES3) epistemophilia, an epistemically temperate—or, at least, *enkratic* (strong-willed) or not overly *akratic* (weak-willed)—disposition that, unlike its vicious counterpart, is conducive to recognition. As we saw, the epistemophile prevents the formation and sustenance of trusting relationships by refusing to abide the kinds of non-instrumental ignorance relevant to establishing and maintaining trust. In doing so, they squander opportunities to perform acts of recognizing. It is within the context of trusting relationships, after all, that our cognizing can be communicated most frequently and with a greater likelihood of success. In most acts of recognizing, especially those involving subtle communicative acts and cues, there is the potential for miscommunication due to attributional ambiguity, that is, uncertainty about the motives behind another's words or actions. Rachel McKinnon illustrates this phenomenon with her experience going through airport security:

I'm told that I've been selected for a random search. I select the pat-down (not wanting a full body scan), and before being taken to the private room, I'm asked if my gender is female. Now, did the employee do that because she suspects that I'm a trans woman, or was asking the question standard operating procedure? (All of my identification lists "female" as my sex/gender). At the time, it was unclear.³⁰⁴

Another one of her examples—one less propositional and institutional—concerns a site of heightened stereotype threat for trans women, namely, public washrooms. The trans woman in a public washroom might notice a “nasty look” directed at her from a cisgender woman and face an interpretive hurdle: “Was [it] because she's jealous of what

³⁰⁴ Rachel McKinnon, “Stereotype Threat and Attributional Ambiguity for Trans Women” (2014), p. 867.

the (trans) woman looks like, or is it because she's 'clocked' the (trans) woman *as* a trans woman? It's ambiguous."³⁰⁵ Attributional ambiguity, moreover, not only makes the evaluation of another's motives more tentative but they often heighten our estimation of the probability that the motives are negative, especially when we are aware of prevalent negative stereotypes that might influence these motives. As McKinnon notes, in scenarios such as these "the possibility of a less positive cause pollutes the possibility of the more positive one."³⁰⁶ This polluting of the assessment of motives is an impediment to recognition, since acts of recognizing—of communicating uptake or corroboration of another's experience—may themselves be attributionally ambiguous and, as such, can easily be misinterpreted and discounted by the hearer. Relationships of trust, however, can attenuate such ambiguities. Genuine trust moves us to err on the side of a more generous or positive interpretation of the speaker's motives—an option that is available, but not always prudent, wise, or even psychologically possible when dealing with not-yet-trusted acquaintances. Even if the forms of expression are the same in both cases, we are likely to assume that a trusted friend is reacting with sincere uptake and understanding when we would worry that an acquaintance might only be engaging in polite but feigned agreement, masking their disbelief in order to smooth social intercourse or as a way of "picking their battles" to avoid the trouble of a potential quarrel. Trusting relationships, then, allow not only a greater frequency of communicative acts associated with recognition but enable them to be far more likely to succeed than they would in the absence of trust.

We have, in this discussion, cast some light upon another virtue associated with recognition. The epistemophile, as we have just seen, in disvaluing ignorance so thoroughly that they engage in epistemic self-indulgence, cuts off their potential to form bonds of trust with various other people. This inability to create and sustain trusting relationships is, in turn, a squandering of countless opportunities to grant recognition to others by gestures of recognizing that are both momentous and miniscule, overt and

³⁰⁵ Rachel McKinnon, "Stereotype Threat and Attributional Ambiguity for Trans Women" (2014), p. 868.

³⁰⁶ Rachel McKinnon, "Stereotype Threat and Attributional Ambiguity for Trans Women" (2014), p. 868.

restrained. Epistemic temperance, especially in its more pragmatic guise, then, is one of the virtues of recognition.³⁰⁷ We can add further precision by spelling out the two types of temperance—ET2 and ET3—that correspond to ES2 and ES3 epistemic self-indulgence in Battaly’s analysis. The person who is epistemically temperate in ways that are relevant to the formation and maintenance of trusting relationships, and, by extension, relevant to recognition “(ET2) desires, consumes, and enjoys [epistemic objects] only at appropriate times; and (ET3) desires, consumes, and enjoys them only to the appropriate amount and degree and with the appropriate frequency.”³⁰⁸ The ET2 and ET3 epistemically temperate person, then, is disposed not to recoil at all forms of ignorance but is comfortable with abstaining from the type and amount of knowledge that would bar them from the good of friendship grounded in trust.

6.1.b. Ignorance and Epistemically Responsible Empathy

The epistemophile’s interpersonal troubles do not end with their difficulties forming relationships of trust. They cut themselves off from another non-instrumentally valuable form of ignorance, one that Townley characterizes as an “epistemically responsible empath[y].”³⁰⁹ This is not the affective type of empathy, that characteristic of, say, caregiving or intimate relationships. It is, rather, empathy as a tendency to “see the other as a knower with her own perspective, one that I have to strive (and might fail) to appreciate.”³¹⁰ This kind of empathy is epistemically responsible because it is constitutive of the participatory stance that is required when engaging in co-operative epistemic endeavours, especially with other knowers who occupy saliently different social locations than our own. Epistemically responsible empathy, then, requires sensitivity to situatedness, both of our own particular social and epistemic location and of

³⁰⁷ There are, to be sure, a number of other virtues that act as a bedrock for the formation of trusting relationships. Pursuing these in detail, however, is the subject of another line of inquiry than the one I am pursuing here.

³⁰⁸ Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” (2010), p. 224.

³⁰⁹ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 44.

³¹⁰ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 44.

the distance, if any, between it and that of our epistemic collaborator's. The acknowledgement of that distance should—barring the “epistemic vice of arrogance... [of] taking my own (superior) status for granted”³¹¹—entail an acknowledgement that we will require significant input from the perspectives of others to fully gain the understanding we are seeking, along with the corresponding behaviour toward them as co-inquirers as opposed to instrumental objects of study or storehouses of information. This will be the case for technical or scholarly endeavours—I can, for instance, pore over Plato's dialogues *ad nauseum* on my own but my understanding of the texts will be enriched considerably by getting my more literarily-minded colleague's take on them—but it will be especially important for understanding various features of our social environment. The distance between the different social locations we inhabit can never be fully remedied; it is a space that cannot fully be bridged. Even if I gain a rather sophisticated understanding of gendered, racialized, or class-based social dynamics from my empathetic engagement with differently-situated people, my inability to wholly inhabit their social position, and, hence, to have a vantage point from which to perfectly replicate their particular perspective, means that I will likely still require their input. After all, what we gain from our epistemic collaboration with differently-situated others is not a new perspective we can occupy—although we may, in our unguarded moments, speak of it in such terms. Rather, what we gain is a new set of interpretations that are highly unlikely to have occurred to us. To be sure, these interpretations can serve us well, and we can employ them to read many social dynamics with a newfound savviness. That they are merely interpretations, however, will especially be clear to us when novel situations or questions arise. My mind may be well-furnished with interpretations related to, say, race, gender, and ability but I might still find myself unmoored when encountering Rachel Dolezal's assertion that she is trans-racial³¹² or the concept of transdisability, that

³¹¹ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 45.

³¹² Dolezal was the president of the Spokane, Washington chapter of the NAACP until she resigned in 2015 when media reports alleged that she was a white woman passing as black.

is, “[b]ecoming disabled by choice, not chance,” as a *National Post* headline put it.³¹³

When we encounter such concepts, testimonies, and reports for the first time, our well-worn and normally useful interpretations might fall short or become intensely tentative and we will require fresh collaborative efforts in order to gain proper understanding of and insight into these matters.

Both forms of non-instrumental ignorance discussed by Townley (those related to trust and those related to epistemically responsible empathy) involve certain epistemic restraints, but we should not let this mask an important difference between them. As we saw above, the virtue involved in the maintenance of trusting relationships is an epistemic temperance concerning the frequency and timing of our attempts to confirm and corroborate the claims made by an ostensibly trusted individual. It is important to note, however, that epistemic temperance is concerned solely with the desire for and consumption of epistemic *objects* and, as such, is perfectly compatible with a negative assessment of the character or intellectual traits of the person to whom trust is granted. I can, in other words, be motivated to maintain a trusting relationship with someone without believing them to be trustworthy. We might, for instance, exercise epistemic temperance in order to keep a smooth relationship with our spouse, to ensure that our friend does not decline our future lunch invitations, or to attempt to remain on good terms with our children in the hope that they will keep in touch with us once they move out of our home. We might also engage in therapeutic trust, which H.J.N. Horsburgh defines as “trust which aims at increasing the trustworthiness of those in whom it is reposed.”³¹⁴ This is analogous to attempting to encourage someone to become a responsible person,³¹⁵ which can only succeed by giving responsibilities to someone who has, presumably, not yet proven themselves to be reliable in discharging them. Likewise, therapeutic trust has

³¹³ Sarah Boesveld, “Becoming disabled by choice, not chance: ‘Transabled’ people feel like impostors in their fully working bodies” (2015).

³¹⁴ H.J.N. Horsburgh, “The Ethics of Trust” (1960), p. 348.

³¹⁵ I mean this in the colloquial sense, rather than the way the term is generally used by moral philosophers to designate moral responsibility.

the peculiar feature that we exhibit some degree of trust in another by deliberately maintaining a certain degree of ignorance—that is, we do not check up on their assertion that they, for example, did not throw a party during our absence, are no longer corresponding with an ex-lover, or cheating on their homework—not because we believe them to be trustworthy but precisely because we believe them to lack this characteristic and wish to encourage its development. Therapeutic trust, like the encouragement to responsibility, fosters its desired outcome in two separate but related ways. It involves, first, giving the person who is trusted some space to exhibit trustworthiness. The forbearance of the trusting person gives the one who is trusted an opportunity to make the decisions that a trustworthy person would make and, in doing so, begins to form the habits that will eventually bloom into genuine trustworthiness. Secondly, this forbearance not only provides the opportunity for trustworthy behaviour, but functions as a kind of moral appeal.³¹⁶ Put simply, imparting trust on someone will function as a sort of call to live up to that trust—the very fact, for example, that my father has trusted me to take care of his house and pets while he is away, despite my spotty record in fulfilling such tasks, will be, if I am not entirely insensitive to such things, one of the reasons that moves me to take proper care of them.

The cases of relationship maintenance and therapeutic trust just discussed involve the acquisition of certain goods through the display of trusting behaviour facilitated by epistemic temperance, not because of but *despite* the character traits of those for whose sakes the temperance was exercised. It is a wholly other matter, however, with epistemically responsible empathy. Showing this kind of empathy toward someone involves setting aside some of our epistemophilic tendencies, but refraining from consuming certain epistemic objects (or doing so at the wrong times or with too great a frequency), as an (ET2 and ET3) epistemically temperate person would, will not be sufficient. Unlike the maintenance of trust, which does not require a positive assessment of the trusted person's relevant character traits, epistemically responsible empathy involves an acknowledgement of another's epistemic agency, especially an awareness of

³¹⁶ H.J.N. Horsbrugh, "The Ethics of Trust" (1960), p. 348.

their epistemic authority relative to us. Of course, having this kind of empathy does require us to practice abstinence from certain epistemic objects—persistent checking on another’s claims is a problem here too, since it betrays a lack of confidence in the other knower’s epistemic authority—it also requires an awareness of our own epistemic limitations and of the epistemic advantages that particular others have over us, and it is this acquiescence to the authority of another that is characteristic of epistemically responsible empathy and that facilitates co-operative epistemic endeavours.

Townley names two epistemic virtues that are relevant to the proper acknowledgement of these epistemic limitations and for engaging with differently-situated others as full epistemic agents: humility and deference.³¹⁷ These are very plausible candidates; however, she labels these traits but leaves them undefined. Humility and deference are concepts that carry a number of connotations and can be used to denote a number of different character traits. Defining their contours, then, and distinguishing them from various other traits that share the same name is no simple matter. Still, so that we will have a better idea of what the virtues of recognizing might look like in practice, I will make a brief attempt at it, keeping in mind the fact that they should be, as discussed in the previous paragraph, concerned with the relative epistemic authority of different epistemic collaborators concerning particular subject-matter.

Epistemic humility strikes me as a more cognitive disposition, while epistemic deference seems a more behavioural one. To be epistemically humble is to properly understand our place in a community of knowers, or at least some reasonable approximation of it. It is not humility as a form of self-abasement, exhibited by holding an unwarrantedly low opinion of our intellectual authority. Humility so understood, in fact, marks out what is actually a vice in the context of epistemic collaborations. The appeal of the notion that humility is a virtue of abasement—setting aside for a moment its Abrahamic heritage—likely results from the fact that its most evident and bothersome corresponding vice is arrogance, which is remedied most conspicuously by lowering our assessments of our

³¹⁷ Cynthia Townley, “Toward a Reevaluation of Ignorance” (2006), p. 45.

talents, skills, and wisdom in an exaggerated fashion. This kind of conspicuous underestimation of oneself is, however, itself a vice. When it comes to co-operative epistemic projects, it matters that we make good collaborators and this will involve acknowledging and making use of our strengths and our acquired knowledge rather than masking them. Humility, then, is, properly understood, a disposition to accurately assess our intellectual and epistemic qualities, as well as the roles that we are best suited to play and tasks we are best suited to perform on account of these qualities.³¹⁸

If humility is understood simply as non-overestimation of one's epistemic qualities, then it would be odd to pair it with deference if it is understood as a heedless capitulation in the face of any challenge to our intellectual authority. It should, instead, be seen as the behavioural counterpart to humility as non-overestimation. To be deferential in the epistemically virtuous sense, then, will be to cede to the authority of others when it is warranted rather than take on a superior role no matter our place in the community of knowers and to listen attentively to those with expertise that we lack rather than ignoring them in order to rely solely on our own inadequate resources.

To characterize virtuous deference simply as the behavioural counterpart of humility, however, may seem to render it superfluous. After all, if we already have attained humility, there might be little need of a virtue that simply seems to grow directly out of that humility. While it is true that virtuous deference grows directly from humility, it nevertheless earns its place since non-overestimation of one's talents and abilities can often prove to be fallow soil. Someone might, after all, perfectly well recognize their own standing within a group of epistemic collaborators and have a Socratic awareness of the limits of their own knowledge, yet still try to overplay their authority or overstate their expertise because they enjoy the heady feeling of taking charge, or want to shore up their

³¹⁸ This is by no means an idiosyncratic understanding of humility. There is a body of literature defending the concept of humility as non-overestimation of one's merits, which seeks to preserve the intuition that humility is a virtue by stripping it of the lowly self-opinion that the term often connotes. See, for example, Norvin Richard, "Is Humility a Virtue?" (1988); Owen Flanagan, "Virtue and Ignorance" (1990); Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, "The Virtue of Modesty" (1993); and, more recently, Jason Brennan, "Modesty without Illusion" (2007). For an attempt to preserve both humility's status as a virtue and its connotation with lowly self-opinion, see Julia Driver's "Modesty and Ignorance" (1999).

reputation as a learned and insightful person, or seek to protect their social privilege or some status quo by overpowering the perspectives and opinions of marginalized others. We must be careful here not to let the popular connotations associated with humility lead us astray. It is true that this non-deference sounds like a far cry from the conduct of a humble person, but the kind of thrill-, reputation-, or privilege-seeking non-deference is entirely compatible with humility defined simply as the cognitive non-overestimation of one's talents and abilities.

Virtuous deference, then, far from being superfluous, is an essential component of epistemically responsible empathy and, as such, essential to acts of recognizing. As we saw in previous chapters, recognition, as I am using the term, is a matter of corroborating the experience of another or, what is perhaps more important in this context, acknowledging the plausibility of their interpretation of the world. It is through virtuous deference that we signal to others our acknowledgment of their epistemic authority and communicate to them that their perception of the world is respected and not dismissed out of hand. Deference guided by humility, then, is a trait conducive to the recognition of others and is, therefore, one of the virtues of recognition.

6.2 Etiquette as Virtue

I will end my list of some of the virtues of recognition with a very brief discussion of a virtue that lies outside the Aristotelian tradition—that lays, in fact, outside the Western tradition entirely—but that is not without precedent in it. The virtue is that of etiquette, as defended by the neo-Confucian scholar Amy Olberding. Although I am transplanting it from the Confucian tradition into the Aristotelian one, it will prove a comfortable fit, especially once neo-Aristotelianism has been updated in light of concerns for interpersonal recognition.

Olberding advocates for moral philosophy that is not focused only on momentous moral dilemmas—what Joel Kupperman calls “big moment ethics”³¹⁹—but on a concern with

³¹⁹ Quoted in Amy Olberding, “Etiquette” (2016), p. 427.

etiquette, with the moral quality of the details of our everyday comportment. She takes her cue from the early Confucian philosophers, especially their concept of *li*. Although she notes that *li* is standardly translated “ritual,” that term does not quite capture its other-directedness—at least not for contemporary Western moral philosophers who are not versed in Confucianism. “Etiquette” itself is inadequate, since the concept that she articulates runs together etiquette and manners, which are treated as distinct by “[b]oth popular etiquette writers... and ethicists advocating the inclusion of manners in moral discourse.”³²⁰ Manners is the set of “constant and universal”³²¹ principles of respectful conduct which serves as the foundation for etiquette, that is, for the particular social conventions through which manners are expressed. It is, for example, a principle of manners that we show respect to those to whom we are introduced, but whether or not this respect is signalled by removing one’s hat and offering a handshake is a conventional matter that falls under the province of etiquette. Olberding, however, runs the two concepts together under the single heading of “etiquette” in order to capture the fact that *li* involves the performance of conventionally mandated social conduct but not in a merely formulaic manner. Rather, the social rituals observed fall under the category of *li* only if their observance is an embodiment of the principles of manners. While we can, in other words, fulfill the demands of etiquette by simply going through the motions, it will not constitute *li*, or the analogous moralized sense of etiquette, unless “both emotion and form are fully realized.”³²²

The performance of etiquette as a virtue, then, consists of an attentiveness to the small gestures we perform daily, with a sensitivity concerning to whom and in what contexts we perform them. It is a habituation of our movements, modes of address, and even, when relevant, modes of dress that signal the respect we owe to others. Part of Olberding’s rationale for this moralized notion of etiquette appeals directly to the need for recognizing others, that is, for communicating recognition to them. As she points out,

³²⁰ Amy Olberding, “Etiquette” (2016), p. 425.

³²¹ Judith Martin, quoted in Amy Olberding, “Etiquette” (2016), p. 425.

³²² Xunzi, quoted in Amy Olberding, “Etiquette” (2016), p. 426.

People generally do care about how the prosaic interactions of ordinary shared life transpire. Whether we feel ourselves respected, our dignity recognized, and so forth will often have far more to do with such interactions than with whether our social partners abstain from sharply injurious conduct... the felt contours of moral experience—our sense of whether we are valued and valuable as human beings, our capacity to develop and maintain secure moral community—will derive more from the mundane acknowledgments and subtle social signaling that infuses human interaction.³²³

These acts of recognition in the form of signaling of respect to others is also relevant to recognizing as I have understood it in this chapter, as the communication to others of our uptake and corroboration of their experience of the world. This is so in at least two ways. First, the hearer's acts of etiquette signal a respect toward the speaker that aids in opening and maintaining a line of communication with them. If the speaker does not perceive us as someone who respects them, they have little incentive to share with us their reports or testimony of their experiences, nor are they likely to seek uptake and corroboration from us. As is the case with an inability to build relationships of trust, lack of etiquette decreases our opportunities for recognizing by impeding the formation of the kinds of relationships in which recognizing can occur. Second, etiquette reduces the odds of unclear communication that result from the attributive ambiguity discussed in the previous section. As we saw above, acts of recognizing can misfire when the motives behind our conduct are unclear. Etiquette is relevant here, too, since failing to signal our respect for someone is likely to increase their assessment of the probability that our ambiguous conduct is the product of bad motives or indifference toward them. Our motives are rarely as transparent as we would like them to be and deviating from etiquette can lead to the miscommunication of our good intentions. I may, for instance, mean nothing untoward by violating the injunction to don solemn attire at funerals by attending one wearing neon green bicycle shorts, but unless I have some compelling reason to do so—perhaps it is known that the deceased had a fondness for tacky dress and everyone has been asked to wear eye-popping colours—the potential for miscommunicating my good intentions, even if I loudly and emphatically insist that I

³²³ Amy Olberding, "Etiquette" (2016), p. 427-428.

meant no disrespect, is high. The threat of attributional ambiguity, then, is lessened by ensuring that our small gestures signal a respect for our interlocutor in a highly legible way. For these two reasons, the virtues of recognition involve a disposition to be attentive to the details of our conduct, to the way they register or tend to register with others,³²⁴ and to deliberately attempt to change it so that our small gestures communicate what we wish them to—attempts that will be effortful and stiff at first, but will gradually become second nature.

The notion of a moralized etiquette inspired by Confucian philosophy may seem an ill-fitting transplant to an Aristotelian account of virtue. I am, however, not beholden to the letter, and not even always to the spirit, of all of Aristotle's claims. So long as this virtue of etiquette can be understood as one of the products of a conception of natural goodness that is sensitive to the need for interpersonal recognition, then it can comfortably remain part of my account of human virtue.

Moreover, such a thing is not so alien to Aristotle's ethics as might be supposed. Although Aristotle begins his discourse on particular virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* with dramatic and grandiose displays of bravery by those who face death on the battlefield, he soon moves on to far more minute subject matter. *Nicomachean Ethics* III.10-12 cautions the student of virtue to neither be gluttonous nor insensitive to the pleasures of food, while IV.8 advises them to become witty conversationalists while always refraining from telling offensive jokes. The importance of comportment, however, is most evident in his discussion of the magnanimous individual, the agent whose virtues are crowned by that of pride. The magnanimous person is one who "thinks himself

³²⁴ This will involve, when relevant, a kind of etiquette code-switching in which we modify our conduct across contexts or individuals in order to signal properly. We do this, for instance, when we travel to another nation and act in accordance with some of the local custom in order to avoid causing offence. Code-switching may be required within our own communities as well. I may, for example, fumble in my attempts to communicate my respect for another when what I take to be a polite and affable working-class exuberance is read as disrespectful when I use it as a mode of address to a member of the local upper crust, or when the conduct I adopt to signal politeness among the intelligentsia registers as condescendingly "putting on airs" when I continue to engage in it when interacting with my blue-collar parents.

worthy of great things and is worthy of them,”³²⁵ and is especially, or only, concerned with the “greatest of [external goods]... that which we render to the gods,” namely, honour.³²⁶ Aristotle goes into great detail about what sort of person the honour-worthy magnanimous individual is, describing the attitudes and character traits they display.³²⁷ He concludes by stating that the magnanimous individual is not only characterized by their worthiness, their attitude, and their character, but also by their “slow step... deep voice, and... level utterance” so that we can spot a person who lacks this crowning virtue by noticing their “excit[ability]... shrill voice and rapid gait.”³²⁸ While neo-Aristotelians would do well to eschew the cartoonish masculinity that underpins the specific features of Aristotle’s virtuous man—along with, quite frankly, all of Aristotle’s views on the sexes—it does nevertheless show that the Aristotelian virtuous agent’s morally relevant traits go beyond those that are employed in making momentous decisions and extend all the way down to those that govern the minutiae of mundane, everyday conduct.

6.3 Summary of the Virtues of Recognizing

In the previous chapter, I provided the broad outline of an account of the virtues of cognizing. There, I defended the claim that dispositions to reflexivity, reflectivity, and attentiveness are important preconditions for ensuring that we engage in reasonably frequent and reasonably successful acts of cognizing, that is, understanding another’s experience of the world usually by their verbal reports or by interpreting their reactions to certain situations. While cognizing is essential to the uptake and corroboration of another’s experiences, it is not, by itself, a sufficient condition for recognition. Recognition requires the additional communication of this cognizing—what I have, adopting Honneth’s terminology, called recognizing—to those who are the objects of our recognition.

³²⁵ 1123b2-3

³²⁶ 1123b17-21.

³²⁷ 1124b7-1125a13.

³²⁸ 1125a13-16.

Recognizing, as I have stressed in this chapter, is partly a matter of explicit, verbal communication, but is above all enacted in our everyday conduct; our small gestures; and our prosaic, off-hand remarks. For this reason, the virtues I have chosen to serve as the contours of a more complete and comprehensive account of the virtues of recognizing are those that are most salient for these small moments rather than those that motivate us to make grand declarations or issue repeated, explicit, verbal assurances of our understanding. Nor is it a purely idiosyncratic preference that leads me to privilege these virtues above those more magnified ones. They are, I contend, more fundamental insofar as the grand declarations we make and assurances we give are likely to be taken as insincere expressions of our motives or perceptions and beliefs about others unless they are also accompanied by the small gestures that communicate to them the goodness of our character and the positive inclination of our assessment of them. For this reason, the virtues of cognizing must be paired with virtues of recognizing. These will, at the very least, include those that I have defined in this chapter: the epistemic temperance (with respect to timing and frequency of the consumption of epistemic objects) required to build and sustain trusting relationships; the humility and deference required to convey to others some respect for the authority of their epistemic vantage-point, and the (moralized) etiquette required to signal to others the respect that smooths our acts of recognizing—of communicating our recognition to others—and increases their odds of succeeding.

6.4 Conclusion: The Virtues of Recognition and a New Model for the Old Structure

The Natural Goodness theory is one whose boundaries can be pushed in two directions. There are those who seek to trim off as many of its theoretical appendages and to discover how slim a theory the Natural Goodness model will tolerate. They may be drawn to the elegant simplicity of Foot's model or they may be awed at what a rich vocabulary of virtues and vices can bloom from so few seeds. Or they may be of a more particularist bent and believe that if we have justified the value of practical wisdom, we have firmly anchored our justification for the rest of morality. In other words, they hold,

like Thoreau, that even the golden rule is “but the best of current silver” and that “[i]t is golden not to have any rule at all.”³²⁹

As should be evident from the culmination, in these last three chapters, of my brief exploration of the Natural Goodness theory, I am far more inclined to push the theory in the other direction—to see how far the theoretical apparatus can be expanded. When it comes to the deep metaphysics of the theory, I have left everything untouched. The underlying logic of the structure that Foot built remains the solid base from which I theorize. Following Hursthouse, however, I have tried to explore just how much of virtue we can formalize. I am not so naïve as to believe that a few explicit principles can neatly disentangle every conundrum that we face but there are some formalizable features of good character and good conduct that seem to me not only theoretically defensible, but utterly undeniable. So, keeping the old structure, I have drafted for it a blueprint for a new model that pushes the boundaries of the theory a bit further than Hursthouse’s already capacious account.

I began laying down this foundation and made the case for pursuing the expansion of the natural goodness model in the first chapter by building onto the conception of human nature that Hursthouse posits. In the first half of Chapter Two, I responded to Sandler’s attempts to expand the model of natural normativity by positing various ends corresponding to rationality. I devoted the second half of that chapter to taking on that very challenge, arguing against Hursthouse’s dismissal of contemplation as a species end for rational beings. In Chapter Three, I argued that understanding human social animality as being a matter of interdependence, affective bond, and causally relational building of character is to overlook an important but easily missed feature that is, to my knowledge, unique to our species. As psychological studies and testimony of inmates in long-term solitary confinement show, we are, unlike other social animals, constitutively relational insofar as our experience of the external world and even ourselves as having objective, concrete features is dependent on corroboration from others.

³²⁹ Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1985), p. 60.

With the last three chapters, I moved on to the normative side of my project: if we take seriously the fact that we are constitutively relational beings, what does this entail for the virtues? I began to answer this in Chapter Four by making the case that constitutively relational beings need a reasonable amount of recognition, understood as the corroboration or uptake of our experience, and that, without it, we would be unable to flourish. Since that is the case, we have to evaluate character traits and dispositions in light of how conducive they are to fulfilling others' need for recognition.

I devoted the final two chapters to provide a quick sketch of what sort of virtues become important if we make relationality and recognition part of our model of natural goodness. Chapter Five identified reflexivity, reflectivity, and attentiveness as three virtues that are conducive to cognizing, the first step in recognition. Chapter Six identified three additional virtues, relevant to the second step in recognition, the communication of our recognition to others (what I have called recognizing): epistemic temperance, a deference guided by humility, and a moralized notion of etiquette. Together, these six virtues provide a preliminary, but by no means complete, picture of the virtues of recognition.

Although adding relationality and recognition to the model of natural goodness, along with its corresponding virtues, makes the theory somewhat hefty, it does not, I believe, make it unwieldy. At any rate, no virtue theorist has ever, to my knowledge, been put off by the vast and seemingly endless vocabulary we have available for virtue and all I have done is solidified some of the terms in an attempt to make Aristotelian virtue ethics a bit more concrete.

It is, moreover, my suspicion that the virtues of recognition can be further multiplied and that the ones I have supplied can admit of further elaboration and specification. It is my hope that this work will serve as a catalyst for further exploration of the role of recognition in the virtues, or even renewed attempts at pushing the limits of the Natural Goodness model. To do so would not be to constrain practical wisdom but to pay tribute to it by capturing a small sample of its countless manifestations.

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