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TOWARDS AN INVESTIGATION
OF
HUMAN FLOURISHING

by

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ABSTRACT

Taking Aristotle's position in regard to ethics as a starting point, this thesis will analyse the concept of human flourishing, for this metaphor resists strict definition. Can the concept be unpacked so that more significant substance can be given to it?

First, the role of flourishing in ethics is provided with a context. In the first two chapters Aristotle's ethical picture is contrasted with contemporary ethical positions. These latter positions reduce ethics to the study of 'quandaries' (Edmund Pincoffs' term), which makes them inadequate. I then contrast two modern accounts of Aristotle's view of the *polis* and the essence of man. The first, Alasdair MacIntyre's, takes Aristotle to hold that man cannot develop his essence outside *apolis*. He is necessarily dependent upon it. A second view, supported by Martha Nussbaum, is contrasted with MacIntyre's. She takes Aristotle's account of man's relationship to the *polis* to be contingent. Having determined that MacIntyre's view is too narrow, the discussion moves to a more general consideration of human flourishing.

Having established how to view man, I now scrutinise the concept of flourishing itself. Aristotle provides a practical account of what flourishing is, but he does not consider if it is the type of concept that can be accurately applied to man. A more general analysis of the concept is needed. Flourishing is therefore unpacked in the light of *needing* and *wanting*. I argue that to unpack the concept of flourishing one has to focus on wanting. Further, I suggest that standards are conceptually connected with the idea of wanting, i.e., in wanting one has a *target* at which one is aiming. Wanting to flourish, then, is wanting according to standards. Can flourishing be analysed in this same way? Although superficially similar to e.g., wanting to race, swim, etc., *flourishing* operates differently from wanting such things. The latter activity has no clear target. Flourishing as a concept remains a vacuous metaphor.

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INTRODUCTION

0.1) Aristotle and Teleology: An Attractive Perspective

It seems that a good deal of work in contemporary moral philosophy revolves around pondering solutions to all sorts of extremely difficult moral problems. They tend to be of the following and now hackneyed sort: What should I do if I have to choose between torturing an innocent victim and saving the entire population of some metropolis? Should I lie about an innocent victim's whereabouts to the killer who is seeking her? Ought I to hang this innocent soul to avert the wild crowd's riot? What is usually brought out through considering such dire conflicts is that there is an obvious distinction between what the *right* thing is to do as opposed to the *good* that will result. The argument then hinges on one's deciding which viewpoint to adopt: aiming for rightness or aiming for goodness. There is, of course, some merit in considering these sorts of problems, but I am not at all sure such reasoning necessarily leads anyone to seeing that there is this ^aclear distinction between there being a right action and a good action. In fact one of the puzzling aspects ^{of} these sorts of intractable moral problems is that, from another perspective, they might be used as evidence that we mere mortals have at present and may possibly continue to have in the future significant difficulties in finding *any* agreeable solutions.

The contemporary tendency to reduce problems to being either unpacked in terms of rightness or unpacked in terms of goodness is the issue with which I shall deal in Chapter One. There I will introduce, in opposition, an Aristotelian view and argue that it is an approach far more adequate for ethics. Before doing that, however, I would like to present a situation that will, albeit oversimply, suggest why I take it to be a worthwhile approach. Thus, from the start, one can see the bias I am working under and also have a hint of some aspects of the methods I will be employing throughout the thesis, namely trying to unpack ethical concepts in terms of concrete examples.

Before embarking on my research I spent seven years teaching in American sixth, seventh, eleventh, and twelfth grades. My students ranged from the ages of eleven to eighteen. It is impossible to teach (nor for that matter raise children) without having to deal, on a day-to-day basis, with the problem of getting them to do particular things. More specifically, a good deal of one's time is taken up in having them do what is best for themselves, a topic on which there is, historically, some difference of opinion between the younger generation and the older. But a teacher's task is too narrowly viewed if one imagines they are to motivate and guide students only to try to paint the best possible picture or write the best possible essay, etc.; more broadly teachers are intending that their students end up as good people. In this sense, many

(and I would argue that it ought to be all) schools are essentially Aristotelian in character and structure. Why is this so?

Consider the following situations and from them extract what is appealing about an Aristotelian approach. Imagine a schoolboy, Paul. Paul is sitting a weekly spelling test for which he is marginally prepared and, behold, well-prepared Linda, who is sitting so that Paul has easy access to her answers. What would most people want Paul to do? One story might run in the following way: Paul considers looking at Linda's answers but averts his eyes because, as much as he wants to, he knows it is not the right thing to do. But of course there is another story that can be told: Paul sees that the answers are available and quickly weighs in his mind the benefits and costs. Surely if he copies her answers he is cheating himself now, but he can make up for it next week by taking extra care to prepare for the next test. Other goods will come of copying her answers: he will now feel indebted to Linda and treat her more considerately at the playground, and he will receive his favourite dinner if he gets a high mark on this test. Seen in this light, then, cheating now provides Paul overall benefits.

Against these two views (and I am not supposing I have analysed the situation exhaustively) many teachers and, in fact many parents, would say that they rather it were the case that Paul not look at Linda's answers *and that he not even be tempted to*^{look}. (Actually most would rather that Paul was prepared in the first place, but ignore this.) There is a way of considering the situation that invokes no conflict within Paul whatsoever. In this view Paul sits the test though unprepared, and simply takes his lumps. The reason Paul is not tempted to cheat is that he has learned and knows that to cheat would not be good for him (and this is not to be crudely reduced to his realizing that cheating will not accrue certain benefits). It is not an activity that will lead to his meeting with success in life. In much the same way, consider Paul being tempted by his friends to throw a rock at that brittle window that he knows will break as a result. Should Paul weigh the pros and cons, the admiration of his friends versus the having done an injustice? Or, rather, would it be preferable for Paul to have a character of such a composition that he would not even consider throwing the rock. I will just leave it that the answer is obvious. The distinctions I am raising will be dealt with more carefully in Chapter One, but they allow me to present the immediate appeal of a moral theory that is based on the virtues, which means a theory aimed at driving for a life that will be successful and fulfilling, and the key to success and fulfilment is *doing* and *wanting to do* the best things. This requires that the agent have certain dispositions or states of character, and that is what the virtues have to do with the story. Of course, virtues are only part of the story, since to have an idea of what dispositions to develop relies on having an idea of what sort of person one wants to

be. Hand-in-hand with virtues goes the concept of flourishing, and this is the concept I will ultimately be trying to get a substantial grip on.

This brings me back to what teachers are doing. When they punish John for pulling hair, give Gertrude a failing mark in Mathematics, or keep Alistair after school for having missed a class, it is important that the purpose of such signals be clear. What one does not want is for John always to experience an internal struggle when the opportunity for pulling hair arises (it does arise rather often). Rather one wants John not to want to pull hair at all, and not even to imagine it as a possibility. Why? His life will be slightly barren if he continues to pull hair. People will not like him, or the wrong sort of people will, and he will be unhappy, and those around him will be unhappy. Teachers, through punishment, reward, and explanation teach students about valuable ways to be. In the end, then, what successful teachers do is enable children to act in particular ways not simply because that is the way that best suits the school environment, but because that is the best way for the child to act in all environments; it is the way he will have to be in order to be fulfilled.

Having alluded to the virtues, this seems an appropriate place to make a few introductory comments about them. First, a great deal will be said about the virtues throughout this thesis, although little will be argued in terms of specific virtues. In other words, I am most interested in talking about what the virtues are and the role they play as a class of dispositions. I am not so much interested at this point in whether particular dispositions are or are not virtues or in compiling any sort of comprehensive list. This leads to my second point; it is worth taking a brief moment to consider what a virtue is, for this consideration will raise an immediate problem. Aristotle is the best source of a discussion on the virtues, but some recent commentators, e.g., Peter Geach and Philippa Foot, provide modern accounts that are quite helpful. To begin with Aristotle (and I will only provide a cursory overview): he comments that "...it is the activities expressing virtue that control happiness,..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b10).¹ Further, "...the happy person has the [stability] we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life....he will do and study the actions expressing virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely...." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b18-21). When an agent acts virtuously, he "...must also be in the right state when he does them...." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1105a31), and "...every virtue causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well;..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1106a16-17). By this view, having virtues is to have developed particular dispositions, and when one has these dispositions one has a stable character, one not prone to twisting

¹ All references will be provided within the body of the text. For the sake of consistency, all works by Aristotle will be referred to by their Latin titles.

in the fickle wind, and one will have the proper attitude toward the appropriate things in life, i.e., hate the vile, the corrupt and enjoy the good. To return to Paul, if he is virtuous he has a disposition that is settled, this is why there is no internal conflict occurring as he takes the test. There is no need at this point to press the matter further, but it is worth reiterating that virtues are states or dispositions, therefore they are not things that easily change. When one acts according to virtue, one is not doing something because of some rule or some demand, but because one is already inclined to act in that particular way.

The problem that arises is this, if the virtues are states or dispositions, how does one attain these states or dispositions rather than those? Do I cultivate my taste for generosity, or my taste for stealing? The second chapter discusses these specific problems, for Aristotle took great care in discussing the process of habituation through which one develops the virtues. Propping up Aristotle's view is his teleology, and this comes out clearly in the last of the passages above. Aristotle maintains that man has particular functions and when human dispositions are properly developed, people function in the best way. Peter Geach, in defending Aristotle's teleological view, states:

....And in that way of thinking it makes good sense to ask 'What are men for?' We may not be so ready with an answer, even a partial answer, as when we ask 'What are hearts for?' 'What are teeth for?'; but Aristotle is right to my mind in desiderating an answer-...
(Geach, *The Virtues*, p. 12)

What *are* men for? Such a teleological account carries with it two problems, for it is not entirely obvious that people can easily sort out what man's function is, but nor is it absolutely clear that a teleological view is a plausible view at all. I will not seek to demonstrate that a teleological view is a correct view, but rather assume that it is correct. However, having said this, it does seem appropriate to point out why one might not be persuaded by such a view and to comment briefly on why it is a view that lacks absolute persuasive power.

A fairly short and recent article by T. L. Short entitled 'Teleology in Nature' will serve as the background for this discussion. First, it is worth setting out what a teleological view amounts to and then consider what pitfalls come with it.

....Teleological explanation is explanation by final causes. Final causes are abstract types that so influence processes of mechanical causation that they tend to bring about their own actualization....While final causation involves mechanical (or efficient) causation, neither is reducible to the other. Final causes are required to explain what

mechanical causation by itself cannot explain, namely, the emergence of order from disorder or unity from variety....
(Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 311)

One can add to this picture by considering one of Aristotle's accounts on final cause. In the first book of *De Partibus Animalium* he argues that the final cause is first cause; it is the cause that provides the necessary background one would need in carrying out any investigation of various phenomenon. He uses an analogy of a builder setting about to his work. In order for him to have anything to do he forms for himself "...a definite picture....this he holds forth as the reason and explanation of each subsequent step that he takes...." (Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium*, 639b 17-19). The nails, the tools, the trips to the site, the planning, etc., are all steps the purpose of which is the attainment of an end, namely the building of the house. Similarly, sense cannot be made out of the building materials, the trips to the site, etc., unless the end is known. To know what a slate or a gutter is is, in part, to know what it is for. Such a view is based on the idea that things have functions; everything has a purpose.

This kind of view squares fairly nicely with the way many of us view the world anyway. Everyone has faced a gift to which one's initial response is "What is it?", which is quickly followed by the two likely follow-up questions: "What is it for?" or "What does it do?" Popularity of views, however, has never entailed their truth. Despite the usefulness of approaching questions from a teleological perspective, there are grounds for questioning whether it is an adequate approach. First, as Short points out, "...it is theory-laden. The wrong explanatory hypothesis will prompt mistaken judgments of observation...." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 312). Since knowing what something is aiming for helps explain what it is doing now, judgements of what it is for transform how individuals see what the object is doing. A mistaken teleological account thus skews one's view of what an object is up to at any given moment. (Imagine trying to explain a duck's mating behaviour if one had no idea that it was mating the duck was up to.)

Second, "...[t]he real source of skepticism about teleology lies, rather, in our seeming inability to imagine how a putative goal, how any mere possibility could explain anything at all...." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 312). T.L.S. Sprigge has put the matter in a slightly different way, which, he admits, begs the question, but it nonetheless makes the point I am after: "...[there] seems to be the feeling that it is absurd to explain an event in the present,...by reference to an event in the future, said to be for the sake of which it occurs. The true explanation of events,... must lie in prior events,...it is only some sort of illusion which pictures future events as somehow pulling previous history towards them." (Sprigge, 'Final Causes', p. 151). People swayed by this line of attack are, as a result, often pulled into a view that

suggests that final causality is merely a chimera, and that all processes can be reduced to mechanical causal principals. Final causes may be a helpful way to talk about events or actions or habits, but it is a handy convention only.

Both these objections are difficult ones for the teleologist to meet head on. The ultimate and unsurprising difficulty about the view is that even a good defense of it cannot prove full-stop that the teleological perspective is true. On the other hand, no criticism can really disprove it. Short, to take an example, does the most one can ask, namely he provides a picture of teleology that fits with what we know about mechanical causality in a way that avoids incoherence. I, for one, am convinced if not entirely by Short's particular scheme, then at least by the direction he has taken. As I mentioned earlier, however, the intent of this thesis is not to vindicate teleology. Any broad view of the universe is theory laden. One has to look at the universe from some particular perspective, that perspective then colouring the way one assesses the various bits of the universe. On the other hand it seems worth mentioning, at least in summary, how a teleological view can be formulated in a way that stands up to these objections. A few of Short's strategies are illuminating on this score.

What Short considers is the phenomenon of one's being able sometimes to extract from some process the end toward which it is moving without yet knowing what the mechanical steps are that are involved within the process. The mechanical causalist will claim that the end of a process cannot be known with certainty until one has unpacked the various mechanical steps in the process. Short turns to statistical mechanics in order to demonstrate that this is not necessarily true, for in "....statistical mechanics...the particular events of a process can be taken into account without being known: any number of alternative sets of initial conditions and intermediate steps are shown to lead to the same result....It follows that from the knowledge of the result we cannot retrodict earlier stages of the process, as one could if it were explainable by mechanistic principles...." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 312). What the development of statistical mechanics has shown is that one can know what results will be without knowing what specific steps occurred to lead to those results. Nor can one, when one does know the results, use them to review the process to sort out what the mechanical steps within the process were. In referring to Darwin's use of statistics in studying evolution, Short points out that: "....The particular variations that occur and the different misfortunes that eliminate individuals before they reproduce need not be known in order to employ this statistical reasoning...." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 313). But then how does a final cause *work*? "....The type of result toward which the process tends is built into a principle of selection which variations that are retained satisfy...." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 314). If successful

reproduction is one aspect of evolution, then those species that cannot successfully reproduce (and this the result of mechanics) will eventually die out.

Short takes time to contend with objections, and his responses are good ones. There is one specific objection worth considering here. One might, after all this, still contend that it is specific mechanical events that cause a final state to be achieved. There is nothing that a final cause could be *doing* in the process; "...an abstract type could not be a cause unless it got out there and pushed something around-..." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 314). This is not a proper objection, however, since it rests on the assumption that the *only* way to talk about causes is to be able to reduce them to mechanical events. This is precisely the point of debate. If, to refer again to evolution, the principle of selection is given as the cause "...for why variations in inheritable characteristics tend to result in species adapted for survival...", then there are, on this picture two causes at work. The general tendency is the final cause (not a mechanical one) within which there are occurring certain mechanical causes, some of which we know something about, some of which we do not. To talk about the specific mechanical events "...is *not* the explanation of the general tendency." (Short, 'Teleology in Nature', p. 314). The overall view that results is one where the various mechanical processes develop in the way they do because of the final cause. In other words, the final cause is not to be viewed as a principle that enters any process directly and 'pulls' the process toward an end, but as a cause that directs the various mechanical events within the process, and it is through the success of the development of the mechanical events that dictates the end toward which the process moves. So it is possible to argue that final causes cannot be reduced to mechanical ones, and it is possible to construct a picture of the way in which final causes might actually work. My intent, just to repeat, is not to embrace whole-heartedly Short's solution, but simply to point out through that solution that the objections that mechanical causalists take to be so obvious and damning are not clearly so. Most important, the teleological and mechanical views are not exclusive nor reducible; each can provide a measure of explanation that is coherent.

The upshot of this is that this thesis argues from a teleological perspective. Although there are problems with this perspective, none are significant enough to sway me, nor are alternatives significantly better at dealing with those problems.

One other bugbear must be mentioned at the outset. This thesis is argued from the viewpoint of a non-causal theory of intention and action. At no point is an attempt made to justify this position; it is not the goal of the thesis to do so. Having said this it must be admitted that the non-causal viewpoint is, in some circles, much out of favour, especially if the circles one is inhabiting revolve around the work of Donald Davidson. It would be lax not to pay any attention to this rival viewpoint, and it

makes good sense to deal with it from the start. What follows in this short section is an all too brief account of Davidson's criticism of the non-causal view of intention and action, an overview of his causal theory, and finally a response to that theory. My intent is not to present a knock-down argument against Davidson and the causalists, but to point out that there are still sufficient enough gaps in this account to warrant suspicions about how successful his causal theory is.

Much of the thinking in this thesis, and much of my view about how to interpret Aristotle, is flavoured by the work of Gilbert Ryle and Elizabeth Anscombe, both dyed in the wool non-causalists. To put the matter oversimply (there are many other non-causalists and though their views bear some resemblance, there are significant differences between them) non-causalists would maintain that human action cannot be reduced to a set of causal relations. To say that some action is the result of a causal chain is to suppose that actions can be reduced to a series of logically separable events that form such a chain. An account that attempts to explain actions in such a manner immediately runs into difficulty as the lines by which the steps within the action are to be defined are extremely difficult to set. If I switch on a light there have to be a series of definable steps in that action. This is seductive for part of the analysis. Having decided to turn on the light it seems plausible that one can set out a series of micro decisions within that context that would follow as the direct result of my decision. But it is not so easy to talk in causal terms about why I made the decision to turn on the light. That rests on my wanting light, and a very strong case can be made that wanting light is not an event at all, but rather an ongoing disposition.

Another feature of causal theories has been the belief that reasons for action can serve as causes for action. Non-causalists, however, would argue that this is to reduce reasons to causes; a reduction that is inappropriate. Until Davidson sought another approach, causalists had been bogged down by this assertion since reasons (things that occurred in the mind) had somehow to have physical effects.

Davidson's account of causality seeks to avoid the pitfalls set out above. What shall here be provided is a thumbnail account of how he sets out to accomplish this. Davidson sets out his position immediately and straightforwardly in his paper, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes': "...rationalization is a species of causal explanation...." (Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', p. 3). How is this so? Davidson believes one can set out rationalizations, that is explanations that carry one from one's reasons to a resulting action, in the following way. If I act for a reason it must be the case that I was having "... (a) ...some sort of pro attitude toward actions of a certain kind, and (b) [I was] believing (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) that [my] action is of that kind...." (Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', p. 3-4). In other words, when one speaks of a reason causing an action (it

must be remembered that this is only one species of causality) it has to be the case that one has a pro attitude toward the action and one believes that that action is of a kind that will fulfil that pro attitude. To turn to an example: if I reach for a glass of water for a reason (to have a drink), and that reason is the cause of my reaching (as opposed to my reaching accidentally or as the result of some uncontrollable nervous reflex), I must want to reach because I desire, want, have a hankering for a glass of water and I must believe that my reaching is the kind of act that will lead to the satisfying of that desire. This said, how does this relatively simple picture answer the objections above?

First, Davidson rejects the non-causalist account that there are not discernable events that can be identified in an action. He argues that it is clear that desiring something is in fact logically separable from having the thing. "Because 'I wanted to turn on the light' and 'I turned on the light' are logically independent, the first can be used to give a reason why the second is true...." (Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', p. 6). He arrives at this conclusion by demonstrating that the truth of the statements is arrived at by referring to two separate events; the statements *are* logically independent. On this score, then, it is possible for a desire to be a step in a causal chain that results in an action.

Still, for there to exist a causal chain, there has to be a law at work. This now creates the second problem with which he must contend, what kind of story can be provided to explain how a desire, yen, or hankering can causally effect an action? In order to do this Davidson provides a story that is extremely interesting. He sets out the apparent inconsistencies of his position immediately in his essay 'Mental Events'. In the past causalists tended to argue that psychological states such as desires, or hankerings, could be reduced to physical entities that, to put the matter oversimply, pushed other physical entities to eventually cause the action.

Davidson establishes an alternate position, which he labels *anomalous monism*, to respond to this problem (Davidson, 'Mental Events', p. 214).

Anomalous monism resembles materialism in its claim that all events are physical, but rejects the thesis,...that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations....it allows the possibility that not all events are mental, while insisting that all events are physical....Although the position I describe denies there are psychophysical laws, it is consistent with the view that mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on the physical characteristics.... (Davidson, 'Mental Events', p. 214)

The mental is anomalous; that is it resists being organised under the rubric of laws. But, "....laws are linguistic...." (Davidson, 'Mental Events', p. 215) therefore there

are descriptions of actions and events that "...instantiate a law..." (Davidson, 'Mental Events', p. 215). The anomalousness of the mental is preserved rather than reduced to the physical, and at the same time it is possible that reasons can be subsumed under a law so that one now has a causal explanation.

This is too short an explanation, but it does bring out his endeavour to present a causal theory that escapes the criticisms of the past. Is it more convincing than the non-causal picture? What George Wilson points out is that Davidson was first moved to provide a reworking of the causal theory because he felt that the non-causal alternative did not do much in the way of explaining the role of reasons in action, or, as Davidson himself puts it "...we are left without an analysis of the 'because' in 'He did it because...','..." (Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes', p. 11). This *may* be true (though I doubt it), but "...[t]he soundness of the central argument presupposes the existence of the causalist reduction and does not argue for it..." (Wilson, 'Davidson on Intentional Action', p. 33). So there is nowhere given an argument that demonstrates *why* the causal theory is true.

Frederick Stoutland, to turn to another criticism, finds Davidson's account of the psychological and the physical far from satisfying. The problem that Davidson claims to have solved through the notion of *anomalous monism* is the how to account for causality when the psychological and the physical are by nature irreducibly different. "...[W]hen an agent has acted for a reason, there must be a physical description of that very reason and a physical description of that behavior which are related by causal law. We need not, and normally will not, know what these descriptions are, but unless the reason and behavior are such that there is a law connecting physical descriptions of them, the reason was not the reason for the agent's behavior..." (Stoutland, 'Davidson on Intentional Behavior', p. 53). This solution is hardly satisfactory, however, for it is simply not clear *how* a reason causes behavior. If a reason possesses psychological properties, as it seems it does, *these* can have no role in causality since causal laws are physical and therefore nomic. "...But if a reason causes an action only in virtue of its physical properties, then the psychological as psychological has no causal efficacy, so that the connection between the psychological and the physical is accidental:..." (Stoutland, 'Davidson on Intentional Behavior', p. 53). This strongly suggests that Davidson has not accomplished what he set out to do, namely provide a story that combines psychological autonomy with materialistic ontology (Stoutland, 'Davidson on Intentional Behavior', p. 44). There is still no way to see how one is to make the causal jump from the psychological to the physical.

Both of these critical essays raise other points; there is no need to go into them here, however. The point remains that if one wishes to be a causalist, Davidson has set out a path that is promising, but that path does little to persuade the non-causalist.

The path, in fact, relies on one's *assuming* that causality is the only sensible approach. Most important, this thesis needs to be examined under the auspices of the non-casual approach, for it is through the non-causal lens that the concept of flourishing will be considered.

0.2) Thesis Outline

The ultimate purpose of the thesis is to unpack what it means to flourish. This concept, however, brings with it certain difficulties. Consider just one problem. If I claim to have an insight about what is required for humans to flourish, even someone with little philosophical background might be inclined to ask whether my notion of flourishing is exclusive. In other words, when one talks about flourishing, does one have in mind a limit to the ways in which flourishing might occur, or does one assume that there are a variety of ways? Aristotelians find this a debatable point, for it is not all that clear how Aristotle would have responded. If one thinks of the *Ethica Nicomachea*, it is possible to see it as an argument that concludes that there is one kind of life that is the flourishing kind. The rest fall short. This is especially true of those who lay great stock in Book X. (I will not attempt to resolve the controversy about Book X, but I will simply acknowledge that there is fair dispute over how it is connected with the rest of the *Ethica*.) On the other hand, there are those who suggest that Aristotle would be quite happy with a conception that allowed for a variety of activities to be of the sort that would lead to flourishing (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre seemed to argue for this at the end of *After Virtue*, but in his more recent book has taken a strong non-relativist position). I want to move discussion in the direction of considering flourishing from this more conceptual level. I will consider common use of the term and its Aristotelian use, which is a bit more constrained, in order to discover whether there is enough content to the concept for it to be useful as a term of moral guidance.

Before I begin this task, I must first move from considering Aristotle specifically. As previously mentioned, the first two chapters are concerned with setting out Aristotle's ethical focus as opposed to some more contemporary ethical positions. The role of habituation and education within the Aristotelian scheme is examined, as is the role of *eudaimonia* as a central concept. In order to move to a consideration of flourishing there is one Aristotelian position that has to be dealt with, and that is Alasdair MacIntyre's as presented in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. Chapter Three considers his view of Aristotle in regard to the role of the *polis*. It is important that MacIntyre's view be dealt with adequately, for if he is right, the *polis* becomes central to any consideration of flourishing. I believe, however, that MacIntyre's

argument that the *polis* is essential to man's rationality is mistaken for a number of reasons. MacIntyre continually stresses the role of the *Politica* in providing a true and full picture of Aristotle's thinking. Upon inspection, however, passages on which MacIntyre relies heavily can be seen to be far more ambiguous than he supposed. Further, reasoning as a function of man needs to be considered in a wider way than MacIntyre has done.

The fourth and fifth chapters form the final part of the thesis, and the emphasis in analysis here is focussed on the concept of flourishing itself. I break the concept down into the components of needing and wanting in the hope that a consideration of flourishing in terms of its constituent parts will provide a clearer analysis of how it is to be viewed. Needing is the focus of the fourth chapter, and for reasons discussed at some length it becomes clear that one cannot learn a good deal about flourishing through considering what needs are. The weakness, to oversimplify the matter, lies in how the concept of needs works. Needing operates relative to something's being wanted; it cannot operate by itself. Talk of needing enters the picture only after there is talk of what people want. The mistake is easily enough made, and it does seem tidier to imagine that humans are collections of 'need compartments', the filling of which will lead to humans' flourishing. This kind of picture is held, for example, by David Wiggins, and a critical examination of his paper 'Claims of Need' is included in this chapter. The upshot of considering what it means to need is that what it means to want is, especially for the purposes of thinking about flourishing, the concept to which consideration must be turned.

Chapter Five brings together the threads of the previous chapter. The concept of need is demonstrated to be totally inadequate to the task at hand. The concept of flourishing is considered from the standpoint of the concept of wanting. Wanting does share one important attribute with needing. It cannot work by itself. Why this is the case is well discussed in Elizabeth Anscombe's *Intention*. Wanting is always connected with purposes and reasons; it always works within some context. This immediately adds a complexity that allows the concept of flourishing to be considered in a slightly different and more illuminating light. To want works within a context, and with contexts come standards. The connection here is conceptual. When one wants, one does so in a particular way. Think of wanting to learn to play bridge. Now I cannot want this full-stop; I have to want to play it in order to have a new source of entertainment, as a way to impress my superiors, as a way of getting invited to bridge parties, etc.

That being said, what else am I wanting in wanting to play bridge? I cannot want to play bridge without wanting to play bridge a particular kind of way. In this way, there is a conceptual connection between bridge-playing and the standards of bridge.

One cannot want to play bridge without wanting to be assessed by the standards of bridge. Similarly, if it does make sense to imagine that one wants to flourish, the way to consider this metaphor is to unpack it in terms of the standards that would have to be involved. As seen early in the chapter, it is a word that works in slightly different way from many other verbs. Flourishing is an assessment word; it signals that one is judging one's life from a particular point-of-view. Winning, for example, is another assessment word, and it also examines an activity from a particular point-of-view. The two points-of-view are, however, very different, and the nature of that difference is explored. From this discussion follows the most significant conclusion of the thesis: If flourishing is a means of assessment to be considered as something more substantial than a vague metaphor, it must carry with it standards in a way similar to the way standards would be involved in one's assessing a man's running ability. My question is not whether it makes sense to ask whether one can want to flourish. I think that when people say this, and when Aristotle uses it, they know what they are talking about. The question is, can something more substantial be said out about what they are talking about; can one, as in the running case, hold up a target and argue that *this* is what one is after? This is precisely when the notion of flourishing comes apart, for when one talks of runners, one talks of times. When one talks of flourishing there seems to be no similar target, nor does it seem that a target could ever be set. Therefore I argue that flourishing cannot be viewed as being any more substantial than an apt, but ambiguous metaphor.

I do not think this is a negative conclusion. One of the aspects of Aristotle that is important and too often overlooked is his insistence always that ethics is only a rough study; that is the nature of the beast. That Aristotle's notion of the fulfilling, flourishing life cannot be reduced to clear standards is, therefore, not surprising. The conclusion that cannot be ignored is that its metaphorical content cannot be filled out with more substantial notions.

CHAPTER ONE

WHY FLOURISHING?

1.1) Ethics as Quandaries and Ethics of Character

There are a variety of ways to pose fundamental questions in the study of moral philosophy, and how such questions are posed will always define the sorts of answers one uncovers. The questions asked by many contemporary moral philosophers serve as a good illustration of this. It is widely supposed that the question of moral philosophy, at a practical level, is: how is one to solve or elucidate how one is to act in various sorts of situations? or, to use a phrase adopted by Edmund Pincoffs in his article, 'Quandary Ethics', how does one sort through the various 'quandaries' one is faced with in life? This fundamental question is usually dealt with by either one of two approaches; each approach being summarised by the asking of a further question.

According to the first approach, one asks, "What is the good thing to do?" in order to find a route to uncover how one might act in a situation. From the vantage point of this question, moral philosophy is an exploration or an evaluation of various actions that lead to states-of-affairs. The superiority of one action over another is asserted by the amount of good the consequent state-of-affairs will yield. This position is the hallmark of consequentialism generally, and utilitarianism more specifically. The second common approach raises a similar question, but replaces 'good' with 'right.' Such a minor change, however, leads to the position that is generally viewed as the major rival to consequentialism, namely a deontological view that traces its roots back to Kant. In this system one searches for the right action, and the good that that action might yield is of no consequence. Underlying such a view is the notion that there are actions that are intrinsically right, and the states-of-affairs that such actions might yield are not of importance in evaluating the options for action. And there you have it; work in moral philosophy in recent times has tended to see its task as solving the first question through the solving of either of the latter two.

There are problems with viewing ethics according to such a scheme of questions. First, and most basically: Is it right to claim that moral philosophy's work *is* the search for or elucidation of ways for humans to act when they find themselves in various situations? If the formulation of this question has been botched, and I believe that it has, the two popular ways of carrying on that search, namely seeking the right action or the good state-of-affairs, will also be off the mark. Second, in addition to the reductionism of the two views, are there other internal difficulties with the two schemes that make them unpalatable? What one will discover, not unsurprisingly, is

that the two views share an inadequate picture of how people come to ethical situations, and each view, for its own peculiar reasons, is seriously flawed in other, deeper ways. Let me turn to the first of these issues.

Both consequentialist and deontological positions imply a view about the relationship between ethics and human nature that is filled with difficulties, and the implication arises in the way each view has 'carved up' human activity and has then structured ethics to fit the results of the carving. At the heart of both conceptions is the notion that one needs to uncover rules for action, and those rules will lead one to proper ethical behaviour. Those who have this view assume that lives are to be viewed as a series of scenes in a play, each scene presenting the moral agent with a new situation with which he must cope. Individuals, as moral agents who are the actors, cast about searching for 'solutions' that will allow them to make their way through the scene in a morally permissible way. After their success or failure they then move on to face another scene. Of course agents can be playing roles in different scenes at the same time, and there is overlap between some of the scenes, but the metaphor still encapsulates a common view of the ethical side of man: a combined tragi-comedy with game-show elements mixed in as people attempt to act in such a way that will move them to another scene.

My combining tragi-comedy and game-show elements is not an attempt to trivialise the picture, but to highlight a major weakness within it. Filling in letters makes one successful on *Catchword* or *Wheel of Fortune*, but it is not going to help one on *The Price Is Right* or *Mastermind*. If one imagines that life is a set of quandaries to get through, then one can imagine that there are certain solutions to each specific quandary one faces. There need not be, however, any necessary connection between my solution in quandary or scene one and scene five of my life. It could even be possible, if not probable, that what clearly was *not* a solution in scene one, *is* a solution in scene five. Being honest in scene one, as I am taking a test I know I will fail and yet deciding not to cheat, is how I solve my quandary. In scene five, however, I choose dishonesty as the referee asks me if the ball did cross the goal-line: I feel I cannot let my team-mates down as it is a Cup final which we all have worked hard to attain. The problem with the view of life as quandaries is that it is not considered important that there be a connection between the solutions in each scene - that I am for the same type of solution as I face various scenes. One must be satisfied playing the part of a kind of Polonius (whose only consistency was his inconsistency), doing whatever it takes to succeed at the moment.

An obvious response to this is to insist that there is consistency from scene to scene: the consistency lies in the rules one applies to the situation. In reference to the two examples, I will consistently choose not to cheat on tests that are designed to

measure my personal educational development. The reason I do so is because I see that tests are a good indicator, a good mechanism by which I can measure my progress. Second, it is primarily my progress that is at issue, no one else's. On the football pitch, or in any other team endeavour, however, I may ignore certain rules in order to win. The reason I do this is because I imagine that the most important aspect of the sport is winning and because I am supporting and working with my teammates. I cannot let them down. Clearly all sorts of other reasons can be provided to support the view that academic and sporting endeavours are sufficiently different to support the different rules I apply.

It is important to see that this response does not, for the non-quandarist, put the consistency in the right place. What it does is provide a picture of a person whose *first* task is to apply certain rules consistently and then become a certain sort of person by way of having applied the rules. In other words, my primary duty is to act according to certain consistent rules determined objectively by the situation, as though the rules are the sole vehicles by which I come to create my character. This process is quite backwards to what really occurs.

In the article to which I earlier alluded, Edmund Pincoffs suggests that such a picture is a recent one, and one that we ought not to accept. The quandarist's view of the study of ethics does not look at all like the study of ethics through most of human history. Prior to the quandarist's scheme, ethics tended to concern itself with the consideration of the sorts of ingredients that comprised good character and led to good lives. In this opposing picture, individuals are each a character in a play with many different scenes, but the object is to develop one's dispositions in such a way that they will be in accord with a fulfilled life. Thus the way people deal with scenes depends on the characters they have developed, and what they choose within the scenes will depend on the avenues available to them that will allow them to act according to the characters they have. Rules, in this context, are the flexible means people employ to help guide the formation of their characters (e.g., consider an analogy of a beginning bridge-player: I may always finesse or always get trumps out first when I play a hand (these are my rules) until I develop the ability to discern when alternate strategies are more effective). This is quite different from the former view in that the solution one is seeking *is to develop a particular kind of character* through action despite the many demands placed on one in the various scenes. Such a picture is essentially Aristotelian. L.A. Kosman, for example, paints a very similar picture when he considers Aristotle's thinking concerning how people learn to relate choice to feeling and thinking in the proper way: "....choice for him [Aristotle] is not a concept having to do with individual moments in an agent's life, nor with individual single actions, but with the practise of that life within the larger context of the character and intentions

of the moral subject...." (Kosman, 'Being Properly Affected', p. 115). What is important for Aristotle is that one develops the ability to know what the best way is to act and to want to act in that way. The trick is not just getting through the scene, but being a particular character through all the scenes.

When ethics is considered through the simile of scenes, as I have been doing, the superiority of such an Aristotelian view should become readily apparent. The quandarist sees scenes in the morality plays as entities that somehow have objective solutions. What we will see in Aristotle is a different view of such scenes. The issue is not finding some independent certain response to some quandary, but to have some sort of character that can work through great uncertainty to uncover an appropriate mode of action. Quandarists see scenes as entities with certain specific data which, if evaluated properly, will yield clear solutions. Non-quandarists, on the other hand, see scenes filled with all kinds of data with no clear line indicating which data should count toward a decision and which should not. If the importance of the data is ambiguous, even more so the answers. Knowing how to think about the data available and assess which should be relevant to any choice relies on one's first having decided what one wants to do. There is no clear solution, for the solution is dependent on what one wants out of the scene.

Only over time has ethics moved to become a study of solutions to problems, which is a distorted model. The criticism of the first picture is nicely summarised as follows:

To take the resolution of problems as central, and to conceive of problems on the collision-model is indefensibly reductivist. It reduces the topic of moral character to the topic of conscientiousness or rule-responsibility. But it gives no account of the role of character as a whole in moral deliberation; and it excludes questions of character which are not directly concerned with the resolution of problems. (Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', p. 570-71)

In such a reductivist scheme it is supposed that people can simply be taught rules to apply to their scenes. But why should we not solve problems by teaching people to search for and then follow rules concerning those problems? This seems a clear enough solution, but it is too simplistic. First, what are we to do to *make* people search for particular rules?, and second, if they perceive that a rule ought to be applied, how are we to ensure that they *do* abide by it? In both cases the searching for or discovery of an adequate ethical rule bears no necessary relation to the agent's acting according to the rule. As Peter Geach is fond of pointing out, if one does act according to some rule it must "....touch an agent's inclinations...." (Geach, *God and*

the Soul, p. 122).¹ Pincoffs points to the fundamental circularity in the position of ethics as the solution of quandaries:

....The adult of good moral character must indeed be able to handle difficult situations as they arise, and to reason about problems...but to reason well he must already be an adult of good moral character: loyal, just, honest...Unless he has these qualities, moral dilemmas will not arise for him. Unless he has a well-formed character his prescriptions for himself and others are not likely to be morally acceptable. (Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', p. 566)

And this is exactly the point. To see that one might want to apply an ethical rule to a situation requires that one have an ethical character, *be* a particular kind of character throughout one's scenes. To have an ethical character is to be able to identify those situations in which one ought to be considering action according to moral principles. One cannot have rules to identify moral situations, and then another set of rules to apply *in* those moral situations. The logical problem here ought to be obvious, for if being moral were simply a case of learning and applying rules, one would be stuck in a picture that collapses into absurdity, for rules would be needed *about the rules* for identifying moral situations, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Both Gilbert Ryle and Alasdair MacIntyre discuss this problematic aspect of the nature of rules, though the purpose of each man's discussion is quite different. Ryle, in the *The Concept of Mind*, focusses on the intellectualist view of knowing. In brief, the intellectualist reduces the process of thinking to the finding and then exercising of certain rules about reasoning: to be able to say that someone is thinking is to say that he is properly exercising the appropriate rational rules. If he is not, then whatever activity it is that is going on in his head cannot be called thinking. Such a conception is clearly false.

....According to the legend, whenever an agent does anything intelligently, his act is preceded and steered by another internal act of considering a regulative proposition appropriate to his practical problem. But what makes him consider the one maxim which is appropriate rather than any of the thousands which are not? Why does the hero not find himself calling to mind a cooking-recipe, or a rule of Formal Logic?....Must we then say that for the hero's reflections how to act to be intelligent he must first reflect how best to reflect how to act?.... (Ryle, *The Concept Of Mind*, p. 31)

¹ For a complete discussion of Geach's view contrasting ethics that is based on the inclinations with a more Kantian approach, i.e., an approach that suggests one can instill correct action through laying down duties despite inclinations, cf., *God and the Soul*, p. 121-122; *The Virtues*, p. 8-9.

MacIntyre describes how any ethics that shares the same sort of vision that Aristotle has can have no place for rules as the foundation for guiding action. In Aristotle's picture, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is that aspect of man's intellect and character that guides his actions. How does man develop this faculty? Can I learn how to use it by learning a set of rules? Clearly not.

...Let us suppose that *phronesis* were itself to be rule-governed, that in exercising it we not only on occasion apply rules to particular cases, but that we have and follow rules in so applying rules. Then either these second-order rules will themselves be applied by means of the exercise of some non-rule-governed capacity or some third order set of rules will be involved in knowing how to apply the second-order rules, and so on....
(MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 116-17)

The inadequacy of a conception of ethics that seeks to ground itself on the learning of rules ought to be painfully clear. As MacIntyre points out, a non-rule element will have to come in somewhere, and without that element, the rules have no use. This element has to be the starting point.

It is important to add that neither MacIntyre nor Aristotle would then conclude that rules have no place in ethical thought. They do, but their role is limited. To have an ethical character requires more than simply learning rules. Aristotle saw this very early on and suggests that moral action requires other ingredients than rule-following.

...the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state.²
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1105a30-35)

To have a well-formed character, that is to have a character that will play a role in leading one successfully through various situations, requires years of habituation following those who model good behaviour. Such training will result in: (a) the agents having developed the proper dispositions, and (b) having learned how to identify those situations in which the appropriate dispositions are to be exercised. (This second point underscores Aristotle's continual stressing of the role of experience.) On this model, I do not look for rules to apply. Instead, by my training I have developed certain inclinations, so I first want to act in a particular way in a situation, and as a result of wanting to act in that way I seek particular avenues of

2 All brackets in the passages from the *Ethica Nicomachea* are the translator's.

action (this is, after all, what deliberation is all about). If I am inclined to be brave, when I am asked to guard the gate from invaders I will pick up a sword; if I am inclined to cowardice I will cower behind a barrel in the corner. Rules may come in at this stage (when in hostile territory always carry a sword, or, conversely, never go into hostile territories in the first place), but these are rules of a much different kind than those of the quandarist. Note also that Aristotle admits that if one is properly well-trained, one might act very successfully without knowing or considering why one does so.

....As a condition for having a virtue, however, the knowing counts for nothing, or [rather] for only a little, whereas the other two conditions are very important, indeed all-important. And these other two conditions are achieved by the frequent doing of just and temperate actions. (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1105b1-5)

It is not true to say that a well-trained person necessarily has the full virtues, but it does seem quite true that such a person will have a better chance of living a successful life than one improperly trained.

The full picture Aristotle has of how one develops good moral character is a topic I will take up in the next chapter. The myth to be dispelled here, however, is the view that one might approach a particular situation, exercise a mental calculation or assessment of it *and then* feel a certain way that is appropriate. Instead training leads to one's inculcating the feeling; one has it all the time. It is a disposition (and it would be helpful here to consider disposition in the sense in which Ryle develops it in *The Concept of Mind*) that one acts out of when a particular situation demands it. Thus a brave person always has a disposition to feel and act bravely, but only certain situations will cause, in a narrow sense, the individual to act in a way that manifests the disposition. This is why one without the full virtues may well be successful; he acts properly although he does not know fully why he does so.

Our first topic is, therefore, cleared up. Still, the two predominant ethical views are well entrenched and will die hard. Are there further reasons to discount their efficacy? Can we discover internal faults with them in addition to their reductionist psychology? The two positions amount to this, and I will use my neighbour's chickens as an example. I may choose not to pinch my neighbour's chickens for the sole reason that I fear his fierce temper in conjunction with his eighteen-stone physique. In such a case, the rightness or wrongness of the act of stealing never enters my mind. If my neighbour was of slighter build, I might think nothing of occasionally pinching a chicken. On the other hand, my moral dialogue might instead revolve around the inherent rightness or wrongness of pinching another's chickens. In that case I decide not to grab the occasional Rhode Island Red because it is stealing,

and stealing is wrong full-stop. How do the adequacies of these views compare? Consider a slightly more serious scenario.

I am driving a car that is presently stopped at a red traffic light at 3:00 a.m. There is absolutely no one within sight, and there is a clear view in all directions. The street lighting is excellent. I have an overwhelming desire to get home to bed, so I am debating whether to ignore the light. What are the reasons I consider as I decide how to act? Some consequentialist ones spring to mind. One reason I might not go through the light is because I fear punishment. I just cannot be sure that there is not some policeman's prowl car deviously hidden to catch people just like me. Perhaps, on the other hand, I will not go through because I like the situations that are created by traffic lights. They make intersections safe and orderly.

Of course one could suggest that neither of these reasons are very good ones. Since I can be almost sure there is no prowl car around and since there is clearly no other traffic, my passing through will be without effect. (This counter-response, however, fails to recognise one of the purposes of stoplights, namely to eliminate borderline cases of decision-making at intersections (give-ways, for example, do not eliminate borderline cases). They help create an orderly flow of traffic through intersections, and they do this by eliminating the need for individual drivers to decide when to drive on. If I choose to drive through the light I am engaging in a borderline case that the light is designed to eliminate my having to make.)

First, can consequentialism provide one with a reason to act that is completely satisfactory? that is to say one that will cause anyone to say, "Aha! Now I know what I must do!" I believe it cannot because its Achilles' heel lies at a fundamental level, namely, it grounds morality in the relative circumstances of the particular situation and in the circumstantial needs of the agent. It is hard to see how any objective standard could be found for use in evaluating between rival states-of-affairs. Various proponents of consequentialist systems have claimed to have achieved such standards, utilitarianism comes to mind, but it too has failed on this score. To imagine a good state-of-affairs 'impersonally' calculated is an impossibility.³ The role of *personal* integrity in constructing or uncovering what is good is essential, and

³ A *non-consequential* attempt to formulate an ethical theory around an 'impersonal' point-of-view is that of Thomas Nagel in *The Possibility of Altruism*. He believes that only objective reasons, or subjective reasons based on objective reasons, can properly motivate one to act morally. One is required to make decisions from, "...a conception of oneself not merely as *I*, but as someone." (Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*, p. 100; cf., also p. 101). I am suspicious of this notion of impersonality. Further, if Williams is correct (cf., below), his argument about personal integrity applies as much to Nagel as to consequentialists.

consequentialism has real trouble with this aspect of morality. Bernard Williams' claim concerning consequentialism's inability to take into account this notion of personal integrity raises just this problem: consequentialism demands that people sometimes do things that are anathema to their characters. As Williams states the case concerning utilitarian consequentialism:

...how can a man, as a utilitarian agent, come to regard as one satisfaction among others, and a dispensable one, a project or attitude round which he has built his life....?....The point is that he is identified with his actions as flowing from projects and attitudes which in some cases he takes seriously at the deepest level....
(Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, p. 116)

I think there is a strong case to be made against consequentialism if one uses this argument. Personal integrity is part of the core from which most make their decisions.

The notion of integrity as Williams is using it is not, however, without its problems, and I need to take a moment to explore his criticism. My initial response to Williams' claim was one of whole-hearted sympathy, but a reading of Samuel Scheffler's views on Williams in, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, has given me pause to reconsider. Scheffler's views on this do not refute but add considerable weight to Williams' position. Scheffler rightly points out that Williams' criticism is not specific enough to utilitarian consequentialism. Scheffler interprets Williams' position as finding fault with utilitarianism in that the commitment one may have to one's own projects is "...dependent on the state of the world viewed from an impersonal stand-point..." (Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, p. 8). Thus, as the situation in the world changes the agent could become alienated from his projects, and, in certain circumstances, be forced to relinquish his connection with them even though he would not wish to do this. What is problematic with this view is that this criticism can be leveled against any moral theory that is not specifically egoistic. "...Virtually any moral view will hold that if things get bad enough from an impersonal stand-point, the agent's projects become dispensable...." (Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, p. 8). Scheffler does not abandon the criticism, but proceeds to reinforce it by examining the nature of the connection between a person and his projects.

The problem, as he sees it, is that personal projects generate from persons and are connected with them 'naturally' and therefore independently of how those projects would be viewed from an impersonal ranking. Utilitarianism, however, asks people to see their own projects as "...dependent for their moral significance on their weight in such a[n] [impersonal] ranking....," and this leads Scheffler to his more careful summary of the difficulty with utilitarian consequentialism:

....Utilitarianism thus requires the agent to allocate energy and attention to the projects and people he cares most about *in strict proportion* to the value from an impersonal stand-point of his doing so, even though people typically acquire and care about their commitments quite independently of, and out of proportion to,...an impersonal ranking of states of affairs. It is this feature of utilitarianism which may be thought to alienate the agent...and thereby undermine his integrity....So construed, the objection based on integrity could not be directed against those non-egoistic theories that do not share the utilitarian conception of the right, for they lack the feature that is now being said to generate the objection....
(Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, p. 9)

This reformulation of Williams' criticism leads Scheffler, ultimately, to *his* criticism of consequentialism of the utilitarian kind:

....It urges that this conception of the right holds the agent's ability to permissibly pursue his own projects and plans unacceptably hostage to the state of the world viewed from an impersonal stand-point, regardless of the extent to which that state has been shaped by human activity specifically....
(Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, p. 10)

Consequentialism can claim that one ought to seek that state-of-affairs that is the best, but what will be deemed to be the best is, in large part, the fruit of the labour of those who have chosen to pursue particular personal projects. The very search for what is good is a personal project, and it seems to make no sense to say that people ought to see their personal projects as expendable to a greater good when the formulation of that greater good is dependent for its formulation on people's personal projects. The crucial point in all this is consequentialism's requiring people to surrender to certain ideals which they would need to believe to be of greater value than the ones they would hold personally. *How* such values would attain their status as being 'greater' is a bit too much of a mystery.

To return to my example, how do these features manifest themselves? At the consequentialist level, the person who decides to proceed illegally through the stoplight will be free to respond that it is acceptable to him to break the law because the state-of-affairs he wishes is more important than the observance of the law. There is nothing irrational in this response, nothing self-contradictory. Now, a non-consequentialist might respond by saying, "Look, forget the state-of-affairs, you have no right to put others in danger, and you certainly cannot universally will that others should act as you do." Unfortunately, he, the law-breaker, can say that he has a right, that he is willing to put others at risk in order to procure a state-of-affairs he

wishes. And, it would not be irrational for him to universalize this. He might be more than willing to admit that others are free to follow the same course of action even if it is *his* life that is put at risk. Because this fellow will not respond to superficial consequences (i.e., a traffic ticket and fine) some might then be led to think that a non-consequentialist argument might be more persuasive. It *may* be more persuasive, but it depends on whether or not he agrees with your reasons, and he can be as persuaded by consequentialist reasons as by non-consequentialist ones. The issue is not the power or authority of reasons, but the willingness of the agent to be persuaded.

Continuing to use the traffic light example, how does the picture change if I see the issue non-consequentialist? Can I not change the question and get to the heart of the matter? Let me ask, "Is it right to go through the light?", or, in a broader formulation, "Is it right to break the law?" The deontologist is going to ask me to ignore the results of my actions and deal with whether it is right to act in one way or another. Therefore, the rightness of the action is the only guide to its being an acceptable reason for action.

Consider the example still, only with two changes. Now suppose that I am a resident of the area, and I know that the placement of the stoplight was directly due to a number of fatal accidents that had occurred. The light was a clear solution to the problem. Second, my view is not completely clear, but in my judgement it is clear enough to support my taking a risk to go through the light. Now, as a potential breaker of the law I might find myself engaged in the following internal monologue. (Or, I might engage in no thought at all. I might just automatically wait or automatically drive right through. But, for our purposes, assume I am of a persuasion to ponder such situations; imagine I am Hamlet driving a car to murder Claudius while he is in the chapel, not yet realizing that Claudius' praying will be an obstacle of significant proportion.) "So," and Hamlet (that is I) begin a monologue easily imagined, "there is a risk that if I go through this light I might be hurt in the process, or that I may hurt another. If I do not go through, I might miss my opportunity to avenge my father's death by killing Claudius while he is praying. Should I be concerned about others out for a drive whom I might hurt? Is the fact that some innocent person might die as a result of my placing my duty to kill Claudius above anything else reason enough for me to not go through this light?"

To a non-consequentialist the answer, and the reasons for it, is clear. It is wrong to put an innocent human life unnecessarily at risk, especially to fulfil a ghost's request for justice. Even to include such circumstantial aspects to the situation is unacceptable to the non-consequentialist. To drive through a stoplight is wrong because it is an instance of breaking the law. Life would be easier for Hamlet if he realized this, since

it would save him undue mental anguish. Is there some attribute of the non-consequentialist reason that makes it superior to the consequentialist ones? Does the elimination of certain actions from moral permissibility provide for one a better reason not to do those actions? According to this picture, it is the perception or uncovering of the right action that can then act as a guide. To hold this view, one has to see rightness or goodness as a specifiable feature in actions such that one's identifying that feature would *then provide* one with a clear reason and motive to act in a particular way. This picture is difficult to support.

If one is seeking to ground morality in some principle that will be ultimately persuasive, then such a project is doomed to failure. That this is the case has been well argued by Philippa Foot in 'Goodness and Moral Choice'. Foot describes the problem in the following manner:

It is often said nowadays that the meaning of the word 'good' is to be explained by talking about some necessary connection between calling things good and choosing them....
(Foot, 'Goodness and Moral Choice', p.132)

The position she wishes to attack is that espoused by those who wish to claim that the recognition of goodness in an action (or I could, to keep the language consistent, say 'rightness') carries with it an obligation to act in that particular way; this position has been described as 'internalism'. The mistake in such a position lies in the account it provides for the grounding of man's choices. People do not recognise the goodness in an object or action independently of their desire for that object or action. Again, to refer to Foot's position on this:

....If a man who calls an A a good A has reason, other things being equal, to prefer it to other A's, this is because of the kind of thing that an A is, and its connection with his wants and needs....
(Foot, 'Goodness and Moral Choice', p. 146)

Because people tend to choose similar things as working well, being right, or being good does not mean that they are good in themselves, but that they are good in connection with people's particular desires. Consequently, choices are dependent in part on desires. To say that one ought to pursue a particular course of action because it is good-in-itself is to disregard the connection between its being good and one's desires. Much moral disagreement occurs because one cannot be sure of what will fulfil those desires, or whether it is wise to fulfil certain desires over others. Many of us perceive certain choices in the course of human history to have been poor ones.

Sorting out what desires ought to be fulfilled in what ways is what choosing is all about, and there is plenty of disagreement over those types of choices. The Fall is descriptive of this aspect of the human condition. Although one could certainly not cite the Bible as proof positive of man's condition, all have experienced and have knowledge of people who, even when faced with clear and seemingly persuasive reasons to act one way, will choose to act another. The reasons for people choosing in such a manner is not for me to explain, but that people do and that they can rationally support those reasons is obvious enough.

Kant, the ultimate deontologist, views rules as absolute. Rules, he feels, are seen by people as having absolute authority: their power comes in that the rightness of a rule somehow leads one then to have a duty to obey that rule. As Roger Scruton points out: "...for Kant, the standard of validity in moral reasoning must be internal to it: it must at the same time provide a motive for *me* to act, and lay down a universal law." (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 323). If moral action can be grounded in objective laws, and if these laws exist universally in the reason of man, one has a basis from which to act that will apply universally, and man will be required to follow these laws. "...*Because* the moral being is rational, there are certain courses of action which he cannot consider. If Kant is right, it is man's very rationality that leads him to close his mind to actions for which a thousand prudential reasons might be given." (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 323). In another article from *Virtues and Vices*, Foot points out:

Kant's thought seems to be that moral rules are universally valid in that they are inescapable, that no one can contract out of morality, and above all that no one can say that he does not happen to care about the ends of morality, morality does not apply to him....
(Foot, 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', p. 171)

Specifically, Foot describes Kant's project as demonstrating that "...moral rules have a peculiar and dignified status...." (Foot, 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', p.172). Kant asserts that morality must be based on moral rules that have this special status, and it is the special status that somehow requires that the rules be followed.

What Kant fails to consider, or will not consider, is that morality is connected to human action in a very different way than he supposes. Both G.E.M. Anscombe and John Searle have examined the nature of descriptive facts, and both have come to the conclusion that the relative 'bruteness' of facts is important in how one evaluates moral decisions. If one acknowledges that descriptive facts work in the way Anscombe and Searle suggest they do, one can see why there are such inadequacies

within Kant's ethical system. From Anscombe's and Searle's point-of-view the categorical imperative would extend a universality to moral decisions that often make no sense outside a particular context. The categorical imperative is grounded in the idea that moral laws are universal. Because they are laws in this universal sense, they require obedience. When one examines how moral concepts really work, using the relative bruteness of facts as a model, it is clear that social and cultural contexts and institutions play a larger role in the creation of moral concepts than Kant would believe they do.

The early passages of *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* make Kant's project clear.

....Is it not of the utmost necessity to construe a pure moral philosophy which is completely free from everything which may be only empirical and thus belong to anthropology? That there must be such a philosophy is self-evident from the common idea of duty and moral laws. Everyone must admit that a law, if it is to hold morally, i.e., as a ground of obligation, must imply absolute necessity....
(Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 5)

There are two important aspects to this passage. First, Kant will not ground moral laws in man's inclination since that would carry with it the threat of relativism. The second, discussed already, is Kant's contention that moral laws must be absolute, for if they are not, one is then not obliged to follow them. His intention, then, is to find such laws.

Kant sees decisions as emanating from the will which can be controlled by both inclination (desire, for example) and reason. Reason recognises the objective (and universal) laws of morality. Therefore, all rational beings have the ability to act according to the same laws. The problem arises practically when one is trying to act according to those laws. Since the will moves one to act, and one's will can be swayed by subjective desires of inclination, one often make decisions that are not based on these laws of reason. The question then becomes one of *how* to make decisions based on those objective laws of reason. The categorical imperative is the 'formula' Kant provides that will allow one to do that. The moral laws can be discovered by applying the categorical imperative to practical situations. If my maxim is correctly formulated, I must be acting according to the objective law that would determine the correct moral action of the situation, since the maxim would uncover the universally willed, therefore rational action (cf., Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p.29-31).

This scheme only works if, in fact, there are such universal laws so that my applying the categorical imperative will yield actions according to those laws.

However, there are not such laws in a universal sense, and moral laws are often meaningful only in relation to particular institutional contexts. Kant's categorical imperative cannot take such relativity into account. Any moral system must take into account Anscombe's or Searle's notion of relative bruteness, and to that issue I shall now turn.

Facts are not objective entities, but are entities that have varying amounts of 'bruteness' or objectivity; that is to say they are recognisable entities, useful entities only when they are attached to some background set of ideas. The more complex and dependent on a social or conventional background a fact is, the less 'brute' it is, and vice versa. The pool of 'brutest' facts is indeed quite small. If I look at an object and say, "This apple is red" I am describing a relatively brute fact that is based only on the set of facts directly relating to the colour of the apple. The redness of the apple is, therefore, according to Anscombe, a brute fact. "This apple is mine" I say as I am holding it. That the apple is mine has meaning only in the context of the concept of possession, and that there is a connection between holding an apple and being able to claim that an apple is possessed. (It is easy to imagine cultures in which such a 'fact', i.e., holding and ownership, would not be a fact of this kind at all, e.g., primitive cultures with no concept of individual ownership.) Therefore, because of the larger framework of facts needed to explain the situation, my possessing the apple is less brute than it was in the first statement. Having taken the apple from a fruitstand, the vendor may say to me, "You owe me fifteen pence for the apple." The fact involving my owing the vendor is similarly less brute, since it depends on a complex set of facts regarding the commercial selling of fruit, the institution of money as a bartering tool, and my understanding that I am supposed to exchange coins for fruit.

The point of these descriptions is to make clear that: 'redness', 'mine', and 'owing' are all factual statements. The bruteness of the fact can vary according to the corresponding complexity and reliance the central fact has to other facts. What is crucial is that certain facts exist only within the context of particular institutions (and here institutions must be taken in a wide sense, i.e., to take into account social and cultural conventions and contexts). John Searle points out that:

....a man has five dollars, given the institution of money. Take away the institution and all he has is a rectangular bit of paper with green ink on it.... (Searle, 'How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'', p. 111)

When seen in this context it is clear just how many facts gain their meaning from their connection with some institution. The class of the brutest of facts is indeed quite small.

The purpose of Anscombe's and Searle's observations is to provide a way around Hume's contention that no way had yet been found to derive normative statements from factual ones. What is clearly suggested here is that the "isness" of most factual statements is relative to some other factual statement, these, in turn, relying on various conventions, contexts, or institutions. This, in turn, suggests that certain moral descriptions are not grounded in universal laws, but in 'laws' relative to particular human institutions. For example, owing money is meaningful only in a society that barter, uses money, and has some sense of credit.⁴

The relative bruteness of facts can be seen clearly in the following example. I am playing in a football match and my jersey is tightly held by an opposing player while I am in the process of shooting on their goal in their penalty area. As a result, I cannot take a successful shot. A rule has been broken and I will be awarded a penalty kick. Following the match I am walking down the street with my family, and my daughter, without looking, steps off the kerb. My immediate reaction is to grab her jumper and impede her progress. In both cases I can talk about the brute facts of the grabbing of the clothes. How I describe those acts, however, is different. In the former example the player committed a foul, in the latter example I protected my daughter from imminent harm. The contexts surrounding the two actions make them very different, therefore my description of the acts are correspondingly different. The actions, in a less brute sense, are very different because of the context in which they are exercised. Any moral theory must take such contexts into account, and must allow that certain moral rules or laws will be dependent on the surrounding contexts.

This is precisely what Kant does not believe ought to be taken into account. Although the various formulations of the maxims based on the categorical imperative can be changed to fit certain situations, the underlying thought is that actions must be guided by universal principles, not principles grounded in particular institutions.

The inadequacy in Kant's thought is his insistence that moral laws, and therefore moral rules, cut across such cultural and institutional lines, yet it is those lines that often create the moral laws that are to dictate people's actions. The categorical imperative is seen by Kant as having a special status because of its connection with universal laws. What compels individuals to act in a situation is not the universality of the law, but the demands of the situation. A surrounding context, institution, or situation will require that one act in particular sorts of ways, and it is one's ability to

4 A bit more will be said about the notion of bruteness further on when we take more time to consider Anscombe's discussion of Hume and the history of the law conception of ethics as she describes these in 'Modern Moral Philosophy', cf. p. 40, below.

identify both the context and the resulting appropriate action that will determine how morally sensitive one is.

The final word on this, because it is so succinct, will come from Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre claims that there is nothing in the framing of a maxim that can be universalized that will guarantee the maxim is a moral one (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 46). This criticism, in itself, is not debilitating for Kant, but Kant's subsequent attempt to supplement the categorical imperative with the notion that people must always treat each other not as means but as rational ends, fails more dramatically. Kant seems to see rationality as the criteria by which people would decide to act if they were to act intelligently and consistently. The problem lies in Kant's envisioning inconvenient behaviour as irrational. Thus MacIntyre comments, "I can without any inconsistency whatsoever flout it; 'Let everyone except me be treated as a means' may be immoral, but it is not inconsistent...It might be inconvenient for each if everyone lived by this maxim, but it would not be impossible..." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 46). MacIntyre proceeds to eliminate any hope for any Kantian formulation of maxims when he attacks Onora O'Neill's defense of Kant through her "loosening" the maxims so they do not have to apply to all possible contexts (cf., O'Neill, 'Kant after Virtue', p. 395-398). MacIntyre successfully argues that this is not what Kant could have meant. If one is seeking a maxim, and that maxim can be framed in a variety of ways, some of which include a particular situation and some of which do not, both types of maxims could be universalized. If this is the case then, "...no one maxim...is uniquely specifiable by the Kantian rational test of universalizability...", and "...if no one maxim...is uniquely specifiable in this way, then something other than reason as Kant understands it will partially determine on what maxim rational agents act..." (MacIntyre, 'Moral Rationality, Tradition, and Aristotle', p. 449). This means that the shaping of maxims will not be autonomous, but heteronomous, a condition that, for Kant, cannot be described as moral since the agent would not be acting according to the good will alone, but according to the will and something else. The 'something else' is, in a Kantian system, anathema to moral reasoning.

Why does a deontologist fear the grounding of moral concepts in contexts or institutions? The boundaries of such contexts are not entirely clear, and the possibility of a purely consequentialist morality lurks formidably in the wings. Unfortunately, certain contexts clearly do provide the meaning for certain moral concepts. The categorical imperative, at the very least, at certain times would require that one not take such a context into account. If, however, there are legitimate moral concepts that arise from an institutional context and the categorical imperative cannot take these into account, it will not uncover the moral law that underlies the moral judgment. If one

cannot use the categorical imperative some of the time, its usefulness at any time becomes dubious.

There is another deontological model I need to examine briefly since it is considered by some in recent times to be a more adequate picture, namely morality based on a system of absolute rights. The work of Alan Gewirth will be helpful in this respect, since he attempts to demonstrate the objectivity of natural rights. Gewirth wishes to claim that denial of the existence of certain absolute rights entails a self-contradiction, therefore, one must act in such a way that honours others' rights. Gewirth's argument fails in a manner similar to Kant's, for both are trying to demonstrate that to act immorally is to act in some fashion irrationally. This is not the case, although our lives would be simpler if it were. The problem lies in where Gewirth seeks to find the grounds for morality. The nub of his argument runs as follows. All have justifications or reasons for acting in particular ways, for pursuing particular projects. People therefore see their reasons as providing for them *prima facie* rights to pursue those projects. Now, not any reason is a good enough according to Gewirth, so he wishes to provide a criterion for a description that would allow a reason to be considered a right.

....the description under which or the sufficient reason for which any agent rationally must claim that he has a right to participate voluntarily and purposively in transactions in which he is involved is that he is a prospective agent who wants to fulfill his purposes.

And, he proceeds to conclude:

....all prospective agents who want to fulfill their purposes have the right to participate voluntarily and purposively in transactions in which they are involved. If the agent denies this, then he contradicts himself....he has a right to participate because he is a prospective agent who wants to fulfill his purposes.
(Gewirth, 'The Justification of Egalitarian Justice', p. 338)

Since similar situations demand, in order to avoid inconsistency, similar treatment, we who demand that our rights be obliged have a similar duty to oblige others' rights since they, like ourselves, are purposive agents fulfilling their purposes.

The problem lies in Gewirth's seeking objectivity where there is less than he supposes. An individual chooses particular projects to achieve states-of-affairs that he desires. Therefore, the reason or justification for an action, or to use Gewirth's terminology, my right to pursue a course of action, lies in my belief that the state-of-affairs that I desire will result. That a desired state-of-affairs gives *me* a reason to act

cannot be denied, but that others have a duty to respect that reason is a conclusion I do not see. It seems that Gewirth is relying on the word 'right' to carry with it some moral force which it has and which the word 'reason' does not. The important point is that the state-of-affairs I wish to achieve provides the grounding for my reasons. There is no necessary reason why I must consider other people's pursuits of their states-of-affairs. There can be no absolute requirements that I honour their pursuits. Gewirth, like Kant, is hoping to find some objective standard to which we, as moral beings, must conform ourselves. Such a standard does not exist.

To summarise: I have considered two ways to provide reasons for pursuing a particular course of action. One can say that one is motivated by consequences; one wishes to achieve a particular state-of-affairs. Or, one may claim, duty or obligation provides a reason for action. I have suggested that it could appear that people are, at times, satisfied in grounding their actions consequentially, but at other times when consequentialism leads them to a result with which they vehemently disagreed, such as surrendering a project or belief in which they are deeply invested, non-consequentialist reasoning may seem more seductive. For example, if I am a firm believer in the equality of civil rights, I could, in a consequentialist system, have to decide to surrender that belief. When viewed deontologically, however, I will never have reason to surrender those beliefs, therefore it would seem that such a system of morality would offer me exactly what I wish. The hope would be that the objectivity of such moral obligations is more firmly rooted than consequentialist obligations. In fact they are not because, as demonstrated, it is quite difficult to show that immoral behaviour is irrational. It simply does not make sense to envisage that I need to amend my actions according to some external standard, be it some state-of-affairs that one claims to be objectively 'good', or according to some law that is independently conceived to be 'right'.

Even more fundamentally, there is significant doubt about whether modern day consequentialists and deontologists are even looking in the proper arena as they pose their respective questions. I believe they are not. Ethics as the study of quandaries is simply the wrong study. Humans are not contestants born with some sort of 'rule-applying' capability that allows them to see automatically life's situations as scenes that merely call for the appropriate rule or script. Individuals do make their way through scenes of sorts, but their ability to know how to do this relies on the character they have developed, and that is not a neutral one that has some kind of 'rule-searching-and-applying' component.

By the quandarist model an agent faces a situation then applies rules. For example, I am hungry and there is food within arm's-reach, but it is not mine. I then calculate what I ought to do: I ought not take another's food simply because I feel hungry. As

a result of following this rule I move away and find some legitimately elsewhere. This same process from a more Aristotelean standpoint looks quite different because I would never have to make the kind of calculation suggested above. If I have been properly trained my feeling hungry could not cause me to want another's food for I would also have a disposition to respect the property of others. What I would want would be my food, so I would purchase some. By the quandarist model a trip down the street would be a veritable obstacle course. If hungry I would be tempted by each bag of chips, each scotch pie, each ice cream being consumed by every passer-by: I would have to calculate reasons for not taking them. Here one may counter that it is only necessary that I make the calculation once and abide by it all the time (i.e., I will never take another's food wrongfully). This will not do, however, since then I am walking down the street acting continually on this calculation. One is left with a picture that errs because it looks as though an individual who really does want the other's food but has decided not to take it. Internally he is salivating for the chips in that other fellow's hand. What I wish to say is much stronger; he is not salivating for those chips at all. We do not walk down the street having to apply an internal leash to our movements. (Indeed, what internal entity would be leashed?) The whole approach to the psychology of the situation is incorrect. I am in one situation with one disposition, and because of that disposition I either search for or make another situation (walk into the shop and buy an ice cream), or I seek to make do with what is available in the situation at hand (for instance I might go hungry for a time).

Since this characteristically modern search is of the wrong type, and since it cannot hope to be successful, why is it still pursued? There are a number of interesting views on this. Elizabeth Anscombe suggests one reason, which I will only touch on briefly, and it is tied in with Christianity's "...law conception of ethics..." (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p.30) that led us to adopt a moral vocabulary connected with that conception. The problem lies in the fact that we no longer share the fundamental beliefs that allowed the law conception to be effective. Michael Oakeshott, in 'Rationalism and Politics', puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Rationalistic movement. In a similar vein, Alasdair MacIntyre, claims the Enlightenment has led us down a path that is necessarily a dead-end. The thinkers of that movement believe they can construct, "...valid arguments which will move from premises concerning human nature as they understand it to be to conclusions about the authority of moral rules and precepts...." Such a project can only fail because there is "...an ineradicable discrepancy between their shared conception of moral rules and precepts on the one hand and what was shared - despite much larger divergences - in their conception of human nature on the other...." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 52). Space does not allow discussion of various aspects

of these philosophers' views on this historical process, but they have all presented cogent ideas about why philosophy took such a wrong turn, and my inclusion of these sources is really meant as a counter to those who might say, in one last gasping attempt of salvaging defence, but how could it be that so many were so wrong for so long? For quite a while people thought the earth was flat.

If the two current and popular views are inadequate, I will need to consider some of the history underlying these two views and begin a search for a better alternative. The next section will deal with these two matters in turn.

1.2) Needs and Virtues

Considering the reduction of the most basic question to a quandary format, it is not surprising that modern moral philosophy has headed down the consequentialist or Kantian path, so I ought now to consider briefly that if the adequacy of these two approaches is flawed, where, then, is one to turn? How should I answer the fundamental question, namely how is one to act in the situations with which one is faced? Some recent philosophers: Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre, to name a few, have moved in some interesting directions. Anscombe, in particular, expresses dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in the article mentioned earlier, 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. She introduces the paper with three doubts about the state of contemporary moral philosophy. First, she suggests that we do not have the necessary tools of psychology to be able to say much about how moral philosophy can work. Second, she suggests that our use of the concept of moral duty and its reliance on the "...*moral* sense of 'ought'..." are flawed, dusty notions from a moral library that is long since out of date. Finally, she claims that English philosophy has little worthwhile to say since it has followed in the footsteps of such consequentialist thinkers as Sidgwick (G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 26).

I will not comment here on Anscombe's assessment of the concept of duty and modern consequentialist theories, although one will probably not be surprised to discover that I find her evaluation persuasive. The essential point is to examine what results if there is agreement with Anscombe's assessment. If it is the case that deontological theories rely on an antiquated and vacuous notion of duty, and consequentialist positions yield clearly unjust states-of-affairs, then where to turn? How is one to do moral philosophy, and how should fundamental questions be framed in order to avoid the complications faced by consequentialists and Kantian deontologists? For her part, Anscombe strongly hints that a re-evaluation and consideration of virtue theory is an alternative path, but,

This part of the subject-matter of ethics is, however, completely closed to us until we have an account of what type of characteristic a virtue is - a problem, not of ethics, but of conceptual analysis - and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced...For this we certainly need an account at least of what a human action is at all, and how its description as "doing such-and-such" is affected by its motive and by the intention or intentions in it....

(G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 29)

So we are left with a path, but she suggests that it is, at present, impassable. Later in the paper she again suggests, when she discusses the relationship between wants, needs, and flourishing, that it is this direction that will bear fruit. Again, however, little encouragement is given. It would be worthwhile, however, to discuss in some detail how Anscombe sees the relationship between these concepts. In order to do this I will have to review her comments on Hume and the nature of the 'is/ought' problem in the light of the previous discussion of the 'bruteness' of facts. (What follows is a summary of Anscombe's argument from pages 28-31 of 'Modern Moral Philosophy'.)

According to Anscombe, Hume maintained, to put the matter perhaps oversimply, that no factual claim could be used to imply a moral claim. It is well and good for me to perceive that my dog might thrive if I feed him expensive cuts of beef, but my perception of that fact cannot move me to do anything about it, to feel somehow morally compelled to buy large quantities of beef. The reason I remain unmoved is because the fact concerning my dog and beef is out there, and my willingness to be moved is in here inside of me, and is not the same sort of thing as a fact. According to Hume, a fact is different from a moral idea and, as such, it cannot cause a moral idea to occur.⁵ Now Anscombe points to the errors in Hume's logic when she discusses what is meant by fact. If facts are not as completely different from moral ideas as Hume suggests they are, his argument will not go through. Indeed, facts are not objective entities, but are entities that have varying amounts of 'bruteness' or objectivity, as already seen (cf., p. 31, above); that is to say they are recognisable entities, useful entities only when they are attached to some background set of ideas.⁶

5 It has to be noted that Anscombe's interpretation of Hume is not without controversy. One reading Hume could see him as arguing that there are facts (in particular in regard to man's moral sentiments) that can be used to support moral claims (cf., 'Concerning Moral Sentiment', p. 264, and esp., 'Of the Original Contract', p. 371).

6 For a slightly different account of the mistake in Hume's use of fact see Julius Kovesi's *Moral Notions* (cf., p. 17-20). Kovesi points out that Hume is confused about the nature of facts since he asks us to try to find the factual element of vice in an act of murder as though murder, in itself, is a brute fact. It is not a fact but "...an

Anscombe considers why Hume would have made such a mistake concerning the nature of facts. Essentially, he inherited a set of concepts about morality that seemed to have been rooted in 'fact' in a simplistic way. In other words, to say that x was a bad thing was to make believe that one *was* making a 'brute' factual claim about x , and the reason this was so was because morality had been grounded in a divine law conception. The vocabulary continued to maintain factual force, but by the time Hume was writing the factualness of the divine law conception had long since disappeared. "...So Hume discovered the situation in which the notion of 'obligation' survived, and the word "ought" was invested with that peculiar force having which it is said to be used in a 'moral' sense, but in which the belief in divine law had long since been abandoned...at the time of the Reformation..." (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 30-1).

How does this digression bring us to an understanding of Anscombe on wants, needs, and flourishing? Anscombe uses her analysis of "is" to "ought" to discuss the relation of "is" to "needs". Although she demonstrates the fault in Hume's analysis in the former problem, she does imagine that there are factual cases in which his analysis would be correct, namely certain cases where a state-of-affairs is 'brute' factually one way, and our human internal system is not, in a sense, connected with or tied into responding to those 'brute' facts. She uses the example of a plant and imagines that one can work out, at a 'brute' level, "...from the characteristics of an organism to the environment that it needs..." (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 31). Hume would assert, and in this instance Anscombe agrees, that our perception of what the plant needs can have no logical claim on influencing our actions. (The influence cannot be logical, but it can be the result of the way one is built, the result of one's 'chemistry'. There is nothing in the concept of 'ailing plant' that demands, through logic, that I help it, but it is true that I can be moved because I am influenced in other ways when I see the ailing plant.) Thus, "...it *must* be impossible to infer "needs" or "ought to be" from "is"...." (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 31). But, can people make the same kind of claim about themselves? Clearly Anscombe says she will have none of that, though the reasons for this claim are complex.

Hume has assumed, to consider the plant case, that the problem lies on the side of the "need". In other words, Hume has this idea that needs are things external to people that, in order to influence them, have to have the ability to push some internal part for them to want the need. The plant has various needs, but those needs are not

object of our reasoning..." (Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, p. 18), which is to say that murder is *not* a fact, but a way people rationally organise and evaluate certain kinds of actions.

the things that would be able to give my internal wantings that kind of push. Anscombe is claiming, however, that Hume has not analysed the situation properly, and it's the wanting that needs unpacking, not the needing. It is worthwhile to consider what she says, and from that form a picture of how wanting works in terms of needs. (The discussion here will be introductory only. The connection between wanting and needing is complex and, I think, at the heart of the difficulty in the consideration of the concept of flourishing, so it demands separate consideration. This will occur in chapters Four and Five.) Anscombe states:

....But there is some sort of necessary connection between what you think *you* need, and what you want. The connection is a complicated one; it is possible *not* to want something that you judge you need. But, e.g., it is not possible never to want *anything* that you judge you need. This, however, is not a fact about the meaning of the word "to need", but about the phenomenon of *wanting*.

(G.E. M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 31)

This passage is a touch cryptic, but it contains an important kernel of truth. Essentially, Anscombe is maintaining that people define needs in terms of wanting, and in this sense wanting is prior to the discovery of needs. It makes no sense to view needs as stimuli that are external, for the defining of needs can only take place in the context of wanting to do a particular thing.

Consider the following example. I wish to write a great novel (or even a mediocre one, as long as I make a great deal of money from it). I ask a reliable writer-friend what I will need, and he makes some obvious suggestions. Well, pen, papers, pencils, erasures, sun-tan oil, sun-glasses, word-processor and printer are the things for me. But I do not want to bring sun-tan oil or sun-glasses, and I will not need them because I am staying in Scotland to do the writing. Clearly, I can make a case for not needing such things, and they do not relate to what I want to do. I also discard the word-processor and printer. I want to write a book, but I do not like computer-type gadgets; I do not even wish to have a typewriter. Fine, but then I tell my friend I do not need paper or writing instruments; I will make do with just the erasures thank you. At this stage my friend, wondering why I have even asked for his help, will ask, "But you *do* want to write a novel, don't you?" "Yes," I reply, "but I do not need all those things you have suggested." If I do not claim to have specific needs, then I am open to and can be criticised for not really wanting what I say I want. To paraphrase Anscombe's passage: if one does not want too many needs associated with a particular wanting, then does one really have the wanting at all? There is a point at which it is possible to say that one does not see some particular needs as important while still maintaining that one has the wanting (i.e., I do not want

the sun gear or the computer gear, but I do want the rest of the writing tools), but if I discard too many of the needs the wanting associated with the needs is also not important, I cannot claim really to want it. This suggests that there is, then, a stronger connection between the two concepts than Hume had supposed. To unpack the force that needs have, one needs to understand what it means to want. Needing (in the sense that will elucidate flourishing) is parasitic on wanting, but the discussion of this will have to wait. Hume, to reiterate Anscombe's point, thinks the problem lies in the nature of what needs are, but in fact it lies in what the nature of wanting is.

Now virtue theory would seem to fit well into such a view of wants and needs since it is based on one's learning to want some things and not others. To put this point crudely but succinctly, to act virtuously is to want the right things for the right reasons and not want the wrong things. It is clear why Anscombe eludes to seeing some promise in virtue theory; it has something to say about the phenomenon of wanting; the virtuous person wants the proper things.

It would be worthwhile to interject briefly about how wanting looks in the context of virtue theory. More will be said about this in the following chapter, but it is important to have a rough picture in mind from the start. The virtuous person wants what is constitutive of *eudaimonia*. In order to achieve this it is necessary that he train himself to act according to those characteristics (virtues) that will lead him to this. To do this requires not simply that he act according to such virtues but that he acts because he wants what is best. Aristotle points out that virtues "...are means, and they are states..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1114b27) They are means to the good life and to having a character that is capable of having a good life, and they are also the states one must act out of in order to achieve the good life. They are dispositions that are necessary to *eudaimonia*. Take one succinct example. Imagine that I have determined that rowing every day is constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Various virtues are required to accomplish this, not least of which are courage and tolerance. I am not exercising these two virtues if I am spending my time rowing on a windy, wet day while consequently thinking that I might drown as a result of the boat's swamping and cursing the rain that soaks me to the bone. I am certainly not enjoying the row. Courage and tolerance are dispositions that enable me not to pay attention to some of the inherent dangers of rowing and the discomfort of the rain. Because I am not thus distracted I can get on with enjoying myself fully; I can participate in the *eudaimon* life.

This entire picture is directly at odds with a Kantian view. Both Scruton and MacIntyre comment on the weakness of Kant from the view of Aristotelianism. "...For Kant,...the benevolent emotions that prompt us to do what virtue commands, are not genuine expressions of morality, but merely 'empirical determinations',..."

(Scturon, *Sexual Desire*, p. 322). Precisely what training in the the virtues aims for is discounted by Kant as being morally irrelevant. This ought to highlight clearly the difference in stance taken by an Aristotelian from that taken by a Kantian. "...To act virtuously is not, as Kant was later to think, to act against inclination; it is to act from inclination fromed by the cultivation of the virtues. Moral education is an 'education sentimentale'. (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 149).

It must be admitted (this is a controversy that I will only gloss here and touch on in my conclusion) that in certain places Aristotle speaks as though one has properly developed a virtue when one sees that the virtue in question is good in itself. (Consider the following passages from the *Ethica*: 1097b4-6; 1099a20; 1144a1-3). I do not really know how seriously to take these claims, for it seems daft to imagine that being brave is simply a good thing, as though one ought to go out seeking opportunities for it. M.F. Burnyeat interprets Aristotle in such a way and is led to conclude, for example, that we imagine, "...the brave man who is pleased to be standing up to a frightful situation,..." (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to be Good', p. 78). What is he pleased about? It makes good deal more sense to say he is pleased in that his virtue allows him to sack the city and make off with the spoils, or take the enemy hill. Is it thought that he could be enjoying the hail of arrows or gunfire in themselves? One could imagine, and I think that this happens quite often, that one is pleased in one's overcoming danger (one's first time leading a long and dangerous climb up a rock face), but again the pleasure would seem to lie in the fact that one has learned that one can climb a difficult route (the end one is after) and will not be put off by the danger. Aristotle's discussion of bravery in *Ethics*, III, vi-ix, certainly does not seem too supportive of Burnyeat's interpretation. Other virtues, however, could be seen to be good in themselves (e.g., generosity), so whether Aristotle means that all virtues are good in themselves, or simply that some are, is a point open to debate. The structure of the *Ethica Nicomachea*, in addition to the passages above where Aristotle specifically refers to them as such, suggests that the virtues are means. Aristotle provides the reader first with the virtues to develop and only latter is he given instruction on how to deliberate.

There is another way of thinking about the virtues that must be avoided, and it is a mistake easily made. The virtuous person does not want to be virtuous simply because it will lead to his flourishing. This is why Aristotle stresses that virtues are means and states. If one imagines, for example, that x wants to be courageous *because* it will lead to his flourishing we have a picture in which x has not achieved the state of being courageous. It suggests that he is performing a calculation that runs something like this: "I want to flourish; rowing boats is an aspect of my flourishing; I will brave these winds and waves (be courageous) in order to row the boat". The

problem lies in the element of persuasion that appears to be at work here. If one has to *persuade* oneself to be courageous (which of course implies that one would really rather be doing something other than being courageous) one clearly does not have the disposition in hand.

Aristotle is quite clear about this, and an observation by Gilbert Ryle elucidates why Aristotle would have had to be. If we *were* to imagine that a courageous person thought in the way I have supposed he cannot, an obvious 'category mistake' would result. Just as Ryle demonstrates how this mistake works through the use of examples, I will use the courageous-because-it-will-cause-me-to-flourish-man as an example. A 'category mistake' occurs when one, "...represents the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one logical type or category (or range of types or categories), when they actually belong to another...." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 16). How does this occur in our example? If I ask my courageous-because-it-will-cause-me-to-flourish-man where the flourishing lies in a particular act of courage, or for that matter, why courage as just one of the virtues is an example of flourishing, he will attempt (and fail) to tell me. His mistake lies in his thinking that he ought to be able to find the component that attaches to flourishing. Just as the fellow who visits Oxford or Cambridge (to refer back to one of Ryle's examples) cannot quite figure out where the Universities are after having seen the buildings, pitches, students, etc., my man, when asked to consider where the flourishing is in his particular act of courage will somehow imagine that he ought to be able to tell me. Just as "...The University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organised...." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 16), flourishing arises as the result of being courageous, and being many other things. One cannot 'pick out' a University building and then say, "Well, *here* is the University really.", just as one cannot pick out a specific act of courage and say, "*Here* is an instance of real flourishing." To act in a way that demonstrates that one values all the virtues simply *is the way* flourishing is organised, and to imagine that flourishing is somehow contained in specific instances of acting virtuously or in specific virtues is to commit a 'category mistake'.

Unfortunately, other than suggesting that virtue theory is a promising path, Anscombe stops short of pressing the point; in fact she immediately raises doubts about its usefulness. First, she again reiterates her belief that there is too much about psychology that is unknown, thus:

....X needs what makes it flourish, so a man needs, or ought to perform, only virtuous actions; and even if, as it must be admitted may happen, he flourishes less, or not at all, in *inessentials*, by avoiding injustice, his life is spoiled in essentials by not avoiding injustice - so he still needs to perform only just actions. That is roughly how Plato and Aristotle talk; but it can be seen that

philosophically there is a huge gap, at present unfillable as far as we are concerned, which needs to be filled by an account of human nature, human action, the type of characteristic a virtue is, and above all of human 'flourishing'. And it is this last concept that appears the most doubtful....

(Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 41-2)

And what is doubtful about 'human flourishing' is whether one can unpack it and then define it so that it is a helpful and not a uselessly relative concept. The danger of its being uselessly relative is great, for those unimpressed by Aristotelian or Platonic notions of flourishing may say:

...."What we need is such-and-such, which we won't get without doing this (which is unjust) - so this is what we ought to do". Another man, who does not follow the rather elaborate reasoning of the philosophers, simply says, "I know it is in any case a disgraceful thing to say that one had better commit this unjust action." The man who believes in divine laws will say perhaps "It is forbidden, and however it looks, it cannot be to anyone's profit to commit injustice"; he like the Greek philosophers can think in terms of flourishing. If he is a Stoic, he is apt to have a decidedly strained notion of what flourishing consists in; if he is a Jew or Christian, he need not have a very distinct notion: the way it will profit him to abstain from injustice is something that he leaves it to God to determine

(Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy", p. 41-2)

This puts one in a rather interesting position. The consequentialists and deontologists have asked the wrong sort of questions, so their answers have the wrong format. In addition to this there are other fundamental problems within each of the systems. Unfortunately, the only other direction in which one might alight seems foggy since one has no clearer concepts with which to work. Still, the alternative ways *are* wrong, so it makes sense to try to clear the fog. The broad question is whether one can come up with a notion of flourishing that is useful. The negativism of Anscombe on this issue is really what has prompted the theme of this thesis. If one could add some form to it, it would be much easier to argue from what one would require to flourish to some position about any particular ethical system. In the end, one would have a different basis for 'ought', for one could now argue that another ought to do something because it would lead to his flourishing, which would be a state that he *could decide* to refuse, but his task in justifying an action against his flourishing would be far more difficult than my task of persuading him to head toward that flourishing state. This kind of optimistic looking ahead is perhaps premature, but it does seem to me that until one can begin to understand what it might mean for a human to flourish, ethics will always have a too pragmatic look about it; a look that

might be described as a study on how to put out ethical brush fires without ever having the tools to extinguish the entire forest-fire.

CHAPTER TWO ARISTOTLE'S VIEW

2.1) Aristotle's Question

First, one needs to ask the right kind of question. We have already seen that that reduction of ethics as a study of solutions to a series of human quandaries is inadequate. How ought a human look at himself? Well, perhaps one could look at oneself and ask questions of oneself in a way more sympathetic with the ancient Greeks. For Aristotle, ethics is the search for and consideration of what would be the good life, *eudaimonia*, for man. Such a view cannot be reduced to goodness that derives from right action or an aiming toward some specified state-of-affairs. To underline the difference in the modern perception from the ancient's, consider Alasdair MacIntyre's summary:

In general, Greek ethics asks, What am I to do if I am to fare well? Modern ethics asks, What ought I to do if I am to do right? and it asks this question in such a way that doing right is made something quite independent of faring well....
(MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 84)

J.O. Urmson, in his recent book, *Aristotle's Ethics*, also emphasises how Aristotle's enquiry differs from our own.

....If one asks the question of the modern moralist: 'How ought I to live?' one is not asking Aristotle's question: 'What is the *eudaemon* (*sic*) life?'. Aristotle's question requires an answer more like that required to the question asked of a parent: 'What sort of life do you hope for your children?' Parents, in general, want their children to succeed in life, though they have different views of what constitutes success. So had the Greeks. (Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 12)

It is quite easy to see that the separating of the concepts of good and right has no place in an Aristotelian scheme. One should not ask, for example, "Is a view based on 'flourishing' (which is what Aristotle's account amounts to) about the *good* for man, or about the *right action* for him to take?" (I will not talk about the adequacy of *flourishing* as a translation until the first section of Chapter Four. The support for the use of *flourishing*, as will be pointed out, is fairly wide among Aristotelian interpreters.)

Urmson provides a contemporary example that clearly demonstrates the contrast between what most in today's world would describe as a commendable action, and

which the ancients would see as such. Suppose two men wish to stand up to support their views at a public meeting where they are facing a hostile crowd. One man, Brown, has both confidence in himself and in the rightness of his position, and he, therefore, has no difficulty in facing the audience to state his case. Another, Smith, believes as fervently in his position, but does not have such self confidence, and he must pluck up his courage in order to present his views. As a result, one may want to praise Smith for his courage, but Brown is the individual that represents the more successful of the two to Aristotle. "...Brown is the man who has excellence of character; he is the man who acts effortlessly and as he wants to act, without any internal friction...." (Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 27). One might tend to admire and dwell on the case of Smith; in fact, one in a Kantian frame of mind might even see Smith as a paradigm of reason 'taming' inclination, thus demonstrating a moral action that emanates from the good will. But this way of looking at the issue would not be Aristotle's. Brown is superior because he does not waste his time worrying about the (illegitimate) complaints of the others. Smith, on the other hand, is weaker because part of his problem is that he is worried about what those who do not know best are saying. He is thus distracted from getting on with his task, and he is experiencing mental anguish when there is no reason for him to do so.

....Aristotle is not making a hopelessly wrong judgement about moral virtue; he is raising a different sort of question. The excellent character is that which a man will have who lives the most *eudaemon* life, the most choiceworthy life. If we were to ask, not for what person do we feel most moral respect, but what sort of person we should wish a child of ours to be, we shall be nearer to Aristotle's viewpoint. He thinks a parent should aim to train his or her children to behave properly without effort. (Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 27)

In such a scheme, the right and the good cannot be separated and considered on their own. The purpose of education within this Aristotelian scheme is to make people want to do what will cause them to flourish. Scruton summarises Aristotelian education as follows: "...In educating a child I am concerned, not merely with what he does, but with what he feels and his emerging character. Feeling and character, which provide his motives, determine what he will do. In moulding them, I mould his moral nature...." (Scruton, *Sexual Desires*, p. 325). The search cannot be reduced to either a vision of man as an entity seeking solutions to various moral quandaries, or our seeking a set of rules that will yield right actions or good states of affairs.

Following Urmson's lead, one can see other ways in which Aristotle's ethical project of searching for *eudaimonia* differs considerably from other contemporary ethical projects. Consider the limited roles the right and the good play within the

concept of *eudaimonia* itself. "If one lives a moral life one is, no doubt, to be praised. If one lives the *eudaemon* (*sic*) life one is to be congratulated. Aristotle frequently makes the distinction between what is to be prized and what is to be praised (e.g., 1101b10), and *eudaemonia* is to be prized. It is a success, an achievement." (Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 12). The *eudaimon* life is an achievement *beyond* the right or good acts that comprise that life, and distinguishing between prizing and praising as evaluations is meant to convey this. A look at the text itself provides a clearer means to understand this.

Whatever is praiseworthy appears to be praised for its character and its state in relation to something. We praise, e.g., the just and the brave person, and in general the good person and virtue, for their actions and achievements....If praise is for these sorts of things, then clearly for the best things there is no praise, but something greater and better. And indeed this is how it appears. For the gods and the most godlike of men are [not praised, but] congratulated for their blessedness and happiness.... (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1101b12-25)

The specific distinction with which to attend lies in the difference between the notions of praising and being praiseworthy and the notion of congratulating for having achieved blessedness and happiness. This distinction is difficult to explore for our language does not have specific and concise terms to convey the meanings Aristotle is considering here. It is important, nevertheless, to work toward an understanding of the distinction.

By Aristotle's conception, praise makes sense as an acknowledgement of something done in relation to something else. Imagine a university student preparing for and then sitting his examinations towards an honours degree. He will be praised for his fortitude in sticking with his studies, in foregoing present pleasures for future ones, in seeing the long-term value of study as opposed to the short-term pleasure of viewing *Neighbours* and *Top of the Pops* each day. What allows us to praise him is that his actions can be seen in the light of what he is trying to accomplish, which is considered greater or more important than the lesser activities in which he could be engaged. He is praised in relation to his greater goal.

This captures one half of the distinction. The other half is a bit more difficult: this requires a different example. Imagine facing a person who, by all accounts, has achieved *eudaimonia*. (Ignore, for the time being, the difficulty in describing an individual as having achieved this state while that individual is still alive and thus able to 'lose' it. This is the realm of hypothetical here.) What does one say to such an individual in this case? Praise, as used above, clearly will not do, as the individual is at the point he has been working to achieve. Irwin and Urmson favour

'congratulation.' This, however, will not capture Aristotle's distinction. The reason is quite simple, the application of the term is too wide in modern usage. Congratulate means, (1)"....to rejoice along with another....," or (2)"....to express sympathetic joy on the occasion of ...an event or circumstance..." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II). It is perfectly appropriate by this definition, therefore, to congratulate someone for succeeding in mastering some means to an end (e.g., mastering the 'grips' in order to play the bagpipes) *or for* attaining *eudaimonia*. This latter use of 'congratulate' is the suspicious one that the translation does not help to clarify.

Another translation can help here. W.D. Ross translates a portion of the above passage in the following way:

....clearly what applies to the best things is not praise, but something greater and better, as is indeed obvious; for what we do to the gods and the most godlike of men is to call them blessed and happy...And so too with good *things*; no one praises happiness as he does justice, but rather calls it blessed, as being something more divine and better.
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Ross trans., 1101b21-25)

By this translation one does not act as one would if one is congratulated, one really describes the *state of the individual* at the time of his achievement. He has not simply acted in particular ways (for which he can be praised), but fortune as well has afforded him *eudaimonia*. His being blessed reflects both that he acted properly, but more importantly the order of things conspired to work in his favour. The *eudaimon* life requires more than praiseworthy acts or states. "...For praise is given to virtue, since it makes us do fine actions; but celebrations are for [successful] achievements...happiness is something honourable and complete." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1101b32-1102a). This view also makes more sense since an appraisal such as this would have to take into account circumstances, and circumstances are not generally something for which another can be praised.

Parents want their childrens' lives to be complete, to be blessed. Children are praised for acting in ways that will help lead to such a life, but parents do not see such actions as the sole constituents of such a life. They realize there are others over which they do not have control, such as fortunate circumstances, and they want their children to have these also. What most people realize is that one is better able to make use of fortune (or successfully deal with misfortune) if one has a properly developed character.

My intent in discussing this at some length is to clarify the question that is being dealt with and to insist that any attempt to reduce it to one of a simple consequentialist or Kantian deontological type will not go through. To my mind, those viewpoints are mistaken because they are seeking to solve the wrong kind of riddle. MacIntyre

captures the essence of the opposition of Aristotle's view to other views (in this particular reference Plato is the opponent) when he says:

....The point is that if we begin by asking for an account of goodness which is compatible with the good man suffering any degree of torture and injustice, the whole perspective of our ethics will be different from that of an ethics which begins from asking in what form of life doing well and faring well may be found together. The first perspective will end up with an ethics which is irrelevant to the task of creating such a form of life.

(MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 60)

Quandarists say, in effect, let us not concern ourselves with the 'form' a life might take. Instead, let us uncover rules that all must obey, which will, in turn, lead to good states-of-affairs or right actions - this is what the study of ethics is about. The important view is not how a life might look, the 'form' it might take, but the states-of-affairs or the actions that result from human choices. I reject this picture since it leaves us with no story, no good explanation, of how people will know when to apply rules, or which rules to apply.

In fact, as is noted by Pincoffs, the quandarist view seems plausible only because, to make it work, character *is* allowed to play a part, though it is 'snuck in' without the quandarist acknowledging its presence. If one grants the quandarist's view of rules,

....I have to decide not just what the rule is which governs the case, but how to go about honouring it. In deciding this, it is inevitable that I will not approach the problem in a vacuum, as any anonymous agent would, but in the light of my conception of what is and what is not worthy of me. So considerations of character, of my own character, do enter by the back door.... (Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', p. 562)

Pincoffs is maintaining, essentially, that character has to enter the picture somewhere, either in our choosing how to follow a rule, or in choosing which rule to apply.

Reduced to this observation, Pincoffs' point is a good one, but it is worth noting that in moving to this conclusion Pincoffs also suggests that we "...distinguish between different ways in which a rule may come to bear on an agent...." (Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', p. 561). He claims that rules can be like commands or orders. Commands are very explicit: he says they tell us both what to do and or what not to do, while orders tell us what we should try to achieve without indicating how we should achieve it. For example, "Don't put beans up your nose" is a command, while, "Take care riding your bicycle" is an order. He is led to conclude, therefore,

that,"...[s]ome moral rules are more like general standing orders than like general standing commands...." (Pincoffs, 'Quandary Ethics', p. 562).

This idea of how rules work is not entirely consistent with my view, nor does it clearly relay how one might reply to a quandarist's view. Pincoffs suggests that there is a set of entities called moral rules that has two sub-sets, namely orders and commands. The majority of moral rules are also members of the sub-set, orders. This is a confusion. Rules, commands, and orders are not entities related to one another in this hierarchical fashion. A rule is not a command. They differ in that their spheres of influence differ, as do their purposes. In *Moral Notions*, Julius Kovesi outlines the restrictions and purposes of rules, regulations, and commands (Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, p. 79-82). About rules, Kovesi remarks, "It seems that rules and regulations are formulated in such a manner as to enable people to follow them on the basis of empirical similarities....if people do not know why they should or should not do something then only empirical similarities could enable them to follow a rule...." (Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, p. 84). Rules are tools that guide action in certain situations about which people are uncertain, and therefore need aid in action, or about which it is necessary that a particular procedure be followed in order to accomplish something. Commands are different in that they order a particular action, but do not provide reasons within the order for the action. As a father I may command my daughter to wash the dishes, and I supply no reasons in the speech act for it being her, as opposed to someone else, who washes. It is also important to note that rules and commands are not things that can be drawn up, shouted out willy-nilly. They are restricted: in the case of rules and regulations, by time and place, in the case of commands, by the extension of authority (Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, p. 78-79).

This second observation is similar to one made by Hobbes in *Leviathan*. There he distinguishes between command and counsel, one of several differences being "...a man may be obliged to do what he is commanded; as when he hath covenanted to obey...." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 166). By this account the rules and commands are not the moral entities, though at times my following or obeying may be a moral choice. The crucial difference is my reason for following or obeying. To obey a rule, to follow a command, is to act *because of* the rule or command. It is adequate for me to provide as a reason, "Because that is the rule." It is appropriate to say, on the other hand, "I choose not to obey that rule *because x*" (*x* being a reason). In this case the moral element is entering in my decision to heed the rule or command.

It is here where it is appropriate to say that the quandarist view runs onto the rocks. How is an agent supposed to know which rules to follow or which commands to heed if he does not have a character that has been sufficiently well developed to be sensitive to judging about the appropriateness of various rules and orders? People do

not and should not follow all rules and commands, and the process of discerning whether a rule or command has authority over them is a process that cannot be reduced to the following of other rules and commands. One needs to have a particular kind of character first, in order to apply or search for moral principles. People do not 'get' characters from simply following rules, but follow certain rules because they have certain characters.

This is emphatically *not* to say that rules have *no* place in the formation of character: no parent could raise a child without making the child heed certain rules, but those rules are more intimately connected with making the child be a certain sort of person than his being a 'rule-following' person. As Martha Nussbaum points out:

...They [rules] are guidelines in moral development: for people not yet possessed of practical wisdom and insight need to follow rules that summarize the wise judgement of others. And even for virtuous adults...[they] guide us tentatively in our approach to the particular, helping us to pick out its salient features...Furthermore, rules give constancy and stability in situations in which bias and passion might distort judgement....Rules are necessities because we are not always good judges; if we really were operating ethically as well as we should, we would not have the same need of them.
(Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 304)

Parents order a child to share toys with friends, not so that when a situation in later life demands that goods be shared our child-now-adult will know she should share, but so that our child-to-become-adult will be the kind of person who always shares, who is generous. To refer to the above discussion, parents command a child or have a rule for a child until the child learns how to judge and act appropriately.

One can, at this point, raise another question, and, in fact, MacIntyre does raise it specifically: "...It still remains to ask whether it is modern ethics which is clarifying a valid distinction that the Greek moral vocabulary fails to observe or Greek ethics which is refusing to make a false and confusing distinction...." (MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 85). I have suggested some preliminary reasons for rejecting the modern dichotomy between the concepts of the good and the right, but those reasons have really sought to emphasise the fact that my view does not acknowledge the dichotomy, therefore the question under consideration looks different. The adequacy of my picture of man trying to make his way through numerous scenes acting as one actor throughout will need some separate consideration. First, I will consider and evaluate how Aristotle imagines that people develop a conception of the good and then act in such a way as to form their lives around that conception. This will make it clear that people are really acting to provide form to their lives, and not just acting in a way that will ensure what they do fulfils certain criteria of rightness or goodness.

The first issue, then, is what it can mean to live a *eudaimon* life. Can one find enough content in this concept so that it can provide the kind of criteria one needs to use it to organise one's life? To put this in terms more closely connected with the immediate discussion, if one has a view that ethics is the study of those things that will create people of fine character, one will need a vision of what it is like to have and exercise a fine character, to live the life of one with a fine character. Aristotle provides a very good starting-point since he has presented us with a view of man as he is when he is flourishing, so we must contend with Aristotle's vision. Is it adequate? Although I believe Aristotle is raising the right kind of question, I think his answer is filled with insights and with difficulties. I will need to explore Aristotle's vision of how one becomes virtuous and what the role is of the good life in one's development as a moral being. In brief, acknowledging that examining ethics from the viewpoint of flourishing is a project worth the endeavour, can one come up with a notion, an idea, of flourishing that is understandable and, more important, useful?

2.2) Aristotle and the Genesis of the Moral Agent

There are a variety of ways to enter into a discussion of Aristotle on the topic of *eudaimonia*. First it is important to think about the processes and mechanics by which one learns to become a moral being. In this case the most fruitful way will be to consider how Aristotle imagined a human might come to learn virtue. This chapter will focus on the story provided by Aristotle about education. Habituation is an important feature of Aristotle's thought, and I will first consider his discussion of it in the *Ethica Nicomachea*. To unpack the process of habituation it is necessary also to explore the mechanics that underlie Aristotle's concept of self-motion, for it is essential to Aristotle that one does not end up with a picture of habituation that makes human animals appear to be merely receptors and responders to external stimuli.

M.F. Burnyeat, in 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', provides a fairly detailed account of Aristotle's thinking on the issue of moral development. Many of Burnyeat's observations seem especially forceful when combined with those of Martha Nussbaum: her analysis of Aristotle's view of self-motion in animals supplies an explanatory picture that provides substance to Burnyeat's overall view of the process. In this section I will discuss Aristotle's view of learning as outlined by Burnyeat, and supplement his views with Nussbaum's. My aim is to present a clear picture of Aristotle's view and to argue that it is, at least in so far as it describes those still in the process of becoming virtuous, a very adequate picture.

Burnyeat suggests that one perceptive aspect of Aristotle's view of how people come to learn to be good is his belief that "...morality comes in a sequence of stages

with both cognitive and emotional dimensions...." (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', p. 71). This perception is important for it requires one to uncover Aristotle's picture of how a person comes to move from one stage to another. One must also realize who the *Ethica* is written for: namely those who are at the first stage of moral development, those who have attained and act according to good habits, but do not yet fully understand why those habits are good. Consider an early summary by Burnyeat.

Thus the picture forms as follows. You need a good upbringing not simply in order that you may have someone around to tell you what is noble and just - you do need that....but you also need to be guided in your conduct so that by doing the things you are told are noble and just you will discover that what you have been told is *true*. What you may begin by taking on trust you can come to know for yourself. This is not yet to know *why* it is true, but it is to have *learned that* it is true in the sense of having made the judgement on your own....
(Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', p.74)

Generosity is taught by one's performing generous acts, and eventually one sees that such acts are good. It is not until much later that people learn the reasons why generous acts are good (though *this* knowledge is not essential to being generous).

There is a point worth making here, and generosity is a good example to bring it out. What Aristotle has in mind is a picture of a human who has a set of incipient capabilities, some of these capabilities requiring more work to make one aware of them than others. There are some things that do not require excessive effort in liking: e.g., ice cream, lollies, drinking water, hide-and-seek. Virtues such as generosity do, however, take time to develop because it takes people longer to see that they have a taste for them (i.e., the trick is to have people *pay attention to* the tastes they have); the same is true of developing a taste for single-malts, tea, coffee, etc. This is why it is possible to perform generous acts (e.g., giving someone else my cream bun) without properly being generous. I can perform the act without having the taste for it (e.g., because my mother made me do it).

When children are in the process of being trained to be generous the point is to have them do the action and see the results, and then discover they like the results (i.e., the smile of gratitude, the satisfaction of having helped another, etc.). There is, therefore, usually a time when one acts but has not yet focussed on the benefits. (Any parent will bemoan the fact that this is the case.) Cream buns in the hands of two-year olds provide a case worthy of analysis. What adults aim to do is create a generous person. To do that they need to provide a pathway by which the child can discover that he likes performing generous acts. First parents need to teach the child what the tools are for the job; what the activity is that will lead to the end product. In

this case, giving a cream bun to another who does not have one is the appropriate activity. Next parents want to direct the child's attention to the result of the activity just performed (a happy face, a sincere "Thank you", etc.). In doing this I am pointing to what a child *would want* if his view was not obscured by competing and less fulfilling desires (i.e., selfishness). This is, of course, where progress is often waylaid, for at the start of this process most children will pay attention to what they have given up and now do not have, as opposed to what they have provided to another. There are all sorts of ways to get children to see what they have done, but it takes time to teach them to pay attention to the proper aspects of these actions. The point is, once they learn to pay attention to the happiness that results, they will be persuaded by it to act that way again (most of the time).

Like any process concerned with learning, not all have the proper lessons or learn them in the proper way. Misers, for example, are people who simply do not know how to look for the benefits of generous acts or do not know how to go about acting generously. (Giving money to the poor provides a crude but clear example. If I give money to some needy beggar I can either look at the gratitude on his face or the emptiness of my pocket. The miser would never look beyond the empty pocket.) This suggests that the miser is corrupt, and he is so in this sense: to be corrupt means to pay attention to the wrong impulses and not to have recognised one's taste for better impulses. So the kind of thing being talked about here is something one must be led to appreciate, and the beginning of that process is doing the acts themselves. The audience has to have had enough of a taste of good behaviour to know something about it.

The problem raised at the end of the first section of this chapter was that of "getting started". Aristotle takes considerable time discussing habituation as this first step, and without it one has no hope of moral development.

....This is why we need to have been brought up in fine habits if we are to be adequate students of what is fine and just, and of political questions generally. For the origin we begin from is the belief that something is true, and if this is apparent enough to us, we will not, at this stage, need the reason why it is true in addition; and if we have this good upbringing, we have origins to begin from, or can easily acquire them....¹ (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1095b4-9)

¹ Burnyeat also quotes this same passage, but uses a different translation. Burnyeat, for example, builds his argument on Aristotle's establishing that one must have "the *that*", which is translated in Irwin's text as "....the belief that something is true....". I have chosen to use Irwin's translation even when discussing Burnyeat because: 1) it will maintain consistency in my overall thesis, and, 2) in this case Irwin equally, if not with some superiority, captures this concept of Aristotle's accurately.

Aristotle is maintaining that the path to learning to be good can only be followed if one first develops the proper habits, or, to put the matter in another way, one can develop a more complete understanding of being good only through the performing of good actions. Since it is useless to discuss or debate with someone about what goodness really is unless one has had a taste of it, there has to be a way to introduce a person to this process of learning. The only way is through habituation.

This picture might seem too dogmatic to some, the claim too strong. Aristotle is saying that one cannot approach the study of ethics on a deeper or more complete level until one has the proper background. But, how can habituation lead to understanding? These two activities seem fundamentally opposed, especially if one tends to think of habituation as the developing of 'blind habits' (cf. p. 54, below). As Burnyeat points out, however, "...practise has cognitive powers, in that it is the way we learn what is noble or just...." (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', p. 73). Allow me to flesh this out by considering Aristotle's observations on this.

Toward the end of Book II, ii, Aristotle considers how knowledge of certain skills is imparted to students. Behind this view is Aristotle's belief that humans have a variety of natural capacities that can be developed in a number of ways. The trick is to get these capacities to develop in the proper way, that is in the way that is most suited to essential humanness. Repetition of a particular set of actions will, in effect, make a person develop in a direction, be it for the better or the worse; "...the sources and means that develop each virtue also ruin it. For playing the harp makes both good and bad harpists....It is the same, then, with the virtues. For actions in dealings with [other] human beings make some people just and unjust...." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1103b8-15). Aristotle goes on to assert, finally, that "...A state [of character] arises from [the repetition of] similar activities....It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth; rather, *it is very important, indeed all important.*" (italics mine) (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1103b21-25). This is a strong and important fundamental claim, and one that is essentially correct.

An example will clarify how the process works. If my daughter is acting selfish or impertinent, I must attempt to change that behaviour. Changing here means altering a behaviour in terms of developing one capacity rather than another, or leading a capacity to develop in one direction rather than another. In this case, my daughter has a capacity, expressed through her inclination to be selfish, and her actions indicate that she is inclined toward paying attention to herself at this moment. Her paying attention to herself is obstructing her ability to pay attention to others. What she also could be inclined to do, only she is not attending to it, is share, be generous. What I wish to do is refocus my daughter's attention. There is really only one way to do this, and

that is by having her perform generous acts. By performing such acts she is not *being* generous (though this is the goal), but she is performing the actions that a generous person would. What will happen, eventually, is that the child will begin to notice the effects of generous acts and *will not help but liking them*. (This is important; for it is a mistake to imagine that one sees smiles of gratitude and then *learns to like* the smiles. People are so constructed that one does not have to teach them to enjoy another's gratitude, but one does have to get them to focus on another's gratitude.) If this did not happen, there simply would be no way that generosity could ever be inculcated. The difficulty, of course, is that generosity has to compete with selfishness, which, for whatever reason, is another inclination people often have. The thing all parents eventually get their children to see, however, is that ultimately generous acts are one of the things that make them happiest.

Scolding, by this account, is an interesting and often misunderstood tool. It will only work in the intended way if it is associated with non-generous (therefore unwanted) actions. Thus the child learns that scolding follows acts of one sort (stealing another's biscuits, not sharing), so the child acts generously in order to avoid the scolding. It is important to note that scolding will not, in itself, accomplish what parents want, for generosity is not just sharing or giving, but having an appropriate feeling about these actions, and scolding cannot impart this feeling at all. There is a world of difference between surrendering one's cream bun to avoid banishment to one's room and doing it because one perceives another needs the bun. Scolding helps people to pay less attention to themselves only (since the results of having done so are unpleasant) in order to notice more quickly another's needs and, consequently, see what is good about one's generous acts. Scolding is a secondary tool; one that is merely designed to speed-up the process.

It is very important to realize that one is not inserting acts that are 'foreign' to a child's nature, but one is making her act in a way that guides her to realize her better nature. Things cannot be made to act in any sort of way, but only in ways appropriate to the type of things they are. "...For if something is by nature [in one condition], habituation cannot bring it into another condition. A stone, e.g., by nature moves downwards, and habituation could not make it move upwards, not even if you threw it up ten thousand times to habituate it..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1103a20-24). One makes the child act generously. Instead of allowing her to keep two cream buns to herself, her first inclination, someone asks her to share the buns. One does not simply say, "It would be better to share that bun", one has her actually share it. A repetition of actions leads one to the final stage of seldom feeling selfish at all, when one shares because one perceives another's need and one wishes to fill that need. "...It is right, then, to say that a person comes to be just from doing just

actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one *has even a prospect* of becoming good from failing to do them." (italics mine) (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1105b10-11). My purpose in italicising the phrases in two of the last three quotations has been to draw attention to the importance Aristotle places on the primacy of habituation.

As was mentioned above, some scepticism about this position will result if one thinks of habituation in terms of developing some blind habit. One can develop a habit so that its exercise does become automatic (think of using one's directional indicator in a car, or, to refer to an old *Volkswagen* advertisement when automatic transmissions were just becoming the rage, manual shifting *becomes automatic* for most people), but not all habits are of this type. One needs to distinguish between blind habit and the sorts of habits that are developed through training. This is just the type of distinction that Ryle makes. The latter type of habituation does not become automatic, but it demands continual refinement and practise. (One does not need to practise with one's directional indicator once one has mastered the habit, but one does have to practise target shooting even after one is good at it and has, in a looser sense, mastered how to target shoot.) Ryle uses a walker as a model:

....we walk on pavements without minding our steps. But a mountaineer walking over ice-covered rocks in a high wind in the dark does not move his limbs by blind habit; he thinks what he is doing....he economizes....he tests and experiments....if he finds a new trick effective he is inclined to use it....He is concomitantly walking and teaching himself how to walk in conditions of this sort....

(Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 42)

Blind habit requires no reappraisal. The habituation considered in this section does. As I develop a habit, I learn from it, and this, in turn, will make me readjust the habit if it is not sufficient to the task at hand. "....Drill dispenses with intelligence, training develops it." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 43).

One can see habituation working in more complicated ways. The narrator of *The Way of a Pilgrim* provides an interesting case analogous to what Aristotle has in mind.² As the pilgrim has been making his way through Russia he comes across a retired captain who relates the story of how his wife, years before, had left him alone with his eight-year-old godson. Being old and with gout, the captain had a terrible time keeping control of the young boy. At wit's end about what to do the captain

² This book is an account of a Russian Orthodox's pilgrimage to attain spiritual purity through the *hesychast* method of prayer. One must learn to devote oneself to praying unceasingly in a way that focusses all one's attention on God. Although the example demonstrates the revelation of a spiritual truth, the way to that truth is what is at issue.

decided to teach the boy the Prayer of Jesus. "...I made him sit on a bench in my room with me, and bade him say the Prayer of Jesus without stopping. At first this was extraordinarily distasteful to him, and he tried all sorts of ways to avoid it, and often fell silent...." Gradually, through a system of punishment and persistence, the boy changed and began saying the prayer all the time and when asked about the motivation for saying it, he replied that "...he felt an insuperable desire to be saying the Prayer always." (*The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 85). (The captain's story ends with the Crimean War and the child's describing his need to return to the solitude of the house where he first learned the prayer, and dying as a result of having travelled two thousand miles in less than a month in order to reach it.) The important issue is the process whereby a child learns, by pursuing an activity, of his ability to pursue the activity, and of the value of it. The perception of that value could not be imparted in any other way. For example, in this case, the child could not have learned about the value of the prayer and learned how to pray with proper devotion only by being didactically taught about it or simply introduced to it. One would not hand a child a card with a prayer printed on it and say, "Recite these words on your own, and you will learn all about prayer." This bogus method seems to have an appeal for certain folk who make a living accosting travellers in American airports, but they have the process quite confused. It is true that one could introduce the child to facts about the prayer, teach him the words, talk about what they mean, but until he actually begins reciting the prayer, and through that process of recitation learns what it means to pray, he cannot be said to be learning in the more complete sense. This necessity of this process is, I think, precisely at the heart of Aristotle's methodology. Just as the child cannot learn to see the value of the prayer without saying it, one cannot learn about the good without first acting well. Aristotle is maintaining, as Burnyeat and our pilgrim essentially argue, that practise, habituation, leads to "...the internalization of knowledge." (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', p.76).³

Consider a case closer to one Burnyeat discusses (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good, p. 76-77), that is developing the proper sense of some pleasure, say wine-tasting. There is a proper way to develop a taste for wine, and an improper

³ I must add that I realize that a case could be made, especially through my use of a religious example, that what I am dealing with is not habituation and learning to appreciate, but downright brain-washing or manipulation. Of course the reason that people can be brain-washed or manipulated is the direct result of their ability to learn through habituation, therefore it is also the case that there is a relatively thin line between proper habituation and sinister manipulation. The example I use above assumes that the former is occurring, although I recognise that it could also demonstrate that the child's faith is the unfortunate result of manipulation. There is, however, no way to discern between habituation and manipulation of the negative sort except on a case-by-case basis.

way. If a person wishes to introduce someone to the nectar of the gods, he will not simply talk about it and then walk away. Nor will he uncork two bottles of ten-year old *Chevalier-Montrachet* and suggest that the novice drink himself into inebriation. Just as one leads daughters and sons to generosity, a person leads another to the appreciation of wine, and both actions require that individuals learn to focus on the proper things.

There is an important parallel between the leading that occurs in these two cases that will bring out nicely how to think about habituation as a process of discovering what humans are built to like. Ryle talks about this parallel in an article entitled 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', and his discussion fits tightly into the web of Aristotelian thought I am weaving. Ryle comments that in two places Aristotle notices that once humans have inculcated right action it is the case that they do not forget what is right (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b17, 1140b29). The article seeks to unpack why it is absurd to assert that one might have forgotten the difference between right and wrong. One speaks of knowing this difference, yet one also speaks of knowing the equation that allows one to convert from Celsius to Fahrenheit. Why can a person forget the latter but not the former?

The answer lies in the difference in the type of knowledge to which a person is referring in the two cases. Knowledge of right and wrong is similar to having "...tastes and preferences....[and]....Taste is educated preference, preference for recognized superiorities. To be able to recognize superiorities is to know the difference between good and bad." (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 384). Repetition brings recognition of superiority; making my daughter perform generous acts is intended to make her see her taste for such acts and that she likes them better than selfish ones. Similarly, drinking wine should bring a person to recognise that he enjoys it, providing he focusses on the proper aspects of it. In both cases, only good and proper examples of actions or drinking will do. If, for example, I force my daughter to be generous but do not include in this process the bringing of her attention to another's joy, or if my attitude is one of compunction only ("I'm a father, therefore I really ought to do something about making her think of others, but I really do not care..."; this thought with the appropriate heavy sighing, rolling of eyes, and other signs of tedium), she will not see that generosity is much better than selfishness. Leading one to the joys of wine without expressing any enthusiasm for the topic or obvious appreciation of the endeavour, and then providing poor examples of wine, will not sway anyone in the proper direction.

This leads to another aspect of the kind of knowledge being talked about. "...Knowing, in this region, goes hand in hand with approving and disapproving, relishing and disrelishing....there seems to be an incongruity in the idea of a person's

knowing that something wrong had been done, but still not disapproving of it or being ashamed of it...." (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 384-5). Knowing and appreciating go hand-in-hand, and this happens to be the case of the sort of knowing being talked about here. (Note that it seems far less odd to say that I know how to calculate using the quadratic equation, but I have not grown to love it or admire it. My knowing it *only* to solve examination questions does not alter the fact that I know it. What Ryle continually stresses in this article, and in most of his other related work, is that it is a mistake to imagine that knowing applies only to certain specialised skills and, therefore, the criteria for having knowledge in a specialised field is the same criteria for knowing in all other fields in which one might claim there is such a thing as knowledge. "...Learning to enjoy, to love, or to admire is not acquiring a skill or a parcel of information. Nonetheless it is learning...." just as much as learning the quadratic equation is (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 386).)

At this point there is a move that is tempting to make but must be avoided, for in talking about the kind of knowledge involved with the learning of virtues or wine one might suggest that a person can come to be generous, know about wine, and as a *result* of this knowledge come to appreciate it. Generosity, in this scheme, would be a kind of skill about which one could develop a certain knowledge, and then, as a result of that knowledge, learn to appreciate the skill. This is a mistake. Ryle notes that "...[t]hese are not effects of coming to know; they are concrete examples of what coming to know is coming to...." (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 386). Being generous and knowing how to be generous reduce to the same thing; the knowing how is the doing of the generous act. This is precisely why it is impossible to have learned to act generously yet failed to appreciate generosity or be repelled by lack of generosity. To have been taught the difference between right and wrong, "...is to have been brought to appreciate the difference, and this appreciation is not just a competence to label correctly or just a capacity to do things efficiently. It includes an inculcated caring, a habit of taking certain sorts of things seriously." (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 387-8).⁴

To understand what the difference is between good acts and bad acts, good coffee and bad coffee, requires that an individual have a taste of the good examples first. Consider the making of coffee. It is no good simply providing someone with the following directions: "Use one tablespoon of ground coffee for each cup of coffee

⁴ Ryle does proceed to explain that though we do not *forget* the difference between right and wrong, we can cease to *care* about this difference, which is a far different matter (Ryle, 'On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong', p. 388).

wanted. Place the coffee in the drip filter, coffee-maker, percolator, etc. Add water according to instructions attached to the particular coffee-making appliance." The result of following these instructions will not, outside of a few lucky instances, yield *good* coffee. Coffee-makers vary, as does the quality of the water, the grind and roast of the coffee. There is no doubt that following the above instructions will yield coffee, but its goodness can only be guaranteed if one has had good coffee and liked it so that one can alter the amounts of coffee and water according to the contingent circumstances. One cannot develop the skill of making coffee and then learn to appreciate the coffee that is made. The fact that appreciation, caring is one aspect of developing the skill becomes clearer if one imagines oneself as wanting to make good coffee, but not quite having the knack of it, or wanting to be patient, but being still a little irascible in anxious situations. It is appreciating what the good is that causes one to alter one's behaviour and critically assess it. Deciding that the coffee is too bitter or that my heart rate would do better at sixty beats per minute rather than one-hundred and sixty while my daughter shrieks about not wanting her hair washed is possible only if I also have in mind the end-result I wish to achieve. I know what I want; what I am searching for is the activity or means to get it. Acquiring the skill is parasitic on appreciating the skill in the first place.

Humans are, by such a view, built to enjoy best particular activities and things, but to know what those activities and things are requires being properly introduced to them (e.g., being 'generous' in order to gain a reward is not to be properly introduced to generosity, nor is one really being generous). It takes practise to get the action right, and it is only the right action that will be appropriately fulfilling. Analogously, once one knows that hitting a golf ball straight and a good distance is the best way to succeed at golf, one embarks on practising the means to get the ball to do that.

Training, of which habituation is one aspect of the process, leads one to proper enjoyment. When one teaches a child to not be selfish and, rather, to want to share, the ultimate lesson is that sharing is a good-in-itself, not a means to another good. If my child only learns to share because it is an effective way to get what she wants, or manipulate others, she has clearly not learned not to be selfish at all, and she has clearly not learned to share for she is focussing on the incorrect features of the act. Similarly, if I only drink wine to attain the pleasant effects of the alcohol, I am, in sense, distracted from and missing out on the more fulfilling pleasure wine can give. I am aiming at one narrow feature, and missing the other important ones.

This view demands that people see desires in a particular kind of way. An opposed model, Plato's for example, presents a view of desires that pits them against reason. Reason becomes a tamer, but it does not tame the desires. It rather tames the individual with the desires to lose his care of them. Aristotle is suggesting, however,

that desires are controllable by reason, that one can form one's desires "...in the light of reason...." (Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', p. 82). Habituation, to put the matter crudely, leads us to desire some things rather than others. If people have been habituated according to the virtuous desires, they will want to pursue them. Reason will guide people in pursuing them, and will guide them in avoiding the less virtuous desires.

2.3) The Mechanics of Discriminating

It would make sense at this stage to outline the mechanics that underlie this interplay of desire and reason. First, it is essential that one realize that within the Aristotelian moral scheme people have control over their desires because they have control over their characters (Aristotle discusses the nature of this control in *Ethica Nicomachea*, III, v). Human animals do not necessarily act on their desires automatically, as if by some trigger. For example, it is tempting but erroneous to think that desiring is akin to a 'knee-jerk' reaction; by their natures humans cannot but help responding in a certain way to a certain thing. Just as a spark ignites gunpowder, my seeing a ten pound note on the street when there is no one about, 'sets off' desiring within me. By this account it might be supposed that the morally upright person is the one who somehow overcomes the desire. (This would require imagining that an agent says to himself, "Much as I want that tenner, I'll give it to the porter." This is quite different from "There's a tenner, perhaps the porter can find the owner; if not I'll give it to Oxfam." There is not a hint of 'overcoming' in the latter, Aristotelian case. In fact, it is not at all clear how 'overcoming' might actually occur in the first case. What does one do to 'overcome' greed; what exercises accomplish this?) But if this picture of desiring is incorrect, how does it work?

David Furley expands on this in 'Self-Movers' by weaving together sections of the *De Anima*, the *Physica*, and the *Ethica Nicomachea*. Filling out Furley's account will provide the kind of picture one needs to have to see how action occurs in an Aristotelian paradigm. First one needs to grasp the difference between the movement found in inanimate objects and the movement found in animate ones. The distinction at this level is not terribly complicated. Using Aristotle's discussion from *Physica* VIII, Furley points out that inanimate objects "...have a source not of causing movement or of acting...but of being acted on...." (Furley, 'Self-Movers', p. 56). What he distinguishes, and what one can see through cashing this out through some examples, is "...the distinction between inanimate natural bodies, which have an [origin] of *being* moved, and animate beings, some of which have an [origin] of *causing* movement...." (Furley, 'Self-Movers', p. 59). Crudely put, the world has

within it entities such as stones and golf-balls that can, as a result of external forces, be moved in ways that are natural (specific to these, downward) and unnatural (e.g., propelled), but these entities cannot initiate this movement themselves. On the other hand there are entities with souls, namely the catalogue of living things,⁵ and these have the ability to cause their own movement. Such a view creates a problem, for it could be argued that animals, for example, do not really differ all that much from rocks if one assumes the kind of mechanical 'knee-jerk' picture seen above. Furley notes:

....[Aristotle] clearly wants to preserve the commonsense intuition that the movements of animals, and especially the actions of human beings, are not brought about by external agents in the same way that the movements of the inanimate beings are. Yet he sees a danger that all the movements of the cosmos might be thought explicable on this principle of the self-movement of autonomous parts, and so insists that even this self-movement presupposes some external changes that are independent of animal movements.
(Furley, 'Self-Movers', p. 59)

What Aristotle needs is a ground floor distinction that preserves the passive aspect of inanimate objects in regard to movement while at the same time allowing for the reliance living things have on the external environment without reducing *this* movement to a picture that is identical with the movement in inanimate objects. The task is further complicated by Aristotle's belief, and certainly most people's, that man brings about his actions. For this view to be sensible it is important that humans are not entities that are simply 'shoved around' willy-nilly by external forces. Perception and the resulting internality of movement is that activity that can provide the ground floor distinction that is being sought. Living things move as the result of having perceived something about their external environment. The movement that results is initiated within the entity itself as a result of this perception. This movement differs from that found in inanimate objects in that there is no material external to the animate object that is doing any physical pushing. My wanting and moving toward the fish and chips on that table is caused by my perceiving them. There is not a material connection (e.g., fish and chip atoms) pushing me. The perceiving is internal to the

⁵ The *Physica*, VIII, vi makes clear that self-movers includes "...the whole class of living things..." (Aristotle, *Physica*, 259b2; cf., also *De Anima* II, ii). There are times when Aristotle does talk as though he is referring only to animals (cf., for example, *Physica*, 254b15), but such discussions are based on his using animals as examples representative of the class of all living things. Tulips, slugs, grass, man all move according to approximately the same mechanism.

living thing, and it is impossible to reduce this to the same kind of explanation as would describe the movement of something like a golf ball.

Consider the hierarchy of movement found in inanimate and animate things. My discussion here will rely partly on Furley's comments and will not conflict with anything he says. If one begins at the bottom of the hierarchy of things that are acted on, i.e., with an inanimate object like a golf-ball, one can quickly see what Aristotle has in mind about its inability to initiate its own movement. It is true that the constituent parts of the ball will fall if not obstructed, or fly through the air when hit, but this potentiality cannot be activated unless a material, external force is at work (i.e., my letting go of the ball, a swung niblick). There is no soul inside the golf-ball in which the following hypothetical monologue can take place: "I see that green as a place I'd like to be, therefore I'll propel myself through the air to get there." (Aristotle discusses the reasons why such things as inanimate objects cannot move themselves in *Physica* VIII, iv, and this chapter provides Furley with much of his supporting material.) Any movement of a golf-ball is entirely the result of its internal properties having been acted on by external forces then and there. There is no mechanism within the ball that causes it to move as the result of perceiving something and then moving, with the source of that movement coming from within the ball entirely.

Self-movers are different sorts of entities that are placed higher on the hierarchy. What is essential to grasp from the start is that within the class of *living* things there is no fundamental difference in the model of how these things move themselves; what differs is the range of perception and how they perceive (i.e., via touch, sight, smell, etc.). Living things (i.e., things with souls) are acted on by external forces, but in a way that allows the soul some 'say' about these external forces. Furley remarks:

....Animals are clearly distinguished from inanimate natural bodies in that although both require external things to explain their movements, only animals require external things perceived (or otherwise apprehended) as having significance *for them*....Only a being with a soul can move in this way....There must *be* an external object, however, and hence the movement of an animal does not provide an example of a totally autonomous beginning in motion...."⁶
(Furley, 'Self-Movers', p. 64-5)

By this account an external object is perceived as having a certain significance to the living thing, which then moves in consideration of that significance. There is no

⁶ It would be more accurate to expand this to include all living things, for it is important that we not think that we are entirely different from, say, plants on this score. Furley tends to talk as though Aristotle intended only to refer to animals, but this would be a mistaken view (see previous note).

material, external push, but a perception by the being of something significant about the object perceived. The range of things any living thing can do as a result of such consideration is set, partly, by what the thing is. Plants are relatively immobile, but they can turn somewhat to face the sun, they can direct their roots toward moisture and nutrients, and they can grow. An external object, some particular nutrient say, is perceived by the plant and as a result of the plant's requiring that nutrient it extends its roots toward it. The fact that the plant needs the nutrient is internal to it, just as its then extending its root toward the nutrient is the result of the plant's having perceived some particular bit as a nutrient it requires. (Golf balls do not *reach* toward greens or holes because of having wanted to, but plants reach for things because of an internal response which is the result of having perceived the form of the thing.) A golf ball will move when hit by any object heavy enough, but a plant does not move toward any object. It has an internal ability to react selectively (e.g., it moves toward sunlight but not moonlight). What Aristotle is maintaining is that there is an ingredient of 'reaching for' in the flower case that, though it may be spoken of in terms of some purely mechanical principles, cannot be *reduced to* those principles.

What shifts as one ascends the hierarchy is not this picture, but the web of perceptions involved, which tends to expand as living things become more complex. Imagine instead a trout that is feeding on hatching insects. It lies in a feeding lane and sips certain insects off the water's surface. It is mobile and has a capacity for a certain discernment. It takes some insects but not others depending on their size, the distance that must be travelled, and the energy needed to take the insect. The trout wants insects in the same way that the plant wants the nutrient, but because of its ability to see well and move it has more options to exercise. It even has some memory, as any angler knows who has fished over a trout that has taken an artificial fly before and then been released.

Man is far more complex, and this is due in some large part to his memory, and the wealth and range of information he has in weighing alternatives for his future well-being. What humans see as having significance for them is thus often weighed in the light of future states-of-affairs they have in mind. Trout, for example, do not have the ability to plan far ahead; they have not the mind or physical capacity to do it. A wise trout cannot, for example, watch Green Drakes hatch and pass on eating them in order to 'fill up' on the tastier Tricos that will be hatching in two hours time. Deer, being herbivores, must continue to take in food for eighteen hours a day, even though during the stalking season it would be wiser to hide for that time and eat later. Humans, on the other hand, are well equipped to decline a second helping of smoked haddock flan in order to have room for a bit more trifle when it is time for the pudding. The difference between trout and ourselves is that our physiology,

psychology, and mobility allows us to consider more options as we make decisions. (Aristotle discusses this particular problem in the *De Anima* when he notes that creatures with a 'sense of time' have to sort out what is more important: the fulfilment immediately of some desire or the waylaying of that immediate desire for some future state-of-affairs (Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433b5-10).) What has significance for us, what humans reach out for, is balanced against a wider variety of possibilities.) (It is worth noting that the hierarchy I have presented here fits well with Aristotle's discussion of the increased complexity of living creatures in the *Analytica Posteriora*, II, ix.)

It is also possible, to move away from the specifics of the mechanics, to see how training fits within this scheme. Furley discusses the nature of man's role in bringing situations about and refers to Aristotle's insistence in *Ethica Nicomachea* III, v that humans are responsible for their characters. The above account ought to clarify why this is so; the notion of moral responsibility is the direct result of the way humans happen to be constructed, how people can make decisions, and the kinds of things they value. The purpose of training is to get people to do the things they will find most fulfilling as human beings, but in order to do those things it is necessary that they possess certain dispositions so they will not be distracted from the important tasks. Again an example can do the work here. Assume for the sake of argument that fly-fishing is a constituent activity in the good life. When situations arise that may lead to one's fishing, one would be rather foolish not to opt for them (e.g., take angling holidays, finish one's work early to go fishing, live near good streams for fishing, etc.). In order to participate in this activity in the proper way, however, one must not only know how to fish, but one must be able to focus on fishing. This training requires that a person be suited to the demands and pitfalls associated with fishing. One must develop those aspects of one's character that will be needed in order to enjoy fishing: patience for the waiting and the for dealing with the frustration of missing fish, courage for wading dangerous stretches of river, perseverance when swarmed with mosquitos and midges, etc. Inculcating these virtues, making these dispositions parts of one's character, will allow an individual to pursue and enjoy the activity that matters. To get the enjoyment out of fishing requires that the insect bites, the wet clothing, the tedium and frustration must not matter, not obstruct one in one's activity. One has to train oneself to get to a state of not caring about such things. Whether an individual does the things necessary to instil these dispositions in himself is entirely up to him. If he does not properly train himself, he will continually be distracted from focussing on those things, like fishing, that are part of the good life.

Martha Nussbaum's consideration of *orexis* in her recent book, *The Fragility of Goodness*, provides an illuminating account of the role of training (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 285-287). It uses as its foundation Aristotle's *De Motu*

Animalium, which is a discussion of his views on the common explanation for animal movement. More will be said about the specifics of Aristotle's views from this work in a moment, but what is of present concern is how that text, as interpreted by Nussbaum, fills out the picture about training that has just been painted. What Nussbaum stresses in Aristotle's account is the selectivity with which living creatures deal with their surrounding world. The reason training works in the way described is because even young animals, especially human ones, reach out for certain things with some degree of discernment; when training young people, we are dealing with "...a creature that responds selectively to its world via cognition and *orexis* (for a fuller discussion of this concept, see below), and whose movements are explained by its own view of things, its own reachings-out for things as it views them..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 285). Training, therefore, "...is not simply a mindless type of behavioral manipulation..." , instead it "...attempts to persuade the creature to modify, actively, its own view of the good, to reach out for more appropriate objects..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 286). So, for example, humans are built to pay a good deal of attention to midge bites, that is people can scratch them, whine about having them, complain, etc. But people are also so constructed that they can focus on other activities that can cause the midge bites to fall to the background; people can be selective in what they pay attention to. At the end of a day's fishing I can point to midge bites and scratch or I can think about the pleasure of the activity of fishing. The proper training leads me to be able to pursue the more worthwhile activity (i.e., fishing). It is this kind of picture that ought now to clarify why the earlier picture (i.e., a human desires as a knee jerks) was so inadequate. People cannot possibly react in such a way to the world because they are taking in too many things about which they could have some reaction; people therefore *have to* select what they pay attention to and what they will not. This simply means that individuals can learn to notice some things but not others, and this fact lies at the heart of successful training. One does not 'overcome' desires, one just does not heed them, which is another way of saying that one pays attention to another desire instead (i.e., one could not not notice this itching but then proceed to not notice *anything else* either. Instead one does not notice the itching because one is attending to the fish at the end of the line. Parents instructing children always provide the best examples. Parents want their young ones to notice the beauty of the song, not the length of time it takes to be sung, or the fact that it is the singing that is keeping them from seeing *Postman Pat* on the telly.).

Furley points out that "...people desire things in the external world, and exert themselves to get them, *under certain descriptions*, and their actions cannot be explained without some notion of what each of their goals means for them..."

(Furley, 'Self-Movers', p. 63). What makes animals in general different from inanimate objects is that animals' actions have two components. The object of desire, which may well be external, does, in a sense, trigger a person to pursue it, but it does so *because a person sees it as a particular thing he wants*. In other words, the object of desire only triggers a response if an individual has developed an internal apparatus to desire the particular object. A cow moving to the water trough does so because it wants a drink. The water as an object of desire plays no role if the cow does not want a drink; it is not a sort of magnet that draws the cow to it no matter the circumstances. What distinguishes human beings from other living things is the complexity and variety of the apparatus they can employ when making the same kinds of decisions that cows make.

Martha Nussbaum provides an excellent historical background to Aristotle's explanation of action in humans, and it is worth a brief look.⁷ The problem was shaped by the contrast between those who favoured a physiological approach to the explanation (Diogenes of Apollonia and Democritus), and those who favoured a purely rational approach to the explanation (most notably Plato). The Aristotelian concept of *orexis* combined with our cognitive faculties responds to these two approaches. The word *orexis*, not easily translatable, has two components. "...It strongly implies directedness towards an object...a focusing on something...It is more active than passive: it is a going for..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 274). Aristotle is saying that all forms of animal movement are, "...object-directed, active inner reaching-out; and this reaching-out is common to all movements of both human and other animals." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 275). The result of what Aristotle captures in this concept is a more complete notion of movement; one that encapsulates an animal's intention (this reinforces Furley's earlier observations) and its mechanical ability in relation to that intention without reducing these two components to one. *Orexis* "...makes us focus on the intentionality of animal movement: both (a) its object-directedness and (b) its responsiveness not to the world *simpliciter* but to the animal's own view of it. Second, it demystifies rational action by asking us to see it as similar to other animal motions...it [the animal] goes after objects that are seen to have a certain relation to the animal's needs." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 276). Aristotle, by combining *orexis* with man's cognitive powers, redescribes the explanation of movement. Through cognition (taken to mean perception and one's considerations of perceptions) people perceive an object and perceive a way to attain the object (assuming they want it). This story alone would not adequately explain how a

⁷ For her full historical account cf., *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 269-273.

person would go about actually getting the object. Before this process starts one needs to have the *orexis*, that is the active inclination. "...The general notion of *orexis*...is the notion of something going on internally, an inclining towards or reaching for, such that in certain circumstances (in combination with the right sort of perception or thought) action will naturally and swiftly result....movement *will* result unless there is some sort of impediment..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 278). If I am standing by a chalkstream in early summer watching large trout rising and sipping hatching insects off the water's surface, I am perceiving an activity, and am inclined to do something about it, namely get a fly rod. (The very fact that I am paying attention to the fish in the stream rather than the movement of the water, the sound of it, the scenery along the banks, indicates my inclining.) One can explain those who do decide to work through the means of being able to angle on this stream by realizing that they have an *orexis*, an inclining toward angling that leads them to act on their perceptions.

The cause of movement has now shifted more strongly to the internal side of things. Rather than seeing ourselves as golf balls that are caused to fly by an external source, people are entities *in* which movement is occurring all the time. *Orexeis* are the particular movements a person is up to - what I can learn to be selective about are the objects to which those *orexeis* are directed (e.g., I can assuage my hunger with an éclair or a nectarine), or I can select the *orexis* to which I will pay attention. The reason I can do this is, again, because of my mobility, memory, and calculative capacity that allows more options to be brought into any particular calculation having to do with what will be best for me.

Having examined habituation and the mechanism of intention and action as imagined by Aristotle, one needs to tie these issues together. By Nussbaum's assessment of the *De Motu Animalium* one now has a model of a human action that fits quite neatly with the process of moral education as described by Burnyeat. People are not simple passive lumps of clay that can be moulded in any way according to various methods of training, each needs to be viewed, instead, as a "...creature that responds selectively to its world via cognition and *orexis*, and whose movements are explained by its own view of things, its own reachings-out for things as it views them..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 285). Habituation, then, as seen in Burnyeat's observations, is really a process of leading an individual to see which things it would be happiest reaching out for. Since both cognition and *orexis* are involved, desire must be able to be focussed in this way. If one considers Aristotle's view of the soul, as Nussbaum points out (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 286), it seems this is precisely what Aristotle has in mind.

The non-rational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plant-like [part] shares in reason not at all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, in so far as it both listens to reason and obeys it....The non-rational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by chastening, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation. (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1102b29-1103a)

On this view of the soul, it is quite clear that Aristotle imagines the non-rational part as subject to the ministrations of reason. It is true that this non-rational part does not have its own reason to exercise, but it must be able to respond to reason.

The goal, then, of the early aspects of moral training is to teach people to respond to some desires rather than others, which really means reasoning to sort out which desires or inclinations are required in which situations, and then having the appropriate inclinations. As has been noted, however, the young do not have full reasoning ability. Training at the earliest stages is, then, training young agents to respond to certain wishes, only the agent's wishes are, at this stage, defined by the wishes of those parents, elders, etc., who are in charge of the child's moral education. "...Hence we must already in some way have a character suitable for virtue, fond of what is fine and objecting to what is shameful." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1179b30). Habituation at its earliest stages is precisely what makes one's character suitable for later development. Learning amounts to seeing that one likes, appreciates, and wants certain things more than others. One also learns that contrary wantings can obstruct these, so one needs a tool or mechanism to deal with the contrary wantings, and this is what habituation and reason provides. An individual can habituate himself to wanting some things, and when contrary wantings arise he is able to choose because he can rationally sort through the conflict; he can say "I will be better off being courageous, and to run away would not be an expression of courageousness, therefore I will stay and fight it out."

An example of the process will clarify the steps, for it is the case that desires and inclinations are selected and ordered by quite non-rational means, but gradually they can be ordered by purely rational ones. How does this occur? Imagine a child's wanting water each and every time he 'feels' thirst. For various reasons (the parent's belief that it is important for the child to develop a sense between really wanting water and merely asking for it to get attention, developing self-control, etc.) the parents withhold water on certain occasions. This will be done in a variety of ways, by simply failing to acknowledge the child's entreaties, pleadings, and whinings, by declarations that he will simply have to wait for tea, by scoldings, and by focussing his attention elsewhere. There are, obviously, times when the child does want and needs water. What of the other times? The child wants something, and his cries for

water are an indication of this, but he is unclear what he really wants. Perhaps he wants attention, he wants to be included in some activity.

What most do in such a case is direct the child's wanting, for he has a very poor sense of identifying, beyond the very basic, what he wants, or the range of things he might want that are available to him. What a child has difficulty seeing is the range of things he can do. Education is, in large part, introducing children to directing their unformulated inclinations to new specific areas, and habituation is the method used to do this. (Remember, new in this sense does not mean completely novel or alien, but new in the sense that a child has an as yet unrecognised capacity to which he needs to be introduced.) The inclination is there to be developed, the parents' introduction of the child to the inclination is the aspect that is new. For example, he is bored, so one directs his inclination to scream toward another inclination, colouring in a book perhaps, or playing with pots and pans (assuming it was not simply the volume of the screaming one found objectionable). Following this conception, one aspect of education is aiding one in uncovering the varieties of abilities one has. Habituation is partially directing behaviour to these inclinations so the child will realize that he will want to develop them. If every time a child wants water an adult directs his attention to playing a xylophone, colouring in a book, building with bricks, she is habituating the amorphous wanting; directing it to other inclinations he has not yet considered. She is, in a sense, acting on the principle that the child can whine for water and play the xylophone, and it's the playing the xylophone to which he would be best directed, for that is the activity that he will find more fulfilling.

This provides a story concerning being introduced to capacities, but it does not explain how one learns to order one's inclinations. What is needed is a way to explain how people learn to act on particular inclinations at particular times rather than other inclinations at those times. For example, what if, while I am on the way to the track to run in a race, I am offered a pastry that, in other circumstances, I would normally not refuse, in fact I look forward to opportunities of ingesting them, I find every opportunity to be in a situation where one might be offered? What is occurring, then, if I refuse it on the way to the track? It would be odd to imagine that I would run a race while thinking about the pastry the entire time. It must be the case that I can learn to train myself in some way about my inclinations. There has to be some way to refuse the pastry without relying on a picture that employs the idea of, as it were, 'tying down' that particular inclination.

L.A. Kosman, when writing about the Aristotelian view of training, considers the notion of wanting or feeling as educable in the following way, "...it is nonetheless possible to engage in a certain range of conduct deliberately designed to make one the kind of person who will characteristically feel in appropriate ways, at appropriate

times, and so on...." (Kosman, 'Being Properly Affected', p.113). Imagine someone who decides that when faced with a particular situation, he will act in this virtuous way, and he will continue to act in virtuous ways until "...the fixed disposition of virtue becomes a hexis...." (Kosman, 'Being Properly Affected', p. 112). I discover I have this inclination to run in footraces. I decide as a result of my inclination to run to sort through the various means that will help me develop that inclination. I train, pay attention to my stride, practise improving concentration, and alter my diet. In short I focus on running and organise my life around this. In the specific case with which I am dealing, however, it might seem I have two competing inclinations, eating the pastry and running in the race. If it is not the case that I am fighting down my desire for the pastry, what *is* occurring?

If I want to win the race, I can deliberate about the means to the winning; one of the means is not eating the pastry. The running takes precedence, it is what I focus on, and the other simply falls into the background and loses its potency. If I am a serious runner and am about to engage in an important race, but I also like pastries, it will, nonetheless, not even cross my mind to have one. To consider the matter in more conflict-oriented terms, I have habituated myself to act in particular kinds of ways in relation to my inclination to run in footraces. But I also have a sort of on-going inclination to eat pastry. The pastry, in this case, presents itself as a type of obstacle, a distraction to my inclination to run. If I have practised developing my inclination to run, I am able to avoid the temptation of the pastry because I am not paying attention to the other things. My disposition to run precludes my noticing the pastry as something I want. Some situations would not be so clear, and in these cases I need reason to guide me. What if I am offered a sip of water? The wanting to win the race is the goal, and I will have to deliberate about the sip of water's place in the winning. If it has a place, then I will act on it and drink, if not, then I will refuse it. If, on the other hand, I do take the pastry, my coach will question my resolve in wanting to win the race, and he would be quite right to do so. If I take the pastry, I am wanting it, am inclined toward eating it more than wanting to win the race.

It would be worth interjecting an observation about the success with which one might correct or revise one's behaviour in terms of its aligning with the appropriate inclinations. If I fall off the path I have set for myself, what sort of adjustment will be required to return me to it? Footballers need managers and coaches, professional golfers need instructors, more often than not to get them to keep focussing on the proper things. It is interesting to note the difficulty that exists in bringing oneself back to the desired state if one stumbles away from it. Most of the work that a football trainer or manager does is not concerned with conveying new knowledge, but with getting the players to focus on one aspect of the game they have come to neglect.

A golf swing provides another good example. One with a good drive may begin to focus on getting even more distance, and if he does this he 'forgets' his basic swing, which then deteriorates altogether. To get back to top form requires another to watch and point out mistakes, which often amounts to refocussing attention. It is a quirk of our make-up that our feedback mechanism is limited; it does not work very effectively if an individual tries to sort things out on his own. Aristotle seems to have this need in mind when he discusses in the *Ethica* III, v the control one has over one's character. There he speaks of individuals constantly receiving 'feedback', (e.g., through praise, punishment, correction) from various sectors of society so that the individual is guided or kept to the proper path. His assumption seems to be that success only comes with others providing a view of how one is doing.

In summary there are two general pictures worth comparing in considering Aristotle on this idea of habituation. A distinctly *non-Aristotelian* picture would suggest that people are analogous to trained dancing bears. (I am not suggesting, by the way, that I am about to provide an accurate picture of the thinkings of dancing bears. I do not know any personally, but such a non-human example can sometimes prove useful.) On this account if someone asks the bears whether they enjoy dancing, and assuming they understand him, they might roll around, jump, and snarl gleefully to indicate their love of dancing. If, however, someone were to hook-up the proper sort of electrodes to their heads and ask this question he would discover that, although they are giving outward signs of glee, inside their brains they would be registering discontent. Those outward signs are all the result of training only, and the training is so complete they have *subjugated* how they really feel. They have not learned to love to dance, but have been trained to subjugate what they want. This picture suggests an internal conflict. Training may outwardly be effective, but the agent is internally dissatisfied. (This is not unlike, for example, the kind of story provided about the development of civilisation in Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*.) On the Aristotelian account the bears' response to the question, their romps and snarlings, *would be indicative* of how they feel, because in this case the electrodes would register that they like the dancing they have learned to do. Habituation leads humans to be what they really want and ought to be.

What one has, then, in combining Burnyeat's overall picture with Nussbaum's view of the role of *orexis* in action and habituation, is a very adequate, and I am sure many parents would say, accurate view of how most of us go about learning. Habituation is, in a sense, a cultivation that is a preparation for further learning.

Arguments and teaching surely do not influence everyone, but the soul of the student needs to have been prepared by habits for enjoying or hating finely, like ground that is to nourish seed. For someone whose

life follows his feelings would not even listen to an argument turning him away, or comprehend it [if he did listen]; and in that state how could he be persuaded to change?
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1179b25-30)

We now have a structure and the mechanics behind the structure.

What this chapter has brought out is the importance of viewing Aristotle as dealing with a different question, and as a result, having a different answer about ethics from that commonly found in today's moral debates. It must again be stressed that an Aristotelian conception resists reduction to utilitarian or Kantian deontological schemes. By Aristotle's lights, ethics is a complete package, it is a way of acting throughout one's life so that one may flourish. The right and the good cannot be viewed as separate goals. There may be times when, in fact, the right thing to do does not lead one to flourish; when the virtuous man is beset by factors that conspire, despite his best efforts, to make him miserable. Aristotle acknowledges that events deny one the opportunity to become blessed. It is however interesting to note that Aristotle suggests that the worst circumstances can be overcome eventually if one has a strong enough character (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1101a1-11). One may not be fortunate enough to have a blessed life, but a happy one is generally within reach.

The discussion has dealt with a variety of ways of looking at how one learns, in general, with an eye toward considering how Aristotle imagines people beginning to develop as moral beings. The emphasis has been on the role of habituation as a way of learning. Burnyeat has argued that Aristotle has written the *Ethica* with a view of the role of habituation underlying his entire scheme. Nussbaum's discussion of the *De Motu Animalium* and the explanation of self-movement as explained by the cognitive faculties in conjunction with *orexis* provided us with a model of desires that explained how they were aspects of our character not simply reducible to reactions from external 'pushes'. Desires are not tamed, subjugated, but made responsive to reasonable demands through the process of habituation.

In terms of this discussion's relation to the larger issue of the thesis, it has been my intention to provide what I take to be Aristotle's account of how education occurs. This account seems to me correct. Having said this, my aim overall is not simply to elucidate an Aristotelian line, but, having laid down what the process of education amounts to, to consider what kind of concept flourishing would have to be to fit meaningfully into this picture.

Training amounts to focussing, and focussing is effective since people are built to be fulfilled when focussing on some things rather than others. The difficulty often lies in getting people to focus on the proper sorts of things rather than allowing themselves to be obstructed from that task by focussing on improper things. The

mechanics of perception was also considered, which clarified why focussing cannot be reduced to mechanical principals determined externally to the animate creature. Finally, a picture of how one might resolve conflict between inclinations was considered.

There are a number of conclusions to underline and bear in mind in these considerations. First, people do not develop habits, as is often thought, in order to avoid thinking, (though there may be some people develop so they can pay some things less mind), but in order to be able to think and act in particular kinds of ways. In order to keep my mind focussed, I must habituate it. Habituation enables. Second, it is the *only* initial step one can take if one is ever to be able to think and act in particular kinds of ways. Habituation, as has been discovered, is the way people come to be prepared, come to be cultivated, in order to be able to do particular things. Third, and really as a consequence of these conclusions, this notion of habituation leads directly to a new consideration. If this account is correct, habituation as a first step is essential, but it also requires a guide, an authority. People need the proper cultivator; one who knows what a human is properly for, what man's essential nature is. What is man's essence?

There are two general views one might take about Aristotle's position on this. One is the narrow view, i.e., that man's essence is quite specific and activity short of this makes one less than human. This position has been espoused most recently by Alasdair MacIntyre in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. One might rather take a wider view, i.e., that there is some considerable range to human essence, and this is what I shall do, but only after first considering why the narrow view is not a wholly convincing interpretation of what Aristotle is up to. Deciding which of these lines to take is important for it dictates how one can proceed to unpack the notion of flourishing. Therefore, I shall use the next chapter to critically assess MacIntyre's view of Aristotle on the issue of what the essential nature of man is.

CHAPTER THREE
MAN'S ESSENCE: REASONING OR THE *POLIS*

3.1) The Centrality of the *Polis*

The aim of this thesis is to see if it is possible to unpack what it means for a human to flourish. Thus far I have stressed the good sense of Aristotle's view concerning the nature of ethics. What is left is to consider, given that view, is what flourishing might amount to. But this requires that one has a clear view of what man does. One cannot sort out what the components of flourishing are unless one knows the essential features of the object being considered.

I believe that Aristotle's picture of how man ought to act if he is to be fulfilled is based on his belief that man is a reasoning creature. What does Aristotle mean by this? I shall fill out the account in the next section, but I can provide a summary here against which to contrast the opposing view. Man's reasoning needs to be considered broadly, that is as something man *does* that enables him to choose between activities and pursue those activities in which he chooses to be engaged. Reasoning is weighing alternatives, grasping the forms of things, taking into account future goals, etc. Humans cannot avoid reasoning most of the time because it is what they do in order to engage in activity. Of course one can come up with wrong answers, wrong calculations, or make mistakes in weighing future benefits, but this does not mean one is not reasoning, but rather that one's calculations and predictions were incorrect. I maintain that there is enough in this notion of reasoning to provide a basis from which to begin to consider what flourishing amounts to.

There is another view about how Aristotle sees reasoning as a human function, however, and that is Alasdair MacIntyre's, especially as it is expressed in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. There he stresses, early in his discussion of Aristotle, that "...a human being separated from the *polis* is thereby deprived of some of the essential attributes of being human..." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 96). One of those attributes is reasoning. This is a premise that proceeds to colour all of MacIntyre's analysis of Aristotle, and it is a premise that has less to support it than MacIntyre suggests.

I will take some time in this chapter to explain why MacIntyre's account of how Aristotle envisioned the relationship between man and the *polis* is mistaken. The reason I shall do so is because in order to think about what a creature needs to flourish it is important to know what the creature is, what it does, and the sort of environment it requires. If man is political in the necessary sense suggested by MacIntyre, then it becomes imperative for a story about flourishing to take this into account. (Imagine,

for example, the mistake one might make if one captured a lone honeybee and attempted to construct a full account of what it does without seeing its actions in connection with the hive.) Any story about flourishing would have to include some account of the role of the *polis* as necessary to this. I do not believe, however, that one needs to see man's connection with a *polis* as necessary because man's inclining toward political communities is a natural outcome of *other* features that are more closely connected with his essence. If this is true then a consideration of flourishing would not have to take into account the *polis*, but rather would have to consider more primary features of man's essence. Reasoning, in the sense discussed above, is one essential feature, and it is all one needs to begin a study of what it means to flourish.

I will begin the chapter with an analysis of MacIntyre's interpretation of Aristotle's views about the role of the *polis*. This will be followed by short account of how I believe Aristotle ought to be interpreted when he speaks of man as reasoning. This should then clear the way for a preliminary consideration of the concept of flourishing, which will be the substance of the remaining chapters.

For MacIntyre, the *Politica* is a text essential to understanding Aristotle because of what it has to say about the relationship between man and his *polis*. He uses this text aggressively, especially its early sections. When MacIntyre is speaking of the *polis* in the passage above, he has in mind one of the opening sections of the *Politica*. Here Aristotle discusses the importance of the state, sets out the method by which he will examine it, and then discusses its genesis. The emphasis MacIntyre gives to this section must be given adequate attention.

....This is a passage [1252b28-1253a39] whose importance for the interpretation of everything that Aristotle wrote about human life cannot be underrated, and it is peculiarly crucial for understanding his claims about justice, practical reasoning, and their relationship. (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 96-7)

MacIntyre proceeds to reconstruct Aristotle's views on man's essence as based on the premise that man cannot be properly understood and he cannot develop fully outside the structure of the *polis*, for he is deprived of things necessary for that essence. He begins the discussion with a consideration of the concept of *dike*, which has a significance that extends back to Homer and Sophocles.¹ "...For the use of the word '*dike*', both by Homer and by those whom he portrayed, presupposed that the

¹ *Dike* is today generally translated as 'justice'. As with many Greek terms, however, this translation does not capture its full meaning. Underlying the concept is the notion that there is an order that cannot transgressed, and that order is one of cosmological rather than simply local nature (cf., Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, p. 38-40, and MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 14, 96-98).

universe had a single fundamental order, an order structuring both nature and society, so the distinction which *we* mark by contrasting the natural and social cannot as yet be expressed...." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 14). On such an account, one could not discuss man as extracted from his social context (i.e., the *polis*) any more than one could meaningfully discuss him extracted from his natural context. (Studying a fish out of water would be a similar sort of mistake.) If one did so the result of one's investigations would be entirely misleading, for one would not be seeing the creature as it really is. Man has a place in the order of the cosmos, and one needs to know what that place is for any study to be at all accurate.

Because MacIntyre sees Aristotle's project as, in part, an elucidation and sophistication of *this* notion of *dike*, it is argued that one needs to see the *polis* in terms of the Homeric conception of *dike*. To understand the background of this conception (found on page 96 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, and which I will only summarise here), MacIntyre contrasts it with Plato's. Justice, for Plato "....is independent of and antecedent to the justice that is the ordering of the *polis*." Thus the characteristics of the justice of the *polis* is made up of "....the characteristics of the individual persons who compose it...." Aristotle, by contrast (and on this reading MacIntyre's interpretation seems to rest on historical analysis, for the text of the *Politica* to which he also refers (1252b28-1253a39) cannot, on its own, support the view) observes that a human is deprived of justice if he is separated from his social group. For Plato, one mistreated by the *polis* could exercise the virtue of justice; for Aristotle, unless one was effectively educated by a just *polis* at some time, this could *not* be the case. There is no justice prior to the *polis*. As such, justice can *only be done* against a background of the *polis*, for justice is the apportioning of what is due to a man, but what is due can only be discovered if one is considering man in his proper environment, namely the *polis*.

MacIntyre uses this short section of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* to present his premise that man outside of the *polis* is denied, *phronesis*, *arete*, and *dikaiosune*. Without the *polis*, man is simply a "wild animal" (cf., below); he cannot think about things in the right way, therefore he has no hope of developing fully. At the beginning of Chapter Seven MacIntyre makes it clear that because practical rationality relies on the concept of justice, and, since justice is possible only within the *polis* those outside it have no practical reason. (In much the same vein, MacIntyre is led to argue that another aspect of reasoning, dialectic, is also denied to those outside the *polis*, for they lack the adequate social environment in which to verify their dialectical premisses (cf., MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 117-118).) For these reasons MacIntyre believes that Aristotle would contend that man's essence is necessarily tied to life in a *polis*. This has significant repercussions, for it means that

all of Aristotle's central ethical concepts (e.g., practical reasoning, dialectic, justice, etc.) cannot be made sense of until one sees man in the proper political light. Thus a modern account of ethics according to which one believes "...that there can be no uniquely rational way of ordering goods within a scheme of life,..." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 133) is accordingly without merit: "...such an individual has been deprived of the possibility of rational evaluation and rational choice..." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 133). It is no surprise to find MacIntyre arguing that Aristotle maintains "...that human beings cannot be understood in detachment from their necessary social context, that setting within which alone rationality can be exercised." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 133). It is important to keep in mind his overall intent, which is described concisely here in a review by Martha Nussbaum:

MacIntyre insists that people cannot successfully justify their moral beliefs in detachment from actual ways of life, as embodied in ethical traditions....We cannot understand how the Greeks thought about justice, for example, without seeing how their conception is linked to their understanding of the relationship between reason and desire. Hume's very different account of reason helps to explain why he adopts a very different view of justice. Since any argument about justice must employ some view about what reasoning is like, it would appear that there is no neutral standard by which this conflict, and others like it, can be adjudicated...When such a confrontation takes place, he argues, one view will frequently succeed in establishing itself as superior to the other....
(Nussbaum, 'Recoiling from Reason', p. 38)

MacIntyre wants an interpretation of Aristotle that will support his (i.e., MacIntyre's) view that there simply is one mode of life that is rational, therefore superior, to other modes of life.

(MacIntyre is not the only interpreter who views Aristotle in this way. Roger Scruton's interpretation amounts to much the same thing, at least as it is presented in *Sexual Desire*. There Scruton discusses the role of reason in shaping virtuous behaviour, and he is led to the conclusion that the courageous man is *more* rational than the coward (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 329). The justification for this is that the courageous individual is taking into account a longer view of his life prospects and his good than the coward, therefore he is more rational. What I am immediately moved to ask, however, is why one would not say, rather, that both the hero and the coward are rational, but one has a better view of what he has to do.)

It ought now to be clear why MacIntyre's view needs to be dispelled, for if it were accurate, then any consequent study of flourishing would have to begin with a

political account of man. One could only consider man within the context of certain social structures, and an account of flourishing would, in order to be legitimate, have to include those structures from the very beginning of the study.

MacIntyre's is a strong view; what is the evidence summoned in support of it? MacIntyre cites numerous examples from Book I, ii of the *Politica* to underscore his interpretation of the integral relationship between the *polis* and rationality. Aristotle, for example, refers to one's being connected to a *polis* as a hand or foot is to the body. The hand or foot, detached, "...will no longer be hand or foot except in name...the spoilt hand...no longer has the capacity and the function which define it..." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1253a18-a23). Presumably what Aristotle means is that, for example, although one can still call a severed hand a hand, it has lost its *eidos*. What a hand does (e.g., grasp, shake, hold) is fundamental to what a hand is. Since it has lost its ability to function as a hand, it no longer even has the capacity to do so, and, as such, it has changed fundamentally.

It can be argued, therefore, that the potential for a hand to fulfil its function as hand is not contained entirely within the hand itself. It needs a working body to provide its full potential. MacIntyre would seem to have strong support if one looks to what Aristotle says a few sentences further on: "...It is clear that the state is both natural and prior to the individual..." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1253a25). (I shall have to return to this later, for though in the context of the specific passage Aristotle's aim seems clear, there is an underlying ambiguity in the overall intent of this section of the *Politica*.) As a hand requires a body to equip it with the ability to become fully a hand, one needs to see the body as somehow prior to the hand and necessary for it. Similarly, the *polis* does this for man.

Mention must be made of another strand of MacIntyre's argument. He states that:

....the *polis* is human community perfected and completed by achieving its *telos*, and the essential nature of each thing is what it is when it achieves its *telos*. So it is in the forms of the *polis* that human nature as such is expressed, and human nature is the highest kind of animal nature. (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 97)

In support of this view one can again refer to the *Politica*. There Aristotle states that , "It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal..." Interestingly, Aristotle goes on to observe, "...Any one who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good, either subhuman or superhuman..." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1253a1-2). Again one sees that Aristotle appears to make very great claims for the *polis*.

Aristotle tells us, "...we fulfil our function in so far as we have intelligence and virtue of character; for virtue makes the goal correct, and intelligence makes what promotes the goal [correct]...." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1144a8-9). MacIntyre is led, therefore to conclude that, "...the *polis* is required for *arete* and *phronesis*, as well as for *dikaiosune*. Separated from the *polis*, what could have been a human being becomes instead a wild animal." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 98). Without the *polis* there is no other way for a person to direct his biological capacities properly. MacIntyre states unequivocally that:

There is thus the sharpest of contrasts, on this Aristotelian view, between the human being disciplined and educated by the justice of the *polis* and the human being lacking such discipline and education in respect both of the virtue of justice and of the ability to engage in practical reasoning. The rules of justice cannot be understood as the expression of, nor will they serve to fulfill, the desires of those not educated into the justice of the *polis*....For what those deprived of the justice of the *polis* want cannot provide any measure for justice. (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 98)

First, this claim flies in the face of Aristotle's point noted above (1253a1-2). His point there is that a creature who by nature has no *polis* cannot be changed into needing a *polis*. His nature determines his needs. MacIntyre here seems to suggest that humans outside a political structure are unfulfilled because they have not been educated into the life of the *polis*. But if education is all they lack (rather than the appropriate nature), then they must already have a nature that can be fulfilled by the structure of the *polis*. Would what they want, then, be so different? MacIntyre here simply overstates what education does. By his view he seems committed to saying that those not educated within the *polis* cannot find satisfaction in the *polis*, and this is, of course, not true. Education directs potentials that already exist, and bad education (e.g., the sort one might receive outside a *polis*) obscures one's views of one potentials. People outside the *polis* have, in this way, been obstructed, but this hardly makes them 'wild animals'.

Second, the text (esp., 1144a8-9) on which MacIntyre relies is less than lucid. The goal's "being correct" might mean "...virtue has the correct goal only because intelligence has found what promotes it;..." (Irwin, notes to *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 348), or that having the right dispositions (virtues) means that one will want the correct goals, and that having intelligence means that one will properly deliberate about how to get those correct goals. It is difficult to enlist this passage as positive support for the necessity of the *polis*.

One can look to the *Politica* and see that Aristotle, when he has a chance to exclude from consideration small, isolated groups whose structures are not developed enough

to be *poleis* of the proper sort, he does not do so. In VII, iii he considers happiness in human life and discusses it in terms of its being an activity. (The intent of this chapter, more generally, is to demonstrate that the function of man is activity of a particular sort, and what the nature of that activity is.) Now for humans such activity characteristically (as opposed to necessarily) occurs in the *polis*, and the proper *polis* certainly is so structured to allow the greatest opportunity for a properly active life. Nonetheless, Aristotle notes that "As for states that are set up away from others and have chosen to live thus in isolation, there is nothing in that to oblige them to lead a life of inaction...". Aristotle then goes on to include a more telling qualification, "...The same is true of any individual person..." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1325b23-30). If activity is dependent on the interaction of parts (which is why the *polis* provides the richest opportunities), it must also be the case that smaller entities, which also consist of parts, will share in activity. Even down to the individual level, Aristotle seems to acknowledge that there is no *logical* reason why the parts, though far fewer, could not provide enough to allow for activity of a significant kind.

Is there any evidence to suggest that Aristotle has in mind some particular activity, 'reasoning', that is something humans do in *poleis*, but humans outside such a structure are barred from doing? Looking through various texts it is not obvious that this is so. The first chapter of the *Metaphysica* paints a very broad picture of the role of reason in man, and the first line clearly places the function of man, that is his love for knowledge, in his nature. Aristotle's further thought that, as opposed to the other animals, "...the human race lives by art and reasonings..." (Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 980b26) suggests that reasoning ought to be broadly construed. That this was Aristotle's general assumption is precisely what presents him with a spot of trouble when considering reasoning and slaves, which is discussed in I, xiii of the *Politica*. Here Aristotle equivocates, first suggesting that slaves have reason since they are human, then withdrawing the claim by suggesting that the "...deliberative faculty in the soul is not present at all in the slave..." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1260a12). This view is then moderated since the successful completion of tasks in the household by the slave requires a certain, albeit minimal, amount of virtue and, therefore, reason.

The reason for Aristotle's moderation would rest on, I think, two conflicting points. First, in thinking that slaves could not reason, there is the notion that a slave is simply set tasks and does them, rather as a robot might. There is no cause for his calculating. Second, and opposed to this, is the fact that even relatively simple tasks usually *do* require calculation (e.g., my putting the wine in the cellar demands thoughts about how to stack it, carry it, what route to take, etc.).

It is true that he may not be reasoning about the variety of things that a full citizen might (i.e., instead of worrying about taxation, business matters, and civic duties, he

might only have to think about the garden, or getting the meals properly prepared), he is still reasoning. (It could here be countered that slaves are of the *polis* and it is through the *polis* that they exercise what rationality they have. This, however, does not coincide with common thought about slaves which would have asserted that though they live within the boundaries of the *polis*, they are not *of* the *polis*.) If Aristotle is willing to grudge even this minimal amount of rationality to slaves it is hard to imagine that he would deny it to those of other *poleis*. Earlier on (I, viii) Aristotle, through an example in which he refers to the nomads, clearly admits to there being "...among human beings...many varieties of life." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1256a30).

That Aristotle could be shown to support the view that there is a wider flexibility in political arrangements is well argued by Nussbaum in a paper entitled 'Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution'. In this piece she suggests that Aristotle evaluated *poleis* in the *Politica* by their ability to provide opportunities to their citizens for the *eudaimon* life; the question of rationality does not enter the picture in the way MacIntyre would imagine. Instead, "...This conception urges us to assess political arrangements by looking to the functionings of individuals, taken one by one...." (Nussbaum, 'Nature, Function, and Capability', p. 147). A *polis* arises as a contingent result of the various ways in which individuals within groups function. In VII, ii of the *Politica* Aristotle acknowledges the necessity of a range of structures that will result and even states that "...There will of course be different rules laid down in different places...." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1325a10).

In Book III of *De Anima* Aristotle considers the role of the soul in originating movement in animals. What is interesting here is that he divides animals into only two categories, man being in one category and the rest of the animals in the other. Man is so separated because Aristotle characterises his movement by his 'calculative' abilities (although some men may move from *phantasia* which runs contrary to 'calculation') while animals alone move as the result of *phantasia*.² Aristotle asserts that self-movement requires appetite which, in turn, requires *phantasia*. which is either "... (1) calculative or (2) sensitive. In the latter all animals, and not only man, partake." (Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433b30). This particular chapter is interesting insofar as Aristotle again talks of reasoning in the broadest terms (i.e., to reason is to

² *Phantasia* is translated in this text as 'imagination', which is, unfortunately, misleading. 'Imagination' is used somewhat ambiguously throughout this chapter. On first appearance it is presented as one of two ways according to which mind may operate (the other being thinking and calculation), and it is characterised as the kind of crude thinking of which non-human animals would be capable and man sometimes so (see 433a10-12). Later he seems to use the term to mean thinking generally, of which there are two types, calculative and sensitive (see above).

calculate about means to ends), but he then observes that one might act only on *phantasia* (as any other animal does), while retaining one's humanity. All these references to reasoning highlight the notion that Aristotle seems to have viewed reasoning as an attribute common to humans as a race, not one found in particular humans here, but not in those there.

So far I have disputed MacIntyre's view because it leads to a picture of man that seems to be not at all what Aristotle had in mind. But what *is* all the evidence MacIntyre brings to bear that suggests that this is the picture Aristotle had in mind? Here is another source of trouble. A fine example lies in the very section of the *Politica* to which MacIntyre, because he sees it as crucial to an understanding of Aristotle, turned our attention in the first place: namely Book I, ii. What becomes apparent as one examines this section is that the writing, even when taken in conjunction with other work of Aristotle's, is sufficiently ambiguous to yield a variety of interpretations. I have already referred to the passage in which Aristotle says, seemingly unequivocally, that the state exists by nature, man is political by nature, and anyone who has no *polis* in which to live is outside the realm of being human (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1253a1-6). MacIntyre interprets this as proof that living in the *polis* is a defining characteristic of being human, and it is the result of being denied a *polis* that makes one less than human. This last clause, however, is the problematic bit. It is not at all clear that it is the lack of the *polis* that is to account for one's lacking humanity. T. A. Sinclair in his translation observes in a footnote to this passage "...It is such a person's *pugnacity* that Aristotle seems to regard as marking him out as in some sense not human..." (Sinclair, note 17 in Aristotle, *Politica*, p.60). Sinclair cites as evidence a passage from Book X of the *Ethica Nicomachea* in which Aristotle discusses the need for war and the fact that it is a means to the end of peace, and no one but the most violent would go out seeking war for its own sake (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1177b5-19). On this reading, Aristotle's reference to the cause of one's being sub-human does not lie solely in the fact that he is without a *polis*, but in the fact that he is biologically constructed so that he does not enjoy the community provided by the *polis*. His natural *pugnacity* excludes him from enjoying the good life.

Secondly, and more in the background here, is the notion that individual independence does not fit well with other things that one wants or needs. The stress in the preceding passages (1252b15-1253a1) is on man's wanting to secure the good life and seeing that the community is the best way to procure this. To want to live alone is to suggest that the goods on offer in the *polis* are not the ones one wants. This implies rather a different view of the *polis* than MacIntyre's. If the fault lies within the construction of this *pugnacious* individual (i.e., because he has traits that

cause him not to care about the things most humans care about), then this implies that the *polis* is the *result* of what humans need and want. On this view the *polis* is contingent to the way man is constructed; it is not a necessary component in determining what makes one a human and another not. In other words, as the result of another ingredient (i.e. gregariousness, affection, etc.) man is led to the *polis* as an appropriate mix that works to his advantage.

This way of looking at the *polis* is well argued by Martha Nussbaum, and I shall only briefly recount some aspects of it here. She too considers the *Politica*, Book I, ii, and her conclusions seem to rest on far more stable ground than MacIntyre's. In particular, her interpretation of the passage to which we just referred falls exactly into line with Sinclair's. She reminds one that Aristotle's discussion has been preceded by a description of Homer's Cyclopes, creatures "...whose specific difference from us is constituted by their lack of social and political concern...." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 351). Nussbaum claims that in the passage I am now examining, Aristotle wishes to make the point finer: what will one say of a creature who looks like us, acts as we do, so much so that our immediate inclination would be to number him among our species, yet he does not live within a *polis*?

....If it is really his *nature* to be solitary and to love war for its own sake, not just as a means, then, Aristotle says, he is either below or above our kind, but he is not of it. If we encountered such a being, asocial not through accident or frustration but in his own natural inclinations, we would not count him as one of us, accord him the treatment we accord fellow human beings....

(Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 351)

He is not one of us, not because he does not live in a *polis*, but because he is missing other more fundamental human traits that would cause him to want to live in a *polis*.

In this particular section of her book Nussbaum catalogues an impressive body of evidence, much from the *Ethica Nicomachea*, to support her claim that "...to be political is a part of human nature...." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 349), and one in search of *eudaimonia* would count oneself as being well short if one were not involved in some human relationship. Martha Nussbaum's account works along three tracks. First, she discusses the *polis* as crucial to human growth (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 347-349). As seen already, Aristotle conceives of human development as a series of stages, there being no obvious place where one's development simply stops. Guidance is therefore important throughout life. This being the case, the *polis* is the forum in which such development can best be guided. Why? "...[O]nly the civic plan promises the consistency and uniformity

that is highly important for the regulation of daily life...." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 346). Although parents have a central role, the fact is that there is some difference between how certain parents raise children and what they teach their children to value. Through civic education the resulting inconsistencies can be sorted out. More obviously, "...a public scheme has a better chance of getting things right about human *value*,..." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 346). This is true because legislators, who have the time and expertise to think about such matters, will pass along their knowledge to the rest of the community. Parents, involved as they are in the day-to-day process of raising children, have not the time for such consideration, and may possibly not have the taste for it. Finally, since it is the case that one's social life is a valuable aspect of being human, "...this fact will best be taught by the fostering of a common and not a private scheme...." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 346). Thus there are a variety of instrumental reasons for arguing that the *polis* is the forum within which man may best develop.

She also argues that Aristotle sees political life as important to man because it is a natural outgrowth of our nature (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 349-353), and in support of this she refers to the passage in the *Ethica* (cf., discussed below) concerning the "...naturalness of *philia*...." (Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 350), and the fact that man is political by nature (support for this also coming from the passage in the *Politica*, also discussed below, in which Aristotle speaks of those who would wish to live the solitary life). Most important for Nussbaum's account is the fact that the *polis* is the manifestation of man's need of *philia* (discussed in great detail in Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 354-368).³ Certainly Aristotle's view that *philo*i are essential is strongly put. He begins Book VIII of the *Ethica* by simply stating that *philia* is necessary to one's life, "For no one would choose to live without *philo*i even if he had all the other goods..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1155a1-5), and as a result of this need, then, most people choose to live within a *polis*. Although the result of her discussion seems quite similar to MacIntyre's, it differs in one important way: she does not suggest that Aristotle had in mind only one kind of political structure within which this could occur, nor does she argue that the *polis* is necessary in the ways that MacIntyre has done. For Nussbaum, the *polis* is necessary, but it is so *as a result of* our individual human natures.

³ I will avoid a lengthy discussion of how this term ought properly to be translated. Martha Nussbaum's discussion of the intricacies of the concept is quite comprehensive, and I will assume in my use of the term her translation for it, namely a wide range of strong, affectionate relationships that may occur both within and without one's family (cf., Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 354-355).

MacIntyre calls on other evidence from the *Politica*. Can those claims be dealt with in a similar fashion? The problem on which I have focussed in the section reviewed above is endemic to this entire chapter of the *Politica*; the wording does not unequivocally support MacIntyre's point of view. For instance, in the analogy of the hand and foot to the body to which MacIntyre refers, Aristotle concludes that the state is natural and prior. This seems a point for MacIntyre, and a clear one at that.

There is one initial problem to be noted in the use of this passage. Aristotle himself seems to be talking about the relationship between the hand and the body in a rather odd way on the face of it. It is not entirely clear how a body could be prior to things like hands as it is the case that a body just is or amounts to being the totality of its constituents. The other question with which MacIntyre does not deal, probably because he sees his position as so obvious, is *how* or *in what way* the state is prior and natural. A sentence further on suggests how: "Among all men, then, there is a natural impulse towards this kind of association...." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1253a29). I can reinterpret this entire chapter around this very notion. The *polis* is the result of certain biological capacities or inclinations. MacIntyre uses priority in a way that suggests the *polis* is prior in a deep metaphysical sense; in struggling towards rationality man realizes that he needs one certain kind of *polis*. In the way priority is discussed in this chapter, this does not appear to be the sense in which Aristotle is using it. Aristotle begins the chapter by discussing how individuals came together, saying that we will "....get the best view of the matter if we look at the natural growth of things from the beginning...." (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1252a24). Aristotle sees humans coming together in pairs as the result of natural urges within them (Aristotle, *Politica*, 1252a26). He then goes on to suggest that the formation of households, then villages, and finally the state is a result of discovering that these organisations secure a way of life we desire. The *polis* is, therefore, the natural result of the way people are built, but its being a result does not exclude it from being prior. It can be seen to be prior in the sense that, taking human needs and biological construction into account, the *polis* is the social organisation at which most would naturally arrive. Living in a *polis* then becomes a contingent matter. It is prior only in the sense that the seeds for its genesis are in man from the start. The *polis* is not a necessary force that in some historical sense 'pulls' us toward it; it exists in us in the sense that it is the outcome of the kind of life we lead. People outside the *polis* are unfortunate because they have some quality that makes them repugnant, or else their misfortune lies in the difficulty they will have in finding fulfilment outside the *polis*. The suggestion one is led to by MacIntyre is that one needs to see it as a component that is essential to making a human. He is interpreting Aristotle as saying that man apart from the *polis* is

without that essential attribute that makes him fully what he is. This puts the story quite backwards.

MacIntyre has argued that, according to Aristotle, a *polis* is essential because it is the only vehicle through which man can develop and exercise his rationality. Man is pulled to become political in this way not because it is his desire to live life with others, but because it is necessary to fulfil his potential as a rational being. Outside the *polis* man fails to fulfill his human nature because he is unable to develop his rationality.

It would have been odd had Aristotle thought that rationality was impossible outside the *polis*, for it is not at all clear how, then, *poleis* would have developed in the first place. Such a view would exclude the possibility that anyone could have rationally come to see such an organisation as a useful one, for one would not have been equipped with the rational tools with which to do this. On the other hand, if man formed such groups first entirely as the result of contingent circumstances, and then the rationality underlying such a structure was somehow revealed, MacIntyre's view of the necessary connection between rationality and the *polis* no longer exists in the way he describes, and the way is open for various social collections of humans to exercise rationality outwith the specific confines of the *polis* MacIntyre has in mind. The textual evidence seems too thin to support what MacIntyre contends. It may be the case that man is excluded from *eudaimonia* outside the *polis*, but this does not imply that he loses his humanity. I have also considered the textual evidence on which MacIntyre so heavily relies and found it also to be far more ambiguous than his claims suggest.

If man is to be rational it must be the case that he has a biological aptitude to reason, an aptitude that will express itself inside or outside the *polis*. Though it may be the case that exercising such an aptitude is more easily facilitated inside the *polis*, MacIntyre's claim that it simply cannot be exercised outside a *polis* is too strong. A more plausible interpretation of Aristotle seems to be that man is drawn to others in a political way because of his capacity to enjoy others' company and that, simultaneously with this, he has a capacity to reason that tends to flourish more within the context of a community than without.

Before passing on to the last section of the chapter, it is worth recounting why a consideration of this interpretation of the *polis* has been necessary. There are two views about the reasons why man tends to live in political structures. According to the account considered in detail in this section, the *polis* is necessary, and, as was remarked, it exists in some kind of deep metaphysical way prior to any individual's existence. The opposing view, and that with which I have sympathy, asserts rather that man has a nature that has within it certain interests, and it is the case that those

interests are best served within a social structure. In this sense a *polis* may be inevitable, but it is surely contingent. The special difficulty with the first view, and the reason it has demanded my attention, is that, if not proven inaccurate, it would from the outset determine a good deal about *how* one could proceed to think about what it takes for a man to flourish. By dispelling this view I have removed a potential roadblock. It will now be possible to begin to unpack the concept of flourishing by focussing on the nature of man considered individually, as he is no matter what his social context. Before doing that, however, some commentary must be provided about how to think about the function of man and the role of reason.

3.2) Man and Reasoning

I began this chapter with a brief discussion of Aristotle's use of reason as a distinguishing feature of man's function. I would like to take some time now to fill in that account. A look to Martha Nussbaum's 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics' will be exceedingly helpful. At one point in this article Nussbaum provides two accounts of how one might see human functioning, "the life of E-ing". One account, most notably argued by John Cooper in *Reason and Human Good In Aristotle* (see especially p. 144-180), and followed loosely by MacIntyre, suggests that to have a function means "...the part of a total life that consists in E-ing..." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 35). There are other things a human, for example, may do and share with other non-human animals (drinking, sleeping, etc.) but they "...are no part of the essential, characteristic activity of a human being. We could have a properly human life altogether without these..." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 35). So if I assert that a lawnmower's function is to cut grass what this use of 'function' suggests is that I ought to focus on the single activity that separates lawnmowers from other objects. The corresponding thought that underlies such a view is that a lawnmower is fulfilling its essence, is being its most "lawnmowerly" when it is actually engaged in that particular activity. Other aspects of it (being a gardening tool, being a machine) that connect it with a larger family of things (tools, machines, etc) are of no particular importance if one is concerned in distinguishing its essence. Analogously to this, to think of man's function is to focus on his essential activity, that is his reasoning. For example, the specifically human aspect of drinking a pint at the pub would be the mental calculation that would precede it (e.g., "I've an important meeting this afternoon, therefore a shandy is appropriate to drink now."). The reasoning is the human bit; after that one is acting like any other animal that drinks.

The opposing view in regard to the interpretation of functioning is that "...the life of E-ing" means a life organized around E-ing...E-ing is the distinctive and guiding feature...E is in some way its distinctive organizing principle...." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 35). This is the view that Nussbaum defends, as does Terence Irwin. I will not here set out the entirety of Nussbaum's argument, which relies on a careful analysis of important phrases in the original text (cf., p. 35-39). What that analysis does, essentially, is support the view that this second interpretation more closely reflects what Aristotle says in I, vii of the *Ethica Nicomachea*. Aristotle's discussion of functioning narrows the focus toward that which makes us human. To do this he searches for the way we do things that separates us from other entities (e.g., plants, oxen).

...The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason.

Now this [part has two parts, which have reason in different ways], one as obeying the reason [in the other part], the other as itself having reason and thinking. [We intend both]. Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways [as capacity and as activity], and we must take [a human being's special function to be] life as activity, since this seems to be called life to a fuller extent.

(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1098a3-7)

Aristotle concludes:

....that the human function is the soul's activity that expresses reason...or requires reason....Now we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be the soul's activity and actions that express reason....

(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1098a8-14)

Nussbaum points out that Aristotle says, "...not that the *ergon* of the human being is the activity of reason, but rather that it is the activity of the soul *according to* reason or not without reason...." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 35). Irwin also remarks in the notes to this passage of the text: "...The life of ACTION will be a life that includes other activities besides reasoning (just as a dog's life includes more than just PERCEPTION); but it is still guided by reasoning, as a dog's activities are guided by perception...." (notes to 1097b22-1098a20, from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 305). (I believe Irwin's observation very effectively sums up the point I am trying to make.)

Having a pint at the pub cannot, by Nussbaum's and Irwin's account, be separated into human and non-human animal segments. People do not calculate as humans and then drink like non-human animals; they rather calculate and drink like humans.

Nussbaum remarks that there "...must be a life organized, in some fashion, by practical reason, in which all functions are informed and infused by reasoning's organizing activity...." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 39). As she points out, the task of the *Ethica Nicomachea* is to set out the best, most properly human ways to go about things like eating, being brave, etc. (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 36-7). What makes one a human is that one reasons in order to engaging in one's activities whether or not they are the sorts of activities in which other animals share.

Looking at the those areas of the texts in which Aristotle talks about what reasoning actually is, two points are continually reiterated. First, all humans do it, and, second, reasoning in matters of practise amounts to calculating, and the kind of calculating that any human cannot avoid. Even more specialized aspects of reasoning, such as dialectic, are not suggested to be exclusive to one set of humans. At one point Aristotle does, for example, discuss dialectic in Book I of the *Topica* in a way that might suggest that he assumes it can only occur in a *polis* (though he does not specifically speak of a *polis*). In the first chapter Aristotle sets out dialectical reasoning as being one of two possible types of reasoning (the second being 'demonstrative') (Aristotle, *Topica*, 100a18-100b20). He considers the process by which one would proceed through a dialectical enquiry. The starting-point of such an enquiry may begin with considerations of dialectical propositions: "...something held by all men or by most men or by philosophers...." (Aristotle, *Topica*, 104a8). In other words, one may begin a dialectical consideration by examining what some hold to be true, or what some hold to be true but others may not, and this obviously requires some social structure. It is also possible, however, to start such enquiry by considering a dialectical problem from a vaguer starting-point. "...It must, moreover, be something on which either people hold no opinion either way, or the masses hold a contrary opinion to the philosophers...." (Aristotle, *Topica*, 104b3-5). Aristotle places, by way of example, considerations having to do with the eternity of the universe as reflective of this form of enquiry.

First, this seems to provide only weak and indirect evidence that the background of the *polis* is necessary for dialectical reasoning to occur full stop. Second, there is the suggestion here that one may begin a dialectical enquiry by considering a problem which may well be the result of merely 'wondering about' something, seeing something that has a look of mystery about it that one then wants to solve. This kind of enquiry would not require a social structure. Finally, there is implicit in this account another kind of test by way of verifiability that is easily overlooked, and that is the verification one seeks against the world as one sees it. In support of this one need only return to Aristotle's account of induction working in a way similar to

reforming a battleline in the midst of a rout (cf., below). What Aristotle is there doing is presenting a view of the way the mind is working that is the result of its construction and the way it is capable of processing information. Nowhere is there the suggestion that a mind not properly trained will not be able to carry out this process. It certainly could be the case and often is that the mind may use the process to reach false conclusions, but this is a case of reasoning poorly, not simply being non-rational.

MacIntyre, for example, tends to talk about rationality and reasoning, which Aristotle sees as capacity and something humans *do*, only in terms of narrow and specific sub-categories (for example, see his account of steps necessary to make a rational decision, cf., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 124-126). (One might say, for example, that in order to discover the volume of a 'free-form' swimming pool one needs think about the problem in a particular way, i.e., about what sort of formula will provide the most accurate answer, then, having decided on a particular differential equation, one must take care to go through the right steps, etc. This kind of reasoning does have specific criteria to ensure success, but it is a mistake to assume that all thinking has similar narrow criteria.) We may come to decide that an anthropomorph, to use an example of Martha Nussbaum's, is not properly human, but it must be for the right reasons. "...A bad plan is still a plan: bad reasoning, even haphazard, careless reasoning, is still reasoning. It excludes only people who live without planning and organizing their lives at all: the sort of creature , we might say, who would be the survivor of a frontal lobotomy...." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', p. 41). One can only exclude those others who live without planning and reasoning at all. Further, Aristotle claims in chapter twelve that "...Induction is the more convincing and clear: it is more readily learnt by the use of the senses, and is applicable generally to the mass of men...." (Aristotle, *Topica*, 105a16-17) If ever a statement suggested that induction is connected to how humans as individuals are built, this would seem to be it. Further, by Aristotle's own definition at the start of the *Topica*, reasoning is simply "...an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them...." (Aristotle, *Topica*, 100a25).

When Aristotle describes how one moves from *empeiria* to understanding (a dialectical process), he employs the simile of a rout in a battle that is consequently halted.

....It is like a rout in battle stopped by first one man making a stand and then another, until the original formation has been restored. The soul is so constituted as to be capable of this process....When one of a number of logically indiscriminable particulars has made a stand, the earliest universal is present in the soul: for though the act of sense

perception is of the particular, its content is universal - is man, for example, not the man Callias. A fresh stand is made among these rudimentary universals, and the process does not cease until the indivisible, the true universals, are established....
(Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, 100a10-100b2)

The perception of some phenomenon or object is, first, indiscriminable in the sense that one perceives the particular but is unable to pick out the universal that underlies the particular. Still, the perception of the particular is the first stand since it affords one's first, albeit cloudy, view of the universal in the particular. With consequent examination one moves closer to seeing the universal that is embodied in the particular, so that the number of men making a stand, to continue the simile, increases, until, finally, one perceives the universal clearly. If one is after the cause of the buzzing about by insects, it ought finally to become clear that, in this case, reproductive activity is the culprit. The insect activity can now be properly unpacked, i.e., it is not just buzzing, but reproducing that is occurring.

Why is man capable of unpacking particulars in this kind of way? Aristotle offers no explanation, indeed how could he? What he does assert is that man is "so constituted" as to be able to do this. This is one of the things that man *does*. This is simply the result of how people are built. Just as one thing that insects do is to reproduce (as do we for that matter), so man has a capacity to see the universals in particulars.

Finally, the organisation itself of the *Ethica* would seem to support the view of reasoning I am considering. Aristotle does not really talk about reasoning in detail until Book VI, after he has already discussed the natural virtues. In other words he has already talked about the activities in which well constituted and well trained humans engage before he discusses how one might think about those activities. His account of the good life from the *Rhetorica* (discussed in the next chapter) makes no mention of reasoning, but rather focusses on what people would have or the activities in which they would be engaged. Taken all together, then, reasoning needs to be construed broadly, that is as the calculating humans do in order to get along with their lives.

Having thus removed the *polis* as a potential obstacle to my consideration of flourishing and clarified how reasoning ought to be thought of, it remains to ask the most significant question of the thesis. If one takes Aristotle's view about ethics to heart, and if one sees man in the way Aristotle does, is it possible to provide the concept of flourishing with significant content that amounts to more than vague and unhelpful metaphorical analogies? This difficulty is an important one, for in embracing, at least broadly, an Aristotelian scheme, one ought to be expected to provide for others a clear account of the kind of guidance that scheme would offer.

Since Aristotle's view is based on the notion that what one is aiming at is to flourish, it should be the case that one ought to be able to supply a significant, that is to say, unequivocal response. Can that be done? That will be the issue with which the next two chapters will be concerned.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEEDS AND WANTING

4.1) Needs and Flourishing: Some Preliminary Problems

Considering the account of MacIntyre has been essential to my task because no discussion of flourishing can even begin until one has the proper grip on how the entity to be examined (i.e., man) is to be looked at. Having come this far it is now time to explore some specific difficulties with this concept in the hope that the mapping of them will lead to an increase in the clarity of this metaphor. This move will be frustratingly preliminary, especially if one simply wants to know what one should be *doing* in order to flourish (e.g., should I spend my time playing football, reading philosophy, making golf clubs?). Aristotle can be accused of vagueness on this point, for he spends remarkably little time in the *Ethica* telling people what they ought to spend their time doing in order to be living the good life. For example, excluding Book X, one cannot help but notice that Aristotle supplies little in the way of practical advice on such matters. He tells us in Book I of the *Rhetorica* that humans need athletic powers, but he stops short of telling us what activities to pursue in order that these athletic powers be used most beneficially. Through fleshing out some of the more problematic aspects of Aristotle's view, I would like to lead our thoughts in the direction necessary to provide a better grip on what it means to flourish. The upshot of this discussion will demonstrate that there are, frustrating as it is, certain aspects of this concept about which there can be little clarity. What will surface in the next two chapters is why this is so.

The move away from the quandarist point of view allows one to make the central issue of ethics focus on the response to the question: "How ought one to live?" The second chapter explained the Aristotelian response to this, but it is important to note that this response is not the only one available. Plato's response to the question, for example, would be far different. How one ought to live would depend on the kind of soul one had, which in turn would dictate the class to which one belonged. Soldiers do not have the proper 'equipment' to aim for the same sort of life as philosophers. The needs of those in each class are different; so too is what they aim for. I will not refute this position, although I will suggest that its rigidness is not reflective of how human beings actually are constructed. I will simply refer to human history as vindication enough to show that, except on a modest scale, it is quite difficult to assert that certain humans are so built that they only have the limited potential to perform certain narrow tasks.

Another position would be to argue that people ought to focus on the one aspect of

their lives that is ultimately valuable (e.g., I should spread the Word of Jesus, stop crimes against the earth, ensure that justice is done). Some of these moral positions could, of course, be held by quandarists, but it is worth noting that this need not be so. For many of those with a fanatical frame of mind, the quandarist distinctions hold no sway. Setting animals free from cages, for example, is the right thing to do and the good thing to do. Within such positions the concept of personal fulfilment has a very different meaning from that found in an Aristotelian view. I will not enumerate the variety of positions but note that, for me, one of the attractions of the Aristotelian view seems to be that if people develop the proper virtues, many other issues about which people have specific concerns would be less pressing. That is to say, if people act virtuously many problems on which specific groups focus (e.g., lack of justice, maltreatment, etc.) would be less significant problems. The existence of such problems is often caused by others acting viciously or insensitively. The other point worth noting is this: the world is not a 'one issue' place. I take it that there will always be numerous issues of concern, and many of these issues will conflict. This is the result of the interests and concerns people have, and these can never be reduced to a single concern. The world just is a complex place.

I have talked about *eudaimonia*, but not yet discussed the how the concept of flourishing is connected with it. I have been proceeding through this discussion simply assuming that *flourishing* captures accurately what Aristotle means when he discusses the *eudaimon* life. No justification has been provided for this interpretive manoeuvre. The use of the term *flourish* is not original to me, and its use has been justified by a number of authors; e.g., John Cooper in *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (see p. 89, note 1), and it underlies at least one other thinker's view of Aristotle, that being Elizabeth Anscombe's as presented in 'Modern Moral Philosophy' (this point is also noted by Cooper in his discussion). Rosalind Hursthouse also provides a similar account of *flourishing*, but embellishes it considerably by examining the use of *success* and *prospering* as alternatives (cf., Hursthouse, 'Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 36-7). Since I take these discussions to be correct, I shall not pursue the matter, but the scholarly foundation of this interpretation is worth noting. Certainly according to the picture of Aristotle's project as presented in the first part of this thesis, *flourishing* seems a quite adequate term to depict the picture Aristotle is painting.¹

The next point worth making will serve as an introduction for the final part of this thesis. Up to this point I have focussed on providing an interpretation of Aristotle, and this has required that most of the discussion be focussed on what Aristotle's

¹ Richard Kraut is one interpreter who takes exception to the use of *flourishing* (cf., Kraut, 'Two Conceptions of Happiness', p. 168-169, esp. fn., p. 169).

ethical project is. Now that I have done that the emphasis will soon noticeably shift away from Aristotle. Having determined that basing ethics on *eudaimonia* is worthwhile, and having conceived that one way of making use of this concept is to consider it in terms of flourishing, I would now like to move to a conceptual consideration of the metaphor of flourishing. In other words, if Aristotle's project in the *Ethica* is to guide a student toward flourishing, what does the term 'flourish', in general, mean, and can a clear conceptual understanding of how the term works provide another means of evaluating Aristotle's use of it? The concern of these two chapters will be of a higher order, namely as a general concept, what does flourishing amount to?

In order to investigate flourishing in this way, I would like to break it into its constituent parts. There seems to be an obvious way to consider the concept, and it becomes apparent if one considers its common use. This point comes out obliquely in a comment by Anscombe: "...X needs what makes it flourish,..." (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 41), and the rest of the paragraph proceeds to outline the differences in views about what the needs of flourishing are. Her move, to talk of needs, is a sensible consideration, and this is where I shall begin the analysis. I do not think there is anything controversial in this. What will become quickly apparent, however, is that though flourishing often gets cashed out in terms of needs, needs will prove to be a difficult concept to use to get a clear grip on flourishing. The reason this is the case is because needs cannot be viewed as a term that operates absolutely. Why this is the case will be the subject of this chapter.

Needing has an obvious place in a discussion of flourishing. Examples are numerous enough: a discussion of what a rosebush needs to flourish will lead quickly to commentary about a rosebush's needing water, sunlight, nutrients, etc. Using such an example demonstrates the ease with which most connect flourishing with needs. It is often assumed, I think, that this way of referring to needs is applicable in the same way to human beings. Flourishing, for a human, requires so many calories of food, proper shelter, a minimal amount of leisure time, protection of rights, etc. There is, however, a clear mistake in using 'needs' in this way, for it presupposes that 'needs' are entities that exist absolutely, and this is not accurate. Let me explain. The needs of a plant, for example, can only be isolated if one *begins with* some notion of what a plant does. But this is actually quite difficult to do in other than a very general way (e.g., plants grow, germinate, etc.). This is because a discussion of a plant's needs usually focusses on *our* view of what a plant can do, such as grow quickly, yield fruit, yield aromatic, colourful blossoms, etc. This means that discussion of a plant's needs tends to presuppose our wanting the plant to flourish.

This last point becomes disguised because it is hard to imagine the plant as wanting

anything but that it flourish. But plants do not 'want', they simply do naturally (or what people direct them to do). Plants do not have mechanisms so they can avoid the sun in order to be less successful plants (e.g., they do not react to sunlight by pondering whether to put a hood on or not); they cannot choose to try not to flourish, nor have they the means to weigh and attempt alternate paths of flourishing. The point here is that distinguishing a plant's needs in terms of flourishing is to distinguish those needs in terms of what people want plants to do. The mistake that occurs is this: any needs one can enumerate that are important to a plant's flourishing is based on the assumption that what *we* want the plant to do is equivalent to *its* objectively flourishing. The result of such an assumption is not that it is incorrect, but that it is so obvious it tends to drop out of its proper place in the picture, and as a result it is mistakenly supposed that the needs are a necessary set of conditions the existence of which are prior to and define what flourishing is. Flourishing, falsely, then reemerges as a concept that is wholly parasitic on what a plant's needs are. It is then assumed that *this* description of the needs/flourishing relationship holds as being appropriate for human animals also. People are pre-packaged bundles of needs the filling of which is necessary for flourishing.

This, I maintain, is to present things in reverse, for needs are parasitic on other concepts, one of which is flourishing. Flourishing sometimes provides the shoulders on which needs stand. (My intent in sounding conditional is to allow the possibility for needs to ride on the shoulders of other concepts also. One does not only need as the result of some idea of flourishing; e.g., one can need to stand up to open the door without flourishing entering the picture at all.) It is, therefore, appropriate to talk of plant and human flourishing in roughly the same way only as long as it is realized that there is a considerable difference in the breadth of possibility in plant flourishing contrasted with human flourishing, and that any talk of plant or other non-human flourishing is heavily reliant on our cashing out these principles in terms of what humans want.

This is all needs talk, and another complexity has yet to be introduced, which will receive preliminary mention now. Talking of needs naturally leads to talking of wanting, a concept which seems to rely in certain ways on the notion of needing, but must not be reduced to it. Some time will be taken to consider the relationship more fully, but at the outset, as I have alluded already, it would be dangerous and indeed incorrect to use 'wanting' in a way that suggests that it is interchangeable with 'needing'. Looseness in ordinary usage is the culprit here, but it is essential that the distinction be noted from the start.

To return to the concept of needing, the difficulty in the view as roughly outlined here lies in finding an adequate description of how needs relates to the concept of

flourishing. The lure of the view that maintains that needs are necessary, prior, and absolute is that the picture is neat and straightforward. It is highly problematic, however, in that the connection between needs and flourishing is difficult to demonstrate. How needs could be prior is also difficult to sort out. The alternative view, and the one to be pursued here, sees needs as contingent, but this comes at the price of a certain messiness in the picture.

The use of 'need' in common parlance at first suggests that most people share some of both of the views above. At times people will use 'need' in the former sense when they assert that one needs employment, or one needs a triple bypass surgery. These are representative of the former view in that they are made full-stop (i.e., employment (working) is necessary; a triple bypass (health) is necessary). The same people will then use it in its latter sense when they assert that, for example, one needs a certain book or a portion of gâteau. Here the underlying reasoning is that *because I want b I need a* (i.e., because I want to write I need a pen. My needing a pen is neither a prior nor a necessary constituent of my flourishing). In considering needs in these two ways it ought to become quickly apparent that the notion of wanting could be seen to provide the conceptual foundation for employing 'needing'. In all the examples here it is the case that what one wants defines one's needs. The difference seems to come in the immediacy of one's needs. Needing triple bypass surgery is a condition that, if not immediately corrected, will disable the individual and cut him off from being able to flourish altogether. Not being able to have a particular book, on the other hand, does not usually carry with it the same immediate consequences. The logic of the use of the term 'need' in these situations is the same, although the urgency differs. Put another way, our wanting to flourish creates for us particular needs, the importance of those needs varying with particular situations. This chapter shall argue that the tendency to talk of the relationship between needs and flourishing obscures what is really more central to the issue, which is the relationship between wanting and flourishing. This is not to suggest that needs are figments of one's imagination, but that they ought to be seen in a narrower way. I will, therefore, still need to analyse what needs are, only with the intent of fitting them into a larger picture that is dominated by wanting.

Shifting the analysis to wanting will not, as if by magic, clarify what it means to flourish. There are great difficulties in this relationship. Understanding the connection between wanting and flourishing is made difficult by the fact that human animals are incredibly adaptable; people learn to pay attention to and want some things at one time (resulting in one set of needs), and then at other times want other things (which leads to another set of needs). One of Aristotle's mistakes, though justifiable, is his underestimation of how such adaptability would affect views of flourishing.

This, then, provides the two strands for exploration: first, how is one to piece together the relationship between needs, wanting and flourishing, and second, having done so, can one now have a clearer, unequivocal sense of what the concept of human flourishing means? This chapter will deal only with the first strand, while the next will focus on the concept of flourishing itself.

Aristotle, in the *Ethica* and the *Rhetorica*, talks about needs in a way that will help to clarify how what people do (our activities) creates a need for particular things (e.g., sailing requires boats and canvas or nylon). What Aristotle suggests is not that people need a set of particular things, but that if the proper activities are pursued in the proper way having certain things will generally result (assuming that a modicum of reasonably good fortune shines down upon one), and people are so constructed that they will want those sorts of things. I have already considered Aristotle's discussion of the role of reasoning in human activity (cf. Ch. 3), which amounts to humans pursuing things intelligently. In I, x of the *Ethica* Aristotle discusses quite specifically acting according to virtue and the goods that result. Virtue is the characteristic essential to happiness, for "...it is the activities expressing virtue that control happiness...(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b10); "...the happy person has the [stability] we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life...he will do and study actions expressing virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b17-21). This discussion of character culminates in his observation of the virtuous person's response to adversity.

And since it is activities that control life, as we said, no blessed person could ever become miserable, since he will never do hateful and base actions. For a truly good and intelligent person, we suppose, will bear strokes of fortune suitably, and from his resources at any time will do the finest actions he can....
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b33-1101a4)

Having discussed the prominence of character he then proceeds to shift his emphasis toward what, at first sight, appears to be a list of ingredients (as opposed to activities) of *eudaimonia*. The discussion is not at first satisfying, for Aristotle seems to be twisting in his allegiances. This point is reiterated: "...Then why not say that the happy person is the one who expresses complete virtue in his activities, *with an adequate supply of external goods...*" (italics mine) (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1101a14-15). There now appear to be two constituents to the good life: first there is activity that is virtuous, then there are external goods.

The *Rhetorica* highlights this dual view. There Aristotle suggests that the most common views of happiness (from which one can unravel the true view of happiness) are a combination of the need of good character and having the appropriate amount of

property or prosperity. (Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1360b14-18) This latter observation is then emphasised in the discussion that follows: there Aristotle lists the 'constituent parts' of happiness, many of which are clearly external goods, e.g., beauty, strength, plenty of children, athletic powers, etc. (Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 1360b19-1362a13; the list is again discussed in some detail in 1362b1-27).

At first sight the idea of a list of important constituents does not seem unreasonable, but what creates some problem is the nature of the relationship between these ingredients and the character one has developed, both of which are now claimed to be necessary to one's happiness. Let me clarify what Aristotle is and is not saying. It is tempting to imagine, as someone like Wiggins might (cf., 4.2, below), that the sorts of things Aristotle lists as needs are meant as an absolute list; that is humans are entities containing 'bundles' of needs, the filling of which is *essential* to flourishing. This is *not* at all how Aristotle is talking. What has here been termed 'ingredients' is actually an inept description. Aristotle is not suggesting that humans have a set of dispositions (virtues) and then a set of 'things' (goods), the two categories added together producing happiness. It is rather that the second set of 'things' tend to go hand in hand with having the dispositions. They are the entities through which, most often, the dispositions are expressed. For example, it would be odd to assert that *because* one of my functions is to act intelligently I need a brain (this is what the Scarecrow mistakenly imagines is the case in the *Wizard of Oz*); instead, one of the things I work with or employ in being intelligent is my brain. Similarly, if loving family and friends is part of what man does, he needs family and friends with which to work. Families are not provided *so that* he can love them; they are the entities through which he loves.²

This leads me to make two observations. No answer to the query "What should I do?", and certainly not one stressing the characteristic activity of humans, can guarantee the good life will result. The kind of guide Aristotle offers is a general one, one designed for most people, but certainly not all. First, there are differences between individuals, and though humans are, in general, similar, no theory could take into account all individuals. (Remember Aristotle's warning almost immediately in the *Ethica*, cf. 1094b12-24.) Second, one can be stopped from functioning properly if, even while being adaptable, one cannot have certain of one's needs met. Circumstances can be overwhelming in such a way that flourishing becomes impossible (cf., *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100b24-1101a14). As luck will have it, it is not available to everyone, even those with the proper character. This does not point to

² I realize that this specific account of what man does jars with what Aristotle says about the superiority of study and self-sufficiency (cf., *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1177a17-1177b1), but I think, if one takes Aristotle's position in Book X seriously, he is simply wrong.

a flaw in the theory of eudaimonistic ethics, but indicates a practical problem in regard to the state of the universe. By this view a theory that rests on the virtues becomes a much rougher guide, one that cannot guarantee that their exercise will result in happiness. It requires that other pieces also fall into place for flourishing to result: some of this individuals can control, some they cannot.

Having discussed these preliminaries, it will now be highly worthwhile to focus on needs and needing. Brief mention was made of this concept in the first chapter in relation to Elizabeth Anscombe's discussion of the concept in 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. There, as we saw, she discussed the concept as a way of talking about flourishing, and some notions were considered in an introductory way. What must now be done is a filling out of Anscombe's picture, and the addition of some of her comments from *Intention* will aid the endeavour. It is also worth mentioning that time will be taken to consider the notion of absolute needs as discussed by David Wiggins in a recently revised essay 'Claims of Need'. Again, by examining where Wiggins' argument heads off the rails one can get a very clear picture of how the concept really does work in relation to the notion of flourishing.

4.2) Anscombe on Needs

First consider an expansion of Anscombe's view concerning wanting, and it would be most useful to do this through considering some examples. The issue can be most usefully thought of through the following question: How are needs connected with what people want? Some might suggest that our needs can be considered separately from what we want, while others find it difficult to separate the concepts of needs and wanting. Anscombe, as seen in the first chapter, rejects the first possibility for the second. The reason the first alternative seems compelling could be because of the tendency, already discussed, to think that considerations of a plant's flourishing are exactly analogous to considerations of human flourishing. The result of thinking there is such a precise analogy then leads one to see the identification of a need as having some motivating force in human action, e.g., if my perceiving that I need water compels me to have some it must also be the case that my perceiving that a plant needs water compels me to provide it. But the needs of objects external to one would only motivate one or compel one to act in a particular way if, as a pre-requisite, one *wanted* the objects to flourish. My caring about a plant's need for water is *not* the result of perceiving that the plant needs water. How is the opposing picture incorrect? The mistake lies in the assumption that factual needs can somehow be assigned without any necessary connection to wanting. One needs to consider our own case, that is consider human needs and how they function in connection with human

wanting, if one wishes to get a clearer picture of what the concepts of needs and wanting mean.

Anscombe argues ('Modern Moral Philosophy', p. 31) that when I judge a need for myself, e.g., I need water, I need a toothbrush, I have necessarily to want what I have judged I need (cf. 1.2). I could not even begin to compile a list of needs without wanting. She suggests that the kind of necessity at work here is quite complicated, so an example will help to elucidate what is going on. Anscombe does claim that it is possible *not to want* something one needs, but it is not possible never to want what one needs. Consider a tooth that hurts because of a cavity. There are two ways to apply the kind of connection Anscombe is claiming to exist.

I have this cavity and as a result I can, at one and the same time, not want the cavity filled because I, quite understandably, do not like the sensation caused by the drill's whizzing its way into the centre of my tooth, and I do want the cavity filled because I want healthy teeth. Life is easier with healthy teeth, and I like the look of them because I have a particularly toothy smile. It must be the case that if I want healthy teeth (again, imagine a situation in which healthy teeth are essential to my eating and, additionally, they are the source of my livelihood as a fashion model) although I can not want some thing I need, (e.g., I do not want drills or large needles inserted into tender bits of my mouth) it is clearly not possible never to want anything I need (e.g., although I do not like various bits associated with the proper filling of the cavity, I do want the cavity filled). Or, to put the matter in a slightly different way, because I want healthy teeth I need to have treatment. There is no difficulty here when the need is under such a description. However, needing the treatment entails, as it turns out, some awkward pain (i.e., the drill, the needle, the probe, the dentist's fingers inserted into my mouth). So wanting healthy teeth creates a need for treatment, but that does not necessarily mean I want *that* treatment that will cause that particular pain. As I am wriggling in the dentist's chair what I want are healthy teeth, and what I am putting up with is what will deliver me that result.

Anscombe is building such a picture on an Aristotelian base, and this becomes quite clear when she discusses the role of wanting in *Intention* (cf., p. 62-82). In this section she elaborates the role of wanting as it applies to the picture of practical reasoning set out by Aristotle. "...[T]he (starting point) is (the thing wanted)...." (Anscombe, *Intention*, p.63). She goes on to point out that:

....The role of 'wanting' in the practical syllogism is quite different from that of a premise. It is that whatever is described in the proposition that is the starting-point of the argument must be wanted in order for the reasoning to lead to any action....
(Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 66)

What this remark and the rest of the discussion underline is the notion that the first premise in a practical syllogism is not a 'disguised' statement expressing a want. The practical syllogism is a model of reasoning. Whether that reasoning leads to action is dependent upon the object of the first premise being something I want. That is a different matter from the syllogism itself. I can, for example, think about possible action in practical syllogisms all day (e.g., I want a whole sheep butchered, they do this kind of work at the butcher's shop on Market Street, therefore I'll go there to have my whole sheep butchered), but this does not mean I will do anything about them. Needs are describable as such because they are things people want to do something about. A need only gets identified if one wants something. Wanting sets the stage for one's being able to employ a need statement.

Are there cases that run antithetical to this? Imagine that my car has stopped dead. I rummage through the tool box, I wiggle this wire, I tap this valve, etc. Still the car will not start. Now, the mechanic down the road comes by, gives the car a quick examination and supplies what I have needed, namely the petrol. Could one argue that I needed the petrol without wanting it? This is clearly not how the situation ought to be unpacked, because what I wanted, which sets the parameters for what I need, is what it will take to run the car. So, in fact, I do want the petrol in that I do want what will cause the car to run. My wiggling wires and tapping valves is just one manifestation of my search for the means to attain the end I want, namely getting the car to move. I can want an end, therefore, but be casting about for the specific means that will lead to that end. I can easily want my car to run, and necessarily want what that requires (more petrol, new water pump, new battery, etc.). When I go to the garage I might say, "Perform whatever is necessary to make the car run." If I have a particularly valuable car, the price of the repair may not be of concern.

But might it be the case that an identification of a need could *spur* a want? This kind of case, at first, has some appeal, but it rests on a confusion. Before elucidating where such a confusion lies it will be important to see why an adequate response to this kind of case is crucial if one wishes to support an Anscombean/Aristotelian picture. If it turns out to be the case that there is truth to the claim that needs can, in some sense, exist previous to wanting, and, to put the matter crudely, initiate the existence of certain kinds of wanting, great credence will be lent to the position that some needs are absolute. (This kind of position, to be examined later in this section, is held by David Wiggins.)

Despite the initial plausibility of there being things we want absolutely, such a picture does not make a great deal of sense. Imagine a situation in which x points out to y that y needs to decrease his intake of salt and fat in order to lessen substantially his risk of heart disease. The absolutist picture looks something like this: y , imagine,

did not know he needed to cut out salt and fat, in other words, e.g., give up those well salted fish and chips he so dearly loves. Until being told of the horrible things occurring to his heart, veins, and arteries, he was unaware of the 'need' he had to forego the trips to the chip shop. Now, if one points out to him that his tiredness, the stiffness in his legs, the shortness of breath, etc. are tied to salt and fat he will *now see* he has a need to curtail his intake of certain foods. In a sense, then, the bringing to his attention such a need will *cause him to want* to change his diet in order that he put things right.

This story is suspicious for reasons to which I have alluded. One response to this picture is to remark, and not at all implausibly, that *y* is free to respond to the new awareness of his need that he does not care a fig; fish and chips and lots of creme-cakes are the things he cares about and the things he will pursue. This does not defeat the absolutist case, however, for he will claim that there still exists for *y* a need to change his diet and he is making a mistake in not responding to that need. The factual need simply, and in very realistic terms, *is* there whether he likes it or not. Whether this is true can be sorted out by seeing the situation as divisible into two possible descriptions. One can claim that either:

- (a) *y* *needs* to decrease salt and fat from his diet, or,
- (b) *y* *needs* to decrease salt and fat from his diet *in order to* avoid heart disease and feel better.

The absolutist cannot maintain that (b) is the case because (b) suggests a picture that is far from explainable in absolutist terms. According to the definition of need in (b), how could *y* respond to the new-found evidence that he needed to shift to a low sodium and fat diet? One possibility is that he will say "Well, I am bothered by this continual fatigue, shortness of breath, and stiffness in my legs, and it is true that I'd like to enjoy my pensioning days feeling fitter than I'm feeling now, so I want to eat according to this new diet." Wanting in this case, and if one thinks about it, in every case, has to occur first. It makes little sense to discuss needs outside of the context of wanting, for wanting provides the context for enumerating needs.

The absolutist case becomes more transparent if one considers more obvious cases of conflicting needs. Martyrs, to take one example, 'need' to renounce their beliefs in order to be "let off the hook" so to speak. One might say, inaccurately, that they have this 'need' *and* they have the opposing 'need' to express their loyalty/belief in some particular religious principle. It is hard to imagine how such a conflict between needs could be sorted out except by one finally saying "I want this (martyrdom) rather than that (saving my skin)." Similarly, if I throw myself on a hand-grenade to save the lives of others, one might still maintain that I needed to run away in order to save my

own skin. But I wanted to save my compatriots rather than myself. To say that someone 'needs' to run away in this instance amounts to making a *judgement* about another's decision of what he wants. I think "He needs to run away" amounts to saying: "He *should not have wanted* to save the others and therefore have needed to jump on the hand-grenade. He *should have wanted* to save himself, in which case he needed to run away."

Still, it seems that the absolutist can aptly respond that, though one may not acknowledge particular needs, it is the case that they are still there. Why is this true? The only possible justification for claiming this to be true rests on non-absolutist grounds. This can be demonstrated by pushing the absolutist to respond to a series of 'why?' questions that would, ultimately, have to end at a place where the absolutist would be willing to say, "Well it's just obvious that..." Can this be done in the case just considered? The absolutist will claim that y needs to eliminate salt and fat. Why? "To avoid heart disease." Why should y avoid heart disease? "Because", the absolutist might respond, "it will cause him to die at a younger age and, quite possibly, in a manner far more uncomfortable than he would wish." Now where does the absolutist go when one asks the next obvious question, that is: "And why should y be concerned especially about these matters rather than others (that is be more concerned about health and quality of life in old age rather than his present diet)?" The absolutist cannot simply respond, "Because he has a greater or more fundamental need" as this is just the point of dispute. Nor can he respond that if y knew and seriously understood the consequences of his choice he would want to choose greater health over creme-cakes. This just demonstrates the point the absolutist wishes to refute, namely that needs are defined by wanting certain states-of-affairs.

Perhaps it is open to assert that there exists this need, but what, at the end of the day, would such an assertion do or mean? If it has no motivating force, what is the point of attaching the label 'need' to it? By such a version of the story one would have, as it were, two sets of 'needs' at work. There would be those needs attached to wanting that people would act on, and there would be another set of needs in the background, held in reserve as it were, that have no function at all other than being there. What is the use of the extra set? If it did turn out to be the case that someone 'called up' and decided to act on any of these 'reserve' needs, it would not have occurred because such an extra set existed to be called up, it would be because what one wants had now changed to embrace a slightly different state-of-affairs.

It is worth stressing the difference between the roles of wanting and needs in one other way, and again Anscombe will be quite helpful here. As just seen, answers to questions of wanting and needs can be followed always by a further 'why?' question.

But such a chain cannot continue indefinitely, for there are answers that stop such questioning dead. To use Anscombe's example, if a farmer wants a Jersey cow, and someone asks why he wants to have such a cow, his response will be that this cow has 'x' qualities which are good cow qualities, and since his farm is comprised of cows this would be a good cow to have. There are no more questions to ask on the subject of wanting this kind of cow (Anscombe, *Intention*, p.70). (It is not open to continue by asking "But what do you want to have a farm full of cows for?" because this is now a different question, i.e., "Why did you choose this vocation rather than that?") To consider the matter more broadly, wanting can be justified in relation to a kind of chain that will eventually lead back to what Anscombe calls a 'desirability characterisation' (Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 72). If I am whacking golf balls like mad on the practise ground and someone asks why I am doing it I can clearly respond either that I enjoy it (to which I cannot now be asked to provide a further reason for doing it), or that I am practising. If I am asked why I am practising I can respond that I wish to improve my golf game. In response to the last "why?" of this series I can say that the playing of the game at an improved level increases my pleasure in playing.³

The point at issue is whether needs can be discussed in the same kind of way, and in fact they cannot. Although it is legitimate to initiate discussion about needs in the same way I have done so for wanting, questioning of needs will end only when a 'desirability characterisation' is reached, i.e., the 'what for' does not stop until someone can answer why he *wants* whatever is needed. Again, if I am bashing golf balls and a passerby asks "why?" then I may respond that I need to practise. "Why?" "I need to play golf." "Why?" "I need to make a living, and playing golf fills this need." This, however, is a very different kind of statement from "I want to play golf." To the question of needing to play golf to make a living it is quite reasonable to ask "Why do you *need* to play *golf* to make a living? I hear that teaching is quite a nice profession." The answer to this query can only be made in terms of wanting, and the same is true of any query about needs. The difference, then, in the series of answers that will be given to these two sets of questions is that, while questions concerning wanting can always be traced back to a 'desirability characterisation', questions concerning needs cannot end with a need that requires no further characterisation. The series cannot end until the need is explained in a terms of a *want* that requires no further characterisation.

It would be helpful here to clarify the distinction in one further way by referring

³ It is worth noticing that Anscombe's argument on this issue is very similar to Hume's view of things (cf., *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, Appendix I, 'Concerning Moral Sentiment'*, p. 268-269), and Aquinas' (cf., Haldane, 'Metaphysics in the Philosophy of Education', p. 179).

back to the way in which Anscombe introduced her discussion of needs in 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. This section of her paper begins with a synopsis of her argument from 'Brute Facts' (cf., 1.2, above). Her intention is to argue that 'ought' (considered as a recommendation rather than as an imperative) can in fact be derived from 'is'; what is the case is in large part definable in that particular way because of its close connection with what people take ought to be the case. She then moves on to discuss 'needs' and how 'needs' is related to 'is'. Her intention is much the same: just as what is the case (factually) requires a certain background, so that background is partially defined by a context. Needs are not brute facts, but relatively brute facts, that is the factualness of the need depends on the surrounding context, namely what is wanted.

Alan White in *Modal Thinking* supports this way of talking about needs. His description of the situation can be nicely summarized by considering part of his discussion concerning need.

To say that A needs X or needs to V is to say that X or V, that is, what A needs, is something which is necessary for A....A cannot in these circumstances reach the end-state without V or without X. The end-state - which can be discovered or stipulated - is what A needs to V *for*....Because the end-state can be of many kinds, to say that A needs to V is elliptical for saying that A needs to V in order to F....

Given the circumstances and the end-state, reasons can always be demanded for the contention that what A needs is so-and-so....
(White, *Modal Thinking*, p. 105)

The notion that needs are 'elliptical' is the helpful bit here, and on this score White is surely correct (although White sees the connection between wants and needs in a very different way from Anscombe or me).

This kind of picture is in tone different from that presented by David Wiggins, and this is an appropriate spot at which to examine his view. In 'Claims of Need', Wiggins embarks on a project to establish the nature of the connection between needs and rights claims. In order to do this he presents a story in which absolute needs figure predominantly. It takes some verbal gymnastics to accomplish this, and, all told, the story is not too convincing.

Wiggins is surely right in insisting early in the argument that needing is not the same as wanting (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 5). His demonstration of this is clear enough: if one forces a shift in some discussion from needs language to wanting language it seems that some of the top-spin is taken off the rhetorical force of the argument. My needing a glass of water is construed by most to have a different meaning from my wanting one. More careful analysis, however, ought to make clear

that there is *not* "...some special context that the word [needs] possesses in virtue of which that force accrues to it...." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 6). My declaring I want a glass of water can easily carry with it the same rhetorical force as my saying I need it. If, in the middle of a match, a dehydrated footballer says he wants water, I will not be less moved to provide what is wanted because the use of 'want' is verbally less compelling. The rhetorical force comes from the surrounding situation. It is true that often people use the term 'need' to signal that there is a certain situation behind the request that is dire, but any motivating power the term 'need' receives comes as the result of one's assessment of situation that lies behind the request. I can question a person on his 'need'; his language can be viewed as suspicious if the context of the situation does not provide enough of a story. The request of a man bursting into my house and 'needing' my telephone might not strike me as suspicious if I heard two cars colliding in the street, for then I would know what he was wanting to do. It *would* be suspicious if nothing odd had happened to explain his 'need' for the telephone, for I would almost immediately be moved to ask what he needs it *for*, which amounts to wondering what he wants it for.

There is a legitimate distinction here, but it is not this one that Wiggins has supposed. Wiggins presses the needs/wants distinction in other ways. He thinks, first of all, that needs lacks the intentionality of wanting (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 6), and this provides an immediate clue to his view of a human being, for it is not clear that the intentional/extensional distinction falls out as clearly as he suggests or that it could provide enough evidence for claiming that needs are absolute. If I want something under one description, e.g., to quench my thirst with the liquid from the flagon with the dragon, that does not necessarily mean that I want the same thing under some other description, especially if that liquid is poison. The temptation, then, is to imagine that wanting is always intentional. This, however, is to overstate, as my struggling to get the car running ought to have pointed out (cf. above, p. 102). I can want something in a way that an array of solutions are satisfactory.

If, on the other hand, I need paracetamol for neuralgia, I need this no matter what the description. "...What I need depends not on thought or the workings of my mind (or not only these) but on the way the world is...." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 6). This picture is reinforced by his later claim that people ought to "...see needs themselves...as *states of dependency (in respect of not being harmed)* which have their proper object thing *x* needed...." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 16). This suggests that needs are entities of a sort that lean on or require other entities that can only be confusingly described as anti-harm requirements, of which each human has a specific and determinate set. Now this does seem plausible. One can be in a situation where one knows only vaguely what one needs (as in our disabled car example

above) and be quite mistaken (it was not the wire that needed wiggling, but the tank's needing petrol). It does not follow from this, however, that needs are a set of prior entities waiting for individuals to 'discover' they have them. Wiggins seeks to build the concept of need on what is at first sight the plausible notion of absolute harm. Humans are built in such a way that if certain needs are denied harm will necessarily result. The discussion is heavily parasitic on this notion of absolute harm, yet it is precisely here where an objection can be raised. I do not know what 'absolute' harm is, for what will harm me does not seem to be absolute at all, but depends largely on what I am in the midst of or will be in the midst of being up to as I live my life. (I will say more about this in a moment.)

If I am dying from malnutrition because I am on a hunger strike it is tempting to say I need food since starvation is an absolute harm. This is parasitic on an observer's judgement of what *I* need. The "way the world is" is not a brute fact, but is partially reliant on my place and goals within it. If I want to be on a hunger strike, I do not need food. If I am tempted by food and take it this in no way demonstrates the absoluteness of my needing food ("Ah! You have seen what is absolutely good for you!"). It simply demonstrates that I was not entirely committed not to wanting food and wanting to be a hunger striker.

A more telling criticism can be brought to bear if one examines the point early in his argument where Wiggins distinguishes between instrumental (elliptical) needs and absolute ones. The sense he is trying to catch is that any need grounded in one's avoiding harm is a need that is necessary and therefore absolute, which is quite different from an instrumental need. If *x* says he needs a paint brush, he is speaking elliptically, since he is not providing the "what for?" that would justify his use of need. To speak non-elliptically *x* would say "I need a paint brush in order to paint this chair." *X*'s need is instrumental because the chair's needing paint is not necessary: it is open for someone to respond to his request by questioning whether the chair needs painting, which could, in turn, take some of the stuffing out of his claim to need the paint brush. If someone *does* respond by denying that the chair needs to be painted, where to now? There must be some way to use 'need' that is non-instrumental. What Wiggins suggests is that: "...The ellipse (*sic*) theory suggests that he ought then to insist that there is an end of his for which the [chair] is necessary....What he has to show, if he wants to make more that the instrumental claim claim, is that he *cannot get on without that [chair's being painted]*, that *his life will be blighted without it*, or some such thing." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Needs', p. 8-9).⁴ "...[T]here is another sense of 'need' by which the purpose is already fixed,

⁴ Since the paintbrush example is mine (Wiggins uses a man's need for a suit), I have substituted it throughout these quotations for the sake of consistency.

and fixed in virtue of the meaning of the word...." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Needs', p. 9). What Wiggins insists on is that there is a use of 'need' that relies on one's committing oneself to avoiding harm, and that the avoidance of harm is an absolute need that grounds in a fundamentally different way certain needs claims from other, instrumental needs claims. Simply put, instrumental needs can always be called into question; a justification can always be requested and possibly rejected. There are, however, absolute claims about which no question can be raised. If, for example, *x* claims that he needs the paintbrush, and to my querying his need to paint the chair he responds that failure of his doing so will result in his and his family's being executed at dawn, I have struck rock-bottom. His need is absolute. Because he cannot get on without it, he is committed to describing the use of the paintbrush as a need.

Now I would not want to suggest that he has no right to use the word 'need', but what is not clear is the way in which his request for a paintbrush differs from a decorator's request for a paintbrush. What Wiggins seems to have in mind is that there is a set of necessary conditions present that provide a framework for harm's being avoided. It is quite difficult to get a grip on exactly what the nature of such a framework would be. Wiggins states, obscurely, that when one uses 'need' non-instrumentally "...appeal is made to the necessary conditions of harm's being avoided...." (Wiggins, 'Claims of Need', p. 7). This seems to suggest that there is some objective and necessary set of non-harm conditions that exists prior to and supports absolute needs claims. This brings me back to the problem I noted earlier: what is an absolute harm? I do not think it is possible to be clear about this because harm is a term that is as instrumental as need. Things are not harmed full-stop; the harm comes in the disablement.

Just as with need, it always possible to ask why a certain state is harmful. Bashing me over the head with a bottle is not necessarily a bad thing (e.g., perhaps it is an action that will bring me to my senses so I now realize what a waste of time it is to be a football hooligan), but it certainly is if I want not to be unconscious, if the cuts stop me from being able to play football, and the headache stops me from reading. D. Z. Phillips and H.O. Mounce make a similar observation in regard to injury in their paper 'On Morality's Having a Point'. Is injury necessarily a bad thing? As they note, philosophers such as Philippa Foot argue as though this is clearly the case (Phillips and Mounce, 'On Morality's Having a Point', p. 315-16), but this is a difficult claim to make stick. Injury's being bad depends, as has been argued here, on what one either is or would be getting on with. Thus the thorn in the flesh of St. Paul is an injury, but it is not necessarily a bad thing.

....These views of personal injury or physical harm cannot be cashed in terms of what all men want. On the contrary, it is the specific needs

concerned, namely, dedication to enquiry and dedication to God, which determine what is to constitute goodness and badness.... (Phillips and Mounce, 'On Morality's Having a Point', p. 317)

It all depends on what one wants or would have been wanting. Harm will not do as the kind of concept to which one can refer in the hope that it will provide some absolute foundation for a need. I am more liable to give *x* his paintbrush not because the type of need involved is different from a decorator's, but because I understand that *x* will be pained, and this is not something, as it happens, I would wish. (It is interesting to note that Wiggins' own consideration of apparent relativities of need (cf., p.11-14), which grates against his absolutist picture, is left to twist in the wind in an unsatisfactory fashion.)

Although I would be prepared to say that avoiding harm is a *reason-terminating* locution (cf., Abelson on this in 4.3, below), or one that can successfully be reduced to a *desirability characterisation*, it is not the case that being such a locution carries with it the extra baggage of being absolute. Doing *x* because *it* I say I enjoy it does not make my needing *x* absolute, although the enjoyment may be *reason-terminating* in terms of explaining my need to do *x*. *Reason-terminators* are the end of the line in terms of explanation, but there is not a type of 'need' explanation that simply is self-justifying, full stop, in the face of any enquiry. All claims of need must be characterised in terms of what one wants something for.

It is indeed a mistake to view needs absolutely. Further, one will not get very far if one wishes to unpack the concept of flourishing through the consideration of needs. As now ought to be apparent, needing turns on wanting, and it turns on wanting because what one is pursuing, what one is focussing, dictates what one needs. Therefore, at least one path has now been closed off as a possible route. A great deal of interest lies in the concept of wanting, and it will turn out that it is along this route that one need search to arrive at a clearer elucidation of flourishing. This route, of course, will not be without its pitfalls, for the flexibility involved in wanting, at least as far as human animals are concerned, makes this a difficult concept to get tangible hold of.

4.3) Wanting

Having argued that talk of needing requires an elucidation of the concept of wanting, it is now time to turn our attention in that direction. Anyone considering needs and wanting is scratching the perimeters of the study of action. Any complete analysis of needs and wanting demands an extensive and coherent view of the mind and of action, which is well beyond the scope of this thesis. What I shall try to do in

this section is provide only a skeleton upon which to build a preliminary understanding of the concept of wanting. This will enable us to do two things: first provide an adequate explanation of needs in terms of wanting, and, second, supply the origins of a coherent story of the psychology of wanting.

In dealing with a concept such as wanting I will be considering some views that have already been knocked about. Beginning at such a specific level avoids the tendency to leap into abstract considerations that often seem to have little connection with the reality of the task at hand. What is needed is a definition so that one can talk intelligibly about wanting in a way that accentuates how it is a different concept from needing, but stresses how it is a foundation for it.

In an article entitled 'Wanting', T. F. Daveney defends the idea that all statements providing reasons for one's acting are preceded by some statement of the "I want..." variety. In other words, any time one demands of another an answer to the query, "Why did you do that?", there will have to occur at some point in the response an "I wanted to..." (Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 135). One must discover the sense in such a response. Daveney examines the various ways that wanting may be used in these kind of responses. He begins the discussion with a refutation of the 'Feeling' theory of wanting: a theory built on the idea that wanting can only be viewed as a product of some kind of feeling. First, such a picture is based on a confusion between wanting and the objects of wanting. I may have a feeling about some entity or object, but the feeling is quite different from wanting it. There are also clear cases when one wants something and no feeling is involved (e.g., I want to open the door to let in my mother; but I do not necessarily have any feeling about opening the door), or one might have a feeling that coincides with wanting, but it does not correlate with the object one is after. For example, I may feel 'butterflies' in my stomach, a great sense of anticipation as I guide a large fish into my net while angling one day. I also want to get the fish in my net. The feeling, however, has no clear connection with my wanting the fish in the net. Further, if one *does* want to insist that wanting is necessarily connected with feeling it is hard to avoid the regress that results, i.e., if one is wanting something as the result of a feeling, then one has to decide whether one wants the feeling, which, in turn, could only be based on another higher order feeling, and so on. Where would such a chain end, and what story could be provided to explain the genesis of such a chain of feeling and wanting? There is little point in belabouring the issue here since Daveney covers it more than adequately (Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 136-7).⁵

⁵ It is also worthwhile to consider Gilbert Ryle's criticism of the 'Feeling' theory of wanting, a criticism with which Daveney clearly has great sympathy (cf., Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 84-90). For an example of the kind of view Daveney wishes to refute, Baier's discussion of wanting in *The Moral Point of View* provides a good

Daveney seeks to dispel a myth about one problematic view of wanting and he does so by describing how wanting occurs, namely in two kinds of ways. A person wants *inclinational* and *intentionally*. The language can be a bit confusing, and I will refer to some problems about this later, but his overall intention is on the right track. The question or paradox he is seeking to uproot is that if one stipulates that one does not do anything one does not want to do, then there is some difficulty in discussing those cases where one does things that, on the face of it, one does *not* want to do. He presents the paradox in the following way:

....Now saying I always do what I want to do sounds like saying I always do as I please, or I always do as I like....The problem, I consider, is to show that in some sense we always do what we want to do, while at the same time to deny we always do as we please.
(Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 139)

This is a difficult paradox if one sees wanting as some sort of event in a causal chain. In order to undercut such a view and thereby undercut the paradox, Daveney points out that wanting is of two different types, neither of which can be construed as an event. The first kind of wanting is the most straightforward and is labelled *inclinational*. *Inclinational* wanting is of the sort that does not involve any sense of being compelled. In other words, it is wanting under the rubric of free choice, e.g., I want some ice cream, I want to go to school, I want to play golf. There can be, in this type of wanting, ingredients, some of which I do not like or want, but in this case these are considered secondary to what I want; they are the contingent things I must put up with in order to obtain what I want (Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 139-40). But how is this kind of wanting different from those who have a causal picture in mind? It is different in that the things or activities wanted, i.e., the ice cream, the hand-made putter, the game of squash etc., do not serve as signals or triggers to some internal switchboard that then causes me now to want or have a yearning for the object. To want *inclinational* is merely to provide a story about my disposition of wanting; it does not provide any mechanical picture about why I might want the thing in question. In fact, by Daveney's account, there is no mechanical picture to provide. My disposition to want *inclinational* is that of wanting without being in any way compelled. It is similar to how I would describe my disposition toward things I have little difficulty in finding enjoyment in, i.e., my hobbies, food, wine, etc.

What Daveney's view rules out is the possibility of discussing wanting in a way disconnected from the entity wanted. In other words, one cannot want absolutely, i.e., in the sense that one cannot sensibly say "I want..." without wanting something

example (Baier, *The Moral Point of View*, p. 114-5).

for some purpose. More will be said on this later. I mention it now only to point out another unfortunate outcome of the mechanical view, namely one could, with such a view, logically talk about wanting without having any particular object or activity in mind. The inability of the mechanical view to provide the tools or the means to deny such a possibility is, to my mind, indicative of a weakness.

The second kind of wanting is not so straightforward. In this case one must consider something one does, but would not choose to do. In this case Daveney suggests that "to want to" is still an appropriate description, but now want means something slightly different. Consider an example by way of illustration. If I abhor butter beans but am served them, as is my three-year old daughter, I may well say "Mmmm, well, just what I wanted, butter beans." Eliminating one tone of this sentence that would be heavily flavoured with sarcasm, imagine that I say this with gusto. Is 'wanted' appropriate here? Daveney maintains it is so. I have a duty to eat butter beans because I am continually imploring my daughter to eat what is given her without making a fuss, therefore I ought to do the same despite my past experiences of eating butter beans. (She, of course, may well end up liking butter beans, thus there is a further reason for masking my prejudice). My use of want in reference to butter beans is '*intentional*' as opposed to '*inclinational*'. "...I conclude the word 'want' in this use means 'intend' simpliciter, because saying "Mr. X wants..." seems merely to be giving Mr. X's aim or intention, and the matter of whether he acted from inclination is left open...." (Daveney, 'Wanting', p.141).

Daveney points out that further investigation may well help in uncovering which sense I am employing. Do I eat butter beans with gusto and demand seconds, or do I eat a few and unobtrusively push the remainder under a lettuce leaf on the side of a plate? All sorts of things that happen to the butter beans in conjunction with my interaction with them provide clues. It is important to note that whether I really like butter beans in an inclinational way versus an intentional one may well not be revealed at one meal, nor, perhaps, at several. I may eat butter beans for years before finally revealing, when the children are at last out of the house, that my wanting them was merely *intentional*, not *inclinational*. ("Well, now that the children are away to university, let's not have those again.")

The result of this two-sided definition provides the solution to the paradoxical assertion that though I only do what I want, I do not necessarily do as I please.

....Now in saying "He wants..." we may mean he aims at from choice. But this need not be the case; he may be doing what he utterly dislikes. Nevertheless, "He wants..." can still explain his action because in its broader sense it means 'intend' simply. And if we restrict ourselves to the notion of voluntary action, it is analytic that an action has intention. In other words, "Every action I do, I must want

to do" is a logical truth, because part of what we mean by action (in this use) is that we intend it. On the other hand, it is manifestly false that in everything I do, I follow my inclinations. (Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 143)

This kind of solution is clear enough, and the passage speaks for itself.

Implicitly, the article is aimed at those who would contest the claim that people do what they want. The reason for such contesting is that critics often believe that wanting occurs as an event in a causal chain. Using mechanical, causal language, the case of one's acting because of some obligation in order to accomplish something for which one has extreme distaste (my eating the butter beans for example), one might assert that clearly I do not *want* to eat butter beans; my saying I want to is a mask to fool my daughter; the real apparatus at work is a rational principle that has motivating power that causes me to control what I *inclinationaly* want (namely, to heave the butter beans into the nearest dustbin). In such a model there are times when what one wants pulls one way and duties or responsibilities another. Now, would someone holding such a view find much merit in Daveney's descriptions? The answer is no, but the reason for the answer's being no does not lie in a confusion about Daveney's description of the two ways people want or intend, but in one's supposing that a certain kind of mechanical model needs to be the paradigm for all answers, exactly the sort of paradigm that Daveney explicitly denies to exist. In other words, the reason there can be no resolution between these positions lies at a deeper level.

For the critic of Daveney the difficult question has been avoided or moved to a different place. The critic will, for example, say: it is true that I can describe myself as wanting to do something distasteful, but this is only because the definition of want has been sufficiently broadened to accommodate such actions. He will not be satisfied until Daveney answers the following question: how does one *decide* to intend this rather than that?

Much is to be made of this distinction: Daveney says I *intentionally* want butter beans but *inclinationaly* want trifle. Why can this distinction not be reduced instead to a description of the following kind, i.e., I *inclinationaly* do not want my daughter to make a fuss, so I will choke down butter beans (the lesser of two evils), just as I *inclinationaly* want trifle.⁶ Now Daveney can use this reduction to prove his point. I *do* want butter beans instrumentally (as a way of leading my daughter to eat hers).

⁶ It could be suggested that this is not a fair reduction, i.e., it is not just that I do not want my daughter to make a fuss, but that I have a duty as a parent to raise her so that she will, in general, be polite, of which good manners at table is one manifestation. Thus what is motivating me is not such a simple situation as I have described here. This response, however, is open to the obvious counter-claim that I will not even wish to teach my daughter politeness if I do not want her to be polite. *Inclinal* wanting is still at the heart of the description of the situation.

Daveney remarks that "...one can say that where what is wanted is some instrument for achieving some further end, the sense of 'want' which may explain the agent's action is always of the "intentional" kind, and never "inclinalional"...." (Daveney, 'Wanting', p. 142). I think this response makes good sense if it is construed in the following way. What I want "inclinalionally" is for my daughter to behave well at the table. In order to accomplish what I want I have to accept that there will be certain means that, under other circumstances, I would avoid. This does not mean, however, that under these circumstances I do not want them, but that they are what I must do to get what I want. In order to be able to play football well, one has to run and train. One may dislike the running and training, but they are the means to playing. One wants to run and train "intentionally", that is, in order to do what one "inclinalionally" wants.

F.C.T. Moore puts the distinction rather more clearly in his book, *The Psychological Basis of Morality*. He also believes that one does not do anything one does not want to do. He points out, however, that "...if *a* desires (*p*&*q*&*r*), we cannot infer that (*a* desires *p*) and (*a* desires *q*) and (*a* desires *r*)...." (Moore, *The Psychological Basis of Wanting*, p. 21). It is often the case that what one wants in the "inclinalional" sense (Daveney's and *not* Moore's terminology) will carry with it other components one does not want "inclinalionally".

....[T]he proposition(s) describing the state of affairs which he takes himself to be bringing about must be included in or must include the set of propositions which specify a state of affairs which he wants, even though the proposition(s) describing the state of affairs which he takes himself to be bringing about may not occur essentially in the in the specification of the object of that desire,...

(Moore, *The Psychological Basis of Morality*, p. 22)

How does one identify the difference? It can come out in a variety of ways. Things that are wanted "intentionally" become obvious because they are usually only sought within specific circumstances. I only have my teeth drilled when I have cavities. If I sought out more instances to have this done another would be justified in thinking my wanting it done was "inclinalional". So it is true, only superficially, that what I want can be determined by what I am doing under a particular description, but it is also true that this does not necessarily mean that what I am doing can be reduced to wanting only "inclinalionally".

This seems to me a reasonable picture. It allows that wanting is inclinalional without denying that one always does what one wants. Not all that one does is the result of inclination; a good deal is the result of intention, that is doing particular things in order to get, ultimately, what one "inclinalionally" wants. This account of

wanting is quite different from what the causalist had been looking for. His frustration would be that an account such as Abelson's is non-explanatory. If wanting is what one is doing, then the circularity is obvious. There is, however, a worthwhile distinction being provided through the accounts of Abelson and Moore, and that is: one can distinguish between what people want inclinationally and what they intend, which is what they also want and need to have to get what they inclinationally want.

In a slightly more recent article, Raziel Abelson sets out to explain why the psychological concepts of reasons and motives cannot function as causally explanatory concepts of action. This discussion leads Abelson to consider whether wanting, enjoying, and liking lack explanatory power also. His outlook is useful, especially his consideration of *reason terminators*, and this will be considered more closely in a moment.

Abelson wishes to reject the notion introduced by Kurt Baier in Chapter Four of *The Moral Point of View*, namely that of "self-regarding" reasons. Such reasons are sufficient in providing a reason for action, so the claim goes, because no further characterisation can be provided that would make sense of why I might pursue the action. Enjoying is a clear example, i.e., if I am asked why I eat poached salmon and I reply that I enjoy it, there is no further explanation I need give that will provide a more adequate reason for my eating the salmon. Abelson rejects this picture because if I claim to do *x* *because* I enjoy it, like it, want to do it, etc., and I see these reasons as causes for the action *x*, I am engaged in an over-determined picture of action. Abelson refers by way of example to a Mr. Jones who, during a bridge game, kicks his wife on the shin.

On the causal theory of psychological explanation, Mr. Jones would have explained his action by identifying the psychic stimulus to which his action was a necessary response....we would be obliged to admit that Mr. Jones could not have refrained from kicking his wife, since he was the helpless victim of an irresistible psychic force,...

(Abelson, "Because I Wanted To", p. 549)

This suggests that enjoyment is a kind of psychic push; a force one cannot resist. For a variety of reasons this view is quite wrong, not the least of which is that moral judgement would be highly problematic (Abelson, "Because I Want To", p. 548-9).

Since "self-regarding reasons" present an over-determined picture, Abelson seeks to find an alternative that avoids this yet preserves the connection that would seem to exist between liking or wanting and doing. If enjoying, wanting, etc. do not function as reasons in the causal 'push' sense suggested above, they are nonetheless "...intimately related to reasons...." (Abelson, "Because I Want To", p. 550).

Abelson, following Nowell-Smith and Melden, suggests that to say "I want" or "I enjoy" is to stop the discussion, to stop the line of questioning one may be following to get to the foundation of the reasons for my acting in one way rather than another. "I want" does not provide the reason or the cause, but it indicates that there is nothing else I can answer that will make clearer sense of why I am doing this rather than that. In other words, there is no other intention in the action. I can swing a golf club to loosen up my back before playing, or to practise the shot I plan to be hitting, or because I enjoy swinging a club (e.g., think of Bob Hope's swinging a golf club on stage at his performances). What 'enjoying' does in this case is clarify that there is nothing else to be said about the action; it is done for its enjoyment. Abelson therefore concludes that, "'Because I want to' (or like to, desire to, etc.) may then be said to function as *reason terminating* locutions. They indicate, in various ways, that there is no point to further discussion,..." (Abelson, "'Because I Want To'", p. 550). Essentially, one's explanation of an action can go no further than this.

I would like to employ this notion of a reason terminator, for I think Abelson's fundamental point is correct. There is one distinction I must note, and that is that although 'like', 'enjoy', etc. are *reason terminating*, I do not believe that "Because I want to" without *any* characterisation could be satisfactory. Let me explain briefly why I make this distinction. Anscombe notes: "...To say 'I *merely* want this' without any characterisation is to deprive the word of sense...." (Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 71). Anytime a person claims to want or asks for something I am free to ask "What for?" and it is reasonable to expect an answer. The *answer* may be a *reason terminator*, but "I want" is not, or, in other words, what is wanted combined with some description of what one wants it for may be *reason terminating*, but to speak of wanting without this further characterisation is to use the word in a way that lacks sense. This is not to say one cannot use 'want' alone as a *reason terminator* ever. Many times it simply is obvious what the 'what for' is.

All kinds of examples make this clear. If I decide to play an entire round of golf while holding an egg in one hand, my saying I want to do it while insisting that there is no further characterisation (no 'what for') is to make a claim without sense. *Why* do I want to do it? If I refuse to provide any reason for playing and holding the egg other than wanting to do it, and further it is obvious from how I hold the egg that I am not getting any sort of comfort or other use for it, as Anscombe notes, "...It is likely that the other [the questioner] will then perceive that a philosophical example is all that is in question, and will pursue the matter no further...." (Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 70). Cases in which "I want" would tell a sufficient story are generally those in which the context makes the 'what for' obvious. The upshot of this, and my point of departure from Abelson, concerns the notion that wanting is, like needing, reliant on a

further notion, namely a characterisation, a 'what for'. The reason Abelson too quickly falls into misdiagnosing wanting as a *reason terminator* is because, despite his best attempts to avoid doing so, he cannot help falling into talking as though wanting operates as enjoying does.

I believe that Anscombe is right about this, but it must be remarked that Alan White would have little sympathy for this position. When he sets out the distinctions between needing and wanting he claims the latter, as opposed to the former, "...carries no necessary reference to an end-state in virtue of which something is wanted....Someone can want to V either for some reason or just because he wants to V;..." (White, *Modal Thinking*, p. 110). White is led to conclude, therefore, that:

....To say that one wants to V is, in certain circumstances, to explain one's actions; but to say that one needs to V is, in comparable circumstances, to try to justify them....
(White, *Modal Thinking*, p. 110)

It does seem true to say, according to the discussion thus far, that wanting can explain an action when connected with a *desirability characterisation*, but it does not seem plausible that wanting without any characterisation, without any 'for x' could explain anything (cf., Anscombe regarding wanting a pin, *Intention*, p. 71).

In certain cases, as in this egg example, the 'what for' has to be known in order to make some sense of why it is the individual wants it. There are, however, a variety of responses in this type of situation that may not satisfy the questioner but are, nonetheless, satisfactory characterisations. If I respond finally that I *like* to carry this egg (again assuming this is an accurate reporting) the questioner may fail to find this satisfying, but it is legitimate and it does provide the 'what for'. (The questioner's dissatisfaction can only be cashed out in terms of another question, namely "What do you like that for?" which is really a question about why one likes this particular thing rather than that. This is a different kind of question.) To say "I like" is not simply to say I want to, but to say why I am wanting to. This leads to what might, at first sight, appear to be another type of wanting report. If I say I want to be the world's best speller, or the fastest man over the high hurdles, or the most accurate sharpshooter, it is tempting to say that I can want such things without justification. This is not an accurate appraisal of the situation because what is wanted still needs filling out in terms of 'what for'. Even a minimal statement such as "I would *like to be* the world's best speller" does this.

Reason terminators conclude discussion without one's having to claim that one has uncovered a reason for action. At the same time they acknowledge that there is no further line of questioning. Abelson points out that although *reason terminators* may

not provide reasons, they are helpful in another way, namely they provide a view about character. Essentially he maintains that one may learn a great deal about another through his responses to 'why' questions. If, upon finishing a bottle of wine, I talk of the bouquet, the nose, the fullness of the fruit, and suggest that these are the things I go for in wanting wine, people can begin to learn something about my attitude to wine. They learn more watching for a pattern of behaviour and response over time. "...Reason-terminating locutions can play an explanatory role, although they provide neither causes nor reasons for action, by revealing features of one's character that makes the action more predictable...." (Abelson, "'Because I Want To'", p. 551). (Ryle also seems to support this idea when he refers to his Aristotelianism on page 108 of *The Concept of Mind*).

Let me shift the discussion slightly to work toward a workable definition of wanting, one that keeps this concept separate from these other concepts with which it is often confused. Having pointed to some problems in past analysis of the concept I need to turn to a more affirmative approach. In order to do that I will begin with a target, namely Anscombe's definition of wanting. My purpose in doing this is not to suggest that I already have in mind that hers is the definition at which to arrive, but it does have two assets in its favour. First, it is simple (in the elegant sense, not in the idiotic one) and second, it has an immediate appeal; it seems more than faintly possible that it might be accurate. The idea here is to use Anscombe's definition to build on; as a concrete starting point it will keep the discussion from the limits of empty abstraction.

Anscombe suggests that one see wanting as a combination of two features: "...some kind of action or movement which (at least the agent supposes) is of use toward something, and the idea of that thing...." (Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 70). (The entire argument leading to this is to be found in section 36, p. 67-70.) So wanting, on this score, would seem to have something to do with inclining toward something (understood as moving toward) on the basis that someone has a particular view about the thing. This seems clear enough. If I want to fish it seems quite true to say that I incline to do it and I see it as a possibility. Wanting, however, is not wishing. As Gertrude Ezorsky points out, there are two important ways in which the differences between wanting and wishing can be brought out. First, "...I am in a privileged position with respect to my wishes. I can keep them from the public. But if I really want what I say I want - if I am serious - then I show it in my behavior...." Second, "...the objects of my wishes are unbounded...." (Ezorsky, 'Wishing Won't - But Wanting Will', p. 228). Both of these claims are based on the idea that it makes no sense to say I want something and then do nothing to get it,⁷ just as it makes no sense

⁷ 'Do nothing' is meant in its broadest sense, so it would be a mistake to discount my

to say I want something I cannot possibly have so that I could not even act in any way to get it. If I know that living gnomes (as opposed to the garden variety) do not exist, it hardly makes sense to say that I want them living in my garden. What could I possibly do to get them? How would I act? It is possible to have wants based on false beliefs, so one could rationally explain one's sitting out in a wooded glen late at night with a wee net as "I want a gnome and am lying in wait to catch one." The problem in this example, however, is not wishing, but my wanting something because I have incorrect knowledge, which is a different issue from that which I am dealing. So, wanting is bounded by the possible, and I must do something at some point to express my want, i.e., I have to try to get.

There is, however, another kind of case that might seem to fall uncomfortably in the middle and therefore present a problem for the notion that wanting has to do with trying to get. Is it possible to want *without* trying to get? I think not, and the reason this is the case is because one must carefully examine what it is one wants, as opposed to what one says one wants. An example from a Stephen Leacock story will do well as an illustration. Five middle-aged gentleman get together one evening, and in the course of the conversation it becomes apparent that they are all very keen fishermen and are dying to get out for a day of wetting the lines. They want to fish.

....Jones said he had been hoping that some of the boys would get up to a fishing party. It was apparently the one kind of pleasure that he really cared for. For myself I was delighted to get in with a crowd of regular fishermen like these four, especially as I hadn't been out fishing for nearly ten years, though fishing is a thing I am passionately fond of. I know no pleasure in life like the sensation of getting a four-pound bass on the hook....But, as I say, I hadn't been out for ten years. Oh yes, I live right beside the water every summer, and yes, certainly - I am saying so - I am passionately fond of fishing, but still somehow I hadn't been *out*....Yet I must say I was surprised to find that so keen a sport as Jones hadn't been out - so it presently appeared - for eight years....

(Leacock, 'How Five Men Went Fishing', p. 170-171)

The elaborate planning for the hire of a boat, the early rising, the decision to fish despite the weather conditions, etc., is all founded on their wanting to fish. The arrival of morning, coming as it usually does, on the early side, leads the protagonist quickly to observe that, "...[e]ven without getting out of bed, I could see from the window that it was no day for fishing. No, not raining exactly....but [it] was one of

thinking about how to get x . Thinking about is one aspect of doing something about just as physically moving toward something is another aspect. In connection with wanting my thinking concerns ways of getting, while in wishing my thinking cannot be concerned with this.

those peculiar days - I don't mean *wind* - there was no wind, but a sort of feeling in the air...that it was a perfectly rotten day for going out...." (Leacock, 'How Five Men Went Fishing', p. 176-177). Anyone would be quite right to be suspicious of any claim made by these gentlemen that fishing is something they want to do. Or can one explain this by suggesting this as an example of wanting without trying to get? This is not at all the case, because what needs unpacking in a more careful way is what is wanted. Something is. What these gentlemen want, what they are inclining toward, could be a variety of things. Wanting to plan, wanting to dream about fishing, wanting to act the part of a fisherman while in one's club; all these are possible things that are wanted. *Saying* that I want to fish does not necessarily mean I want *to fish*, since the saying alone may instigate a series of situations I *do* want, these having little to do with fishing. Wanting has to be a trying to get, although people's reports of what they want may not accurately convey what it is they are trying to get.

In order to want something is it necessary to be able to choose? It seems relatively straightforward that if I have a dander into town and purchase an ice cream on the way one would be safe in asserting that I wanted an ice cream. Is the reason this would be a safe assertion because I had an unhindered choice **and** because is no element of externally forced compunction about my buying? Does my wanting necessarily involve choice? It is not clear that this is so. There are cases where I may decide to get an ice cream and carry on some kind of monologue of the sort that runs, "Do I want this, or do I really want to save fifty pence so I can put it toward the purchase of that brilliant new record by the Proclaimers?" (let's say). Here, I have alternatives and some might be led to suggest that, on the basis of this model, it is the having an alternative that is essential to wanting. I do not think it is the existence of alternatives that does the work here, but let us leave this example for a moment and consider a slightly simpler one. I could purchase an ice cream because I want one with *no* consideration of alternatives because, practically, there are none. This seems to be part of what is at work when one considers (in deference to twentieth century material consumption) 'impulse' buying. The "I want *x*" and resultant buying of *x* may not operate in a world of alternatives at all. On this picture, I see something that I want and I buy it. Let me unpack this situation and then return to the former.

I am having my dander about town when I spy the ice cream shoppe. I nip in, purchase and eat one ice cream. Where and how does it make sense to speak of wanting in this? To make sense of wanting one needs first to speak of dispositions, and my position here will reflect what I take to be Ryle's on these matters. There are a number of inclinations at work here. I am disposed to dandering, which means, I want to walk slowly through town taking in the sights with no particular aim in mind while, at the same time, keeping my mind open to various interesting possibilities that

may arise during the walk. This is a disposition; I tend to do it when offered the opportunity or when circumstances fall into place I find myself seizing the opportunities to have such walks. One must remember that a disposition, "...is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state...when a particular condition is realized..." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 43).⁸ I am also disposed to buying things if they strike my fancy, if they are good value for money, or because they capture my interest. There are times when I am open to looking for good buys and having my interest captured, and times when I am not. (When I stride through town late to an appointment I am not open to having my interest captured.) I also have a general disposition for sweet things; I am more open than not to having them capture my interest.

Now it is at this dispositional level where confusion often enters the picture. It is tempting to ask, "What caused me to have the disposition *now*?" This is a confused question because it does not capture what dispositions are and how they work. Wanting things that are sweet, that is having a disposition that cashes itself out through my inclining toward things sweet, which is how one sense of wanting manifests itself, is, in a sense, there all the time. People who have a sweet-tooth have a penchant for things sweet, though it is the case that they do not always pay attention to this penchant. The penchant is expressed in their thinking about a quick stop at the confectioners, in their longing looks at cakes and tarts, in their planning their route to take them by the sweet shoppe, and in their enjoying those occasions when they eat sweets. To ask what causes them to have a sweet at this time is to mislead, for it leaves out the story of the disposition. What one can ask is why can even the most stalwart sweet-eater sometimes *not* take a cream bun while at other times be unable to refuse the offer? Why does he act (which is what having a disposition amounts to) at this time but not at another?

A story must be provided that explains how, if people are bundles of dispositions, it turns out that one acts from a particular disposition while at another time one acts from another. One view seems plausible, but it is very awkward. It cannot be that one pays attention to one disposition rather than another, for then one would have to provide a story about why one would pay attention to disposition *x* rather than disposition *y*. More accurately one would want to say, plausibly, that *paying attention* to my disposition to play golf amounts to playing golf. Individuals are conglomerations of dispositions, the range of these dispositions varying significantly (e.g., consider the difference in the range of dispositions that might be found in a single-minded zealot contrasted with that of the 'yah yuppie'). There are myriad

⁸ For further elaboration of the notion of dispositions, especially concerning actions that entail a mixture of dispositions, cf., Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 138-142.

'causes' behind having one disposition (acting one way) rather than another. (Causes is used in the inverted commas sense since I am not really dealing with causes in a the mechanical sense at all. As Ryle points out, "...to explain an action as done from a specified motive or inclination is not to describe that action as an effect of a specified cause...." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 113).) So how then does one account for people's choice of action? Ryle distinguishes between reasons for acting (which are dispositions) from causes of actions (which are the particular dispositions people are expressing at a particular moment) in the following way:

But the general fact that a person is disposed to act in such and such ways in such and such circumstances does not by itself account for his doing a particular thing at a particular moment; any more than the fact that the glass was brittle accounts for its fracture at 10 p.m. As the impact of the stone at 10 p.m. caused the glass to break, so some antecedent of an action causes or occasions the agent to perform it when and where he does so.... (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 113)

Return to the example of the sweet-eater, the disposition is what inclines the sweet-eater to notice or pay attention more readily to sweets. What causes him to notice particular sweets is seeing them, being offered them, etc. How might he refuse them? He needs to have another disposition that dominates. In such a case the occasion of spying a sweet or being offered one will not lead him to act on this disposition. Instead, his disposition to lose weight has to be dominant, and what causes him to act on this disposition is his seeing the sweet as a thing that will contain many calories, which will make him heavier. He can be said, therefore, to view the sweet in a different way when in another disposition. This description of the situation parallels the first that was mentioned above, and it brings out two points worth underlining.

First, to talk of what causes one to act cannot make sense without first talking of dispositions. A chocolate bar offered to a child who has never seen anything like it will not be seized unless the child has developed a disposition for chocolate. (If it is seized, it is not because it is a *chocolate* bar, but because of the way it is presented, wrapped, looks, etc.) Second, talk of internal conflict requires talk of people's changing dispositions. Finally, when seen in this way, causes of actions are not very mysterious, for particular dispositions bring with them paying attention to particular signals, triggers, stimuli that are part of what it means to have the disposition. If I am buying (I am in a buying disposition), I pay attention to the hand outstretched in a particular way. I surrender some money to the cashier. If I am not in a buying disposition but am in a 'worrying-about-my-next-appointment' disposition while buying a paper from habit and see the hand outstretched, I may fail to pick up the

signal because I am not attuned to it. It is only when something occurs to shift my attention to the task at hand (perhaps an "Excuse me Sir, that is thirty p.") that I will pay what is asked.

There is another way in which one who insisted that choice was essential to wanting might press the case. It might appear that even in cases where one is not compelled and one has a single-track disposition there is always an alternative. Even though I want an ice cream I could also not want it or have it, but this response is to get the dispositional story incorrect. I either have an ice cream buying disposition *or* I do not. I am not tentatively having an ice cream buying disposition - that would be another disposition in itself. Choice is involved either when I act from having one disposition or another (e.g., do I hold my ground or run away?), or within a disposition there is a choice made available through being in that disposition (e.g., to be in a paying for the newspaper disposition makes the choice between paying for the *St. Andrews Citizen* with a twenty pence coin or two ten pence coins relevant). If I want to be fishing for a day it seems silly to say I choose between golf and a day's fishing. Similarly, though more absurdly, I may be cutting beans and putting them in a saucepan for cooking, but it seems silly to suggest that I have the choice of putting them in the saucepan or putting them up my nose.

Can I be ordered or forced to do what I want? Again, the being ordered or forced does not necessarily override wanting; it does not make my wanting to do something necessarily describable in different terms. If, for example, while being held hostage, I was ordered to drink water it could reasonably be the case that I wanted to drink the water also. Which description is more correct then: "I have to drink the water" or "I want to drink the water"? The most accurate would be something like: "I want to drink the water, but he would make me do it anyway". In this case, "my wanting" to drink is accurate if I carry on whether or not he tells me to stop. If I drink in order to avoid being cuffed, then it is not really the water I want. Is choice involved here? Again, not necessarily. I may be so thirsty that drinking is all I want and consider. Choice is not essential to wanting.

There seems little to change in Anscombe's definition. Wanting is moving toward or inclining toward something or some idea combined with one's knowledge or opinion that the thing or idea is practicable. What must be broadened, however, is the notion that one might incline toward things or ideas while not paying close attention to the fact that one was inclining toward those things. I will say, however, that it is generally the case that when what one wants but is not paying close attention to is pointed out it must be the case that the agent does still want what has been pointed out. If, for example, I want the good life for my daughter, and I enrol her in the latest scheme for hothouse children because I want her to have all the advantages, but then it

is pointed out that this particular 'advantage' would not lead to the good life for her, if I still want her to have the good life I must act accordingly. Wanting differs from needing in that what I incline toward creates a context in which needing now has a place. It is the wanting that creates the need. Until I incline one way or another I cannot need anything.

Having come this far it is now appropriate to shift to the most difficult of issues. If wanting works in this way, what is its relationship to flourishing, or, to put the matter slightly differently, can wanting be used as a concept through which to gain a clearer understanding of what flourishing, in general, means? First I must summarise briefly. I believe that the search for *eudaimonia* is the right search for ethics, and on that score flourishing is a concept worth exploring. If the aim of Aristotle in the *Ethica* is to provide an account of what one ought to aim for if one wishes to try to flourish, then I think it is worthwhile to consider the concept in itself rather than just relying on Aristotle's use of it. In other words, Aristotle has employed this concept on a practical level, but this and the next chapter ask a slightly different question about it: if flourishing is an apt metaphor within Aristotle's scheme, then is the use of it, taking into account how it functions as a concept, legitimate within that scheme? In this way these two chapters are examinations of a second order.

There is one important thread that has now been established and deserves mention. By the picture of Aristotle seen so far, he has a view of human nature that can be set out in the following way. Man is born with a set of capacities, some of which he may or may not choose to develop. What a man's needs are is not a 'set' in any objective sense (this is the kind of view I argued against in the last chapter) but they are the result of his construction and what, because of that construction, he contingently needs. This builds into Aristotle's view a certain amount of flexibility. What people need cannot be narrowly set out. But it also means that it is difficult to get round the notion that wanting demands careful investigation. The next task is to turn to wanting and to examine the role it plays in the function of flourishing. A promising account of how flourishing functions when considered in terms of wanting does present itself, but, as it turns out, it is a mere chimera.

CHAPTER FIVE
WANTING, NEEDS, AND FLOURISHING

5.1) The Contingency and Categories of Needing

There are two threads from the previous chapter that can be tied and, consequently, preface what is finally to be said about the relationship between wanting and *flourishing*. The issue to which attention will first be turned is how it is best to see the connection between needing and wanting. The second issue is that of the two fundamental ways to talk about needing.

It has already been argued that wanting sets the stage for needing. Now a scheme can be presented of just how this is the case. What needs to be brought out is a connection of the following sort. People want all manner of things. Their various actions are manifestations of this. One way to unpack this in terms of needing is to see that when one wants something one immediately seeks the apparatus or the path to obtain what one wants. This apparatus or path *is* the need that is created by what is wanted. This suggests that needs will never be fixed, for it will be the case that the apparatus or the paths have a degree of non-specificity to them. Contrast two views on this matter.

One, following Wiggins for example, might try to make a case for humans needing books. By this line of argument humans are built so that books fulfil something people are built to do, therefore people need the books. According to such an account, one's *awareness* of one's need for books is unimportant. (People are built with the ability to read, reading is a positive aspect of our being, or, to be Wigginsian, *not* being able to read would objectively lead to our being harmed; therefore people *need* to have books). This puts the story quite backward. What is actually occurring here can be unpacked in an entirely different and, I believe, more accurate way. Think about one of the reasons why people read. One of the things humans go in for is imagining or fantasizing (here again 'go in for' is being used metaphorically, i.e., there is not necessarily a designer who sees to it that humans 'go for' certain things, but it is true that people are better equipped for and enjoy doing some things rather than others: cf., p. 134-135, below). This leads people who want to imagine or fantasize to cast about for the means to do these things. At this point one can see an immediate contrast with Wiggins' approach. What he would want to say is that there is an objective set of conditions that must be filled in order for one to be successful as a human being, and such a set of conditions exists despite what any particular human being is up to. Thus, whether or not one wants to read, one needs books. Whatever merit this view has is limited, as will be pointed out later (cf., p. 128-129, below).

There is one immediate objection to which I will directly respond. In considering imagining or fantasizing, I am *not* suggesting that these (rather than books) are objective needs for all humans, that is that all human beings need to imagine or to fantasize and that, despite what other activities they may be up to, they would be positively harmed if imagining and fantasizing were not open to them, but rather that they are activities humans pursue at particular times. It makes no sense to speak of them *objectively* (e.g., fantasizing can be good if one is relaxing, but it is not so good if one is in the middle of an important examination). It is difficult to establish beyond a small and basic set of 'needs' what would count as an objectively good state-of-affairs for man. In other words, I am not denying Wiggins' claim that being able to read is an objective need, only to smuggle in another notion of objective need, albeit in a slightly vaguer form, by talking of imagining and fantasizing.

To get to the inadequacy of trying to pin down certain 'needs', consider more carefully the role fantasizing plays in human life. Day-dreaming is one means people have of doing this. If consideration is given to the historical development that might have occurred because of this imagining ability, one plausible story presents itself. As humans developed they began looking for ways to practise imagining. The telling of stories and listening to others' stories are two alternative practises that have served well. What people want is still basically the same, but the apparatus through which to practise it is continually widening. Such a search for alternative forms led to the need for storytellers, but this need is only a contingent one, dependent on the current state of the options available and what experience people want (e.g., sometimes day-dreaming will do, in which case I am not looking for a storyteller). Of course storytellers can be successful only part of the time; they have to be available, and one has to be willing to listen to the entire story. What if I am wanting just five or ten minutes of fantasy? Different background situations or constraints created a need for something else, namely books. (Of course books require that all kinds of other things be developed, and I am not suggesting that literary language came about only because people wanted to read a story for ten minutes at bedtime.) Needing things like books, plays, storytellers is contingent upon the options available. It is quite possible that other means by which to imagining could have developed or might still develop, so this is one type. (For example, it is not a matter of necessity that people now spend a great deal of time reading. Suppose that cinema had developed first.) The cause of the development of these various media, what some might be tempted to call a basic need, *is also contingent* and not, therefore, an objective need at all. Yes, imagining and fantasizing may lead to the development of film, but so also can the desire for information that is readily accessible.

What I am asserting is that what one defines as a need depends on what one happens to want at a particular time. Needs are contingent because what one wants is not necessarily narrowly fixed, nor is the means to fulfilment of what is wanted narrowly fixed. Thus, man's wanting means to fantasize led to the development of a variety from which he could choose. The particular choice one might make is contingent. Literature, as it has turned out, is one of the ways people have often used to fantasize, but there does not exist an objective need for literature. People who enjoy reading have this need of course, but that is because reading is what they want to do. Of course it is also true that most people, when introduced to the benefits of reading, will want to read. That reading has such wide appeal does not mean, however, that it ought to be seen in a separate, special category, or in the kind of category discussed immediately below. The point in terms of *flourishing* is this: it is not valuable to talk about objective needs people require in order to *flourish*.

Immediately a certain reassessment of this view of needs has to occur. The preceding discussion has not covered every instance in which one would talk about needs. There is another 'need' category that has to be delineated, and though it might appear that conceding this category will leave me open to the criticism that I am back-sliding from the concept of need developed thus far, this is true only at a superficial level. What of needs that are the result of our biological construction? Our need for vitamin C, E, food, and water seems different from needing books, umbrellas, and fishing rods. What is the nature of the difference between 'needing' books, for example, and 'needing' vitamin C? Consider the latter. The most obvious characteristic about it is that *one cannot hope to get along at all without it*, and *flourishing* would be out of the question if this vitamin and others were absent. I can have all the interesting projects in the world set out before me, but if I am lacking in vitamins, food, water, etc. there is *no* chance of my attending to those projects. I must, therefore, immediately grant that it makes good sense to say that, for example, a human needs vitamin C full-stop. One cannot get on without it whether or not one wants it. This type of need is the direct result of the way humans are built. To grant this much, however, is not to back-slide, for the way 'need' works when connected to such things is very different from the occasions for its use when *flourishing* is at issue. Such pressing biological needs have little to do with whether or not one will *flourish* (although they do have something to do with whether one will live). They connect only in that they are necessary if one is eventually to embark on a course that will lead to *flourishing*. To speak in terms of a simile, such needs are rather like having a ticket to board a cruise liner. Having the ticket is not what leads one to have fun on the cruise. The having fun or not depends entirely on what one does once one is on the boat. But one cannot get on the boat unless one has a ticket.

That supplying biological needs does not lead to *flourishing* can be brought out in a number of ways. Most obviously, having plenty of vitamin C, i.e., more than enough, does not mean I am going to *flourish* in terms of those aspects of my life that have some dependency on vitamin C. Similarly, although I need food, having an overabundance of food has no connection with *flourishing*. The point is simply this, one cannot get on to consider *flourishing* unless these background, biological minimum standards are first met. There simply is no point.

There are some curious differences between the use of 'need' in the two categories, and I believe there is a good deal here to explore, but for now consider only some of the differences that become apparent. Humans need a certain amount of warmth in order to survive. This observation could not necessarily support the assigning of a need of this very specific sort: Humans need warmth, therefore humans need foxfur coats. It is true that if I am cold, a foxfur coat will work to warm me, but this is a contingent matter. What I need is *whatever* will supply the warmth. It is important to bear this in mind, otherwise one would be led to expand the list of needs to wide and over-specific dimensions (e.g., to move from humans needing warmth, shelter, water, etc. to humans needing furs, two-story villas, imported mineral water). If the particular need is warmth, then the way warmth is obtained is immaterial as long as what is wanted is delivered in the end. It is not a coat, or a cardigan, or a coal fire that I need in this basic sense, but whatever will enable me to function. If, on the other hand, I claim to be cold and a sit in front of a coal fire will do nicely, or the feel of a cashmere jumper is just the thing, I am no longer simply focussing on my body's need for warmth, but on the production of a certain kind of warmth, and this is a different matter. Now I am not simply concerned with getting warm, but how I get warm. The need I may have is for warmth, but any claim I make of 'needing' it to be of a particular type (e.g., from fire, hot water, cashmere, etc.) is an equivocal use of 'needing'. It is easy enough to sort out the difference between straightforward and equivocal senses of 'need'; just withhold the particular sort of warmth that is wanted and see what happens. If I forego other types until I find what I want, it ought to be obvious that the way I am using 'need' is equivocal. If, on the other hand, I am driven to take whatever source of heat is available because of my incessant shivering and hypothermic behaviour, one then seems to be getting at a 'rawer' sense of need, one that, as in the vitamin C case, determines the possibility of *any* future activity.

The distinction between the two categories ought now to be clear, and it ought also to be clear that the latter category can do no work if one is talking about *flourishing*. The rawer items are simply the things one needs in order *then* to be able to get on to do the things that lead to *flourishing*. (I think Anscombe's noting that it is "hard to swallow" that a starving man might *flourish* (Anscombe, 'Modern Moral

Philosophy', p. 41) can now be sorted out. Of course it is hard to swallow, since, except in extraordinary cases, it is not *flourishing* that one is after, it is survival.) It must be acknowledged immediately that there are borderline cases between the two categories. Are other people (e.g., family, friends, civic community, etc.) a fundamental need as is vitamin C? Certainly the effectiveness of solitary confinement might suggest this is so. There seem to be a number of vitamins the exclusion of only one of which would not necessarily lead to death, but certainly would greatly limit successful functioning. One way to discern which needs belong to which categories would be to see whether the denial of some 'need' leads to impairment, and what sort of impairment it is.

In response to this dual categorisation it might be thought that there are two kinds of wanting that correspond to these two categories of needs. That is to say, one might want to say, mistakenly, that one wants the rawer needs absolutely; these are things a human wants full-stop and only the most cynical brain-washing would make a human not want these basic things despite the fact that he would need them. This is, I think, incorrect. People do not want absolutely in such a sense. Although it has just been suggested that there is a category of needs that is biologically 'basic' or 'raw', it is not the case that people will automatically want such needs. Confusion reigns because humans are all born wanting particular things, and there is a remarkable similarity to these things: all babies want food, attention from others, drink, etc. This fact would seem to suggest that certain wants are absolute.

Wanting, however, just like taste, develops. Does it make sense to ask if a newborn 'wants' breastmilk? Compare this with asking twelve-year old Mark if he wants a peanut butter sandwich. What has changed? A baby is hungry and drinks milk. As he gets older he wants rusks or rice cereal, then he wants peanut butter sandwiches, then fish and chips, then salad, etc. Over the course of the years how does his wanting to eat change? To put the matter another way: Does Mark want a peanut butter sandwich or want to satisfy his hunger? The latter seldom seems an accurate description. Why? I shall term needing to eat to satisfy hunger, and other similar kinds of needing, *primary*. This needing is primitive and basic; not terribly different from any animal's instinctual needs. My labelling such needing as *primary* is not to suggest (at least in the human case) that there is a mechanism of the primary sort at work here. I mean it only as a label of that which humans must pay attention to in order to survive. The distinction I wish to make between this and another kind of need can be brought out by considering the different circumstances surrounding my shivering reach for a blanket when I am on the verge of freezing to death and my having a hankering for a lie in a warm tub. Although one will say in both cases that one is cold and therefore 'needs' something to rid oneself of the cold, there seems a

remarkable difference between the two circumstances, and it is not simply one of degree. What happens to those things people need *primarily* is interesting: first because whether or not people act on them is a contingent matter, and this is very different from the way these needs work in other animals. Second, our attention to them never disappears, but it does get refocussed. Babies, for example, stop paying such close attention to fundamental needs as they grow older and learn to want other things, which entirely for the sake of clarity, I shall label *secondary*. Mark wants the peanut butter sandwich in a complex way, for his attention is not awakened by raw hunger, but rather he focusses on specific kinds of food (e.g., a peanut butter rather than a ham sandwich) because he is wanting something to eat. He has at his disposal alternatives. The craving for a peanut butter sandwich is *secondary* in this sense; the 'raw' need for food is so continually filled that he now comes to focus on the alternative enjoyable ways of eating. Hunger is not driving him so much as taste for this, that, or the other. This taste is a matter of pure contingency.

What is interesting about humans is that they stop paying attention to what they *primarily* need (most obviously when abundance or habituation enables us to do this), but humans are built so that under certain circumstances they can refocus their attention on those things again in different ways. If abundance gives way to barrenness, eating to stave off hunger is the issue; what one eats is generally less important. This is not the philosophically interesting case. What is of interest is a change of circumstances that would usually lead one to pay attention to one's 'raw' needs, something that is of this supposedly absolute nature, and which one chooses to disregard. Hunger strikers, martyrs of various sorts seem to present obvious cases. Conversely, it is not unknown for people to starve to death because the sustenance available is simply unpalatable to their tastes. This suggests that needs on which people are *primarily* focussed will not necessarily command more attention than what they need *secondarily*. Scott's and Amundsen's attitudes toward horse and dog meat for survival offer an interesting case in point if one wishes to consider a concrete example. This seems to support the idea that in any adult all wanting really is of a *secondary* nature because what one wants is contingent. I do not think that how one chooses between a peanut butter sandwich or one made of cheese and tomato is different from how one chooses between starving oneself for a cause or surrendering one's belief in the cause and eating. The 'stakes' may be higher, but that is all. The point is this, what I have labelled *primary* wanting does not function in any absolute sense: no one has wants that are absolute. Although it is true that there are things on which all humans initially focus, people are so constructed that these can become contingent as they grow older. Most people do not pay much attention to these *primary* needs, but if I am called to pay attention to them I see that it is a contingent

feature whether I later want them or not. There is nothing about their nature that makes them such that I will necessarily choose them.

Against this the following example might be pressed, again by those in favour of Wiggins' approach. Yes the hunger striker may forego his *primary* need, but in fact he would be objectively better off by having food. The answer to this is, at best, a highly equivocal 'yes'. Purely as a biological entity he is better off, but humans are not simply to be conceived of in this way. His being 'better off' depends on what it is he is after. A mountain-climber, oxygen starved and undergoing severe physiological stress at 20,000 feet, is not, objectively, badly off, especially if what he wishes to be doing is getting to the summit and there is nowhere he would rather be. To prop up the idea of objective needs on man's biology only captures part of what it is to be a man. Other animals do not have the choice to pursue one kind of life or other; humans do have such a choice - it is part of what being a human amounts to. There simply is no one objective state-of-affairs about which one can say: this is what a person *needs* to be aiming for.

An aside to this must be made. Sometimes my referring to *primary* needs may be reason terminating, and satisfactorily so, but it is far from true that it will always be so. If one asks why I want to eat and I reply it is because I am hungry, it is generally ridiculous to require further justification. (One does not, for example, ask of people who are hungry, "Well what is so bad about being hungry?"). One could, however, press the questioning in a different situation. It would not be unreasonable for one hunger striker to ask of another if hunger was enough of a reason to need to eat rather than carrying on not eating. Circumstances, therefore, are another essential ingredient in sorting out what counts as reason terminating and what not.

Needs, then, are contingent and talk of them must be connected with what one wants. This is even true of those that fall within the most fundamental category. It does make sense to ask an adult of sound mind why he wants vitamin C. Most will answer in an obvious and straightforward way, but there is nothing in the body's need of vitamin C that demands or makes it necessary that one should want vitamin C. Further, these basic, biological needs tell us little about what is needed if people are to *flourish*. They simply tell us what is required to function in a minimal way. Having discerned how to speak of needing, and having closed off that path as one possibility to which one might have looked to elucidate a concept of *flourishing*, it is now time to tackle the more difficult task. Can a consideration of wanting provide the means through which to develop a clearer view of *flourishing*?

5.2) *Flourishing*: Roses, Man, and Initial Considerations

The examination of wanting seems the proper route by which to consider the concept of *flourishing*. This will be the focus of the rest of this chapter. If one sees Aristotle's project along the lines I have presented, then a consideration of *flourishing* based on an examination of wanting should, in the end, be able to provide a fuller account that could fill out Aristotle's use of the concept. These two sections will take the following rough shape. First I shall unpack how to think about *flourishing*; how does the Aristotelian conception differ from other uses of the term? I will then try to focus on why, even when considered in an Aristotelian way, it is such an elusive metaphor. Having brought out these difficulties the task will be to search for a view of *flourishing* that avoids them and provides a story about the concept that is meaningful, useful, and consistent with Aristotle's overall view. The question the end of the chapter will resolve is whether this story is successful, i.e., provides one with a meaningful use of *flourishing*.

What do people mean when they use the term *flourish*? "To flourish" is variously defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as: "To blossom, thrive"; "To prosper, do well"; "display vigour in,...abound in"; "To be at the height of fame or excellence; to be in one's blossom or prime...." (*Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. IV, p. 348-9*). Apt as these definitions are in capturing the metaphorical meaning and use of the term, it seems a much easier concept to apply accurately to things such as plants than it is to humans. This does not necessarily mean that it is difficult to find instances of appropriate use when one is speaking of human examples, but that the specific criterion for its application is much 'fuzzier'. Why is this? The definitions provided above present a clue, and it has to do with the function of the term as it applies to different entities. The focus of the more specific definitions above tends to be on an object's being at its prime or acme. In order to describe an entity as being at such a point, it is essential that one have fairly specific criteria by which to measure such success. For example, when I imagine a rose's *flourishing*, the range of ways in which I can see it doing so is deemed to be fairly narrow. (I am here avoiding the question of whether my perception of the rose's *flourishing* is an accurate appraisal of whether the rose, objectively considered, is *flourishing*.) The point is this, in judging particular objects as *flourishing*, one focusses on how that object is in its prime. In a sense a specific target is established that one wishes the object will meet at some point (e.g., imagine preparing a dog for competing at *Crufts*). One then judges whether the object has reached that point by whether it has satisfied various criteria.

Human *flourishing* is different from this in a fundamental way, and the vaguer definitions offered above capture the way in which this project is different. To speak

of a rose as "blossoming", "abounding in" blossoms, "being in its bloom" is to register its being at its acme in a specific way. To speak of man as "thriving", "prospering", "doing well" tells one something different because one is no longer employing the kind of specific criteria which could register *an* acme. This kind of judgement is rather different. People tend to use the term 'flourish' in reference to things like roses in a way different from an Aristotelian description of a human life.

Perhaps an Austinian approach would yield helpful insight. Imagine the following statement, "Harold is flourishing" made as a simple statement of fact. What sense can one make of this? The first thing to notice is that describing Harold by the verb *flourish* distinguishes this word as a verb different from others that might appear to be similar. For example, I might also say, "Harold is moving." Although the descriptions operate in approximately the same way, there is a significant difference between them. I do not necessarily need to know anything else about Harold in order to describe him as moving, growing, shrinking, floating, etc. In fact, perceiving Harold as doing one of these things reveals to me something about Harold that I might not have known. Perception, then, can provide the full story about Harold within some context. As opposed to this, I could not simply perceive Harold as *flourishing* without knowing a good deal about his nature, what activities he goes in for. If someone tells me that Harold is *flourishing* I cannot immediately perceive that what is said about him is true. I might now be able to look at him and his activities to pick up clues that would fill in important contexts that would allow me to make a judgement. I need to have some story about the success of what he is doing and has done in order to make some judgement about *flourishing*. This requires more than immediate perception. To say that something is *flourishing* is to imply that one has a knowledge of what the thing is and what it is meant to be doing. One has to be able to provide some story about why the 'flourishing' description is an apt one. On the other hand, if Harold is simply moving, all I need do is point to his progress and describe what I see; his progress vindicates my judgement. Talk about *flourishing* has to have some connection with knowledge of the natures with which one is dealing.

Perhaps, in order to have a concrete starting-point, one could consider a preliminary definition of human *flourishing*. It can be argued that human *flourishing* consists in our doing what we are meant to do well. It also seems to be the case, if one builds into this definition an aspect that is reflective of human adaptability, that people are meant to pursue a variety of activities; that is to say there is a wide variety of things people can do well. Therefore, preliminarily speaking only, participating in a variety of the activities humans are meant to do, and doing these things well is what humans ought to be aiming for. (A clarifying condition must be spelled out. 'Meant to do' is a phrase with a metaphorical use suggestive of alternative interpretations.

One could say that man was meant to be a steward on this earth, which suggests that man's role be seen in a particular theological light, i.e., that God placed man on this earth and constructed him to fulfil a specific function. This is a stronger sense than that which I intend. 'Meant to do' must be construed as a contingent matter. Elephants are meant to walk, not play cricket. People are meant to calculate rationally but not move about by slithering on the ground.)

As has already been argued, the range of activities people are meant to do is not limited to those things only humans can do (cf., Chapter Three). Rather we are meant to pursue a variety of activities in a characteristically *human way*. The first contention might arise over the issue of variety (e.g., how many? how 'wide' a range? etc.). This, however, is not as significant as might seem if variety is seen in a reasonable light (i.e., enough breadth to allow one to develop significantly in a number of areas, while not so narrow that ill-health, for example, would leave one with little to do). Overspecialisation of any sort, it can effectively be argued, decreases one's ability to pursue a variety of activities well. This, of course, is not simply to say that exclusive pursuit of excellence in some vocation is going to lead away from *eudaimonia*. If such a pursuit leads one to lose sight of other important activities, then this would be so. There are a number of specialised careers that provide interesting cases: jockeying, olympic wrestling, boxing, or gymnastics. Consider specifically one vocation: ballet dancing. This brings with it certain rewards that could lead to *eudaimonia* (e.g., fulfilling artistic performances, fame, adequate income, travel, mingling with interesting people, many invitations to parties, etc.). Further, it could be the case that such rewards could offset any negative aspects of one's dancing career (e.g., stress, the drudgery of practise, arthritis in old age, stringent diet, etc.). In the life described here the interest in the career has not 'crowded out' the interest one has in participating in other worthwhile endeavours. Now, on the other hand, imagine one who claws her way to the top of the dancing world, using people, caring only for her own career, focussing entirely on her own needs as a dancer. This kind of specialisation will normally not lead to the *eudaimon* life. Parties are not much fun if one does not have friends, nor is fame necessarily enjoyable in itself. When one's career is over, what will one do with one's time other than massage aching joints? This is, admittedly, a bleak picture, but it is meant to point out an important contrast. Doing things well does not mean that some activities are to be pursued at the cost of other important activities. Most simply would not be fulfilled carrying through with one project to the exclusion of all else.

There are various reasons this might be the case, and it is important not to overemphasise the role of variety. One argument, set out by Mill in *On Liberty*, tends

to do just this, for he suggests that one ought to develop *all* one's capacities to the fullest.

He who lets the world,...choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgments to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision....Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.

(Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 994-5)

The picture here (stressed throughout Chapter Three of *On Liberty*) is that in order to be successful one needs to develop all of one's 'equipment' adequately, and what makes this especially true within Mill's view of things is the stress he places on the importance to us as humans of individuality. It is not only important that I know of particular truths, for example, but that I come to know of these truths myself. To do this requires that all my capacities be in full working order. To neglect *any* of these capacities is to leave oneself defective.

Now there are clearly advantages to developing a range of capacities, but it is not entirely obvious that one's having a range of capacities requires that one use them all fully to keep them 'in tune'. I am not sure that I really need to exercise my capacity, now long since atrophied, of solving calculus problems so as to prepare for some eventuality that might, in the future, require such operations. This picture presents capacities as a kind of protective wall, and all points of the wall require alert attention. Not only is this not the way most humans work, i.e., protecting themselves against all eventualities, it does not acknowledge the reality that the constraints of life require that I focus on some capacities and make them strong rather than weakly maintain them all. (It is a bit like asking an athlete to forego his rigorous squash training, and forego success in squash, in order to leave some time for marathon training just in case it turns out that he may want to run in one). The point here is simply that it makes sense to develop a range of capacities, but this does not suggest that one ought to keep all one's capacities in 'fighting trim' all of the time. The type of variety I am referring to is less wide than Mill suggests, but it acknowledges that one is better off generally developing a range of activities. Taking the role of circumstance into account in one's life, this would seem quite a prudent thing to do.

Is it *necessarily* true that someone who leads a life entirely focussed on one activity or an extremely narrow range of activities, such as a ballet dancer or one of the Desert

Fathers, e.g., St. Evagrius, will be unable to achieve *eudaimonia*? There do seem to be cases throughout history of people being singularly focussed or obsessed while, at the same time, living fulfilled lives. This, however, does not undermine the advice one would generally give, namely that people in general ought to develop a variety of talents, and this for two reasons. First, it is not necessarily obvious that one obsession often leads to a fulfilled life. It is extraordinarily difficult to say whether genius *a*, in pursuing physics to the exclusion of all else, is more fulfilled than he would have been if he had also developed a few hobbies. The apparently rather unhappy lives of various geniuses at least leaves some room to suggest this about lack of fulfilment. (Compare the life of Mozart with that of Einstein.) Second, that there might be exceptions simply points to the limits of what an ethical system of an Aristotelian type can do. It seems fair to say that people singularly focussed are different from most of the rest of us, and it also seems quite legitimate to say that there is not much else that can be said. When considering people who are either geniuses, extraordinarily eccentric, or unusually obsessed with certain activities, it is legitimate to say that the kind of guidance here provided may not necessarily be of much use. This does not refute the guidance, but underscores the difference between various people. These differences do not make advice about what one ought to pursue suspect, but they do suggest there are limits in regard to its applicability. (This situation creates problems, especially for schoolmasters or anyone else seeking to provide guidance, but a discussion of this will have to wait for the conclusion.)

Is it accurate to say while Reginald is on the golf course: "He certainly is flourishing today, playing a round at scratch. Overall, he has had a brilliant day. This morning he received a lucrative promotion. Goodness, that's prospering!"? (Notice how this sounds as though Reginald is a rose.) First, could *flourishing* be relative to a single activity? Aristotle's answer is clear enough (as has already been seen). Only the total life can be properly classified as *flourishing*. In other words, as *flourishing* is used as a description reflective of *eudaimonia*, the total life is what is being considered. It is worth pointing out that on this point common parlance does not necessarily reflect this Aristotelian use. When I claim that a rosebush is *flourishing* (that is, doing what it ought to be doing well, namely having buds bursting all over the place with lots of colour and aroma) it is clear that my description is intended more as a signal that the plant has reached a peak, and one ought to take notice. This is a different assessment from Aristotle's (which is more reserved). By his lights one has to wait until one's death and until one's children grow up before making the proper assessment (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Book I, x, xi). So flourishing not only assesses more than the activity, the assessment stretches over and beyond a lifetime.

[Happiness needs a complete life.] For life includes many reversals of fortune, good and bad, and the most prosperous person may fall into terrible disaster in old age, as the Trojan stories tell us about Priam; but if someone has suffered these sorts of misfortunes and comes to a terrible end, no one counts him happy.
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100a6-9)

....But it would also be absurd if the condition of descendants did not affect their ancestors at all or for any length of time....
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1100a 30-1)

Not only must one withhold definitive judgement until the life has been completed, but if one's life has been truly fulfilled the benefits will accrue to the offspring. One has to wait and see how *they* turn out. (For a fictional example, consider Hardy's frequent reference to the role of ancestors in determining the circumstances of Tess Durbeyfield's life.) To describe one as having *flourished* is to be making a comment about the array of activities in which one took part and about the quality of those activities over the span of a life. If an assessment of *flourishing* is apt, it is the *entire* life that is being considered, not just the life as ballet-dancer, golfer, or jockey.

Having unpacked how to think about flourishing, its problematic aspects now need attention. As has been argued, "...life for us must be a life organized, in some fashion, by practical reason, in which all functions are informed and infused by reason's organizing activity...." (Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature', p. 39). What humans are meant to *do*, then, is live rationally. What I wish now to focus on is tying together the relationship between what people do, what they want, and how they *flourish*, for this will lead us to see precisely why the concept of *flourishing* seems such a useful metaphor while at the same time it is most difficult to get hold of.

In the previous chapter the connection between doing and wanting was explored. A modicum of further analysis is now required. Doing and wanting provide reports that answer very different questions. Sometimes these reports will differ, though it is not necessarily the case that they always will. Examples can serve to tighten up this observation. Here is a series of activities that stresses *doing* reports versus *wanting* reports. *Doing*: swinging a niblick - *Wanting*: practising a golf swing; *Doing*: scanning the grass - *Wanting*: looking for a contact lens; *Doing*: hanging a towel over two chairs - *Wanting*: making a tent. (I could slightly redescribe these categories by rephrasing 'wanting' as 'wanting to do', but I am inclined to think that there is no significant difference between these two descriptions. If, as I walk across the room to flick the light, I stumble over the ottoman, it is true to say that what I am doing is stumbling, but it is also still true that I am wanting to flick the light and am still in the process of doing that, assuming that I get up from the floor and then flick the light. Thus I have opted for the more concise terminology.) As these cases ought to bring

out, wanting has something to do with what someone is doing under a particular description. The difficulty, also as these cases bring out, has to do with a third-person report or question concerning someone's doing and what that doer really is doing. I see my daughter hanging a towel over two chairs, and what she is doing, and what she wants to do, is make a tent. My observing that Reginald is wasting his time swinging a club in a very peculiar way (and certainly not in a way that will successfully propel a golf ball) is, to him, practise (although it might not be effective practise). Another possibility arises in that one may not provide a true report of what one wants ("Fiend! You were holding my jersey to stop me from scoring". "No, I was just using it to wipe the mud off my hand. Bad luck; sorry old bean".). It is not in principle, however, impossible to figure out what someone wants. That will usually come out eventually in one way or another.

One observation must immediately be noted. The use of wanting and doing in a question asked by a third party is not always reflective of the distinction of concern here. If I ask my daughter "What are you doing?" as she drapes towels over chair-backs, I am actually asking a more robust question, namely: "What do you doing *that for*?" What she is doing is clear up to a point; i.e., draping towels, but what is not clear is whether I am seeing what she is doing in a way that is specific enough, or, in other words, what she is intending. Questions about doing do not always require as specific answers as could be provided (e.g., my daughter's response that she is playing is often enough, though it might not be if she is playing at having tea with the good china).

The reason to distinguish between wanting and doing here is to point out that this distinction presents a pseudo-problem only to this examination. I can mistake what another intends, but I cannot get this wrong in the same kind of way when I consider *flourishing*. The difficulty does not lie in this distinction, because *flourishing* cannot be reduced to or considered in the same way as verbs such as 'swinging', 'practising', 'tent-building'. Ascriptions made with verbs of this type can be unpacked, sometimes entirely through observation, or through asking questions, or by fitting an activity within its surrounding context (e.g., I may ask a gentleman why he is swinging a golf club at dandelions, but if he is swinging the club out on the links, what he is doing is generally pretty well obvious). *Flourishing* cannot be so easily unpacked, but it is not the third person observational aspect that causes the difficulty. Nor is *flourishing* on a par with other more specific success verbs (e.g., coming first, finessing, scoring a century). These, like *flourishing*, report successes that are highly specific, because the contexts sharply define what counts as success. *Flourishing*, opposed to this, is a type of over-arching verb that assesses whether

some kind of success has been achieved, but the success does not refer to actions but to the totality of actions. This changes the nature of the assessment.

Return to examples for a moment. The distinction that may occur between, say, swinging a club oddly and practising a golf swing occurs because it is possible to misinterpret what another intends. He intends x , but I see y . So I cannot properly assess the matter until I know what is going on. Once I *do* know I can then carry on with the assessment. Intending cannot 'straighten out' one's assessment so easily when one talks of *flourishing*, which is why the analysis one uses to unpack what another intends in some specific action will not do when one is dealing with *flourishing*. Although people may want to *flourish*, they do not normally set out specifically to *flourish*. They set out to do specific things, swing golf clubs, erect tents, teach children, drink beer; and *flourishing* seems to have more to do with the assessment of how these things fit into a larger pattern.

This is not to suggest, and I lay great stress on this, that *flourishing* is something that happens as the mechanical result of doing a number of particular things, nor is it a quality that things have in addition to what they *prima facie* have. I could not, for example, write out a list of activities the pursuance of which would necessarily lead to *flourishing* as an effect of those causes. Nor is it the case, to provide an example in regard to the latter point, that the *flourishing* that describes a life as it is built around fishing is descriptive of something additional that occurs in that life over and above the fulfilment and fun one has while fishing. If one wants to say that the fishing life is the *flourishing* life, this is another way of saying that fishing *amounts to flourishing*.

Think of assessing one's life as a teacher as being 'worthwhile' or 'fulfilling'. To say that something is fulfilling is to assess the activity from a particular point of view. For example, to have learned to spell 'cat' can be useful (e.g., one can now pass tests that require the proper spelling of 'cat'), it can be fun (e.g., one gets great glee from writing 'cat' on the chalkboard), it can be fulfilling. These are assessments from slightly different points of view. Each assessment is evaluating a different aspect of the activity. Similarly, to assess whether one is *flourishing* is to consider one's activities from a particular point of view. It is not to look at some particular quality or ingredient, but to consider the qualities and ingredients of one's life as a whole from a certain position, namely from a position that takes in an overall pattern shaped around what one is generally seeking to accomplish, namely living a good life. (This point can be made another way if it is considered as parallel to Ryle's example of describing a bird as flying south or as migrating. "...Yet the process of migrating is not a different process from that of flying south,..." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 142). One can describe what the bird is doing in a variety of ways, but the bird is not doing

a variety of separate things. How one describes it reveals the aspects of the action on which one is focussing.) If the assessment of life in terms of *flourishing* is from a particular perspective, what is there to know and what ought to be known about that perspective? At what times does one assume this perspective, can one assume this perspective?

This is, I think, where the role of wanting takes on significance. What is now required is an examination of the connection between wanting things, activities, etc. and how those entities connect with wanting to *flourish*. As was remarked above, if one does not set out to *flourish*, but sets out to pursue specific activities, at what point and in what way does wanting to *flourish* enter the picture? This latter view clearly will be more complex, and it is also clear that wanting to *flourish* must work in a slightly different way from the way wanting does in other cases.

The description of 'over-arching' is essential to *flourishing*. One must first be pursuing a variety of individual activities before one can even hope to assess them from the perspective of *flourishing*. The problem lies in determining how one is able to judge from this perspective, or how one develops the tools to be able to judge. To refer back to teaching (without now being concerned with issues of fulfilment), I cannot begin to try to teach unless I have in mind a purpose. One has to know what the purpose of teaching is first to even begin to try to do it. The purpose provides the basis upon which one can assess one's success (e.g., are the students solving the problems correctly? pronouncing their "r's" properly?). One has to know what one is aiming at. One could not, for example, simply shop (which shop? what items?, etc.); one has to shop for something of a certain specifiable nature (e.g., a spanner, dog biscuits, tea towels, a birthday present). A picture of wanting to *flourish* will have to be analogously specific.

What needs to be worked out is what the picture is one has in mind when one aims at *flourishing*. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to provide a convincing picture of how this might occur. This attempt should make it clear that it is impossible to be able to form a coherent picture of what one is aiming at. First, however, what kind of case can be made for seeing *flourishing* as a concept with an unequivocal target?

5.3) *Flourishing* and Learning its Standards

Consider first the notion of fulfilment, which I take to mean something different from *flourishing*. I cannot accurately assess the fulfilment of teaching until after I have mastered at least some aspects of the art of teaching and have taught for a while. If I cannot wield a hockey stick and am absolutely hopeless on the pitch, my

assessment that hockey is unfulfilling is without any merit since my inability to see how it could be fulfilling is the result of *my not playing properly*. I am not *able* to be a good judge. It does, however, seem perfectly obvious that once I work at teaching or hockey, master some of the techniques, etc., I come to be able to say whether or not it is fulfilling. *How* do I 'come to be able to say'? What makes me an authority on what is and is not fulfilling? Somehow I have to be able to judge whether this activity or that is worth my time. This requires that I have given some separate consideration to this (i.e., do I want to be challenged, develop this skill, compete, enjoy myself, etc. in these particular ways?) How I am *able* to give separate consideration to such things? There is no way to gain this knowledge without having actually engaged in particular activities in which I would be challenged, compete, enjoy myself, etc. Engaging in the activity does not simply teach me about the practise; I learn other lessons. To run in a race is to learn about running and to learn about competing. The running and competing are not two different components of the event, but the way I am running is also to compete.

Establishing something as being fulfilling is, in the way I am using the term here, more specific than a judgement about *flourishing*. For something to be capable of being fulfilling, it first has to be the case that a human has a capacity to be fulfilled by a certain activity. This is simply the result of the way humans are built. In pursuing a particular activity properly, and focussing on the right aspects of the activity, one will find it fulfilling because one has the capability to find it so. This becomes more obvious if one considers an activity that would be unfulfilling, say standing in an empty room that has no windows for a long period of time. Few would seek to be in such a state-of-affairs because there would be nothing to do. Humans are not built to get much out of standing in such a way. Deciding that an activity is fulfilling can be done without having a look at one's entire life. I can be fulfilled fishing and only by fishing without making the next judgement, namely whether there is something else I might do. I can be fulfilled one day but not the next. I believe that this kind of assessment is actually fairly narrow.

Contrast this with playing tennis. Why is tennis fulfilling? It would not be if one was not built to get enjoyment out of running around, swinging a racquet, thinking about strategy, etc. But in fact people are built to enjoy these things, which is why they do them. There is of course scope for unfulfillingness here. Some humans may not enjoy these things, but they will enjoy other activities that build on other capabilities. Then there is the case the case of leading one to be fulfilled, and part of this requires focussing on the right aspects. When people try to get others to see what is fulfilling, most of the job is to get another to focus on the proper aspects of the activity (the joy of mountain climbing is found in the skills employed, the views, the

environment, the being on top, etc.; it is not in the sore feet, the headache, the backache). Most would contend that if another will focus on the proper aspect of the activity, the being fulfilled simply follows. It is the result of doing what humans are capable of. Stepping off the tennis court after a successful match can leave me fulfilled, but can I say anything about how this fulfilment stands in relationship to *flourishing*?

Getting a grip on what it means to be fulfilled occurs through properly engaging in activities for which one is suited. The engagement in the activity leads us to be fulfilled. The question is whether *flourishing* can be unpacked in this same way. Swinging a golf club properly is fulfilling because one is engaged in an activity that builds on a number of capacities people find enjoyable. It is tempting, then, to try to build a story about *flourishing* that is similar; namely that to get a grip on what it means to *flourish* occurs because I am, through my various activities, learning to develop all my capacities. It is like learning about fulfilment, only on a wider scale. Can this picture be adequately supported?

The case can be made in the following way. If one wants to play football, one is seeking to participate in an activity that involves a certain set of standards inherent to the game. A player cannot use arms or legs to propel the ball, he must try to put it in the direction of the opposition's net (directly or indirectly via teammates), he must not stand off-side, etc. It is relatively easy, if one has knowledge of the game, to gauge a player's success within this context. Does he trap and pass the ball effectively? Score goals? Head accurately? Make clever passes to other teammates? Good judges watching play can evaluate success. This is obvious enough. However, though he may be successful in terms of the manoeuvres involved in playing football, are his successful executions on the pitch leading him to *flourish*? What standards does one now use? Gauging success within a particular practise is not so difficult, and nor would gauging success at *flourishing* be if it was attached to specific practises in the same kind of way. The problem in unpacking what it means to *flourish* lies in trying to get a grip on the standards. (To refer back briefly to the discussion concerning the inadequacy of needs in unpacking *flourishing* (cf. 5.1), one ought to see another reason why needs cannot be a way by which people will learn about *flourishing*, for needs can only make sense when standards are clear. When considering *flourishing*, it seems this is what is lacking.)

The connection between wanting and standards is crucial. As one masters certain activities and judges one's mastery of those activities one also judges those activities from the point-of-view of fulfilment. One cannot simply become a judge of one's golfing ability without also developing some knowledge of whether or not it is fulfilling. At another level, it could be argued, one learns about fitting the activity into

a larger pattern about which one can make a different sort of judgement, namely, how does this activity fit in with all the others? Golf may be fulfilling for a weekend afternoon, but what is its role in my entire life (i.e., balanced against my studies, my insect collecting, my reading, etc.)? I need standards in order to make this judgement. There seems only one possible route to provide such standards, and that is to argue that through participating in particular activities one must also be learning something about the standards that are involved in *flourishing*. To learn about golf is to learn something about *flourishing*. In wanting to play golf I must also be wanting to *flourish*.

Another metaphor might here serve to clarify what has just been suggested. If I am aiming at some target, I do so from a particular position. I can, however, change my position while still aiming at the same target. To judge an activity according to the standards of the activity itself is to measure up the target from a particular position. (There are often many ways to size up the target according to internal standards. Consider track events. I can measure up success in at least two related but slightly different ways. First, obviously, is to see who wins. Second, however, is to look at how people actually run, i.e., their style. Are they running properly in order to win? In this latter case I am considering the same target, but I have shifted the position from which I am looking at that target.) To judge whether aiming at the target is fulfilling is to shift one's position while still looking at the same target - it is to size it up from a different angle. To judge an activity's role in terms of *flourishing* is not so easy to make out for I must shift my stance yet again. Now my stance allows me to see the same target, but also all the other targets at which I also might aim. This makes the question of my aim different, for I have the choice of aiming at this particular target or others. I can aim at one for a certain period of time, at another for a shorter period of time, and not aim at others at all. What standards do I use to make *that* choice?

In aiming at a particular target it is relatively easy to decide what the bullseye is, to know what to be shooting at, and the bullseyes on all the targets would, within the context of each particular target, be the same kind of thing. In other words, once one spots the target it is not terribly difficult to see what one ought to be aiming for to have success at hitting the target. *But what standard would one use in deciding at which particular targets to aim in the first place?* There are now no longer things like bullseyes that make it obvious. To want to *flourish* and to want to play golf in order to *flourish* is not to want to be doing two different things, but the evaluation of the success of the activity has now to be considered from an ambiguous stance. There is not some obvious criterion of success continuous from the individual targets to the targets considered from this wider point-of-view.

Consider Nordic events in the Olympics that involve not just skiing, but target-shooting. These are two very different activities, and it is the case that in terms of a competitive event they have been reduced to comparable standards. Speed on skis gains points, shooting well gains points. The weighing of one activity against another is difficult, but not without solution (e.g., fastest time around the course wins, and misses at target-shooting adds penalty time to the real time). But the reducing of these two separate activities to a system of points does not suggest that one could ever answer the quite different question of which activity to favour, or to what extent to pursue or spend time on one or the other in the first place. Against what standards would one weigh the benefits of target-shooting versus those of skiing? Think now of the people who originally came up with whatever equation to compare the weights of the two activities. Could there have been a non-arbitrary way to do this (i.e., a way that spoke to the comparable qualities of the activities and found a justifiably representative point system versus an arbitrary point system manufactured for ease of scoring)?

Flourishing is a consideration that cannot begin to come into one's focus until one starts aiming at targets in the first place. One cannot see how pieces fit together until one has some pieces with which to play. But, of course, as soon as one starts aiming at any target one also develops the ability to change one's position and look at other targets. As soon as I take up target-shooting, I am not doing something else (i.e., I am not watching the telly, playing snooker, reading detective stories), so I have made some choice between targets. This might suggest that as soon as one engages in an activity and therefore judges according to the standards of that activity, one can also begin to judge according to some other standards that help one select and weigh alternatives, and such selection leads one to considerations of *flourishing*. But are standards now involved? If they are it would seem there would have to be two sets of standards: those inherent to the practising of the activity itself, and those by which to weigh the place of the activity within one's life as an aspect of one's *flourishing*. This solution does not immediately recommend itself as plausible.

Before finally ruling out this possibility, is there *any* hope for it? If one thinks sense can be made of this view of *flourishing*, then it has to be the case that one is aiming at some kind of target that takes into account other targets. One story presents itself. I could say, for example, "I want to play golf well." But how is "wanting to do well" to be taken? It immediately suggests two senses, and whether they are related or not needs to be determined. Wanting to do well according to the standards of the game is the first sense. Can this be separated conceptually from the second sense in which I want to play well (according to the standards internal to the game) *because* I have a belief that my hitting the ball well, my low scores, the successful

long putts are part of what my *flourishing* amounts to? For instance, I could want to practise taking more time at putting in order to size up the break and develop the proper touch for long putts for a complex of reasons. It will improve my score (an internal consideration); it may also be a manifestation of a general trait I wish to develop (weighing up situations and taking my time while extending the appropriate concentration is valuable and an aspect of *flourishing*), and finally putting well is straightforwardly part of what *flourishing* is. An internal aspect of the practise is an instance of a wider concern I might have. Implied in this kind of observation is my working at one skill, but taking other targets into account. This skill is something that, if developed, will be good for me in many ways; it is part of *flourishing*. Is wanting to *flourish* simply applying the benefits internal to some activity more widely? Perhaps there is a case to suggest that learning standards internal to practises leads to developing those dispositions that are part of *flourishing*. Putting improvement is a path to my *flourishing*.

This seems wrong because to set out on a path implies that one knows the destination. I am not exercising patience in order to *flourish*, but to putt better; that is what I am aiming for. Without knowing what *flourishing* amounts to first, what would it mean to exercise patience in order to *flourish*? To have patience in putting is to have patience and apply it to one's putting. I may later learn to display patience on the tennis court or at the bridge table. To do so is not to have *flourishing* in view, but to have these activities in view.

One way to come to grips with the idea of wanting to *flourish* is that this is to want to pursue particular activities and to want particular things, imagining it to be the case that these particulars will have some role in one's leading the good life. Perhaps, then, there are two aspects to my wanting to play football, one of which is wanting to engage in the activity that involves running, kicking, heading, etc., and the other aspect is my wanting to pursue this as an aspect of my well-being. I have standards for the former aspect, that is, in going in for football I have to be going in for running, kicking, heading, etc., or else I could not play the game. From where do the standards come in regard to the latter aspect? It could be that standards arrive in a way that is remarkably unexciting: one sees what activities other folk go in for, sees what comes of it, and uses how they are getting on as a gauge. In other words, perhaps various activities are seen as the ingredients of a larger picture, as the component parts of a *flourishing* life. This rough explanation is not the entire solution to the problem, for this simply shifts the standards to a different place, but the direction might be correct.

It is worth taking a moment to summarise. Wanting is the concept through which *flourishing* is most apt to be clearly understood. The concept of wanting, however,

immediately brings with it the connected notion of standards, and it is here where the difficulty in the concept of *flourishing* lies. Standards are difficult to grasp when connected with *flourishing*, and this for two reasons. First, what standards to take into account and how to weigh them one against another so that one can see how they might fit into an overall pattern is not an endeavour that admits of a clear solution. Second, it seems extremely difficult to make use of examples or models if one does not have a clear set of standards by which to measure e.g., I only know if this is a good car if I know what specific things a car of this type ought to be expected to do, and whether this car can do them or not. One response to this would be to claim that in fact there is a clear set of standards to apply to examples or models, and people know precisely what these standards are. This response could be sustained by one holding a very orthodox Aristotelian point of view (it is precisely the point of view that philosophers such as Philippa Foot, Peter Geach, and Elizabeth Anscombe would hold). This position would be, to put the matter oversimply, that man's teleology, what he is built to do, is defined and relatively narrow, and that that teleology sets the standards by which *flourishing* is gauged. Certainly in the case of Geach and Anscombe, this teleology requires the existence of God who created man with a specific purpose.¹ If, however, such strong teleological views are set aside because of their arguable theistic foundations, it remains to be considered whether such views as Aristotle's can be supported without the weight of a purposive creator. I would suggest that to think of standards exclusively in the orthodox way is incorrect.

5.4) The Case for Standards

One structure within which standards operate are as specific criteria against which to measure something (e.g., if there are enough peanuts in this batch of peanut butter to warrant its being jarred under the *Skippy* label). When standards are used in this way, as they often are, one might erroneously think that *all* standards operate in the same kind of way. But standards also operate in a far less obvious fashion. To refer to the target-shooting metaphor again, there is an important complication that has to be again emphasised. Not only is there difficulty in knowing at which targets one ought to aim and how much time one might spend in shooting at this target rather than that, it is not clear *what even counts as a successful hit* when one is considering more than one target (i.e., *flourishing*). Built into target-shooting is the idea of hitting *a* target, and success is determined by setting standards according to which one aims at and hits a target. I have been trying to come up with something of the same sort that

¹ The end of Chapter One of Geach's *The Virtues* presents just such a view (cf. p. 17-19).

operates if one considers human *flourishing* as a kind of target shooting. What counts as a successful hit when one has multiple targets in view? The lack of standards makes it too ambiguous a concept. It is hard to reject this conclusion.

Having noted this, however, it would be worthwhile to pursue the path embarked on above. One might argue that there *are* standards by which to assess how the targets all fit together (they are learned only through participating in activities), but the real reason they are difficult to get hold of is because one must be participating in the activity of getting hold of them in order to say anything about them. They cannot be elucidated like a list of ingredients in a recipe, but can only be understood from within the activity of *flourishing* itself. They are found out by examining the lives of those around one as one is developing one's character (which is participating in an activity). In just the same way that people learn about successful target-shooting by participating in that activity, so people learn as they develop their characters how to size up the variety of targets they can face through seeing how successful other people are at that same project.

To explain how this might occur I will turn to an introductory paper on Aristotle, 'Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*', by Rosalind Hursthouse. Much of this paper is devoted to outlining and explaining how Aristotle saw the project of ethics and contrasting it with various other accounts. The latter part of the paper focusses on the objections that one might make to Aristotle's view of ethics. One objection can be formulated in the following way: If it is the case that Aristotle's account will have no power of persuasion over people who have already rejected the virtuous path as an alternative, then it seems rather as though Aristotle is preaching to the converted (Hursthouse, 'Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 44). Aristotle is indeed preaching to such a group (cf., 2.2), but is this a good basis upon which to found an objection? One response is pursued by Hursthouse. She suggests it is without a great deal of merit as it does not take into account the rather large portion of the population that is neither yet persuaded of Aristotle's account, nor is committed to acts of consistent power-hungry wickedness. "...The question was whether Aristotle's answer could recommend itself to someone who was genuinely open-minded about how to live well, i.e. someone who does not already have a settled conviction about what *flourishing* consists in...." (Hursthouse, 'Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 44). This is worth noting. What does it mean to be one who does not yet have a "settled conviction"? Simply put, one who has not yet learned to act out of a particular set of habits would fall into such a category. Students, for example, who are in the very process of forming habits, would seem to be precisely the people who might be persuaded by the Aristotelian account.

....Viewed this way, having a settled conviction need not be having a consciously held belief about what flourishing consists in (which indeed not many people other than philosophers do have). Correspondingly, not having a settled conviction is, regardless of the beliefs one may profess, having a character which is not (yet) settled into its final mould.

(Hursthouse, 'Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*', p. 45)

Remembering the time-frame within which Aristotle sees development occurring, people's characters are developing significantly until they reach their early thirties, this does not seem to be at all an implausible view. The situation to consider is one in which there is a large portion of the population (everyone between, say, six years of age and approximately thirty-two to thirty-five) who do have a wide range of convictions and beliefs, but are willing to reassess those convictions and beliefs if there is good reason to. (This picture assumes that such people have not become completely vicious as the result of their upbringing. It also sidesteps an alternative view of Aristotle's conception of the development of character. Is it true that the young have *no settled* character (which suggests they are without characters at all), or do they rather have a weak and impulsive therefore undesirable character that can, through training, become different? Either way, the important point is that within the agent there is the potential for change.) Considerations of Aristotle's audience may help in terms of establishing standards.

There are two helpful observations that have been made by educators in general that would clarify the direction one might take. The first is that students spend a significant amount of time 'trying on' masks or roles (again keeping in mind that 'students' is a wide category: people are 'students' in the sense that they are still capable of learning well beyond the age at which they leave school). The second is that students tend to 'learn' teachers before they learn what is on offer in any teacher's particular course. In other words, students will often learn about what a teacher likes and dislikes about his subject, appraise how much and in what ways he values his subject, etc. In doing so, students are not simply wanting to see what behaviour will gain them success, but they are engaging in a process of learning the subject through seeing what the teacher does and emulating that behaviour. (This process does not, of course, occur in each course of study a student may follow, but it does occur in some of the courses. Similarly, it may be quite true that there are some students who never take on the cloak of a teacher in the way here described, but it certainly is the case that the student put on someone's cloak at some point in time.) If one considers these two views along with Aristotle's view, as interpreted by Hursthouse, that "...we are constituted by nature to receive the virtues (1103a24-26)...." (Hursthouse, 'Aristotle,

Nicomachean Ethics', p. 46), one can begin to see how standards might operate within such a picture.

How does participation involve learning standards? Imagine a hockey player who wants to learn to drive the ball straight and fast. He can read a book that will tell him how to do this, but he is more likely just to watch someone who can do it and then do as he does. How does our player know when he has met with success? The ball actually goes straight (that he can see), but is it moving fast? That is a bit harder to judge. If he cannot get it past a goalkeeper, then it is not moving fast enough. When he finally can, it is. But is it really fast? exceptionally fast? This is harder to see for oneself. The point to keep in mind is that there are two necessarily connected aspects in his participating in the one activity. First, he is learning how to do something, but, second, in order to be able to do that he cannot help but learn how to measure his success. He cannot help but learn the standards. It is impossible to learn or attempt to exercise a skill unless there is some standard against which one is weighing one's attempts. Further, one does not learn the skill, *then* discover the standards. To learn about the skill just is to learn about the standards. They are not two separable activities. (Consider learning how to putt. One does not first learn how to properly strike the ball and then learn that the way to gauge the success of the strike is whether it comes close to the target, namely the hole. To learn how to strike the ball *is* to strike it so that it will go somewhere in particular.)

Ryle's examination of knowing how to do something (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Chapter Two) will provide some background for the case I am building in defence of standards and *flourishing*. Knowing how to do something involves the inculcation of standards. To know how, as Ryle points out (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 27-32), requires that such knowledge meet certain standards. First, there are certain objective criteria I must measure my knowledge against. For example, it is not adequate to say that as a player of squash I know how to win if all I can do is describe shots that are generally winning shots, but none of which I can perform. I do have some knowledge of the game, but not a player's knowledge (which is different from a spectator's). As a player I cannot claim to know how until I can actually execute a particular shot. To demonstrate that I know how to win I have got to amble on the the court, play, and win. Ryle also stresses that knowing how is not just to satisfy such criteria, "...but to apply them; to regulate one's actions....profit from examples...." (Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, p. 28-29). If I begin to hit shots that are losing, I need to be able to hit the shots differently so that they become winners, or hit different types of shots altogether that would be winners. Consider, to take another example, the reports of a beginning golfer and a professional, both of whom, after having not swung properly, say to a bystander, "I *know* how to swing

the club." What the beginner usually means, and of this I have some considerable experience, is that he knows how a swing ought to go and what will properly propel the ball, but not necessarily how to do things here and now with his swing so that he can put that knowledge into practise. The professional, on the other hand, generally means that he knows how the swing should be, that he has not done it, and he is in the process of correcting himself. The professional knows how to change things to get it right. The beginner knows what he wants in the end, but not how to change what he does to get it right. One does not know in the full sense until one knows what must be done and one is able to put it in practise.

How does a person learn what the standards are? To play squash requires training. One hits shots down the side-walls, one hits lobs, one hits drop shots, until one can execute them well. There occurs, while one is attempting to execute them, a growth of knowledge about how to make particular shots. The standards one weighs oneself against cannot be learned except by execution, that is by participation in the activity. One does not, mindlessly, hit shots for five minutes, and then stop and consider what lessons one ought to have learned. One is learning the lesson and therefore learning the standards while hitting the shots. (The lack of separable stages can be brought out by referring back to Ryle's distinguishing between blind habit and intelligent practise (cf., p. 54, above).) Blind habit requires no reappraisal. The mastery considered here does. As I develop a skill, I learn from it, and this, in turn, makes me readjust it. Talk of readjustment necessarily entails some standard. The exercising of the skill is both a doing and a thinking about the doing, but not separately so. If this is the process, no skill, except ones which one may choose to exercise blindly, is ever so refined as to not require further refinement.

Learning how to do anything involves standards, and the standards are not separable from the activity but are a necessary part of it. There is an objection one might make to such a picture. What of the instance of one's judging the success of some skill without actually acquiring the skill? (Above I noted the difference between the squash spectator and player.) In such a case is it not clear that there must be some standards that are extractable from the activity by which one judges? In other words, the standards the spectator is using must have been extracted from the game itself and so must be considered as separable from the game. This depends on whether one is a spectator or whether one is a knowledgeable judge of the game or practise. If one is merely a spectator, it is not necessary that one's standards of judgement be directly extracted from the practise, for spectators watch for a variety of reasons. If I go to a football match to be entertained, I may have little concern with the specific skills and strategy of the game. There are numerous occasions when people attend events they know little about, but they enjoy nonetheless. They are still judging the event, but it

is not necessary that they know the standards internal to the event in order to do so. Spectating is an activity in itself that has its own standards.

To be a judge, however, is a different activity. This also *is an activity in itself*, but it is more obviously parasitic on the standards of the participant in the activity. The reason this is so is because the judge is, ultimately, reporting to the participant on how well he participated in the activity. Some of the standards the judge employs therefore have to overlap with the ones the participant employs. It is still the case, however, that they are participating in two separable activities, and they employ differing standards (e.g., the diver will be moving his body in a particular way in order to enter the water with a minimal splash, the judge is looking at how successfully the diver does this. But their points-of-view and what each is after are different). The way to learn the standards to be a judge is to judge.

What this preceding discussion points out is that an all-encompassing list of criteria cannot be extracted from any activity in such a way that a novice would have a complete view of success in that activity. To engage in the activity is to absorb the standards of the activity. To seek to extract standards from any activity is to engage oneself in a different activity that has, in itself, a different internal set of standards. This does not demonstrate that there are, therefore, no standards, it simply shows that the standards can only be understood from within the activity and through doing the activity. The standards for any activity can only be known by the participants. As a result it ought also now to be clear that the only way one has of learning anything about an activity is by participating in the activity. This is as true of *flourishing* as it is of football or hockey. Similarly consider practises connected with fishing: practicing casting, concentration, observation, etc. One acts as a good fisherman does, tries out its success, and if it 'fits' retains it, if not one searches around for something more appropriate. The standards enter in the success one has in incorporating others' behaviour as one's own. What works, what leads to success, one keeps; the rest one unloads. To return briefly to metaphorical target-shooting, it would appear that I do have a standard by which to weigh up alternative targets, and I learn the standard by weighing up alternative targets in my own life and by watching how others do it in theirs. Participation in the activity is the only way to learn the standards.

The activity to return to is fishing. Consider learning to fish from a fisherman (as opposed to learning from a manual). Is the former different from learning from the manual in a way that is significant? There is the obvious difference in that instructors can convey information about the causes of successes of failures more specifically and quickly than manuals. If I am an instructor, I can tie knots before the eyes of my pupil, and then he can tie the same knots so I can correct mistakes and indicate successes. I provide explanation: the what fors. I suggest places to fish, show the

pupil how to cast in a variety of ways, point out what to look for in the water, etc. In this sense I am somewhat similar to a manual. But there is this second difference: guidebooks cannot physically fish; I can. The other way the pupil learns how to fish is by watching me fish and then doing the same things I am doing, and by asking why I am doing what I am doing. In watching me fish he learns more than knots to tie, places to cast, drifts to make: he learns about fishing in general and about me in general, and some of those lessons he will absorb. My question is now this: because the pupil can watch me, does he actually learn more than lessons about fishing, namely, is he also learning about *flourishing*? In examining me he can also measure up whether or not fishing is fun, worthwhile, fulfilling, if it is perhaps a constituent of my *flourishing*. In watching me fish he is learning about these elements also. Am I excited, having fun, concentrating, etc.? If one is inclined to respond "yes", then it seems I have outlined a way in which learning a practise also teaches one about *flourishing*.

It is time to bring this full circle. I suggested earlier that to want to *flourish* is to aim at a variety of targets. If this is true, there will have to be standards by which to do this. Standards are employed, and in the way I have just described. One looks at other people and assess them in two ways. First, one assesses their achievements within particular practises, and then one assesses how they balance those practises against other important practises. One does not perform this dual evaluation all the time. If there is an area of particular interest to me, I may take on the mask of some appropriate mentor and my interest and evaluation of that mentor is only carried out in terms specific to that area. To play football, I try to play like John Barnes or Mo Johnston, to fish I try to cast like Lefty Kreh, to do philosophy I try to emulate, well let me not strain the point. It is worth noticing, however, that I can try to play football like Mo Johnston and have no interest in how he fares off the pitch. One of the tools I use to improve within a practise is to look at one who is skilful in that practise and do what he does. But it is also true that when one is seeking the way to the *eudaimon* life, one looks at how others get on as they lead what one takes to be fulfilling lives, and one tries to do what they do. Also, as I suggested earlier in the hockey example, learning standards within a practise may also be to learn about standards that apply to *flourishing*.

This is precisely why, in order to learn how to do something, one watches and sees what others in the activity do. Is this is the kind of guide with which Aristotle provides us? Is it possible to see Aristotle's project as being similar to a 'how-to-play-football' manual written by a successful footballer? The nature of virtuous behaviour is of a type that to talk of specific activities would be unhelpful, but to talk of what things one would take into consideration in deciding what to do is helpful.

Similarly, a professional can tell me how to do particular things, but he cannot tell me what to do when I am on the pitch. (He can tell me, "In this situation I would take these factors into account and then decide whether to pass, shoot, run with the ball." He cannot tell me "When fifteen yards to the northwest of the goal post take a shot if it is a home fixture, pass if it is away." Neither can Aristotle be expected to do the same kind of thing.) But to be unable to provide specific rules does not mean that there are no standards by which to judge, it just means that one can only exercise the standards correctly by having been involved in the practise itself. When I do get fifteen yards from the northwest of the goal post I will then decide, considering the circumstances, what to do, and my decision will be according to standards.

Is it no different with *flourishing*, except that there is not something so obvious as a goalkeeper to be beaten that indicates one's success? I can assess my footballing on the basis of my successful participation in the activity, and I learn those standards only through participation. In the same way, engaging in activities that are possibly constitutive of my *flourishing* is how I learn how to flourish. I weigh the successes or failures of my attempts at *flourishing* just as I weigh the successes or failures of my goal kicks.

Here it could be suggested that I have made no case for standards at all, because what those who are not yet of settled character lack is a guideline by which to know whether what some person is doing really is constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Again, how do they know who to watch? The point is that people often do not know who to watch, and consequently they watch the wrong people. Not all the masks people try on are successful, and so many are worn for a while and then ditched. They are ditched because they do not seem right, and there are many reasons why they may not seem right. Underlying this scheme, as remarked above, is the notion that since people are 'designed' to practise the virtues it will, by and large, be the case that acting in particular ways will simply be right. There is not a mysterious standard by which to measure whether generosity is an appropriate virtue to humankind, when one acts generous it becomes more than obvious why being generous is something one normally goes in for.

Does this suggest that I have made some progress in sorting out some of the difficulty with *flourishing*? The real difficulty is that standards cannot be taught except by participating, so it is difficult to discuss them separately from participating in the activity (e.g., try explaining bridge strategy to a non-player). In this way learning to *flourish* is very like learning to play hockey. This can only be accomplished by participating, and one of the ways to learn to participate properly is to do what others who are better at it do. There may be no published list, but there are

standards. This is as plausible a case as could be made to equate *flourishing* as a specific activity with other activities like footballing, bridge-playing, flying, etc.

One immediate objection arises. If all are engaged in the activity of *flourishing*, all ought to be able to discuss its standards, just as footballers on any team could discuss the standards that determine their play. This is certainly true about footballers, and others engaged in various practises. What is off the mark, as I shall discuss momentarily, is whether flourishing can be seen as an activity similar to these others. There are similarities, but the metaphorical language of *flourishing* ought not obscure a fundamental difference of type.

All the activities that come to mind, excluding *flourishing*, have identifiable aims or targets. It is those targets that set the standards of the activities that further define or wanting to participate in those activities. Without such targets one would have no activities at all. (Recall, could someone just shop without shopping for something?) What *flourishing* lacks, what makes it fundamentally different *in type* is its lack of a target, and more damaging still is that the concept, as Aristotle uses it and as it has been considered here, could not even specify a target, for the concept itself precludes it. The 'over-archingness' of *flourishing* is what makes it a different assessment from, say, 'scoring', or 'making a bid', but it is what also makes it ultimately vacuous. Footballing, no matter what one is up to at a particular moment on the pitch during a match, has a target, and that is to put the ball in the net. What players are up to at any point in time can be unpacked in terms of that target (e.g., shooting, passing, running to create space, etc.). Success can be assessed clearly. Even more obscure activities can be unpacked similarly. Is *x* a good pilot? He is if he flies planes safely. Is *y* a good monk? Here again the answer is yes if he is appropriately focussed on prayer and the spiritual life (although it is true that this assessment may not be open to us to make, but that is a different matter). But to *flourish* has to do not simply with one's success in particular activities, but the success in achieving a balance between all of one's activities. And it is not simply getting the balance right, but knowing at which activities one ought to aim in the first place. This creates a difficulty that the target metaphor, when first introduced, brought out and I see no way to resolve. To know at which targets to aim in the first place and how much time to take on this target or that requires that one have an even greater target at which one is aiming. But what target could that be? The obvious suggestion, happiness, *eudaimonia*, will not do, for it is one thing to say that this is the target, but it is entirely another then to describe just what the constituents of that target are. Aristotle tells us early on in the *Ethica* that it seems rather obvious that *eudaimonia* is what one is after, but he also is quick to point out that there is a fair share of disagreement over what counts. It is not

unlike saying that the target is the bullseye, but then arguing over what the bullseye *is*. It is not clear how one is to find out what the bullseye actually is.

What of the possibility that in participating in particular activities one is learning about aspects of *flourishing*? By fishing (engaging in casting, tying knots, thinking, being content, wading, etc.) I was also, through these engagements, being led to learn about what it means to *flourish*, or so the story went. The difficulty that has been elucidated is this, I can aim to catch fish (no one would, for example, go fishing without tying a fly on to the line, or go to a river devoid of fish), and my throwing the line out is doing just that, but I cannot aim to *flourish* because I cannot make sense of what it is I would be doing to aim at *that*. What one learns about through engaging in a practise is what is important to the practise. There are no other lessons to be learned from the practise.

Does this mean that Aristotle's view of ethics is a flop, and that all those who follow in his footsteps simply have motes in their eyes? The weakness I have highlighted is only the wider view of what Aristotle is after. To say that man does not have an ultimate, grand target at which to aim does not, I think, preclude his aiming at targets altogether. I may not know, for example, what a particular human hand's role is in the grand scheme, but this does not mean that I have no idea about what hands are meant to do. Similarly, generosity, intellect, wit, are all worth developing for they help man get along more adequately, and people know this without having a grand target in mind. This may make Aristotle's system seem a bit 'piecemeal', but it is not an unrealistic view. I suggest that it does all that any ethical system can hope to do, namely suggest what one might do based on a view of what it is that one is best suited to do. What people are best suited to do can only be defined roughly, and there will always be indistinct edges with which to contend. These indistinct edges have to be lived with, and in many cases resolution about whether certain activities are or are not peculiarly human will not result. Aristotle can be accused of having a rather narrow view of what would count as a successful human life. Given the social roles that defined the *polis*, his belief that the relatively narrow range of model lives within one's *polis* would provide an ample range of acceptable ways of life upon which one might base one's own is understandable. Still, the essential idea of looking at lives as models is a good one, and it is probably the best basis on which any ethical system could be built.

I have just referred to the unsatisfactoriness of some aspects of this Aristotelian approach. That it is difficult to discern how to weigh differing standards, or even which standards to include in any appraisal, is a problem that has driven some philosophers to look for other ends for which humans are built that avoids the issue altogether. Unsurprisingly also, the lack of prescriptiveness has also left room for

doubt. Consider for example, Immanuel Kant, who would clearly find the rough outline of Aristotle's recommendations a liability of the system. Kant's discussion very early on in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* concerning the relationship between reason and happiness provides an interesting contrast to Aristotelianism. Happiness as the end for which man is designed is there rejected outright precisely because it is obvious that there are incommensurate standards according to which one might weigh options. All I need do is look at what reason is designed for: "...no organ will be found for any purpose which is not the fittest and best adapted to that purpose...." (Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 11). If it indeed was the case that happiness is what I should be driving at, it seems fairly obvious that my capacity to reason is ill-suited for such an end, and instinct would have been a far better capacity for my happiness since ends and means would have been more or less set. Reason, in this picture, would have been designed only to "...contemplate the happy constitution of its nature, to admire it, to rejoice in it, and to be grateful for it to its beneficent cause...." (Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 11). If happiness had been what I was designed to seek, "...nature would have taken care that reason did not break forth into practical use nor have the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the plan of happiness and the means of attaining it...." (Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 11). In this miniature *reductio* Kant is trading on the fact that it is generally the exercise of reason that upsets the apple cart, alerts us to our misery, and it is clearly designed to do this since it is capable of being exercised to construct plans and weigh means to attain ends. When used as a tool to attain happiness, I am only the more frustrated by my efforts. "And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason deliberately devotes itself to the enjoyment of life and happiness, the more the man falls short of true contentment...."(Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 11). Reason, in such cases, is being used to consider the wrong thing.

Of course Kant's conclusion to this problem is to find an end toward which reason can work without becoming mired in unsolvable conflicts between options, and that end is the "...establishment of a good will...." (Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 12-13). What is worth noticing about Kant's analysis of how ill-fit reason is for the pursuit of happiness is his idea of the constituents of happiness. Kant has in mind a kind of bovine stable state, and this is considerably different from what Aristotle has in mind. There is, for Aristotle, absolutely nothing incompatible about reason's leading us to weigh alternatives, since I will only find fulfilment in an activity that allows reason to do just this. Nor does Aristotle suggest that the use of reason is a guarantee of *eudaimonia*. (This discussion supposes that Kant is after something quite different from Aristotle. Others, influenced by Kant,

might not agree, preferring to argue that one can get a better grip on Aristotle if seen through post-Kantian eyes. A good discussion of the influence of Kant on Aristotelian scholars is presented in Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, cf. p. 329-334.)

To say that people are meant to want some things rather than others does not mean that they can somehow learn to want something for which they have no capacity (e.g., to 'want' to grow gills is really wishing talk, not wanting talk), but rather that they can shift their attention between the things wanted. To say I am meant to want particular sorts of things really amounts to saying that if I focus my attention on wanting what is best for me it has to be the case that I will discover that these *are* the things for which I have a preference. Learning is, in part, discovering what it is one wants to do.² One thing Aristotle does in the *Ethica* is describe this recognition process.

Here I will briefly summarise the position that I have tried to make out in support of *flourishing* as metaphor that has some sense to it. To talk of humans needing things full stop proved too problematic (except in a very basic and unhelpful sense e.g., needing vitamin C); to speak of human wanting seemed the more direct path to getting at the concept of *flourishing*. Focussing on wanting revealed the conceptual connection that exists between wanting and wanting particular states of affairs for various reasons. In this sense the concept of wanting brings with it the notion of wanting according to a set of standards. I have suggested that if sense can be made of *flourishing*, it can only be understood by coming to terms with the role standards would have to play. It appeared, initially, that this course of analysis might prove successful, and a series of analogies was worked through to consider whether *flourishing* worked in the same kind of way and employed standards in the same kind of way as other activities, e.g., footballing. To want to participate, and similarly to participate in such activities is to learn according to and be assessed by the standards inherent to the activities. Further, the learning of those standards comes *only through participation* in those activities. To learn about an activity as a spectator is to learn according to a different set of standards than if one is a participator. This occurs because the activities in which one is participating are different. What was also revealed was that standards require having some target at which to aim, and despite one's best efforts, this is precisely the place where *flourishing* as a metaphor can be shown to dissolve. One can refer to standards in activities because one can pick out the targets toward which the activities aim, but the nature of *flourishing* I have been

² Another account reflective of the general theme of recognition as being an essential element of learning can be found in Chapter Two of J. S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*, especially in the discussion of higher and lower pleasures.

considering precludes this. To want to *flourish* requires that one have a target, yet *flourishing* is generally considered to be an assessment not just of particular targets, but of the appropriateness of aiming at these targets rather than those. It is an assessment of the total perspective of all those things at which one is aiming. But in order to have such an assessment another target is needed according to which standards can be set. But conceptually it is unclear just how one can have an overall target into which one could 'fit' all the lesser targets. Aiming at happiness is probably supposed to serve as this type of overall target, but then the task of the *Ethica* now becomes very unclear since there Aristotle seeks to unpack what happiness is (i.e., what target a person should be aiming at). And it is not clear whether one can embark on a project of defining standards without knowing what the target is in the first place. How would one look for a target, and how, having a perspective candidate in mind, would one know whether or not the target really is what one should be aiming at? The vicious circularity is clear.

If one had to encapsulate what is troubling about building an ethical system that relies on the idea of man as *flourishing* it is that the concept that underlies the view, namely *flourishing*, cannot, in itself, be used in any kind of specific way when applied to man. It can, of course, be used in specific non-human instances (e.g., in regard to roses, cows, horses, etc.), but then the notion is parasitic on what specifically men want the non-human entities to do. It could only work if there was a way for a human to be full stop, but coming up with such a specific picture seems beyond our conceptual powers, and I think for good reason. There is no such specific picture to be had.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1) Further Connected Thoughts

Before embarking upon a summary of the argument of this thesis, I would like to add some comments about various issues, some of which are a direct result of my research but could not be covered in a thesis of this scope. Any work of substance tends to create a new series of questions or leads to a number of epiphanies, the paths from which cannot be followed at the time of discovery. So it is with this. It is worthwhile setting them out.

First some discussion ought to be directed to the title. Considering my conclusions about the concept of *flourishing*, it may seem that my title hedges. I am not, however, hedging. My research is more modest in its ends than ruling out the possibility of any meaningful notion of flourishing. What I will maintain is that given our present use of the term and Aristotle's understanding of it combined with our present understanding of human nature, we cannot but conclude that the term is not particularly helpful. This is not to say that our understanding in any of these areas cannot improve. With improvement might come a better sense of what *flourishing* is. As I mentioned at the end of the last chapter, however, at this time we have no clear, specific sense of what a human is for, and without that as a target, there can be no clear notion of flourishing.

In this sense my frustration in failing to unpack flourishing in a way that is ultimately fruitful is similar to Richard Kraut's frustrated attempt to find a substantial and defensible view of *eudaimonia*. His paper does not conclude that no objective view can be found, but that what we have so far just will not work (Kraut, 'Two Conceptions of Happiness', p. 192-3). He continues to maintain, however, that if we ever did acquire the necessary knowledge we would, "...drop our present conception of happiness and adopt something like his [Aristotle's]." (Kraut, 'Two Conceptions of Happiness', p. 167). What we both seem to be left with is a teleological view that remains enticing, but little clue of the ingredients that would yield something more substantial.

I mentioned in the last chapter that there is a certain messiness with an Aristotelian conception, especially if one is fond of ways of thinking that provide clear answers to questions and clear models for all to follow. Aristotle, at least as I see him, is not the sort to go in for this kind of view. This creates an interesting paradox, especially within school settings. As I have said, schools, almost without exception, are places fashioned after Aristotle's methods (as are homes with families and many other social settings). This leaves, for some, a worrying aspect in this educational picture. If

Aristotelians are providing models and pictures of ways of life that are in general successful, what about those who do not or cannot fit into the pattern? Teachers guide students to ways of life that are generally fulfilling (and there is a good deal of variety to the pictures they offer), but how does one provide a picture to the exceptional, the genius, the eccentric?

Aristotelians are not especially equipped to do this, but then neither is anyone else. A biological analogy would help clarify where the difficulty lies. Imagine a lioness who gives birth to a cub with two extra front legs that are fully functioning. Can the lioness teach the cub to make use of its interesting advantage? (I will imagine that this is an advantageous abnormality. The cub does not, for instance, trip continually over its extra legs.) What else can the lioness do but show it what she does and the kind of life she leads? She can only show it the kind of life that she takes to be best. Teachers are no different, and they have few applicable lessons to learn from people of genius, lessons that could be passed on. People who are exceptional in any number of ways have, in a sense, slightly different or extra equipment from the rest of us. Those of us with the more run-of-the-mill kit are not really in a position to do more than provide a model or advice about what people, in general, do with what they normally have, and how they find fulfilment. People ought not to be asked to do more because one simply cannot provide for the exceptional. Certainly I could say "Look, Wolfgang M., you may have quite the knack for tunes, but you would really be happier forgoing that and becoming a silversmith." With the knowledge I have, that may not be bad advice, but it does not take into account all the capabilities he has.

This leads me to underline two points. First, Aristotelianism does not provide the kind of system that provides a recipe for happiness. As Roger Scruton points out about Aristotle, "....In establishing that courage or wisdom is a virtue, the Aristotelian does not argue that the possession of these virtues is in every particular circumstance bound to be advantageous...." (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 338). This is true if 'advantageous' is viewed only in the sense that virtue will not necessarily lead to *eudaimonia*. What it *will* lead to is a state of affairs that, given the circumstances, is the best that could be hoped for. My being brave in battle and dying as a result may cut my life short, but all the wealth I might have gained had I run away will not save me from my cowardice. Practically, for most of us for most of the time, being virtuous is the better way to be, and the exceptional circumstances do not outweigh the truth of this. Second, since this is the case, parents and teachers have little choice but to educate children to aim toward fulfilment that is a model for most. It is all of which we are capable. The dilemma, then, is what to do with those who we know do not fit into the general mould. The solution, I am afraid, is that we do not know at what to aim, so toleration and an attempt at understanding the differences is what is

called for. Sometimes the differences can be tolerated, even in fact nourished, at other times they cannot.

This dilemma has no comfortable solution; the next problem I raise may yet have. Throughout this thesis I have stressed the interpretation that virtues are means. This interpretation is not without controversy. Aristotle does speak puzzlingly in a number of places on this score.

....[A]ctions expressing virtue are pleasant in this way; and so they both please lovers of what is fine and are pleasant in themselves.
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1099a14)

....[T]hen actions expressing the virtues are pleasant in themselves.
(Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1099a20)

First of all, let us state that both intelligence and wisdom must be choiceworthy in themselves, even if neither produces anything at all;.... (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1144a4)

Aristotle's references, though here taken out of context, have provided some commentators ample justification for stressing this aspect of the virtues (and it is quite puzzling to see what Aristotle is driving at, especially in the last of the three passages above). Scruton, for example, suggests that the way to see virtue is not solely as a means, but also that "...it consists in the right choice of end." (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 327). Using friendship as an example that is analogous to virtue, Scruton suggests that people act as friends because they value friendship as an end, and as a means to *eudaimonia* (Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, p. 328). By this account, one does not have understanding of friendship until one sees that it is a constituent of the good life, and that it is valuable in itself. It is a means and an end.

MacIntyre also believes that virtues must be seen as ends in themselves. In *After Virtue* he seems initially to favour the idea of virtues as means: "The virtues are precisely those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve *eudaimonia*, and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that *telos*...." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 148). He then goes on to elaborate that seeing virtues solely as means to ends would be inadequate since the exercise of the means is also necessarily constitutive of man's end. Thus, for example, being brave is not simply the means to attain *eudaimonia*, but bravery is one constituent of *eudaimonia*. This view leads MacIntyre to conclude that the moral agent "...does what is virtuous because it is virtuous...." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 149). In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, he paints a picture of the good man who "...aims at the fine, which he values for its own sake as well as for its part in constituting *eudaimonia*." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 108). MacIntyre uses the means

versus ends distinction to discriminate between those who are seeking effective goods versus those who are seeking excellence. This view leads to rather distressing conclusions, and signposts why I find the distinction interesting. MacIntyre, in talking about the virtue of justice, remarks "...that being just requires caring about and valuing being just, even if it were to lead to no further good...." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 113). I do not know what to make of this conclusion, except that it seems false.

Against this interpretation is Aristotle's own discussion, often stressing the virtues as means. Virtue "...causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well;..." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1106a16). He concludes that "...they are means, and they are states...." (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1114b26). This conclusion is immediately followed by a discussion of bravery, a virtue of character. There Aristotle continually stresses that bravery is a means to *eudaimonia*, and it is difficult to see how it could be valued as an end in itself. (In fact *Ethica* III, ix lays great stress on this.) Bravery is a means in the sense that, once I have a target in mind, once I have a view of *eudaimonia*, I should not be shaken from it by piddling circumstances. (The view to have is that of Colonel Kilgore from *Apocalypse Now* who, having discerned that surfing is a good thing to be doing, strides around the beach ignoring the falling mortar shells.) It is a state in that it is a disposition. This is much the way Aristotle speaks, and he speaks negatively of those who would seek bravery in itself (e.g., walking around a beach amidst falling mortar shells, not to surf, but just to be brave).

What I wish to point out is that there seems to be some ambiguity about whether virtues are simply means or whether they are also ends in themselves. One can make a very strong case for certain virtues, such as temperance, mildness, etc., being means only, but then friendship, generosity, charity seem to require an analysis that sees them as something more than means. Anscombe suggests that one might see virtues as essentially of two types: utilitarian and supra-utilitarian. The first sort would be more strictly viewed as means to a good life, the latter sort having something to do with those things people value in themselves (and here Anscombe is not hesitant to use the term 'mystical' in setting apart such virtues) (Anscombe, 'Contraception and Chastity', p. 149). I do not wish here to weigh the merits or demerits of the various interpretations I have summarised, but there is scope for some further consideration about what virtues are and the kind of place they have in a well-ordered life.

Having set out these considerations, I will close this thesis with a summary of the argument I have constructed.

6.2) Summary

I opened the thesis with a consideration of Paul, who was sitting a spelling test. What that scenario elucidated was, first, the kind of behaviour parents, and adults generally, wish children to exercise. Second, the situation ought to have helped elucidate why such behaviour is superior to alternative behaviours. A similar situation was discussed in Chapter Two when I referred to Urmson's description of Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown at a public meeting. What is appropriately seductive about these two views is the coordination of disposition and reason.

Despite the good sense of having an ethical project that focusses on creating people with appropriate dispositions, numerous contemporary ethical views abound in which such dispositions play little or no role. The first chapter discussed consequentialist views of a utilitarian type and deontological views of the Kantian type and found both wanting. Not only do these positions have serious internal problems, the way both the views 'carve up' life into unconnected quandaries was seen to be an inaccurate representation of how lives are lived, for the views place too much emphasis on the solution to the quandary and too little emphasis on the kind of character needed to deal with a life of quandaries. Moral agents do not see their lives as a series of segments, and this is not because they have an improper view, but because such a view does not reflect how people want to or ought to see their lives.

Having argued that such contemporary views have significant failings, the second chapter focussed on the nature of Aristotle's project as opposed to the contemporary ones. Where contemporary views tend to dwell on right actions or good actions, the Aristotelian view is to be seen as a response to a different kind of concern, namely, how ought one to live a fulfilled life? Aristotle's response to this question is based on human teleology, and because it is so one needs first to know what man's function is. To begin to see how Aristotle thinks of man, I presented Aristotle's views on the process of education, for through seeing how man learns, one has an insight into the kind of creature man is.

Having talked of the role of habituation and the mechanics of selection via *orexis*, the discussion of the third chapter dealt with a specific interpretation of Aristotle, namely Alasdair MacIntyre's. His position concerning the role of the *polis* was of immediate interest to my study because of the implications his view had on any study of flourishing. To put the matter oversimply, in arguing that man is designed for the *polis* and can only be rational within that structure, a serious objection could have been raised about a consideration of flourishing that did not build immediately from such a view. An account of human flourishing, even a general one, would have had to have begun with a political account of human nature. Thus, the issue of the final

two chapters is: what does 'flourishing' mean - is it a concept applicable to any man singularly considered? Because the question could be put this way, I was able to consider separately the concepts of needing and wanting and the role they play in flourishing. I could, in fact, call into question the very idea of objective needs. Had MacIntyre's interpretation been correct, I would have had to argue that man does have objective needs, for his functioning as human requires a *polis*. Without a *polis*, one is not even human.

As was demonstrated, however, MacIntyre's interpretation of Aristotle was seen to be unpersuasive. There is simply not enough in Aristotle's account of the development of the polis to warrant MacIntyre's strong claims. Nor is there much evidence that Aristotle would have been happy with such a narrow account of what reasoning is as MacIntyre provides.

Dealing in this way with MacIntyre's interpretation allowed the consideration of flourishing to begin at a 'ground floor' level. In other words, since Aristotle's purpose in the *Ethica* is to provide a type of guide, the purpose of which is to help lead people to flourish, what I wished to do was to consider whether one could even have a view, in a more general sense, of what the concept of flourishing means. If the general concept turns out not to be a clear one, then any claim of a practical kind of what flourishing amounts to would have to be suspect. The last section of the thesis, the last two chapters but one, took as their focus just such an analysis of flourishing.

The fourth chapter divided the general concept of flourishing into its constituent parts, namely needing and wanting, on the basis that it seemed possible to get a better grip on the concept if considered in this way. This chapter dealt specifically with attempts to elucidate flourishing in terms of needing. In other words, is it possible to find out what flourishing amounts to by uncovering what someone needs in order to flourish? It was quickly discovered that this route was a poor one for two reasons: first, needs cannot be construed in a purely objective fashion. Second, since needs are elliptical, it is tempting to suppose that one could provide a list of needs based on what it takes to flourish. The problem is the obvious circularity. We do not know what is required to flourish, so the concept of flourishing can hardly be used to supply a list of needs. Needing is itself a concept that rides on the shoulders of another concept: wanting. The last portion of this chapter therefore argued that wanting is a more important concept for this study.

The final chapter explored the connection between wanting and flourishing, and initial considerations suggested that, in fact, it might be quite possible to unpack flourishing using wanting. Since we could not provide an account of needs without an account of flourishing, then could we, instead, first talk of what humans want when they want to flourish? Initially this seemed implausible, but then if flourishing

was considered as though it was an activity like other activities one pursues, then perhaps there was a model that could be used that would provide sense to wanting to flourish. Then it is merely a question of finding out specifically what it is one is wanting.

This led immediately to a discussion of standards. It was argued that there is a conceptual connection here, that is that one cannot simply want, but one must want in a particular kind of way. Flourishing could not be unpacked in terms of needs, because needs only make sense when considered in terms of what people specifically want. When people want, they must do so in terms of standards. To return to flourishing, one cannot talk about what people need in order to flourish, for flourishing is not the kind of concept that can, in itself, be used to supply a list of needs. To talk of flourishing one has to talk of what people want in order to flourish. If people want in terms of standards in others areas (e.g., wanting to play football, bridge, read, etc.), then it ought to be the case that to want to flourish carries with it standards of a similar type. This possibility was explored in great detail.

What could not be overcome was this: all instances in which it makes sense to say that wanting is occurring have a target. That is really what wanting comes down to. In fact flourishing, in non-human cases, also has such targets, though set by humans (e.g., good roses yield buds of x type), but what could not be found was any specific target at which the Aristotelian sense of flourishing could be claimed to be aiming. The reason for this is because, for Aristotle, to flourish means more than registering an acme. It is, as was argued in the last chapter, an assessment that is all-encompassing. It is precisely this aspect of the metaphor that makes it vacuous. There is not a sufficient account of what it is to be a good human in the way there is a sufficient account of what it means to be a good rose, a good dog, or indeed, a good footballer. The target Aristotle has set is no target at all, at least not unless a far more careful account is provided of what a good human is. That is the precisely what we do not have.

I do not think this means that the Aristotelian view is permanently crippled. What it does suggest is that its perspective is too wide. Virtue theory does hold promise. There must be something valuable about it, since it is the means through which we continue to teach our children. The question now is whether there is merit to studying the virtues one by one, rather than as entities that can only be understood within the framework of a greater scheme. (This way of studying the virtues seems to be behind Geach's project. He agrees with Philippa Foot that, "...[virtues] are such as a man cannot rationally choose to go without, any more than he can rationally choose to be blind, paralytic, or stupid; to choose to lack a virtue would be to choose a maimed life,..." (Geach, *God and Soul*, p. 122-123). In order to know this, of course, one

first has to know what an unmaimed life is.) I cannot specify what makes a good athlete, but I can specify what makes a good squash player, hurdler, pole vaulter, footballer. The virtues, similarly, need to be considered first singly. On this score a clearer case can be made for demonstrating how they benefit individuals, for I think it is far easier to discuss particular things that humans, by and large, are disposed toward than to talk, in very general terms, about their aiming for flourishing.

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