Rationality and the Human Characteristic Way in Hursthouse’s *On Virtue Ethics*

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Rationality and the Human Characteristic Way in Hursthouse’s *On Virtue Ethics*

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Abstract

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Rationality and the Human Characteristic Way in *On Virtue Ethics*

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In this paper, I first assess whether Rosalind Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is warranted for the evaluation of non-rational social animal good. I argue that when Hursthouse’s concept of “characteristic way” is identified with Michael Thompson’s concept of “natural history”, her evaluation structure *is* warranted in the context of non-rational social animals. But this warrant does not transfer to the human ethical context. Rationality destroys the determinate link that exists between the four ends and the human characteristic way. If her evaluation structure is to be warranted for the evaluation of human good, then Hursthouse must either be a foundationlist about the normative status of the four ends or eliminate competing conceptions of the human good that are in tension with the unity of the four ends. I show that neo-Aristotelian ethical foundationalism is false in the case of rational animals. Thus, Hursthouse must justify why the four ends “really do constrain” what can pass reflective scrutiny as a possible virtue, despite not ruling out alternative conceptions of the human good. Until she does this, Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is not fit to serve as an objective criterion for the classification of human virtues.
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Introduction

In the last section of *On Virtue Ethics*, Rosalind Hursthouse addresses the question of objectivity in virtue ethics. She is particularly interested in answering the following form of the question: “Can we hope to achieve a justified conviction that certain views about which character traits are the virtues (and which not) are objectively correct?” (Hursthouse 164). She argues that we can. Her justification depends upon an analogy between animal good and human good. She argues that animal good and human good share a common structure, and that views concerning which character traits are virtues can be justified on the basis of this structure (Hursthouse 224). She first develops the evaluation structure in relation to plants, and modifies the structure as she “ascends the ladder of nature”, ultimately arguing that humans are ethically good in respect of satisfying the same natural ends as the social animal (Hursthouse 223). The natural ends in question are survival, continuance of the species, characteristic enjoyment/freedom from pain, and the good-functioning of the social group (Hursthouse 198). These ends, taken together, constitute Hursthouse’s evaluation structure. Thus, if Hursthouse is right, then human virtues are the human character traits that satisfy the four ends in the human characteristic way.

In this paper, I first assess whether Rosalind Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is warranted for the evaluation of non-rational social animal good. I argue that when Hursthouse’s concept of “characteristic way” is identified with Michael Thompson’s concept of “natural history”, her evaluation structure is warranted in the context of non-rational social animals. But this warrant does not transfer to the human ethical context. Rationality destroys the determinate link that exists between the four ends and the
characteristic way that is present in the non-rational social animal context. If her evaluation structure is to be warranted for the evaluation of human good, then Hursthouse must either be a foundationlist about the normative status of the four ends or eliminate competing conceptions of the human good that are in tension with the unity of the four ends. I show that neo-Aristotelian ethical foundationalism is false in the case of rational animals. Thus, Hursthouse must justify why the four ends “really do constrain” what can pass reflective scrutiny as a possible virtue, despite not ruling out alternative conceptions of the human good. Until she does this, Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is not fit to serve as an objective criterion for the classification of human virtues.
General and Particular Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism

Hursthouse’s thesis that we can obtain a justified view concerning which character traits can be objectively and correctly identified as the virtues is grounded in her particular brand of ethical naturalism, which she develops within the context of a more general neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism. So, in order to get clear on her project, it is important to situate her naturalism within the general framework of neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism.

Hursthouse provides a clear statement of what I am calling general neo-Aristotelian naturalism (hereafter GN) in the following passage:

Ethical naturalism, in the context of virtue ethics, aims to capture Anscombe’s and Foot’s idea that, when we talk about ethically good human beings, we do not suddenly have to start to use the word good in an entirely different way. There is a structure (not necessarily of the sort I have outlined, but some structure) in the botanical and ethological evaluations of other living things as good or defective specimens of their kind, which supervenes on evaluations of their parts and behavior as good or defective in light of certain ends, and this carries over \textit{(mutatis mutandis)} into evaluations of ourselves as ethically good or bad as human beings in respect of our characters. (Hursthouse 226)

The primary intuition motivating this view is that the word good does not radically change meaning from context to context (Hursthouse 195). In the context of living organisms, the good is fulfilling or failing to fulfil what constitutes successful living for the species. Thus, if the intuition is correct, then both humans and animals are good or bad in respect of fulfilling or failing to fulfill what constitutes successful living for their species.

I take GN to consist of two theses. The first thesis is that the good is species relative. That is, the content of the good changes from species to species. For example, the aspects that constitute a mouse’s good are different from the aspects that constitute a
moose’s good. The second thesis is that the good for living things just is living in the way that is characteristic of the species. Although it is true that certain goods such as survival and reproduction may be common criteria of goodness across different species, an organism’s fulfillment of those criteria is relative to how the species in question characteristically accomplishes those ends. For example, consider a wolf that lacks hunting ability. Poor hunting ability is a defect *qua* wolf, not a defect *qua* living thing. Some animals, like cows, simply do not require hunting skills to live in the characteristic way of the species. Thus, hunting ability will not factor in as a good for such animals.

If GN is true of humans, then human virtues are virtues because of the role that they play in living in the human characteristic way. Thus, if there is an identifiable human characteristic way, then the character traits that are required to live in the human characteristic way can be justified as virtues on that basis; and thereby provide an objective criterion for distinguishing virtues from non-virtues. ¹

Hursthouse’s particular naturalism is a specific way of developing GN. GN does not make specific claims about what is contained in the concept of the characteristic way, but Hursthouse’s evaluation structure does. She identifies both the ethically relevant aspects of the characteristic way and the ends that determine whether an aspect is good. The aspects are the parts, operations, actions, emotions, and desires (Hursthouse 202).

The ends that determine whether these aspects are good or bad are survival, continuance

¹ This is what Hursthouse has in mind for the second thesis of her three-part platoic thesis. Hursthouse’s three part thesis is thus: (i) The virtues benefit their possessor (they enable her to flourish, to be, and live a life that is, eudaimon. (ii) The virtues make their possessor a good human being. (Human beings need the virtues in order to live well, to flourish as human beings, to live a characteristically good, eudaimon, human life.) (iii) The above two features of the virtues are related (Hursthouse 167). Hursthouse argues that when these theses are taken jointly, we can obtain a justified view about which character traits are objectively the virtues. I do not address her thesis explicitly because if her naturalism (her second thesis) fails, then her thesis as a whole fails.
of the species, freedom from pain/characteristic enjoyment, and good functioning of the
social group (Hursthouse 202). These two claims, taken together, constitute Hursthouse’s
evaluation structure. The important claim for the purposes of this paper, and for
Hursthouse’s goal of gaining insight into the virtues, is that social animal good and
human good can be evaluated using the same structure. Thus, I define Hursthouse’s
particular neo-Aristotelian naturalism (hereafter HN) as the following thesis:

**HN:** Both social animals and humans are good in respect of satisfying the four
ends in the characteristic way of the species.

Since Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is first developed in the non-rational animal
context, it is important to determine where the evaluation structure comes from and
whether it is valid in that context. This will be the subject of the next two sections. Only
once this is clear can we determine whether the elements of her evaluation structure
successfully transfer over to the human ethical context.
Hursthouse sums up the evaluation structure for non-rational social animals in the following passage:

So, summing up, a good social animal (of one of the more sophisticated species) is one that is well fitted or endowed with respect to (i) its parts, (ii) its operations, (iii) its actions, and (iv) its desires and emotions; whether it is thus well fitted or endowed is determined by whether these four aspects well serve (1) its individual survival, (2) the continuance of its species, (3) its characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic enjoyment, and (4) the good functioning of its social group—in the ways characteristic of the species. (Hursthouse 202)

Hursthouse’s evaluation structure does two things: 1) identifies the aspects that constitute an animal’s goodness and 2) identifies the ends that determine whether a given aspect is good or bad. Taken together, it asserts that animal is good in virtue of being well-endowed with respect to its aspects, and these aspects, in turn, are determined to be good or bad on the basis of whether they well-serve the four ends in the characteristic way of the species.

Since the purpose of Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is, first and foremost, to track animal good, and the animal good is living in the characteristic way, then we can clearly identify the conditions under which Hursthouse’s evaluation structure will fulfill or fail to fulfill its promise. It succeeds if it tracks the characteristic way, and it fails if it does not track the characteristic way. There is one way for the evaluation to succeed and five distinct ways for it to fail. I will first identify the ways in which it can fail.

There are five ways that Hursthouse’s evaluation structure can fail to track the characteristic way. First, it fails if the four ends are not really the characteristic ends of non-rational social animals. Second, it fails if the four ends do not constitute the complete
set of the characteristic ends. Third, it fails if the aspects specified in the evaluation structure are not really the aspects that are relevant to an animal’s satisfying the four ends. And fourth, it fails if the aspects do not constitute the complete set of the ends relevant to the satisfaction of the four ends. There is also a fifth way, but I will not be giving it much attention in this paper since it does not seem to constitute a plausible threat to the evaluation structure. The fifth way in which the structure can fail is if animal good amounts to something more than the satisfaction of the characteristic ends in the characteristic way. Beyond aspects and ends I am not sure what could be relevant to the good of the non-rational social animal. Therefore, I will take it for granted, as Hursthouse seems to, that an animal’s being is exhausted by its aspects and ends. All of the cases that threaten Hursthouse’s evaluation structure are cases where her structure fails to capture the characteristic way, and thus, the good in question.

Hursthouse’s evaluation structure succeeds in tracking the characteristic way if and only if the characteristic way is the satisfaction of the four ends in the characteristic way. If the characteristic way amounts to anything other than the satisfaction of the four ends in the characteristic way, then there will be animal good that cannot be captured by the evaluation structure. Thus, we can state the above as a condition on the warrant of her evaluation structure in a particular application. An evaluation structure is warranted if and only if it is capable of reflecting the good in question.

Thus the condition:

**Agreement Condition (AC):** Satisfying the four ends in the characteristic way (of the species) just is the characteristic way (of the species).
Since the aspects (parts, operations, actions, emotions and desires) are the properties in virtue of which an animal is good, AC can also be stated in terms of aspects: the aspects that satisfy the four ends in the characteristic way must be identical to the aspects that constitute the characteristic way. The purpose of AC is to ensure that Hursthouse’s evaluation structure tracks non-rational social animal good. It is both a necessary and sufficient condition for her evaluation structure to be warranted. AC is a necessary condition for it’s being warranted because if it is violated, then the characteristic way amounts to something other than satisfying the four ends in the characteristic way. If this is true, then the evaluation structure would be unable to track animal good. AC is a sufficient condition because the good just is the characteristic way. Since the characteristic way, according to Hursthouse’s evaluation structure, just is satisfying the four ends in the characteristic way, and the good is the characteristic way, there would not be any other properties for the evaluation structure to capture. In other words, if AC is true, then it does not miss anything when it comes to non-rational social animal good.

It is not prima facia clear that AC will be met. It is certainly an available question whether the satisfaction of the four ends in the characteristic way really is the characteristic way for non-rational social animals. After all, it is both logically and biologically feasible that the negation is true. This is particularly the case in light of the Darwinian view of life. Perhaps mutation, struggle, and gene propagation are the only true ingredients to life. If this is true, then it may be that the characteristic way is a concept that needs to be dispensed with altogether. Furthermore, even if it is granted that animals have both the four ends and the characteristic way, it is not clear how the four ends get their normative status for animals. Are the four ends connected to the
characteristic way in a special way that explains how they acquire their normativity? I will be concerned with this last question.

Hursthouse’s thesis that the four ends are objective criteria that can be used to determine which human character traits are virtues is based on the analogy from animals where the structure is first developed. If the evaluation structure is not warranted in the animal case, then it will certainly not be warranted in the human case. In the following section I evaluate whether there is reason to think that AC is met in the animal context. To do this I 1) motivate the possibility of a characteristic way concept via an argument by Michael Thompson, 2) elucidate how the concept of the characteristic way is constructed (that is also a sufficient condition for a veridical species concept), and 3) argue that this condition can provide reasons for thinking that AC is satisfied in the animal case.
Natural History and the Ends Condition

Beyond what is implicit in her structure, Hursthouse does not offer an explicit account of what the characteristic way is. In passing she says, “A species’ ‘characteristic way of operating, etc’ is identified by how it [a species] characteristically operates in its natural environment, natural habitat” [... ]” (Hursthouse 203). Although a start, this does not give us much traction for understanding where her evaluation structure comes from, where the four ends figure in, or how the concept of the characteristic way for a species is constructed. To clarify these matters I will turn to Michael Thompson’s work on life.

The essential atom in Thompson’s thought on life is the “natural-historical judgment”. Natural-historical judgments are expressions of the form “The S is (or has, or does) F” (Thompson 64, 2008). S refers to a given species and F refers to a given aspect (part, operation, action, emotion, desire, etc.) of the species. For instance, “The wolf has four legs” and “The wolf hunts as part of the pack” are both canonical instances of natural-historical judgments. The complete set of such true natural-historical judgments constitutes a complete description of a given species’ life-form that is called the species’ natural history (Thompson 72, 2008). Thompson argues that a species’ natural history can be “viewed as indirectly articulating the ideal, standard or perfect operation of a

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2 Thompson treats “life-form” and “species” as referring to the same thing, but prefers the term “life-form” (Thompson 59, 2008). I will be using both, and the locution “the species’ life-form”. I do this to make it clear that I am saying that each species has a life-form (or life-cycle). It is certainly possible to imagine a species that does not have a characteristic life-form (life-cycle), but neither Thompson nor the typical proponent of GN accepts this. The idea that a species has a particular way of going on is central to the thesis of GN. Thus, using the locution “the species’ life-form” might be formally redundant, but it helps fix ideas. In any case, both species and life-form refer to the “wider-context of description” (Thompson 56, 2008). The wider-context of description is the life-cycle of the species itself. This wider-context is a necessary precondition for the possibility of a true description of an organism. For example, one cannot deduce from the internal structure of an appendage that it is a “wing”. One must look to the wider-context of the organism’s life-cycle to determine the role that the appendage plays in the organism’s life-cycle. This requires going beyond anything that is contained in a single observation to the life-cycle of the organism in question. Thus, the species or life-form concept just is the atemporal representation of the life-cycle of a particular kind of life.
bearer of this kind of life” (Thompson 55, 2005). ³ Let us review his argument for holding this.

Consider the following natural-historical judgment: The wolf hunts as part of the pack. What does this sentence express? Before proposing his own account, Thompson considers four prima facie plausible ways of interpreting such a natural-historical judgment: 1) as a universal judgment 2) as a statistical judgment 3) as a ceteris paribus judgment and 4) as a universal judgment to be reduced via normative analysis. For my present purposes, I will only address the first two interpretations.⁴

Interpreting our above natural-historical judgment as universal statement would amount to the following: For every x, if x is a wolf, then x hunts as part of the pack.⁵ If this is what natural-historical judgments express, then they are just simply false. For if they are hidden universal statements, then our natural-historical judgment can be defeated by one instance of a free-riding wolf. We know there are such free-riding wolves. Clearly

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³ The role of “indirectly articulating” is very important here. The natural history of a species does not express how an animal should be set-up. That is, the natural history cannot be reduced via normative analysis. Rather, the natural history just is how a species’ life form is set-up, and thereby introduces a standard by which the “goodness” of particular members of the species can be gauged. Put differently, the natural history should not be understood in terms of normativity, but normativity (regarding life) should be understood in natural history (Thompson 75, 2008).

⁴ Thompson’s argument against the ceteris paribus interpretation can be seen in the following passage. “The thought that certain hormones are released, or that they live at such and such altitudes and amid such and such vegetation, is a thought of the same kind as the thought that they breed in spring. The field guide and the nature documentary assign an external environment to the intended life-form, after all, and in the same mood or voice or discursive form they elsewhere employ in describing its bearers’ inner structure and operations. These conditions are thus ‘presupposed’ by the life-form itself; and how the bearer comes to arrive in them will itself be described in natural-historical terms” (Thompson 71, 2008). The idea is that in the attempt to reduce the natural-historical judgment to a ceteris paribus clause, we simply advance our knowledge of the life-form in question- but this is expressed in natural-historical judgments. So, a ceteris paribus interpretation would already require us to be acquainted with the true natural-historical judgments of the species’ life-form in question. For a reason against the reduction via normative analysis, see footnote 3.

⁵ Thompson regards this as a “plausible theory”, but says that “My purposes do not, I think, require that I refute it’. (Thompson 67, 2008) I must admit that I do not quite understand why he would say this. Given my argument above, such an interpretation of natural-historical judgments would make all natural-historical judgments come out false.
then, if we assent to the truth of ‘the wolf hunts as part of the pack’, then it cannot be reduced to a simple universal claim about wolves.

Interpreting our natural-historical judgment as a statistical statement would amount to the following: The majority (90 percent, let’s say) of wolves hunt as part of the pack. This interpretation does have prima facie appeal, but Thompson rejects this construal as well.

But, again obviously, although ‘the mayfly’ breeds shortly before dying, most mayflies die long before breeding. And if the description of the ‘life-cycle’ of the monarch butterfly told us ‘what mostly happens’, then it would soon be unnecessary to visit that strange Mexican valley in order to wade knee-deep among them. (Thompson 68, 2008)

The important point made by this passage is that something can be statistically false of a species, but nonetheless true of its natural history. This is certainly true of the mayfly and the monarch. Thus, when giving a description of the life-cycle (or rather, constructing a natural history) for an species, it is not merely statistical data that is taken into account; one must look at all of the phases of the species life-cycle and the role that each aspect of the organism plays in the living of that life-cycle. This eliminates the possibility of construing natural-historical judgments as merely statistical statements.

Although I will not discuss them in detail here, Thompson goes on to eliminate the other possible reductions of natural-historical judgments. If Thompson is right, then natural-historical judgments cannot be reduced to universal propositions, statistical propositions, ceteris paribus propositions, or normative analyses. Thompson ultimately concludes that natural-historical judgments represent an irreducible form of thought that he calls “non-Fregean generalities”. In his own words: “The dispiriting suggestion will be that the intended natural-historical judgments form a sub-class marked off from the others
by content and not by form” (Thompson 77, 2008). For instance, take the natural-
historical form ‘The S is F’. Let us put inanimate subject matter into the form: ‘The car is red’. Clearly, ‘The car is red’ is logically reducible to “For some x, x is a car and x is red”. If Thompson is right, then when life enters in as the content to ‘The S is F’, the statement becomes logically irreducible to any other form of thought. This is what grounds Thompson’s conclusion that life represents a logically distinct form of thought. Furthermore, if it is true that natural-historical judgments cannot be logically reduced, then perhaps there is support for the claim that when we talk about “The Wolf” we are talking about something logically special; namely, a natural history.

It is important to note some of the peculiar logical properties of natural-historical judgments and what they tell us about the subject of natural-historical judgments. If Thompson is right, then true natural-historical judgments can have the strange property of being true even when there is no member of the species that extensionally satisfies the natural-historical judgment at a given moment. For instance, imagine that there is a plague that wipes out all but one wolf. According to Thompson, it would still be true of ‘the wolf’ that it ‘hunts as part of the pack’ even though it can no longer be true of the individual particular wolf. Just as Thompson’s mayfly/monarch passage illustrates, the predicates of natural-historical judgments do not necessarily transfer to any particular member of the class that bears that life-form. Natural-historical judgments are true in virtue of articulating the life-form of the species in question, and the life-form indirectly represents the standard of success for the species (Thompson 55, 2008). My goal was only to motivate the plausibility of the concept of a natural history and get Thompson’s
language on the table. I will now examine how the natural history concept, from the perspective of us human inquirers, is constructed.

If our attempt to articulate the natural history (the complete set of true natural-historical judgments) of a given species is not just matter of what we statistically observe about a species, then how is it decided what goes into the natural history of a species? After all:

The attempt to produce a natural history, by contrast, expresses one’s interpretation or understanding of the life-form shared by the members of that class […] My understanding may of course be shallow or deep, extensive or narrow, mostly true or largely mistaken. (Thompson 73, 2008)

The natural history of a given species’ is true of the life-form shared by the members of that class, but because natural-historical predicates in the natural history do not necessarily transfer to all (or even the majority) of the members of the class, we are left with the problem of how to distinguish between the natural-historical judgments that seem true of the species’ life-form and those that are actually true. Thus, although natural history is the set of true judgments regarding the life-form of the species, it is a separate question (our question) whether a given interpretation of a natural history is correct. Thompson does not address this question, so I will now propose a possible way of proceeding. I then argue my proposal can help out Hursthouse in the non-rational social animal context if she identifies her concept of characteristic way with Thompson’s concept of natural history.

Consider the mayfly again. Why is “The mayfly dies shortly after breeding” true of “the mayfly” if it is not statistically true? That is, why do we attribute “dying shortly after breeding” to the natural history of the mayfly rather than “dying before breeding”?

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6 This is where I depart from Thompson, though I continue to use his language.
"The mayfly dies before breeding" is not necessarily an absurd natural-historical judgment. After all, there are some animals that cannot reproduce (the liger) of which it is true that they die before breeding (if only because they cannot breed at all). Perhaps the mayfly has an inner drive towards death, and it is the defective mayflies that go on to breed. This construal of the facts would have the benefit of aligning the natural-historical facts with the statistical facts, but we do not think it is true. Biologically, it is highly implausible that an organism has no concern for its genes, so, what is it that leads us to assign natural-historical judgments to a natural history if not statistical facts?

Natural-historical judgments are true of species because the referred to aspects in the natural-historical judgments play important roles in the life-cycle of the species. For instance, consider two natural-historical judgments: ‘The wolf has a small freckle on its underbelly’ and ‘The wolf hunts as part of the pack’. Even if the former judgment is statistically true of wolves, it is not likely to enter into the natural history of the wolf. This is because having a freckle does not (let’s plausibly assume) play any role in the life-cycle of the wolf. On the other hand, we can imagine a number of aspects that do play important roles in the life-cycle of the wolf, such as hunting as part of the pack. Thus, it appears that an aspect (as expressed in the form of a natural-historical judgment) enters into the natural history of a species only if the aspect plays a functional role in the species’ life-cycle.

Now, what kind of functional role might we be talking about? The functional roles in question are not relative to human interest because whether a life is well or poorly lived for an organism is not settled by human judgment. It is a matter of what constitutes the good given the organism’s life-form. Thus, we must look to the organisms
themselves. By gathering empirical data about various members of a given species we can begin to assess what is important to them, and determine what their basic drives (hereafter “ends”) are. Once we determine the basic ends of the members of the species, we can then evaluate aspects as part of (or not part of) the natural history on the basis of whether they play a functional role in the satisfaction of the characteristic ends of the species. For instance, perhaps we suppose, despite the statistical falsity of reproduction in the mayfly case, that the mayfly has a basic end to reproduce. If we do this, then this rules out the natural-historical judgment “The mayfly dies before breeding” and supports the natural-historical judgment “the mayfly dies after breeding”. Thus, the very content of what enters the natural history depends upon first assigning basic ends to the species’ life-form in question. This helps us to see how certain natural-historical judgments can be true of a species despite being statistically false of the existent members of the species at any given moment in time; namely, organisms have ends, but it is not always easy to satisfy them.

Determining the ends of a species is the first crucial step in constructing the concept of the natural history for that species. Without determining the ends of a species, the natural-historical judgments that enter into natural history run the risk of being either arbitrary or statistical. Neither provides justification for thinking that the resulting natural-historical judgment will be true. We have already assumed that an organism is exhausted by its ends and aspects. That is, there is nothing more to an organism than its ends and aspects. I will now argue something slightly more specific. Namely that, if there is a matter of fact regarding a particular natural history at all, then the aspects (as
expressed in natural-historical judgments) must share a common functional story that ultimately bottoms out in the characteristic ends of the species.

Consider a few questions from a hypothetical inquirer and the set of answers that we may provide: “Why does ‘the wolf have sharp teeth’?” the inquirer asks. Answer: in order to ‘rip off the flesh of its prey’. “Why does it do that?” the inquirer asks. Answer: in order to ‘gain nutrition’. “Why does it need that?” the inquirer asks once again. Answer: In order to ‘survive’ (or reproduce or whatever).7 In the sequence of why-questions various aspects are referred to (sharp teeth, ripping off flesh, gaining nutrition), and the list could have been made much longer if we cared to be meticulous enough to go into chemical detail. But regardless of how detailed we want to be, the aspects that serve as answers to our why-questions ultimately terminate in the most general functional plan of the life-form in question. The functional plan is the set of characteristic ends; that for the sake of which the aspects function. The ends constitute the most general story for why an aspect exists in the species’ life-form, and further, they are the grounding that relates and unifies the various aspects of the species’ life-form together.

If the aspects of a species do not admit of a common functional plan, then there is no matter of the fact regarding the natural history for that species. One can imagine a disorganized and chaotic species with aspects that operate for entirely unrelated ends.

7 The functional relations between the parts of an animal’s natural history could perhaps be spelled out in terms of Thompson’s natural-teleological judgments. “Natural teleological judgments may thus be said to organize the elements of a natural history; they articulate the relations of dependence among the various elements and aspects and phases of a given kind of life” (Thompson 78, 2008). I don’t mention Thompson’s natural-teleological judgments because he does not express how they perform the function of articulating “the relations of dependence” among the parts of the natural history. Since I am making a claim about how the natural history of a species is organized and constructed, I thought it was best to keep my view separate from Thompson.
The story of such an organism would be a tale of warring aspects that pull the organism in hopelessly contradictory directions. Sometimes the organism is pulled by aspects (A1), and in virtue of the ends (E1) of those aspects, it performs a function (C1). At other times it is pulled by aspects (A2), and in virtue of the ends (E2) of those aspects (which are contradictory to E1), it performs function (C1). (E1-C1) and (E2-C2) are contradictory. We can formulate the above into natural historical judgments, and since the aspects of the organism are not related in a common functional plan, one is forced to conclude that “The S does C1” and “~ (The S does C1)”. This contradiction shows that such a species, if possible, is simply a defective species for which there is no matter of fact regarding its characteristic way. Thus, for a species to possess a determinate natural history, the aspects of the species’ life-form must be unified by a common functional plan. The common functional plan is spelled out in the characteristic ends of the species.

Now that the functional unity of the life-form is on the table, we can articulate a procedure for constructing a natural history concept that converges on the truth. I will go on to justify the parts of the condition after I introduce it. Sufficient condition for the truth of a natural history concept:

**Ends Condition (EC):** 1) The species in question has characteristic ends in virtue of the species’ life-form, and the characteristic ends articulate the functional unity of the species’ life-form. 2) The aspects (as expressed by natural-historical judgments) that enter into the natural history well serve the four ends. 3) The characteristic ends that we predicate of the species’ life-form constitutes the complete set of actual characteristic ends of the species. 4) The natural-historical judgments that satisfy (2) are true of the species’ natural history.

In other words, EC says that if the characteristic ends and the aspects that well-serve those ends are identified (for a given species), then the set of natural-historical judgments

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8 I am not sure how Thompson would respond to the idea of an inherently defective life-form, but it certainly seems logically possible.
corresponding to those aspects constitutes the complete and true natural history for the species. One can already see the parallels to Hursthouse’s evaluation structure, but let us justify the parts of EC first.

EC1 is a metaphysical requirement for a given species to even have a natural history. If either a species does not have characteristic ends in virtue of its life-form or the characteristic ends do not share a common functional unity, then there is simply no natural history to discover. If characteristic ends cannot be identified, then there is no way to identify what the aspects most generally function for. If this is the case, then there would be no reason to privilege the attribution of one prospective natural-historical judgment to the life-form over another. And if, however, there appear to be characteristic ends, but they are in conflict with one another, then the species’ life-form is defective. If such a life-form can be said to possess a natural history at all, it is riddled with contradictions. EC1 tells us whether a natural history project can even get under way for a species.

EC2 is a condition that ensures the functional unity of the natural history. It says that before a prospective natural-historical judgment can enter into the natural history, the referred to aspect in the natural-historical judgment must well-serve the characteristic ends. Put differently, EC2 ensures that only the aspects that play an important functional role for the species’ life-form enter into the natural history. If EC2 is satisfied, then one knows that all of the natural-historical judgments in the natural history share a common functional story in the characteristic ends that are predicated of the life-form. Correspondingly, another function of EC2 is to condition against the possibility of constructing a natural history that is inherently defective.
EC3 simply states that if an interpretation of the natural history is true, then the characteristic ends that we predicate of the species’ life-form must really constitute the complete set of actual characteristic ends. An epistemological problem becomes obvious in EC3. How can we know that the ends that we identify as the characteristic ends really are the characteristic ends of the species? I will not be concerned with the justification for EC3 in this paper, but I do think it is worth noting that our interpretation of a given natural history fails if we do not identify the proper ends (and thus functional plan) of the species in question.

And lastly, EC4; EC4 states that the natural-historical judgments that satisfy EC2 must be true of the species’ natural history. EC4 falls victim to the same epistemological problems as EC3, and though I am not dealing with these epistemological problems, EC4 is important for other reasons. EC4 must be included because EC (1-3) are not sufficient to get true natural-historical judgments. To see why consider a bear that satisfies all of its characteristic ends solely by eating trash. Here we have a case where an aspect (the action of ‘eating trash’) well-serves the characteristic ends, but in a way that is not characteristic of the species. Despite the fact that the aspect well-serves the characteristic ends, eating trash cannot enter into the natural history of the species. Why? Simply because it is false of the natural history. Thus, EC4 is required to adjudicate between cases of aspects that well-serve the four ends in the way that is characteristic of the species and those that well-serve the four ends but in a way that is not characteristic of the species.

EC4, in some sense, shows a kind of circularity in the project of providing a set of conditions that, when satisfied, gets to the truth about a given natural history. For EC4 implies that we must know what the natural history is before being justified in entering a
natural-historical judgment into the natural history. Although this is circular as stated, there are methods (not to be discussed in detail here) of distinguishing what is characteristic of a species from what is not. For instance, one plausible way of proceeding is by way of a natural-historical analysis. We might appeal to questions such as: “How has the bear satisfied its characteristic ends over the generations?” or “What aspects are necessary for the bear to carry on in a stable manner?” Answers to these questions can help us to distinguish between characteristic and uncharacteristic aspects. But I am not prepared to supply anything that approaches a solution to how one can come to know that EC4 is satisfied in a given case; my interest is what EC can tell us about Hursthouse’s evaluation structure and the normativity of the four ends. Let’s review.

When the procedure for articulating the natural history of a species is made explicit we find that the natural history just is the set of aspects (as expressed in natural-historical judgments) that well-serves the characteristic ends in the way that is characteristic of the species. EC (1-2) ensures that all of the aspects that enter into the natural history of the species are functionally related for the pursuit of a common end or a common set of ends that are identified in virtue of the species’ life-form. EC (3-4) ensures that the ends that are assigned to the species constitute the complete set of actual characteristic ends of the species, and that the aspects (as expressed in natural-historical judgments) that satisfy the characteristic ends are characteristic aspects (rather than uncharacteristic aspects that serve the characteristic ends). Thus, taken together, the natural history of a species just is the set of aspects that well-serves the characteristic ends in the way that is characteristic of the species. Epistemological problems aside, if
these conditions are satisfied, then one’s concept of the natural history is true of the species.

The isomorphism between Hursthouse’s evaluation structure and my expanded account of natural history can now be made clear. For Hursthouse, an animal is good if it satisfies the four ends in the characteristic way of the species, and if this is true, then AC must be satisfied. AC states that the characteristic way (for a species) just is the satisfaction of the four ends in the characteristic way (for the species). EC shows that the natural history just is the set of aspects (as expressed in natural-historical judgments) that well serves the characteristic ends in the way that is characteristic of the species. If the four ends are substituted for the characteristic ends and the natural history substituted for Hursthouse’s characteristic way, then we see that AC is satisfied. Let us make the substitutions.

**EC* (for non-rational social animals):**

1) Non-rational social animals have the four ends in virtue of their life-form, and the four ends articulate the functional unity of their life-form.
2) The aspects (as expressed in natural-historical judgments) that enter into the characteristic way well-serve the four ends.
3) The four ends constitute the complete set of actual characteristic ends of the species.
4) The natural-historical judgments that satisfy (2) are true of the species’ actual characteristic way.

IF EC* is satisfied, then it follows that the characteristic way just is the set of aspects (as expressed in natural-historical judgments) that well-serve the four ends in the characteristic way. This is just a re-statement of AC. Thus, if EC is satisfied in the animal case, then AC is satisfied as well. This vindicates Husthouse’s evaluation structure in the context of non-rational social animals.
First and foremost, EC* (if true) expresses that non-rational social animals share a common functional plan that can be articulated in terms of the four ends (as satisfied in the characteristic way of their respective species). This seems true. Non-rational social animals do appear to exhibit functional unity in light of the characteristic ends supplied by their species’ life-form. Furthermore, the four ends appear to be plausible characteristic ends of non-rational animals. If a non-rational social animal succeeds in surviving, reproducing, avoiding pain/characteristically enjoying, and contributing to the good functioning of the social group—in the way that is characteristic of its species, what else could we ask of it? Thus, although there are epistemological problems with knowing the truth of EC (3–4), I will grant Hursthouse that it is true in the case of non-rational social animals. This has the benefit of vindicating AC, and thereby justifying her evaluation structure in the case of non-rational social animals.

Before moving on to evaluate the warrant of Hursthouse’s evaluation structure in the human ethical context, we must first review how Hursthouse completes the analogy to the human ethical context.
Making the Analogy to the Human Context

In the move from the animal context to the human context a new aspect comes onto the scene: rationality. Despite the introduction of this new aspect, Hursthouse argues that the structure of human good retains the same structure as animal good; namely, satisfying the four ends in the characteristic way. She briefly addresses the possibility of introducing a fifth end to accommodate human rationality, but dismisses it, claiming that it is not clear what a fifth end could amount to (Hursthouse 218). So instead of identifying another end for the human, she fits rationality in by assigning it the role of the characteristic way. The human characteristic way, as Hursthouse defines it, is “a rational way”: “A ‘rational way’ is any way that we can rightly see as good, as something we have reason to do” (Hursthouse 222). Thus, according to Hursthouse, “human beings are ethically good in so far as their ethically relevant aspects foster the four ends appropriate to a social animal, in the way characteristic of the species” (Hursthouse 224).

If the above is true, then Hursthouse has succeeded in making the analogy from the animal context to the human context. The structure of animal good and human good are identical; only the characteristic way has changed. In the same way that the inability to hunt makes a bad wolf, a human whose character traits cannot be seen as fostering the four ends (as responsive to the demands of reason) makes a bad human being. With the analogy made, Hursthouse is now in position to justify virtues from non-virtues by appeal to an objective criterion (her evaluation structure).

Since the structure of goodness has remained identical from the animal case to the human case, let us now see if we can apply EC as a means of justifying Hursthouse’s use of the evaluation structure in the human ethical context. Just as in the animal case, if
Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is to be warranted in the human ethical context, then AC must be satisfied. For AC to be true in the human ethical context, the aspects that constitute the human characteristic way must be identical to the aspects that satisfy the four ends in the human characteristic way. The first thing that is noticed about finding a way to satisfy AC in the human case is that the characteristic way for humans is very unlike the characteristic way for non-rational social animals. Hursthouse notes this:

Their [animals] characteristic ways of going on are many and have to be described in detailed terms, specifically related to such things as the acquisition of nourishment, mating, feeding the young, hunting, selecting leaders, etc., and are discovered by observation. Our way of going on is just one [the rational way], which remains the same across all areas of our life. (Hursthouse 222)

Hursthouse appears to be saying that while animals live their lives by means of multiple aspects, humans live their lives through one aspect: rationality. Put in the terms we have been using, non-rational social animals use multiple aspects to satisfy their characteristic ends, while humans use only rationality to satisfy their characteristic ends. Prima facie this seems harmless, but if we want use EC as confirmation that AC can be satisfied in the human case, there enters a problem.

It seems plausible that EC* is satisfied in the animal case because we can make empirical observations and see that the aspects of a given non-rational social animal share a common functional plan provided by their life-form. We can get direct empirical confirmation (albeit inductive confirmation) of the truth of EC* in the animal case. If we make the relevant substitutions in EC appropriate to the human case, however, it is unclear how one would go about confirming the truth of the steps. This is because our characteristic way, the rational way, is not a matter of discerning the functional plan of
the aspects as supplied by nature, but is, rather, discerning the relationship between actual reasons for action and the reasons supplied by our social animal being.

The human characteristic way is “doing what we rightly see we have reason to do”. So, if EC is to be satisfied in the human case (and thereby offer support for AC in the human case), the following must be true:

**EC** (for Humans)

1) Humans have the four ends in virtue of their life-form, and the four ends articulate the functional unity of the human life-form.
2) For a reason for action (or which character traits to manifest) to be good, it must well-serve the four ends.
3) The four ends constitute the complete set of actual human ends.
4) The reasons for action in (2) are really what humans rightly have reason to do.

It seems plausible that the functional relations among the aspects of non-rational animals can be cashed out in terms of the four ends, but can the same be said for human reasons for action? In the next section I employ a thought experiment by John McDowell to show that rationality’s link to freedom poses problems for EC**.
Rationality and Freedom

The following consideration from McDowell seriously threatens the idea the humans can simply look to their life-form to figure out what they have reason to do.\footnote{“Two Sorts of Naturalism” (1995). John McDowell argues that there is a link between reason and freedom that usurps the normativity of nature, and thereby poses an important problem for neo-Aristotelian ethical systems that attempt to find a foundation in natural facts. Although Hursthouse does not purport herself to be providing a foundation for ethics, the argument applies in the same way.}

McDowell begins his thought experiment by imagining a wolf that has somehow acquired rationality:

A rational wolf would be able to let his mind roam over possibilities of behavior other than what comes naturally to wolves. Aside from the fact that it comes within the scope of our pretense, that may seem obvious, and indeed it is. Even so, it reflects a deep connection between reason and freedom; we cannot make sense of a creature’s acquiring reason unless it has genuinely alternative possibilities of action, over which its thought can play. (McDowell 170)

McDowell argues that rationality entails freedom. That is, the capacity of considering and entertaining alternative ways of being forces one into the role of having to make decisions in accord with whatever representations one is opened up to. This is the condition of the rational animal; being open to myriad reasons in a world that allows for only one path. A rational animal cannot excuse itself as “simply going along with what is going to happen anyway” because the very condition that is acquired with reason is becoming unstuck from the flow of events that previously just swept one along (McDowell 170). So, while it may be true (and thus normative) for the non-rational wolf that “Wolves need to pool their energies, if their style of hunting is to be effective”, the rational wolf can “step back” and question whether such a consideration constitutes a
genuine reason for him to participate in the hunt (McDowell 171). “Why ought I to hunt when I could get by perfectly well being a scavenger?” the rational wolf might ask.

The important insight is that rational animals can step-back and question the normativity of any alleged reason for action, including the alleged standard provided by their life-form. This sets rational animals apart from non-rational animals in a very important way. Non-rational animals do not have the capacity to step back from their life-forms; their range of possible actions (and the ends that they have) is determined by the aspects that they possess. Provided that the range of possible actions and ends that humans can entertain is many, identifying what is normative is not as simple as reading it off of the functional plan of the human life-form. 10 The problem is sifting through the many, possibly contradictory, ends and identifying what ends humans ought to have. So, while the freedom of reason does not yet, in any way, show anything about what humans ought and ought not to do, it does show that the way in which characteristic ends are determined for the human is different than the way in which characteristic ends are determined for non-rational animals.

In the context of non-rational social animals, the four ends are identified as the complete set of characteristic ends because they seem to exemplify the functional unity of the aspects for such life-forms. In other words, if EC3* is true, then the aspects of non-rational animals function for the sake of the four ends. Moreover, the four ends and the functional plan that they constitute are not open to questioning for non-rational animals;

10 Hursthouse notes this very disanalogy, but does not address the severity of it. “With the other animals, it is almost guaranteed that overall, there are good, healthy members of the species, who, with a bit of luck, will be living well, for what counts as being good and living well is determined by the standard that, so to speak, nature has laid down for them. But for us it is an open question whether any human being is good, or living well, given what we could be, not something that has already been determined by nature” (Hursthouse 228).
they are determined by the life-form of their species. Thus, it is no mystery where the four ends come from and why they are normative. The aspects and ends of non-rational animals cannot be modified, so if they have characteristic ends at all, the ends must be those provided by the functional plan of their aspects (which we are assuming are the four ends). This makes EC1* easily satisfied in the non-rational animal case; non-rational animals have the four ends in virtue of their life-forms. The fact that non-rational animals are not free with respect to their natures grounds all evaluations of animal good in the unquestionable foundation of their life-forms. Non-rational social animal good has a clear foundation.

Humans, on the other hand, are free with respect to their natures. They can question what constitutes a genuine reason, and modify their behavior in conformity with their conclusions, even if the conclusions are contrary to the reasons supplied by the human life-form. For humans, the ends in question are not the functional relations among biological aspects, but potential reasons and what is found to be worthwhile. While it may be true of an aspect that its good is grounded in the functional role that it plays for the life-form, why should it be assumed that reasons are good for the same reason? In the process of reasoning, the human might find that its life form is evil, and not something to serve. Thus, there is no foundation for human good in the human life-form; the four ends cannot be directly read off of the human life-form as they can in the non-rational animal case. It seems that the only justification for thinking that the four ends are normative for humans is that we are social animals. But perhaps the introduction of rationality creates,

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11 Hursthouse never claims that human ethical evaluation is foundationalist. She actively opposes this, urging the Neurathian approach to ethical justification. In a later section I will argue that Hursthouse cannot so innocently take shelter in the Neurathian approach; there are elements of her view that appear to be foundationalist.
as considered earlier, that flawed organism who is victim of its own contradictory ends. In any case, EC1** is violated in the human case. There is no clear way to assign characteristic ends to humans in light of their life-form. If EC** cannot be satisfied, then the project for constructing a characteristic way for humans cannot get off the ground in the way I have outlined. Thus, EC cannot help justify AC in the human ethical context.

But EC is only a sufficient condition, so while the violation of EC does not pose inherent problems for the satisfaction of AC, it certainly does raise questions as to how Hursthouse is so sure that the four ends are characteristic of the human (that which humans rightly have reason to pursue). If it is the determinacy of non-rational life-forms that provides a foundation for the determination of their good, then it is the indeterminacy of rationality that destroys the foundation for human life-forms. Thus, *if* the four ends are in fact normative standards for humans, it must be in virtue of considerations beyond the inspection of the human life-form. McDowell’s argument that rational animals are free with respect to their nature tells us something very important about the etiology of normativity in the human case. We must look beyond our life-form to justify our ethical claims.

Let’s take stock. Non-rational animals are determined by nature. As a result, their life-forms can act as a foundation that satisfies EC1*, which gets the project of constructing a natural history off of the ground. Thus, if EC* (2-3) is true, and the four ends constitute the functional plan of non-rational social animals, then AC will also be satisfied. This makes Hursthouse’s evaluation structure warranted in the animal context.

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12 This is Bernard Williams’ objection against the naturalist project. I quote Hursthouse, “The view is, roughly, this: that in adding rationality to our social animality, nature has produced a sadly flawed and divided creature, an ‘ill-assorted bricolage of powers and instincts’ in Williams’ own words” (Hursthouse 256).
The human case is different, however. Humans are free with respect to their natures. As a result, the human life-form cannot act as a foundation for the determination of characteristic ends. EC1** cannot be satisfied. Thus, AC in the human ethical context will have to be justified by other means than EC. If AC cannot be met, then there is human good that cannot be reflected in Hursthouse’s evaluation structure. If this is the case, then there is no reason to suppose that her evaluation structure can distinguish virtues from non-virtues.
Objections

In this section I consider two complaints that Hursthouse is likely to have. The first complaint is about the foundationalism and why it should matter that the characteristic ends of the human cannot be read off the human life-form in the same way that they can for non-rational social animal life-forms. The second complaint is that all I have shown is that her concept of the characteristic way is not Thompsonian. I will flesh these complaints out and respond to each in turn.

Hursthouse might object that the fact that there is no foundation for human good does not provide a problem for her account. After all, she has been multiply explicit that there is “no neutral viewpoint” (Hursthouse 178). She accepts McDowell’s Neurathian approach as the path through what she calls the “standard dilemma” for the rationality of ethics (Hursthouse 165). Hursthouse puts the dilemma as follows:

If, speaking from within our ethical outlook, we seek to validate our ethical beliefs, we shall merely be re-expressing that outlook, not subjecting it to any kind of genuine reflective scrutiny [...] So, it seems, our only alternative is to speak from outside our ethical outlook, from ‘the neutral point of view’; nothing short of that will do”. (Hursthouse 165)

The Neurathian approach passes through this dilemma by embracing the idea that ethical justification can only occur internal to an ethical outlook; no foundation is needed for the Neurathian, for them, ethical justification is coherentist in structure. This allows ethical beliefs to be validated, criticized, and (possibly) radically changed over time as they are subjected to the facts that are available for critical reflection (natural facts, cultural facts, scientific facts, etc…). A coherentist approach to ethical justification escapes the vicious circle.
Although Hursthouse embraces the Neurathian approach, and acknowledges that ethical justification is not foundationalist for humans, at times, she seems to be in tension with the Neurathian spirit. One consequence of being Neurathian about justification, rather than foundationalist, is that one’s conception of the good can be wrong. If Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is correct, then it gets us to something like the standard list of the virtues, but she has not excluded alternative conceptions of human good. Thus, her evaluation structure can be considered only tentatively true at best. She does briefly consider how a Nietzschean view of morals would change the conception of human good, but without seeming to recognize the consequences that it has for her project. I take the following three claims to be inconsistent, or at the very least, in tension with the Neurathian spirit:

The four ends appropriate to us just in virtue of our being social animals really do constrain what will pass reflective scrutiny as a candidate virtue. (Hursthouse 226)

And without much distortion we can, I think, see such [Nietzsche and Rand] views as also challenging the third thesis in maintaining that, with respect to the strong, the end of characteristic enjoyments and the fourth end of the naturalism fall apart. (Hursthouse 254)

In so far as serious consideration of Nietzsche’s views might well lead to the improvement of our current ethical outlook I positively welcome it. (Hursthouse 255)

In the first passage she claims that the four ends “really do constrain” what can pass reflective scrutiny as a virtue. In the second she recognizes that on a Nietzschean view the third and fourth ends come apart. And in the third passage, she says that she would welcome the revisions of a Nietzschean view if it could improve our ethical outlook. The third passage is very Neurathian; she is willing to revise the conception of good in light
of careful critical reflection. But in so far as the view in question conflicts with her current structure, she cannot help herself to what she says in the first passage. Unless she is foundationalist about the four ends, the four ends do not, in any way, really constrain what can pass as a virtue independent of what second nature finds worthwhile.

Second nature is not mentioned by Hursthouse, but it is important to note that McDowell’s use of the Neurathian approach is, in part, motivated by the introduction of this concept. In light of his attacks on neo-Aristotelian ethical foundationalism, McDowell proposes that the real standard of correctness in ethical judgment comes down to the internal standards of what practical logos finds worthwhile:

[…] the point of a particular courageous action lies not in the fact that human beings in general need courage, focused, as it were, on the circumstances at hand, but in the fact that this action counts as worth-while in its own right, by the lights of a conceptual scheme that is second nature to a courageous person. (McDowell 192)

Hursthouse’s concept of the human characteristic way (doing what we rightly see we have reason to do) appears very close to this conception, so where do the four ends come in exactly? If the standard of correctness consists in the internal standards of the practical agent, and the internal standards of the practical agent are subject to change, then in what sense do the four ends really constrain what the practical agent can take as a virtue? Hursthouse must resolve this apparent inconsistency. She can help herself to the claim that the four ends constrain what can pass reflective scrutiny only if she either excludes other possible theories of human good or is foundationalist about the four ends. We showed that foundationalism is false in the case of humans, thus only the former is available.
Further, even if the practical agent does indeed find the four ends worthwhile, and the standard list of virtues is true of human good, the four ends constrain what can pass as a candidate virtue only in respect of the practical agent’s endorsement of the four ends. The four ends cannot do any work on their own as they can in the case of non-rational animals; the four ends cannot be read off of reasons as they are off of aspects. Thus, the foundationalism matters because in the absence of foundationalism, Hursthouse cannot help herself to the claim that the four ends constrain what will pass reflective scrutiny as a virtue.

Hursthouse’s second complaint might be that all I have done is show that her concept of the characteristic way is not Thompson’s concept of natural history. I do not take this as an objection to my argument, but rather a positive feature. My argument aimed only to see if Thompson’s concept of natural history could help clarify Hursthouse’s evaluation structure in the human case. It can’t. This failure, however, draws attention to an outstanding issue in Hursthouse’s account of the human good. If Hursthouse’s concept of characteristic way is not Thompson’s natural history, and if it is not McDowell’s concept of second nature, then what is it? Furthermore, Thompson’s natural history concept does work in the context of non-rational social animals. This generates the concern that if the characteristic way changes so dramatically between the two cases that the application of the Thompson framework fails in only the human case, then perhaps this difference between humans and all other social animals is significant enough to undercut the basis of the analogy informing Hursthouse’s analysis of the human virtues.
It seems as though Hursthouse wants the best of both worlds. She employs something like a Thompsonian natural history to ground the four ends, but then employs something like McDowell’s second nature to make clear that she does not think that there is a neutral viewpoint that constitutes a kind of scientific basis for ethical beliefs. If she wants to conclude that the four ends constrain what can pass reflective scrutiny as a virtue, then she must either be foundationalist or somehow exclude alternative conceptions of the good like Nietzsche’s. If instead, she wants to do justice to the Neurathian approach and defend a McDowellian second nature, then she must recognize that the four ends can be revised as standards of evaluation. In such a case, then she can only maintain that the four ends tentatively constrain what can pass reflective scrutiny as a virtue. Further, she must concede that the normativity of the four ends comes from second nature’s endorsing the four ends, not from humans being social animals.
Conclusion

I showed that sense can be made out of Hursthouse’s evaluation structure in the case of non-rational social animals if Hursthouse identifies her characteristic way concept with my expanded Thompsonian natural history concept. The same does not hold in the human ethical context. Reason destroys the determinate link between the four ends and the characteristic way in the human ethical context. Thus, if Hursthouse is to retain her evaluation structure, then she must eliminate alternative conceptions of human good that are in tension with the unity of the four ends. Until then, Hursthouse’s evaluation structure is not warranted in the human ethical context, and therefore it cannot serve as an objective criterion for the classification of human virtues.
Works Cited


