

PHILIPPA FOOT'S THEORY OF NATURAL GOODNESS

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Abstract: Philippa Foot's book, *Natural Goodness*, involves a large project including a theory of natural goodness, a theory of the virtues, and a theory of practical rationality. Natural goodness is the foundation for the rest and is used to support a more or less traditional list of the virtues and a theory of reasons for action. Though Foot's doctrine of natural goodness may provide an account of some sort of goodness, I argue that it is not adequate as a foundation for practical rationality or as a defense of more or less traditional virtues.

Philippa Foot has been one of moral naturalism's most loyal proponents. She has developed a number of naturalistic moral theories culminating in her most recent work, *Natural Goodness*. Though a slim volume, it involves a large project including a theory of the good, this being her theory of natural goodness, a theory of the virtues, and a theory of practical rationality, that is, of reasons for action. Natural goodness is the foundation for the rest of the theory and is used to support a more or less traditional list of the virtues and a theory of reasons for action with an important feature. She challenges a common idea that only self-interest or desire provide reasons for action of a sort relevant to practical rationality. She writes that

the rationality of, say, telling the truth, keeping promises, or helping a neighbour is *on a par* with the rationality of self-preserving action, and of the careful and cognizant pursuit of other innocent ends; each being a part or aspect of practical rationality. The different considerations are on a par, moreover, in that a judgment about what is required by practical rationality must take account of their interaction: of the weight of the ones we call non-moral as well as those we call moral. (2001, p. 11)

Though Foot's doctrine of natural goodness may provide an account of some sort of goodness, in this paper, I will argue that it is not adequate as a foundation for practical rationality or as a defense of a more or less traditional set of virtues.

I. Natural Normativity

I begin with a summary of Foot's theory of natural goodness. She first identifies a kind of goodness and defect in the non-human world. Living things, their parts and their activities have a natural goodness and defect which depends on the relation of these things to the life form of the species. Borrowing from Michael Thompson, she uses 'Aristotelian categoricals,' or 'natural history sentences,' for sentences such as 'Rabbits are herbivores' and 'Cats have four legs' (2001, pp. 28-31). These sentences depend on a 'natural history account' of how creatures of a particular kind make their living. Thompson thinks that the relation between these natural history sentences and evaluation is close, a link Foot calls 'conceptual.' If there is a true natural history sentence 'S's are F,' and a particular S is not F, then that individual is not as it should be. Foot says that Thompson has not isolated adequately the kind of proposition that yields evaluations. She distinguishes *teleological* from *non-teleological* natural history sentences. Those that ground evaluations have to do with self-maintenance and reproduction. 'The blue tit has a round blue patch on its head' is different from 'The male peacock has a brightly colored tail.' The patch on the tit's head (she thinks) plays no role with respect to self-maintenance and reproduction, so to lack one is not a defect. The male peacock displays his tail to attract a female, so its tail can be evaluated based on how well it serves this function. Note two things. First, these evaluations are not made on a case by case basis, but rather turn on the general role the feature plays in the life of the species. A slow deer is naturally defective even though, in a particular situation, a swift deer is caught in a trap. Second, not all natural goodness and defect is self-regarding. There is something wrong with a honeybee that does not dance, or a free-riding wolf, even if they do not themselves suffer from their lack.

Foot applies the model of natural normativity to humans. Humans, their characteristics and their activities can be evaluated in relation to the parts they play in human life. This is so even though human good is not, like that of non-human animals, identical with self-maintenance and reproduction. Though human good is problematic, we can give a general account of the hu-

man life-cycle on which to base judgments of natural goodness and defect. For example, humans are naturally defective if they lack the mental capacity to learn language or to work together. Foot's next step is more controversial. She applies the model of natural normativity to moral evaluations, and especially to generate a theory of human virtue and of reasons for action, including moral reasons. Moral defect is a form of natural defect. For her, moral evaluation is a subcategory of the evaluation of the human will and she thinks that the pattern of natural normativity applies there as much as to anything else.¹ There are true natural history sentences about the human will which depend on the life of our species which can serve as the foundation for both virtue and practical rationality. With Geach she says that humans need virtues as bees need stings. We need to cloth ourselves, to pursue love, friendships, and so on, and these require virtues such as industriousness, loyalty, and fairness. This view of moral evaluation is naturalistic, and moral evaluation, like natural normativity generally, is factual. She writes,

the grounding of a moral argument is ultimately in facts about human life . . . therefore, a moral evaluation does not stand over against the statement of a matter of fact but rather has to do with facts about a particular subject matter, as do evaluations of such things as sight and hearing in animals, and other aspects of their behavior. Nobody would, I think, take it as other than a plain matter of fact that there is something wrong with the hearing of a gull that cannot distinguish the cry of its own chick, as with the sight of an owl that cannot see in the dark. Similarly, it is obvious that there are objective, factual evaluations of such things as human sight, hearing, memory and concentration, based on the life form of our own species. Why, then, does it seem so monstrous a suggestion that the evaluation of the human will should be determined by facts about the nature of human beings and the life of our own species? (2001, p. 24)

II. Natural Goodness as Functional Goodness

In this section, I give an interpretation of Foot's doctrine of natural goodness and of its extension to human virtue and human practical rationality. Exactly how the goodness or defect of an organism, feature, or action is 'derived' for Foot is not completely clear, even putting aside the transition

¹ Like many virtue theorists, Foot does not draw a sharp distinction between moral and other sorts of evaluation. For her, the important category is certain evaluations of the human will. What we normally speak of as moral evaluations are a species of this genus. I will tend to ignore, without discussion, her views on this matter.

to the moral. She gives what appears to be two somewhat different examples of the derivation, but I will focus on this one (2001, p. 33).

A living organism of a particular species has a life cycle, which consists (roughly) of self-maintenance and reproduction.

- a. There is a set of natural history sentences *describing* how, for a species, this is achieved, for example, ‘Deer run swiftly.’
- b. From these natural history sentences, *norms* are derived requiring, say, swiftness in deer. (I assume a norm is derived from a natural history sentence by taking descriptive words like ‘is’ out and replacing them with normative words like ‘ought.’ ‘Deer run swiftly’ becomes ‘Deer ought to run swiftly.’)
- c. These norms determine whether an individual member of the species, its parts, and its actions, are as they should be, in a certain respect.²

The key notion here is that of a function. The natural history sentences that determine the norms used to evaluate living organisms, their features and their acts, describe functions. I suggest the following interpretation of this. Since G. E. Moore, naturalism has faced the challenge of the open question argument. On one interpretation, the open question argument is employed against analytic naturalism, that is, forms of naturalism that define moral terms using natural terms, where ‘define’ is understood in terms of analyticity. Arguably, the open question argument is a test for analyticity and refutes a purported definition by showing that it is not analytic. Some naturalists have tried to meet Moore’s challenge and to find definitions that pass the test, and some of these folk have focused on the ‘thick’ moral terms, that is, terms that have, by virtue of their meaning, one foot in the evaluative realm and one in the natural realm. There are empirical truth conditions which determine whether the thick term applies, which, in turn, entails evaluations. ‘Thick arguments’ have the following form. (1) Empirical conditions C obtain. (2) If C obtains, T (a thick evaluative concept) applies. (3) Hence T applies. (4) If T applies, then E (a thin evaluation). (5) Hence, E. One of the best known arguments of this sort comes from Foot herself and turns on the thick evaluative term ‘rude’ (1978). (1) In doing A, P caused offence by indicating disrespect. (2) Rude behavior is behavior that causes offence by indicating disrespect. (3) Hence, P’s action was rude. (4) Rude behavior is *prima facie* wrong. (5) Thus, P acted *prima facie*

²A somewhat different formulation appears on page 46. In the formulation I prefer, explicitly normative terms do not appear until the third line, but in the alternative formulation, the evaluative term ‘good’ would appear on the first line.

wrongly in doing A. In this argument, the link between the empirical truth conditions expressed in (1) and rudeness is, she says, conceptual. To give other criteria for rudeness is simply to „leave the concept behind.”

This approach is problematic since there are counterexamples to the thick argument schema. For example: (1) Kant is German. (2) Someone is a Kraut if and only if German. (3) Hence Kant is a Kraut. (4) Anyone who is a Kraut is despicable. (5) Hence, Kant is despicable. This argument turns on the meaning of ‘Kraut’ just as Foot’s turns on the meaning of ‘rude.’ To give other criteria for being a Kraut is to „leave the concept behind.” Yet the conclusion is likely false. I will not analyze what goes wrong with thick arguments which allows counterexamples, but a thick moral philosopher might suggest that the problem can be avoided by choosing a proper thick term. ‘Function’ might be such a term. It is a thick term just as ‘rude’ is. It has its feet in both the natural and the evaluative realms. That something serves a function is often a fact. That something which fails to serve its function is not as it ought to be is a conceptual truth.

Foot’s natural goodness is a kind of functional goodness. This raises a problem. Foot is interested in a theory of the good that generates a theory of the virtues and of practical rationality. Now suppose we assume that the good – in this case, functional goodness – provides at least *prima facie*³ reasons for action directly: there is a reason to do A if and only if A produces functional goodness. This goes too far. Functions are of many kinds and functional goodness and badness are large categories. This allows a huge number of uninteresting evaluations. Some functions are had by artifacts. A mortising chisel serves the function of chopping mortises, and one that does not do it well, say because the steel is not hard enough, is defective. Many functions are natural. The heart pumps blood, and one that fails to do so adequately is defective. A plague virus is defective if it fails to produce the symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea) by which it spreads to other creatures and thereby reproduces. The sheer quantity of functional goodness and badness overwhelms any suggestion that it is important in itself, provides reasons for action, especially moral ones, or that taking it into account is linked to human virtue. Functional goodness, without some qualification, at best provides hypothetical reasons, reasons that turn on the desires or interests of the individual. If one wants to hand cut a mortise, one has reason to use one chisel rather than another. This is not what Foot wants to say about morality. She once considered, and now rejects, the idea that

³Foot prefers the term ‘relative reasons’ here, but I will use the more common ‘*prima facie* reasons’ (2001, p. 59).

morality consists of hypothetical imperatives. Moral imperatives are categorical, not in the sense that they are without exception, but in the sense that they hold (perhaps as *prima facie* principles) whether or not one has certain desires and interests. The problem, then, is that the ubiquitousness of functional goodness and defect undermines the claim that it can provide categorical reasons for action, in this sense.

Foot's way to deal with the problem of excess functional goodness and defect is by narrowing the functions she is concerned with. She first focuses on natural functions, putting artifactual functions aside, but this is still too wide a category. That the Marburg filovirus reproduces by creating hemorrhaging, in itself gives us no reason to help it along. Foot needs to further restrict the realm of natural functions, and to explain why only some provide reasons for action and generate virtues. Foot wants to identify the kind of functionality that produces reasons for action and virtue and is less interested in why other forms fail to do so. Here is a possible reason which also helps restrict the natural functions we are interested in. The deer's heart serves functions, and it is naturally good that its heart act in accordance with these functions, but that does not have normative implications for us *unless it is naturally good that we act in accordance with those functions*. It is only our own natural goodness and defect that can generate human virtue and vice and human categorical reasons for action. The functions of the deer's heart would only have categorical normative significance for us if there were a true functional natural history sentence like 'Humans look after the welfare of deer,' that is, if looking after deer served the right sort of function in our lives. There is not, in general, such a true functional natural history sentence. In fact, acting against the good of the deer, stopping its heart and eating it, is a component of how many humans make a living.

So far, we have restricted the relevant functionality to human natural functionality. Some natural law traditions take seriously human functionality right down to the functionality of individual human organs and processes. It is not uncommon to argue that the function of human reproductive organs and sexual activity is to reproduce and to conclude that there is a categorical (often meaning 'without exception' as well as 'independent of one's self-interest and desire') moral principle forbidding any other use for these organs or activities. Foot does not buy this. Functionality of human bodily parts and activities does not itself provide categorical reasons for action or generate human virtues any more than does the functionality of non-humans and their features. She restricts the relevant natural functionality even further. Her next restriction ties the theory of practical rationality

and the theory of the virtues together. She says, „there is no criterion for practical rationality that is not *derived from* [her emphasis] the goodness of the will” (2001, p. 11). Now as a general statement, this is not true. There are reasons for action not derived from goodness of will, the hypothetical reasons already mentioned. If I want something, and a particular means is effective, I have reason to use that means. The reason is derived from the effectiveness of the means and my desire, not from any goodness of the will, especially if what I want is evil.⁴ But it is worth following up Foot's statement as an account of categorical reasons. The view, then, is that all categorical reasons for action are derived from the goodness of the will. On Foot's natural goodness account, for the will to be naturally good in a certain respect, there must be a true functional natural history sentence of the form 'Humans have dispositions of the will of kind K.' A human will with that disposition is, thus far at least, naturally good.

This is still not adequate to generate a theory of the virtues or of reasons for action. There are a number of ways that the will can be good. Given her focus in *Natural Goodness* on the virtues, I assume that when Foot says that the criterion for practical rationality is derived from the good will, the good will she is talking about is the virtuous will. The virtuous will could simply be identified with the naturally good will, but Foot has a more specific view which makes it a subcategory of the naturally good will. She defines virtue as a disposition to recognize certain things as reasons for action.⁵ Which things are these certain things? A plausible answer is: things it is good to recognize as reasons for action, where 'good' still refers to natural goodness. That is what makes a will virtuous; it takes as reasons for action things it is naturally good to take as reasons for action. Now, on Foot's theory of natural goodness, it is naturally good for humans to recognize R as a reason for action if and only if there is a true functional natural history sentence of the form 'Humans recognize R as a reason for action.' For example, if there is a true functional natural history sentence 'Humans recognize the giving of gifts as reasons for gratitude,' then a human who recognizes this is a reason for gratitude, thus far at least, has a virtuous will. Again, this is a subset of ways a will can be naturally good, for a will can be good in some way without being virtuous in this sense. For example, there might be a true, functional natural history sentence of

⁴ This, of course, is a fairly standard point, but not beyond question. For some critical discussion of the commonly assumed connection between desires and reasons for action, see T. M. Scanlon (1998, Chapter 1).

⁵ I assume recognizing a consideration as a reason for action involves both a cognitive element and various dispositions to act and feel. I will not worry about the details here.

the form ‘Humans have dispositions to fear some things under certain conditions’ which defines a kind natural goodness of will, but not a virtuous will. Since the virtuous will determines reasons for action, we now use this definition of the virtuous will to say that a consideration is a real reason for action if and only if it is good to recognize it as a reason for action, that is, if and only if there is a true functional natural history sentence of the form ‘Humans recognize R as a reason for action.’

I will summarize where this leaves us. According to the theory of natural goodness, the goodness of a living organism, its parts and its behaviors are derived from true functional natural history sentences. These sentences serve as the foundation for practical rationality and human virtue, but only some do so, those that are about what humans naturally take to be reasons for action. Given that there is a true natural history sentence of the form ‘Humans take R as a reason for action,’ a person who takes R as a reasons for action is, thus far, virtuous, and R really is a reason for action. This opens the possibility that Foot was most concerned with which I mentioned at the start of this essay, that things other than self-interest and desire can provide reasons for action. If something serves a function in the life of our species in the proper way, so that there is a true functional natural history sentence that humans recognize a reason to pursue it, we are both virtuous and rational to pursue it.

III. Natural Roles and Unusual Niches: the Bees and the Coyotes

For Foot, natural goodness is based on species-wide general norms derived from species-wide true functional natural history sentences. However, things are not so simple. Leaving humans aside for the moment, and focusing on non-human animals, there may be some species-wide functional natural history sentences that define species-wide norms, but the species is far too broad a category to capture many of the relevant natural history sentences and norms. To properly capture them, Foot’s theory needs to be developed so as to take into account subgroups within species, and this in at least two ways which I illustrate using bees and coyotes. This development might be viewed as an unproblematic modification of her view, and a plausible one. However, the modifications are sufficiently large that one might fear they push her theory off track. Be that as it may, more serious problems arise when similar points are brought to bear on humans with an eye to defining moral virtue and reasons for action. But first, the animal world.

I begin with a few comments about bees since Foot draws an analogy between humans and bees: humans need virtue as bees need to sting. As a matter of fact, some bees sting and others do not. I am not talking about different species of bee. What I am talking about is different members of, say, a honeybee hive. Honeybees have different jobs. There are true natural history sentences about each honeybee role, and these define role-specific goodness and defects rather than species-wide ones. There are true functional natural history sentences about queen bees like 'They kill their sisters and mother,' 'They mate with males,' and 'They lay about 1500 eggs per day.' Other bees, the drones, have the job of mating with the queen. Workers, have many jobs. For example, they make the comb, tend the queen, gather pollen, drive out drones not needed for mating, and they defend the hive by stinging. A worker that fails to sting under the appropriate conditions, and turns tail and flits, is naturally defective, but no drone that turns tail is naturally defective. In fact, they lack stingers. Honeybees need to sting, but only in the sense that each hive needs workers that sting. There is no true functional natural history sentence, 'Honeybees sting,' that grounds negative evaluations of a drone. Again, this is not an objection to Foot's theory so much as a development of it, and a development suggested by things Foot herself says. But we will see its problematic significance for humans later.

Next, consider an animal Foot does not talk about, the coyote. There are true species-wide functional natural history sentences about coyotes, but the coyote is adaptable. Some live in wilderness where there are few humans, but where wolves are a problem. Others live in Yellowstone Park where there are humans, who do not generally pose a threat, and where, till recently, there were no wolves. Now there are. Some live on ranch land where they are regularly killed by humans. Others reside in cities such as Los Angeles where they live off of human leavings. These populations make their livings in different ways and different functional natural history sentences and norms apply. Prior to the reintroduction of the wolf, the Yellowstone coyote was at the top of the food chain, save for periodic confrontations with mountain lions and grizzly bears. Proper behavior for these coyotes was different from what it is now that wolves are in Yellowstone. Coyotes now must make their living on the edges of wolf society. Yellowstone coyotes need not worry too much about humans, but coyotes that prey on farm animals outside Yellowstone must deal with ranchers and farmers. Coyotes who live in cities are in another situation. If my experience is any indication, there is relatively little human predation on them since they seem willing to be heard and seen, to a point. What counts as a virtue and reasonable behavior for a pre-wolf Yellowstone coyote is dif-

ferent from what counts as a virtue and reasonable behavior for a post-wolf Yellowstone coyote, or for a ranch or city coyote. To take functional natural history sentences to yield species-wide norms for coyotes is to declare many hundreds of thousands of coyotes, which are doing quite well, to be defective. Were these norms imposed on coyotes by a divine legislator of goodness, many coyotes, including large healthy populations, would be destroyed. To impose species-wide standards is as arbitrary as imposing the standards appropriate for a wolf on a coyote on the grounds that they are both *canidae*. As I said at the start of this section, one could view this as a plausible development of Foot's view. On the other hand, it could be a rather serious modification that pushes Foot's theory off track. For once this slide from species-wide standards begins, it is not clear where it stops, or whether it can be stopped in a non-arbitrary way. There are not just populations within a species, but sub-populations. A coyote family that finds a unique niche and adopts highly unusual, and normally destructive behavior is not failing by any natural standard that need be taken seriously. One might respond that this just says something about coyotes, that there is a true functional natural history sentence asserting they are adaptable. Just so, but this means that the many natural history sentences might be defined for very tiny populations that fill very tiny niches. So natural goodness and defect slides into sometimes tiny niche goodness and defect. I leave open to what extent this is a problem for Foot's view when we are only talking about animals. I now turn to humans.

IV. Problems with Foot's Theory When Applied to Human Beings

Foot's theory does seem to capture a sense of the word 'good,' but there are problems when it is used as a foundation for the virtues and practical rationality. These problems pile up into a virtual *reductio*. The first problem is this. Foot wants to derive species-wide human virtues of a more or less traditional sort, and categorical reasons for action, from species-wide functional natural history sentences, but her theory does not get this result. Take seriously her analogy with bees. Foot says that humans need the virtues the way that honeybees need to sting, but not all honeybees sting. Bees have different jobs, each with its own natural virtues and defects. Similarly, humans need something like the traditional virtues of courage, honesty, and so on, but as with bees, individual humans, and a human community, can flourish when some people have some virtues and other people have other virtues. For example, courage, at least of the physical sort, is required mainly by

soldiers and police, and a community with a professional army and police force does not need much physical courage in the citizenry as a whole. One could argue that other sorts of courage are required by other members of the community, for example, a scientist needs the courage to put forward a new idea. Granted, but we are still in the realm of a minority. The average clerk, salesperson, gardener, or philosopher working in a college that requires no research has little need for courage beyond what is required to walk out the door in the morning and order an Egg McMuffin. Though some honesty is required for human societies, honesty is more important in some segments of the community (and at certain times) than in others. Indeed, depending on one's role in the community, honesty can be a detriment both to the individual and the community, just as a stinging queen bee would be a detriment to the queen herself, since stinging kills the honeybee, and to the hive as a whole, which would be without its queen. In various kinds of cross-group relations, for example, in labor negotiations, honesty is not a virtue. It can be a disaster for the negotiator, who might find herself without a job, and for the group, which gave away its final position at the start of the negotiations. Just as humans need honesty the way that the bee needs its sting, so do humans need fraud as the viceroy butterfly needs fraud – it has evolved to look like the poisonous monarch butterfly, a common phenomenon in the biological world. Many similar examples can be easily generated.

Whether one takes this seriously turns on what one wants Foot's theory to do. One could simply accept that the theory does not get more or less traditional, species-wide human virtues and reasons for action and that a lot of what some folk consider *human* virtues and defects are really *role* virtues and defects. However, my argument does not just conclude that different roles have different virtues. It concludes that things often considered vices, like lying, become role-specific human virtues, on Foot's view. This is a problem if one is seeking something like a traditional conception of moral virtue and reasons for action.

I now turn to the analogy with coyotes, with the help of lions, to make a more serious point. There are sub-populations of coyotes all the way down to niche populations. These different populations are not like the different roles bees play for the good of the hive. The coyote populations may not interact, and if they do, they may not contribute to a group good. Different coyotes simply have different ways of getting on in the world. The same is true of humans. Here is an example of a human niche population that is troubling for Foot, those that engage in organized crime. This is a paradigm example of immorality, and yet it is a way humans get along in the world. There are true functional natural history sentences like 'Humans prey upon

each other.' Preying on other people serves major functions in the lives of individuals (and of communities if we move from organized crime to war, an exercise I will not bother with since my point can be made without it). Further, organized crime has animal analogues, something that emphasizes its naturalness, if that seems important. Consider, for example, the male lion. It does relatively little hunting, that being mostly left to females. Yet it claims the 'lion's share' of the hunt. Further, it can be destructive. When a new male takes over a pride, it often kills the kittens of the previous male, thus ensuring that the females will be able to reproduce again, with him, more quickly. What exactly does the male do? Among other things, he drives off other males and kills their kittens, not obviously wonderful activities, save in so far as it helps ensure that future male lions are superior to present male lions, at least in their ability to drive off other males and kill kittens. Yet, whatever role the male lion plays, and no matter how destructive it sometimes is, by Foot's standards, when those standards are applied to sub-groups, a male lion that does these things is a good male lion. This means that the majority of male lions are not good lions since only a minority win prides and reproduce. On the other hand, another way male lions make a living is by slinking off when confronted by a larger, more aggressive male. The slinkers also play a role in the life-cycle of the lion so it would seem that both the killers of kittens and the slinkers are naturally good lions. Of course, the slinkers do not reproduce, but neither do most bees. Returning to human communities, successful organized criminals can be naturally good just as successful male lions are naturally good. Members of gangs behave much like the male lion. They are often relatively non-productive. They keep other organized groups out, and take substantial parts of the 'kill' they did not create. When a new group takes over, blood is often spilt, including that of the children of the newly acquire 'pride.' Blood vendettas cross generations, and it is not uncommon to kill the children of those one has killed. The life of organized crime is as much a human niche requiring its own virtues as the life of the city coyote is a niche requiring its own virtues. And when confronted with the cost of stopping such parasitism, many human communities decide, within limits, to tolerate it, just as female lions generally do not interfere in male lion conflicts and in the killing of their own kittens. We sometimes even glorify and encourage it, just as female lions, after a point, allow their kittens to be slaughtered and then mate with the killers. Such is a way humans and lions get on in the world. This is not a quirky example. It is easy to find similar ones.

One might argue that such behavior cannot be naturally good since human communities would be better off without these parasites, and for that

matter, if human virtues, such as courage and honesty, were more general than the honeybee's tendency to sting. There are several responses to this. First, this converts Foot's natural goodness argument into more of a utilitarian argument than she wants. There is a connection between morality and the good of the species and individual, but Foot does not think this relation is as the utilitarian, whether act – or rule-utilitarian, has it. Second, there are better ways for lions to make their living as well, from the point of view of a lion-centered utilitarianism. The violent clash of males, the failure of the majority of male lions to do what male lions most want, establish a pride, and the regular destruction of young lion life is hardly a utopia for lions. But it is the way they get along in the world and hence, for Foot, definitive of lion goodness. So the same must be true of organized crime.

So far I have emphasized that Foot's natural evaluations do not lead to a species-wide kind of human natural goodness, and can lead to seriously counterintuitive results, as in the organized crime case. Perhaps she can accept this and agree that the organized crime figure is naturally good. After all, presumably she already needs to accept that the Marburg virus is naturally good to the extent that it produces the horrible symptoms needed to reproduce. If the members of a successful organized criminal group are good in no deeper sense than that, we can accept it. The real question is whether her theory generates a plausible theory of virtue, given her account of virtue, and reasons for action, with a special eye toward moral reasons for action.

Foot's theory does no better here. The same issues that arose above can be reproduced in the realm of reasons for action and virtue. Remember what Foot's theory of reasons for action and her theory of virtue say, as I interpret them. A consideration, R, is a real reason for action if and only if it is good to recognize R as a reason for action. On the theory of natural goodness, this entails that there is a functional natural history sentence of the form 'Humans recognize R as a reason for action.' One who recognizes as reasons for action considerations that pass this test is virtuous in Foot's sense of 'virtuous.' This use of the word 'virtue' cannot, strictly speaking, apply to most animals, but nevertheless, imagining animal analogies tells us something about the problems for Foot's theory. Were honeybees to become intelligent so as to think in terms of reasons for action, there would probably not only be true functional natural history sentences like 'Worker bees sting,' but also ones like 'Worker bees recognize a reason to sting.' So on the theory of natural goodness, first, there really would be a reason for the workers to sting, though they die doing it, and second, these intelligent stinging bees are not only good the way a properly virulent virus is

good, but they are virtuous in Foot's sense. Similarly, were lions intelligent enough to recognize reasons for action, there would probably not only be true functional natural history sentences like 'Strong male lions take over prides from weaker males and kill their cubs,' but ones like 'Male lions recognize a reason to do this.' So on the theory of natural goodness, there would be a real reason to take over prides and kill cubs, and lions that recognize this reason are not just good as a properly virulent virus is good, but are virtuous in Foot's sense.

The moral of these animal tales is clear. There are true functional natural history sentences about organized criminals and about people lacking courage. Those can be converted into norms. George is a vicious but cowardly gang member, his slogan being, 'He who runs away today lives to knife his enemy in the back another day.' On the theory of natural goodness, he is naturally good just as the properly virulent plague virus is good. There are also true functional natural history sentences like 'Humans like George recognize there to be reason to engage in this behavior.' This true functional natural history sentence makes it naturally good to recognize this reason, and therefore it is a real reason. This entails that George is naturally good not just as the properly virulent virus is good, but virtuous as our intelligent cub killing lion is virtuous: he recognizes as reasons for action considerations that it is good to recognize as reasons for action, by the standard of the theory of natural goodness.

As if this were not bad enough, there is a final degeneration of Foot's view which is brought out by my discussion of niches. Like coyotes, humans fill many niches, some tiny. Each represents a way of making one's way in the world. So long as there is a true functional natural history sentence of the right sort, the individual who fills that niche is naturally good. And so long as there is a true functional natural history sentence saying that the individual in question recognizes reason to be as he is and do as he does, then there is reason and the individual, in recognizing the reason that he recognizes, turns out to be naturally virtuous. This serves as a *reductio* of Foot's view.

Can Foot stop this slide? The goal was to find species-wide, functional natural history sentences like 'Oaks have strong roots.' Given the way oaks make their way in the world, so to speak, they need strong roots. But oaks are not a model for humans. Oaks have few options. Humans are flexible. There are many true functional natural history sentences about humans, and about what humans recognize as reasons for action, which support judgments of goodness and virtue, defect and vice, on the theory of natural goodness. Humans are courageous and cowardly, truthful and liars, generous

and stingy. All of these play functional roles in the way humans make their livings. Foot's theory makes both the brave and cowardly naturally good. If we refuse that result, we must find some way to restrict the true functional natural history sentences that can support judgments of goodness and badness, virtue and vice. It is hard to find a non-arbitrary way to do this save by demanding that they be near universal, true functional natural history sentences. But then few people having either the traditional virtues or the traditional vices will be really virtuous or vice-ridden. For that matter, since many honeybees do not sting, there is no true, near universal functional natural history sentence that honeybees sting. On Foot's theory, pushed in this direction, stinging worker bees are no longer naturally good.

This problem is the result of one of the risks of naturalism in ethics. Ethical naturalism requires links between the moral and the natural, but if the normative is to do its job, there has to be some gap between the moral and what happens in the real world. If what really happens defines the good and the right, the evaluative function of normative judgments is lost. The naturalist must link the moral with the natural while preserving an evaluative gap. Foot tries to do this. 'Cats have four legs' is a functional natural history statement which generates the norm, 'Cats ought to have four legs.' Some cats only have three legs and are defective. The gap is there because having three legs is not a way cats make a living, though a particular three-legged cat might make a living *in spite of* its three legs. (On the other hand, a five-legged cat could make its living by means of its five legs by joining a carnival. Having five legs is part of its way of getting on in the world) The problem arises because being a human criminal is not like being a three legged cat. Being a human criminal is a way of getting on in the world, just as being a kitten killer is a way male lions get on in the world. Foot preserves some gap between the real and the good, but not enough.

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