

Ethical Naturalism and the Guise of the Good

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Ethical naturalism is the view that the most fundamental norms governing human conduct are grounded in *human nature*, or more precisely, in the human *life-form*. The view has perhaps most famously been defended in Philippa Foot's *Natural Goodness*, but in response to certain perceived weaknesses in her account, more sophisticated versions of naturalism have been developed by (among others) Anselm Müller. In this chapter, I reconstruct the failings of naive forms of naturalism and argue that they are based on a flawed understanding of the so-called guise of the good thesis: the idea that intentional action is pursued because the agent views her action as good. I show how the sophisticated naturalism developed by Müller (e.g., 2004, 2018)—central to which are the ideas of *practical inference principles* and *connatural knowledge*—can be seen to respond to this worry. However, having framed the original problem in terms of the guise of the good thesis, I argue, allows us to formulate a similar worry for the sophisticated naturalist position. For, I will argue, the latter cannot explain how an agent's commitment to certain highly general modes of acting (i.e., virtuous inference patterns) is constituted by *knowledge* of her life-form—thus threatening to obscure the sense in which agents could ever view their conduct as good and act out of that understanding. I, therefore, suggest that pursuit of the ethical naturalist project may require rethinking the relation between theoretical and practical knowledge of our form of life.

1. Introduction

Ethical naturalism is the view that the most fundamental norms governing human conduct are (in a sense to be explained) grounded in *human nature* or, more precisely, in the human *life-form*. As such, the naturalist project is a self-consciously neo-Aristotelean one, both in that it relies on an Aristotelean understanding of the concept of *life* in general and in that it attributes a central role to the *virtues*—the thought being that such characteristics as *honesty* and *justice* belong to human nature in the same way that, say, having sturdy roots essentially belongs to the life-form “oak tree.” On this picture, the possession of ethical knowledge will thus be a kind

of self-knowledge: knowledge of what is good for a particular life-form—namely, the one *I myself* bear.

Although the most influential and canonical statement of the view is perhaps Philippa Foot's (2001) *Natural Goodness*, it is by now commonly accepted among those sympathetic to the neo-Aristotelean project that her view stands in need of correction.¹ In a number of brilliant essays (e.g., Müller 2004, 2018), Anselm Müller has convinced me of this need and has also helped me to see that even despite of the shortcomings in Foot's account, we need not give up on the idea that ethical knowledge is self-knowledge of our form. I am sympathetic to his view and am inspired by and admire the humanity that one finds in Müller's writings. At the same time, I have certain doubts about the precise solution to the weaknesses in Foot's naturalism that Müller proposes. In this chapter, I will try to formulate these doubts as clearly as I can. Though perhaps critical, I offer these considerations in a spirit of friendship—this is the best way I can think of emulating the example set by Müller's philosophy.

I will label Müller's view, as well as related ones (Thompson 2004; Frey 2018, e.g.), *sophisticated naturalism*. For such accounts are meant to improve on a certain naivety in Foot's understanding of how knowledge of human nature is supposed to enter into an individual human agent's practical self-consciousness—that is, her understanding of how natural norms bear on the question, e.g., “Why should I keep my promise?,” posed in the first person. In brief, the problem is that for Foot, *theoretical* knowledge of human nature is supposed to play the role of a major premise in practical reasoning—and, as Müller argues, it is impossible for a theoretical *recognition* of facts concerning our nature to move us to action.

As I will explain,² Foot fails to see this because she has a confused understanding of what it means to say the human capacity for practical reasoning *aims at* the good—that intentional action is, as it is often put, “under the guise of the good.” But now we may already wonder: if we reject a conception of that capacity as responding to theoretically acknowledged facts about human nature, then how can any form of ethical naturalism still be maintained? Isn't that rejection simply tantamount to insisting that ethical knowledge is not, after all, knowledge of human nature?

Sophisticated naturalists believe this consequence can be avoided by calling to their aid the idea of specifically *practical* knowledge, famously introduced in the contemporary philosophy of action by Elizabeth Anscombe (1963). As Anscombe argues, intentional action is characterized by a form of self-knowledge: an intentionally acting agent knows “without observation” what she is doing. If Anscombe is right, such practical self-knowledge is a kind of non-empirical knowledge of a material process³—that is, a reality of which *other* subjects may have perceptually mediated knowledge “by observation.” And this idea, that there may be “two kinds of knowledge, but only one thing known”⁴ is precisely what the naturalist needs. Thompson, whose suggestion I will take sophisticated naturalists like Müller to be taking up, puts it as follows:

We have non-observational knowledge in self-consciousness of certain of our inner states, and a special practical knowledge of [our intentional actions] [...] what is to be said against the idea that we might have another kind of practical knowledge—ethical knowledge, if you like—of certain norms that attach to us as bearers of a particular life form characterized by practical reason? [...] Such cognition goes to constitute the form of life in question as one in which the things cognized are true. (Thompson 2004, 72–3)

Roughly, the thought is thus, first, a certain claim about natural goodness, phrased in the third person—that *human beings keep their promises*, for instance—is *identical* to a thought that a human being of virtuous character might have, phrased in the first person as something like *promises are to be kept*, or *it is good to keep one’s promises*, and second, that the agent’s thinking the latter, practical thought *constitutes* the truth of the first. This is supposed to be analogous to the way in which an agent’s thinking a practical thought of the form “I am doing φ ” constitutes the truth of the third-personal description “she is (intentionally) doing φ ” (more on this in Section 3).

What indeed is to be said against this idea—at least by someone who wants to grant the premise that there is practical knowledge of intentional action? I must admit that on first sight, the picture strikes me as convincing. It seems to allow us to hold on to the idea that ethical normativity is continuous with natural normativity (ethical knowledge is knowledge of *a nature*) while at the same time doing justice to the idea that our nature is *rational*, and we are therefore in a different position with respect to our own nature than with respect to nature at large. Against this background, rejecting the idea that there might be self-knowledge of our nature can thus seem merely dogmatic.

However, when we consider in detail how Müller attempts to fill in Thompson’s sketch, I argue, we will find that it is actually very mystifying what the sophisticated naturalist solution is supposed to come down to. I will suggest that what makes it *seem* as if the solution works is again, as in Foot’s case, an appeal to the intuitive truth of the “guise of the good” thesis. But as I will argue, I fear that the sophisticated naturalist has not really provided an account of how they can maintain that thesis: we still lack an understanding of how knowledge of human nature is supposed to enter practical self-consciousness.

I will begin (Section 2) with a brief reminder of the core ideas of ethical naturalism, as expounded by Foot, and the Aristotelean conception of life-forms it depends on and then consider in some more detail the way in which Foot fails to account for the practicality of thought of the good (Section 3). I then present the sophisticated naturalist’s response to this problem (Section 4). I will finally argue that the sophisticated naturalist, too, is unable to account for the practicality of thought of the good (Section 5).

2. Foot’s Recognitional Naturalism

Following Frey (2018), I will label Foot’s brand of ethical naturalism *recognitional*, for reasons that will become clear in the next section (Section 3). However, the neo-Aristotelean conception of life that is central to Foot’s account is common ground between her and more sophisticated forms of naturalism. I will start by reminding us of the central tenets of this

conception and then work my way up to the specific details of Foot’s account of practical motivation.

According to said neo-Aristotelean conception of life, in representing particular living organisms, we bring to bear judgments involving a peculiar form of *generality*, e.g., *bobcats breed in winter; horses have four legs; red-eared slider turtles have a hard shell.*

Following Thompson (2004, 2008), Foot calls such sentences and judgments “Aristotelean categoricals” or “natural-historic judgments.” Their hallmark is that they do not describe any number of particular turtles, say, but instead describe how turtle life proceeds *in general*—their generality is *nonquantificational*. The idea is that in describing anything as (part of) a living creature, we implicitly relate the particular we have in view to such general judgments. In thinking that this here is a turtle shell, for instance, I am thinking of it as playing a certain role in the life-form of the organism in front of me. Therefore, natural-historical judgments are not *falsified* when we find a particular turtle with a cracked shell. Instead, it is the turtle that would be found wanting: it manifests what Foot calls *intrinsic* or *natural defect*, in that this particular exemplar of the species fails to live up to a standard provided by its nature, i.e., by *what it is*. Aristotelean categoricals thus constitute *natural norms*. That is why they do not quantify over given particulars, but instead define what it is for a particular living creature to *be*, say, a red-eared slider (even if particular specimens can, and always will, fall short of this nature in some way, i.e., will manifest some kind of natural defect). Moreover, judgments of natural history are not self-standing: they are, rather, part of an interconnected *system* of such judgments that together represent a certain life-form. The facts articulated in each judgment thus stand in a *teleological* relationship to others. For example,

(a) *turtles have shells* and (b) *turtles take shelter in the presence of predators*

are not unconnected—rather, (b) explains *why* a good specimen of the species “turtle” will conform to (a). And what it means to satisfy (a), i.e., what counts as a good, sufficiently tough shell, will be determined by reference to judgments like (b) and others. Similarly, for instance, what counts as good eyesight in a hawk will be different from what counts as good eyesight in a mouse.⁵

Finally—and importantly for our purposes in Section 5—we *explain* the behavior of a particular bearer of a life-form by showing it to be an instance of what bearers of that life-form do *in general*. For example, we can say, it is *no accident* that Leonardo here is growing a shell because he is a turtle, and turtles *need* them *to take shelter from predators*. The form of explanation of vital activity through natural-historic judgments is thus *teleological*: it relates what happens with a certain particular here and now to *what the species needs or does* in general.

In this peculiar logical form of representations of life, the ethical naturalist thus finds the raw material for overcoming the idea that there is any fundamental gap between evaluation and description (*pace* the noncognitivist dogma derived from Hume’s “naturalistic fallacy”).⁶ For in describing something as a turtle shell, we are *already* bringing it under natural norms such that it follows that it is *bad* if it is cracked. And, so the ethical naturalist suggests, might it then not be that specifically ethical concepts—such as, say, *justice* and *charity*—are also concepts of natural goodness, which belong in a description of the specifically *human* life-form? The idea is that the absence of such qualities from a particular human being’s *will* would constitute a natural defect:

[w]ill and practical reason are on the face of it just two more faculties or powers a living being may bear, on a level with the powers of sight and hearing and memory.
(Thompson 2008, 29)

So just as a judgment about the soundness of the eyesight of a particular animal can only be made relative to its life-form (see the previous discussion), what counts as the sound operation of an agent’s capacity to act—their *will* or practical reason—is equally life-form-dependent. And that is to say, there is an *intrinsic* connection between the good of the life-form and what is practically rational for it. According to ethical naturalism, practical reason is just that through which human good is achieved (in the same sense in which vision, for the eagle, is that through which *its* good is achieved). So if, e.g., *human beings avoid injury* and *human beings keep their*

promises are true natural-historic judgments, then reasons of *justice* are on a par with prudential or self-interested reasons. There would then not be any *puzzle* about the rationality of morality: prudence and the virtues will be equally part of practical rationality.⁷

This raises the question of why we should think that something like the traditional precepts of virtue are indeed part of the human good. That is, what would be *defective* about a lack of, for example, justice in a particular bearer of the human life-form? Here, Foot argues that, as with any vital activity, the question can be answered only by reference to the “wider context” (as Thompson calls it)—that is, by ascertaining what justice is *good for* or what role it plays in human life.⁸ To illustrate the ethical naturalist’s general “method of derivation” (2001, 46) for answering such questions, Foot appeals to an example given by Anscombe that illustrates the need for the practice of promising in human life:

What ways are there of getting human beings to do things? You can make a man fall over by pushing him; you cannot usefully make his hand write a letter or mix concrete by pushing. [...] You can order him to do what you want, and if you have authority he will perhaps obey you. Again if you have power to hurt him or help him according as he disregards or obeys your orders, or if he loves you so as to accord with your requests, you have a way of getting him to do things. However, few people have authority over everyone they need to get to do things, and few people either have power to hurt or help others without damage to themselves or command affection from others to such an extent as to be able to get them to do the things they need others to do. (Anscombe 1969, 73–4)

Justice, then, is part of the natural history of humans in the way that having strong roots is part of the typical life of an oak tree. An understanding of why humans must keep their promises is thus an understanding of the same kind as that of why turtles need hard shells or why oak trees must have strong roots:

the structure of the derivation is the same whether we derive an evaluation of the roots of a particular tree or the action of a particular human being. The meaning of the words “good” and “bad” is not different when used of features of plants on the one hand and humans on the other, but is rather the same as applied, in judgements of natural goodness and defect, in the case of all living things. (Foot 2001, 47)

3. The Guise of the Good

Let us assume that we can indeed establish, via this “method of derivation,” that “human beings keep their promises” is a true Aristotelean categorical.⁹ It seems that there is still a further question: how is a recognition that promise-keeping is part of the human good supposed to *motivate* action? Or as Foot (2001, 53) puts the question, Can the ethical naturalist “establish an intelligible connection between [an appraisal of natural goodness] and what we have reason to do as individuals?” Here is her eventual answer:

Returning [...] to the sceptic who was supposed to have asked why he should do that which the good person must do, I would point out that there are two ways of understanding this question. If we understand the words “that which a good person must do” ‘transparently’ (extensionally) as referring to, for example, keeping promises ... then our answer must consist in showing him why doing *these things* he would act badly [...] But if his words are understood opaquely (intensionally) as referring to *bad actions* under that description, we must try to show him the conceptual connection between acting well and acting rationally [...] if he goes on saying “But why *should* I?”, we may query the meaning of that should. (Foot 2001, 65)

So Foot takes herself to have shown that the only two ways in which to take the question “Why should I do what the good human being does?” are

- a) as asking for an explanation of why, e.g., promise-breaking does not accord with human nature, and

b) as asking what reason there is to do what is good.

We are supposing for the sake of argument that (a) can be answered by means of the “method of derivation” illustrated earlier. And as is evident from the previous quote, Foot thinks that the question in sense (b) is nonsense. But why? As she explains, her reason for thinking this is that she accepts what is known as “the guise of the good thesis,” i.e., the idea that

while animals go for the good (thing) *that they see*, human beings go for *what they see as good*. (Foot 2001, 56)

We will investigate the meaning of this thesis in more detail below. But for now, we can put the point by employing some Aristotelian jargon and saying that *the good* is the *formal object* of practical reason—its constitutive end or *telos*. And assuming that much, it does seem that there is some absurdity involved in the question “Why should I do what is good?” So as Foot conceives of things, there is (assuming we have ruled out its “extensional” reading (a)) simply nothing for that question to mean other than “Why should I be practically rational?” Once we see this, it thus only requires a mild grammatical correction to lay the question aside.

But is this answer convincing? I think not. It seems that Foot just *postulates* that we can identify *the good* in the sense of the formal object of practical reason—the “guise” under which we act—with the natural goodness of one’s life-form. To see this, it will help to develop the guise of the good thesis, and the contrast with animal action, in a bit more detail.

As Foot put it, animals “go for the good (thing) *that they see*.” I think we can explain this by saying that the natural-historical judgment that, e.g., “rabbits eat carrots” should be understood as bearing an implicit reference to sensory consciousness: “rabbits eat carrots [when they see one],” or perhaps “rabbits eat [perceptually given] carrots.” Being given some carrot in perception, and other things being equal, the rabbit will go after and eat it: *that* is what rabbits do. Importantly, however, the rabbit lacks an understanding of two things. *First*, it lacks an understanding that the carrot *is* good for it, and *second* (on a particular occasion), *it is eating a carrot because that is what rabbits do*. The rabbit’s nature—its *instinct*—furnishes it

with a desire for carrots. And although the desire is of course (how could it not be?) *felt* so that we may say that the rabbit is *conscious* of what explains her action, it does *not* understand *that* her present carrot-ward tendency is provided by its nature, i.e., a matter of instinct. By contrast, given a (proto-)scientific understanding of rabbit nature, *we* as observers can see that it is no accident that this rabbit here is going after (desiring) some carrot, as opposed to some other object. However, our *knowledge* of that explanation is not part of the explanation itself—our understanding of the fact that rabbits are furnished with an instinct for carrots is not what *makes* this particular rabbit’s behavior nonaccidental.¹⁰

Although it would go too far to defend this claim in detail here, I thus take it that the implicit reference to sensory content described by Foot’s slogan (“animals go for the good (thing) that they see”) is a *formal* feature of animal life. It is formal because, on the one hand, it characterizes a kind of living nature that we can distinguish (as, e.g., Aristotle does in *De Anima*) from, say, merely vegetative life: a form of life that unfolds by being essentially aimed at *particular* objects (e.g., *this* prey, or *this* potential mate—where the “this” has the specificity associated with a perceptual demonstrative). It is formal, on the other hand, because since it characterizes the animal *form* of living, the slogan remains entirely abstract, i.e., does not describe any determinate principle of movement until we consider this or that specific *kind* of animal.

The guise of the good thesis can be understood as claiming that when it comes to intentional action, the forms of ignorance that pertain to animal action are dissolved. It is essential to intentional action that we recognize our objects *as* good, and are therefore able to understand and *explain* our own actions. Or more abstractly: whereas the explanation of what makes a particular animal’s action nonaccidental (by showing how it accords with its natural good) is brought to bear on the relevant movement merely third-personally, intentional action is characterized by the agent’s first-personal *understanding of* the reason for her action. This thesis about the nature of intentional action is as controversial as the guise of the good thesis itself,¹¹ and here is not the time nor place to defend it. However, I take it that this very rough conception of intentional action is common ground among ethical naturalists. As we have seen in the introduction (and as we will see in what follows), it is precisely the idea that intentional

action is characterized by what Anscombe (1963) calls nonobservational, *practical* knowledge of what we are doing that motivates the sophisticated naturalist. And we can now see how the idea of practical knowledge is intimately related to the guise of the good thesis. For as Anscombe explains, our practical knowledge of what we are doing comes out first and foremost in our ability to answer the question “Why?” about what we are doing (at least under descriptions of our action under which it is intended)—i.e., to *explain* what we are doing.

Importantly, on the Anscombean understanding of such practical knowledge of what we are doing and why, it is more than just an awareness of an explanatory principle or cause that is operating in us *anyway*. That is, it is not that we can neatly separate the cause of our doing φ (an inclination or felt urge to φ , let’s say) from our knowledge of that thing’s *being* the explanation of our action—it is not that we somehow observe or infer a causal connection between such a desire and the movements we are making, or even that we directly experience our movements as an affective response to some inner or outer prompt.¹² Instead, in intentional action, we can insert no wedge between our understanding *that* φ is our rational response to a certain reason ψ , and ψ ’s *being* the reason why, i.e., the explanation of, our φ ’ing. Roughly, this is so because, if the explanatory (causal) relationship between φ and ψ obtained independently of our *understanding* it to obtain, we would be unable to view our φ -like movements as our answer to the question “What to do?”¹³ at all: we would instead have to view it as a movement that happens (and the cause as one that operates) *anyway*, regardless of our practical deliberation. That is to say that an intentional action is, or embodies, an agent’s judgment about the good (i.e., what is practically rational) that is the cause of, i.e., explains, the reality it understands.¹⁴

Although I cannot argue for the point here, I thus take it that when Anscombe (1963, 87) (following Aquinas) calls practical knowledge “the cause of what it understands,” she is suggesting that practical reasoning and intentional agency involve a *sui generis* form of explanation that is characterized by its *self-consciousness*. As Rödl (2007, 55–63) argues, for such a form of explanation, we cannot separate between the *causality* of the cause and the subject’s understanding of its causality. And I think we can make the same point, as Anselm Müller has done, by saying that the distinctive *teleology* of practical reasoning (roughly, the

latter's being a power *to realize the good*) is not merely natural, but *mental* teleology—that is, the good at which practical reasoning aims and which it helps to produce is one that is essentially understood so that realizing it *is* acting under its guise.¹⁵

If the previous argument is right, we can see that indeed, a *rational* animal does not just go for perceptually given food and does not just do that because she understands that it is nourishment, but does it *knowing* that that is *why* she is doing it. Unlike for the non-rational animal, the explanation of her action thus includes her knowing that it *is* its explanation. What makes it no accident that I am doing φ is my self-conscious practical *judgment* about how to act.

Now given all of this, it may be tempting to formulate the guise of the good thesis as follows, analogous to the way we represented the implicit reference to sensory consciousness in the animal case:

(1) The human being does φ (when they judge that φ 'ing is good)

And there need be nothing wrong with that. However, it is important to note—and I think that, crucially, Foot fails to see this—that this merely states something about the *formal* character of intentional action: that it is action performed on account of the agent's self-consciously judging it to be the thing to do in the present circumstances. Properly understood, the thesis is analogous to the statement that “animals go for the perceptually given things they desire.” Just as the latter does not say anything determinate, so (1) does not give any determinate sense to the meaning of “good” over and above: *that which is to be pursued* (for a certain agent, or kind of agent). Call this good_p . We can then say that an intentional action is an agent's answer to the question what it is this good_p to do. But this does not say anything about how an agent who faces the question “what is this good_p to do?” can go about and answer that question—it does not say anything about what *standard* is to be employed in evaluating what is to be done; that is, this good_p is a wholly *formal* specification of the *telos* of practical reasoning. It does not, however, provide us with any orientation *within* practical reasoning.¹⁶

Contrast the following statement, letting good_N stand for natural goodness (in this case, of the human being):

(2) The human being does φ (when they judge that it is good_N)

If this statement were true, it would establish a *determinate* connection between what is *naturally* good for humans and what humans do. And Foot seems to think that this is how we should understand the guise of the good thesis. But it is unclear why this would amount to more than wishful thinking on Foot's part. She *wants* there to be a connection between what is

good_N for the species and what we have practical reason to do (what is good_P). But the skeptic's query, properly understood, is why that should be the case. As Müller puts it, the skeptic is someone who

claims he cannot be told *how to act* by being told *how he ought to act* [i.e., that φ is good_N for members of his species]. He denies that he has been given any reason *to do* what he has been given reason *to believe he ought to do*. [...] Foot asks him to recognize practically a requirement that she only shows to deserve theoretical recognition.¹⁷ (Müller 2018, 173)

If I am allowed to speculate on the reason why Foot may think it permissible to equate goodness_P and goodness_N, I would suggest that this is because she seems to treat (2) as *itself* a natural-historic judgment.¹⁸ That is, she may think it a fact about the human will that it is, as it were, attuned to theoretical judgments about human nature: when the intellect recognizes the truth of a natural-historic judgment, the will “naturally” follows. But this turns the guise of the good thesis into a merely external or sideways-on claim about human beings. And as such, it is in fact at odds with the guise of the good thesis as I explained it earlier. For if (2) is indeed a natural-historic judgment, it describes a principle of explanation (viz., a principle of the kind explained in Section 2) that does not include the subject's knowledge of it. The *truth* of (2) would be independent of whether someone, *A*, happens to *know* that it is true. And that is to say that when *A* φ 's in circumstances in which she theoretically judges that it is good_N to φ , she herself will see no intelligible connection between that judgment and the fact that she is, in fact, φ 'ing. That is to say, she would not have practical knowledge of the answer to the question “Why are you doing φ ?”

Thus, if we take the guise of the good thesis in its *formal* sense, it does not establish a connection between natural goodness and human action. However, if we take it in its external, sideways-on sense, it establishes such a connection—but only at the price of losing the specifically self-conscious character of human action that the thesis was originally meant to capture. In neither case, then, has Foot shown that there is *practical* reason to do what is

good_N. Her account seems to, in a peculiar fashion, confuse the teleology of theoretical reason—it's being aimed at the *true*—with that of practical reason.

4. Sophisticated Naturalism

Sophisticated naturalists like Müller (2018) accept that Foot does not give an acceptable account of motivation by ethical norms. However, they believe such an account can be given without letting go of what is essential to naturalism: the ideas that ethical norms *are* natural norms and that ethical knowledge *is* knowledge of our form. Thus they take the problem we developed for Foot earlier as providing the contours of a defensible form of naturalism. What the naturalist needs is simply the idea of a judgment that is *natural* for us to make, but is at the same time thoroughly practical (aimed at realizing the good, rather than representing the true). And, it seems, the idea of such a judgment is just the idea of a specifically *practical knowledge of human form* that we already encountered in the introduction. Müller summarizes the idea as follows:

the very human nature that involves moral requirements *also* includes a corresponding *awareness*—not the theoretical knowledge of these requirements, but the *practical recognition* which ideally shapes the motivational dispositions which realize them, the virtues. (Why shouldn't it—just as sea turtle nature, which involves the need of ocean water, also supplies the hatchlings with an instinct to head for it?) The well-developed human mind by nature recognizes what to treat as a reason for doing what, in basic, “indemonstrable” (!) yet material should-convictions, or practical principles. Aquinas calls the natural disposition to become conscious of and apply these principles *synderesis*. (Müller 2004, 182–3)

Let me take a moment to spell out the suggestion, as I understand it. What Müller argues is that practical reasoning does not involve theoretical recognition of natural norms, which would have to be applied, in a sense, third-personally: they would involve a moment in which the agent applies a third-personal judgment about what is good for *Xs* to herself, which is precisely what

raises the problem for Foot that I have elaborated on. Instead, Müller’s thought is that sound practical reasoning must remain wholly first personal. Thus, instead of the following form:

1. Human beings keep their promises
2. I am a human being
3. I’ve promised X to φ
4. So I’ll φ

we have instead¹⁹

- A) I have promised X to φ
- B) So I’ll φ .

Deriving (B) from (A) instantiates a certain “motivational pattern” (Müller 2018), or what Müller elsewhere (e.g., 2004) calls a practical *inference pattern* characteristic of bearers of the virtue of fidelity. And although this disposition is not, perhaps, a further *premise* in one’s reasoning, it is as Müller says, an “awareness” of “what to treat as a reason for doing what”—an awareness that, in line with the Thompsonian thought, Müller even calls “moral knowledge” (2018, 184) or “unmediated knowledge how to act” (2018, 182). The way our virtuous agent might give expression to this awareness, when queried about her reasons for action, is by saying “promises are to be kept,” or “one should keep one’s promises.”²⁰ And it is human nature, when “well-developed,” that furnishes us with such “material should-convictions, or practical principles.”²¹ That is to say, we do not arrive at these should-convictions *mediately*, i.e., *by practical reasoning* from further premises. Rather, we know them just by partaking in the very nature that these practical principles form part of our knowledge of them is “connatural.”

According to the sophisticated naturalist, we can thus see the agent’s practical awareness, which she expresses with “one should keep one’s promises” as a first-personal *expression* of an explanatory principle that is merely *described* third-personally, in a natural-historic judgment: *human beings keep their promises*. And as Müller says, this is supposed to be perfectly analogous to the case of other animals. Just as the natural-historical judgment “sea turtles need ocean water” is a *description* of the well-formed sea turtle’s consciously felt *desire* for ocean water, so “human beings keep their promises” is a description of a *self*-consciously held

commitment had by each good specimen of the human species. In both cases, the necessity to *X* described in the natural-historical judgment *just is* a disposition to *X*—a sensible desire in the one case, a practical commitment or “rational inclination” in the other.

Crucially for the argument in the next section, this also means that human action can be *explained* through natural-historical judgments. For in the same way that, through knowledge of its nature, we can explain why a particular sea turtle is heading for the ocean (“it’s a sea turtle—they need ocean water”) without *sharing* in its desire, a species of rational animal (Martians, say) with a curiosity for anthropological matters may explain what goes on with a particular human being through its knowledge of human nature (“see, she’s keeping her promise!”). Now the naturalist believes this need not conflict with the idea that the human being subjected to such explanation might herself be able to explain her action nonempirically, i.e., without having to take recourse to general anthropological knowledge (“I’m keeping my promise—it’s what one does”). The sophisticated naturalist thus claims that we can distinguish between:²²

- c) the unity of the system of natural-historical judgments our Martian anthropologists use to explain human action—which is empirical and third-personal, and
- d) the unity of what is thereby explained—human action—which is the unity of a set of practical judgments, i.e., a practical syllogism.

The unity involved in (a) must be the unity of *natural* teleology, while the unity involved in (b), by contrast, is self-conscious, practical teleology. But, the idea is, *in saying*, e.g., “one keeps one’s promises”—something that expresses a practical commitment—we at the same time instantiate the relevant natural-historical judgment. Judging in accordance with a valid practical inference principle, then, is our way of realizing the natural goodness of our species.

Now in addition to providing ethical naturalism with a way out of the problem for Foot, this picture also yields an attractive view of the *unity* of practical reason. For on Müller’s view, acting in accordance with different kinds of practical *reasons* can be said to be practically *rational* simply in so far as responding to each of them instantiates a *good pattern* of practical inference—i.e., one through the adoption of which the natural goodness of the species is

realized. This explains how acting out of both so-called backward-looking reasons (such as the fact of a promise made) and forward-looking ones (such as the fact that doing φ would be conducive to one's health) can be rational in the same sense and indeed how acting for backward-looking reasons can ever be rational at all.²³ After all, the mark of the latter is precisely that no *further* good is achieved by it: the rationality of keeping one's promise does not lie in any good achieved by it (it is not, e.g., a means to achieving justice). If the paradigm of practical rationality is thought to lie in forward-looking reasons, this can seem mysterious. On Müller's account, however, we can say that the rationality of the inference pattern "I have promised to φ , therefore I'll φ " and the instrumental pattern " φ is a means to ψ (which I want), therefore I'll φ " consists in precisely the same thing: it belongs to the natural goodness of human beings to respond to reasons in these ways. We will return to this in Section 5.

It is worth noting, moreover, that we can actually think of the "unmediated knowledge how to act" (Müller 2018, 182) that is constituted by our adoption of such inference principles as necessitated by our considerations in Section 3. For as we have seen there, as long as we understand the good in merely formal terms as "that at which we aim in practical reasoning," it lacks any determinacy: it does not provide us with any orientation *within* practical reasoning. If practical reasoning is a capacity for self-conscious action—i.e., action that is done in and because of one's understanding of it as good—then such reasoning must have a *starting point* in the form of practical commitment that is not itself arrived at by implementing the instrumental inference pattern. Instrumentally mediated practical judgments, it can seem, depend for their very possibility on unmediated "*material* [emphasis mine] should-convictions" (Müller 2004, 183). Indeed Jennifer Frey, who I take to defend a form of sophisticated naturalism similar (but perhaps not identical) to Müller's, makes this argument for the possibility of connatural knowledge explicit as follows:²⁴

practical thought could not operate unless something were already wanted by some person—that is, unless someone was already self-consciously directed toward the realization of some end or good. (Frey 2018, 67)

Therefore,

we must presuppose such starting points or first principles because the intrinsic teleology of practical reason presupposes that some ends are wanted, since the primary or principle job of practical reason is to find the means to realizing or maintaining ends. (Frey 2018, 74–5)

However, let me point out that a philosopher who finds the idea of connatural knowledge impossible to understand might of course equally apply *modus tollens* here and conclude that practical knowledge of action is impossible. Or perhaps more carefully, in so far as one has not earned the right to speak of unmediated practical knowledge, one has also not yet earned the right to speak of practical reasoning as a capacity for practical knowledge—after all, one cannot always have what one needs. And my worry is that not enough sense can be made of the notion of synderetic knowledge: that we cannot understand the idea of a single explanatory principle that can be both described in a natural-historical judgment and taken up practically in the first person.

5. The Cause of What It Understands?

In Section 3, we saw that the guise of the good thesis brings out the *formal* character of intentional action: it is action done in and because of an understanding that it is good—an understanding that is the cause of what it understands. And as we have seen, such an understanding—practical knowledge of what I am doing—is not just an awareness of a causal principle that operates in the agent *independently* of her knowledge. To deny this would be to deny that animal movement and rational self-movement are formally distinct. That is something that the sophisticated naturalist clearly does not wish to say. Frey, for example, is again explicit about this. As she insists, the practical commitments that we have connaturally should not be understood along the lines of “given” animal inclinations:

I am not saying that we are naturally apt to know [the starting points of practical reason] because we are inclined to them. If we must insist on a logical priority, then cognition is always prior (logically) to desire. (Frey 2018, 74n37)

However, my worry is that the sophisticated naturalist cannot make sense of the required “logical priority” of knowledge over inclination—i.e., of the idea that such knowledge is the cause of what it understands. This can be brought out by asking the question, *What* knowledge, exactly, is supposed to be embodied in a general practical judgment such as “one should keep one’s promises”? Presumably, the answer is knowledge that promise-keeping is *good*. But good in what sense? On the face of it, there seem to be only two options here. In being committed to a general practical judgment, the agent has knowledge of either

- 1) that promise-keeping is *naturally* good, i.e., she knows that promise-keeping is good_N for bearers of her species, or
- 2) that promise-keeping is *what she is practically committed to*, i.e., she knows that promise-keeping is good_P for her to do.

Here, in brief, is the dilemma I think the sophisticated naturalist faces: (1) effectively means giving up on the “logical priority” of knowledge over inclination. In that case, we cannot understand an agent’s knowledge as anything more than a strange first-personal awareness of a causal principle that is operative in her *anyway*. And such knowledge would not be *practical* knowledge. By contrast, if (2) were the case, the agent’s judgment would perhaps be constitutive of her *having* the inclination to keep her promises. But it would not be practical *in virtue of* being *knowledge* of the agent’s form: the knowledge would be merely *of the agent’s practical commitment*, which begs the question of how the agent herself understands her commitment to *this* (rather than some other) general practical principle. In neither case is the required *unity* of what is described in a natural-historic judgment and what is voiced in the expression of a first-personal practical commitment in view for the agent herself. And the question I am raising is how we can then still make sense of the idea that action is under the

guise of the good (that we human beings “go for what we see as good”) if we understand that thesis in the way I have explained it.

Let us first take a closer look at option (1). I take it that it is fairly obvious, given the aims of the sophisticated naturalist position, that what is known in the virtuous agent’s connatural practical commitment cannot be a natural norm *qua* natural norm. After all, it was precisely Müller’s objective to sharply differentiate between knowledge of natural-historical facts, which he insists must always be third-personal and theoretical, and first-personal practical knowledge. Nevertheless, it may still be tempting to think that what *underwrites*, i.e., confers objectivity on, an agent’s first-personal commitment is the corresponding natural norm: an agent is *right* in saying, e.g., “one should keep one’s promises” because it is a fact of human nature that “human beings keep their promises.” But I think it is clear that as long as the agent is said to lack any awareness of that natural norm *qua* natural norm, the fact of the agent’s practical commitment and the natural-historic fact stand in a merely accidental relation to each other—if we speak of “knowledge” here, it must then be in a wholly externalist sense that I doubt the naturalist wants to endorse.

Now the obvious reply is that the two facts do *not* stand in a merely accidental relation to each other: after all, it is *natural* for human beings to *have* certain practical commitments. This fact about one’s nature *explains* why one is committed, e.g., to promise-keeping. However, central to our grasp of the notion of a natural-teleological explanation was the thought that the *object* of the explanation may be blind to the operation of the cause or principle in question—and in any case, knowledge of such a cause is not itself part *of* the explanation. Compare (Frey 2018, 66):

Natural teleology is a form of explanation that is objective—it describes the way things are independent of anyone’s thoughts or desires. In this sense, natural good is an object of theoretical knowledge, because the facts are prior to the judgment of them. This implies that the facts are independent of the judgment that registers that good.

By contrast, what is known in a *practical* judgment is obviously not in that way independent of the judgment. To understand how a practical judgment that “one should keep one’s promises” or “promise-keeping is good” might constitute practical *knowledge*, it will thus not suffice for there to be a natural-teleological connection between the fact that “humans keep their promises” and the fact that this human here is committed to promise-keeping. Nor will it suffice to add to this connection a general understanding that human action *tends*, as a matter of natural-historical fact, to realize the natural goodness of the human species—i.e., that “practical reason” for humans is analogous to “instinct” for animals. Such an abstract understanding would still be merely theoretical, and it would leave unexplained how one can act out of a *specific* conception of, say, promise-keeping as good. What we need to understand is how an agent might, *in* being first-personally and practically committed to promise-keeping, see herself as realizing the good. So we cannot understand connatural knowledge as an awareness of a natural-teleological principle *as such*. It is not that we are, as it were, inclined to keep our promises *anyway* and then come to have a special first-personal knowledge of this fact.

This brings us to option (2), which effectively insists that the order of explanation must be the reverse: it must be *because* human beings practically know certain ends to be good that it is true to say that they, in general, keep their promises. Thus it is only because of our own practical knowledge of the good that the Martian anthropologist can have a different, empirical knowledge of human natural goodness. In that sense, then, practical knowledge of how to live is “the cause of what it understands.” As Thompson (2004, 73) says, “[S]uch cognition goes to *constitute* [emphasis added] the form of life in question as one in which the things cognized are true.” A commitment expressed by saying that “one should keep one’s promises” is then simply knowledge *that promise-keeping is good*_p. Like Anscombe’s practical knowledge, synderetic knowledge is knowledge that constitutes one’s practical commitment, and what is known in it is just that very commitment. The only difference is that synderetic knowledge would be knowledge of a more *general* commitment—not of a particular intentional action that I am now performing, but (as Müller would put it) of the commitment to treat certain things *as reasons*. This may seem to give us a straightforward answer to the question of how in acting we can take

ourselves to be realizing the good: our practical commitments, from the most general to the most particular, are all judgments that something is *to be done*.

Unfortunately, this answer only provides the appearance of understanding. For the reality is, I fear, that we have so far failed to give the expression good_p any sense at all, over and above that to which I am practically committed. Our reason for *calling* our practical commitments judgments *about the good* is just that we take the guise of the good thesis for granted. But nothing has been done to make that thesis understandable—to explain how an agent *could* take herself to be realizing the good in committing practically in one way rather than another, i.e., how she can see her commitment *as* her answer to an objectively defined standard. To see this, it will be helpful to reflect again on Müller’s idea that connatural knowledge is an awareness of “what constitutes a reason for what” or practical inference patterns.

As we have seen, the idea is that such “material” patterns as “I have promised to φ , therefore I will φ ” stand on a par with the instrumental pattern “ φ is a means to ψ , so I’ll φ .” They stand on a par because they are equally ways in which human *natural* goodness is realized in practical reasoning. But there is, it seems, also an important difference between them. For I take it that it is reasonably clear how, in implementing the instrumental pattern, an agent might take herself to be realizing the good: *assuming* that ψ ’ing would be good, one can take that goodness to be “transmitted” to the means, φ —and so one can come to view φ *as* one’s answer to the question, “What is good to do?” Clearly, this does not hold for the material inference principle pertaining to promises. Both patterns may equally be (let us assume) such that human goodness is realized through them—but our question was how, in being committed to treating promises kept as a reason to act, the agent can view herself *as* realizing that good. The answer we were considering was that an agent can view that commitment as good in the same way that she can view her commitment to a specific intentional action as good. However, as I hope to have shown, any understanding we might have of how an agent might view a *specific* action as good in fact presupposes an understanding of how she might view her commitment to a *material* inference principle as good. We are tracing a rather too small circle if we attempt to illuminate *unmediated* knowledge of the good by analogy to a form of practical

knowledge (Anscombe's) that we understand through the idea of (instrumentally) *deriving* one's action from another thing wanted.

6. Conclusion

The good that an agent understands herself to aim at *in* being committed to some material practical inference principle, then, cannot be understood on the model of the goodness of a practical commitment in the sense of an intention. For that practical commitment would then have to appear to the agent as a brute fact. She would be unable to understand her commitment to promise-keeping (rather than obligation-shirking, say) as the *right* answer to the question, "What to do?"—and in so far as either answer seems arbitrary, the very idea that she *is* answering a question with an objective answer seems to be at stake.

Perhaps, however, Müller would insist that my argument assumes something his account meant to avoid: the idea that the virtuous agent views promise-keeping *as good* at all. Part of the point of his account of practical inference principles was, after all, to distinguish between *ends* that are wanted (and thus viewed by the agent as good) and practical inference principles. Maybe we should therefore say, an agent who has adopted a certain motivational pattern *thereby* aims at a certain kind of life (an honest one, say), but the motivational pattern is not itself a judgment about the good.

However, it still seems to me that in order to describe an agent as *reasoning* in accordance with a certain inference principle, we must describe her as viewing the inference as *valid*—and that means, as thinking that reasoning in that way results (necessarily, given the truth of the premises) in correct judgments about the good. And the question is how, in the case of "material" principles like the promise-keeping pattern, the agent can take *that* to be the case. How can she take it that a pattern of promise-keeping rather than obligation-shirking realizes the good? It seems to be at this point that the ethical naturalist must reach out to the idea of our nature: it is our life-form that provides the objective measure that answers this question. If that is right, then we face the question of what the relation is between our form of life and our commitment to specific practical inference patterns. Either the relation is just that our form of

life *naturally* gives rise to certain commitments, where this explanation will remain obscure to the subject, or it is more, and it is *in virtue of* our knowledge of our form that we come to have certain general practical commitments: and that is what I understood sophisticated naturalism to claim before I considered the aforementioned objection.

The tension within the latter idea that I have sought to bring out is that it seems difficult to conceive of a kind of knowledge that relates to its object in the way that practical knowledge (“knowledge in intention”) relates to *its* object (what one is intentionally doing), while also allowing the subject to view herself as genuinely *getting it right*—as having and acting “under the guise of” a correct take about what constitutes living well. In the case of knowledge of one’s intentional action, what allows one’s practical knowledge to be “the cause of what it understands” is precisely that there is no answer to the question of what one is doing prior to one’s settling it. But in so far as we have to view our most general practical commitments (Müller’s motivational patterns) as realizing the good, we cannot view our commitment to them as constituting the answer in the same way. I have tried to show that two related ideas conspired to camouflage this difficulty:

- I. The idea that we can identify self-conscious practical commitments (intentions) with judgments about the good.
- II. Thompson’s analogy between the unity of observational and practical knowledge of intentional action.

As I have already argued, (I) does not constitute a datum that the naturalist can simply take for granted. Practical knowledge of what I am doing can count as *knowledge of the good* in a substantive sense only if an account is given of how we know our most general practical commitments to be good (and not merely how we know what our most general practical commitments are). And in closing, allow me to speculate that perhaps (II) also cannot be taken for granted.

Thompson (2004, 72–3) asks what is to be said against the idea that there might be practical knowledge of one and the same fact that can also be known in a natural-historical judgment—just as I can have practical knowledge of a material reality, i.e., my intentional action, that can

also be known by you third-personally. I believe our considerations allow us to appreciate that this is more difficult than it may seem. For if an explanation of why someone is φ 'ing is a natural-teleological one, the nature in question must be logically prior to the individual's behavior, which merely manifests it—whereas if φ has an explanation of a self-conscious, practical form, the truth of that explanation is constituted by the individual's judgment.

So even if we assume that, as we considered in Section 4, the possibility of self-knowledge of what I am doing depends on the possibility of self-knowledge of the good, we should be cautious of concluding that it is, therefore, possible to have self-knowledge of the same thing that can be known in a natural-historical judgment. That may be the wrong way to understand self-knowledge of form. Instead, we might take Thompson's analogy in the other direction and question his assumption that my observational knowledge of what you are doing must be purely third personal. The assumption may seem innocent: after all, when I see you φ , I am not φ 'ing. According to this assumption, my knowledge of your action is thus of the same kind as the Martian anthropologist's knowledge of humankind: it does not require the knower to *share in* what is known. But if we reject the idea that self-knowledge of form is knowledge of something that can also be known merely empirically, we can perhaps also reject that assumption. May it not be that my knowledge of your action is only possible because we *do* share in an activity—not that of φ 'ing, perhaps, but the shared activity of self-conscious human living? If that is right, knowledge of each other's actions and knowledge of our form would be even more closely connected than the naturalist has hitherto imagined.

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¹ Apart from Müller’s work, compare, e.g. Frey (2018) and Haase (2018).

² See Section 3.

³ As Thompson (2011, 200) puts it, “[S]elf-knowledge [...] extends beyond the inner recesses of the mind, beyond the narrowly psychical, and into the things that I am doing.”

⁴ See Frey (2018, 81) referring to Anscombe (1963, 53).

⁵ That is, the predicate “good” is logically “attributive” rather than “predicative” (Geach 1956).

⁶ Compare Foot (2001, Chapter 2) for the specifically ethical naturalist attack on, and Anscombe (1958) for a related but more general criticism of, the “is-ought fallacy.”

⁷ To show, *pace* the noncognitivist (and *pace* her younger self (1972)) how acting in line with moral requirements can be practically rational is Foot’s guiding concern. Compare Foot’s formulation of this dissolving of the puzzle about the rationality of morality: “Many of us are willing to reject a present-desire theory of reasons for action because we think that someone who knowingly puts his future health at risk for a trivial pleasure is behaving foolishly, and therefore not well. Seeing his will as defective, we *therefore* say that he is doing what he has reason not to do. [...] what, we may ask, is so special about prudence that it alone among the virtues should be reasonably thought to relate to practical rationality in such a way?” (Foot 2001, 63)

⁸ Hence Foot (2001, 35) quotes Geach’s slogan, “Men need virtues as bees need stings.”

⁹ There are grounds to question the success of such derivation. As Müller (2018) argues, the variety of ends that can constitute a good human life—and the fact that individual satisfaction or happiness *does* play an essential part in it, as Foot herself admits—means that it is difficult to establish that justice, as traditionally conceived, really *is* a virtue, rather than an impediment to a life well lived. Moreover, Müller argues (following Anscombe’s (e.g., 2005) idea that some virtues have a nonteleological or “mystical” point), it seems that not the whole of what is contained under the virtue of justice, say, can be explained by saying that it is necessary for the achievement of human good.

¹⁰ I will not defend this understanding of the logical specificities of animal life here, but take it to be along broadly Aristotelean lines. Cf. Rödl (2016, 87–90).

¹¹ Indeed, as I will explain, I take it that both theses properly understood will overlap.

¹² Such as when one jumps at the appearance of a spider and knows that it is precisely because one thought there was a spider that one jumps—that is, I mean to exclude the kind of affective responses that Anscombe (1963, 15–18) discusses under the heading of “mental causation.” As an aside, note that one way of understanding the so-called problem of “deviant causal chains” for the standard causal theory of action is precisely that such theories cannot distinguish between movements that are genuine rational responses to a situation, or practical judgements, and mere “mental causation” in Anscombe’s sense (such as when Davidson’s (2001, 79) famous climber is startled by his own desire to rid himself of the weight of his fellow climber, and lets go).

¹³ That is, what I will below label the question of what is good $_p$ good $_p$.

¹⁴ A proper development of the guise of the good thesis, I thus submit, would show that *seeing something as good* just is a practical judgement that something is *to be done*, and that just *is* one’s performing the action—acting intentionally *is* acting out of the recognition that so acting is good (cf. Rödl 2007 ch. 2).

¹⁵ Müller (1992) distinguishes mental or “unreasoned” teleology in this sense from *intentional* teleology, which is the “syllogistic” teleology exhibited when we have a certain purpose ψ in mind, and think that φ will contribute to it. That an exercise of the power of practical reason does not aim at the good in *that* sense is clear, Müller argues, because this would lead to an infinite regress: we would have to think of practical reasoning as contributing to the aim of achieving the good, and would have to engage in it on account of that thought (also cf. Müller 1979). Nevertheless, Müller rightly argues that this does not mean that practical reason’s directedness toward the good is a case of merely natural teleology (of the kind described in Section 2). Instead, a paradigm for “mental teleology” is the way in which (theoretical) judgment aims at the truth: roughly, to judge that p is to settle for oneself the question whether p is true. And this identity is “transparent”: “in deciding *how you ought to judge* you cannot help judging *as you decide you ought to judge*” (Müller 1992, 178). This means that *in* judging, we always have the formal object of judgment (truth) in view—and any activity that is not sensitive to truth in this way is simply not judging. *Mutatis mutandis*, this is what it means to say that action aims at, and thus is under the guise of, the good.

¹⁶ Müller (2020) briefly makes the same point (note 16, point (4)).

¹⁷ Thus, Müller argues, while on Foot’s account there is (at least arguably) *no* logical gap between the conjunction of the following premises,

1. believing that human beings φ given R;
2. believing that the good life, for humans, depends on them implementing $R \rightarrow \varphi$; and
3. believing that I (a human being) ought to φ

and the conclusion:

4. believing I would be a bad/defective human being if I did not φ

there *does* remain a logical gap between all of those beliefs and *practically judging*, i.e., *doing* φ .

¹⁸ Cf. Müller (e.g., 2020, 152–4), who insists that what he calls a practical judgment and judgments of Aristotelean necessities should be sharply kept apart. We return to this matter in the next section.

¹⁹ And there may anyway seem to be good reasons for rejecting the first form in favor of the second, as Müller (2018) argues. For is there not something strange about representing a virtuous agent as *acting out of* the consideration that, e.g., human beings *need* to keep their promises—or *else* human life won’t get by? Shouldn’t the fully virtuous person be moved to act out of consideration of, say, a promise made alone? I will not pursue this question here.

²⁰ I am taking both expressions to be entirely first personal, even if they do not contain the first-person pronoun. For the necessity expressed in them is such that it is no accident that a subject who expresses it is

also *bound* by that necessity: in expressing oneself in this way, one is saying how one has answered, for oneself, the question, “What to do?”—a question that is as first personal as it is universal. Cf. Müller (1977).

²¹ It is important to note that this changes the *form* of answer to the moral skeptic that Müller envisages. Unlike Foot, we answer the skeptic’s question, “Why should I?,” “not by giving him reasons why he should, reasons drawn from a theoretical understanding of his life form or from anywhere else. Perhaps by saying: ‘Really? You don’t know? Not even dimly? And how did you manage to lay your knowledge at rest?’” (Müller 2018, 184)

²² Remember the appeal to the Anscombean idea that “we can speak of two kinds of knowledge, but only one thing known” (Frey 2018, 81), mentioned in the introduction.

²³ For the idea of backward-looking reasons, and the challenge posed by them for the unity of practical reason, see Müller (2011).

²⁴ One difference between Frey and Müller seems to be that Frey does not distinguish as clearly between *wanting* the good as a first premise and being disposed to reason in accordance with a certain practical inference pattern. However, I take the point Frey is making here to straightforwardly carry over to Müller’s account: connatural knowledge is necessary for practical reasoning to get going.