

THE METAPHYSICS OF GOODNESS

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Dedicated to my wife, parents, grandparents and aunts, whose sacrifices made this possible.

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ABSTRACT

What is it for something to be good? Using the example of an Ebola-like microbe, I argue that a merely kind-based account of goodness is defective (Chapter 1). I offer instead an account that is both kind-based and platonic (Chapter 2). On such an account, goodness turns out to be non-natural (Chapter 3). However, non-naturalists can explain why the goodness of an individual supervenes on its natural properties, by appealing to the essence of the kind to which it belongs (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 1. AN EBOLA-LIKE MICROBE AND THE LIMITS OF KIND-BASED GOODNESS

What is it for something to be good? Aristotelian theory contends that to be good is to be good as a member of one's kind, and so there are varying standards of goodness depending on whether something is a squirrel, human, or whatever kind. Appearing in several contemporary versions,¹ the theory has the advantage of easily explaining, for instance, why having deep, broad roots is a measure of excellence for the oak tree but not for the squirrel, which has a different standard of goodness.

Michael Thompson's and Philippa Foot's version of the Aristotelian account offers to give content to the kind-based standards, using the very conception of the kind of lifeform that an individual organism bears. It is perhaps a little noticed feature of Foot's project, in particular, that it aims to provide more than just a kind-relative account, but seeks an exhaustive account of something's goodness. She concludes, in effect, that something's goodness admits of only the kind-based sort. What follows, with respect to being a good individual, is that a good individual just is good of a kind (is a good oak, good squirrel, etc.) Accordingly, an individual's goodness obtains solely in virtue of its satisfying kind-based standards. However, her account faces an important challenge—there are at least some metaphysically possible things that can satisfy their kind-relative standards, but we plausibly judge them to be bad when they do. Thus, a thing's goodness does not appear to obtain solely in virtue of meeting kind-based standards, and so a thing's goodness is not captured merely by Foot's account. In this sense, such possible things are counterexamples to Foot's neo-Aristotelian account. The focus of my discussion will be Foot's account and any Aristotelian theory similar to hers where kind-relative standards implicitly offer an exhaustive account of something's goodness. As I later explain, I suspect that many neo-Aristotelian theories would be similar to Foot's in this respect, otherwise they would leave the door open also to a sort of co-existent, kind-independent account of a thing's goodness. So, although there may be Aristotelian theories not similar to Foot's in this regard, I will henceforth use 'the Aristotelian account' to refer to all Aristotelian theories offering an exhaustive account of goodness, and will take Foot's account as an important representative.

¹ See MacIntyre (1999), McDowell (1995), Hursthouse (1999), Thompson (2008), and Foot (2003).

The aforementioned counterexample-based challenge to the Aristotelian account has been articulated by Mark Murphy. He accepts that the goodness of a thing belonging to a kind obtains partly in virtue of its meeting kind-relative standards. However, in a little thought experiment, he imagines a being for which being ignorant would satisfy its kind-based standard. On the Aristotelian account, if that being were ignorant, that ignorance would be good. Murphy points out, however, that *being ignorant* cannot be a good feature and so argues that a thing's goodness does not hold solely in virtue of satisfying kind-relative standards. Unfortunately, Murphy's counterexample fails because (for an Aristotelian) the content of the kind-based standard cannot require the lack of something, in this case knowledge. Nonetheless, I develop Murphy's valuable insight that something can satisfy its kind-relative standards but yet not be good when it does, by offering a different sort of counterexample to Aristotelianism, namely an Ebola-like microbe. A member of this kind of lifeform, by hypothesis, would meet its kind-standards by being destructive for its own sake. So, there is a metaphysically possible thing that can satisfy its kind-relative standard but is bad when it does, demonstrating that contrary to the Aristotelian account, being good is not only in virtue of satisfying kind-based standards.

In the next section, I briefly present Thompson's and Foot's neo-Aristotelian account. I then discuss Murphy's counterexample to the Aristotelian account, before offering my own counterexample and argument against that account. I end by responding to the objection, raised by Micah Lott, that to judge a functioning thing to be bad is to take a vantage point external to its lifeform conception—a standpoint from which that kind itself can be bad or could be improved. But, so the objection goes, it is mistaken for my argument to take this kind-independent, external standpoint, and so my argument fails. After responding to this objection, I close by showing that my analysis of goodness can also help explain some intuitive judgements we have of certain otherwise difficult cases from the actual world, such as those involving the bottlenose dolphin and elephant seal.

1.1 Thompson's and Foot's Neo-Aristotelian account

Foot calls the account “the theory of natural normativity,” and an account of “natural goodness,”² but I will call it ‘the Aristotelian categoricals account’ in order to highlight the

² See, for example, Foot (2001: 49), and the title of that book, respectively.

account's distinctive theoretical device. Central to the account is what Thompson calls "the representation of life". For any creature that we could represent as living, there is a corresponding "interpretation or understanding of the life-form shared by the members of that class . . ." (Thompson 1995, 288). All of a particular creature's activities, be they hunting, sleeping, or reproducing, are to be recognized as hunting or sleeping only by using that understanding of a lifeform, and representing that individual creature as a bearer of that form. Such an interpretation and understanding of the species is articulated as a set of statements which express the characteristic activities and features of this species. So, for instance, *the tiger has four legs*, and *the wolf hunts in packs* are stock examples of Aristotelian categoricals. The categoricals do not necessarily express the statistical facts of the population. So, for instance, even if someone were to surgically remove one leg from every single tiger in the world, it does not follow that the categorical thereby becomes false. Further, because there are numerous Aristotelian categoricals specifying the lifeform, likely no individual creature will perfectly instantiate all the categoricals specified for members of its kind.

Aristotelian categoricals are also teleological, in the sense that they do not merely articulate generalizations about members of a kind having certain features or doing certain activities, but pick out features and activities that relate to the proper ends of the relevant kind. So, the expression of those activities or features

possess certain further possibilities of combination—in particular, of 'teleological' combination with others of their same form. Their linguistic expressions, that is, are fit to enter into certain sorts of 'final cause'. 'They have blossoms of such-and-such type in order that such-and-such insects should be attracted and spread their pollen about.' (Thompson 1995: 292-293)

Since the features and activities expressed in the categoricals relate to the "final cause" of the relevant species, the categoricals can be the basis on which normative evaluations are made. Foot writes:

[W]hat distinguishes an Aristotelian categorical from a mere statistical proposition . . . is the fact that it relates to the teleology of the species. . . . This is why the noise made by the rustling of leaves is irrelevant in this context while the development of roots is not. And this is why Aristotelian categoricals are able to describe norms rather than statistical normalities. (Foot 2001: 33)

That is, which generalizations count as Aristotelian categoricals depends upon whether those generalizations relate to the teleology of the species, which Foot (going beyond Thompson) identifies as species-characteristic ways of seeking: self-maintenance and reproduction (2001: 31), and in the case of humans, reason-following (2004: 11-12). This is why the categoricals form the basis for kind-specific norms of goodness. Each species has its distinct way of seeking its species-teleology, and so each kind has its own set of categoricals, giving rise to different norms of goodness varying with kind-membership. Let me illustrate with a few examples. Blood circulation by heart-pumping is needed for a good human even though it is not required for a good jellyfish, since it does not have blood. The wolf hunts in a pack to obtain food, and so a wolf requires a certain set of social instincts in order for it to be good. By contrast, hunting in a pack is not how the tiger hunts prey. Thus, having the social instincts needed to hunt together is not needed to be a good tiger, which is solitary. The categoricals can also be the basis on which *negative* normative evaluations are made. An individual which does not satisfy a particular categorical would have a defect. So, a tiger with only three legs would be one suffering from a defect. Similarly, Foot suggests, a human who is unable to recognize and respond to *reasons* for action would not be a good human (2004: 11-12).

The Aristotelian categoricals, then, give rise to different standards of goodness varying with the kind. In this sense, the categoricals *are* the kind-specific standards, in a manner of speaking (because those standards are derived from the categoricals). And so, just as a member can satisfy its kind-based standard, a member can satisfy its categoricals, in a manner of speaking. Let us turn now to the question of whether the account contends that a member's goodness is fully explained by satisfying the categoricals. Put otherwise, we ask whether the account claims that a member's goodness obtains solely (and not merely partly) in virtue of satisfying the categoricals. To answer this question, we must first clarify what the solely and partly in-virtue-of relations are. Fact x holds solely in virtue of fact y just in case y's obtaining by itself determines, and thus fully explains, x's obtaining. A fact x can obtain partly in virtue of fact y. Fact x is only partly in virtue of fact y just in case y's obtaining together with that of some other fact(s) determines x's obtaining, and so y only partly explains x.³ We can now answer the question posed earlier, whether the

³For instance, something's being a red car is partly in virtue of that thing's being red. The former is also partly in virtue of the thing's being a car.

account claims that a member's being good holds solely in virtue of its satisfying the categoricals.⁴ In this 'solely in virtue of' formulation, the claim does not appear in Thompson's and Foot's writings. However, it is fair to read it as implicit in Foot's account, in light of her discussion of "norms" (kind-based standards of goodness) and their application; the categoricals express how self-maintenance and reproduction are achieved for a particular lifeform, and "[f]rom all this, *norms* were derived, requiring for instance, a certain degree of swiftness in the deer . . ." (Foot 2001: 34).⁵ She continues: "By the application of these norms to an individual member of the relevant species it (this individual) was judged to be as it should be or, by contrast, to a lesser or greater degree defective in a certain respect" (Foot 2001: 34). So, Foot can here be plausibly interpreted stating that satisfying the norms and categoricals is sufficient for an individual to be "as it should be", and thus to be good.⁶ Plausibly, the individual's possession of certain properties (expressed by the categoricals) is the determinant of its satisfying the categoricals; and the more of those properties the individual possesses, the more it satisfies the categoricals. Since satisfying the categoricals (by itself) determines the member's goodness, its goodness is solely in virtue of satisfying the categoricals.

Does Foot take herself to be providing an exhaustive account of goodness? In a well-known essay entitled "Utilitarianism and the Virtues", Foot provides a glimpse into how she conceives of her project of accounting for moral goodness, and thereby also how she conceives of her broader (Aristotelian categoricals) project of *natural goodness*, moral goodness being a special case of the latter.⁷ In that essay, Foot begins her argument by following Peter Geach (1956) in claiming that there are some uses of the word 'good' such as 'a good event' "that do *not* at least as they stand have a sense. Following this line one might suggest that philosophers are a bit hasty in using expressions such as 'a better world'" (Foot 1985: 199). Foot understands phrases such as 'a good event' or 'a good state of affairs', by themselves, to have only a speaker-relative sense at best.

⁴ *A member's being good*, and *its satisfying the categoricals* are facts (things in the world making true propositions true). However, in this essay I will often also express the former as *a member's goodness*, intending this as shorthand for the relevant fact.

⁵ Thus, for Foot it appears that the categoricals are explanatorily prior to the standards.

⁶ As failing to satisfy any of the categoricals is a defect, satisfying them is also necessary for goodness. Thus, it is plausible (that Foot contends) that *necessarily*, the goodness of a member is solely in virtue of satisfying the categoricals. In no metaphysically possible world does a member that fails to satisfy the categoricals avoid defect.

⁷ "*Life* will be at the centre of my discussion, and the fact that a human action or disposition is good of its kind will be taken to be simply a fact about a given feature of a certain kind of living thing" (Foot 2001: 5). Hence, Micah Lott interprets Foot as holding that "moral goodness is a form of natural goodness in human beings" (2012: 354).

Such phrases are also not salvaged simply by tacking on ‘from a moral point of view’ at the end. While the qualification ‘from a moral point of view’ may have sense in certain “special contexts” (203), Foot expresses skepticism that just any phrase with that qualification tacked onto the end would reliably result in something coherent. So, Foot argues it cannot be assumed that ‘good state of affairs from a moral point of view’ has any sense. However, she points out that it would be mistaken to assume that this expression has no sense in any of the contexts in which it appears. She recognizes that John Harsanyi and also R.M. Hare provide utilitarian theories “in which a certain interpretation is implicitly provided for such expressions” (203). Nevertheless, while talk of good states of affairs has sense within those theories, Foot insists that such talk does not have reference “unless the arguments given by Hare and Harsanyi are acceptable . . .” (204), which arguments she rejects.

Foot is clear in her essay that its aim is to counter utilitarianism, which she says “tends to haunt” even its opponents and so should be directly refuted (196). Now whether or not Foot is correct that the arguments of Hare and Harsanyi are not acceptable, and thus utilitarianism has indeed been refuted, is not my focus here. But what one should notice from her essay is that Foot’s project is one searching for defensible sorts of goodness. In the end, she allows that in a way there *is* such a thing as a good state of affairs, but insists that a truly good state of affairs “appears *within* morality as the end of one of the virtues”, rather than standing “*outside* morality as its foundation and arbiter” (206). In other words, Foot can accept good states of affairs, in a way, but only as the sorts of states that a virtuous (benevolent) human who seeks the good of others would aim to realize. So, such “good states” have “no special meaning in moral contexts other than the one that the virtues give them” (207). Thus, her view is that the only sort of moral goodness that exists is found in the virtues, and it is reasonable to presume that her rejection of utilitarianism helps motivate this.⁸

Foot’s project, thus, is not simply to articulate and motivate a sort of goodness found in the virtues, leaving room for the possibility of other sorts as well. If this were her project, there would have been no need for her to refute utilitarianism and its posit of good states of affairs, which could co-exist with the goodness of the virtues. Instead, Foot thinks that the latter would be “haunted”

⁸ Foot does not refute deontology in her essay, but one may presume this is due to deontology usually being a theory of the right rather than the good. She does not discuss platonism, likely since it was (and remains) not a popular position.

by utilitarianism, and this is because utilitarianism offers a different sort of goodness that is normative upon humans. This should not have bothered Foot's project if all it sought was an account of the goodness of the virtues (that is not founded upon another goodness), without also requiring that it was the only sort of goodness normative for humans. Thus, Foot's project is after an exhaustive account of goodness in this sense. Indeed, Foot takes her project to have found the only defensible sort of goodness there is, and it is kind-relative natural goodness, of which moral goodness is a special (human) case. Later in the chapter, I will argue that the counterexample I offer does present a challenge to Foot's neo-Aristotelianism because it points to a plausible judgment of goodness or badness that cannot be explained by her account. In addition, we have reason to expect that this challenge will not be subject to her critique.

We have seen that each lifeform has its own characteristic features and activities, expressed by Aristotelian categoricals, that relate to its species teleology and form the basis for species-specific norms of goodness. Thompson and Foot do not use the following terminology in this way, but let us call the whole set of these characteristic activities of kind K 'the function of K', such that the function includes both the activities and teleological ends.⁹ For instance, *the wolf hunts in packs* articulates, of the wolf, one of these characteristic activities (which loosely speaking is one its "functions"¹⁰), and includes both the activity and the implicit teleological end of self-maintenance. Since the Aristotelian categoricals express each and every one of the activities contained in the function of kind K, and the goodness of a member of K obtains solely (and not merely partly) in virtue of satisfying the categoricals, that member's goodness is also held to be solely in virtue of performing the function of the K.

1.2 Murphy's counterexample to the Aristotelian account

Thus, the Aristotelian account would claim that for any member of kind K, that member's being good obtains solely in virtue of its performance of the function of K (to use our *function* terminology). Now consider for a moment the question: How far can we take the Aristotelian

⁹ The reason to introduce this terminology of 'function of K' in addition to the function of a body part of a K is that we are assessing the Aristotelian theory as an account of the goodness of individual things instead of merely their parts. At any rate, categoricals for the individual things as a whole are not foreign to Foot, given her examples regarding the deer's swiftness for eluding predators and cooperative hunting of the wolf (2001 34). Some motivation for both the priority of the individual's functions, and for functions as activities, can be found in James Lennox's (2017 42-44) reading of Aristotle's focus on the whole organism and its "certain complete actions".

¹⁰ The function of a given K is a set of several activities, but loosely speaking each of those activities is a function.

account, and in particular the claim that a member (of K)’s goodness is solely in virtue of performing its function, whatever that function is? Mark Murphy’s insight is that it *does* matter what its function is. He asks us to imagine “a lesser god” who creates a being that is designed to be ignorant, friendless, and unable to appreciate beauty.

A lesser god might fashion a being that ought not to—that is, it would be defective with respect to its design plan if it came to—know things, or to make a friend, or to appreciate something beautiful. But we would resist the view that these things are admirable or lovable just by exhibiting the features *being dead* or *being ignorant* or *being friendless*. (Murphy 2011: 160, italics not added.)

For simplicity, let us focus on the feature of ignorance. Being ignorant is intuitively not a good feature even if possessing it fulfills that being’s “design plan” and thus also satisfies its kind-based standard. While being ignorant might have some good effects, such as avoiding being targeted as a political threat in a totalitarian government (my example), Murphy’s point is that on the Aristotelian account it would follow that the being’s ignorance is good for its own sake.¹¹ But intuitively, being ignorant is not. Murphy does allow that good can come of ignorance, death, and the like, but argues they are not good for their own sakes. Regarding a thing’s death, he writes: “When a thing’s dying is admired, it is not admired as such, but as something that is accepted as just necessary, or as for the sake of something better or avoidance of something worse” (159).

If Murphy’s example succeeds, then it is a counterexample to the Aristotelian account of what goodness is solely in virtue of. Murphy has quite rightly seized upon the insight that it is not the case that things are good solely in virtue of performing their function.¹² I argue, however, that his example does not clearly impugn the Aristotelian account and does not cleanly bring out the insight just mentioned. The *ignorant being* example gains its intuitive appeal only if one assumes that the kind to which the being belongs has a function which includes its being a knower (or being rational). If the being were something not a knower (e.g. oak or squirrel), the view that the being is good by exhibiting “ignorance” should *not* be resisted. Indeed, it is doubtful a non-knower can be ignorant. Aquinas, in *De Malo* (q.3, a.7) distinguishes between nescience (lack of knowledge)

¹¹ In the terminology of Christine Korsgaard’s “Two Distinctions in Goodness” (1983), such goodness would be properly called “final” goodness, as contrasting with instrumental goodness.

¹² Using this insight as a springboard, Murphy’s own proposal is that in addition to meeting its kind-based standards, there is a further condition for something’s goodness: “So I say that the best theistic account of the good will take what constitutes a thing’s goodness to be jointly fixed by Godlikeness and by its kind --- being like God in ways that belong to the kind to be like God” (Murphy 2011, 160).

and ignorance, which is lacking knowledge *that a member of a kind ought to possess*. So, the ignorant being is a knower and is not good, owing to its failure to possess knowledge that it ought to. But then, of course, its defect can be explained solely on kind-dependent considerations. Indeed, the example turns upon those considerations, and thus the ignorant being fails as a counterexample to a kind-based account.

There is a second problem with Murphy's example. The problem is that ignorance cannot be a function. As the ignorant being's ignorance is essentially the failure to know things it ought to, its ignorance is a privation (of the act of knowing those things). But I argue that genuine Aristotelian kinds have functions that involve positive activities instead of privations or inactivities. So, some so-called function to *not* H (where H is some activity) does not count as a genuine function. Thus, on Aristotelianism, something having such a "function" will not be a metaphysically possible thing, and thought experiments ought not to use it. The argument for this acceptance of Aristotelian functions as positive features but not privations can be made by bringing out in more detail my earlier claim that function involves activity. Aryeh Kosman's interpretation of Aristotle provides a basis for such an account of function. Kosman's answer to the question of what it is to be something (to be a member of kind K), is to act as Ks act, which is to engage in the characteristic work (*ergon*—function) of the K:

To be a horse is to perform the characteristic activities in which a horse engages in leading its equine life, the horse's characteristic work: its *ergon*. To be a horse is therefore to be at work— *energos* —as a horse, or in other words—and this is the prize we were after—it is to be actively— *energeia* —a horse. (Kosman 2013: 122)

To be a horse is to engage in equine activity. Earlier, I characterized the 'function of K' as the set of characteristic activities of kind K, and so 'function of K' roughly corresponds to what Kosman calls the characteristic work (*ergon*) of that kind. Thus, function involves a positive sort of "work" rather than an avoidance of some activity. This is what Kosman puts so aptly above, that performing the horse function "is to be actively—*energeia*—a horse". So, something's function cannot be to be ignorant, since that does not specify an activity but rather what to avoid. For similar reasons, something's function cannot be to be uncultured, and so on.¹³

¹³ What, then, of static categoricals such as the tiger has four legs? Unlike the wolf hunts in packs, the former does not express an activity. Perhaps the static trait may be more properly expressed as a particular way by which the lifeform performs its activities, such as *the tiger hunts four-leggedly* (and *the tiger defends itself four-leggedly*, etc., as suggested by Mark Murphy in personal conversation).

1.3 An Ebola-like microbe: An effective counterexample to the Aristotelian account

Even though Murphy's counterexample does not get off the ground for the reason above, I accept his insight that some things can meet their kind standards without being good. In the remainder of this chapter, I will retain that insight but develop it by offering a more effective counterexample that avoids the problem plaguing Murphy's example. It is an Ebola-like microbe whose function includes destroying organisms, for destruction's sake, by attacking their early-detection system before devastating their vascular system.¹⁴ This microbe is not the actual Ebola virus, but a microbe similar with respect to method and effectiveness of transmission, as well as similar in power. If the function of the actual Ebola is not to destroy organisms, my proffered counterexample would not be affected; the function of the Ebola-like microbe includes the end of destroying organisms (just for the sake of destruction), and this function is stipulated by hypothesis. Counterexamples to an account of goodness do not have to be actual individuals (or members of actual kinds), but rather metaphysically possible individuals (or members of metaphysically possible kinds). There is another reason that the Ebola-like microbe is not the actual Ebola virus, and the reason is that it is not a virus. Viruses depend directly on other lifeforms for their operations. For instance, while a member of an Aristotelian lifeform takes in nutrients and converts them into the energy it needs, viruses depend on their host to metabolize that energy. Indeed, most of the virus's biological activities are really done by their hosts, but under viral control. This is one reason it is controversial that viruses are lifeforms. To ensure that the Ebola-like thing belongs to a kind of Aristotelian lifeform, I have stipulated that it is not a virus but a different kind of microorganism ('microbe').¹⁵ This kind of microbe does not rely on a host's metabolic processes and energy, but carries out its own microbiological activities, including evading detection and destroying an affected organism's vascular system.

¹⁴ The guise of the good thesis (see, e.g. Tenenbaum [2010: 3]), which asserts that desire or intentional action seek what the subject believes to be good, might be thought to be at odds with destruction for its own sake, if the latter cannot be good or thought to be so. Now, the microbe does not have beliefs. However, an analogous form of the thesis would be that all creatures seek what appears good for them. How can destruction for its own sake appear good for the microbe? I contend that the microbe is inclined to seek such destruction as one of its goods, and so such destruction appears good to the microbe. In Section 1.4, I will explain why a lifeform's function and good need not be limited to seeking self-maintenance and reproduction.

¹⁵ If an Aristotelian believes that microbes are also merely borderline substances, then let the Ebola-like thing be an insect, like the smallest known insect *S. musawasensis* beetle (Polilov 2015) which is as small as some single-celled organisms. In this case, the Ebola-like thing's method of transmission (infestation) would be slightly different from actual Ebola's, although its power to destroy and effectiveness of transmission could remain similar to it.

Ex hypothesi, the microbe is such that at least one of its functions has the teleological end of destruction for its own sake. In contrast to say, the rabbit which “destroys” the carrots and grasses it eats, the Ebola-like microbe has at least one function whose end is destructive of others for the sake of destruction, while the rabbit destroys for the sake of nutrition.¹⁶ The Ebola-like microbe is a counterexample to the Aristotelian account because it is bad when it performs its functions. We know by intuition that a functioning Ebola-like microbe is bad—we know that something is (non-instrumentally) bad which functions to ravage mammals by rapid infection, for the sake of destruction. But on the Aristotelian claim that a thing’s goodness is solely in virtue of function-performance, the microbe would be good; its badness cannot be accounted for by Aristotelians,¹⁷ even though the Aristotelian account purports to be an exhaustive account of something’s goodness or badness. So, the Ebola-like microbe is a counterexample.

Strictly speaking, the Ebola-like microbe would plausibly have more functions than to destroy organisms (in the way it does), since the microbial lifeform would have other categoricals pertaining to its self-sustenance and other aspects of life. So, strictly speaking, one should not reason from a particular microbe's performance of its destructive function to concluding it is thereby a good Ebola-like microbe as a whole. Instead, we should conclude that the performance of that function is good-making, arguing in the following fashion: If the Aristotelian account is correct that an individual thing’s goodness is solely in virtue of performing its function (set of characteristic activities), then performing any of the functions (a single characteristic activity) is good-making. For some things, performing some of their functions (single characteristic activities) is not good-making, as shown in my counterexample. So, it is not the case that the solely-in-virtue-of claim of the Aristotelian account is correct. However, for the remainder of this chapter, often I will speak of the counterexample being good (as a whole) by Aristotelian lights in virtue of performing its destructive function, assuming the other functions were being performed as well. But my arguments will all go through even if formulated in the more careful way.

¹⁶ For the same reason, the counterexample I offer should be contrasted with the bottlenose dolphin, whose mating practices (perhaps similar to sexual assault) may be disturbing to the reader. Shane Glackin (2008) points out that male bottlenoses form alliances with other males, usually relatives, to coerce unwilling females into sexual intercourse. However, the sort of counterexample I offer is significantly different from the bottlenose, since it is arguable the latter’s coercive copulation is not for the sake of coercion or injury but for the sake of reproduction.

¹⁷ Its badness cannot be accounted for by neo-Aristotelians like Foot, at least (see also footnote 24). But one of Foot’s defenders, Micah Lott, recognizes that there is some basis to a similar sort of judgment of badness. However, it can nonetheless be accounted for by Foot’s theory, particularly from the perspective of the benevolent human (Lott 2012). I show at the end of this chapter that his response is not successful.

The counterexample I offer is such that its destructive effects are part of (are partly constitutive of) its function.¹⁸ Unlike the ignorant being, whose positive effects¹⁹ (if any) would constitute the instrumental goodness of that being, any destructive effects of the Ebola-like microbe would constitute the *non-instrumental* goodness of the microbe, for the following reason: If a thing's function includes (i.e. is partly constituted by) producing certain effects (E) on others, an Aristotelian should accept that the thing would be non-instrumentally²⁰ good for producing those effects (E). For instance, say a human's function includes being generous, which is to give to others. This function includes producing an effect, namely the effect (E') of things being given to others. Further, and this is the point, a human who produces effect E' (in a generous way) would not merely be instrumentally good for producing that effect. Rather, the Aristotelian should say that the human is non-instrumentally good, since that effect is part of its function instead of a further effect of that function. Given this principle, then, and by Aristotelian lights, the Ebola-like microbe is non-instrumentally good in virtue of the destruction it brings to other things. But the microbe performing that function is non-instrumentally bad, we know intuitively. Thus, there is a problem for the Aristotelian account.

Now, suppose the destruction wrought by my counterexample were to cause *further* effects, some of which happened to be good. For instance, imagine that the Ebola-like microbe in one metaphysically possible world brought some small benefit to the ecosystem, such as providing a little carcass-meat for a few scavengers. In such a world, providing a little meat for scavengers would be a further effect of its destructive function. Thus, the microbe would merely be instrumentally good for these positive effects. Such an Ebola-like microbe that destroyed organisms (for destruction's sake), however, would nevertheless be non-instrumentally good by Aristotelian lights, as it performed its function. But it is non-instrumentally bad, and we know it, regardless of what further positive effects come about.

What determines the content of the function of a given kind? This is not an epistemological question of how one would know what that function is, but instead the metaphysical question of

¹⁸ The Ebola-like microbe's function is a set of activities, one of them being, say, to secrete toxins so as to destroy an organism's vascular system. The activity here is secreting toxins while the species-teleology is the destructive effect on organisms. In this way, the destructive effect constitutes (i.e. is part of) the function. And the function includes (i.e. is constituted by) that effect.

¹⁹ E.g. avoiding being targeted by a totalitarian government because the being is ignorant.

²⁰ See footnote 11 about Korsgaard's use of 'final' goodness as the contrast to 'instrumental' goodness.

what the function of the K is, and what determines its content. It is plausible that destruction is not part of the function of actual Ebola, but that it destroys for the sake of self-maintenance or reproduction. In contrast, I claim that destruction for its own sake is part of the function of the Ebola-like microbe. Now imagine that the microbe's activities targeting surrounding organisms brings about both nutrition for itself and the destruction of those organisms. Of these outcomes, which are included in the microbe's function, self-maintenance and destruction, or merely self-maintenance? My argument hinges upon destruction also being included. True, the Aristotelian categoricals account does set the content of K's function. That account emphasizes that this content is an implicit representation of the lifeform, that the content is not a statistical claim, and that they should form the basis of normative evaluations. Now, however, the request is to make the representation of the lifeform more explicit, to yield an elaboration of what decides the content of the categoricals, including the species-teleology of the kind in question.

While I have a preference for how the general contours of an account of function should go,²¹ for the purposes here all that is needed is that there be *some* Aristotelian metaphysical account of what constitutes a K's function. Here we need not take a stand on a particular account as long as there is some account.²² The vast majority of Aristotelians would accept that every kind has some function (or set of characteristic activities for a given kind), according to some account of what decides that function. Equipped with such an account, whatever it is, we would then be able to answer the question in the previous paragraph about what the Ebola-like microbe's function includes. If its function includes destruction, then assuming there is a metaphysically possible world in which it performs that function, the counterexample succeeds. If instead the function does not include destruction for its own sake, then my arguments do not show that the microbe is a

²¹ My preferred account of what determines the K's function is that it is in virtue of the essence of the K. As I will explain in Chapter 4, the essence of a member of K, (its essence *as a member of K*) is what metaphysically explains the content of the kind-based standards of K. In that chapter, I argue that the content of that essence does not reasonably require further explanation, because something's essence is what it is.

²² There is of course a vast literature about function from the philosophy of biology (e.g. Wright, L. [1973], Boorse, C. [1976], or Bigelow and Pargetter [1987]). True, an evolutionary-etiological account will not account for an activity's function to destroy for its own sake, since on that account the function of an activity is the adaptive feature for which the trait was selected. All adaptive features have the end of fitness and reproductive success rather than destruction. Nevertheless, most of these contemporary accounts of biological function are not compatible with Aristotelianism, and any neo-Aristotelian account of biological function will likely need to (re)introduce notions such as form and powers (see Lennox [47-49] for instance) and function will not be restricted to being accounted for merely by the adaptive feature for which a trait was selected. Later I address neo-Aristotelian worries about destruction being a function.

counterexample. But then the details of the hypothetical example could be modified²³ so that it does count as a counterexample. In order to successfully object to this move, the objector would be tasked with the difficulty of casting sufficient doubt upon even the metaphysical *possibility* of a destructive function for the microbe, on any plausible account of function available to the Aristotelian. I show later that this objection fails.

At this point it is also worth pointing out that the counterexample argument I offer also challenges other neo-Aristotelian accounts. This is because their accounts of goodness also rest upon the notion of the proper function of a given kind. The notion of function arises in Rosalind Hursthouse’s mention of a social animal well-fitted and endowed to serve its teleological ends “in the ways characteristic of the species” (Hursthouse 202), and Alasdair MacIntyre’s appeal to “the distinctive powers that [something] possesses *qua* member of that species” (MacIntyre 64). I have offered an example of a lifeform that achieves its teleological ends in ways characteristic of its species and species-endowments, or that activates its distinctive species-powers, yet is bad when it does. Hursthouse and MacIntyre likely agree with Foot that kind-relative goodness exhausts all the goodness there is, otherwise they would have to concede that there is also a kind-independent standard of goodness. So, assuming that Hursthouse and MacIntyre want to reject this concession, they would also assert that a thing’s goodness holds solely in virtue of function-performance. Thus, the example I offer would also be effective against their neo-Aristotelian accounts.

Lastly, even though it challenges Aristotelian views on goodness,²⁴ I wish to make clear that my counterexample argument is not a challenge to the view that (for things belonging to a kind) an individual’s goodness is *partly* in virtue of satisfying kind-dependent standards.²⁵ Instead,

²³ For instance, on an account based on the essence of the K (see footnote 21), the microbe example would be modified from one having an essence whose associated function is to provide carcass meat to a few scavengers, to that whose function is to destroy.

²⁴ I challenge Aristotelian theories seeking an exhaustive account of goodness that make room only for “intrinsic” teleology. Some scholastics distinguish intrinsic from extrinsic ends. Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* I, q.65, a.2, c), for instance, writes about a) creatures existing for their own individual end. But he also contends b), that “less noble” creatures exist for the sake of more noble ones. Further, c) each creature exists for the sake of the perfection of the whole universe, and d) the universe for the sake of God. Intrinsic ends are described in (a), and extrinsic ends in (b)-(d). An Aristotelian positing extrinsic ends could reject the goodness of the Ebola-like microbe because it does not exist for the perfection of the universe and sake of God (although this would concede there is more than merely kind-based goodness). It is thus a weakness of Foot’s Aristotelianism that it has no room for extrinsic teleology.

²⁵ One might, I suppose, support this partly-in-virtue claim by deploying Foot’s point that cooperative hunting is required for the wolf, and swiftness for the deer (2001: 34). One could then go on to argue that activities good-making for the wolf (e.g. cooperative hunting) are not so for the deer, and so something’s goodness is partly in virtue of satisfying its kind-based standards. William Fitzpatrick (2008: 186) and Mark Murphy (2011: 155-9) each offer similar arguments for the partly-in-virtue claim.

it shows only that satisfying those standards is not what something's goodness is *solely in virtue* of. Nonetheless, in showing that satisfying kind-based standards is not enough for goodness, my counterexample argument provides reason to be optimistic about an account of goodness which includes a kind-independent standard in some way, the details of which I later flesh out in Chapter 2.

1.4 Objection 1: Is destruction a possible function?

Let me now address an objection. A defender of Foot might argue that a function whose end is destruction is not a metaphysically possible function. If this is correct, then my counterexample would fail, relying on a “function” whose end is destruction. Earlier, we saw that Foot argues that the categoricals account needs to go further than Thompson does, and that is to specify the content of species-teleology. She states of the categoricals that “in plants and non-human animals these things all have to do, directly or indirectly, with self-maintenance, as by defence and the obtaining of nourishment, or with the reproduction of the individual, as by the building of nests” (Foot 2001: 31). The activities expressed by the categoricals must relate to these ends in order “to isolate the kind of proposition that will yield evaluations of individual organisms” (30), propositions having to do with species-teleology. This is how we may reject a would-be categorical about the rustling noise of oak leaves in the wind but accept that of the development of its roots, since only the latter relates to self-maintenance or reproduction. However, with respect to determining which candidates should count as Aristotelian categoricals, I argue it is enough to require that a categorical expresses an activity that does relate to what the species-teleology of that lifeform is, whatever the content of that species-teleology, without setting limits on that content. Now, I do think that the species-teleology for all Aristotelian kinds will include the ends of self-maintenance and reproduction (especially the former).²⁶ However, for the purpose of including all and only propositions relevant to the species-teleology, it is not needed to go further and limit the content of that teleology to those two ends, again, as long as one requires that all categoricals be aimed at its teleology, whatever it may include in addition to those two ends.

Another reason to disagree that the species-teleology should be thus limited is that in the case of humanity, Foot already opens the door wider regarding species-teleology, as she contends

²⁶ Here I have in mind hypothetical kinds of lifeforms which are immortal, and so may not reproduce but whose species-teleology will nevertheless include self-maintenance. But this point is not crucial to my argument.

that for humans the categoricals will include those relating to other ends such as recognizing and responding to reasons for action (reason following).²⁷ Of course Foot is not guilty of inconsistency, since she was always clear that limiting species-teleology to self-maintenance and reproduction only applied to plants and non-human animals. My point is simply that for the same reason that she opens the door wider when it comes to the human, that reason also widens the door to more teleologies when it comes to hypothetical and unknown lifeforms. Foot argues that the species-teleology of the human, the human good, can be articulated by reflecting on the things without which the human would be deprived. The human needs “the mental capacity for learning language; they also need powers of imagination that allow them to understand stories, to join in songs and dances—and to laugh at jokes. Without such things human beings may survive and reproduce themselves, but they are deprived” (2001: 43). So, due to what we might call the deprivation principle, in addition to maintenance and reproduction, the range of species-teleology for the human is widened to include the pursuit of other human goods, which in turn includes ends like reason following.

Foot’s example of humans needing to engage in songs, dances, and jokes might even suggest additional human ends such as play and aesthetic experience. As this is very plausible, then for humans these ends are worth pursuing for their own sakes, not merely for the sake of self-maintenance, reproduction, or reason-following. Play and aesthetic experience are included among John Finnis’ (1980) list of human “basic goods”. Interestingly, MacIntyre (1999) cites research showing that play, for instance, is a characteristic activity not only of humans but also dolphins.²⁸ This counts as evidence for the metaphysical possibility that the good of some non-human lifeforms, actual and perhaps hypothetical, are such that members that merely self-maintain, reproduce, (and even follow reason) would nonetheless be deprived without also pursuing play, aesthetic experience, or some other end. Then, by the deprivation principle, it is plausible that there are many more possible ends than we originally thought, and that some lifeform could even have the end of destroying other things.

²⁷ Foot writes that in the botanical and zoological worlds, once a species’ feature or operation has been related to survival and reproduction, “questions of ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ and ‘What for?’ come to an end. But clearly this is not true when we come to human beings” (Foot 2001: 42). “Natural goodness in reason following is as much a form of goodness in humans as is proper instinctive behavior in animals” (2004: 11-12). MacIntyre (1999) argues that even dolphins can participate in a certain degree of practical reasoning.

²⁸ See MacIntyre (1999)’s Chapter 3, and Chapter 8, (especially [21] and [85]).

1.5 Objection 2: The view from “outside” the lifeform

The next and final objection that will be discussed complains that the counterexample argument implicitly assumes a particular vantage point from which an evaluation is made—a vantage point external to a lifeform conception. Recall that the counterexample argument claimed, contra the Aristotelian account, that some things which perform their function are not good. The defence of this claim had used the example of an Ebola-like microbe, whose function-performance was non-instrumentally bad, and we knew this intuitively. However, an Aristotelian might reject the very vantage point from which we judge that the microbe is bad, that is, reject a lifeform-external vantage point from which a particular lifeform *itself* could be judged to be bad. Micah Lott provides perhaps the clearest explanation for why a defender of the categoricals account would reject that vantage point, asserting that judgements of goodness are only to be made internal to the life form:

In identifying Aristotelian categoricals, we articulate an understanding of the life form. The corresponding judgments of function and natural goodness are made by representing the individual as a bearer of that form. These judgments depend on an understanding of the relations of dependence *within* the life form. But judgments of natural goodness nowhere depend on the idea that it is in some further sense good *that this is how things stand* with respect to this life form. (Lott 2012: 366, italics not added.)

Responding to the view that a benevolent designer would not have male elephant seals fight to the death for their mates,²⁹ Lott points out that such a view would arise “only when we consider the lifeform ‘from without’ and imagine how the lifeform itself might be improved or made ‘better’ for its bearers” (Lott 2012: 366). But any lifeform should be evaluated solely from within. Thus, the judgment of badness made from a perspective external to the lifeform, which was a kind-independent vantage point crucial to my argument, is misguided and confused. Foot also gives this sort of response to the case of “pestilential creatures” (2001: 49), which she would likely have called my proffered counterexample. Foot would argue that the survival of pestilential creatures is not bad nor are their deaths good in any plausible external sense since goodness is only to be

²⁹ This is an example due to William Fitzpatrick. He argues that a benevolent designer would not design such a practice, and even if the Aristotelian “natural goodness” account says that members of a kind which practices such mating rituals are good, Fitzpatrick would reject the account [2000: 72, 79].

judged from within the framework of the Aristotelian categoricals for that kind (of pestilential creature).

Now this is not to say that Lott thinks the virtuous human should be indifferent between violent vs. non-violent mating practices of the elephant seals. But what explains the difference between the seemingly better and worse one is *not* that there is something kind-independently better about one, but rather that our human morality gives us reason to prefer one over the other. So, Aristotelians like Lott do not wish to completely close the door to the reasonableness of making evaluative judgements of the lifeform conceptions themselves. As I mentioned earlier, Lott opens the door to judging that a functioning elephant seal is bad in some sense for its violent mating ritual, but such a judgment is ultimately grounded upon “what a virtuous person aims for—as an end related to a given virtue, such as benevolence—but not as something standing prior to morality which it is the business of morality to promote” (Lott 367 fn 31). Then, there may be reason for a benevolent human to rehabilitate the elephant seals, for instance by training them “to find mates via some less aggressive means” (367).³⁰ This is Lott’s way of illustrating Foot’s recognition that it does make sense to ask the question of which action will most relieve suffering or promote justice, but that the proper place for such an enquiry is “somewhere within morality” (Foot 2001: 49), which is the vantage point of the virtuous human. As this is the standpoint of the human’s lifeform conception, the Aristotelian can accommodate the judgement, in some sense, that a version of the elephant seal that finds mates without maiming or killing competitors is better. Moreover, the Aristotelian would not have to concede that an elephant seal that finds mates in the usual violent manner is bad, that is, “kind-independently” bad from a vantage point external to any lifeform conception. Neither does that concession have to be made about a functioning Ebola-like microbe, and so our (human) judgement about the microbe being bad need not imply that it is bad in any sense properly relevant to its evaluation—that judgement has been explained to come from the standpoint of the human (rather than the microbe’s), and is thus irrelevant to its proper evaluation. Hence, my argument would not be offering an effective counterexample to the Aristotelian account.

³⁰Perhaps they could be retrained to allow fighting but only until the loser indicated submission (like in mixed martial arts), and so very few competitors would be maimed or killed. In this way such a ritual could still encourage the fittest genes to be passed on.

However, one might press the Aristotelian that some other plausible evaluative judgements (about lifeforms themselves) cannot be explained solely by reference to the virtuous, benevolent human viewpoint. For instance, a functioning Ebola-like microbe that destroys *just as much* as a functioning (actual) Ebola virus would be equally bad to the virtuous human, given the human's benevolent commitment to reducing animal suffering. However, it is intuitively plausible that the microbe should be judged to be worse than the virus, as the aim of the former's function includes destruction for its own sake. Yet, as I will demonstrate below, the appeal to the benevolent human standpoint cannot explain the microbe's being intuitively judged worse than the virus, and so the functioning microbe is not good or bad solely in virtue of considerations from that standpoint or lifeform conception. Second, the neo-Aristotelian does not actually have an argument that only the vantage point internal to a lifeform should be used to evaluate something's goodness. Thus, the neo-Aristotelian owes us an argument that it is mistaken to appeal to a view external to the lifeform, and until then, the Aristotelian cannot respond to my counterexample simply by arbitrarily sealing off and not allowing a kind-independent standard of goodness. Let me flesh out these arguments below.

First, some plausible judgements of a comparative nature cannot be explained by the virtuous human viewpoint. Consider an actual Ebola virus, which is a member of a kind whose function is to destroy organisms for the sake of its own survival, and an Ebola-like microbe that is a member of a kind whose function is to destroy for destruction's sake. Further suppose that each performs its function effectively, and in so doing carries out exactly the same amount of destruction and causes an equal measure of pain and suffering. Considering either of these individuals, the virtuous human would plausibly deem them both as bad individuals, given the virtuous human's commitment to reducing the pain and suffering of other organisms. After all, Lott writes that such a commitment would lead a virtuous human to perhaps "help the [elephant seal] species live differently" so as to reduce the pain and suffering of seals inflicted by other male seals (Lott 366-7). The Ebola virus and Ebola-like microbe would not be inflicting suffering and destruction upon members of their own kind, but it is nevertheless plausible that the pain and suffering inflicted upon other organisms would also lead the virtuous human to judge that the virus and microbe are bad, given a commitment to benevolence. It is reasonable to think Foot would say the same, as she grants that "there is a place" for an enquiry of what is a better state of affairs as long as it is asked from within the viewpoint of a benevolent human, "given, for example, that the end is to relieve

suffering or to see that justice is done” (2001: 49). So, the virtuous human would judge that both the virus and the microbe are bad, and indeed, equally bad, as the two were said to cause the same measure of pain and suffering. So, Aristotelians do not have the theoretical resources to support a claim that the Ebola-like microbe is worse than the actual Ebola virus. However, we plausibly judge that the microbe is worse because it destroys for its own sake, even though the virus causes the same amount of suffering. So, the microbe’s goodness or badness does not hold in virtue of considerations from the virtuous human standpoint alone. Thus, this casts doubt on the claim that only the vantage point internal to a lifeform should be used to evaluate something’s goodness.

Perhaps the virtuous human objects to the microbe even more than the virus, not only from the level of pain inflicted, but also from the level of species-teleology. The thought here is that given a benevolent commitment to reducing animal suffering, a virtuous human would deem that the microbe is worse because of its very directedness towards destruction. However, more will need to be said by neo-Aristotelians as to how benevolence, construed as a commitment to reducing or relieving *actual* suffering, is supposed to also entail a negative judgement upon something else’s mere *directedness* towards destruction (and suffering). This is not a straightforward task, for if the suggestion is that benevolence would frown upon something else’s directedness toward destruction because of its potential to bring about actual suffering, then the negative judgment is really in virtue of that expected suffering. But the microbe and virus are equal on that score. So, if instead the claim is that human benevolence also negatively evaluates mere directedness toward destruction, the neo-Aristotelian would need an argument for this.

In addition to doubts about whether Lott’s virtuous human standpoint can account for the plausible comparative judgement above, and thus whether the lifeform-internal standpoint alone is adequate for evaluation, it is important to also realize that neo-Aristotelians do not actually have an argument that one should not appeal to a view external to the lifeform. Now, in their defence, the explanatory power of the Aristotelian categoricals account does count as support. However, the counterexample I have offered now cuts against the completeness of its explanatory power. Whatever other motivation it enjoys, the counterexample has called the theory into question, and so in response the neo-Aristotelian cannot simply insist upon the internal-only viewpoint. Granted, it is also true that Foot in “Utilitarianism and the Virtues” rejects utilitarianism (which uses a lifeform-external viewpoint) because she finds its arguments unconvincing. Even so, there are other accounts of goodness that use the external viewpoint. Thus, even if neo-Aristotelians have

refuted utilitarianism (and broader utilitarian accounts of goodness beyond moral goodness), it does not follow that goodness is only kind-based. Consequently, they have not shown that we should seal off and not allow the kind-independent view external to the lifeform.

If my critique is correct, I nonetheless recognize that defenders of the Aristotelian categoricals account have demonstrated at least two things. First, Foot has the theoretical resources to argue that for any member of a kind, if it is good, its goodness is partly in virtue of satisfying standards for its kind. For example, having sharp claws and engaging in cooperative hunting are required for the good wolf but not the good deer. Indeed, a deer would not be good that had sharp claws and hunted (cooperatively or not).³¹

Second, neo-Aristotelians have also demonstrated that the lifeform conception is necessary for understanding living things. To see anything as an organism, we must recognize “some of its happenings as vital processes and some of its parts as *organs* or *members* of that organism” (Lott 374). Further, in order to recognize what vital processes are occurring, one must appeal to the larger context represented by the lifeform conception. Thompson points out that the same biochemical process may be a different vital process in different lifeforms: mitosis is reproduction in an amoeba, while it is part of self-maintenance in a human (Thompson 273). In addition to providing a way to determine what particular vital process is occurring, the lifeform conception also determines the kind-based standards of goodness, as that conception (articulated by the categoricals) expresses how the teleological ends are achieved, articulating “how nourishment was obtained, how development took place, what defences were available, and how reproduction was secured. (c) From all this, *norms* were derived, requiring, for instance, a certain degree of swiftness in the deer . . .” (Foot 2001: 33-4). This is a compelling argument that there are kind-based standards of goodness. However, it does not follow that these are the only sort of standards there are of goodness. Further argument would be needed.

So, the thesis that a good individual must satisfy standards for its kind, and the thesis that the lifeform conception is ineliminable in understanding organisms and determining kind-based standards, commits one only to the conclusion that an individual’s goodness is partly in virtue of satisfying those lifeform-based standards. The two theses do not entail that an individual’s goodness is solely in virtue of satisfying those standards. So, they do not preclude that the thing’s

³¹ See also footnote 25.

goodness is also partly determined by some other fact, possibly a fact appealing to something beyond a lifeform conception.

Let us take stock of the terrain we have covered. I had explained that when confronted with my counterexample, the neo-Aristotelian might respond that the example mistakenly relies on a vantage point external to the lifeform conception—the only sense in which a functioning microbe is bad comes from a human’s benevolent standpoint, and that standpoint is irrelevant to the microbe’s proper evaluation. So, the neo-Aristotelian does acknowledge that we do have plausible judgements that certain lifeforms themselves are bad, but claims that the human benevolent standpoint can explain all of those judgements. However, I argued that this standpoint cannot account for a plausible comparative judgement between a microbe and actual Ebola, and contended that the microbe’s goodness or badness does not obtain solely in virtue of considerations internal to that standpoint. Even aside from this, I have also just pointed out that the neo-Aristotelian does not have an argument that only the vantage point internal to a lifeform should be used to evaluate something’s goodness. Hence, the neo-Aristotelian owes us an argument that it is mistaken to appeal to a view external to the lifeform. In the absence of such an argument, my counterexample thus gives reason to reject the Aristotelian position that something’s goodness holds solely in virtue of satisfying kind-based standards. While such a conclusion is nonetheless consistent with a thing’s goodness being partly in virtue of satisfying those standards, this latter claim would imply that a complete account of the thing’s goodness would also make reference to a kind-independent standard—likely by contending that its goodness also holds partly in virtue of satisfying that latter standard. This can explain why a functioning Ebola-like microbe is not good, as it fails the kind-independent standard. As alluded to before, further theorizing would be needed to fill out exactly how something would satisfy such a standard, and I do this in Chapter 2.

The position I have motivated in this chapter also opens up a fruitful avenue of research, which is to potentially explain the badness of some characteristic practices of certain *actual* animals. Groups of male bottlenose dolphins characteristically coerce individual females for sex on pain of death (see footnote 16), and we have already discussed elephant seals who violently compete for mates. In this chapter, my argument has *not* been that those creatures are counterexamples to the Aristotelian account, because their mating rituals are done for the sake of reproduction (rather than sexual coercion or destruction themselves). However, we might still plausibly judge that these functioning creatures are defective in some way, from a view external

to the lifeform conception. Now, one could disagree that *this* judgement is an accurate evaluation of the creatures, even while agreeing with my microbe-based critique of the Aristotelian account. But suppose one thinks the judgement is accurate. Then the Aristotelian account would be incapable of explaining it, as the account would face a dilemma: Either concede that the dolphin (or seal)—insofar as it performs that practice—is good, or affirm that those practices are not characteristic of their kind. However, if my argument in this chapter is sound, it potentially opens up a third option: Even though elephant seals and bottlenoses that are brutal in their mating practices would satisfy their kind-based standards, positing the kind-independent standard may provide theoretical resources to explain why functioning members of those kinds are defective (e.g. worse than members of a kind that is nearly identical, minus the terrible practice). Thus, adding the posit of a kind-independent standard allows us to account for all the plausible judgements neo-Aristotelians can account for, but also difficult ones they cannot account for, such as judgements regarding the Ebola-like microbe and potentially also regarding some actual living things. In the following chapter I will begin to develop such a positive account of goodness.

CHAPTER 2. A PLATONIC KIND-BASED ACCOUNT OF GOODNESS

Again, what is it for something to be good? Chapter 1 had rejected the Aristotelian position that an individual's goodness holds solely in virtue of its satisfying kind-based standards. It argued that whatever it holds solely in virtue of would include appeal to a kind-independent standard. One sort of account of goodness appealing to a kind-independent standard is a platonic account. Call a platonic account one that claims that there exists a platonic good that all other good things must either resemble or instantiate. Robert Adams, in *Finite and Infinite Goods* (2002), defends such an account of goodness, contending that resemblance with the platonic good (which he identifies with God) is what the goodness of other things consists in. Mark Murphy (2011), however, argues that this platonic account is in need of Aristotelian supplementation, as it is plausible this resemblance must occur within the context of a thing's kind-membership.

This chapter will offer an account of goodness concerning living beings that are members of kinds, and while it will accept Murphy's account of goodness (but without identifying the platonic good with God), the chapter will further develop the details of such a position with respect to: providing the exact determinants that something's goodness is in virtue of, providing an argument (without presupposing theism) that something's goodness consists in resemblance with the platonic good, and detailing an account of what it is for something to resemble while something else does not resemble the platonic good. I will organize this work by drawing a distinction between the question of what something's goodness obtains in virtue of, and the question of what that goodness in turn consists in (with regards to its metaphysical status).

I will begin with a brief exposition of Adams' account of the platonic good, which will be important background for my discussion. Next, I will tackle the first question above of what something's goodness obtains in virtue of, explaining why an individual's goodness must hold in virtue of both resemblance to the platonic good and also kind-based considerations. I sharpen this claim later, but I first use this coarse-grained claim that an individual's goodness holds in virtue of these two determinants, in order to tackle the second question, which asks what the metaphysical status of that individual's goodness consists in. I respond with an argument that an individual's goodness consists in its resemblance to the platonic good, rather than consisting in goodness as a member of its kind. Next, I return to provide a sharper answer to the question of what an individual's goodness holds in virtue of, and conclude that it is in virtue of exactly the following

determinants: the thing's own properties, those properties being such as to satisfy its kind-based standards (K-standards), and those K-standards resembling the platonic good. I then develop an account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good: The K-standards resemble it firstly with respect to requiring activities, as the platonic good will be posited to be active, and must resemble it secondly also at the level of what teleology those activities are directed towards. I also motivate the need for a third respect of resemblance, to be developed in future work. The chapter ends with a discussion of the nature of the platonic good, including an argument that the latter is an exemplar rather than a property, and an argument that the platonic good is metaphysically necessary.

2.1 Robert Adams' account of the platonic good

As mentioned, Adams' account of the platonic good will be important background for this entire chapter. The goodness that interests Adams is not goodness construed as usefulness, or merely instrumental goodness. Neither is his study about well-being — what is ultimately good *for* an individual.³² Instead, Adams is interested in the goodness “of that which is worthy of love or admiration”. This is the goodness that is *excellence* (Adams 1999: 13). Moral virtues are excellences, but excellence is not exclusively moral. Adams points to beauty as an important example of platonic excellence, alluding to Plato's notion of a transcendent Beauty, found in the *Symposium*, where Beauty “is the standard of all beauty and all other beautiful things are beautiful by ‘participating’ (211B) in it.” (Adams 13) For Adams, this transcendent Good is the monotheistic God, as it was for Augustine and many others (14). Adams points out that he has no interest in defending a theory of universals, but rather a theory of value. In addition, he has no interest in representing the beliefs of the historical Plato *per se*. However, Adams does take a stand regarding two interpretations in Platonic scholarship about the Forms: One in which they are primarily exemplars, the other in which they are properties or universals. As Adams takes the platonic good to be God, and thus not an abstract object “but a concrete (though not a physical) individual” (14), it is no surprise that Adams conceives of the platonic good as an exemplar.

As the transcendent Good, the single platonic form of excellence is held to be capable of accounting for all varieties of goodness, a thesis with which Aristotle famously disagrees. As

³² It is usual to distinguish theories of well-being as either hedonist theories, desire theories, or objective list theories (which can be broadly Aristotelian). Regardless, Adams is not interested in what is good for something, but what is lovely or admirable about it.

Adams observes, Aristotle claims “that the diversity of things that are noninstrumentally good is too fundamental for their goodness to be accounted for in terms of a single Platonic Form” (Adams 38). For Aristotle, there are as many sorts of goodness as can be predicated in each Aristotelian category. Further, it seems to me that for Aristotle things are too diverse also because individuals belong to different kinds, and so their goodness cannot be explained by a single transcendent Good. But Adams argues that even if there are varieties of excellence, this does not entail that they are not good in virtue of a relation to some one supreme Good: “All other good things are good by virtue of their relation to one supremely good thing, the central relation being a sort of resemblance or imaging.” (40) Thus, for Adams this transcendent good is a kind-independent and ultimate standard that all other things are good in virtue of resembling.

But Adams is clear that not every sharing of a property with the platonic good counts as resemblance. “Judgments of resemblance are more holistic than that. Suppose there is a squirrel that has the same number of hairs on its body that I have on mine. We would not ordinarily say that this rodent ‘resembles’ me in that respect.” (32) Instead, he argues that there must be a certain context within which resemblance holds, and so resemblance is holistic. This context, he eventually argues, is the sharing of properties in a way that gives God a reason for loving the thing. So, “being excellent in the way that a finite thing can be consists in resembling God in a way that could serve God as a reason for loving the thing.” (36)

Now, Adams readily grants that the meaning of the term ‘good’ is not identical to *resembles God* (15). However, he makes use of classic work in the philosophy of language by Hilary Putnam (1975) that distinguishes between questions of nature and questions of meaning, clarifying their relationship, famously utilizing the example of water. As for considerations of meaning, Adams draws from more themes in the *Symposium* and argues that the semantics of ‘good’ will include being the object of our admiration, desire, and recognition (Adams 19-20). Not that we always admire or desire good things, or never admire bad things; after all for Adams the nature of the Good is not based upon facts of our desires. Though our pursuit (*Eros*) of the Good can be mistaken, Adams insists that we are not always wrong: “[I]f we do not place some trust in our own recognition of the good, we will lose our grip on the concept of good [...]” (20). For this reason, Adams argues persuasively that traits like being sadistic or loving cowardice are contrary to the semantics of goodness (46). What about the distinct question of the nature (rather than semantics)

of goodness? In response, he lays out the following strategy to account for the relationship between semantics and metaphysics:

It is possible, I think, to indicate a general pattern for the relation of natures to meanings where the nature is not given by the meaning. What is given by the meaning, or perhaps more broadly by the use of the words, is a role that the nature is to play. If there is a single candidate that best fills the role, that will be the nature of the thing. (Adams 1999: 16)

As mentioned before, Adams contends that the role picked out by our talk of goodness includes being the object of admiration, desire, and recognition. The best candidate to play the role, argues Adams, is “the divine nature” (28). He rejects, for instance, Richard Boyd’s naturalistic account of the nature of goodness, but a discussion here of Adams’ version of a sort of open-question argument (77-82) would take us too far afield. This chapter will claim that something’s goodness consists in resemblance with the platonic good, but remain neutral about whether the latter is God. Suffice it for our purposes at this point to know that Adams uses what we could call a conceptual-role semantics of goodness that allows him to connect that semantics to its metaphysics, while at the same time leaving room for a distinct metaphysical account of the nature of the platonic good.

2.2 Being good: What an individual’s goodness holds in virtue of, Part 1.

I will argue that for any individual *x* belonging to a kind, *x*’s goodness holds in virtue of two partial determinants: a platonic determinant, and a kind-based determinant. In addition, I will contend that its goodness holds *necessarily* in virtue of those two partial determinants, and so not only is it true that if those two determinants obtain then *x* is good, but further: if *x* is good, both the platonic and kind-based determinants obtain. In other words, it would be a mistake to think that the answer to what something’s goodness holds in virtue of, can leave out either of the two determinants.

Before showing that something’s goodness must hold partly in virtue of satisfying the platonic good in some way, I will first claim the weaker thesis that it must hold partly in virtue of satisfying a kind-independent standard.³³ Chapter 1 provided support for this, arguing that on the kind-based account of what in virtue of which something is good, an Ebola-like microbe would be

³³ I consider this is a weaker thesis in the sense that one might endorse it without also endorsing the further thesis that the kind-independent standard is the platonic good.

good simply because it satisfies its kind-based standard, which includes a requirement to destroy for its own sake. However, such a microbe would not be good, we know intuitively. Hence, the counterexamples show that satisfying a kind-independent criterion is needed for something's goodness to obtain.

At this point, we might be tempted to just contend that being good holds solely in virtue of meeting a kind-independent standard, without a member's goodness being even partly in virtue of satisfying its kind-based standards. I think there is a good reason to resist this further move. To demonstrate this, I will follow two writers, William Fitzpatrick and Murphy, who each offer arguments quite similar at core that resist the move. Let us begin with Fitzpatrick (2008), who argues that something's being good is in virtue of not only the thing's properties, but also the fact that possessing those properties is such as to satisfy standards of goodness for that kind. He gives the example of a good computer, which is good in virtue of booting up quickly, running at a high speed, etc. Fitzpatrick lets "XYZ" stand for these properties that are reasons that the computer is good, and in so doing we realize XYZ are good-making properties. Following Jonathan Dancy, Fitzpatrick recognizes that something's goodness is a resultant property, and the thing's good-making features are the resultance base.³⁴ But, as Fitzpatrick asks, what is the relationship between the former and the latter? While one might initially think that the computer's goodness holds solely in virtue of its base properties obtaining, Fitzpatrick disagrees. We can see that its being good is not only in virtue of its possessing XYZ because many other things can have them without being good:

Does [the fact that the thing is good] consist simply in the fact that it has XYZ? One clear indication that it does not is that any number of things could have XYZ without being good. This is generally true for good-making properties of artifacts: sharpness makes for goodness in a knife, for example, but not in a pair of glasses. [...] In the present case, the point is that the fact that this computer is good consists not only in the fact that it has XYZ, but in this together with the fact that possessing XYZ is such as to satisfy the standards of goodness S for computers. (Fitzpatrick 2008: 186)

Fitzpatrick argues persuasively that an individual thing's being good holds not merely in virtue of XYZ but also partly in virtue of "the fact that possessing XYZ is such as to satisfy standards" for the kind. For brevity, I will also simply call this second fact 'the standards for the kind', although

³⁴ See Dancy (1993: 73-7) and Dancy (2004: 232)

this fact is strictly speaking a relation holding between XYZ and the kind-based standards.³⁵ The relation holds just in case possessing XYZ is required by the kind-based standards (hereafter ‘K-standards’).

Similar to Fitzpatrick’s argument is Murphy’s “chicken fried steak” argument:

Suppose that I come down with a rare disease. Interestingly, the symptoms of this disease include my muscles taking on the taste and consistency of a piece of deep-fried tenderized round steak, my epidermis becoming crisp, like buttermilk-and-egg-saturated flour dipped into hot oil, and my pores oozing a whitish substance that is peppery and creamy. I begin to share the properties that make a properly-prepared chicken fried steak good. But this does not make me better, not in the least, or in any way. (Murphy 2011, 155)

The properties which make for a good chicken fried steak just are *not* the ones that make for a good human. What solves this “chicken fried steak problem” is recognizing that the kind to which an individual belongs determines whether certain properties can be good-making ones. Humans are just not the kind of thing which are good by having crispy and tasty skin oozing with a peppery and creamy substance, “though it surely is what makes a chicken-fried steak good”. He continues, “[m]y view is that whenever a being belongs to some kind, then the standards for excellence for that thing are fixed in part by its kind.” (Murphy 159)

These examples by Fitzpatrick and Murphy both support the conclusion that an individual’s being good holds partly in virtue of kind-based considerations. Call their line of reasoning the kind-dependence argument. This argument has used examples featuring artifacts, but the scope of my inquiry is actually meant to focus on living things belonging to kinds, and the above examples of artifacts were meant to shed light by analogy upon the evaluation of living things. A similar argument can be offered to show that an individual living thing’s goodness is partly in virtue of satisfying kind-based standards. In fact, Philippa Foot’s neo-Aristotelian account of “natural goodness”, which we will examine more closely later, gives such an argument in a backhanded manner. She points out that cooperative hunting is required for the wolf, and swiftness for the deer (2001: 34). As I indicated in Chapter 1, it seems to me that one could then go on to argue that activities good-making for the wolf (e.g. cooperative hunting) are not so for the deer. So, satisfying

³⁵ Fitzpatrick also sometimes calls this fact simply “standards”. See, also for example: “It consists rather in that fact [about the individual possessing XYZ] together with the facts that there are appropriate standards of goodness S for human behavior and that actions that exhibit the features in the resultance base in question [...] violate those standards” (Fitzpatrick 2008: 187-8).

kind-based standards does figure into the wolf's or deer's being good. Further, this result reasonably holds for other kinds of living beings—the conclusion about the wolf and deer held not due to peculiarities of their particular kind. Instead it is more plausible that the result obtained because the relevant things are members of some kind, and are held to the relevant kind-based standard. So, it is reasonable to generalize, and conclude that for any individual *x* that is a member of kind *K*, *x*'s being good is partly in virtue of satisfying standards for *K*.

Of course, as argued earlier, an individual *x*'s being good is also in virtue of a kind-independent determinant, in addition to being in virtue of *x*'s base properties and *K*-standards. I claim, then, the following thesis **D**:

D: The goodness of any individual *x* (belonging to kind *K*) holds in virtue of both kind-based and kind-independent determinants.

Adding the kind-independent determinant affords us theoretical resources to explain the goodness (or badness) of not only individuals belonging to actual kinds, but also individuals belonging to hypothetical but metaphysically possible kinds, such as the Ebola-like microbe. Though the microbe bears properties satisfying its *K*-standards, the kind-independent determinant would not obtain with respect to the microbe, because its activity is destructive for its own sake and thus does not satisfy that determinant (as I will elaborate upon later). But because of the kind-based determinant, we are also able to explain why a human that begins to share the properties that make a tasty chicken fried steak good is nonetheless not good; this is because that human does not possess base properties that satisfy its *K*-standards. Thus, the explanatory power of our account, being able to explain the goodness or badness of ordinary as well as hypothetical things, constitutes a good reason to accept it.

Additionally, it seems to me that the kind-independent determinant should be understood along platonic lines. Being an account of the excellence of individuals, the account's posit of a kind-independent determinant here should not be consequentialist. After all, on contemporary consequentialist theories the primary bearers of goodness are states of affairs, since whether actions (or rules, motives, even individuals) are good derives from the goodness of their consequences, which are states of affairs. As Adams points out, however, states of affairs (unlike individuals) are not the sort of things that can bear the property of excellence, as they lack the required unity to bear it (17). So, the excellence of individuals cannot be derived from states of affairs as the latter cannot possess excellence. Platonic and consequentialist theories are the most

plausible accounts of kind-independent value, but I have just rejected a consequentialist account. Thus, it is reasonable to accept a platonic account of the kind-independent determinant of the excellence of individual things. That is, for this kind-independent determinant to obtain is for the individual to somehow resemble a platonic entity. More precision about this determinant will be developed later in Section 2.4, but for this we must first discuss what x's being good consists in, before returning later to continue our discussion of what it obtains in virtue of.

2.3 Being good: What an individual's goodness consists in

Having discussed what being good is in virtue of, I now turn to the distinct question of what being good consists in. This question concerns the metaphysical status of something's being good. In this section, I will argue that being good is to be good platonically.

For an individual's goodness to be good platonically is for its goodness to consist in its resemblance of the platonic good. Call this the *good platonically thesis*. In contrast, for an individual's goodness to be good in a kind is for its goodness to consist in being good as a member of its kind. Call this the *good in a kind thesis*. It may be possible that x's goodness consists in both platonic goodness *and* goodness in a kind. But then goodness would be less unified and this third thesis strikes me as implausibly complicated, thus I will not consider it any further. Given that in the previous section I argued for D that something's goodness is in virtue of both kind-based and kind-independent considerations, let me ask the preliminary question of whether D is even compatible with goodness consisting in being good platonically. Is someone who endorses the latter claim able to concede a side condition that x's goodness (which is claimed to be platonic) obtains also in virtue of the obtaining of a kind-based determinant (as claimed in **D**)? Conversely, consider the view that x's being good consists in its being good in a kind. Could someone endorse this claim while maintaining **D**, that x's goodness (which is as a member of its kind) obtains also in virtue of a platonic determinant?

Let us begin with the "preliminary question" posed above. Here I think that x's being good platonically is indeed compatible with x's goodness being partly in virtue of x's satisfying K-standards, because what it is for x to resemble the platonic good could depend on kind-membership in some way, such as in determining the context for resemblance. Now, first, as we have seen, Adams contends that a thing (besides God) being excellent consists in being good platonically. He identifies the platonic good with God, and claims a Godlikeness thesis that "other things are

excellent insofar as they resemble or imitate God.” (28) Murphy consciously follows Adams here, agreeing that “the goodness of creaturely goods consists in their resemblance to God” (Murphy 150), and thus Murphy also holds what I have called the good platonically thesis, as well as Adams’ view that the platonic good is God. Further, Murphy accepts Adams’ point that not every shared property counts as resemblance, but the *context* of property sharing does matter. But Murphy criticizes Adams’ explanation of this holism, that it consists in resembling God such that it “could serve God as a reason for loving the thing” (Adams 36). Murphy thinks that this sort of condition for resemblance is “explanatorily pretty useless”, not specifying *what* would give God reason to love something. Instead, he believes that the solution is to fix what it is to resemble God as what the thing “ought to become” qua member of its kind. “It is the kind that fixes the context for determining what counts as a relevant resemblance or failure to resemble, God. Every good, then is a divine likeness, but those that make a thing good are those divine likenesses such that members of the kind ought to exhibit them.” (Murphy 160) Thus, although he disagrees with Adams’ explanation of what context of resemblance is relevant, Murphy does agree that being good is to be good platonically, where God is the Good.

I follow Murphy (and Adams before him) in thinking that goodness consists in being good platonically, and also follow them in understanding x’s being good platonically as x’s resemblance of the platonic good (without claiming the latter is God). Also, as both Adams (32) and Murphy (150) recognize, resemblance is holistic. It seems to me, however, that for the reasons above Murphy is correct that kind-membership is what plausibly and substantively supplies the proper context for an individual’s resemblance to the platonic good. I contend, then, that the good platonically thesis is compatible with x’s goodness being also partly in virtue of satisfying its K-standards. Furthermore, so far the good platonically thesis appears to be a plausible one to hold.

However, the question now arises why we should not think that being good consists in being good in a kind instead, while allowing for a side-condition that something’s being good holds partly in virtue of a kind-independent determinant. Perhaps Murphy and Adams claim that x’s goodness consists in being good platonically because they endorse a theistic platonism. As Murphy writes, “God is at the center of the normative world, not just one object of love among others, but both object of, and standard for, admiration.” (Murphy 2011: 160). But any sort of theistic argument to embrace x’s goodness as consisting in being good platonically is unavailable to my account. So, I offer a different motivation, that accepting the good in a kind thesis leads to

a significant implausibility. The thesis claims that goodness consists in goodness as a kind. Something bad would be bad as a kind. So, the implausibility is that something bad, like an Ebola-like microbe that satisfies its kind-based standards, would not even be good in a kind. Let us unpack this. Suppose that the good in a kind thesis is true. In order to be consistent with **D**, a defender of the goodness in a kind thesis would also hold that what it is for an individual *x* to satisfy kind-standards will partly depend on *x*'s somehow resembling the platonic good. (After all, recall that in order to be consistent with **D**, a defender of the good platonically thesis would also hold that what it is to resemble the platonic good will partly depend on satisfying kind-standards.) So, some *x* that does not resemble the platonic good is not good even if it were to satisfy its kind-based standards. This is simply the lesson of the Ebola-like microbe example in Chapter 1. However, the result is that contending that goodness is goodness in a kind would have the implausible implication that this microbe fails to even be good in a kind. But it is reasonable to think that being good in a kind is to satisfy kind-standards (just as being good platonically is to resemble the platonic good). Thus, the good in a kind thesis is implausible. Now, something's kind-standards could resemble the platonic good (as I will defend later), and so something could be good if (and only if) it satisfies its kind-standards that do resemble the platonic good. However, for things like the microbe, their kind-standards would not resemble the platonic good. Thus, the implausibility remains for things like the microbe, that on the good in a kind thesis, a member meeting its kind-based standards would not even be deemed good in a kind.

The good platonically thesis does not share this sort of problem. This thesis claims that *x*'s goodness consists in its resemblance to the platonic good. However, in order to be consistent with **D**, *x*'s resemblance with the platonic good will hold partly in virtue of *x*'s satisfying kind-based standards. Does an implausibility ensue? Could something resembling the platonic good turn out to be bad, and on the platonically good thesis be deemed (contradictorily) not to even resemble the platonic good? Recall Murphy's chicken-fried steak example, where the human shares properties with the steak that would make the steak resemble the platonic good. But such a human is intuitively not good, and so one might think it is an example of something resembling the platonic good (as it shares the properties making the steak good), yet on the good platonically thesis, be deemed not to even resemble it. However, such an implausibility does not arise, as the human would not resemble the platonic good to begin with. This human would not resemble it because we argued earlier that it is plausible that kind-membership sets the context within which any *x*

resembles the platonic good. So, this sort of implausibility does not follow from the good platonically thesis. Now consider the Ebola-like microbe example. Though it satisfies the standards laid down by kind-membership, the kind-independent determinant does not obtain, and so such a microbe is not good. On the good platonically thesis, it would follow that such a microbe does not resemble the platonic good. This too is plausible. Upon quick reflection, one can see that the good platonically thesis also does not result in implausibilities when analyzing members of run-of-the-mill kinds such as the oak and the squirrel. Thus, because the good in a kind thesis runs into the implausibility explained earlier, it is more plausible to hold the good platonically thesis. Now, of course more detail needs to be provided to explain what exactly it is in virtue of which something resembles the platonic good. We need to explain, for instance, why an oak resembles the platonic good but a microbe does not, though they might each satisfy their respective kind-standards. I will take up this question now.

2.4 Being good: What an individual's goodness holds in virtue of, Part 2

Having developed what being good consists in, we are now in a better position to answer with greater precision the question of what x's being good is in virtue of. I submit that an individual's being good obtains in virtue of three determinants as expressed by the following:

- G** Individual x, member of kind K, is good in virtue of exactly the following partial determinants: x's base properties B, B being such as to satisfy kind-based standards (K-standards), and the K-standards resembling the platonic good.

G should be understood as the claim that x's goodness holds *necessarily* in virtue of those three determinants. As such, not only is it the case that if all three determinants obtain, so does x's goodness, but also that it must be that if x is good, all three determinants obtain.

The final determinant listed in **G** is the fact that the *K-standards* resemble the platonic good. It is tempting to have claimed instead that this final determinant should be the fact that the individual x itself resembles the platonic good, given that I argued that x's goodness consists in being good platonically. Granted, given the good platonically thesis, x's goodness is in virtue of its resembling the platonic good, and the latter is a sole (not merely a partial) determinant of the former obtaining. However, it is also definitional, and provides no further explanation of what x's resemblance of the platonic good holds in virtue of. So, in a way our question in this section (2.4)

asks what x's resemblance of the platonic good holds in virtue of. Now, if one were to answer that it holds solely in virtue of x satisfying its K-standards, we saw earlier that this is not tenable for all kinds K since the standards for certain K such as the Ebola-like microbe do not satisfy (i.e. resemble) the platonic good. Well, what if we also require that the K-standards resemble the platonic good? In that case then, and below I will discuss how a standard could resemble the platonic good, we would claim that x's being good is partly in virtue of its satisfying K-standards and partly in virtue of those standards resembling the platonic good. Notice, then, that this is plausible and is in fact what G claims.

2.4.1 K-standards resembling the platonic good

What is it for the K-standards to resemble the platonic good? I will argue that the K-standards resemble it firstly with respect to requiring activities, as the platonic good will be posited to be active, and must resemble it secondly also at the level of what teleology those activities are directed towards.

Later on, I will argue for each of these claims in turn. But first, let us take a closer look at K-standards, in order to better understand the activities required by them and the teleology of those activities. As argued in Chapter 1, I think a plausible account of the K-standards (for material beings) can be found in the Aristotelian naturalism offered by Michael Thompson (1995) and Philippa Foot (2001). Accordingly, a K-standard for a kind K can be understood as a set of numerous norms corresponding to that kind's numerous Aristotelian categoricals (e.g. the squirrel gathers acorns, the squirrel moves on four legs, etc.).

As for immaterial beings (e.g. angels) that belong to a kind, some other account would have to be given for the content of their K-standards. However, it is nevertheless plausible that for immaterial beings, there are propositions similar to Aristotelian categoricals that express the (immaterial) activities relating to the proper ends of that kind. These ends may likely not include reproduction, but could plausibly include self-maintenance in an analogous sense, and may even include other ends. But whatever ends they pursue, it is plausible that immaterial beings belonging to a kind can have kind-specific norms based upon their characteristic activities and their proper ends. These norms can likewise form the basis of evaluation.

How can an Aristotelian categorical resemble the platonic good? The categoricals are propositions that express lifeform-related features or activities (and using a point made by Aryeh

Kosman, Chapter 1 showed there is a case for understanding the categoricals primarily as expressing *activities* of a lifeform). I take propositions to be representations. A proposition such as *the squirrel gathers acorns* is a representation of the squirrel (its lifeform conception) and also of its activity. More precisely, that proposition is a representation of one aspect of the squirrel's lifeform conception, that aspect pertaining to gathering acorns. A representation can resemble something else.³⁶ So, it is plausible that the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns*, being a representation of the squirrel and its activity of gathering acorns, is the sort of thing that can resemble (or fail to resemble) the platonic good. As a K-standard is made up of many Aristotelian categoricals, the former perhaps being a large set of the latter, it is also reasonable that the K-standard is the sort of thing that can resemble (or fail to resemble) the platonic good via the resemblance of that set's members.

Now, on the basis of what does an Aristotelian categorical resemble the platonic good? We might think that the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns* resembles it with respect to the representation of the particular activity of gathering acorns. In Murphy's theistic platonism, he introduces Aristotelianism and argues that good features are "divine likenesses" that members of the kind ought to possess (Murphy 160). But how exactly does (the representation of something's) gathering acorns count as an activity that is a platonic likeness, given that the platonic good does not gather acorns? Murphy does not have space to answer this sort of question. I will argue that yes, the squirrel's K-standard can resemble the platonic good. But it is not as simple as resembling it with respect to the particular activity of gathering acorns, because, again, it is implausible that the platonic good gathers acorns, or has four legs. Rather, it seems that the K-standard can resemble the platonic good with respect to something more general about the activities required by the K-standard. After all, if that K-standard resembled it with respect to gathering acorns itself, keep in mind that the squirrel's other categoricals include moving with four legs and a bushy tail, seeing

³⁶ For instance, a stylized sculpture of some Hollywood actor is a representation of that actor, and it is plausible that the sculpture can resemble some other object, such as one of the actor's own parents. It is stylized and thus does not provide all the details beyond the simplest ones, but enough to constitute a representation of that actor. The view of a sculpture being a kind of representation is what Peter van Inwagen (1986) calls pictorial abstractionism, in his discussion of abstractionist possible worlds (van Inwagen 1986: 201). I agree with Van Inwagen that pictorial abstractionism will not adequately represent a maximal (possible) world, as it will leave out details of the way that world is. However, a representation of a lifeform conception will be simpler than that of a member of the kind, much less a world. After all, a lifeform conception expresses the *types* of activities characteristic to it, not particular tokens of it. So, the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns* will be a representation that is not as precise as any token acorn-gatherings done by any individual squirrel. In addition, the lifeform conception expresses only the *most basic* types of activities of the K.

with eyes of certain sort, climbing tree trunks using a certain claw and foot technique, travelling on branches using a certain technique, and so forth. Now if the squirrel's K-standard resembled the platonic good with respect to these specific activities themselves, the platonic good would appear to be more and more like a squirrel.³⁷

Instead, it is more reasonable that K-standards can resemble the platonic good with respect to something more general about the activities required by the K-standard, and that is their simply being an activity. So, this is why earlier I signaled that I would argue that the K-standards resemble the platonic good with respect to requiring activities. Now, this would imply that the nature of the platonic good is active, among other traits perhaps. If a particular candidate nature of the platonic good would allow the latter to play the role given by our concept of good, and play it better than any other nature, then that is the nature of the platonic good. Recall, of course, that this is what Adams' conceptual role semantics asserts, and I think it is a plausible theory connecting the semantics to metaphysics. The platonic good being active would explain why the K-standards of the oak, squirrel, and many other kinds resemble the platonic good. In this way, the platonic good's nature as active plays the role given by our concept of good. In addition to positing that the platonic good's nature is active, we shall make a second move in order to posit a nature that can play that role, and indeed play it better than any other candidate.

The first posit, as we have seen, is a metaphysical assertion that the platonic good is active, by being a concrete (but not spatiotemporal) individual that is active; let a concrete individual be not abstract, where an abstract individual is causally inert and non-spatiotemporal. The second move I will make and develop later on below, will be to claim what I will call a level-of-teleology thesis that K-standards also resemble the platonic good at the level of what their required activities are directed towards ("species-teleology"). Let us begin with the first posit that the platonic good is active. This posit allows us to form the working hypothesis that the squirrel's K-standard resembles the platonic good with respect to the activity qua activity that is required by those standards. This hypothesis would also easily explain how the K-standards of the oak or the beaver would resemble the platonic good, as the K-standards of all lifeforms do express activities. This

³⁷ Even apart from this absurdity, even though it should be recognized that such a "platonic good" would at least do the theoretical work needed to assess the goodness or badness of individual squirrels, it would nonetheless fail to work for individuals of other lifeforms, unless there were a multitude of platonic goods. But it is more plausible that the platonic good is a unity because if the platonic good were a multitude of platonic goods, this would really be to posit merely kind-based standards instead of a single kind-independent standard, which is also required by F.

posit would also provide a basis from which to explain in what sense the K-standards of the cockroach, which eats garbage and sewage waste, resembles the platonic good. The explanation is that the resemblance is not with respect to the cockroach's eating of those disgusting things, but in its eating them *qua activity*.

However, more must be said. Indeed, at this point it must be recognized that with respect to its activities *qua activity*, even the destruction-aimed activities contained in the K-standard of the Ebola-like microbe would resemble the platonic good, as the microbe surely destroys via activity. Nonetheless, one can continue the trajectory of our method and identify further general features of K-standard activities, with respect to which they resemble the platonic good. One of these features emerges when we reflect upon an important way that the K-standard of the microbe differs from the K-standards for the oak or squirrel. The microbe's K-standard, besides requiring that a member engages in activities with the teleology to self-maintain and reproduce, they also require some activities that have the teleology to destroy neighbouring organisms. On the other hand, I have postulated that the platonic good is active.

Let me explain how the platonic good's active nature rules out the microbe's destruction-aimed activities. The squirrel's K-standard requires activities directed at self-maintenance and reproduction, and these ends can reasonably be understood more broadly as the ends of continued activity. It is plausible to posit that the platonic good is not only active but continually active. Now, the squirrel teleology's state of continued activity will be of a different nature than the continuing activity of the transcendent platonic good. Consider for example that the squirrel's continuing activity is not eternal. Nevertheless it is reasonable that the squirrel's teleology of "creaturely" continuing activity resembles the platonic good's continuing activity, as the former *is* a state of activity and indeed continued activity. Thus, the K-standard of the squirrel resembles the platonic good, at the level of the teleology of activities required by that K-standard.³⁸

When it comes to the Ebola-like microbe, however, rather than having activities aimed at continued activity, it has activities directed also towards destruction as an end —the cessation of activity of the microbe's victims as an end. But the platonic good is active. Thus, the microbe's K-

³⁸Metaphysically, how can a standard, requiring activities directed at ends, resemble the platonic good? My answer: The K-standard has teleological attributes, and on that basis the K-standards can resemble the platonic good. How can it bear attributes? A K-standard is a set of propositions (Aristotelian categoricals). Every true Aristotelian categorical must be directed towards at least one species-telos (end, such as self-maintenance, etc.), and so teleology is indeed an attribute of each categorical, and in this way, of the K-standard. How exactly? A proposition such as *the rabbit eats dandelions* could bear the following property: represents an activity directed at self-maintenance.

standard, requiring activities directed at destruction as an end, does not resemble the platonic good at the level of what those activities are directed towards. So, the second move I have made is to claim the level-of-teleology thesis alluded to earlier, that a K-standard must resemble the platonic good also at the level of what teleology the activities (required by that standard) are directed towards. By claiming this thesis we are able to account for why the microbe's K-standard does not resemble the platonic good while that of the oak or squirrel does.³⁹

Now, the K-standard of a plant eater such as the rabbit will require activities that also destroy plant lifeforms. However, the rabbit's activity here is directed toward its species teleology of nutrition and not destruction. In other words, the rabbit "destroys" its food for the sake of its nutrition and self-maintenance. By contrast, the microbe's K-standard includes activities aimed at destruction as an end, in addition to whatever ends it has pertaining to self-maintenance and reproduction. Granted, the K-standard of the microbe does have some resemblance to the platonic good at the level of its activities' teleologies of self-maintenance and reproduction. But the directedness of its destructive activity is simply contrary to the nature of the platonic good, the cessation of activity (as an end) being contrary to its active nature. Thus, the resemblance of the microbe's K-standards to the platonic good is negligible, and I argue that such a microbe satisfying its K-standards would be bad overall.

Now, it might be asked why the platonic good's nature is not destructive in aim. Setting aside metaphysical questions about whether it even makes sense for the platonic good to have this nature,⁴⁰ one could offer a semantic argument that the successful candidate for the platonic good

³⁹ An objector might complain that the microbe's activities do not undermine its *own* continued activity, but others'. Thus, so the objection goes, the end (*telos*) of the microbe's activities is not inconsistent with anything in the platonic good's nature, as the latter's activities are self-continuing. It could be responded, however, that it is the *telos* (e.g. continued activity, cessation of activity, etc.) and whether that corresponding state resembles the platonic good that is relevant, rather than *whose* state is concerned (e.g. the microbe, its victims, or etc.) After all, it is plausible that a Good-resembling K-standard has activity directed towards a *telos* like continued activity, regardless of whether the corresponding state concerns the same individual (in the case of self-maintenance), another member of the kind (e.g. in the case of reproduction), or hypothetically that of some other kind. By the same token, if the K-standard of some K has activity directed towards the cessation of activity for its own sake, it is plausible the standard would not resemble the platonic good whether this destruction is directed towards the cessation of activity of self, other members of the kind, or of other kinds.

⁴⁰ Nothing I have posited so far about the platonic good's nature, that it is an active, concrete exemplar, indicates (nor precludes) that it could destroy something else for destruction's sake. Supposing it could, then the question arises as to why its nature should not also be applied to itself, and so destroy itself for destruction's sake. Such an account of the platonic good would be a non-starter. Conversely, a defender of the possibility of the platonic good aimed at destruction might claim, however strangely, that it possessed the causal powers to destroy others but not itself. Or, it could harm itself without ever completely destroying itself, though always tending to it without achieving it.

cannot be destructive in aim. As Adams argues, “a property that belonged mainly to things that almost all of us have always thought were bad would surely not be filling the role picked out by our talk of ‘goodness.’” (20) Surely, being sadistic or loving cowardice (Adams 46) are properties belonging mainly to things almost universally deemed always bad, and something bearing those traits could not play the role picked out by our talk of goodness. It seems to me that one should say the same about something that is destructive in aim. So, something whose nature was destructive in this way would not be a successful candidate to fill the role picked out by our semantics of ‘good’. Thus, whatever the platonic good is will not have that nature.

Let us now pause to think about some other possible general features of K-standards. Earlier I argued that the *particular* activities required by the different K-standards (e.g. gathering acorns) are not the respects to which those standards resemble the platonic good, but rather more general features of those activities. We started by picking out activity qua activity (first move), and proceeded to also pick out certain teleological ends of the activities (second move). Should we include other general features? One notices that the activities required by K-standards of the oak, beaver, squirrel, human, and many other kinds are *physical* activities. Could being physical be one general feature of activities that, being found also in the platonic good, partly explains how K-standards resemble it? I don’t think so, as this proposal would imply that immaterial beings would be inferior to material beings, all other things being equal. This is implausible.⁴¹ Thus, by implying that the K-standard activities of immaterial beings resemble the platonic good less, accounting for resemblance based on this posited feature of the platonic good would prevent the latter from properly playing its conceptual role.

One sees, then, that there is a *limited range* of general features based upon which K-standards can resemble the platonic good. I have made two moves above, identifying two such general features, that offer an account of how K-standards can resemble it. Before moving on to Section 2.4.2, I should say that a complete account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good will likely need to make a third move. This third move would posit a further general feature based upon which K-standards resemble the platonic good, so as to place a limit on the sorts of activities

⁴¹ Or at least we don’t know whether being material or immaterial is better. After all, one might have first considered the K-standards of immaterial beings and saw they were all non-physical activities, concluding that being immaterial (or spirit-like) should be the general feature to resemble the platonic good. So, we have no argument to prefer material or immaterial beings, and so have no grounds to list either being physical or being spirit-like as the basis of resemblance with the platonic good.

themselves that can resemble the platonic good, regardless of teleological end. In this way, an activity's seeking certain teleological ends would not simply justify the means, as it were. The following example, alluded to at the end of Chapter 1, will provide motivation for the need for this third move: The mating practices of the bottlenose dolphin, perhaps similar to sexual assault, may be disturbing to the reader. Shane Glackin (2008) points out that male bottlenoses form alliances with other males, usually relatives, to coerce a female into sexual intercourse, on pain of death or serious injury. This practice is required by the bottlenose K-standard, and it is reasonable that the practice's teleological end is reproduction. So, if we do not make a third move, we would not be able to account for our plausible intuition that the K-standard of the bottlenose dolphin is not good — but we plausibly judge that the bottlenose's K-standard would not resemble the platonic good as much as a hypothetical species that is the same in all respects except for this terrible mating practice.⁴² I do prefer a particular way to make this third move,⁴³ but I will leave it for future work to develop it because specifying its details may be more tricky than it might initially seem.

I have argued that the nature of the platonic good posited in this section is the best candidate to play the role given by our concept of goodness. My strategy has been to show that there is a limited range of general features shared by K-standards that could underwrite resemblance with the platonic good. Some general features, I argued, are not plausible for different reasons, and so we have whittled down the general features to the ones picked out above. In doing so, I have made an abductive sort of case that such a posited nature for the platonic good is the best candidate to

⁴² To avoid having to make the “third move”, one could a) deny that the bottlenose K-standard really requires coercive copulation, or b) deny that the practice is bad. (Chapter 1 claimed that an Aristotelian would face precisely this dilemma, but accepting my platonic kind-based account provides a way out — the bottlenose's K-standard fails to resemble the platonic good.) Even accepting (a), without making a “third move” we could not explain why a hypothetical, closely related kind of dolphin whose K-standard required coercive copulation fails to resemble the platonic good. Accepting (b) would come with the heavy cost of rejecting a plausible intuition. Also, implications for the nature of the platonic good may prevent it from playing the role given by the concept of good.

⁴³ My preference is to posit that the K-standards resembling the platonic good must also require activities that are voluntary, or in accord with the individual's desire or disposition (so as to include lower animals and plants). Now, human parents may need to coerce their child to eat their vegetables, and a K-standard requiring it could plausibly resemble the platonic good. Thus, we should further qualify that in order for K-standards to resemble the platonic good, their activities must be in accord with the individual's dispositions *with regard to those activities that establish relationships*. The human parent making their child eat vegetables would go against the will of the child, but is not an activity that establishes a relationship, while the coercive copulation of bottlenoses are activities clearly establishing a relationship (contrary to the will of the female). Accordingly, we make the companion posit about the platonic good that any of its activity having to do with establishing relationships is voluntary. More would need to be said to develop my preferred “third move”, such as to specify what counts as a relationship and so explain why the following candidates would/wouldn't count: host - parasite, predator - prey, human - service animal, human - pet, symbiant organisms, etc.

play the role given by our concept of goodness. Is it really the best candidate to play the role? Adams had argued that the best candidate is the divine nature. However, as discussed earlier, Murphy rightly argued that it is explanatorily lacking for Adams to claim that things resemble God in ways that serve as a reason for God to love it. In other words, Adams' account struggles to substantively explain how things resemble the platonic good. What I have done is to provide an account of the nature of the platonic good that follows Murphy in contending that an individual's kind-membership sets the context for resemblance with it. Further, I have offered an account that explains how kind-membership does this, as an individual must resemble that platonic good *by satisfying K-standards*. Accordingly, a human becoming like a well-seasoned chicken fried steak would not be good. Nevertheless, the account is platonic, and requires K-standards to resemble the platonic good—The K-standard must require activities, the end of the activities must be something found in the platonic good. So, I have made posits about the platonic good's nature that allow for a substantive and plausible account of something's resemblance with the platonic good, thus substantively explaining how that nature can play the role given by the concept of good. Again, is what I have posited the best candidate? Strictly speaking, my account here is not inconsistent with God being the platonic good, so long as the divine nature could be consistent with the posits I have made about it. What I have argued is that the best candidate for the platonic good will have such a nature, whether or not the platonic good is God.

2.4.2 Can different K-standards resembling the platonic good resemble it to varying degrees?

We have seen that the K-standard of something like the Ebola-like microbe or bottlenose dolphin does not resemble the platonic good (or only negligibly resembles it). In contrast, the K-standards of other lifeforms such as the oak or squirrel do resemble the platonic good. Of these lifeforms whose K-standards do resemble the platonic good, do some resemble the platonic good more than others do? I will argue that the K-standards of different kinds can be ranked further with respect to greater resemblance with the platonic good. Along what lines? I think this question (call this the ranking question) can be answered in different ways that are compatible with the basic account offered so far.

I will now suggest one answer, which I call the teleological-diversity response. This response argues that some K-standards compared to others require activities directed at *more*

different ends. Thus, these more “teleologically diverse” K-standards bear a greater resemblance to the platonic good. The motivation for this response is as follows. It is reasonable that the K-standard for the human is more teleologically diverse than the K-standard for the squirrel — the human’s K-standard requires activities directed towards the same ends as those required by the squirrel’s, but in addition also requires mental activities directed towards the end of rationality. Let us also posit that the platonic good engages in rational activity. Thus, the human K-standard resembles the platonic good more than the squirrel’s K-standard resembles the platonic good. It may be obvious that humans have the additional end of rationality, but it is instructive to examine Foot’s argument because it seems to me that her argument can be more widely applied to fill out the answer to the ranking question.

I take the liberty of rehearsing again her argument that I summarized in Chapter 1. Foot argues that the teleology of the human, the human good, can be articulated by reflecting on the things without which the human would be deprived. Humans need “the mental capacity for learning language; they also need powers of imagination that allow them to understand stories, to join in songs and dances -- and to laugh at jokes. Without such things human beings may survive and reproduce themselves, but they are deprived.” (2001: 43) Foot is correct that humans have an additional end that, if they lacked, they would be significantly deprived, even if for the sake of argument they could self-maintain and reproduce without rationality. So, due to what we might call the deprivation principle, the species-teleology of the human should be broadened to include the end of rational activity.

With the door thus widened, and using the same deprivation principle, we might also see that animals such as the squirrel (and the human) would be deprived by a lack of perceptual activity, even if they may maintain and reproduce themselves. So, due to the deprivation principle, we can claim this: in addition to self-maintenance and reproduction, the species-teleology of perceptual animals should be broadened to include the end of perceptual activity.⁴⁴ In addition, let us posit that the platonic good is not only active and continually so, but also engages in something like perceptual activity: e.g. thinking thoughts with representational content. Recall the earlier posit that it engages in rational activity. I will elaborate briefly on these posits in the final section. Making these posits allows us to answer the ranking question in a plausible manner. For instance,

⁴⁴ Here I am speaking for myself and not Foot.

because the K-standard of the squirrel represents activities directed towards the same ends as the K-standard of the oak (self-maintenance) but also perception, the K-standard of the former is more teleologically diverse than the latter. Thus, at the level of teleology, the K-standard of the squirrel resembles the platonic good more than the oak's K-standard resembles the latter. And as we saw earlier, the human K-standard represents activities with the additional end of rationality. Thus, it is more teleologically diverse than the squirrel's K-standard, and is a greater platonic resemblance.

Clearly, this classification of activities is influenced by the Aristotelian schema of the different capacities of the soul: nutritive, perceptive, mind, etc. In addition, in assessing a given K-standards' resemblance to the platonic good, let me be clear that it is *not* that activities directed towards rationality are given more weight than those aimed at perception, which are in turn weighted more heavily than those directed towards self-maintenance and reproduction.

Rather, the claim is that the more teleologically diverse K-standard will resemble the platonic good more, everything else being equal. Finally, keep in mind that this is but one sort of answer to the ranking question, and my basic account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good could be compatible with many different answers.

2.5 The Platonic Good

On my platonic kind-based account of goodness, what more can we say about the nature of the platonic good? In other words, what more is true about this platonic good that the account posits?

I have claimed that the platonic good is something active. Indeed my preference throughout has been that it is a concrete (though not physical) individual, rather than a property. I will now give some motivation to think this. The two options parallel what Adams alluded to as two distinct strands in Plato's thought about the Forms: one in which they are primarily exemplars, the other in which they are properties or universals (14). Applied to the Form of the Good, the first understands it as a non-abstract exemplar of goodness, the second as the property of goodness. Call these claims about the platonic good the exemplar thesis and property thesis, respectively. These options are each compatible with the semantics of 'good', as the question of which option to accept pertains to the metaphysics (nature) of goodness. With respect to the platonic good being active, which is a further claim about its nature, the exemplar thesis can easily accommodate this further claim by understanding the Good as an individual that is active.

If instead one accepted the property thesis, K-standards could instantiate the good rather than resemble it. K-standards could instantiate the good in virtue of requiring activities (activities directed towards certain species-ends, etc.) that instantiate the good. K-standards are propositions, and propositions are representations. A representation such as *the squirrel gathers acorns* is a representation of the squirrel, and also of its activity. Its activity could instantiate properties, and so could instantiate the property *being good*. However, on this property thesis, it is not straightforward what the metaphysical relationship would be between the platonic good and the property of being an activity; on the exemplar thesis, a K-standard and its activities resemble the platonic good because the latter is active. But on the property thesis, it is not clear why K-standard activities instantiate goodness and why activities directed toward certain species-ends would instantiate it while others would not. If the explanation was that the property *being good* and *being an activity* were identical, this would be metaphysically problematic or complicated at best — perhaps the property of goodness reduces to (or is partly composed of) the property of being an activity, or vice versa. Holding the exemplar thesis instead would be less troublesome metaphysically.

Alternatively, what if someone maintaining the property thesis does not claim that being good and being an activity are identical, but being good is a higher-order property, and so being an activity can itself instantiate goodness. So, for instance, the K-standard of the oak requires activities that are directed toward continued activity. And the thought is that its K-standard activities instantiate *being an activity*, which instantiates *being good*. Thus one might think that the K-standard activities instantiate goodness. However, from the K-standard activities instantiating *being an activity*, which in turn instantiates *being good*, it does not follow that the activities would instantiate *being good*—something that instantiates a property does not necessarily instantiate the higher-order property that the first property instantiates.⁴⁵ Now, it would seem that for any property, be it *being an activity*, *being voluntary*, or any other property that might be thought to help explain why a K-standard and its activities instantiate goodness, the same problem of explaining the metaphysical relationship between it and goodness would arise. So, one might think that no other property should be proposed to explain why a K-standard and its activities instantiate goodness, but instead a K-standard like the microbe's just does not instantiate it while

⁴⁵ For instance, a cherry instantiates *redness*. This latter property instantiates the higher-order property *being a colour*. However, the cherry does not instantiate *being a colour*.

something like the oak's does. However, then the relation between K-standards and the platonic good would be brute. Holding the exemplar thesis, in contrast, would allow for an explanation for the relation, as given in the pages above. In addition, the exemplar thesis allows for a relationship between activity and the platonic good that is not metaphysically problematic: the platonic good is a concrete thing that is active. So, accepting the exemplar thesis is preferable.

In the previous section, I raised the “ranking question” of whether the different K-standards that do resemble the platonic good can resemble it to varying degrees. My account had already claimed that K-standards' activities directed at the end of self-maintenance or reproduction should be understood more broadly as activities directed at continued activity. At the level of this teleology, I argued that the K-standards resemble the platonic good, which I posited to be continually and eternally active. My teleological-diversity response had included a peripheral claim that K-standard activities directed at the end of perception should be understood more broadly as involving thoughts containing representational content. K-standards requiring activities directed at perception could then in a similar way resemble the platonic good if the latter's activities also involve representational content, or even imagination. Such a position about the platonic good would most naturally fit with a view that it is an exemplar, and a mind. Similarly, the platonic good being a mind would bolster the claim made before that K-standards requiring activities directed at rationality would resemble the platonic good. In other words, the platonic good is rational, and this accords well with its being a mind. Further work to make the “third move” in response to the case of the bottlenose dolphin could have further implications for the nature of the platonic good. But if my arguments have been sound, one thing they show at least is that being an active mind is true of the best candidate to play the role given by the concept of goodness.

Lastly, I wish to argue that the platonic good exists in all metaphysically possible⁴⁶ worlds. If it did not exist in all such possible worlds, but only some of them, a certain implausibility arises. There would be some other possible worlds in which the platonic good does not exist. Yet, given the truth of **G** (which I take to hold in all metaphysically possible worlds) an individual's goodness obtains partly in virtue of its K-standard's resemblance with the platonic good. But if the latter does not exist there, then the third determinant (listed in **G**) could never obtain. Thus, there is

⁴⁶ Following Stephanie Leary, let us call *metaphysical possibilities* the “logical possibilities that are compatible with the essences of all things.” (Leary 2017: 100) For members of living kinds, I contend that their essence as member of the kind is expressed by what Thompson calls the kind's “representation of life” (Thompson 1995).

nothing in that world that can be good or even bad. However, it is intuitively plausible that those things can be evaluated, that is, that they have some goodness/badness value. Adams actually considers an analogous range of scenarios in which his favoured candidate for the Good, God, does not exist, or turns out to have a nature making him an unsuitable candidate for the role. Adams suggests some responses to these scenarios on behalf of his view (46). These responses, which he includes within what he calls the “less ambitious approach”, make excellence out to be un-instantiated in some worlds, or make what it is to be excellent radically contingent upon that world. But as he rightly points out, such scenarios and his responses to them “may fail to satisfy, due to the strong intuitive support for the view that excellence is so tightly tied to what things are like [i.e. what is the case about them] that it should not be a contingent matter what it would be excellent to be like.” (46-47) He then offers a more ambitious approach according to which God necessarily exists with his (traditionally accepted) nature, avoiding all the unsatisfying implications above. Applying a similar move to my account of goodness, it seems to be more reasonable to contend that whatever the platonic good is, its existence is metaphysically necessary. Otherwise, in some possible worlds nothing there would be good or bad, or that *what it is* to be excellent would be contingent. Further, the nature of the platonic good must not be compromised, and so I argue that its nature is also necessary, the metaphysical necessity explained by positing an essence for the platonic good. If its nature were not metaphysically necessary, then its nature could be so elastic that in some metaphysically possible world the kind-based standards for the Ebola-like microbe could resemble the platonic good. That would be unacceptable — its nature would not play the conceptually given role. For all these reasons, it seems to me more tenable that the platonic good’s existence (including its nature) is metaphysically necessary.

CHAPTER 3. NONNATURALISM ABOUT GOODNESS—PLATONIC KIND-BASED

In the previous chapter, the Platonic kind-based account of goodness that was offered had not been explicitly cast as either a natural or non-natural account. This chapter will make the case that it is a non-natural account, since two of its posits (platonic good and K-standards) are each non-natural (hereafter ‘nonnatural’). That is, the content of each cannot be given an entirely naturalistic explanation. So, since in Chapters 1 and 2 I defended the platonic kind-based account as the correct account of goodness, this chapter argues that something’s goodness is nonnatural. But first, the chapter will articulate what definition of *nonnaturalism* should be used.

3.1 Characterization of naturalism and nonnaturalism

Several writers in contemporary metaethics defend a definition on which nonnatural (normative) properties are those properties which are *sui generis* normative (McPherson 2012, Leary 2017). A helpful characterization of *sui generis* normative properties can be obtained by way of using Tristan McPherson’s strategy of characterizing *sui generis* ethical properties. McPherson claims a thesis he calls “Negative”: “Ethical properties are metaphysically *sui generis*.” (2012: 207) He provides two explications of the claim. First, *sui generis* ethical properties are not reducible to non-ethical properties. Second, not only must they be non-reducible to non-ethical properties; *sui generis* ethical properties must also steer clear of being related to non-ethical properties in another way, and this is to be metaphysically continuous with them. McPherson uses the example of Richard Boyd’s account on which goodness is a “homeostatic cluster property”. On this account goodness is arguably not reducible to any other property. However, McPherson notices that there are “robust (if defeasible) natural tendencies” to unify the properties that constitute the cluster property (209). McPherson understands that for Boyd, the broad, big-picture features of his account would claim that ‘good’ picks out an empirically discoverable pattern in the world. So, even though on Boyd’s account goodness is not reducible to any other property, nevertheless it is not *sui generis* since goodness is “metaphysically continuous” with natural properties.

It is metaphysically continuous with other classes of natural properties, because its nature is to be understood in terms (natural kinds, causation, homeostatic feedback,

etc.) that are themselves deeply naturalistic. Non-naturalism as I will understand it rules out this sort of continuity between ethical and non-ethical properties. (McPherson 2012: 209)

I think it is fair to interpret McPherson as stating that something whose nature is to be *entirely* understood in terms which are deeply naturalistic are metaphysically continuous with natural properties, and would not be *sui generis* normative. Otherwise even something whose nature is only partly understood in deeply naturalistic terms, while partly not, would quite implausibly be counted as natural. Thus, since on Boyd's account goodness can be understood entirely in terms that are deeply naturalistic, it is not *sui generis* normative and would be naturalist on McPherson's *sui generis* definition.

While the *sui generis* definition of nonnatural normative properties emphasizes that nonnatural properties do not have certain relations with non-normative properties, a different characterization of nonnatural normative properties focuses on their not bearing certain relations with the empirical sciences in particular. The characterization of naturalness and non-naturalness that I will use throughout the rest of the dissertation will be based on scientific explainability. That is, I will understand non-naturalism as the position that non-natural properties and facts cannot be entirely explained by scientific facts. This is the characterization that Dunaway (2016) and some others⁴⁷ seem to suggest, and I will use it here. Dunaway characterizes non-naturalism as anti-reductionist with respect to scientific facts. He adds that whatever reduction is, it will be explanatory: "A reduction of *As* to *Bs* requires that all of the features of the *As* be explainable in *B*-theoretic terms" (2016: 13). Consequently, normative naturalism is the position that normative properties and facts can be fully explained in terms of the sciences. Normative nonnaturalism contends that normative properties and facts cannot be fully explained in scientific terms.

This scientifically-indexed definition has an important advantage over the *sui generis* definition. The former is continuous with broader philosophical discussions of naturalism. In contrast, on the latter (*sui generis*) definition, a view that moral properties are underwritten by appeal to God's nature or commands (*supernaturalism*) would not count as classically non-natural since normativity is being reduced to something else (God's nature etc.). Instead, it would count as supernaturalist; for the defender of the *sui generis* definition, nonnatural properties and facts are

⁴⁷ See also Chang (2013) and Schroeder (2007: ch 4).

to be contrasted with both naturalist and supernaturalist ones.⁴⁸ But denying that a supernaturalist view is non-naturalist makes the term ‘non-naturalist’ discontinuous with its usage in broader philosophical discussions. More continuous with such broader discussions is a binary characterization of naturalism and nonnaturalism that contrasts the two positions along the lines of susceptibility to scientific explanation.

Take for example debates about physicalism, and discussions about the nature of the mathematical realm. Some arguments in favour of physicalism are supported by an appeal to modern science, especially its strong restrictions on the kind of entities that can cause physical effects (this restriction is sometimes called the “causal closure thesis”). Here I am using ‘entities’ loosely to include properties and facts. This restriction serves to close off certain kinds of causal influences on the physical world, and these would-be causes (that the physicalist denies can cause physical effects) are held to be “non-natural” ones in such philosophical discussion.⁴⁹ But this is a binary categorization of entities such that supernaturalist and *sui generis* normative entities would both fall under the class of non-natural rather than natural. Discussions about the nature of mathematical objects, on the other hand, are not about whether mathematical entities can cause physical effects (because most agree they cannot), but are nevertheless relevant to our current discussion. The two main positions about mathematical objects like numbers are: mathematical realism (mathematical objects are abstract entities, viz. Wright, C. [1983]) and mathematical irrealism (mathematical objects are useful fictions, viz. Field [1980]). The former view is also called ‘non-naturalist realism’ while the latter ‘naturalist irrealism’.⁵⁰ This classification maintains a binary categorization. Also, it associates naturalism with scientific explanation; the (non-naturalist) mathematical realist asserts that mathematical objects are real, but these objects are not capable of scientific explanation, and this is why the objects are non-natural. In contrast, the naturalist irrealist concludes that mathematical objects are not real, precisely because they are not

⁴⁸ McPherson points out that the reason is that Moore’s naturalistic fallacy applies as much to supernaturalist as it does to naturalist (i.e. scientifically explained) accounts (McPherson 6 fn 13).

⁴⁹ For example, take note of how David Papineau’s Stanford Encyclopedia entry on ‘naturalism’ (2020) uses ‘non-natural’ in his characterization of one physicalist argument: “there may be *a posteriori* objections to such non-natural causal influences on the physical world, even if there are no *a priori* objections. We shall see below how modern scientific theory places strong restrictions on the kinds of entities that can have physical effects. Given that mental, biological and social phenomena do have such effects, it follows that they must satisfy the relevant restrictions” (Papineau Sect. 1.1). Papineau calls this restriction the “causal closure thesis”.

⁵⁰ See Papineau (2020) again, who writes: “So we seem required to choose between non-naturalist realism about non-spatiotemporal mathematical entities or naturalist irrealism.”

amenable to scientific explanation. Thus, it appears that a binary categorization of entities into two categories, naturalist and nonnaturalist (along the above lines), turns out to be more consistent with broader discussions of naturalism/non-naturalism in philosophy.

Not only does the scientifically-indexed definition, in counting normative supernaturalism as nonnaturalist, have the advantage of being continuous with broader philosophical discussions of naturalism, but that definition of nonnaturalism is large enough to include what would count as nonnatural under the *sui generis* definition. In this sense, the former is more “ecumenical” of a definition. Even so, the scientifically-indexed definition can nevertheless exclude accounts reducing normative facts to scientific ones (such as Boyd’s), which are the ones most commonly thought of as naturalist.

Let me now return to further develop the scientifically-indexed characterization of the nonnatural. On this characterization, nonnatural facts are those that cannot be entirely explained by scientific facts. I now argue that complete explanation by scientific facts should be understood as complete explanation by physical laws and mechanisms, due to developments in the philosophy of science. The topic of scientific explanation has generated a large literature in that field. Recent work has favoured 1) scientific laws, 2) mechanisms, or 3) counterfactuals as leading strategies for scientific explanation. I argue that a fact is a natural fact if and only if it can be (completely) scientifically explained in any of these three senses. For brevity, I will henceforth sometimes refer to all three modes of scientific explanation as ‘physical laws and mechanisms’.

Let me briefly elaborate upon each of these modes in turn: scientific laws, mechanisms, and counterfactuals. Scientific laws have been thought to be the key to scientific explanation since laws together with initial conditions can explain and predict natural phenomena (Hempel 1965). For example, the tidal phenomenon on shorelines, namely the varying depth of seawater with respect to time, can be explained by laws of gravitation and initial conditions. Others have argued that what better provides scientific explanation is discovering the mechanisms behind the laws. Mechanisms in this sense are entities (or parts) whose activities are organized such as to produce the relevant phenomena (Machamer et al. 2000). Mechanisms, then, explain why certain conditions regularly cause certain phenomena and explain the regularity that laws describe (Andersen 2011). Further, discovering mechanisms rather than laws may be more suited to some sciences such as biology (Bechtel and Abrahamsen 2005), in order to explain phenomena such as protein synthesis or action potentials (my examples). Currently, the most successful

counterfactual-based strategy explains a phenomenon by establishing a causal link between it and a variable (where both the phenomenon and variable are scientifically accessible). It establishes this link partly by tweaking (“intervening” on) the value of several variables, so the counterfactual strategy is also called the interventionist account (Woodward 2003). To repeat, a fact is a natural fact just in case it can be completely explained by physical laws, mechanisms, or counterfactuals.

Does everything that figures into explaining the content of the scientific explanation, such as logical and mathematical principles (and the relevant objects therein) also count as natural? Russ Shafer-Landau endorses a sort of scientifically-indexed characterization of naturalism. He characterizes naturalism as holding that “all real properties are those that figure ineliminably in the perfected versions of the natural and social sciences” (2003: 59). Included are any properties that are part of the explanans (i.e. part of the scientific explanation), not merely those properties that get explained. As scientific explanation must take for granted certain logical and mathematical principles, it must take for granted whatever logical and mathematical properties or objects that are entailed by those principles. Then, on Shafer-Landau’s view, those logical and mathematical properties are natural. For instance, consider a simple physical law governing projectile motion. Perhaps it relates distance travelled to time and acceleration. This physical law provides a scientific explanation of the relation between these variables, and thus explains projectile motion. But what goes into explaining the content of the physical law, besides observational data, are logical and mathematical laws.⁵¹ These latter laws figure ineliminably into the scientific explanation, and so do the logical and mathematical objects, and thus for Shafer-Landau these objects are natural.

However, I don’t think it is plausible that everything in the scientific explanans is natural. The reason is this. Such a thesis depends upon the principle that whatever figures ineliminably into type E (e.g. natural) of explanation is E-ist (e.g. naturalist). But applying this principle to other possible kinds of explanation would entail implausible consequences. Consider some supernaturalist explanation. Presumably, such an explanation would include some logical laws and objects to explain the content of the explanations. Then such logical objects would be supernatural. Now consider some *sui generis* nonnaturalist explanation for something else. Again, some logical laws and objects would ineliminably figure into such an explanation. So, logical laws and objects

⁵¹ Rejecting false hypotheses (and background assumptions) upon observational disconfirmation, for instance, relies on *modus tollens*. The physical law is expressed mathematically, and furthermore mathematical principles would be required to determine whether the data confirmations or disconfirms it.

would be nonnatural. Thus, they would be supernatural (as argued before) as well as *sui generis* nonnatural. Because the logical laws and objects also figure ineliminably in scientific explanation, they are also naturalist. But something can't be all those things. So, the principle expressed at the beginning of this paragraph is not plausible. Thus, it does not effectively support the claim that everything figuring ineliminably in the scientific explanans is natural.

So, I maintain that a natural fact is one that can be entirely explained by physical laws and mechanisms. Equipped with that definition of nonnaturalism, let us turn now to the defense of a thing's goodness as a nonnatural fact.

3.2 The K-standards are nonnatural

Chapter 2 characterized the platonic good as concrete but not physical, and characterized it as transcendent and metaphysically necessary. This chapter will not spend much space to demonstrate that the platonic good is nonnatural, but instead devote most of its attention to show that the K-standards are to be accounted for nonnaturally. Even so, let me make the following brief remark about its metaphysical necessity to motivate the plausible thesis that the platonic good is nonnatural.

The platonic good is metaphysically necessary in two senses, the first is that it necessarily exists, and the second that it exists necessarily with a particular nature. Let us contrast the platonic good with the universe, and by the latter I mean the physical universe. I assume the plausible thesis that the existence of the universe is not metaphysically necessary. Since the platonic good necessarily exists, then its existence cannot be explained by the (contingent) physical universe. It follows that the existence of the platonic good cannot be explained by the scientific laws and mechanisms of that universe. So, the necessary existence of the platonic good admits of only a nonnaturalist explanation.

A similar argument can be made based upon the necessary nature (rather than merely necessary existence) of the platonic good: The nature of the platonic good is metaphysically necessary, as Chapter 2 demonstrated. In contrast, the nature of the physical universe is not metaphysically necessary. For instance, it could have been governed by different physical laws and even different values for physical constants in those laws.⁵² Thus, the necessity of the nature

⁵² In section 3.3.2 I will elaborate on the contingent nature of scientific laws.

of the platonic good cannot be explained by the nature of the (contingent) physical universe. Consequently, the necessary nature of the platonic good admits of only a non-naturalist account.

Let us turn now to arguments that the K-standards are to be explained non-naturalistically rather than naturalistically.

3.2.1 Aristotelian naturalism and the Argument from an ineliminably evaluative circle

Now, given that Chapters 1 and 2 have held that the K-standards for material living things are explained by their Aristotelian categoricals, as theorized by Thompson's and Foot's account of Aristotelian *naturalism*, one might think that I should assert that the K-standards (for material things at least) are to be explained naturalistically.

While their theory is called Aristotelian naturalism, 'naturalism' here is not necessarily used in the same way as when we speak of the naturalism vs nonnaturalism debate in metaethics. While she may happen to fall on either side of that debate, the proponent of Aristotelian naturalism uses 'naturalism' to denote a theory of something's goodness that turns on the nature of that kind of thing. Jonathan Dancy concurs with this reading of Aristotelian naturalism:

[...] Aristotelian naturalism (Foot 2001; Hursthouse 1999), [is] so called because it holds that moral distinctions are tightly grounded in considerations of human nature. But it takes no official stand on the debate between ethical naturalism and nonnaturalism, as I have characterized it; Aristotelian naturalists could be ethical nonnaturalists." (Dancy 2006: 123)

Now, Dancy here mentions *human* nature and ethics in particular. But it is plausible that Aristotelian naturalism as a theory applying to members of *other kinds* as well can be consistent with nonnaturalism, because the evaluation of such members is plausibly 'natural' only in the sense that that evaluation is also "tightly grounded" in considerations of the nature proper to the kind in question. As explained in Chapter 1, Aristotelian categoricals are a "representation of life" pertinent to that kind of life form, and amounts to an expression of its nature because that representation expresses what that life form is. In addition, the categoricals are the basis for evaluating members of the kind in the way explained in the previous chapters.

So, adherents of Aristotelian categoricals theory could be naturalists or nonnaturalists, depending on whether they contend that the nature and "representation of life" is naturalist. McPherson, for instance, claims that natural kinds are deeply naturalistic (209), and so might claim

that the representation of life of the different kinds is natural. Here are some reasons to account for the nature and representation of life of the various kinds in a nonnaturalist light. One reason is that the content of the categoricals is not determined by evolutionary biology. (By ‘determined’, I refer to the selection of the content as well as an explanation of why that selection was made.) That content of the Aristotelian categoricals, as one recalls from Chapter 1, is fixed by the function of parts or activities of an individual that play a part in the life (teleology) of that species. Foot explicitly states that this notion of function is not to be confused with that used in evolutionary biology, where “the function of a feature of an organism is frequently defined as that role it plays which has been responsible for its genetic success and evolution.” (Foot 2001: 32)⁵³ Rather than being the role a feature played that was adaptive in evolutionary history, function in the Aristotelian categoricals are features and activities that play a part in the life of the species at *a given time*: “They tell how a kind of plant or animal, considered at a particular time and in its natural habitat, develops, sustains itself, defends itself, and reproduces.” (Foot 29) So, what explains what the function of some feature or activity of an organism is, as far as the categoricals are concerned, is not evolutionary biology.

Perhaps biology more broadly conceived can explain the content of the Aristotelian categoricals and thus the kind-based standards of goodness. However, as explained in Chapter 1, the categoricals do not necessarily articulate the empirical, statistical facts of the population, and so *the tiger has four legs* holds even if every tiger were to have one leg removed. Thus, this kind of facts of empirical observation cannot fully explain the standards of goodness. What about a more sophisticated sort of empirical observation that determines the correct Aristotelian categoricals by selecting the ones that encourage and promote naturalist markers such as survival, reproduction, and certain quality of life markers?

For a response to this proposal, I turn now to the first major argument for the claim that the K-standards are nonnatural, the argument from an ineliminably evaluative circle. This is an argument due to William Fitzpatrick (2008), meant to show that moral realists should accept nonnaturalism. However, I will contend that we can adapt his argument to argue that the content of K-standards cannot be explained by natural, empirical facts alone. Let us first examine Fitzpatrick’s original argument. He begins by claiming that realists should accept fact *F*

⁵³ Foot is here quoting Simon Blackburn in the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Blackburn 149-150)

F Some forms of ethical upbringing, or sets of sensibilities, are *better than* others, constituting the *right starting points* for ethically accurate deliberation (Fitzpatrick 2008: 184)

A realist of the naturalist variety would need to argue for *F* by showing that *F* is explained by natural fact(s). The most plausible way to do so is to show that a grasp of (the right starting points alluded in) *F*, together with sound reasoning, tends to lead to certain correct ethical judgements. But, Fitzpatrick argues, this is of no help to the naturalist unless there is a naturalistic means of picking out those correct ethical judgements; for example, the naturalist might assert that the correct ethical judgments are those that conform to standards promoting naturalistic features such as survival, satisfaction, etc. But the nonnaturalist opponent would point out that picking out the correct ethical judgments this way would already require presupposing “a properly informed ethical standpoint”, namely that judgements conforming to standards promoting survival, satisfaction, etc., are correct and properly informed. Fitzpatrick concludes: “We therefore seem to have an irreducibly evaluative circle here, which resists naturalistic inroads on either side”(184).⁵⁴ So, *F* resists purely naturalistic explanation, and Fitzpatrick carries on with the rest of his project to eventually argue for nonnatural moral realism.

I contend that Fitzpatrick’s ethical argument can be adapted to construct an evaluative argument, showing that the content of *K*-standards cannot be completely explained by way of scientific explanation. To show this, we begin by claiming fact *F*’.

F’: Regarding *K*-standards for any given *K*, some requirements for certain basic activities specific to the *K* are better than other candidate activities, constituting the correct basic activities that comprise the *K*-standard.

A naturalist would need to argue for *F*’ by showing that it can be completely scientifically explained. The most plausible way to do so naturalistically is to show that members performing certain basic activities (alluded to in *F*’) tends to result in those members being good. But, we might argue, this is of no help to the naturalist unless there is a principled naturalistic method of picking out those good members; for example, one might assert that the good members are those who tend to possess naturalistic features such as survival, satisfaction, etc. But the nonnaturalist

⁵⁴ He continues: “*F* seems to be a non-natural fact, as do corresponding facts about what genuine values there are, . . . ; and attempts to break into this circle from the outside just lead to the kinds of problems examined earlier” (Fitzpatrick 184).

would point out that picking out good members this way would already require presupposing a correct evaluative standpoint, namely that members who tend to succeed at survival, satisfaction, etc., are good. We thus have an irreducibly evaluative circle here, which also resists naturalistic inroads on either side. So, F' resists purely naturalistic explanation, and hence by extension it is wrongheaded to pursue a purely natural explanation for the K-standards. Thus, the K-standards are more reasonably accounted for non-naturalistically.

3.2.1.1 Argument from the teleology of the Aristotelian categoricals

Let me now offer a second reason to think that the categoricals should be understood non-naturalistically, by way of an argument from the teleological character of the categoricals. The Aristotelian categoricals provide the basis upon which to evaluate a member of a kind, as discussed in Chapter 1, and indeed it is the teleological nature of the categoricals that allows for this evaluation. Every Aristotelian categorical picks out those features and activities that relate to the proper ends of that kind. Foot adds that all Aristotelian categoricals express different (i.e. species-specific) ways of achieving the teleologies of self-maintenance and reproduction (plus reason-responsiveness, in the case of the human). Given that teleology is a significant characteristic of the categoricals, if this teleology cannot be accounted for naturalistically, then this is reason to hold a nonnatural account of the categoricals.

I argue that this teleology cannot be given a naturalist accounting. Now, much literature exists in the philosophy of biology concerning how to account for teleological concepts in biology, namely function.⁵⁵ Larry Wright (1973) famously contended that *Z is the function of X* should be given this analysis: a) X is there because it does Z, and b) Z is a result of X's being there. If, when applying this analysis, (a) and (b) can be explained scientifically, then this could be a promising naturalist account of function. Might this be a promising way to explain the teleology characterizing the Aristotelian categoricals? *The squirrel gathers acorns (for self-maintenance)*. Self-maintenance (Z) being the function of gathering acorns (X) would be accounted for by a) gathering acorns being done for self-maintenance, and b) self-maintenance being a result of gathering acorns. Both (a) and (b) are explained scientifically. However, Wright's account turned out to be vulnerable to counterexamples such as a little rock holding up a big rock in a fast-flowing

⁵⁵ For just the tip of the iceberg of this vast literature, see Wright, L. (1973), and Boorse, C. (1976).

river.⁵⁶ If the smaller did not support the larger, the larger would be washed away. The smaller rock holding up the larger also explains why the smaller is there. But then on Wright's account the function of the little rock would be to hold up the big rock, which is implausible. In order to block such counterexamples, later philosophers of biology have typically offered accounts of function that restrict function to those of traits/activities of things that can reproduce and become the potential objects of selection. And so, a certain effect of an activity or body part was selected for by biological evolution, and this effect is its function, although there are many sophisticated versions of this *etiological* approach that provide variation upon this basic theme.

However, the problem with a naturalist explanation of the Aristotelian categoricals is that the relevant analysis of function offered by Thompson and Foot was explicitly not evolutionary. As explained earlier, rather than being an effect that was adaptive in evolutionary history, function in the Aristotelian categoricals is the role the activity or body part plays in the life of the species at a given time. In other words, it articulates the species' life cycle: how a certain kind of organism (at a particular time and habitat) develops, sustains, and reproduces itself. For Foot, this species-specific goodness in plants and animals is analogous to moral virtue in humans (Foot 2001). To support the analogy, the human good must be sufficiently similar to the end served by the species' life cycle. But if this end were gene replication, the analogy with moral virtue would not hold, as the Aristotelian naturalist would reject that the moral virtues are explained by their contribution to human gene replication (Lott 2012: 360-1). So, function on Thompson's and Foot's analysis does not admit of an evolutionary explanation but instead makes reference to the life of the species at a given time.⁵⁷ Now, the evolutionary etiological approach was the most promising way for Aristotelian categorical *teleology* to be construed in a naturalist manner, but that evolutionary approach is not an option. Thus, the teleological character of the categoricals constitutes a good reason to accept a nonnatural account of them.

The attentive reader might also notice that taking a nonnatural view of the categoricals also implies that the "representation of life" of a species, and indeed what it represents, which is its very essence, would then be nonnatural. How can an oak or squirrel be nonnatural? Many aspects of an individual oak or squirrel are natural, such as their colour, size, etc., and characteristic

⁵⁶ This example is modified by Peter Godfrey-Smith (1993) from some examples by Christopher Boorse (1976)

⁵⁷ Foot's analysis also makes reference to a given natural habitat (29, 34), although usually she refers to the life of the species "at a given time".

activities. However, the other part of the answer is that there is an aspect of an oak or squirrel that cannot be entirely accounted for naturalistically, namely its essence, because of the latter's teleological characteristics. Thus, their essence will be nonnatural. It is consistent with the claim that their teleology is nonnatural, however, that their teleology is immanent rather than transcendent; nonnatural characteristics are consistent with their being of this world, just not with their being what I call empirical properties (properties accessible by the natural sciences and susceptible to scientific explanation). Thus, this nonnatural stance does not commit one to platonic or supernatural properties. Regarding nonnatural *ethical* properties, Fitzpatrick makes precisely this claim, that they can be of this self-same world without being “visible as such from the point of view of empirical inquiry” (195), calling his view the dual-aspect theory.⁵⁸ I have applied his claim to nonnatural teleology.

At this point, let us reflect upon how biology accounts for natural kinds, for presumably natural kinds (such as the oak or the squirrel, etc.) are important concepts in biology. How can biological explanation use the concept of natural kinds, while I have just argued that natural kinds (i.e. lifeform conception and essence) must be explained nonnaturally? It would seem then that (scientific) biological explanation is nonnatural, which would undermine my scientifically-indexed definition of naturalism, or that maybe function in the categoricals is natural after all, contrary to my argument above. My answer is the following: First, there is debate in the philosophy of biology about whether species are natural kinds or individuals (Bird and Tobin 2017 Sect. 2.1.1). If species are not natural kinds but individuals, then biology does not work in terms of the kindhood and lifeform conception that I have argued are nonnatural. Second, even if species are natural kinds, biology and biological explanation need not ever use the concept of natural kinds *as explained by the lifeform conception and essence*. Instead, post-Darwin, biological explanation need only use the concept of natural kinds as explained by evolutionary etiology. That is, natural kinds in biological explanation can be analyzed by a type of organism whose tokens bear a certain set of functions, where functions are understood etiologically. I am not aware of any defences of this position, but I think such a position is open to biologists (and philosophers) to explain natural kind.

⁵⁸ “The objective values that are determinative of correct ethical standards are nothing other than objective, irreducibly evaluative or normative aspects of this same world, though they are not visible as such from the point of view of empirical inquiry.” (Fitzpatrick 195)

So, biological explanation need not be nonnatural even if it does use natural kind concepts.⁵⁹ My view is that to *evaluate* biological individuals, on the other hand, one requires a different account of function and kindhood, and this is the one Foot's account articulates, which is not given an evolutionary nor scientific explanation.

3.2.2 An argument that the K-standards are nonnatural: from the metaphysical necessity of the K-standards

An independent argument that the K-standards are nonnatural can be made from the metaphysical necessity of their content. This argument is patterned after the argument at the beginning of Section 3.2 that argued for the nonnaturalness of the platonic good. The present argument pertaining to the nonnaturalness of K-standards is as follows:

Argument 3.2: Nonnaturalness argument from Metaphysical necessity

1. The content of the K-standards is metaphysically necessary.
2. The physical laws and mechanisms in the universe are not metaphysically necessary.
3. If the content of the K-standards is metaphysically necessary but the physical laws and mechanisms in the universe are not, then an account of the content of the K-standards (including its metaphysical necessity) cannot be explained by those physical laws and mechanisms.
4. So, the content of the K-standards cannot be explained by physical laws and mechanisms in the universe. (from 1, 2, 3)
5. If the content of the K-standards cannot be explained by physical laws and mechanisms, then it cannot be scientifically explained.
6. The content of the K-standards cannot be scientifically explained. (from 4, 5)

Since the content of the K-standards cannot be scientifically explained, the K-standards are nonnatural.

Let me defend premise 2 first. The physical laws and mechanisms in the universe, I argue, are not metaphysically necessary, but contingent. Physical laws often contain constants whose values are contingent.⁶⁰ The mathematical form of these laws themselves, even apart from the constants they contain, are also contingent. The very possibility of the multiverse hypothesis is

⁵⁹ Given what I have argued earlier that not everything figuring ineliminably in scientific explanation is natural, even if Foot's notion of function (non-etiological) were part of biological explanation, it would not follow that this notion and the resulting concept of natural kinds would be natural. My point in the paragraph is that Foot's notion of function need not even figure into (scientific) biological explanation in the first place.

⁶⁰ See Roger White (2000) and (2018), for example.

based upon the possibility that physical laws can be dramatically different in different universes, and thus the content of physical laws is metaphysically contingent. Physical mechanisms are theorized to rely upon basic contingent physical laws at bottom (Glennan 2010), and this is reason to think that mechanisms are also contingent.⁶¹ Thus, it is reasonable that the physical laws and mechanisms in the universe are not metaphysically necessary, as premise 2 contends.

My defence of premise 1, that the content of the K-standards is metaphysically necessary, is based on the implausibility that the K-standard changes in a different world even if that world's laws and mechanisms were to permit a member to survive in a very different way.

Consider the following thought experiment. Imagine a dog in another metaphysically possible world, w2, that begins to climb trees and live on trees. The reason it can, is that in w2, there are different subatomic physical laws governing strong and weak nuclear forces (or whatever), such that due to the dog's nails and the tree bark taking on different properties, that individual dog is able to climb trees. Further, it is thus able to eat birds and other prey that tree-dwelling cats (e.g. the ocelot) would eat. The dog (call it Spot) is able to hunt these prey without a pack, and so it can hunt alone and indeed lead a solitary life. What if Spot did live this way? It would live like an ocelot. What should we say about this case? Is the content of the dog's K-standard different in this world? No doubt Spot is able to survive and lead its life. However, I think such a case, and other such cases could easily be multiplied, should lead one to think that K-standards do not vary with worlds. Foot asserts that the norms of evaluation for a member of a kind do not vary precisely because the standards of excellence are indexed to a given time and natural habitat. She writes:

. . . [W]hat is excellence, and what defect, is relative to the natural habitat of the species. Even in a zoo a fleeing animal like a deer that cannot run well is so far forth defective and not as it should be, in spite of the fact that, as this particular individual is by chance placed, this may be no disadvantage for defence or feeding or mating or rearing the young. (Foot 34)

By stating that the standards of excellence of a species are relative to its natural habitat, it is important to note that Foot does not mean that the standards are dependent on the habitat the member finds itself in, or apply only if that member lives in its natural habitat. Rather, the content

⁶¹ These physical laws are basic in the sense that the relevant mechanism at some bottom level has parts that interact according to the physical law rather than submechanisms, but not basic in the sense that the laws are metaphysically necessary.

of the standards is set by the natural habitat of that lifeform, and so Foot seems to indicate that its content holds regardless of possible world, and thus is metaphysically necessary.

Why does Foot assert that the kind-based standards of excellence are indexed to the natural habitat? She does not elaborate after the above quotation. But I offer the following reason, which I think is faithful to her theory. It is not that we do not understand the forces pushing Spot in the direction that it takes in life. It's just that K-standards require activities and features that are not merely about realizing their teleological ends of survival, longevity, or even reproduction (imagine a second dog like this of the opposite sex), etc., but also about the activities and features by which a member should achieve those ends. After all, this is what sets apart the different kinds (e.g. the oak, maple, dandelion, etc.) that share the same species-teleologies (e.g. self-maintenance and reproduction). And so, the kind-based standard requires certain specific activities and features of a member, regardless of environment or possible world. Thus, the dog's K-standards are metaphysically necessary. Notice that these reflections are not unique to the dog kind. So, we can generalize and argue that for any kind K, the content of its K-standard is metaphysically necessary. Hence, premise 1 is true.

It is significant to my argument that the way of life that Spot leads in w2 is *fundamentally* different from that expressed in the Aristotelian categoricals (for dogs). The different activities that Spot performs are not just activities superficially modified to suit a different habitat and environment. For instance, in the actual world it is likely that the activities of a gray wolf in Canada will be different from a member of the same species in northern California. Perhaps the way they prepare their den will be different owing to their superficially different habitats, and maybe their food and prey are different. However, their activities would fundamentally be similar at core, as they would presumably be social animals living in packs, on land, and so forth. Only the most basic activities would be included in the Aristotelian categoricals, and consequently in the K-standards. After all, for Foot the categoricals express "the most general features of the different species of living things" (29).⁶² Granted, there is the question of how to separate the merely environment-specific "functions" from the functions that are to apply to all gray wolves regardless of environment. In addition, the question arises as to how to define the most basic natural habitat

⁶² Regarding the Aristotelian categoricals, Foot writes: "Their truth is truth about a species at a given historical time, and it is only the relative stability of at least the most general features of the different species of living things that makes these propositions possible at all." (Foot 29)

of the gray wolf. However, an Aristotelian will have some account of function and the content of functions for Ks, which would include a representation of its basic natural habitat rolled into the functions.⁶³ So, we need not take a stand as to which particular account to endorse, as long as there is some correct account.

Now, suppose Spot or its forebears had evolved such that its basic activities and traits became radically different from that of dog-kind's. If so, then it is pretty clear that it nevertheless does not follow that the K-standard for the dog is different in w2. The reason is that the creature would no longer be a dog, having evolved into some other kind. The K-standard of the dog does not change. But there would be a set of different Aristotelian categoricals for a new distinct kind, and a correspondingly different K-standard.

3.3 Comparison with Stephanie Leary's argument for normative nonnaturalism

Thus, I have offered arguments that the K-standards are nonnatural. In Chapter 2, I gave my case that the platonic kind-based account is the correct account of goodness. As that platonic kind-based account appeals to K-standards and the platonic good, and these are nonnatural, it follows that I am defending a nonnatural theory of goodness. Does my theory offer a more defensible account of normative nonnaturalism than other nonnaturalist positions in the literature? Stephanie Leary (2019) defends a nonnaturalist normative theory that posits nonnatural normative *properties*, such as goodness (and rightness, etc.). These normative properties are *sui generis* properties whose essences involve "something above and beyond any non-normative properties" (2019: 8). In addition, and this is important, what makes normative *sui generis* properties *normative* ones, i.e. not merely *sui generis* ones that have some "primitive" feature, is that normative properties have a *normative* primitive feature (11). This normative feature is "something like to be promoted-ness or to be considered-ness" (8). The essence of a normative property, Leary writes, would answer what another writer (Eklund) has called the "Further Question" about a thought experiment (regarding a hypothetical community, "moral twin earth", whose use of normative terms are associated with the same normative roles as our terms, but aren't coextensive

⁶³ It may even be that according to the Aristotelian theory of choice, the relevant kind in this example would not be the dog, but some broader canine kind.

with them).⁶⁴ Leary's evaluation of this thought experiment is not important for our purposes. What *is* important is that Leary agrees that this scenario raises a Further Question, which is "a question about which community is acting and valuing in ways that one *really ought* to . . . ". (Leary 2019: 11) Leary argues that the essence of a normative property can answer the Further Question, and the reason it can do so is that the essence of a normative property is that it "objectively 'calls out' for certain responses in us" (11), and explains "why we should really care about that property and consider it during practical deliberation" (12) and evaluation. This essence is what sets *sui generis* normative properties apart from other *sui generis* properties, such as mental properties (supposing they are *sui generis*). Since natural properties do not have essences that call out for responses to value or acting, normative properties are distinct from natural ones, and are thus nonnatural. In particular, the nonnatural property of goodness would call out for responses to value it.

However, uncomfortable questions arise for Leary's account. A normative realist who is a naturalist claims that normative properties are also natural properties. Such a naturalist might then disagree that having an essence of calling out for certain responses is non-identical to the essence of a natural property. Leary might counter that there are metaphysical grounds to distinguish them, namely that on her definition of nonnaturalness, nonnatural properties just are *sui generis* properties distinct from natural ones. In response, the realist naturalist might ask why normative properties are *sui generis* and distinct from natural ones, because the naturalist believes that the former are identical to the latter, and thus reject that the former are *sui generis* and distinct. Indeed, the naturalist might insist that calling out for certain responses involves the essence of some natural property or that of some homeostatic cluster. Thus, Leary's position merely moves the natural-nonnatural debate to a different level, to that of essence.

Leary does anticipate this worry, the worry that it is difficult to settle the question about whether the essence of normative properties is different from that of non-normative (e.g. natural) properties. She considers the proposed answer that we can know the essence of *being in pain* (a natural property) and that of *badness* (a nonnatural property) through "acquaintance" and "just 'see' that their essences do not involve one another." (Leary ms 29) Leary concedes that such an epistemic claim appears dubious, especially if others (perhaps the naturalist) can claim that their

⁶⁴ See Eklund (2017). *Choosing Normative Concepts*. New York: OUP. The phrase "moral twin earth" is due to Horgan and Timmons (1991), but Eklund uses a relevantly similar scenario.

essences do involve each other. In Leary's words, her normative nonnaturalism is thus not "tractable" about the question about the essence of normative properties—there is no available methodology for determining whether her view is true and to resolve a dispute with a rival view (29). Her response, however, is that rival views are also intractable about some aspect of their view. The only way to make progress in the debate between different versions of normative nonnaturalism is to assess each view holistically "by asking which view best explains various normative phenomena: e.g. the supervenience of the normative on the non-normative, the degree of 'realism' enjoyed by normative facts, how we can come to refer and think about normative properties, and so on" (31).

I'd like to make two points in response. The first is that in comparison with my nonnaturalist account, this tractability problem is more troubling for Leary's version of nonnaturalism. The reason is that the problem strikes at the very heart of what makes her account nonnatural, which is that normative properties are unique and *sui generis* in that they have a normative essence distinct from that of non-normative properties. In contrast, on my account, the nonnaturalness of an individual's goodness is explained by appeal to nonnatural K-standards and the nonnatural platonic good. I have in this chapter given arguments to show that these are nonnatural. While I suppose an opponent may raise objections to my arguments, on my account the nonnatural character of goodness is not simply intractable (i.e. not the case that there is no method to show my account is true and a rival theory is mistaken.)

Second, Leary had argued that even though the question of the correct essence of normative properties is intractable, her account can be confirmed by best explaining: various normative phenomena such as the supervenience of the normative on the non-normative, the realism of normative facts, and talk of normative properties. My account is no worse than Leary's on these scores. Indeed, as for explaining the supervenience of the normative upon the non-normative, in the following chapter I will offer my account's explanation for a particular variety of supervenience and argue that its explanation is superior to Leary's.

CHAPTER 4. NORMATIVE SUPERVENIENCE AND NONNATURALIST GOODNESS

The previous chapter defended the thesis that the platonic kind-based account is a nonnatural account of goodness. It also argued that the account is superior to Stephanie Leary's (2017) nonnatural account of the normative for a number of reasons, including the reason that the platonic kind-based account offers a better explanation of the so-called supervenience objection against nonnaturalist accounts of normativity. This chapter will explain the objection and provide the platonic kind-based account's explanation of a particular version of the supervenience of (nonnatural) goodness upon natural properties.

The normative non-naturalist contends that normative properties (such as goodness) are non-natural properties, whether due to normative properties being *sui generis* normative or being otherwise metaphysically distinct from the natural. On the other hand, the normative naturalist holds that normative properties just are natural properties (or metaphysically continuous with them). Most agree though, naturalist and nonnaturalist alike, that it is plausible that normative supervenience holds.⁶⁵ On one version, supervenience would require that there cannot be a difference in an individual's (or state of affairs', action's, etc.) normative property without there also being a difference in that individual's natural properties. The naturalist has a ready explanation for supervenience because they contend that normative properties are natural ones, and everything supervenes on itself. But supervenience appears to be in severe tension with the nonnaturalist's thesis that normative properties are metaphysically distinct from natural ones. Now, those in the naturalist camp would likely demand from the non-naturalist a metaphysical explanation for normative supervenience. While some non-naturalists contend that the lack of such a metaphysical explanation is not problematic, in this chapter I will offer a metaphysical explanation using the theoretical resources of what I call essence-accounts of non-naturalism, in particular the platonic kind-based version.

I will use such an account to provide an explanation of the supervenience of *goodness*, rather than some other normative property, upon natural properties. Further, my explanation of

⁶⁵ There are some who reject normative supervenience, such as Kit Fine (2002) and Gideon Rosen (ms).

supervenience will be about the goodness of *individuals*,⁶⁶ specifically living individuals belonging to physical kinds. Within these bounds, the chapter will seek to explain how the goodness of an individual supervenes on its natural properties: As Chapter 2 argued, the kind-based standard (K-standard) of a physical individual requires that the individual possesses certain natural properties. Additionally, for the individual to be good, the K-standard in question must resemble the platonic good. As the content of the kind-based standards is metaphysically necessary and fixed, and so is the nature of the platonic good, the goodness of the individual can change only if its natural properties have also changed. The necessity of the K-standards is explained by the essence of the relevant K. The necessity of the nature of the platonic good is also explained by its essence. These essences are metaphysically necessary, and I will explain why such necessities are not subject to a reasonable need for further explanation.

I will begin the chapter by more closely examining the supervenience of goodness upon natural properties, and discuss the apparent problem for non-naturalists. Next, I will describe essence-accounts of nonnaturalism. After that, I show how the platonic kind-based version of essence-accounts can provide a metaphysical explanation of a relevant sort of supervenience. I also explain how this explanation does not smuggle another brute necessary connection into the explanation and thus succumb to what Tristram McPherson (2012) calls bruteness revenge. I close by showing how the platonic kind-based version of an essence-account fares better in the face of an objection than Leary's hybrid-properties version (of a nonnatural essence-account).

4.1 Normative supervenience, and the "supervenience objection"

In this chapter I will be discussing *individual* supervenience, which is a relation holding between the normative and natural properties of an individual (rather than *global* supervenience, which is a relation between the goodness of a possible world and its natural properties).⁶⁷ Let us begin by more closely examining the supervenience of an individual's goodness upon its natural properties. To do this, I shall first discuss the following illustration before turning to a closer look

⁶⁶ I take it that the *goodness* of individuals is an instance of a normative property or feature. Foot writes that the categoricals "determine normative assessments of individual living things" (Foot 34), referring to judgments of goodness or defect. So, goodness is a normative assessment, i.e. "to be as it should be", as Foot puts it (34). And thus goodness is an instance of a normative feature.

⁶⁷ For a formulation of global supervenience, see McPherson (2012: 213). For a helpful treatment of the different types of supervenience relations, see McPherson (2019).

at the apparent problem for the non-naturalist. Suppose Kowalski the penguin is a good penguin. The good-making natural properties that Kowalski possesses are that he is an excellent swimmer, has a warm waterproof coat, hunts Antarctic fish, walks and moves easily on ice, etc. If supervenience holds, supposing Kowalski tomorrow was no longer good, then he must have changed with respect to some of his natural properties—perhaps he developed a walking problem. Supervenience seems plausible here. Indeed, the supervenience of an individual's goodness upon its natural properties plausibly holds for all penguins, and for members of any other biological kind. Moreover, it is plausible that the supervenience of any individual's goodness on its natural properties holds in all possible worlds. Consider again Kowalski the penguin, without the walking problem. Kowalski is good, and possesses the same natural properties, that he is an excellent swimmer, hunts fish, keeps warm, etc. in the actual world. But imagine Kowalski in a different (metaphysically) possible world, in which he remains qualitatively identical in all those natural respects. If supervenience holds, then Kowalski in that other world is also good, which seems reasonable. Let us define this supervenience as follows.

First-order supervenience: No individual that remains qualitatively identical in all base natural respects can change with respect to its goodness, in any metaphysically possible world.

I call this relation *first-order* supervenience because it makes reference to only one individual. Why might this relation be troublesome for the nonnaturalist? The reason is that if the relation holds, then there are metaphysically necessary connections between an individual's goodness and certain of its natural properties. Yet, the nonnaturalist holds that an individual's goodness is metaphysically distinct from and discontinuous with its natural properties. So, the nonnaturalist would seem to owe the naturalist a metaphysical explanation for why such a strong connection holds between two very different kinds of properties,⁶⁸ whereas the naturalist has no such problem explaining first-order supervenience, as on that view normative properties such as goodness are identical to or metaphysically continuous⁶⁹ with natural properties.

⁶⁸ Now, not all nonnaturalists agree that a metaphysical explanation is owed. For instance, Derek Parfit (2011), contends that nonnatural normative properties exist in a non-ontological sense, and infers that a metaphysical explanation is not needed. See also Phillip Stratton-Lake and Brad Hooker (2006), and Matthew Kramer (2009).

⁶⁹ Richard Boyd's account of moral properties as a homeostatic cluster of natural properties, is one example. (Boyd 1988)

There are different ways to more carefully and rigorously articulate this “supervenience objection” against nonnaturalism about goodness. One way of formulating it would use what is often referred to as Hume’s dictum, which is a metaphysical thesis flatly prohibiting metaphysically necessary connections between distinct entities (McPherson 2012: 217). However, Tristram McPherson’s influential version of the supervenience objection does not use Hume’s dictum, but formulates the objection in a more “modest way”, using the following weaker but still broadly Humean principle:

MODEST HUMEAN: Commitment to brute necessary connections between discontinuous properties counts significantly against a view. (McPherson 217)

On this formulation, positing such brute necessary connections would be a significant cost to the nonnaturalist view, if it failed to provide an effective explanation. Stephanie Leary offers an even more modest formulation of the supervenience objection. At heart, her formulation relies on the following principle of theory selection:

[H]aving explanations for the types of things that typically do have an explanation (e.g. metaphysical necessities between seemingly different kinds of properties) is a virtue of a theory. And so, if some theory has an explanation that its rival lacks, then this is a reason to prefer the former theory. (Leary 2017: 81)

At first glance, Leary’s principle seems identical to MODEST HUMEAN, as the latter is also centrally concerned about a principle of theory choice. However, Leary’s principle is more “modest” because it does not imply that positing certain brute connections need give a rival theory a *significant* edge, but simply one reason counting in favour of its rival.

Formulating the supervenience objection using a more modest principle like Leary’s could nevertheless give a basis for preferring normative naturalism over normative nonnaturalism. Thus, the principle could be strong enough for the naturalist’s dialectical purposes, assuming the naturalist’s case was at least as strong as the nonnaturalist’s in other respects. In addition, as Leary points out, a nonnaturalist who uses a more modest principle to articulate the supervenience objection would be building a stronger case on behalf of the naturalist opponent. Hence, such an objection would be more challenging for the nonnaturalist to deal with because that principle would be less controversial (Leary 81). Indeed, even if one could reject Hume’s dictum and MODEST HUMEAN, one might still be forced to accept Leary’s principle regarding theory choice. So, if a nonnaturalist can explain the supervenience objection in spite of the stronger case built on

behalf of the naturalist opponent, such an explanation would be more robust. I characterize Leary's principle of theory choice as follows:

Theory-Choice Principle: A theory's having explanations for facts that typically do have an explanation is a virtue of a theory, such that if one theory does possess them but a rival does not, this is one reason to prefer the former.

This chapter will formulate the supervenience objection using this theory-choice principle.

Before proceeding, one might notice that my definition of supervenience is not continuous with other discussions of individual supervenience in the normative literature. Instead of using what I've called first-order supervenience, it is more standard to use the following definition of individual supervenience.

Standard Supervenience:

No individual in a metaphysically possible world that is identical in all base (intrinsic) natural respects to a second individual in another world can be different from the second individual with respect to its goodness.⁷⁰

First-order supervenience is a limiting-case (or special-case) of standard supervenience, a case in which the two individuals are numerically identical (but perhaps are at different times or possible worlds). Later in Section 4.3.1, I will show that if this standard definition of supervenience is used, then according to the platonic kind-based account, goodness would not supervene on natural properties. In that section I will explain that an Ebola-like microbe and an actual Ebola virus could have identical natural properties but differ in goodness. If so, then that account cannot explain supervenience; indeed it would not need to, because it would contend that supervenience does not hold.

However, it does not follow that the platonic kind-based account need not respond to a supervenience objection. Why not? The reason is that (as I will show in Section 4.3.1), the account is committed to first-order supervenience when it comes to material things. When first-order supervenience holds, there is a necessary connection between an individual's goodness and the natural properties that the same individual bears. Such a necessary connection between very different sorts of properties is something that typically does have an explanation. So, by the theory-choice principle, since the naturalist has a ready explanation for this, if the nonnaturalist does not,

⁷⁰ I have adapted this from McPherson's interpretation of Brian McLaughlin's (1995: 24) definition: "If two possible entities are alike in all base respects, they are alike in all ethical respects" (McPherson 2019 Sect. 1.2), reading 'possible' here as metaphysical possibility. There, McPherson also shows that this sort of definition is a more standard definition of supervenience relevant to individuals.

then this is one reason to prefer normative naturalism. In a nutshell, this is the supervenience objection that I will henceforth tackle in this chapter, and can be thus expressed:

Supervenience objection to normative nonnaturalism

1. Metaphysically necessary connections between seemingly different kinds of properties (possessed by the same individual) typically do have explanations.
2. The Theory-Choice principle is true.
3. So, if normative nonnaturalism does not have an explanation for metaphysically necessary connections between seemingly different kinds of properties borne by the same individual, while its rival (naturalism) does, then this is one reason to prefer naturalism over nonnaturalism. (from 1, 2)
4. Normative nonnaturalism that posits the first-order supervenience of nonnatural (normative) properties upon natural properties does not have an explanation for this metaphysically necessary connection between seemingly different kinds of properties had by the same individual..
5. On the other hand, normative naturalism does have such explanations (as it posits that normative properties just are natural ones or are metaphysically continuous with them).
6. Thus, having an explanation for supervenience is a reason to prefer normative naturalism over nonnaturalism that posits first-order supervenience. (from 3, 4, 5)

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that nonnaturalism, in the form of essence-accounts and the platonic kind-based version in particular, has the resources to explain first-order supervenience. In other words, I will demonstrate that premise 4 of the supervenience objection is false.

4.2 Essence-accounts

What I call *essence-accounts* are nonnaturalist accounts on which the explanation for an individual's goodness will include appeal to the essence of something relevant, such as the essence of the thing (e.g. an oak), or whatever is relevant according to the account. Call this relevant item the locus of explanation, whose essence provides an important explanation of the thing's goodness. The reason that essence-based accounts are potentially able to explain supervenience is firstly because that essence provides a basis for evaluating the individual in question. Secondly, something's essence is metaphysically necessary, and since it does not change, any change in an individual's goodness would be in virtue of a change in its base natural properties. Thirdly, essence is a plausible stopping point of metaphysical explanation, being the essence of the thing (or whatever the locus of explanation is). In other words, the metaphysical necessity of something's

essence is something that does not reasonably require further explanation, as I will show later below. What is something's essence? Here I begin by following Kit Fine, who contends that the essence of an object or property is the set of propositions that are directly definitive of that object or property, and thus they state the very nature of that object or property (Fine 1994).⁷¹

The different varieties of essence-accounts can be categorized according to their locus of choice. One sort of account, a kind-based approach, uses the essence of the individual as member belonging to a kind (e.g. essence as an oak) as the locus of explanation. Rather than the individual as member belonging to a kind, another account might use for its locus the individual as particular individual (individual essence). Other essence-accounts might have the normative property as their locus (Corradini 2017). Another class of essence-accounts might use the essence of normative concepts (goodness, rightness, etc.) as the locus of explanation, as Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo (2014) propose. Lastly, an essence-account might have multiple loci, such as Leary's use of the essence of *sui generis* normative properties and also hybrid properties (2017). Another example is Chapter 2's platonic kind-based account, which uses the essence of an individual as member of a kind, and the essence of the platonic good.

4.3 An essence-account explanation of supervenience: platonic kind-based account

What is the explanation of supervenience offered by the platonic kind-based account? On the platonic kind-based account, some individual *x*'s goodness is partly in virtue of the fact that *x*'s having certain natural properties are such as to satisfy its K-standard. *x*'s goodness is also partly in virtue of another fact, this fact being that *x* has those natural properties just mentioned. Lastly, *x*'s goodness also holds partly in virtue of the K-standards' resemblance to the platonic good.⁷² Given what the partly-in-virtue-of relation is, if *x*'s K-standard, base properties, and the K-standard's resemblance of the platonic good do not change, then of course *x* would continue to be good to the same degree, in all metaphysically possible worlds. K-standards' resemblance to the platonic good does not vary across metaphysically possible worlds, because the platonic good and the content of K-standards are each metaphysically necessary. Thus, if *x*'s goodness or badness varies across two possible worlds, *x*'s base properties must be different in these worlds. This

⁷¹ Fine is here referring to what he calls constitutive immediate essence.

⁷² Also, *necessarily* *x*'s goodness holds partly in virtue of those 3 determinants. So, if *x* is good, all those determinants must have obtained.

explains the first-order supervenience of x 's goodness upon its natural properties. Thus, premise 4 of the supervenience objection should be rejected. In addition, the account avoids bruteness revenge, which is to smuggle a different brute necessary connection into the explanation. The reason the account avoids it is because the necessity of the content of the K -standards is explained by the essence of that kind, and the platonic good's necessary nature is explained by the platonic good's essence—and metaphysical necessities of essence are of the sort that do not reasonably require further explanation, as I will argue later in Section 4.3.2.

4.3.1 The standard supervenience relation does not hold

But first, notice that on my account of goodness, the more standard relation of individual supervenience (“standard supervenience”) would not always hold. Let me describe one example of such a case. Let two individuals, x and y , be qualitatively identical in all natural respects (hereafter ‘naturally identical’). However, notice that if kind-based essence is to be explained nonnaturally, then it follows that essence cannot be fully explained by the sciences. So, there is an aspect of essence that is not explained scientifically. Then, even though individuals x and y are naturally identical, it is possible they nevertheless belong to different kinds, because their essences as members of their respective kinds could have an aspect that differs but is not explained scientifically. So, it is metaphysically possible that x be an Ebola-like microbe, while y an actual Ebola virus. Suppose that each satisfies its respective K standard. However, the microbe's destructive activities seek destruction for its own sake, and so x 's K -standard does not resemble the platonic good. In contrast, actual Ebola's destructive activities seek its self-maintenance, and so y 's K -standard does resemble the platonic good. Thus, x is not good, but y is good. Nevertheless, x and y are naturally identical, which is metaphysically possible because even though x 's and y 's traits and activities themselves are identical, the ends of the activities are different, and those ends are nonnatural, as I argued in Chapter 3. So, this difference is not borne out by their natural properties, and x and y are naturally identical. Thus, understood as standard supervenience, goodness would *not* supervene upon natural properties because x and y differ in goodness/badness without differing in their natural respects.

Let me repeat that I assert that even though lifeform essence is nonnatural, every lifeform essence is fixed to certain natural activities or properties that are proper to that kind. Nevertheless, it is metaphysically possible for two distinct lifeform essences to be fixed to the exact same natural

activities and properties.⁷³ However, these two distinct lifeforms would differ teleologically. Thus, for *two naturally identical individuals* with differing essences, their essences are (and must be) composed of the same activities but differ in what ends the activities aim at.

So, on my account, standard supervenience does not always hold. However, what I have called first-order supervenience does. For this relation to hold, an individual that does not change in its natural properties cannot change in its goodness or badness, in any possible world. This first-order supervenience holds, because an individual's kind-membership is constant. Let me further illustrate below.

Take *y* (the actual Ebola virus) for instance. If its natural properties do not change, it is clear that its goodness or badness would not change, regardless of possible world. The only way *y* could become bad without its natural properties changing is if *y* somehow became a member of a different kind (e.g. microbe) whose *K*-standard did not resemble the platonic good. But *y* could not be *y* without remaining an Ebola virus (*y* would have ceased to exist and a numerically distinct individual would somehow have begun to exist), and so first-order supervenience would not be violated.

First-order supervenience also holds for *x*, the microbe. If *x* became less bad, it is plausible that its natural properties would have to change; perhaps it grew old and its parts could not maintain certain biochemical concentrations, making it less effective at infecting its neighbours.⁷⁴ Alternatively, if *x*'s natural properties had not changed, its badness would not change. And again, the only way its badness could change would be for it to somehow change kind-membership. But then *x* would cease to exist, and supervenience would be moot. So, first-order supervenience does hold on my account, even though standard supervenience does not. Thus, for the reasons given earlier in Section 4.1, a defender of the account owes the naturalist an effective explanation for first-order supervenience, which explanation I offered in Section 4.3.

⁷³ The reason is that essence is nonnatural, implying that an account of essence is not completely scientifically explained. So, there is also some non-scientifically explained factor that explains a lifeform's essence. Thus, two distinct essences can share the same proper natural activities/features but differ with respect to some non-scientifically explained factor.

⁷⁴ Of course, here I am assuming that for any *K* whose *K*-standard does not resemble the platonic good, any kind-based defect a member has with respect to an end that does not resemble the platonic good would be counted as overall good-making.

4.3.2 Bruteness Revenge?

I asserted earlier in Section 4.3 that the content of the K-standards is metaphysically necessary and is thus fixed in all metaphysically possible worlds. But then one might raise the question of what explains this metaphysically necessary connection between the K and the content of its K-standards. Within the nonnaturalist explanation of any version of supervenience, if there remains some posit of another metaphysically necessary connection for which no explanation can be provided, then that explanation would succumb to what McPherson calls bruteness revenge (2012: 222-3). That is, in attempting to explain a necessary connection between normative and certain natural properties, if it does so only by pushing the bruteness elsewhere to a different necessary connection (that reasonably requires explanation), then bruteness would remain and have its “revenge”. However, on my account there is no bruteness revenge in its explanation of first-order supervenience. The reason is that the metaphysical necessity of the K-standards’ content is explained by the essence of the K, which is a sort of necessity without a reasonable need for further explanation. The same goes for the metaphysical necessary nature of the platonic good, which is explained by its essence.

Let me unpack this, and the following will require careful reading. As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, the content of the K-standards is explained by the Aristotelian categoricals. The categoricals are propositions that are a representation of life (i.e. a representation of a given lifeform, e.g. the oak). This representation of life represents what that lifeform is, which is plausibly its essence. Because a representation of an essence is explained by that essence, the content of the K-standards is therefore ultimately explained by the essence of the species K. The content of the essence of the K (e.g. the squirrel, the oak, etc.) is metaphysically necessary, and so this explains why the content of the K-standards is also metaphysically necessary. But at this point it is fair to ask whether the original explanandum has been explained. In other words, we started asking for an explanation of the supervenience of an individual’s goodness upon its natural properties. That explanation led to an appeal to the metaphysical necessity of the K-standards. That explanation in turn has led us to the given lifeform’s essence (and the platonic good’s essence), and ends there. Does this really amount to an acceptable explanation?

In order to explain the content of K’s essence, do we just find ourselves presupposing another brute necessity relation? For if we are really just asserting now that there is a metaphysically necessary relation between a member of K (e.g. a squirrel) and its essence then

have we succumbed to bruteness revenge? I don't think so, and the reason is that one should accept the principle that it is reasonable that an explanation of the metaphysical necessity of something's possession of its essence can terminate there, because its essence is simply what it is. I will first state this principle, explain how it enables us to avoid bruteness revenge, and then defend the principle.

Essence principle of explanation: For any individual x , an explanation of the metaphysical necessity of x 's having its essence (including that essence's content) can reasonably terminate at x 's essence.

This principle asserts that x 's essence explains (without requiring further explanation) the metaphysical necessity of x 's being linked to its essence, and also the metaphysical necessity of that essence having the content that it does. x 's having its essence includes both of these claims. Applying this principle then, for an x that is a member of K , an explanation of the metaphysical necessity of x 's having its essence as member of K can reasonably terminate at that essence; such a metaphysical necessity is of a sort that requires no further explanation.

I take this essence principle to be plausible, and almost tautological, as something's essence is simply what it is to be that thing. A thing would cease to be that thing if it lacked its essence. So, the question of why, necessarily, a member of kind K has the essence of K does not reasonably arise. In this way, with respect to the question not reasonably arising, the query *why, necessarily, a member (of K) has the K essence*, or *why, necessarily, the platonic good has its essence* is similar to other questions that Leary discusses: She observes that the question of why you originated from your mother and father is not a question that should arise, nor is the question of why H_2O and water are identical. She notes that Shamik Dasgupta calls such facts (e.g. originating from one's mother and father) "autonomous" facts,⁷⁵ i.e. the sort of facts that cannot, in principle, have a metaphysical explanation. Leary writes: "The only response that can be given to both questions is that that's just what you and water are! The demand for any further metaphysical explanation seems inappropriate." (Leary 2017: 95) Originating from your mother and your father is part of the essence of you (qua individual). Note that this sense of essence, individual essence, is different from the kind-based essence that explains the K -standards. However, the reasoning is similar when it comes to the need for explanation. You would cease to be the same individual without the same biological mother or father. Water just is identical to H_2O . Water would cease to be the same thing

⁷⁵ Leary cites Dasgupta (2014: 575–80). He asserts that autonomous facts are neither grounded nor fundamental.

without being H₂O. Kowalski would cease to be a penguin without its essence (as member of its kind), and thus Kowalski would cease to be the same individual without that essence. This gives reason to think that just as the demand for further metaphysical explanation is inappropriate for why you originated from your mother and father, or why H₂O is water, so is the demand for further explanation of why, necessarily, a member of kind K possesses the essence that it does.

As for the platonic good, Chapter 2 argued that the nature of the platonic good is metaphysically necessary, and this was explained by its essence. So, the platonic good has an essence, and for the same sort of reason that the essence of the K needs no further explanation, the essence of the platonic good does not reasonably stand in need of further explanation—its essence is simply what it is to be the platonic good.⁷⁶

Due to its appeal to the essences of things, the platonic kind-based account's explanation of supervenience can avoid positing metaphysically necessary standards that are brute. It is thus able to avoid a serious problem with an explanation offered by what Gideon Rosen (2017) calls the bridge law account. This account, defended by David Enoch, contends that all contingent normative facts N are grounded in some non-normative fact Q and also in a fundamental normative law connecting Q with N (Enoch 2011).

In order to explain standard supervenience, Enoch's normative laws must be metaphysically necessary. Otherwise, the content of the laws could vary with the metaphysically possible world and an individual could change in goodness without any change in natural properties. Nevertheless, Leary rightly argues that Enoch's account does not adequately respond to the supervenience objection. To see why, one should know that Enoch himself admits that his account in the end posits a brute metaphysical necessity between the normative and the natural: the normative laws themselves are brute (2011: 148). He concedes that this is a theoretical cost. Leary, however, rightly points out that this is not just some small problem or cost, but amounts to

⁷⁶What is the relation between the essence of different K's and the essence of the platonic good? I have argued that metaphysical necessities of essence do not require further explanation, and so (the content of) K essence is not explained by the essence of the platonic good. Whether this is consistent with the platonic good being able to bear a causal relation (e.g. creation) with various lifeforms is a question I will remain neutral on. (Although, it does seem coherent that God as platonic good could, say, create the various kinds, and nevertheless it not reasonable to ask for further explanation of why the essence of the squirrel is to gather acorns, live on trees, etc. That's just what the squirrel is. And God chose to create it. If God chose to create something similar but different, it would not be the squirrel. So perhaps it is reasonable to ask for an explanation of the instantiation of the K essence but not for an explanation of its content). What I *have* taken a stand on, in Chapter 2, is that the goodness of an individual ultimately flows from that of the platonic good, but all that is needed to account for this is that the individual's K-standard resembles the platonic good (and that the individual satisfies that K-standard).

a failure to explain the supervenience of the normative on the natural. It is a failure because there is in the end no answer to the question of why the normative is necessarily connected to certain natural properties; that necessary connection is unexplained (brute).⁷⁷

The platonic kind-based account, however, does provide an explanation for why the K-standards and the nature of the platonic good are metaphysically necessary. The account does not merely state that the content of the K-standards, or the nature of the platonic good, is metaphysically necessary. Instead, it contends that they are metaphysical necessities explained by essence, and thus are of the sort that plausibly do not stand in need of further explanation, as argued earlier.

Now, a defender of bridge-law non naturalism might respond that if K-standards are part of the K essence, then bridge-laws may also be part of some essence, thus similarly providing an explanation not requiring further explanation. However, K-standards are not part of the essence of the K. As stated earlier (in the second paragraph of Section 4.3.2), the content of the K-standards is explained by the Aristotelian categoricals, which comprise a representation of the relevant K essence (lifeform K). Because a representation of an essence is explained by that essence, the K-standards are ultimately explained by the K essence. But let me make clear that the K-standards are distinct from the essence of the K, i.e., the former are not even some subset or part of the latter. Second, while every K essence may entail bridge-laws, it is not clear that the converse is true, that every bridge-law entails an essence. Enoch's bridge-law account certainly does not appeal to essence, and to the extent that it could be modified to appeal to do so, to that extent it would fundamentally become an essence-account rather than a bridge-law account.

4.4 Contrast with another nonnaturalist essence-account: Leary's hybrid-property account

We have seen that a nonnaturalist essence-account of goodness, the platonic kind-based account, can explain the first-order supervenience of an individual's goodness upon its natural properties. In what follows, I will examine a different essence-account, one offered by Leary (2017). It falls under the category of essence-account because this theory of normative

⁷⁷ "His view doesn't just face some theoretical cost. It faces the very same theoretical cost that he began with. In other words, Enoch's response [...] does not saddle him with a new explanatory burden. [...] It fails to address the original one." (Leary 2017:9)

nonnaturalism makes important use of the essence of *sui generis* normative and “hybrid” normative properties. I will contrast my platonic kind-based account with her account and briefly show how my account is not vulnerable to some recent objections to her account’s ability to explain supervenience. Before proceeding, I should be clear that Leary intends her nonnaturalist account to explain what I have called standard supervenience (Leary 79). However, as first-order supervenience is a special case of standard supervenience, where the individual and the second individual are numerically identical, Leary’s account would also purport to explain first-order supervenience. I will not only show that it fails to explain it, but also that it fails because of more general problems that turn out to undermine its explanation of standard supervenience as well.

Leary’s “essentially grounded nonnaturalism” posits hybrid normative properties that are something like intermediate properties between *sui generis* normative and natural properties. She writes:

[The hybrid properties’] essences specify both naturalistic sufficient conditions for their own instantiation and sufficient conditions for the *sui generis* normative properties [...] [T]he essences of the hybrid normative properties thereby explains (1) why all particular contingent normative facts involving *sui generis* normative properties are fully grounded in particular contingent normative facts involving hybrid normative properties, and (2) why all particular contingent hybrid normative facts are fully grounded in particular contingent natural facts. (Leary 2017: 98-99)

Thus, the hybrid property serves as a sort of “double-sided tape” (99) between the natural and *sui generis* normative properties, thus guaranteeing supervenience, as grounding relations hold in all metaphysically possible worlds. Furthermore, this view does so without compromising the nonnaturalist thesis that the normative and natural are not metaphysically continuous.⁷⁸

However, both David Faraci (2017) and Teemu Toppinen (2018) have raised doubts about whether Leary’s proposal succeeds at explaining standard supervenience. Faraci asks why one should think that the *sui generis* normative properties always have the grounding structure involving hybrid properties in the way that she proposes. Toppinen argues that hybrid normative properties simply do not exist. The platonic kind-based account is not vulnerable to either of these objections. It is easy to see this in the case of Toppinen’s objection. But I will discuss Faraci’s

⁷⁸ The essence of the *sui generis* normative properties cannot be specified in non-normative terms, and the sufficient conditions for their instantiation are entirely in normative terms (Leary 97-98). The essences of natural properties accordingly do not involve non-natural properties.

objection more closely because that discussion will also bring out more clearly the significant advantage the platonic kind-based account has over Leary's theory.

As mentioned, her account explains how certain natural properties give rise to a *sui generis* normative property, by way of a hybrid normative property. The latter has the essence of "taping" normative properties to natural ones. If *sui generis* normative properties are always grounded by such hybrid properties, then standard supervenience is explained. Faraci grants Leary that the hybrid (and *sui generis* normative) properties do have the essences she claims, and also grants her the autonomy of essence, i.e. that "Y is part of the essence of H" cannot be open to further questions (Faraci 315). However, he argues that it does not follow that there cannot be further questions about a different claim, i.e. of the form "There are no properties with essence Z", that Leary needs to presuppose (Faraci 315). It is important whether such a claim is true: Faraci argues that if there is a sort of (what I call) interfering property P, whose essence Z is such as to ground *sui generis* normative properties, but according to that essence, P itself is ungrounded or fully grounded in another nonnatural property (315), then at least some *sui generis* normative properties would not supervene upon natural ones (standard supervenience).

Even if Leary were to emphasize that her posit of hybrid properties is such that there is a hybrid property for *every* individual's natural property (or every natural property relevant to grounding the normative property), unless she also denies there are interfering properties P with the essence described above, then some normative properties would still not be grounded by natural properties (and so not all relevant natural properties would ground a hybrid property).⁷⁹ So, Leary would have to say that there are no P's. For myself, I think it unmotivated for Leary to claim that her *sui generis* normative and hybrid properties exist while P does not. Thus, her explanation of supervenience is not successful. It is neither a successful explanation of first-order nor standard supervenience, because some normative properties could fail to be grounded in natural properties whether the normative properties are possessed by the same individual (at different times or worlds) or by two numerically distinct individuals.

Does the platonic kind-based account face a similar problem? I argue that it does not, because the analogous claim (analogous to "There are no properties with essence Z") that would need to be defended is more easily motivated. The following would be the claim:

⁷⁹ At least it would be unclear which of these "competing" properties (P or the hybrid property) would successfully ground the *sui generis* normative property. No version of supervenience can hold under such uncertainty.

No individuals belonging to physical living kinds have essences such that their K-standards are to be met i) in virtue of no fact at all, or ii) not at all in virtue of any natural base properties.

Put otherwise, the claim is that all K-standards are to be satisfied at least partly in virtue of the individual's natural properties. On the platonic kind-based account, such a claim is plausible for the following reasons. All K-standards of physical (living) kinds, because they are physical, must require a member to bear certain natural properties as expressed by its Aristotelian categoricals, so as to seek its species-teleology of physical self-maintenance and so forth. A lifeform whose essence includes no natural activities or properties would not be a physical lifeform. Further, as argued in Chapter 2, for all living things belonging to a kind, their goodness must hold partly in virtue of satisfying their K-standards. So, a physical individual's goodness cannot hold in virtue of no other fact, and indeed cannot hold in virtue of none of its natural base properties at all. Thus, the "analogous claim" above is well motivated, and paves the way for the explanation of first-order supervenience: An individual's goodness obtains in virtue of its possessing natural properties, partly in virtue of those properties being such as to satisfy the K-standards, and partly in virtue of the K-standards resembling the platonic good. As explained before, the content of the K-standards and the nature of the platonic good are fixed, and thus it is metaphysically impossible that the individual change with respect to goodness if its natural properties stay the same, explaining first-order supervenience.

The more general reason why the problem Faraci identifies in Leary's account is not a problem for the platonic kind-based account is because the latter does not posit some novel *property* (e.g. hybrid normative property) with a novel essence, but rather appeals to the kind-based essence of the individual physical things and the essence of the platonic good. So, while Faraci can argue that positing novel properties opens the door also to interfering properties that prevent supervenience from holding (on Leary's account), the platonic kind-based account appeals simply to the essence of the individual, which is fixed by the kind to which it belongs. The account also appeals to the essence of the platonic good, of which there is exactly one in all possible worlds. Positing some "interfering" lifeform would be irrelevant and thus a non-starter. So, not only (as the previous paragraph explained) must a physical individual's goodness hold at least partly in virtue of its natural properties, but there is not even any question *which* K-standard (or platonic

good) and corresponding essence should be relevant. As a result, first-order supervenience is guaranteed.

Essence-accounts, in particular the platonic kind-based version, can provide an effective response to the supervenience objection by providing an explanation for the first-order supervenience of goodness upon natural properties. Furthermore, because metaphysical explanation can reasonably terminate at something's essence, which is a sort of necessity not reasonably in need of explanation, the explanation of first-order supervenience offered by the platonic kind-based account avoids any other dangling necessary connection that fails to be (but should be) explained. Thus, we should reject premise 4 of my formulation of the supervenience objection. Also, compared to Leary's essence-account appealing to the essences of *sui generis* normative properties and hybrid normative properties, my account's appeal to the essence of lifeforms and essence of the platonic good is more successful at explaining first-order supervenience because the account is not vulnerable to the possibility of interfering properties that could threaten this supervenience. Thus, because the nonnatural account I have defended can provide an effective explanation of first-order supervenience, the Theory-Choice principle articulated at the beginning of the chapter does not provide any reason due to this supervenience for choosing normative naturalism over nonnaturalism.

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