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SELECTED METAETHICAL ASPECTS OF PHILIPPA FOOT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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There are two main positions in metaethical discussions. The first, cognitivist, position is that moral evaluations may be true or untrue, and the second, internalist, position is that these evaluations guide actions such that the agent is internally motivated to act based on the content of that evaluation. These two positions conflict. Cognitivism has to deal with the problem of moral motivation, and internalism has to explain the relevance of moral evaluations. In this article we will explore the moral philosophy of Philippa Foot as presented in her *Natural Goodness*. Our aim is to reconstruct and explain Foot's arguments in favour of cognitivist and externalist views. Hence the final part proffers a summary of the metaethical aspects of Foot's moral philosophy, and thereby highlights both the originality and contribution it makes to contemporary ethical thinking, and sketches a constructivist interpretation of Foot's moral philosophy that emphasises the function of practical reason in constituting moral normativity.

Keywords: Metaethics – Cognitivism – Naturalism – Constructivism – Internalism – Externalism – P. Foot

There are two main positions in metaethical discussions. The first, cognitivist, position is that moral evaluations may be true or untrue, and the second, internalist, position is that evaluations guide actions such that the agent is internally motivated to act on that evaluation. Someone who agrees with the moral evaluation "It's wrong to cross on a red light" thinks the evaluation is true because it relates to an objective fact (e.g. that traffic can be dangerous). The agent is both internally and sincerely motivated to act in line with the judgement – don't cross on a red light. These two positions conflict. Cognitivism has to tackle the problem of moral motivation, and internalism has to explain the relevance of moral evaluations. In this article we look at Philippa Foot's moral philosophy as presented in her *Natural Goodness*, which

can be seen as the culmination of her multifaceted ethical thinking.[1] Drawing on an analysis of her book, the aim is to reconstruct and explain Foot's arguments in favour of cognitivist and externalist views. Hence the final part proffers a summary of the metaethical aspects of Foot's moral philosophy, and thereby highlights both the originality and contribution it makes to contemporary ethical thinking, and sketches a constructivist interpretation of Foot's moral philosophy that emphasises the function of practical reason in constituting moral normativity.

1. The cognitivist aspects of Foot's moral theory[2]

First of all Foot distinguishes between Moore's anti-naturalism and specific intuitive cognitivism which she believes opens to the door to non-cognitivism, particularly emotivism and prescriptivism as versions of subjectivist ethical theories (Foot 2001, 6 – 8; Ricken 2010, 193). The characteristic view in non-cognitivism is that we do not use moral language to claim a particular fact does or does not exist but use it expressively to convey an emotion, recommendation or attitude, and/or directive speech act in order to causally influence the listener's emotions or attitudes (e.g. a recommendation). Moral judgements have no descriptive function, and it is pointless asking about the ontology of the *truth maker* that makes them either true or not true. To conclude: only propositions/descriptions can be true or untrue, moral evaluations/prescriptions cannot (Rüther 2015, 35 – 40; Miller 2003, 6 – 7).

Hence there is a gap between facts, which can be observed using empirical scientific methods and expressed in descriptive sentences, and values, which are determined by emotions and attitudes and are expressed in normative/prescriptive sentences. Foot summarises views on distinguishing between facts and values as follows:

> This opened up a gap between moral judgements and assertions, with the idea that truth conditions give, and may exhaust, the meaning of the latter but not the former. Thus it seemed that *fact*, complementary to assertion, had been distinguished from *value*, complementary to the expression of feeling, attitude, or commitment to action. Propositions about matters of fact were assertible if their truth conditions were fulfilled, but moral

[1] I therefore restrict myself to an analysis of the book, whilst leaving aside her views at the various stages of her ethical thinking.

[2] In this part I will partially draw on the following published studies (Chabada 2020, 747 – 759; Chabada 2021, 10 – 27).

> judgements, through conditions of utterance, were essentially linked to an individual speaker's subjective state (Foot 2001, 8).

However, Foot thinks that distinguishing facts from values is a great mistake (Foot 2001, 8). Her first step to developing a cognitivist and naturalist position is her critique of Moore's understanding of the term "good". In this she draws on Geach's distinction between predicative and attributive adjectives. The meaning of a predicative adjective is independent of the thing it is describing, whereas the meaning of an attributive adjective is dependent on what it is describing. According to Geach, the term "good" is an attributive adjective (Geach 1956, 34). It is on this basis that Foot criticises Moore: for one cannot analyse the term "good" as a free-standing predicate without reference to everyday language use. The attributive meaning of "good" requires an additional noun because 'whether a particular F is a good F depends radically on what we substitute for "F"' (Foot 2001, 2 – 3). Foot thinks Moore was mistaken in analysing the meaning of 'good' without considering its relationship to the species it exemplifies. That opened the door to emotivism and prescriptivism, and postulating moral intuition presents more of a problem than a solution. Therefore one has to analyse the meanings of words as they are used in natural language. If "good" acquires its meaning from being associated with species-specific terms, then this is the first step away from a non-cognitivist position: the words "good/bad" do not express the agent's emotions, commands or projections but refer to the species-specific features shared and exemplified by that particular individual.

Foot bolsters her cognitivist position by distinguishing between the primary/natural meaning and the secondary/instrumental meaning of the attributive use of the word "good". Secondary goodness is "goodness predicated to both living and non-living things when they are evaluated in relationship to members of species other than their own" (Foot 2001, 26). A cow is good in the sense that it serves the needs of its owner, e.g. it produces a lot of milk and so its owner makes a bigger profit. In these examples the objects are seen as means of achieving their purpose, which she considers to be external and set by no-one else (Hoffmann 2014, 130).

In relation to intrinsic natural good Foot says: "features of plants and animals have what one might call an 'autonomous', 'intrinsic' […] that may have nothing to do with the needs or wants of the members of any other species of living thing… it depends directly on the relation of an individual to the 'life form' of its species" (Foot 2001, 27). Something is good in the primary sense of the function it has within the species-specific life form. Natural goodness is dependent on the life form, which exhibits the features of the physical constitution, typical behaviours and life habits of that species. Natural goodness is essential to the extrinsic and instrumental use

and evaluation (if we want to get a cow to produce more milk, we need to know *what* a cow is, i.e. we have to know what life form it is and its intrinsic natural goals, to which milk production is related). Intrinsic natural quality is basal, and extrinsic quality is evaluated on that basis. In living creatures natural goodness is to do with self-preservation and reproduction, which are goodnesses that are not dependent on the wishes of another species and in fulfilling these the individual flourishes (Foot 2001, 27 – 33; Halbig 2020, 84; Ricken 2010, 197).

Another challenge in non-cognitivism that Foot has to tackle is the characteristic gap between facts and values. The solution she offers confirms her belief that values and natural facts are related. "In any case, the norms that we have been talking about so far have been explained in terms of facts about things belonging to the natural world" (Foot 2001, 36). Foot develops a uniform logical structure for evaluations in which evaluative statements can be turned into descriptive statements. "My belief is that for all the differences that there are, as we shall see, between the evaluation of plants and animals and their parts and characteristics on the one hand, and the moral evaluation of humans on the other, we shall find that these evaluations share a basic logical structure and status. I want to suggest that moral defect is a form of natural defect not as different as is generally supposed from defect in subrational living things" (Foot 2001, 27).

Inspiration can be sought in the work of M. Thompson, who employs true descriptive teleological judgements – natural-historical judgements (NHJ) – that capture "the life cycle of individuals of a given species" (Foot 2001, 29; Thompson 2008, 48, 76). Their logical form, "The S is/has/does F", represents a teleological nexus (Thompson 2008, 65) of movements and states where the ultimate formal goal is characteristically to *succeed* or *flourish* or specifically live a *good life*. Species predicate occupies a normative position (Thompson 2008, 29). Identifying a species or life form, F indicates the states, activities and movements that the typical example of the species *usually* or *generally* manifests and the function these states, activities, movements fulfil in the life cycle of examples of the species (Foot 2001, 32).

This type of judgement is a separate logical category, the universality of which is "qualitative normality", and hence allows for exceptions, its truthfulness not being falsified by the fact that individual S isn't or hasn't or doesn't do what exemplary members of species F usually are, have or do. Neither does the logical form of these judgements imply that if S isn't, hasn't and doesn't F then it isn't an example of the species (Thompson 2008, 48, 76), e.g. cats usually have four legs, but a cat that has only three legs is still a cat. True NHJs explicate the life form in terms of the nature of the examples, by exhibiting "patterns of natural normativity" that enable us to determine the natural quality or defect of the example of the life

form. “If we have a true natural-history proposition to the effect that S’s are F, then if a certain individual S – the individual here and now or then and there – is not F it is therefore not as it should be, but rather weak, diseased, or in some other way defective” (Foot 2001, 30, 38; Thompson 2008, 80). If individual E of form L is/has/does F perfectly, i.e. it accomplishes the (biological) functions (fulfils its *ergon*) stemming from the life form, then it is a normal example of form L and so flourishes, that is, leads a successful life according to exemplary form L.

The method for determining whether the individual is a good or defective example of the life form is as follows. The first premise is the general descriptive statement (NHJ), the second premise is a statement about that particular individual and the conclusion tells us whether the individual is judged to conform to the way of life typical of that species. Let us look at an example: 1. (general) premise = NHJ: bees announce that they have found a source of nectar by “dancing”; 2. premise: this bee has found a source and is not dancing; 3. conclusion: this bee is *naturally defective*, or is a *bad* example of the species, that is, it *isn’t* how it *ought* to be (Foot 2001, 33 – 37, Thompson 2008, 80 – 81; Hähnel 2020, 352). Hence the conclusion is normative: the unit of measurement it is judged against is not extrinsic to the individual “but it results from what this individual has always necessarily and essentially been: a member of a certain species of living beings” (Halbig 2020, 84). Therefore one can only talk about whether something is naturally good or defective in relation to the internal teleology of the life form exemplified by that individual (Hähnel 2020, 352).

Hence we can formulate natural norms and thereby list the types of contingent qualities and defects that depend essentially on the form of life of the species to which an individual belongs. Foot is convinced that she has found a single general and consistently logical framework (*special grammar*) for evaluating judgements that are valid for all living things (plants, animals and even humans). On this basis she shows that we are dealing with a use of the word “good” that non-cognitivism cannot explain and that norms are based on the realities of the natural world (Foot 2001, 26, 36 – 37; Ricken 2010, 197 – 198).[3]

Foot also applies this logical evaluative structure to humans: “There is no change in the meaning of ‘good’ between the word as it appears in ‘good roots’ and as it appears in ‘good dispositions of the human will’” (Foot 2001, 39). Foot is, however, fully aware that even though the logical structure of the evaluation remains

[3] Here we are confronted with the key question of to what extent our knowledge of the life cycle depends on our knowledge of evolutionary biology. As Hacker-Wright notes “Foot’s view of function does not claim to explain the origin of species. It is not biological theory in that sense; rather it is a logical theory, a theory of the logic of statements about living things” (Hacker-Wright 2013, 124).

the same, the content changes radically. If the natural goodness of plants and animals relates to the biological cycle of self-preservation and reproduction, the question is whether and to what extent human natural goodness is related to the biological cycle. According to Foot, human natural goodness and a successful life are not necessarily predicated on reproduction and self-preservation. Choosing childlessness and even celibacy is not therefore shown to be a defective choice, because human good is not the same as the good of plants or animals. The bearing and rearing of children is not an ultimate good in human life because other elements of good such as the demands of work to be done may give a man or woman reason to renounce family life (Foot 2001, 42). As Hacker-Wright points out: "We do not hold survival and reproduction as sacrosanct values, and therefore, it is not always rationally chosen" (Hacker-Wright 2013, 123).

Living a good life is more complex for human beings because they are capable of sacrificing their life in pursuit of a value or truth. "The teleological story goes beyond a reference to survival itself" (Foot 2001, 43). This shows that human goodness extends beyond goodness based on the biological cycle. To know what human goodness is, we have to look at how human beings live: in other words, what kind of living thing a human being is. That means that we have to describe the human life form that serves as the standard for determining natural goodness or badness. True descriptive NHJs tell us how people live, for example that people cooperate to achieve goals, get round the rules, trust one another, recognise rights and need words of affection and appreciation. This enables us to pin down *what* people are (Foot 2001, 49, 51).

Just as we evaluated, using the internal standards for the life form of the bee, when a bee is a defective example of its species, we can analogically do the same when evaluating a specific human. If people generally have the capacity for intentional action then specific agent P who is "lacking [intentional] agency is, ipso facto, a defective human being" (Hacker-Wright 2013, 128).

If we evaluate the activities of an individual based on the life form exemplified by that individual, individual human will is then evaluated on the basis of the facts of that human life form. It follows from this that "Human good is *sui generis*. […] To determine what is goodness and what defect of character, disposition, and choice, we must consider what human good is and how human beings live: in other words, *what kind of a living thing a human being is*" (Foot 2001, 51).

Foot's cognitivist naturalist approach provides us with a means of ensuring that the language of morality is objective, specifically that the natural facts of the given life form are used to explain in what way an individual is either a good or a bad exemplary. It is worth highlighting that in Foot's cognitivism, natural facts – which

are facts pertaining to the natural world and exist as the features of actual living creatures regardless of whether we believe in them – are conditional on whether moral judgements are true.

2. The externalist aspects of Foot's moral theory

In the first part of this article we have pointed out the cognitivist naturalist features of Foot's moral philosophy. In the second part we will look at her responses to the challenges of internalism, i.e. how to account for the fact that in her naturalist moral theory moral sentences have the power to guide action.

According to internalism the practical character of moral sentences lies in the fact that those who wholeheartedly agree with their content are immediately motivated to act accordingly. We are motivated to act by the conative element (desire, emotion), while the cognitive element (judgement) merely guides the impulse emanating from the conative element. The motive and the moral judgement are closely related both internally and necessarily (Rüther 2015, 128 – 130; Miller 2003, 7). David Hume was the classic internalist. He famously stated that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume 1960, 415). Reason can only guide action; it cannot cause it. For Hume "an active principle can never be founded on an inactive; and if reason be inactive in itself, it must remain so in all its shapes and appearances, whether it exerts itself in natural or moral subjects, whether it considers the powers of external bodies, or the actions of rational beings" (Hume 1960, 457). Feelings and passions play a crucial role in morality and trigger human action, thus they give rise to morality. Morality is concerned with people's sentiments and actions and so cannot be derived from reason, for reason has no effect on feelings and actions (Hume 1960, 457 – 458). According to Hume "reason operates in the realm of facts or relationships between ideas and shows us how to achieve our ends", which stem from our passions (Hume 1960, 458). Only wishes and desires can explain human actions, and the practical scope of reason lies in the fulfilment of our desires or our interests (Hume 1960, 416).

The externalist characteristics of Foot's moral philosophy can be seen in her understanding of practical rationality, which goes in two directions. In the first direction she critically confronts it with Hume's conception of practical rationality, and in the second she asks whether a conative element isn't necessarily involved if moral judgements are to guide practice (Foot 2001, 62).

Foot agrees with Hume that morality ought to guide our actions since acting morally is part of practical rationality. Foot thinks it a mistake to attempt to explain morality using various types of practical rationality such as "desire-fulfilment

theory" or "self-interest theory" (Foot 2001, 9 – 10).[4] She attempts to rehabilitate a more complex view of practical rationality (the classic Aristotelian and Thomist view). After all, subordinating morality and other kinds of practical rationality or reducing one to the other is unacceptable (Ricken 2010, 194). Foot is of the opinion that we shouldn't be thinking "in terms of rival theories, but of the different parts of practical rationality, no one of which should be mistaken for the whole" (Foot 2001, 13). Action is rational when all the requirements are taken into account in the same way. "The different considerations are on a par, moreover, in that a judgement about what is required by practical rationality must take account of their interaction: of the weight of the ones we call nonmoral as well as those we call moral" (Foot 2001, 11).

If moral action is part of practical rationality, then the instrumentalist view of practical rationality, basically (neo)Humean theory, is integral to moral action. And if, according to instrumentalist thinking, "an agent is rational when she acts on reasons that maximize the fulfilment of her preferences or interests, and it bids us to do that without regard to their content" (Hacker-Wright 2013, 116), then it is precisely in the moral nature of reasons for action that Foot, taking inspiration from W. Quinn, considers the instrumentalist view of practical rationality to fall short.[5] She accentuates Quinn's argument:

> […] that by this account, practical reason, which would concern only the relation of means to ends, would therefore be indifferent to nastiness or even disgracefulness in an agent's purposes. And Quinn asked [...] *what then would be so important about practical rationality*? In effect he is pointing to our taken-for-granted, barely noticed assumption that practical rationality has the status of a kind master virtue, in order to show that we

[4] Foot's conception of practical rationality has changed. "In the earlier stage she was strongly influenced by Hume's practical rationality, which holds that rational action is dependent on the agent's desires and interests. In the 1990s she moved away from Hume's thinking. In her later work she returned to the classic Aristotelian and Thomist conception of practical rationality" (Pauer-Studer 2010, 169).

[5] As H. Pauer-Studer notes, "Foot paints Hume with a rather broad brush and fails to notice that Hume's morality also had room for the concept of 'reflective reason'" (Pauer-Studer 2010, 173). In Slovakia the most recent work on Hume's conception of moral philosophy is by M. Szapuová (Szapuová 2022, 672 – 677). Moreover, M. Kuna has critically analysed Hume's conception of practical rationality from an Aristotelian perspective (Kuna 2007, 310 – 317).

> cannot in consistency with ourselves think that the Humean account of it is true (Foot 2001, 62).

The fundamental flaw in Humean instrumentalist theory, as both P. Foot and W. Quinn see it, is that "practical reason, which would concern only the relation of means to ends, would therefore be indifferent to nastiness or even disgracefulness in an agent's purpose" (Foot 2001, 62).

"Goodness" is therefore a necessary condition of practical rationality and therefore as at least a part-determinant of the thing itself (Foot 2001, 63). Formally "goodness is the goal of practical rationality and that means that people think rationally and act only when their reasons for acting relate to goodness" (Pauer-Studer 2010, 172). This is the fundamental difference between subrational living things and human beings. As Foots states: "animals go for the good *that they see*, human beings go for *what they see as good*" (Foot 2001, 56). There is an "intrinsic link" between moral good and rational reasons for action, and so a person "who acts badly ipso facto acts in a way that is contrary to practical reason" (Foot 2001, 62, 64).

Whether we act in a morally good or bad way is down to various factors, and these can be used to evaluate whether an agent is a good or a bad exemplary of their species. For Foot morally good actions can be evaluated using these formal criteria: voluntariness, knowledge, the nature of the action, the goal of the action and lastly conscientious judgement. The basic criterion of evaluation is whether the action is voluntary because if it is not voluntary then it has no moral relevance. Knowledge is another of the evaluation criteria but it is ambiguous. Ignorance cannot always be justified because there is such a thing as being voluntarily ignorant (Foot 2001, 69 – 70). These two criteria constitute the logical limits to evaluation whose subject is goodness and defect of human action considered as such and relate to the quality or defective nature of rational will (Foot 2001, 71 – 72). A vice is a natural defect, whereas a virtue is a natural state of good will. Morally good actions result from the nature of the action itself – from what it is that is done, from the end for which an action is done or in relation to the agent's judgement of whether he or she is acting badly or well (Foot 2001, 72 – 73, 81). Actions are morally good when all these criteria are fulfilled because a single defect is enough for badness, while goodness must be goodness in all respects. An action is therefore bad "if it has badness from its kind, its end, or its contrariety to the agent's beliefs about what it is good or bad to do" (Foot 2001, 75 – 76).

Foot rejects the internalist theory of motivation and binding moral judgements and actions too tightly, asking "why do we say that what gets the whole thing going must be a desire or other 'conative' element in the subject's psychological state?"

(Foot 2001, 22) Externalist motivations are evident because the weight of the motivational force of moral judgements is transferred from the conative state to rational recognition of the reasons for acting. “Why should we not take the recognition of a reason for acting as bringing the series to a close? Recognition of a reason gives the rational person a goal; and this recognition is [...] based on facts and concepts, not on some prior attitude, feeling, or goal” (Foot 2001, 22 – 23). The reason in her approach is that the moral evaluation “of human action depends ... on essential features of specifical human life” (Foot 2001, 14). From this one can better explain the objectivity of the reasons for action, which is rooted in the natural facts of (human) life. The natural facts are evident in the primary and secondary goods on which a typically successful life depends according to the life form of that species. Naturally facts can be considered a source of moral normativity and a “naturalist standard of evaluation” and so “thinking about the essential conditions specific to human life can only help morally good judgements” (Pauer-Studer 2010, 182 – 184).

Examples of the externalist form of motivation are alleviating others’ pain, parents caring for their children or altruistic friendship (Foot 2001, 102, 107). In these cases the main source of motivation is the objective natural facts of human life that are manifest in various needs (hygiene, food, recognition, trust etc.). The various conative states (emotions) are not therefore a necessary condition of motivation but are contingent to morally good decisions taken in response to the requirements of the human natural facts in that particular situation. The natural facts of human life represent the limits of what people can do to promote, rather than destroy, their own successful life and that of others (Pauer-Studer 2010, 185). But those who go against the natural essence of human life are acting immorally as exemplified in the “crimes against humanity” committed in the concentration camps and gulags (Foot 2001, 113). Thinking about natural facts led Foot to believe that humans cannot achieve their own species-specific life form in the absence of morality (Foot 2001, 17). “Morality helps the individual to identify and apply the reasons as such so they can realise their life form in the best possible way” (Fritz 2009, 366 – 367) and therefore – insofar as the situation and circumstances allow – lead a successful life.

Conclusion

Foot’s moral philosophy offers us a change of perspective and a fruitful approach to interpreting the truth value of moral judgements and the motivation to act on their content. Foot rejects moral philosophical positions in which the meaning of “good” and its force as a guiding action are shifted to subjective positions. She integrates moral judgements into a unified theory of evaluation and develops a single basic logical structure for evaluating both moral and non-moral responses (Fritz 2009,

384). Her critique of the non-cognitivist concept of reason provides scope for a cognitivist understanding of practical rationality and for the guiding force of moral judgements without her having to defend the gap between facts and values. At the same time she rejects the internalist theory of motivation and excessively strong ties between moral evaluations and acts. She thinks will is connected to evaluations that are grounded in the natural facts of the (human) life form. And on that basis Foot's moral philosophy is a cognitivist (realist-naturalist) and externalist alternative to various non-cognitivist-internalist directions (Fritz 2009, 365 – 367).

Let us now sketch out the constructivist interpretation of moral philosophy that Foot sets out in her book *Natural Goodness*. In metaethics, constructivism[6] is presented as a strategy that on the one hand endorses cognitivist premises whilst rejecting a realistic understanding of the objectivity of moral facts. On the other hand it is far removed from non-cognitivist tendencies and closer to the view that moral judgements may take on a truth value (Rüther 2015, 64 – 69).

The starting point for my constructivist reading of Foot's moral views is the way she discusses practical reason. My attempt at a constructivist interpretation is based on her claim that human beings do not instinctively and basally follow their goals in the way subrational living things do, but – "see an end as an end", and an end thus conceived of is a rational ground for action (Foot 2001, 54 – 55). Thus Foot does not think practical reason is theoretically derived, but she acknowledges the autonomy of practical reason and thereby of ethics. The second claim that underpins my possible constructivist interpretation of Foot's view is that she grasps that "human beings go for *what they see as good*" (Foot 2001, 56). Things that are considered to be good and are recognised as good are not just considered thus on theoretical and scientific grounds but are also things that need doing practically. Therefore it is not just about having theoretical knowledge about the nature of the thing but about practically recognising a thing that is considered to be good and thereby desirable. Reasoning about what is morally and practically good does take place through practical reason, which is not arbitrary, but grasps that the content of its nature is good and processes it. Moral goodness therefore manifests as the product of practical reason, which lacks logical-deductive certainty since practical thinking is concerned with the individual, the specific thing embodied within that unique situation.

Humans are therefore capable of setting themselves goals based on practical consideration of the goal, even though they are in many ways influenced by elements of their nature. It is my view that for Foot the term (human) nature does not refer to a statically given entity but a dynamic variable that contains multiple tendencies,

[6] Of course, even in constructivism it is an umbrella term' that encompasses various branches.

abilities and inclinations, which leaves it open to interpretation and shaping. Practical reason does not operate by reading what is morally good and bad in nature. Quite the opposite: (human) nature requires practical reason to determine it. It is this that distinguishes Foot's understanding of practical reason from Hume's instrumentalist practical rationality, in which goals are set by passions and reason is merely "slave" to them. It also distinguishes it from Kant's practical rationality in which the "empirical material" of nature has no moral relevance.

If this objective metanormative framework of nature is not a fixed "ontological" template that our practical reason can read and absorb moral norms from and if moral goodness is not the random work of practical reason, then we avoid subjectivist and relativist conceptions of the moral good. There is still the unresolved problem in Foot of the rules that are supposed to guide our moral reflection but the constructivist thinking could help here as well.

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