MORAL SPROUTS AND
NATURAL TELEOLOGIES
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MORAL SPROUTS AND
NATURAL TELEOLOGIES

21ST CENTURY MORAL PSYCHOLOGY MEETS
CLASSICAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Owen Flanagan

Under the auspices of the
Wisconsin-Alpha Chapter of Phi Sigma Tau
The Philosophy Department of Marquette University on behalf of Phi Sigma Tau, the Philosophy Honors Society, each year invites a scholar to deliver a lecture in honor of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Dr. Flanagan received his B.A. in Philosophy from Fordham University in 1970 and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Boston University in 1978. He taught as Wellesley College from 1977-1993 before moving to Duke University in 1993. He has had Visiting appointments as Distinguished Professor, University of Vienna, the Jack Lynch Visiting Professor, Wake Forest University, a Templeton Distinguished Research Fellow, University of Southern California, Distinguished Fellow in Psychology & Biology of Morality, Dartmouth College, and the John Findlay Distinguished Visiting Professor, Boston University. As a Templeton Distinguished Research Fellow, he gave six lectures on the topic “Human Flourishing in the Age of Mind Science.” In 1998-99, he earned the Romanell Phi Beta Kappa Award, giving three Lectures on “Science and the Human Image.” In addition to his position as Professor of Philosophy at Duke University, he is also Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, Professor of Neurobiology, a Faculty Associate at the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, and an Associate in the Graduate Program in Literature. 

Dr. Flanagan has been a prolific scholar, having published eight books and edited five others. Among his books are Varieties of Moral Personality (1991), Consciousness Reconsidered (1992), Self Expressions: Mind, Morals and the Meaning

To Dr. Flanagan’s distinguished list of publications, the Philosophy Department and Phi Sigma Tau are pleased to add: Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies: 21st Century Moral Psychology Meets Classical Chinese Philosophy.
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21ST CENTURY MORAL PSYCHOLOGY MEETS CLASSICAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

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PREAMBLE

It is a great honor to give the Aquinas Lecture at Marquette. Ed Reno, a Marquette graduate, was my first philosophy professor at Fordham in 1966. Ed was a gifted teacher, then ABD at Yale, who captured me on the first day of class when he nonchalantly introduced part of the syllabus this way: “Plato posits the Good” (in those days syllabi were often spoken, not even mimeo-ed). I didn’t know exactly, really at all, what “posit-ing” was or involved, and I had certainly never heard the definite article before a word like “good,” and I sensed correctly that it was a bit pagan or platonic, as I came to understand. But I experienced from those words a gift, a permission, accompanied by the feeling that philosophy would make me reach, really reach, and I was smitten. The rest, as they say, is history. Many
of my intellectual heroes, first and foremost, Alasdair MacIntyre, who is also a dear friend and colleague, have given this lecture. It was my father, Owen J. Flanagan Sr., the first college graduate among my ancestors, who introduced me to Aquinas through an abridged Penguin edition of the *Summa Theologica*, whose texture I can still feel between my fingers and whose faint moldy scent I can still smell. And it was Alasdair who introduced me to Elizabeth Anscombe, as well as to the idea that comparative philosophy is an important enterprise.

**THE CHARGE**

I take my charge from Anscombe, who, of course, was herself deeply influenced by Aquinas. The charge comes in this famous passage from her “Modern Moral Philosophy,” penned in 1958 of which I quote only a small patch:

> It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking. (p. 1)

One source of Anscombe’s lament was the loss of richness and texture – what came to be spoken in terms of “thickness” by Gilbert Ryle, Clifford Geertz, and Bernard Williams – in Kantian and consequentialist ethics and moral psychology as compared to Aristotle’s “thick” ethics and moral psychology. Things are better now, over a half century later, and thanks in part to Anscombe’s strong hint – perhaps it was a clarion call – for the rehabilitation of virtue theories
and the ensuing broadly Aristotle-inspired conversation about virtue and vice, moral emotions, moral character, its contours, its fragility, and its social coloration and cultural situatedness. Even the considerable resources in Kant and Mill that speak of virtues and character have been reclaimed and rehabilitated.

I interpret the charge from Anscombe, by way of MacIntyre, in this over half-century-of-hindsight sort of way: How are we doing in the project of having an adequate moral psychology that is, as it were, adequate in its own right, as a psychology – as an affective, cognitive, social, developmental, and anthropological psychology – and also, at the same time, as a conversation partner for robust ethical reflection? My answer is of the cup is half full sort. We are advancing in the project of having an adequate moral psychology, especially if we cut ourselves some slack given that the problems here are very hard. They are very hard, among other reasons, because of the extraordinary difficulty of trying to understand the nature of such complex beings as ourselves by those very same complex beings in multifarious, experimentally uncontrolled, natural and social ecologies. At the moment1 – ever since the period that

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1 In recent years, pretty much as I write, excellent, important, and widely discussed work at the intersection of ethics, neurobiology, evolutionary biology, primatology, psychology, and anthropology includes Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers* (2009), Philip Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (2012), Patricia Smith Churchland, *Braintrust* (2011), Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind* (2012), and Joe Heinrich, et al., “Economic Man’ in Cross-Cultural Perspective” (2005),
Owen Flanagan gave us diverse works like Hartshorne and May's, *Studies in the Nature of Character* (1928-1930), Jean Piaget 1932 book, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, Theodor Adorno et al. *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), and eventually Lawrence Kohlberg's (1958) doctoral dissertation, which offered an allegedly comprehensive moral stage theory – moral psychology is an incredibly rich area of research, and this is so in large part because of a tremendous amount of activity at the point where the ethology, biology, psychology, economics, and the anthropology of morals intersects with and interacts with philosophical ethics.2

One worry, one wonder, a philosopher might have over Anscombe's charge, and the impulse to respond to it, is that she seems to presuppose that the empirical, descriptive and psychological has some relation—in addition to revealing constraints on the possibility space—on normative ethics, on how we ought to be. But Hume taught, and G. E. Moore sealed the deal that is-ought, facts-values, and the descriptive and the normative are entirely separate realms. First, Hume taught no such thing. He made a purely logical point

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2 Lawrence Kohlberg was motivated by Piaget's book to develop his own moral stage theory in the late 1950's. Kohlberg's program dominated moral psychology in America from the 1960's to the 80's, when work internal to his paradigm started to question it, e.g., Carol Gilligan *In a Different Voice* (1982); Flanagan (1982 a; 1982 b); Flanagan (1991); Flanagan and Jackson (1987).

about deduction, demonstration, necessity. Second, Moore’s argument is recognized by most everyone to be fallacious. Moore requires that the naturalist provide a reductive definition of “good.” This cannot be done. But the problem isn’t with naturalism, it is with requiring reductive definitions for natural things in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. One cannot define “mammal,” “chair,” or “game” reductively. But all mammals, chairs, and games are natural things and phenomena. Insofar as Anscombe implores us to reconnect ethics with the human sciences, she is on the right side of philosophy, history, and the human sciences. Surely, our nature, our prospects, and our ends have something to do with how we ought to be. Too many philosophers continue to be resistant to becoming full participants in this fruitful interdisciplinary discussion, isolationist and rearguard, often because of prissy ideas about philosophical purity, as well as continued worries that Hume meant something different from what he meant when he wrote that one cannot derive or demonstrate “ought” from “is,” which despite being true does not in any way suggest cutting the descriptive and empirical off from the normative (Flanagan et al, 2014).

I make my case for optimism by examining one influential model that has a major ancient and contemporary version and that conceives of the psychological roots of morality as sprout-like. First

3 There is controversy over who “invented” the idea of moral modularity. Some say Marc Hauser (2006); others say he “borrowed” the idea from John Mikhail (2011). That may be
pass, what we call morality, even as genuinely unified phenomenologically, or as an interactive set of virtues, norms, and rules, even as a unity of virtues, is to some significant degree, the emergent product of the growth, regulation, moderation, modification, tuning, and suppression of ancient equipment comprising relatively narrow dedicated processors. This is the moral modularity hypothesis (MMH). The degree to which a moral psychology is committed to the modularity hypothesis and the degree to which morality is conceived as psychologically modular depends on whether it claims that all, most, or only some of moral personality can be explained in terms of the development and interaction of some number so, but neither invented it. Mencius did. One might distinguish between two kinds of modularists, monists and pluralists. Hauser and Mikhail are monists who follow Chomsky (and Rawls, who was the first to recommend the possible usefulness of thinking of the “justice as fairness” system along Chomskyean lines) and describe an organ for morality akin to the alleged language organ. The social intuitionists or moral foundations theorists are pluralists and describe a set of independent modules, akin to Mencius’s sprouts, that constitute the substrate of moral competence. As for who wins the naming contest, I wrote about both kinds of modularity theories, monist and pluralist, and named them such in Varieties of Moral Personality (1991). Howard Gardner’s important theory of multiple intelligences (1983) was another early attempt to exploit the idea of modularity to improve the low quality of discussion of IQ. Gardner recommended that we think of intelligence as involving multiple, partly autonomous, competences, for example, logical, linguistic, spatial, tactile-kinesthetic, inter-personal and intrapersonal ones, which are differentially favored in different cultures.
of dedicated modules or sprout-like structures. The strongest view is what I call “modules-all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down.” A weaker view is that moral personality is a joint production of an automatic, ancient, fast-acting automatic modular system, cognitive scientists call this “System One,” and a more recent system that involves “System Two,” deliberative reason, what the Greeks called phronesis and what classical Chinese thinkers call zhi. The weakest view is that there are some dispositional sprouts in

4 In the most recent paper (Graham, et al. 2013) by advocates of moral foundations theory, they write: “Nobody in psychology today argues that the human mind is truly a “blank slate” at birth, but opinions range widely from minimalist positions, which say that there is hardly any writing on the “first draft” of the mind, to maximalist positions such as massive modularity (Sperber, 2005; Tooby, Cosmides, & Barrett, 2005), which say that the mind is to a great degree organized in advance of experience, including hundreds or thousands of functional modules.” They write: “We are near the maximalist side of the spectrum.” But they also write that one could accept the empirical findings of moral foundations theory, and a weaker view, simply that the mind offers us some basic dispositional settings.

5 One of the main topics of discussion in cognitive science over the last thirty years has been on the relative roles of what are now called System One and System Two. System One is hot, intuitive, and evolutionarily old. System Two is slow(er) and involves deliberation, central-processing, thinking, sometimes vetoing the deliverances of System One. Daniel Kahneman (2011) is a good overview of the two systems view, which is also called the dual-process theory. The basic idea, of course, is not a new discovery at all. All ancient philosophers in every tradition understood the basic architecture of mind as involving finding equilibrium among moods, emotions,
human nature that play some role in the development of morality, where the degree of this role is unspecified, but that is understood to have its place in a mix with all the other sources of moral personality in culture, reason, self-conception, temperament, and various non-sprout like aspects (capacities to absorb entirely new information) of human psychology.

I do not believe that the moral modularity hypothesis in its strong forms is true as a descriptive-geneticalogical psychology. Persons are complex dynamic psychobiological systems. Whatever independence or autonomy a subsystem has – imagine a visual processor that computes color or one that computes shape – it was built for the whole system of which it is a part and designed to interact with the rest of the system to produce useful and integrated information. When we play tennis, we do not see “some yellow here” and “some roundness there” and “some motion over there,” we see a round-yellow-tennis ball-coming over-the-net. The autonomy and independence of a processor or sub-system is almost always relative autonomy or independence (Karmiloff-Smith, 1992; Elsabbagh and Karmiloff-Smith, 2004). That said, the idea that there are sprouts, beginnings, protomoral (or “moralizable”) foundations or dispositions, possibly even modules in our nature, seems right and helpful to some extent.
MORAL SPROUTS AND NATURAL TELEOLOGIES

MULTIPLE SEEDS, SPROUTS, AND BEGINNINGS

There are among ancient and extant moral psychologies theories that conceive of original nature as egoistic, others that conceive it as altruistic; others as mixed. There are theories that conceive of us as moral tabula rasa upon which a moral code must be socially imposed and inscribed, or, what is different, where morality is a matter of discovery of an independent moral reality out there; others that conceive us as rediscovering or remembering morality already written on our souls or heart-minds; still others who think that some moral dispositions are natural; for example, “benevolence,” which according to Hume even if untutored in a situation of “profuse abundance” will increase tenfold, whereas other dispositions such as “justice,” will be invented only if there is scarcity, in which case we will discover its usefulness as a tool, as a bothersome necessity.

Here I will speak only about multiple seed, sprout, and beginnings views, in part because I think multiple sprout views have the potential to serve as analytic tools in terms of which many of these other debates have a home. What I mean by the suggestion that multiple sprout views can serve as analytic tools for many, perhaps all, the latter debates in this: If morality consists of one unified moral skill, set of competencies, family of virtues, or single moral rule or algorithm, for example, modularity or sprout views will serve as a useful dialectical foil. Either MMH is wrong that morality has distinct plural psychological bases or it is right that it does have such sources, but
needs to explain how plural foundational sources can yield an experiential or phenomenal unity or, what is different, that it can be steered by, or otherwise controlled by, a unified higher level cognitive system (by reason or rules or principles). Alternatively, if some form of modularity is true, then exploring the nature of each seed, sprout, and foundation, its nature, function, and trajectory(ies) across ecologies will yield knowledge of human moral psychology if anything will. And this kind of work will allow more nuanced work on how the various modular competencies interact and intersect, and if and how they can be guided by higher level thinking, planning, intending, and so on, if they can. So, for example, one can organize all the work that judges that an empathy/caring/compassion system accounts for much or most of what we call morality. Then one goes to the work in this tradition to see what the evidence looks like, to work by Mencius on compassion, to David Hume and Adam Smith on sympathy and empathy, to Martin Hoffman, Carol Gilligan, Nels Noddings, Michael Slote, and Patricia Smith Churchland. If the caring system upon close examination ramps up to explain most of moral competence then perhaps there is no need for multiple modules or modularity at all. If the care system doesn’t ramp up, then modularity remains a contender. Meanwhile, others, or the same inquirers, can examine theories that posit bases in human nature (perhaps in ancestors as well) for the impulse for justice. Here one studies Hume and Kant, Rawls, Habermas, Kohlberg, De Waal, and so on, to see what the evidence reveals. Do impulses for
justice as fairness have roots in human nature or is “the cautious jealous virtue of justice” an invention due entirely to scarcity, as Hume thought? Can a system designed for care/compassion yield justice or vice versa (P.S. Churchland, 2013)? Then one reads theorists who think humans are naturally attuned to in-group/out-group, to the sacred, and so on, to see what the evidence reveals. Does the evidence support independent sprout-like beginnings or not? 6 And if it does, are these beginnings like the cocoon of the butterfly that is the sprout from which the caterpillar that becomes the butterfly emerges, but that completely dissolves and is no longer represented in the butterfly; or is it like the beginning of the spinal system which is small and delicate and very soft at first but maintains itself in some highly visible way in the mature vertebrate, or something in between the cocoon and the spine? 

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6 This is roughly the methodology recommended by contemporary advocates of modularity (see Table 2 of Moral Foundations Theory below), who think the evidence supports modularity fairly well. One might decide eventually, now is too soon, that all the evidence taken together supports MMH as a real depiction of the distinct sources of human morality in modular form or in something akin to modular form or, simply, that it is practically useful to organize inquiry this way. The first conclusion would be realist, the second pragmatic (Graham, Haidt, et al. 2013). I am mainly interested in the psychological realism question. I am interested in whether it is true that there are modules, i.e., whether the theory that posits modules is correct in the way say Copernicus’s heliocentric theory is true and not merely useful like Ptolemaic geocentric theory was, and still is.
The moral modularity hypothesis put forward by contemporary psychologists, calls itself “social intuitionism,” or, lately, “moral foundations theory.” MFT fleshes out an idea that was anticipated, on various interpretations, in Mencius and which in its current form is supported by interdisciplinary work in anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, primatology, and economics. This proposal, MFT, can be found in the work of Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues (Haidt, 2012; Haidt, 2007; Haidt and Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt and Joseph, 2007; Graham, Haidt, et al 2013). Its roots lie in work by Shweder (1990), Shweder and Haidt (1993). Brown, (1991); Fiske (1991, 1992, 2004); Schwartz & Bilsky, (1990); Shweder & Haidt, (1993); Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, Park, (1997); and de Waal (1991,1996). My focus on the formulations of Haidt’s research team is largely due to fact that the work captures many of the general aspects of the proposal. Haidt and Joseph (2007) claim that their five modules map onto the three “ethics” proposed by Shweder (1990; Shweder et al. 1997), as well as onto Fiske’s (1991, 1992, 2004) model that claims that all social relations are outcomes of four psychological schemata that govern communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing.

That said, I want the reader to think, if possible, of Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) as a scientific hypothesis not associated with Jonathan Haidt’s complex, multifaceted, and widely discussed research program, which encompasses much more that MFT.
Moral Foundations Theory is, first and foremost, an architectural hypothesis that posits five or six modules or foundations and that claims to explain the shape of (all, some, most) actual moral psychologies in terms of these. The reason it will be helpful to discuss MFT separately from Haidt’s broader theorizing is that Haidt is now famously associated with four additional, independently controversial views, which are logically and empirically distinct from MFT. Haidt also thinks that: 1. Morality is primarily or mostly produced by System One, an evolutionary ancient, intuitive system, and that reason, System Two, as traditionally conceived, by philosophers as otherwise diverse as Plato, Kant, and Peter Singer, has little power over it (Haidt, 2012); 2. There is no non-question begging way to argue for the superiority of one way of configuring, growing, developing the modules over another (personal discussion and correspondence). 3. That liberals have a morality that in certain respects more poorly reflects the intuitive system than conservatives, and that this is a weakness in liberal morality. There is even a 5th hypothesis that Haidt argues for in his 2012 book, but about which his colleagues are not yet convinced (personal correspondence), namely, 4: That Liberty/Oppression (rooted in strong distaste for bullies) is a 6th foundation that is especially useful in explaining the distinctive moral psychology of North American libertarians. I am mostly focused on 1, although I will have things to say about the other hypotheses. It is 1, not 2-5 which makes for modularity. This is easy to see in Mencius, who believes in modular architecture
but is not a skeptic about reason’s role (2) or a moral skeptic or, what is different, a relativist (3). Nor of course is Mencius a modern liberal or a modern conservative (4) and he is certainly not a libertarian (5).

BOTANICAL AND COMPUTATIONAL METAPHORS

Mencius (Mengzi 孟子, 391-308 BCE), the great 4th c. BCE Chinese philosopher, who plays the role of Aristotle in the Chinese ethical tradition, where Confucius’s role is akin to Socrates, is the first great sprout theorist, claiming first that “human nature is good,” which is irrelevant to being a sprout theorist, and second, what is essential to making him a sprout theorist, that there are four distinct sprouts or beginnings in our natures that in normal environments develop into the four most prized Confucian virtues, benevolence (ren, 仁), ritual propriety (li, 礼), righteousness (yi, 义), and wisdom (zhi, 智).

Moral modularity in both its classical Chinese and contemporary American formsuggests that moral competence consists of, or is the emergent product (to some significant degree) of, a set of autonomous or relatively autonomous socio-moral competences. Whereas botanical metaphors are the coin of the realm in ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy – one sees them also doing lots of work in Rousseau – social intuitionists vary among themselves in speaking of innate “modules,” “first drafts,” and “foundations.” I use the term “module” throughout, not because I am sure it is ultimately most well suited to describe what advocates of moral foundations theory (MFT), can
sensibly claim, but because its advocates, fully aware of its meaning in orthodox cognitive science, use it.

We posit that there are a variety of rapid, automatic reactions to patterns in the social world. When we detect such patterns, moral modules fire, and a fully enlightened person has an affectively valenced experience. Not just a feeling of “good!” or “bad,” but an experience with a more specific “flavor” to it, such as “cruel!,” “unfair!,” “betrayal!,” “subversive!,” or “sick!” (Graham, Haidt et al. 2013, p. 110).7

The concept of modularity is useful because it helps direct the mind to a strong and especially interesting interpretation or set of interpretations of the view. This fact alone will be helpful orienting us. If the concept of innate proto-moral modules doesn’t work then we will be clear as to why. For myself, I prefer the messy, botanical, living organism metaphors to the crisp, clean, but mechanical computational ones. But, just to be clear, no modularist believes that the processors are purely mechanical, perfectly predictable, or hard-wired. Everyone, classical sprout theorist or contemporary computational neuroscientist alike, agrees that we are dealing with the structure

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7 While proponents of MTF regularly call these five foundations “modules,” they sometimes make a somewhat different, seemingly weaker claim: “[a]ll we insist upon is that the moral mind is partially structured in advance of experience so that five (or more) classes of social concerns are likely to become moralized during development” ((Haidt and Joseph 2007, p. 381). My considered view is that this weaker claim is almost certainly true.
and function of complex dynamical systems that yield morality.\(^8\)

THE BACKGROUND, SURROUND, HORIZON

Before answering my version of Anscombe’s charge I should mention, in a caveat lector sort of way, that I deploy three other pieces of inspiration so the reader or listener can interpret the background, the orientation, the frame I bring. First, there is the idea there for the taking in Aristotle and also in classical Chinese philosophy, and coined in the contemporary literature by Myles Burnyeat (1980), of “first nature,” something like our given nature or, what is different, our natural developmental trajectory, which interestingly, Aristotle has surprisingly little specific to say about, other than that we are gregarious social animals gifted with capacities for reason and virtue, and “second nature,” the nature that we ought to aim at for ourselves and our charges, and that we achieve, if and when, we become good or something in that vicinity, e.g., fulfilled, realized, a eudaimon.

Second, there is P.F. Strawson’s (1962) idea that human first nature possesses both cognitive equipment such as an inductive design, the not-to-be-justified (he says it is “not irrational but is arational”) tendency to grasp the world according to inductive

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\(^8\) In a brilliant study of metaphors for morality in classical China, David Wong (2012) reminds us that “metaphors don’t confirm themselves.” To which we can add that one’s preferences for one metaphor over another do not confirm them either.
Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies

and causal principles, but also a certain innate perceptual, affective, cognitive, conative equipment whose activation conditions are linked to certain universal states-of-affairs. Strawson calls these intentional mental attitudes, the “reactive attitudes.” They consist of evaluative attitudes such as anger, resentment, gratitude, shame, love (both philia and eros), and forgiveness. As with the straight rule of induction, we can moderate, modify, and sophisticate the reactive attitudes. We can also ask questions about their genealogy, where the usual suspects for origins across the world’s great traditions are just two: divine or natural, or three, if one counts mixtures of the handiwork of God and nature. But mostly, they – the reactive attitudes – are to be accepted as gifts that just come with our kind of nature and are to be dealt with and used hopefully in the service of what is good, and true, and beautiful, not what is bad, false, and repulsive. I read, or superimpose on Strawson a reading as a kind of “affect program” theorist (Griffiths 1997). An affect program theorist is someone who accepts, perhaps I ought to say “entertains,” the idea that certain emotions are adaptations, designed to activate to certain triggers, which were highly relevant to fitness in the past, probably in the past of ancestors. Paul Ekman is the foremost affect program theorist claiming that there is abundant evidence for Darwin’s hypothesis in *Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) that there are certain universal facial expressions that are both expressive and communicative (Flanagan 2000; 2009). The seven faces – happy, sad, angry, scared, surprised, disgusted, and contemptuous – are
displayed across all cultures, and involve moving the same facial muscles, very similar phenomenological reports and autonomic nervous system profile (heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance). Strawson is – or so I claim – a cognitive affect program theorist because he thinks that at least some of the reactive attitudes come with the equipment and are activated without planning and effort by common situation types in creatures like us. To say that Strawson is a cognitive affect program theorist, I mean to emphasize that the reactive attitudes are “intentional” in the standard philosophical sense that they have a cognitive object. The reactive attitudes are not like twitches and startles, they are contentful states: anger that [you took more than your fair share], fear that [you desire my bride], gratitude that [you touch me tenderly], and so on. It matters to my argument that all of Strawson’s reactive attitudes and Ekman’s emotions appear in the most comprehensive list of human universals offered by anthropology (Brown, 1991), as well as in the most comprehensive recent work in moral psychology, whether it be inspired by modularity (Haidt, 2102) or not (Greene 2013).

The third idea that impresses me and that I deploy along the way can be found in Philippa Foot’s late work, and again it is there in Aristotle, and was developed in Aquinas’s natural law thinking. There are certain things, including certain ways of being, that are naturally good or bad for us as human beings; and the goodness or badness of certain character traits, means, ends, and ways of being are rooted in some way or another in aspects of our species nature. Here
Foot was rehabilitating the idea of natural teleology. Despite its bad name among many fellow naturalists who will say Darwin eliminated teleology by revealing that nature is a blind watchmaker that does not give a hoot about the future of any individual human, any particular cohort of homo sapiens, or even the whole species cohort, I am something of a fan of natural teleology, and will defend what I claim is a perfectly sane and respectable version in this lecture. But I will also defend the idea that there may be multiple natural teleologies, several ways to fill out the concept of a good person from whatever first nature is given, multiple ways to grow or develop ourselves, plural natural teleologies, as it were (Wong, 2006).

**The Sprout Text**

To set the stage and further orient the lecture for you, my audience, think of today’s discussion as rooted in explication of a certain famous text and a discussion and unpacking of two charts. I’ll call any moral psychology that posits seeds or sprouts of the sort proposed in Mencius or in Table 1 a modularist view, the details of what counts as such a view are to be worked out over the course of the complete essay. I’ll be discussing two modularity theses. Mencian Moral Modularity (MMM) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT).

Here is a famous text from Mencius, the Jesuits’ name for Mengzi, where he states his famous four sprout view:
Humans all have hearts that are not unfeeling toward others. Suppose someone suddenly saw a child about to fall into a well: everyone in such a situation would have a feeling of alarm and compassion – not because one sought to get in good with the child’s parents, not because one wanted fame among their neighbors and friends, and not because one would dislike the sounds of the child’s cries. From this we can see that if one is without the heart of compassion, one is not a human. If one is without the heart of deference, one is not a human. The heart of compassion is the sprout of benevolence. The heart of disdain (shame/disgust) is the sprout of righteousness. The heart of deference is the sprout of propriety. The heart of approval and disapproval is the sprout of wisdom” (2A6, See also 6A6).

On the following three pages are the two tables: Table 1 displays the five sprouts or modules of MFT. Table 2 displays the criteria for sprout-hood or moral modularity and the evidence for the five currently hypothesized sprouts or moral modules in MFT. Table 2.

**CLASSICAL CHINESE MODULARITY**

Mencius (5th c. BCE), the most famous classical Chinese philosopher after Confucius, and even more important than the Master philosophically insofar as he offers explicit arguments for Confucianism, differed from the Master in this way: Confucius described the virtuous person as a ren junzi – a virtuous gentleperson– where ren ascribes virtue generally. A ren junzi is a good person, generally speaking.
Table 1: The 5 foundations of intuitive ethics (Haidt & Joseph 2007), 392

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies</th>
<th>Harm/Care</th>
<th>Fairness/Reciprocity</th>
<th>Ingroup/Loyalty</th>
<th>Authority/Respect</th>
<th>Purity/Sanctity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adaptive challenge</strong></td>
<td>Protect and care for young, vulnerable, or injured kin</td>
<td>Reap benefits of dyadic cooperation with non-kin</td>
<td>Reap benefits of group cooperation</td>
<td>Negotiate hierarchy, defer selectively</td>
<td>Avoid microbes and parasites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proper domain (adaptive triggers)</strong></td>
<td>Suffering, distress, or threat to one’s kin</td>
<td>Cheating, cooperation, deception</td>
<td>Threat or challenge to group</td>
<td>Signs of dominance and submission</td>
<td>Waste products, diseased people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual domain (the set of all triggers)</strong></td>
<td>Baby seals, cartoon characters</td>
<td>Marital fidelity, broken vending machines</td>
<td>Sports teams one roots for</td>
<td>Bosses, respected professionals</td>
<td>Taboo ideas (communism, racism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristic emotions</strong></td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>anger, gratitude, guilt</td>
<td>Group pride, belongingness; rage at traitors</td>
<td>Respect, fear</td>
<td>Disgust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Criteria for foundationhood, with evidence for the current foundations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation criteria:</th>
<th>Care/harm</th>
<th>Fairness/cheating</th>
<th>Loyalty/betrayal</th>
<th>Authority/subversion</th>
<th>Sanctity/degradation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
For Mencius, on the other hand, ren is a specific virtue, benevolence, one of a team of (at least) four, which together constitute virtue or good character. Mencius claims that virtue comes from enhancing or growing four sprouts. Throughout the Mencius, the book that bears his name, Mencius is both responding to, and is met in conversations by fellow philosophers who think humans are naturally moral blank slates (Mozi), or that there is a human nature but that it not good. It is egoistical (Yang Zhu) or neutral (Gaozi) or “bad” (6A6) in the sense of disorderly or undisciplined.9

After the famous passage, 2A6, where he posits the four sprouts, Mencius says this: “People having these four sprouts is like their having four limbs.” Later at 4A27, he writes that if one grows all four moral sprouts, all four limb buds, “then without realizing it one’s feet begin to step in time to them and one’s hands dance according to their rhythms.” This passage nicely forces a question about the analogy. Do the sprouts of virtue relate to virtue the way the first steps of a toddler relate to adult walking, in which case the relation is smooth, natural, and something most everyone learns, or is the analogy to how those first steps relate to doing a waltz or a tango, or for that matter, the twist or the jerk (there really was such a dance), which also require passing through the walking stage, but requires more talent, training, and virtuosity, are much less common, and much more

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9 This last view is expressed in the Xunzi. But Xunzi lived after Mencius, and thus is not mentioned in the Mencius.
culturally specific, even idiosyncratic. These sorts of questions about what we could call the distance between the initial settings and the desired settings or the degree of preparedness in the original equipment for the ideal are important and on my mind throughout.

From these passages we can extract what is arguably the first text known, East or West, to express a version of the moral modularity hypothesis, actually two versions of MMH, a descriptive and a normative version. This is Mencian Moral Modularity (MMM).

Mencian Moral Modularity Descriptive Human nature contains seeds\textsuperscript{10} for four different moral competencies.

\textsuperscript{10} I’ll not worry about differences between seeds, hearts, and sprouts, but one could and it might matter. A seed is an earlier stage than a sprout. It is worth noting that the response in 2A6 is not the response of a baby or toddler, it is the response of a competent adult. It is good for a sprout view, although perhaps not always absolutely necessary if newborns show some form of the relevant disposition (see Gopnik 2009; Bloom 2013 for great work on children by two philosopher-psychologists). In Table 2 above of the contemporary modularity hypothesis (MFT) a requirement for a module is that it display signs of innate preparedness. The reason that signs of the disposition in a newborn may not be absolutely necessary, is to allow for moral cases that might be like puberty or sexual coming of age. The form of this stage of life is not entirely visible in babies, even if one thinks they are highly sensual, even “polymorphously perverse,” as Freudians say. We do, nonetheless, rightly think that coming of age sexually is developmentally programmed, hard to switch off, even as its timing, robustness, and expression is subject to all the usual contingencies of diet, environment, and social mores.
Mencian Moral Modularity involves growing all four seeds to maturity.

The descriptive thesis – Mencian Moral Modularity – tells us that human nature contains the sprouts of compassion, shame/disgust, deference, and distinguishing right from wrong, each of which, to speak in an Aristotelian way, has a trajectory, a directionality, a proper function, an ergon, a potential that it seeks to actualize. These four sprouts mature into the four cardinal Confucian virtues of benevolence (ren), righteousness (yi), propriety (li), and wisdom (zhi), or sometimes more, depending on whether integrity/fidelity/honesty or filial piety are added.11

The normative thesis – Mencian Moral Modularity – says that growing all four is good, something we ought to do. Not doing so would be like trying to become a person with deficient, missing, or lost limbs. This can be done. Chinese foot binding was straightforwardly devoted to limb suppression, limb degradation, and this is one reason it is considered wrong.

Assuming one grows the seeds properly, then one is truly human and a good or decent person. One can fail to be fully human, or at least a fully developed human, if any one of the seeds lies latent or dies (Van Norden 2007). Just as the loss or failure to grow any of the four limbs would lead to difficulty moving

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11 Keep your mind on this question of how some number n of sprouts or modules can yield > n virtues.
through space, loss or failure to grow any of the four Mencian sprouts will lead to difficulty negotiating socio-moral space; one will not acquire the ability to “dance” in the effortless and graceful (*wu-wei*) way that a morally well-formed person does.\(^\text{12}\)

Mencius’s modularity thesis, MMM, can be summarized as follows: Human nature contains four seeds or hearts or sprouts that in a normal environment grow into four distinct virtues, which taken together constitute, or comprise, or are the foundation of good character or virtue generally. The seeds are sympathy or compassion for benevolence (*ren*); shame and disgust for righteousness (*yi*); deference for propriety (*li*); a sense of true and false, accurate and inaccurate, match and mismatch, approval and disapproval is the sprout for practical wisdom (*zhi*), of appraising persons and situations for who and what they really are, for knowing what to do, and when and how to do it, and so on. Each sprout is an innate cognitive-affective disposition that possesses the potential, the natural trajectory to grow into

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\(^{12}\) Slingerland (2014) makes a persuasive argument that *wu-wei*, effortless negotiation of the social world, is a shared aim across otherwise different classical Chinese traditions. Ancient sage kings are revered because virtue and delicacy came to them easily, naturally. This *wu-wei* way of being-in-the-world can be regained according to Confucians (see especially Xunzi) by practicing the ritual propriety and virtue modeled by noble ancestors or alternatively, according to Daoists, by aligning oneself, not with stale and ancient customs, but with the natural ways of nature, with the way a river or a stream naturally flows.
one of the four cardinal virtues. If these sprouts are planted in a normal environment they will grow like the four limbs do. If they receive suboptimal nourishment, they will grow some; and if they are not nourished at all, they will not grow (6A8). The best outcome is that the four sprouts blossom into the four cardinal virtues. Barring congenital abnormality or abnormality in social conditions the best outcome occurs and virtuous agents emerge.13

So, Mencius defends both Mencian Moral Modularity Descriptive and Mencian Moral Modularity Normative (but with nuances and caveats, to be explained shortly). Although hardly anyone ever asks why it is a good thing that we have four limbs and why they are sized the way they are, it is instructive to consider what one could say if asked. One way to defend Mencian normative modularity for limbs would be by joining his view with contemporary Darwinian thinking and claiming that:

1. Evolution settled on four leg/four limb design because it was an adaptation = adaptationhistorical

13 If having all four virtues well-developed is not normal in the sense of “usual” (and it is not for Mencius, who like Confucius and every other classical Chinese philosopher, is nostalgic for a past Golden Age when virtue was normal in the sense of “usual”) in the way having four limbs is, then we are owed an explanation of how and why the current environment fails to pull for the development of the four cardinal virtues in the same way we would need an explanation for odd numbers of limbs in terms of amputations, radiation poisoning, and the like (Flanagan 2008, Flanagan and Hu, 2011).
2. This design is still adaptive = adaptation_{current ecology}^{14}

3. This four limb design emerges naturally in a species universal way across normal ecologies; and thus

4. We ought to grow our arms and legs the way nature designed them to grow.

The “ought” in (4) expresses the bi-directional agent-to-world goodness-of-fit between a universal phenotypic trait and the world (literally, the earth). If Mencian Moral Modularity_{Normative} were credible, the parallel would run as follows:

1. Evolution settled on four moral modules (= sprouts) because they were adaptations = adaptation_{historical}^{14}

2. They are still adaptive = adaptation_{current ecology}^{14}

3. The modules (= sprouts) emerge, grow, and are tuned (roughly) the same way across all natural and social ecologies; and thus,

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14 The two senses of adaptation – adaptation_{historical}^{14} and adaptation_{current ecology}^{14} – are the usual way that philosophers of biology mark the distinction that psychologists make in terms of proper and actual domains (Peter Godfrey Smith, 2009). MFT (Haidt and Joseph 2007, p. 14) follows Sperber in dividing module triggers into proper and actual ones: They write: “Sperber (1994) refers to the set of objects that a module was “designed” to detect as the proper domain for that module. He contrasts the proper domain with the actual domain, which is the set of all objects that in fact trigger the module.”
4. We ought to grow the modules the way Mother Nature (Tian = heaven) designed them to grow.

Neither argument is valid for familiar Humean reasons. In each case, we need to add a premise that says.

* We ought to allow, not interfere with, even to aid and abet, what nature sets us on course to develop.\(^{15}\)

This premise, however, is itself an “ought” in need of justification. If the argument seems valid it is because we supply this premise unconsciously. And if the premise is in fact defensible, it is not just because nature sets us on a certain trajectory, but, at most, that \(\text{plus}\) that realizing the trajectory(ies) suits us (possibly, and worrisomely, only some of us) in current ecologies.\(^{16}\) That is, there is no warrant for

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\(^{15}\) Almost all natural teleologists, from Aristotle to Aquinas to Philippa Foot think that there is something to this premise, but that it is not solely because some equipment is natural that does the work, but that plus that it is suited to producing what is good in contemporary worlds.

\(^{16}\) “Suits us in current ecologies” is ambiguous between is “still an adaptation,” i.e., still contributes to fitness and still contributes to happiness, flourishing, or goodness – each of which may be different from the other. Consider being a carnivore. We were designed as such. But some of us in developed countries and with good incomes can nowadays get proper nutrition without eating meat. If we think that there are good reasons that pertain to the well-being of non-human animals not to eat them and do so, then we have a case of an adaptation that we think should not be honored. Furthermore, a vegetarian of the sort I am imagining would be an example of a person who is perfectly fit in the Darwinian sense but who chooses for moral reasons not to respect, as it were, this aspect of her first or given nature.
developing, even allowing, nature to have its way just
because it sets us on a certain trajectory, unless it is
also good that it does so. And here we circle back to
worries about the possibility of grounding the nor-
mative – familiar as early as Plato’s “Euthyphro” – in
a way that is not itself normative and/or otherwise
question begging.17

Fitness ≠ Flourishing ≠ Goodness ≠ Rightness

I can put the point in a different way. The warrant
in the combined Mencius-Darwin view – I admit
and intend it as an anachronism – for developing
the sprouts to cover what they are designed to cover
(what we could call the “adaptive target,” which for
philosophers of biology is what the trait was “selected
for”) is because it is fitness enhancing.18 It is probably
the case, at least I will assume that it is so, that some

17 The Euthyphro problem involves explaining why just
because an uber source, God or heaven or Mother Nature
endowed us with a certain set of moral beliefs or dispositions
they are the right ones. This is an equal problem for the super-
naturalist and the naturalist. If a moral belief or disposition
was an adaptation in the past or even is an adaptation now,
this means only that is conduces to fitness, to getting more
of one’s genes in the world down the road. But fitness has no
very direct relation to goodness. To make things more com-
plex and puzzling, some traits that we call “adaptive,” such as
literacy, which we do think is related to flourishing if not so
obviously to goodness, is inversely related to fitness, to being
an “adaptation.” Countries with high literacy have low, often
zero or negative population growth.

18 P.J. Ivanhoe writes (personal correspondence): “The Qing
Dynasty thinker Dai Zhen talked about those things that
kind of fitness is necessary for flourishing, goodness, etc. But fitness is not the same as flourishing, goodness, and their suite, nor is it remotely sufficient for these. And this is one of several reasons why Mencius, were he present, would not accept the full-on Darwinian version of the argument. Many very bad people are very fit. This means that arguments for extending a sprout, a module, an initial setting beyond what enhances fitness requires a different set of reasons that those that pertain to fitness. The king with an extensive harem is uber fit, but not uber good. The person who loves everyone equally may be uber good, but not uber fit.

Mencius in the moral sprout text(s) is depending mostly, even if only implicitly, on the readers’ or hearers’ understanding that there are moral reasons to grow the sprouts in the direction of a realized Confucian junzi. This is their natural teleology. When we ask for or offer reasons for extending sprouts in first nature to form good persons of a certain type, we might be presupposing fitness, but we are almost never asking about what makes or might make some individual or population of individuals reproductively successful. We are asking about what will make them good.

“promote life” 逐生 by which he seemed to mean not only that it was fitness but happiness enhancing.

19 It may be that, indeed it is almost certain, that considerations of flourishing or goodness or rightness sometimes require suppressing dispositions to fitness, e.g., controlling reproduction by suppressing desire.
WHAT MODULARITY IS

So far I have been letting Mencius do the talking, claiming he is the first modularist (that I know about). I should say something more precise about what a module is according to contemporary cognitive science. In The Modularity of Mind (1983), the seminal contemporary work on modularity, Jerry Fodor lays out the properties characteristic of modular systems such as reflexes, face recognition, and the five senses. The five sensory input systems have most or all of the following features: they are domain specific, mandatory, involve limited central access, are fast, informationally encapsulated, produce shallow outputs, operate on fixed neural architecture, are triggered by a restricted class of stimuli (eyes by light, ears by sounds), and demonstrate a characteristic pace and sequencing in ontogeny.

Input systems (System One) differ from central systems (System Two) in that the central systems can draw on any relevant information and confirmation is sensitive to the entire belief system. Thought and problem solving are canonical central system processes.20 Imagine planning what courses to take at the local college over the next several years in order to become an X-ray technician, while working full time

20 Fodor is not trying nor does he believe it is possible to give a definition of “modules” in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. It is not only that having each of these nine properties is not necessary for modularity, but also each of these admits of degrees. Some input systems will be more encapsulated than others both informationally and anatomically.
and being a single parent. People with complex lives do this kind of thinking and planning all the time. It is hard, and doing it well, requires time, patient deliberation, discussion with friends and loved ones, and so on.

If there are moral modules, and if the morality system is modules “all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down,” then we will expect it to be unencumbered by central processes in the way, for example, the skeletal reflex system or the pupil contraction and expansion system are. Keep your mind on this point. It is very important.

If there are moral modules, and if they are like the sensory, perceptual systems, then one immediate difference worth noticing is that they do not produce “shallow” outputs, at least not “shallow” in the sense that the input is just, as it were, received by the mind in the way most sounds or sights are registered. The person who sees the child falling into the well is moved to act; the person who is treated unfairly shows resentment; the contemptuous person reveals her contempt on her face and moves quickly away.²¹

²¹ Gestalt psychologists, as well as phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Gibsonian psychologists have long argued that perception is for action in which case the difference I am pointing to between perceptual modules and moral modules where the former are more receptive than the latter which are more action oriented is at best a matter of degree. See Noe (20xx). But this is a matter for another time. All I need for my purposes is that the moral modules or moral dispositions are active, action oriented.
If one were to read the recent philosophical literature for helpful discussions of a quick response system with emotional and conative force and that has something significant to do with socio-moral life, specifically with reactions to the “weal and woe” of oneself and others, one would be pointed to P.F. Strawson’s (1962) work on the reactive attitudes. The reactive attitudes are such states as these:

- Indignation
- Resentment
- Gratitude
- Approbation
- Guilt
- Shame
- Hurt Feelings
- Feelings of Affection & Love
- Forgiveness

Strawson claims that these attitudes are part of human nature and, as I said, that they comprise a set of cognitive-affective-conative attitudes towards persons, acts, and motives that help, hinder, harm, support, and obstruct the desires, aims, and plans of individuals and groups. The reactive attitudes are a kind, actually several kinds, of conscious intentional state.

Taking inspiration from Strawson, I call a sprout “Strawsonian”, specifically, a “Strawsonian-disposition” if it has the following properties:

- It is automatic, fast acting, and easily activated.
Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies

- It involves a triplet of affect (feeling), judgment (thought), and conation, i.e., an action tendency.
- It has features of cognitively impenetrability despite itself being a cognitive state, i.e., the affect, associated thought, and action tendency triplet are hard to turn off or keep from being activated; the action can be stopped but only with considerable conscious effort/veto, sometimes only indirectly, by doing something else.22
- There exist a well-defined class of stimuli that trigger it (where “it” is normally the triplet).

The key reason to say that moral sprouts or modules are Strawsonian, rather than (simply) Fodorian, is that they carry heavy affective components and action tendencies that the five senses qua modules do not carry. Other input systems, reflexes for example, instigate action tendencies as do moral modules, but they typically, consider the knee jerk, do so without any emotional involvement and are cognitively empty. Startles – for example, to a car backfiring – meanwhile are heavily affective, but not, at least initially,

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22 By “doing something else,” I have in mind cases where one can’t stop salivating at the chocolate cake or wanting the drink (imagine the alcoholic in recovery) or feeling lust. One can’t stay in this particular situation and stop the feeling. The only option is to remove oneself from the situation and this one can do (although it might be hard).
Moral modules, if there are any, are cognitive and affectively loaded. Indeed, a quick survey of every important list of basic moral attitudes or, what is different, attitudes that are sometimes relevant to morality (Darwin’s, Strawson’s, classical Chinese and Buddhist sources) depicts them as partly emotional. Of course, moral attitudes such as compassion involve cognitive appraisal, the thought that [this is a child falling into a well]. But once this is grasped, or better, as this is grasped, the emotional reaction is automatic. Even King Herod, who set out to kill Jesus by killing all first-born Jewish children, can’t immediately override his impulse to save the child. The feeling of distress and the impulse to save the child will happen, and that much is pretty much what is meant by talk of “cognitively impenetrability” in cognitive science. Of course, King Herod can, as he did, think it is a good idea, all things considered, to proceed with his policy of genocidal infanticide. But doing so, especially if the killing is up close and per-

23 The car backfiring or unexpected fireworks or gunshots cause a startle (alarm bells go off). The startle or alarm has no content. But it instigates thinking about what that noise was, where it came from, whether danger lurks, and so on, which results eventually in a contentful thought: “That must have been fireworks.” In the case of the child falling into the well the entire episode starts with a cognitive-intentional state: One sees that [the child is falling into the well] and this contentful state produces the alarm and compassion. Mencius’s view is not one where the sprouts are mere bodily happenings, they are intentional psycho-physical states (Kim, 2010)
sonal will involve overriding or circumventing powerful impulses not to do so.

If we look at Tables 1 & 2 proposed by MTF, we can see how it conceives of the evidence for the five foundations or modules, and supports a reading of the modules as “Strawsonian.” First, each foundation has – or if it is to count as a bona fide module – must have the required four features of a Strawsonian disposition:

- It is automatic, fast acting, and easily activated
- It involves affect (feeling), cognition, and conation, i.e., an action tendency.
- It has features of cognitively impenetrability despite itself being cognitive, e.g., the cognitive-affect-conation triplet is hard to turn off or keep from being activated; the action can be stopped but only with conscious effort/veto, or sometimes only indirectly, by doing something else.
- There exists a well-defined class of stimuli that trigger it.

In addition, there should be evidence that the foundation is universal,\footnote{The “universal” part is actually tricky since the bearers of a hereditable trait might be only a certain segment of a population, e.g., sterile insects or females. I ignore such complexities here.} that there is an evolutionary rationale for its existence, typically in ancestral species and near relations on the evolutionary tree; and that some form of it (a sprout, a seedling) ought to
show up in the very young, or as part of normal psycho-biological maturation. This last is the demand for evolutionary explanation, an explanation for why the original equipment is as it is given a background commitment to Darwin’s theory of evolution. Why? Because Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection is extraordinarily well-confirmed.25

Finally, it is worth noting that according to Table 1 of MFT, each moral foundation has associated with it certain emotions, which constitute in some measure the beginnings of the associated virtues. These

25 The requirement is not that all traits must be explained as adaptations as, for example, some say “evolutionary psychology” requires, which I seriously doubt evolutionary psychology requires. It is weaker, to the effect that the explanation of the original equipment must be consistent with the theory of natural selection. Darwin himself allowed for other natural principles besides natural selection, such as, by-products, exaptations, spandrels, free riders, drift, random catastrophes, etc. I have argued (1995; 2000) that dream consciousness (as opposed to sleep) is not an adaptation but a spandrel. It just comes with selection for ordinary awake consciousness but it – the dreaming mentation part as opposed to the resting part – serves no fitness enhancing function. It just comes for free. It is possible that some virtuous and vicious tendencies are like this. Consider the way humans, even ones who don’t care for dogs and cats or teenagers “ooh and aah” over puppies and kittens and newborns. Explanation: We were selected, as Mencius suggests in 2A6, to feel powerfully towards young humans. Large heads and eyes relative to the body are a marker of a human newborn. You get puppy and kitten affection for free, by accident, as it were, on selection for a human baby care system that is attuned to large heads and eyes. Once puppy and kitten heads normalize relative to body size, once they become dogs and cats, the attraction moderates.
are compassion and love for care; anger, gratitude, and guilt for justice; loyalty, belonging, betrayal, and cowardice for in-group affiliations and associations; obedience, respect and deference for authority; and contempt, indignation, and disgust for purity and sanctity. The match with Strawson’s inventory of reactive attitudes is apparent. One difference is that Strawson doesn’t link or tie down his reactive attitudes to distinctive domains of life nor does he say anywhere (that I am aware of) that each attitude is triggered by a well-defined class of stimuli, which means that Strawson’s reactive attitudes might not themselves satisfy the strict criteria for being “Strawsonian” dispositions. The weal and woe of oneself and others activates the reactive attitudes but what constitutes the weal and woe is abstract, and not tied down to specific concrete triggers. Many different states-of-affairs associated with things not going so well for me and/or my loved ones, for example, can cause sadness. It seems plausible that the emotion of sadness might have had a similar dynamic structure when the ice melted at the end of the Pleistocene as it does now. In which case, we might sensibly say that the sadness sprout is universal, fast-acting, has an evolutionary rationale in terms of motivating me to step up my game, watch for chances to improve my situation, etc., but would not say that it is triggered by a well-defined set of stimuli. I think the same sort of point can be made about the causes of feelings of gratitude, forgiveness, and friendliness. If this is true, we could respond by saying that some basic emotions are not S-dispositions because not triggered
by a well-defined class of stimuli or by weakening the requirement for S-dispositions by removing that condition.

A related issue is that in MTF – but perhaps not in real life – different emotions are linked quite specifically to distinct domains of life. Anger is associated primarily with affronts to justice; rage with disloyalty; fear with abuse of power in hierarchies. The specific reactive attitudes are depicted as doing their work primarily inside a module as it were, not across the modules. But this does not seem to be how the reactive attitudes actually work. Even in something like the original evolutionary situation, anger would seem a natural response to violations of any protomoral norm violations. That is, I see that you do not reliably save children falling into wells, I experience anger; you try to take my food or my bride, I experience anger; you are cowardly when the group needs you to show courage, I experience anger; you never defer to others, I experience anger; you use my sleeping spot in the cave as a toilet, I experience anger. On the other side, shame and guilt, would seem to be both common and appropriate reactions to one's own moral violations across domains, not only as MTF suggests to justice and purity violations (Gibbard 1989; Williams 1993).

How is it possible that emotions can be extended to new triggers inside a module or, what is different, across modules to state-of-affairs normally governed, according to MFT, by processors that specialize in different “characteristic emotions” (see Table 1)? Exten-
sions inside each module are not hard to explain. Fear for alpha males back in the day (hierarchy) is now fear of you because you have the power to fire me and take away my livelihood, even though you could not win a fight in the old fashioned way. This extension of fear is easy to explain so long as there are simple psychological laws of association that track resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect, or the organism learns via Pavlovian classical conditioning, or Skinnerian operant conditioning, or most likely both. A key question about the underlying architecture is whether such learning or conditioning regimens are conceived as placed redundantly inside each module (assuming there are modules), or whether these laws are placed in the mind just once and permeate across the modules. In both cases, there would be a ready explanation for extensions of the modules, but the second architecture has an easier time explaining associations across modules (I think you are compassionate but repulsive), while at the same time it would provide reason to think the modules are not as autonomous as is sometimes suggested. There is horizontal interpenetration across the modules from the start.

**DARWIN AND MORAL MODULARITY**

Was Darwin himself a sprout theorist, a moral modularist? Maybe. Here is what he says in the *Descent of Man* (1871, 498-500) in his most explicit gloss on human moral sense:
In order that primeval men, or the ape-like progenitors of man, should become social...they must have acquired the same instinctive feelings... They would have felt uneasy when separated from their comrades, for whom they would have felt some degree of love, they would have warned each other of danger, and have given mutual aid in attack or defence. All this implies some degree of sympathy, fidelity, and courage.... [T]o the instinct of sympathy... it is primarily due that we habitually bestow both praises and blame on others, whilst we love the former and dread the latter when applied to ourselves; and this instinct no doubt was originally acquired, like all the other social instincts, through natural selection.... [W]ith increased experience and reason, man perceives the more remote consequences of his actions, and the self-regarding virtues, such as temperance, chastity, &c., which during earlier times are... utterly disregarded come to be highly esteemed or even held sacred... Ultimately our moral sense or conscience becomes a highly complex sentiment — originating in the social instincts, largely guided by the approbation of our fellow-men, ruled by reason, self-interest, and in later times by deep religious feelings, and confirmed by instruction and habit.

The fact that Darwin uses the word “instinct” is promising for reading him as a modularist. But the fact that he doesn’t specify the class of triggers for the instincts very precisely speaks against reading him as the kind of modularist who tries to meet the strong conditions on modularity as specified in Table 2 above or in the
criteria for S-dispositions, where in both cases the triggers are supposed to be well-defined. Then again one might claim that Darwin does speak precisely enough about the triggers. They involve separation, danger, and need for mutual aid. But the fact that he adds that with “increased experience and reason, man perceives the more remote consequences of his actions” indicates that the “highly complex sentiment” that emerges in actual worlds is not only complex, as he says, but a heavily cognitively and historically conditioned competence. All of which suggests that even if Darwin might be attracted to a modular substrate view, he would resist a modules “all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down” view, because he sees an important role for reason, history, conscience, Mencian zhi, and Aristotelian phronesis, and also because he himself foresaw the distinction between a trait that is an adaptation in the fitness-enhancing sense(s) and one which is adaptive, functional, conducive to happiness, flourishing, and, what is different still, good or right; or in a thicker idiom, what is compassionate, just, fair, loving, faithful, patient, kind, and generous.

21st Century Modularity – MFT

Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues (2001, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2014) have proposed a version of MMH that is advertised as a social intuitionist model to convey that the modules consist of dispositions to have rapid-fire reactions (the intuitions), which subserve quick affective-cognitive-action tendencies that are triggered by specific types of social or
environmental situations, akin to Mencius’s example of the universal human impulse to save the child falling into the well. The model is called social intuitionist modularity or moral foundations theory, MFT, for short. MFT is one version of the moral modularity hypothesis.

MFT draws on interdisciplinary work (Brown, 1991; Fiske 1991, 1992, 2004; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, Park, 1997; and de Waal 1991, 1996), and claimed originally that there are three types of social situations or domains of life that people everywhere evaluate in affectively loaded moral terms, zones of life in which moralizing universally occurs:

1. Suffering/Compassion
2. Fairness/Reciprocity
3. Hierarchy/Respect

Evaluative intuitions in these domains are found cross-culturally among humans and in non-human primates as well e.g., anger to unfair rewards is found in capuchins and canines and children (Brosnan and De Waal, 2006; Bloom 2013). A fifth module was then added: an in-group/loyalty foundation that accounts for the universal tendency humans have to create, think, and act in terms of in-groups and out-groups; and a purity/sanctity foundation based on evidence from anthropology of the common role intuitions about what is what is base, impure, and defiled, on one side, and pure, holy, and sacred, on the
other side, play in most cultures (Haidt and Joseph 2004).

So we add:

4. In-Group/Out-Group

5. Purity/Sanctity

Moral Foundations Modularity can be then be defined this way:

MFT Descriptive Homo sapiens possess these five innate intuitive psychological modules that are activated in normal social environments by well-defined situation types, and that can be grown/shaped/suppressed/extended/modified in multifarious ways, and which are the basis of all moralities.

The key ideas that define Moral Foundations Theory are that there are (at least) these five intuitive modules and that something in the vicinity of virtues, or special purpose moral skills, are built upon them. These five dispositional mechanisms underwrite complex multidirectional syndromes (mind-world-action) that arose originally to meet specific adaptive challenges and that serve now as the foundation of morality, or something in the vicinity. The process of cultivating, sculpting, suppressing the modules, as well as calibrating their relations, yields second nature, the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses we make to the complex problem space of socio-moral life. Continuous adjustments of the settings might, in the spirit of industrial strength modularity, be explained completely in terms of
social feedback, which is itself mostly or completely explained by the modular settings of those I interact with. Alternatively, one might think that the moral modules broadcast their output into some integrated mental space where they achieve phenomenal unity, in the way that one feels the breeze, hears the birds, sees the mountains, and smells the flowers all at once even though the skin, ears, eyes, and nose compute distinct classes of stimuli (they are, recall, Fodorian modules). Allowing integration of this sort would be congenial to Aristotelians who think of character as involving a unity of virtues. Or, perhaps the architecture could be a hybrid view: some highly vertical systems, some horizontal interpenetration across modules, with a certain amount of top-down control over this output exerted by a general purpose (non-modular) cognitive system (e.g., System Two or dorsolateral-prefrontal cortex, (DLPFC), what they called “reason” or “thinking” in the olden days).

One appealing feature of MFT is that it claims to offer a universal psychosocial baseline for comparing and contrasting moral orientations across individuals and cultures, namely examine how the modules are grown, suppressed, enhanced, and related among themselves. Depending on how exactly the moral

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26 This leaves room for ethical political critique of the extensions. Suppose one finds, as one will, that certain extensions of the original dispositions are brokered by “the rule of the stronger” to satisfy or accommodate only their interests. If moral reasons are supposed to be the kind of reasons that promote the good impersonally considered, then the fact that a “morality” promotes the good of a powerful interest group
modularity hypothesis (MMH) is framed, as Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) or in the Mencian way, as MMM, it might also be read as embedding a criterion or criteria for judging the adequacy of a type or level of moral competence and performance as, for example, Mencius’s four limb analogy purports to do. MFT is normally agnostic about the correct mature shape of the modules, although it sets something like constraints of the possibility space.

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27 Despite logical concerns about deriving “oughts” from “is’s,” empirical scientists have tried to cross the gap. In the early 1970’s, Lawrence Kohlberg claimed to possess an empirical theory of moral psychology that enabled us (finally) to derive ‘ought’ from ‘is’, to plot moral development, and to establish the philosophical adequacy of (his and Kant’s) the highest stage of moral development (Kohlberg 1971). Kohlberg’s idea failed (Flanagan 1991), but the renewed interest in empirical moral psychology in the last twenty-five years has been accompanied by revisiting the “is-ought” barrier with an eye for gaining some normative consequences from the study of moral psychology, even if these normative consequences involve only ruling out certain rule-based theories such as act-consequentialism or an a-emotional Kantianism (where actions should be done solely out of duty not out of such motives as love, compassion, and friendship) as psychologically unrealistic or unnatural, rather than resolving which among the many psychologically realistic ways of configuring moral personality is best (Flanagan 1991, 2002; Greene, 2003; 2013).

28 In Varieties (1991), I proposed the “Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism (PMPR),” which says that when con-
Virtues, conceived as special purpose moral skills, are defined normally as dispositions to \{perceive, feel, judge, and act\} in a way that is responsive to tokens of a situation type (Flanagan 1991, 2009). Courage or temperance or benevolence, and so on, are virtues that are appropriately activated by situations that call for them, which requires cognitive appraisal, minimally “seeing as.” A kind person sees the old lady standing on the subway and gives her his seat. A decent person feels sympathy for the child who scrapes her knee and goes to help her. A courageous person sees when the rights of the powerless are being trampled and stands up for them (even at cost to herself). In the normal life of a virtuous person, declarative rules are not normally consulted, and need not be consulted in cases such as these.\textsuperscript{29} The virtuous person unlike

\textsuperscript{29} Quite a few neurophilosophers and cognitive scientists, M. Johnson (1993; 2014), P.M. Churchland (1996), Haidt (2001), Casebeer (2003); Casebeer and P. S. Churchland (2003) and P. S. Churchland (2011) think that virtue theory is best supported by, or is most consilient with the empirical findings of psychology and neuroscience. Moral psychological research does not seem to support the idea that humans are moral reasoning machines that often or consistently deploy the declarative rules of deontology or consequentialism. But there are formidable others, Peter Singer (2011) and Joshua Greene (2013), for example, who argue that consequentialism is favored by all the evidence (most of which is not psy-
what Aristotle called the “continent person” (whom Kant admired) moves in that *wu-wei* (effortless) manner that Mencius celebrates as suited to our kind of animal. Indeed, Mencius (see 4B19, 6A4-5) makes exactly the same distinction Aristotle makes between the continent person, who does what is right through will-power, and the virtuous person who (if there are any) does it because it is her nature, her entire self is attuned to virtuous expression.

MFT like Mencius’s model makes both a descriptive (there are five innate sprouts) and a normative claim (minimally a claim that we ought to recognize the importance of all five to morality, that doing so will improve moral comprehension across life forms, that it will lead to tolerance since all, or most, or much of the variation in moralities, in second nature, is variation in the growth (extensions/modifications) of shared modules, of a common first nature. And furthermore, variation is entirely due to individual quirks in the initial settings plus cultural variation that is not chosen by a person who is born into and raised inside a morality.

Defenders of MFT are sensibly cautious about offering anything as strong as the Mencian limb analogy. They point out that which sprouts develop, and
the extent to which different cultures or subcultures build on the modules, depend on environmental and social inputs, as well as culture and history. Privileging some sprouts at the expense of others does not necessarily prevent one from being virtuous, as “cultures vary to the degree to which they build virtues on these five foundations” (Haidt & Graham 2007, 99). Nonetheless, “the available range of human virtues is constrained by the five sets of intuitions that human minds are prepared to have” (Haidt & Graham 2007, 106). If MFT, or for that matter if Mencius’s sprout psychology, is true, then American liberal, conservative, and libertarian moral psychologies, as well as Confucian and Buddhist moral psychologies are all built upon the same foundations. Buddhists are influenced to extend compassion in ways that Westerners are not; Confucians to extend respect for authority in ways Buddhists and Western liberals are not; and Americans to extend “justice as fairness” intuitions in ways these others are not. But, if MFT, is true, all these forms of life, as well as every other one ever invented or inventible, rests on the same modular foundations.

This last point, if true, is very important. It would mean that “morality” as a psycho-social kind is restricted to the original modules and extensions of the modules. At least, it would entail this if “rests on the same modules” or “is constrained by the five sets of intuitions” is intended to mean that morality just is the shape that the five modules can take and whatever interactions are allowed among them. Imagine a garden in which there are five seeds that grow into
five plants or five kinds of plants – watermelon, eggplant, peppers, tomatoes, and basil. If the watermelon gets out first and fast then the basil needs to grow around it. If the tomatoes get tall and are sunward from the eggplant, then the eggplant grows differently than if this were reversed, and so on. The key is that there are no other variables that determine what the garden does or produces than the seeds, the soil, the orientations of the plants, and the vagaries of the weather.

Now if, on the other hand, one is allowed to add a gardener to the situation who can cultivate the different seeds at the right time, prepare the soil according the needs of each, irrigate in the right ways, and so on, then how the garden grows will be different than if the seeds are left only to their own devices.30 If we are allowed to add the gardener, we are starting to conceive the system along the lines of a system that is modular at bottom (at root, we might say) but non-modular on top. If one is allowed to add a consumer for whom the gardener gardens, then the picture gets even more functionally and architectur-

30 P. J. Ivanhoe (2013) emphasizes the importance of seeing that Mencius’s botanical metaphors are agricultural rather that simply vegetative (the exception is the Ox mountain metaphor which reveals how environmental degradations can keep any sprouts from growing). Moral development is more like the practice of agriculture, which took about 200,000 years of human history to discover or invent, and which requires skill, wisdom, than it is like allowing the natural undisciplined growth of the sprouts or letting nature “do its thing.”
ally complex as a system, and also more normatively complex, since there are now considerations of what is good for the plants, for the gardener, and for the consumer. This better represents the normal situation in most moral ecologies. One consequence of thinking ecologically is that normative properties, flourishing, tasty, good, are not narrow properties of the seed, sprout, or mature fruit alone, but of these plus the system that includes these wider cultivator-consumer relations. Even in such a complex system, there are still constraints: the gardener with only the seeds mentioned cannot produce grapefruit even if the weather is commodious and the consumer begs for it because he doesn’t have grapefruit seeds.

Now, of course, one can start to imagine that there just happen to be accidents that occur and hybrids arise, so that the tomatoes and watermelons meet and form tomato-melons. The farmer singleton or the farmer and consumer pair or the farmer, grocer, consumer triplet like it, want it, etc. Then from four original seeds we have more than four plants, etc. The possible relations among the four original seeds, and the (now) five kinds of fruit they yield, and between them and the farmer and the grocer and his customers with their changing preferences explode exponentially. So we can add another picture of the dynamic architecture of a sprout or modular based system that has room for hybridity as well as producers and consumers.

According to MFT, the modules as originally set (or maturationally programmed in a normal environment) constitute the initial settings both in terms of
what (the domains) activates the modules and how high or low the emotional and conative responses are tuned. Extensions of the range of activation of the modules and the tuning up or down of the strength of emotional response and actions thus enjoined are accounted for by culture. Moral differences at every level, between individuals, across cultures, subcultures, and so on, are explained by differences in the initial settings, in the degree to which the five mod-

31 I do not explore the topic here, but individual variation in the initial settings, might be widespread and important. Some people like novelty more than others, some are shyer, some like puzzles more than people, and so on. Also, there are almost certainly likely to be gender differences in the initial settings due to selection pressures that might have made for consequential differences in the male and female bodies. See P.S. Churchland (2011; 2013) for a rich discussion of the maternal caring system as an important basis for morality. P. S. Churchland is not a fan of moral or any other kind of modularity. Suhler and Churchland’s (2011) critique of MFT has caused Graham, Haidt et al (2013) to clarify that they do not intend hard-wired anatomical moral modules, only plastic, functional ones. Before there was moral modularity, Churchland and her colleagues in San Diego, wrote a wonderful paper, “The Critique of Pure Vision” (Churchland, Ramachandran, Sejnowski, 1993) criticizing east coast Fodorian modularity, arguing correctly that the visual system is massively interactive. For example, binding takes place so that at the person-level we are not aware that the visual system computes color, motion, and shape separately. True and important. If there is modularity in each of the five perceptual systems and between them, then it often gets integrated. But integration is only an objection to modularity if the modules are described in such ways that they cannot account for it. This is a worry for certain industrial strength modularity views, possibly for some versions of MFT. And
ules are tuned up or down, in the content and scope of situation types to which they are attuned, and to the relative priority given to the various modules when their output differs.

**CONTENT, SCOPE, AND INTENSITY SETTINGS**

Suppose (implausibly) that the original scope of compassion is attuned only to children of one’s own kind falling into a well, but can be extended to unrelated kids, old folks, etc. This will require extension of scope. Likewise, suppose what is not implausible, that disgust is originally attuned to rancid food or excrement, but can be extended to strangers, communists, and homosexuals. Some think that there are no deep moral “reasons” to favor a society that does not extend the scope and content of a sprout in one way rather than another. There just are the different ways different groups extend the foundations, and then the various contingencies that bring about interest group “nudges” to adjust, extend, moderate, and modify the scope and content over which the modules range. I think there is a normative principle that one can use to test extensions.

The Reasons for Extensions Requirement (“Reasons,” for short): Allow a module, if there are any, it can be expressed in the form of a demand to the modularist. Posit modules or sprout-like beginnings if you wish, but eventually you will have to explain or explain away the phenomenology of integrated moral experience, the experience of rational control, of the pay-off of the work of self-cultivation, and so on.
some permission to range over the contents it was originally designed to range over and to have the scope it was designed to have by Mother Nature. But resist further extensions, unless there are good socio-moral reasons for them. When there are extensions in place that have occurred “under the radar,” or are unreflectively delivered on the wings of some tradition, feel free to examine their genealogies looking for dubious moral sources. Finally, require when it seems necessary that the extensions be justified or re-justified morally, i.e., by producing reasons that pertain to what produces well being, or what is good, or what is right.

Suppose the disgust reaction is set to be triggered by more than dangerous fluids and waste, but also by such sexual practices as incest within the nuclear family. Allow disgust to range over rancid food, sour milk, human and animal waste, incest, and such easy extensions as masturbating on food that you then serve to guests. Check. But don’t raise the kids to think homosexuality is disgusting even if it might be

32 The “some permission,” is intended to give a module a prima facie pass to do what it is supposed to do on grounds that it was presumably an adaptation when it evolved. But this permission is revocable for a variety of reasons. The trait may no longer be an adaptation, or exercising it might enhance fitness but not be morally good. In the latter case, we might understand the tendency but then need to work hard to mitigate or overcome it. For example, Bloom (2013) and Greene (2013) emphasize how easy it is to arouse xenophobic, ethnocentric, and racist feelings in babies. This is because first nature is designed to be small group focused, possibly tribal. The dispositions can be mitigated by wise care and instruction.
relatively easy to cause the kids to extend disgust to homosexuality. The rationale is that there is a prima facie reason to think that evolved modules were, at least, once adaptations. In extending its scope or content to cover new situations, require that good reasons be offered. Disgust for homosexuality or homosexuals will not pass such a test, nor will disgust for communists or Republicans or strangers, which, however, is compatible with wanting reassurances that the communists and Republicans and strangers do not have bad intentions. In the other direction, if an ancient setting of a sprout or module starts to be questioned because it is no longer an adaptation in current environments or because it is still fitness-enhancing but is in tension with other ends, for example, with flourishing, goodness, or rightness, then consider suppressing it or sublimating it. Some think that for evolutionary reasons men have tendencies to want to outcompete other men in reproduction, and also to be relieved of child-rearing duties. If true, this would be an example of an adaptation (it enhances fitness) that ought to be suppressed or sublimated for reasons of flourishing, goodness, and rightness. If, as part of this adaptationist cluster, young men in particular are prone to violence and this tendency once served to keep peace by dispersing potential combatants, but no longer does so in societies with easy access to modern weapons, we ought to work to minimize or remove catalysts and to suppress and sublimate the tendency. Basic common sense.

“Reasons” requires that we can offer good reasons for extensions of the content or scope of sprouts or
modules beyond the content or scope set by evolution. The principle should be interpreted also as requiring reasons for the intensity settings, for the loudness of alarm bells that go off in our hearts/minds to indicate the badness of violations of the extended phenotype. Suppose we are raised to extend the sprouts that cause us to care specially for our family and tribe to care specially for our nation state. And suppose that normally there are good reasons for this extension in content or scope. It is another thing altogether to determine how much importance people assign to the extension, how bad people feel about violations of the nation-state loyalty norm in itself or relative to violations of norms of compassion or justice. We require reasons for extensions plus for how high or low the alarm bells are set. This matters because such settings play important roles in how we judge the seriousness of norm violations and how we understand and resolve conflicts of duties. A world in which loyalty violations are set by the community to be experienced as the worst violations is a very different world from one in which violations of compassion or justice are—or in certain cases, might be—worse. One hopes that there might be reasons that can be given to intelligently set intensity reactions and to permit judicious evaluation of one’s initial reactions once the alarm bells have gone off.

**Deep Structure**

According to MFT from a system of five shared set of intuitions, various cultures develop moralities that
extend, or otherwise cultivate the modules, to create a system of appropriate, socially certified dispositions of perception, feeling, thought, and behavior. The shaping of first nature yields second nature, the set of human individuals with moral character, with systems of values, who know and abide certain norms, who possesses a repertoire of virtues, and who often, at least in modern times, have a certain moral ideology. They are Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Daoist, communist, consequentialist, Kantian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, secular humanist, and so on.

MFT sometimes depicts these different moralities as “incommensurable” (Haidt and Joseph, 2004, 56). If by “incommensurable” they mean incommensurable this seems unlikely if there is a universal basis of all moralities in the common sprouts or modules. According to MFT, as with the Mencian sprouts, although the five foundational modules underwrite virtues, they are not themselves virtues, but are “essential tools in the construction of virtues” (Haidt and Joseph, 2007, 63). Thus, we can think of the modules as potential virtues or proto-virtues. One interesting question is whether the modules also provide the seeds or sprouts upon which vice grows or can grow. And the answer is “yes.” In fact, MFT is explicit about this basis for vice with respect to the foundations. So, for example, the loyalty foundation is the basis both for the virtue of attentiveness to the needs of loved ones and for various familiar kinds of nepotisms and chauvinisms. MacIntyre’s “Is Patriotism a Virtue” (1984) is a lovely exploration of just how difficult finding the balance or mean here is. We
Moral Sprouts and Natural Teleologies

want people to care specially about their community or society in part because this is the best practical way to produce the greatest good for everyone. But we don’t want such care and concern to become chauvinistic, blinkered, and so on. The same goes for the other foundations; in each and every case there are ways that one can under- or over-develop the initial sprout. Care or compassion, may seem like the exception, in the sense that there can never be too much of it. But for Aristotle it was clear that the “care” or compassion foundation can be developed excessively. And I think that this is a not uncommon view among many citizens of liberal democratic states, who think that justice does the heavy lifting.33

One could of course be skeptical that there is any real moral force to designations of “virtue” and “vice.” All naturalistic accounts of morality can be taken (although it is not necessary) to show that such designations as “virtue” and “vice” are to be read as honorifics or pejoratives pinned on different ways of extending or growing or cultivating the modules. Different societies favor different extensions of the modules. A minor or subordinate speaking up can be

33 Today as I write (19 November 2013) there is news that one of former Vice President Cheney’s daughters, Liz, who is running for political office (US Senate seat from Wyoming) announced she opposes gay marriage. Her sister, Mary, is a lesbian and in a gay marriage. The Cheneys defended their politician daughter saying that Liz was “compassionate” towards Mary, her wife, and their two children. This seems an example of misplaced or unwarranted compassion. It doesn’t belong here. Compassion is warranted when there is suffering.
Owen Flanagan

a virtue or a vice depending not only on context but also on culture. Compassion can be pegged as weakness or sentimentality by a culture, as courage can be viewed as foolhardiness, and a strict sense of justice as stiffness. Some think that there is no deep answer to the question of which way of doing things, of designating virtue and vice, is the right way.

The question remains whether developing all five foundations to some small or large degree is typical or, what is different, necessary for an adequate morality. If MFT is true, then the surface structural differences among moralities, about which a significant amount of moral disagreement turns, are different extensions, expressions, modifications, and tuning-up and tuning down of the same underlying deep structure. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that either some cultures or subcultures build morality mostly on a sub-set of these five foundations, or that if and insofar as all five intuitive modules are appealed to in all societies, they are hooked up with different domains of activation beyond the domains they are innately set to respond to, and/or they are tuned up-down (higher and lower) to different activating conditions.

CONTESTATIONS

MFT claims that there are (at least) five dispositional foundations in human nature that co-evolved with certain specific kinds of states-of-affairs, which activate the dispositions in normal environments.34

34 There is, as I write, controversy among advocates of MFT about whether there is a sixth foundation or module. Haidt
The initial dispositions are then grown, moderated, modified, channeled, and harmonized in distinctive ways across—and even within—social environments. The original dispositions plus their extended phenotypes form a fair amount, possibly all, of what are recognized across cultures as a “morality.” These dispositional foundations, or better the disposition/environment activating condition pairs, are first nature. Second nature is what you get when you take all the individual and small group variation in the initial settings of the dispositional foundations, mix them with the multifarious vagaries of fetal development, local natural and social ecologies, family, economics, religion, politics, history and culture, plus all manner of unforeseen disruptions, famines, tsunamis, wars, and unexpected good discoveries, electricity and iPhones.

There are many questions, some more about the way first nature yields, if it does, to second nature, others more normative about which way or ways given the constraints and directionality of first nature, and all the contingency we ought to seek to develop, build, or otherwise direct first nature to become a certain variety of second nature. Is second nature only the emergent product of the sprouts or modules? Is it

(2012) thinks there is a Liberty/Oppression foundation, which he uses to explain distinctive features of libertarian political psychology. Graham and others on the MFT team are skeptical for now. The status of this 6th foundation doesn’t matter for anything I say here. If there are moral modules, then the correct number could be Mencius’s number four or the social intuitionists’ number five or six, or fewer or more.
only a matter of the initial modular settings percolating up through the soil of some antecedent natural and social environment? Or, are there other sources of morality than just the modules and the local soil? For example, might there not be some non-modular general-purpose abilities that also come with human minds and that affect second nature “from above” – Reason, for example, what they are now calling “System Two” in cognitive science, for example? How does the modular system engage the world when a situation activates several modules at once? Imagine, one feels called upon to be compassionate and just at the same time; or called upon to be fair to two people one of whom is a member of an out-group, and who, independently of that, one finds disgusting, and the other who is an in-group member who one finds personally attractive. Or, make it an out-group member who one finds dynamic, charismatic, and compelling, and the in-group member who one finds sloppy, boorish, and repellent. How does a purely modular system broker such situations? Does the module that is most powerfully activated rule? How, if the system is modular at the bottom, if moral personality is built on a modular substrate, does the experience of unified moral personality emerge? Is it a user illusion?

Some of these are questions about cognitive architecture and have implications for debates about self-knowledge, about making inferences from the way moral experience seems 1st personally to how it really is 3rd personally, deep-down-inside, as we say. Consider the taste system, since Haidt (2012) has taken recently to using it as a metaphor for MFT. There
are five kinds of taste buds that detect sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami. Taste is unified in the sense that we grasp a taste all at once, by the mouthful, as it were. Flavors can sometimes be individuated as when we taste the sauce as sweet and sour or as savory and sweet. There was no way of knowing from the phenomenology of taste, even with the familiar phenomenon of flavor detection – that the entire system is, in fact, subserved by dedicated taste buds. Discovering the taste bud system required 3rd personal investigation; it cannot be ascertained introspectively. There are numerous possible sensory architectures, including non-modular ones that might have produced the phenomenology of taste. Introspection is indecisive about the nature of the taste system.

So it is with the architecture of human moral psychology. The “moral flavors” of life have spread and interpenetrate, and do not reliably occur with such phenomenal distinctness – a sense datum of compassion here, a sense datum of justice there – that they secure the case for or against moral modularity. The fact that we might as moral agents experience dispositions to justice, compassion, and animosity all-at-once, towards a stranger with odd habits, as part of a phenomenological unity, is not decisive as evidence that the felt unity is due to unity at bottom, or is the result of a merger of modular outputs, or whether the system is a unity at bottom with the distinctions in phenomenological texture imposed from “on high,’ by a cognitive faculty designed or trained to draw the distinctions we think are sensory or perceptual, but in fact are not. These are empirical questions.
A key normative question is: How do we tell when the outcome, or better, some set of outcomes of the initial settings of the modules, assuming there are any, mixed with all the contingency produces what we want and are correct in wanting? How do we tell whether some configuration or some set of configurations, but presumably not all configurations of second nature, are good, worthy, what we ought to want? How do we tell when a genealogy of morals has not just produced a morality – that is guaranteed – but a good one, a morality that is ethical, an ethical morality, a truly good way of living, of being human?

Here is a reason for concern: Unlike Mencius’s sprout view, MFT, assumes a thoroughgoing adaptationist picture. The initial settings of the modules are presumed to have been “selected for” because they enhanced fitness (Sober, 1984). That is, they were selected for because of ties they had to the fitness of ancestral species and early hominids. Homo sapiens in their modern form emerge 200,000 years ago. But only in the last 10,000 years (since the domestication of animals and invention of agriculture) did people start to live in groups bigger than 150, to develop markets between tribes, and capitalistic exchanges that bring unrelated people into regular relations with each other. The sprouts selected to do the work of what we call “morality” were selected for their contribution to fitness largely in ancestral species and in environments entirely unlike modern ones. Furthermore, as I’ve been insisting, even if we assume that fitness is necessary for flourishing, goodness, and rightness (in the weak sense that you need to exist,
to survive, in order to enact or realize these things), it is not sufficient. Fitness reasons have to do with maximizing genetic profit – with getting more copies of my genes or the genes of my people into the future gene pool than those of others. Flourishing reasons (Flanagan, 2007) have to do broadly with the quality of lives with such things as decency, education, literacy, happiness, and social support. Goodness and rightness reasons are considerations about what advances the flourishing of all, the virtues, and the recognition of equal worth, rights, and dignity. There is nothing metaphysically weird about such reasons.

Consider again the disgust sprout. Disgust is designed to be triggered by such things as excrement, rancid food, disease, and incest. As an adaptation, disgust has little to do initially with morality, or with interpersonal commerce beyond disgust for incest. The fact that we can and do easily extend it to people who sometimes carry bad odors, germs, etc. or to people with (other) unseemly sexual preferences may not itself be a biological adaptation, but simply an easy extension of one. The same goes for extending warm fuzzy 2A6 feelings to cartoon figures with large heads and big eyes, to panda and puppies. The compassion system can easily do that, but it does not contribute to either fitness or, possibly, to morality (assuming we are already respectful of the life of all sentient beings). One reply here for the proponent of MFT is to claim that the relevant basic reactive attitude for the purity/sanctity foundation is contempt, not disgust. This move has potential since the Ekman contempt face is very close to the disgust face
involving only a slight difference in one corner of the mouth, but unlike disgust, contempt is a response to people who are morally slimy. As for extending compassion and any other initial setting beyond its initial fitness enhancing scope, it makes sense to require different kinds of reasons, reasons that pertain to other goods than fitness. For example, the fact that it is easy to extend compassion to pandas and puppies because they have the look of a human baby is a cause of extending compassion, not a reason for extending compassion. A reason would be that they are sentient beings, feel pain, have social lives, and as such, have interests that deserve protection and promotion.

Evolutionary biologists and psychologists distinguish among adaptations that were selected for and various kinds of exaptations, spandrels, and free riders. A heart that pumps and oxygenates the body is an adaptation. The sound it makes while pumping is a free rider; it comes automatically with a muscle that expands and contracts in a cavity to send blood throughout the body. Using the heart rate in medical diagnostics is adaptive in the sense that it is good for us, but not an adaptation in the sense that there are genes for it, that it is hereditable, etc. We discovered that listening to heart rate tells us something about heart health, but Mother Nature did not make heart sounds so that we could do that. Likewise, even if Mother Nature set us for adaptive reasons to form strong bonds with in-group members and even if that trait can easily be extended to distrust, even to despise, out-group members, does not mean that it
was selected to do that. Nor, more importantly, does it mean that it is smart or good to do so.

**DIVERSITY, RELATIVISM, AND PLURALISM**

These points explain why and how MFT makes room for moral diversity, namely, the initial fitness-enhancing settings of the sprouts, modules, or foundations radically underdetermine the shape, extent, strength, and scope that the realized full-grown forms of them can and do take across human ecologies. It would be a mistake however to take the fact that first nature, now conceived along modular and adaptationist lines entails that there are no rational things to say favoring some extended phenotypes over others. I have offered the Reasons for Extensions Requirement as a constraint.

Whereas MFT is best understood as congenial to relativist and pluralist genealogies and perhaps also to a related normative relativism and pluralism, to the view that it is fine, acceptable, possibly good that different moral communities grow the sprouts in their own ways, Mencian modularity, MMM, expresses a kind of confidence that there is one way to grow the sprouts properly. That is, whereas MFT says that there are different ways to grow the sprouts in human nature, and that there may be no good reasons to prefer one way of tuning them, and thus no reasons for preferring one way of achieving second human nature over another, Mencius is plausibly read as
thinking that the sprouts have a natural teleology, a proper function, which is to yield Confucian junzi. 35

35 Some say that it is only since Darwin (1859), that we are positioned to understand our given species nature, to understand what humans are like deep-down-inside beneath the clothes-of-culture, as it were. This is hogwash. At any rate, the “for the first time” part is hogwash. Without underestimating the resources that evolutionary biology, genetics, and even neuroscience now provide us to embed and enhance our understanding of given or first human nature, there is great wisdom in classical philosophy, history, and anthropology. The reason is principled and itself embedded in the Darwinian view. Whatever human first nature is, assuming there is such a thing, it involves species level phenotypic characteristics. It involves observable traits. Neither Darwin nor Wallace, joint discovers of the principle of natural selection, had a clue as to what the mechanism of selection and hereditary was other than that it was small, involved reproduction, and was likely similar to the process of seeding in agriculture or animal husbandry. It follows straightforwardly that smart people from time immemorial who were looking to answer the first nature question might have non-accidently hit upon wisdom, might have correctly surmised some of its main features. And also that wise observers of the human condition might have made keen and correct surmises about human psychology, specifically about moral psychology, its initial settings, its co-evolution with the environment in various ecologies; and also, that there is wisdom about how to create, release, discover, moderate, modify, enhance and sometimes eradicate features of our first nature to realize a good, worthy, etc., second nature. What Darwin and Wallace added – and it is of monumental importance – is a genealogical background theory. First nature is a gift of natural selection over a 14 billion year journey from the Big Bang through deep time to unicellular organisms that evolved on earth 4 billion years ago, until now (skipping over a lot).
There are two issues that now need to be addressed: First, is MFT Mencian in substance, in content, in terms of what the five modules are set to do and why they are set to do that, in terms of what their function is or what their functions are? Second, are the MFT modules Mencian insofar as it is desirable, i.e., normatively, to grow all of them, to develop all of them, as it is, for example, to grow and develop all four limbs? To answer these questions it will be helpful to line up the two sets of sprouts or foundations, the classical Mencian ones and those offered by contemporary Moral Foundations Theory.

Table 3: Mencian Sprouts & Modern Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mencian Sprouts</th>
<th>Modern Modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion → Benevolence (Ren)</td>
<td>Harm-Care → α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame/Disgust → Righteousness (Yi)</td>
<td>Purity-Sanctity → β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deference → Propriety/Respect (Li)</td>
<td>Authority-Hierarchy → γ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval-Disapproval → Wisdom (Zhi)</td>
<td>Fairness-Reciprocity → δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingroup-Loyalty → ε</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note Table 3: Mencius has a natural teleology so his sprouts are depicted as yielding the four cardinal Confucian virtues. Contemporary modularity assumes that the foundations are worked on to yield virtues, moral norms, moral beliefs, and so on. But these second nature outcomes are marked by Greek characters to indicate that their ideal forms are underdetermined, that is, they are not specified by, or in first nature, nor is there universal cultural agreement about their correct form. It is an interesting question whether there is more agreement about their incorrect forms. I think so.
Assuming that moral modules (spouts in Mencius), pick out a small set of universal phenotypic traits that are adaptations\(^{\text{historical}}\) and that serve in their extended forms as a basis for morality, one might expect the Mencian modules (= sprouts) list and the MFT list to be the same. The reason is that smart people can see adaptations without knowing anything about the Darwinian theory that explains what an adaptation is, how one works, and so on. But, the lists differ and not just because Mencius has only four, not five, sprouts as MFT does. It also appears that Mencius does not have a sprout for justice/fairness. This, of course, doesn’t mean that Mencius doesn’t recognize some such moral competence or universal feature of moral life (but showing that he does or doesn’t would require deep textual exegesis, which I do not engage in here). Also the assumption that Mencius is looking for universal traits that are adaptations in the biological sense is probably wrong and not only because it is anachronistic; he seems to be looking for universal traits or capacities that are productive of what contributes to flourishing, or what is different, what is good or right. But, even then, one might think that justice as fairness should be highlighted since it plays such an important role in both fitness, on the one side, and flourishing, goodness, and rightness, on the other side. But it is not marked off and treated much or very directly in classical Chinese philosophy.\(^{36}\) But

\(^{36}\) This lacuna is nowadays a hot topic in political theory in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and even to a certain extent in China, in work on Confucianism and rights and Confu-
if there is a justice/fairness sprout in human nature, as there is among capuchins or canines (Brosnan and de Waal, 2006), but it shows up neither as a sprout nor a virtue, we are owed an explanation as to why it wasn't seen in the 4th c. BCE by Mencius. Perhaps, we can find “justice as fairness” in Mencian righteousness (yi). If so, then yi, now understood to include justice as fairness, would be certified as an important virtue, but it would be understood as having different roots in Mencian moral psychology than it has in MFT. The reason is that in Mencius the virtue of yi is rooted in the sprout of purity/shame, a sprout that for MFT is a whole different deal – it supports not judgments of fairness but judgments about whether marrying first cousins or being an atheist makes one dirty or yucky.37 Furthermore, although MMM has a

37 Bryan Van Norden (2008, p. xxxii) writes: “Righteousness (yi) is the integrity of a person who disdains to demean herself by doing what is base or shameful, even if doing so would reap benefits. So, for example, a righteous person would not accept a gift given with contempt (6A10), beg in order to obtain luxuries (4B33), or cheat at a game (3B1). As with benevolence, the capacity for righteousness is innate, but its growth is first stimulated in the family, where respect for the opinions of one’s elders is internalized as the ethical sense of shame.” It is worth noticing that the examples Mencius gives in these passages are not easily read as expressions of a Strawson-module, as, for example, compassion in 2A6 is. A toddler will eat a cookie even if it is given in great annoyance or exasperation, a well formed adult will not. Somewhere along the way from being an infant to being an adult we acquire...
hierarchy module in “deference,” the sprout for elder and ritual propriety (li), which maps nicely onto the authority/respect/hierarchy module of MFT, there is no sprout in Mencius that maps onto the in-group/out-group module of MFT. Then, again, one could make a plausible (but not decisive) argument to the effect that the Chinese tradition makes much ado about filial piety (xiao), which is a paradigm case of an in-group virtue – that starts with one’s parents, grandparents, older siblings and which then generalizes to others inside one’s village, district, and culture. This, if true, might lay the basis for an complex norms governing righteousness, yi. Similarly, there is no innate disposition to express deference or propriety by, say, bowing, over kneeling over hand-shaking. The specifics of rites must be learned, which is why such rules often stymie outsiders who are trying hard to pick up local customs of proper, decorous, courteous behavior. All this said, one might worry that we are down to only one bona fide sprout in Mencius, only one Strawson-module, the sprout in 2A6, that does the mother lode of work in specifying by its first nature, its own second nature form. This is a good, sensible worry to have. The rest of the moral equipment that is said to consist of sprouts or to be sprout-like start to look like very general, complex abilities and orientations, beginnings, perhaps, but beginnings that radically under-specify their own final form. That, their final form, now being largely left up to particularities of distinctive moral communities.

38 Charles Goodman writes (personal correspondence): “Mencius very clearly reasons in accordance with in-group/out-group although he has no special sprout for it.” See 3A5: “Does Yi Tzu truly believe ... that a man loves his brother’s son no more than his neighbor’s new-born babe?” See also 4B29: “Now if a fellow-lodger is involved in a fight, it is right
argument to the effect that the in-group/out-group module is a subspecies of authority/respect/hierarchy, or vice versa.

**ZHI, PHRONESIS, REASON, SYSTEM TWO & DLPPC**

Finally, when the two lists of modules, MMM and MFT, are lined up as in Table 3, Mencian “wisdom,” zhi, stands out as a loner and the reason is informative, speaks in favor of one feature of MMM over MFT, and reveals a weakness in any modules “all the way-up and down” view. Mencian wisdom (zhi) appears to be a meta-skill, largely cognitive, akin to Aristotelian phronesis, practical wisdom, which involves the abilities to read complex situations, other people’s character, to skillfully coordinate means and ends, to apply a doctrine of the mean between excess and defect (familiar from both classical Greek and classical Chinese philosophy), and so on (Van Norden, 2007, p. 123). Wisdom (zhi) as a mature virtue does not have the properties of being fast acting, or automatic, and it is not seen in newborns (Kim, 2010). But one can see the extraordinary usefulness of zhi. A standard difficulty for virtue theories is to break ties. What should I do when I am called upon to be compassionate and just at the same time or when my powerful desire to ostracize the slimy scum bag (purity) conflicts with my impulse to be compassion-

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for you to rush to his aid with your hair hanging down and your cap untied. But it would be misguided to do so if it were only a fellow-villager. There is nothing wrong with bolting your door.”
ate? Which is trump? It is not clear how modules solve such problems among themselves except by sheer strength. Imagine the order of trump just went from left to right according to the order the modules are introduced by MMM or MFT, which we might, for sake of argument, reflects the temporal order they evolved in. So, all else equal, the output of the older trumps in case of ties, or whichever module reaches the highest intensity on a 1-10 scale trumps, where the intensity would be determined by the initial settings, culture, or some combination.

A practical, general reasoning ability (zhi) could help here, especially if it held a rationally worked out as opposed to evolutionarily worked-out trump rule to the effect that if/when there is conflict between, say, the purity and compassion modules, the latter (or former) is trump; or, when there is conflict, the system looked away from the modules altogether to some higher standard, to God’s law, to principles like the categorical imperative or the principle of utility, or to reason or to the wisdom of the ages.

Indeed, a close reading of Mencius indicates that he, in fact, endorses such trump rules. For Mencius, benevolence (ren) and righteousness (yi) are the two most important virtues, more important than propriety (li) (Van Norden 2007, 273). How does Mencius

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39 Van Norden (2007, p. 352) suggests that the four Mencian sprouts govern four parts of life, where e.g. propriety (li) would not even match MTF’s hierarchy/respect since it is all about beauty. Benevolence, ren, would be the only good match with MFT compassion.
gain this ranking hierarchy? The best answer is that the hierarchy among his modules, now three modules, if zhi is removed from the list of modules and promoted to another psychological category, is discovered or seen by wisdom (zhi). It is not simply that ren and yi trump li because that is the way the system is built or designed – so that you will be caused by the force of the strongest module to save your drowning sister-in-law even though this requires improper touching (4A17), or to tell grandpa that you intend to marry who you choose despite the fact that your fiancé is not one of us. Rather it is that you can do these things because they are reasonable, rational. In these cases, benevolence and right provide stronger reasons than decorousness or propriety. And if this is right, then the whole Mencian analogy of the four sprouts with the four limbs starts to come undone, or at least shows the limits of its usefulness.

There is a reply to my objection (due to P. J. Ivanhoe) that Mencian zhi is akin to reason, which is not modular. The reply reminds us that the issue of modularity is in the first instance about the sprouts, not about their mature form. According to Mencius, zhi is the mature form of an ability that begins in an innate tendency to respond with approval or disapproval to simple cases of good or bad character (sharers and non-sharers) or action (giving or withholding cookies). Very young children and perhaps other animals respond in these kinds of ways: approving – Yes! Yes! Smile, or disapproving – No! No! Scowl – of certain people and behaviors. It is this sprout that yield zhi in its mature form, where zhi has become a flexible and
far-ranging ability that allows sophisticated evaluation and judgment of character and types of action. But zhi begins as an Strawsonian-disposition or as a cluster of mini S-dispositions. So the modular basis of virtue is still a contender.

This objection is very helpful and it does protect the most general version of the moral modularity thesis, which says that some set of modules form the basis of all moralities. But it undermines the modules all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down view, since it pictures the sprout that yields zhi not simply as expanding in content and scope but also as yielding eventually a higher order capacity that is no longer remotely modular in form.

We might imagine that among modular views there are now three contending pictures: 1. Modules all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down; 2. Modules at bottom (System One) in interaction with Reason (System Two); 3. Modules (System One) that yield Reason (System Two), which then interact and take on all the usual relations of governed and governor including the familiar ones where what-ought-to-be governed gains control and we succumb, as we say, to temptation, weakness of the will, imprudence and the like. One advantage of accepting the picture that conceives mature zhi as emerging from the sprout of disapproval and disapproval is that it explains why Chinese zhi is not understood as dispassionate. Zhi is passionate reason. It is always reason with feeling, or feeling-reason.

In either case, if wisdom (zhi) is a System Two meta-skill, a heavily cognitive competence or set of
skills for cultivating, including self-cultivating the original seeds, and utilizing the core cardinal virtues, and if benevolence and righteousness trump propriety in importance, then the simple analogy with growing and coordinating all four limbs starts to break down, unless, that is, some limbs are to be stronger (or longer) than others and one limb (wisdom) is less like a limb than like the mind. Wisdom on the meta-skill view is more like motor cortex or even DLPFC (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) or System Two, which controls the limbs (via motor areas) than like one of the limbs (now three), or like the charioteer’s relation to his chariot and his two steeds in Plato’s famous analogy, or to the horseback rider in a favored Korean neo-Confucian analogy, or to the elephant rider in an analogy deployed by advocates of MFT (Haidt 2012).40

If one attraction of the Mencian sprout view is that it seems to maintain a smooth relation between “is” and “ought,” between description and normativity, then in fact, upon reflection, it doesn’t do this. What we ought to do, how we ought to weight the outputs of the modules, is not determined by the modules themselves, at least not in any straightforward, certainly not in any ballistic way. If another attraction of MMM is that it anticipates the modern modularity view, MFT, then in fact in doesn’t quite do that either. There is not a match between the list of philosophy’s first great moral modularist and its 21st cen-

40 It is worth mentioning that well-trained elephants are very well behaved and reliable.
tury mate – between MMM and MFT. Mencius is certainly not a “modules-all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down” theorist, because he sees that a general purpose meta-skill, namely wisdom, zhi, emerges and exerts cognitive control over both first order dispositions and virtues when these compete and whatever the number and nature of these might be. This is an important insight about the need for and role of non-modular elements for successfully negotiating the socio-moral domain in most actual worlds. The upshot is that upon close scrutiny Mencius does not succeed – in fact he never tries – in describing moral competence as fully modular, nor does a credible moral analogue of the normative four-limb analogy emerge. But this it seems is a normative advantage because Mencius’s model, when zhi, or something like zhi, (phronesis) is put in the driver’s seat, is able to describe a capacity that we seem, at least sometimes, to actually deploy in real socio-moral life.

Putting aside the special problem due to the non-modular aspects (non-limb like aspects) of Mencian wisdom (zhi), one way of explaining the lack of fit between the two lists, or possibly of explaining it away, especially given how perfectly Mencian’s sprouts, now interpreted as such, yield exactly the four Confucian cardinal virtues is this way: Mencius was noticing the sprouts that his culture valued, idealized, and amplified, but not all the sprouts available for valuing or amplification. The downside to interpreting Mencius this way is that one might be tempted to say that he makes no contribution to normative ethics generally – if there be such a thing – but only to ancient
Chinese cultural anthropology or ancient Chinese moral psychology. The same could then be said of Aristotle. What Aristotle depicts as first nature is not all there is in human nature deep-down-inside-beneath-the-clothes-of-culture that can be cultivated, but mainly the equipment that is most relevant to cultivating excellent Greek men, just, courageous, witty, friendly, wise, philanthropic men. This suggests the possibility that if there are seeds or sprouts or beginnings or modules in human nature and they are comparable to limbs, then they are comparable to the limbs of a creature that either has many limbs only some of which are chosen to do work, or alternatively that has no determinate number of limbs, but some range that constitutes normalcy. Imagine that an octopus, now a “plocotypus,” can have anywhere from four to twelve limbs depending on the local ecology. The right number is determined relationally in

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41 At 6A7 Mencius suggests that agreement about the four cardinal Confucian virtues is similar to agreement about what foods are delicious, what is beautiful, and so on. The trouble is that we modern folk do not believe that there is universal agreement about excellence in food, wine, music, art, and physical beauty even among experts.

42 The “plocotypus” is a useful imaginary invention in Flanagan and Williams (2010). But it is intended to express a common idea in population genetics about environmental sensitivity of innate stuff. Richard Lewontin (19xx), for example, has studied many genotypic traits that are extremely sensitive to their environments for their phenotypic expression. So, even if a certain fruit fly genome reliably selects for a certain number of belly hairs at 72 degrees F, the number of belly hairs can be dramatically different at other temperatures, even nearby
terms of what number of limbs is best suited to the environment or, what is different, what number the environment happens to serendipitously select. The idea is that first nature may be extremely plastic itself, at its own level, so that there might not – assuming there are modules – be any specific number of them until they are put into a complex set of environments (embryonic, geographic, socio-moral, economic, etc.) or, what is different, what modules we think there are (or find useful) and assign to first nature may be interest-relative pragmatic constructs rather than objectively real special purpose modules or anatomically or functionally canalized dispositions.  

A similar problem arises when considering MFT’s modules as both descriptive and normative, as containing information about both what the innate moral dispositions are and what the extended com-

43 Graham, Haidt, et al (2013) emphasize the “pragmatic validity” of MFT. This can be read as expressing an instrumentalist view of the modules rather that a conviction that they are psychological “reals.” Consider the continents: How many are there really? Seven or five? Fivers join the Americas and Europe and Asia (Eurasia). How big does a land mass have to be to count as a continent rather than an island? Why Australia but not Madagascar? Remember when Pluto was a planet? Who decides such matters?
petence is supposed to be. Recent work indicates that the morality of American Liberals rests primarily on considerations of harm and fairness (modules 1 & 2), whereas the morality of American Conservatives rests on considerations corresponding to all five modules (Haidt and Graham, 2007; Haidt 2012). Cultures, or as in these cases, subcultures inside a culture, nation-state, or small community, “can specialize in a subset of human moral potential” (Haidt 2001, 827). According to MFT, divergent conceptions of the appropriate boundary conditions (domains) of the modules or divergent relative priority among the modules, or over- or under-development of the modules would each deliver us divergent moralities, which are nonetheless built from the same suite of modules. So what is the right way to grow and or tune the modules? If the answer is not in the modules where – if anywhere –is it?

DELIUSIONS OF RATIONAL JUSTIFICATION AND CONTROL

So far I have explained an advantage that Mencius’s view, MMM has over contemporary MFT, namely, it explicitly acknowledges the existence of a non-modular cognitive system as part of the ordinary architecture of the moral mind. Zhi, for the curious, is similar to what Aristotle calls phronesis, although perhaps it has more OOMPH since Chinese philosophy does not separate reason and emotion the way some Western traditions do. It is not entirely clear that MFT is, or is committed to, the thesis that
the moral architecture is modules all-the-way-up-and-down, but if it is, this is a weakness. Jonathan Haidt (2001; 2012) commonly expresses skepticism about reason’s role, especially its power over the outputs of the modules, sometimes claiming that it is a “rationalist’s delusion” that reason plays much of a role in guiding morality and resolving moral issues. On one widely accepted reading of his view in “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail” (2001), rational moral discourse is epiphenomenal post-facto rationalization. In his recent work (2012), there are two roles that reason plays: (1). A strategic or instrumental role in rationalizing and framing actions, norms, or policies in order to “win friends and influence people.” Haidt calls the view about the role and power of reason “Glaconian; but he should call it “Thrasymachean” since Glaucon, Plato’s brother, describes the view in the Republic without endorsing it, whereas Thrasymachus, himself a sophist, endorses it; (2). To guide the unwieldy elephant as the elephant driver does. I take it that an elephant is chosen rather than a Greek or Chinese chariot in order to indicate that what is controlled is much more powerful than the driver (although, once again I can say having ridden several Asian elephants, that they are very accommodating, docile creatures, if well trained). The view that Haidt rejects is that reason normally plays the role of offering good justifying reasons and that moral self-control, self-cultivation, and socio-moral policy is exercised on the basis of such reasons. Sometimes he seems skeptical that it can in principle play such justifying and con-
trolling roles. The elephant is not obedient because it gets the driver’s reasons but because it succumbs to the driver’s power, treats, and training. Haidt calls the belief in that kind of role for reason “the rationalist’s delusion.” This may be true about the elephant, but it is beside the point. The driver has his reasons, which he can justify (he gets paid if the elephant rides the passengers successfully) and he demands that the elephant respond to them. It is no different than when decide to go to the movies and go.

But, as I said earlier, we must separate the components of Haidt’s own program from what MFT as a communal research program says, implies, entails, or requires. My own view or preference is to read MTF as a theory about the (or some) sources or roots or sprouts of morality, but not as a theory about the whole of moral psychology. What proponents of

44 He writes: “worship of reason is ...one of the most long-lived delusions in Western history...The rationalist delusion...is not just a claim about human nature. It’s also a claim that the rational caste (philosophers and scientists) should have more power, and it usually comes with a utopian programs for raising more rational children” (p.88). And then: Reason “evolved not to help us find truth but to help us engage in arguments, persuasion, and manipulation in the context of discussions with other people” (2012, 89). The fact that reason might have evolved to play a role other than truth-tracking does not in anyway entail that it cannot do or that it does not do so now. Compare: the pattern recognition abilities that allow us to do higher mathematics did not evolve to do mathematics. The ability to prove theorems comes for free on top of capacities that were designed for other reasons. This is probably true and does not entail that we now do higher mathematics and prove theorems in it.
MFT have proposed so far is that there is a modular system in first nature, and that it explains a fair amount about the structure of moralities across the earth. The beginnings are cultivated in the multifarious ways that yield all the moralities that exist. But MFT theorists have not dedicated themselves to studying the role or the efficacy of reason in the allegedly delusional sense (Haidt’s famous 2001 is a one-off that does show that there are cases in which reason looks like mere rationalization and even worse like post-facto confabulation about why we judge a tricky moral dilemma as we do). If they think that the modules do most or all of the work in determining the fine-grained texture of individual moral personality, feeling and behavior, there would need to be evidence that the proponents of MFT simply do not have. Meanwhile, thousand of years of philosophy across traditions, thousands of years of testimony of individuals who do not do what is wrong even though they are powerfully tempted, as well as nascent but compelling work in cognitive neuroscience (Greene, 2013) that tests the alleged delusion of rational justification and control, yields a different picture. Reason can, and does, sometimes play the role that philosophers say it does. This clears space for saying it would be better still if it played more of a role in both justification and control.

So it is a weakness of MFT, or at least of Haidt’s version of MFT, that it underrates reason. Denying reason’s role in justification and control dramatically overreaches as a descriptive psychological claim relative to the evidence. It is a claim for which MFT has
no interesting evidence, nor that its proponents have even tried to test in any large scale or systematic way. Those who have studied this matter in a systematic and large scale way claim that there are two systems, System One and Systems Two, the so-called dual processing model, and that they interact in complex ways. The view in its modern form is said to originate with William James (1890) – although I think it is a perennial view – and is all the rage in contemporary cognitive science (Kahneman 2011). Thus it is an empty, unwarranted, but possibly dangerous rhetorical conceit, to claim that we shouldn’t try to use reason in the way philosophers recommend because we can’t. The dialectical situation is such that the burden of proof for advocates of the view that reason’s fans are deluded is on them to show that reasons don’t play a justificatory or controlling role, and that that they can’t.45

MULTIPLE TELEOLOGIES

There is one clear advantage that MFT has over Men-cian moral modularity, namely, that it makes better sense of the multiple options for building second nature out of the original sprouts in virtue of being

45 In conversation – in was in a hotel bar, so there is deniability (I think Allan Gibbard and Jeannette Kennett and Michael Lynch were part of this conversation too) – Haidt said that he thinks there might be a small band of people, a little tribe of philosophers who have reason that works the way they say it can, to justify and control! But that this cognitive design is very rare, hard to build, etc.
less confident that they wear their telos or ergon on the label that comes with the sprouts they are. MFT also acknowledges, more clearly than the Mencian view, the fragility of the sprouts and the tendencies they have to support vice, as well as virtue.

This latter point is important and needs emphasizing. The sprouts or modules that subserve morality are set in Mencius, or perhaps, it is better to say, are understood by Mencius, to produce exactly the virtues that the Confucian form of life aims at. This is the ergon, the proper function, and the telos, the goal, of the Mencian sprouts. In good environments the sprouts realize their destiny and comprise the virtues of a junzi, a Ru gentleperson. This seems, with several thousand years of experience of moral diversity and the ever-present abundance of ill-formed, even bad people, under our belts, too good to be true.46

MTF is a better model for seeing that and how the sprouts of morality, whether conceived along Mencian lines or in contemporary terms, radically underdetermine mature moral psychology. Indeed, the sprouts of MTF permit what we know to be actual and not merely possible: that people, subcultures and

46 Some neo-Confucians list five cardinal Confucian virtues, adding xin 信, which means something like integrity or trustworthiness or faithfulness, or perhaps, wholehearted dedication. Zhu Xi (1130-1200) embraced the five-fold scheme of benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness or wholehearted dedication but stressed ren “benevolence” as the preeminent and unifying virtue. The thought being that one will express all the other virtues properly if and only if one maintains benevolence or is benevolent.
cultures, can differ in terms of how much any sprout is developed, what it is extended to cover, how much it is favored or disfavored, and so on. Furthermore, the sprouts are fragile in the sense that they contain within themselves potential to be exploited excessively or deficiently, where I simply mean that the over- or under-growth of any sprout has what are called “vices” associated with it (see Haidt and Joseph, 2007, Table 1 above).

**SEEDS AND WEEDS**

Many traditions and many views including ones that never explicitly entertain modular architectures, acknowledge the existence of what Buddhists call the “poisons” in human nature. Alongside whatever pro-social, altruistic, good tendencies in human nature are anti-social, egotistic, bad tendencies. In Buddhism, the three poisons are 1. ungrounded fantasies, illusions, and delusions that I will get what I wish for and that I deserve it (moha); 2. Avaricious, greedy, rapacious, thirsty desires for all sorts of stuff I think I really need (lobha); and 3. hatred, anger, and resentment (dosa) when I do not get what I want, when others stand in my way. But like Mencius’s four good sprouts, these sprouts come with our natures, as a sort of Buddhist original sin (Flanagan 2011; Ivanhoe 2015). There are not only good seeds in our nature, but bad seeds as well, kudzu, which, if given the chance, will grow unconstrained and suck the life out of the good sprouts. Call any view that is like this a “seeds and weeds” view. How do we distin-
guish between the good seeds and sprouts and the bad ones, the weeds? Weeds, after all, are just plants that for multifarious reasons we don’t like or want in the garden. Are the bad ones always bad?

Confucius distinguishes “petty impatience” from principled anger, and in the Analects, he sometimes loses his temper with his students for good reason and with good effect. And Buddhists think that anger, even violence, can be warranted as part of a quiver filled with “skillful means.” The point is that when we do a clear-eyed, normatively neutral inventory of human first nature, we will see not only Mencian sprouts with a noble teleology, but various tendencies, especially emotional ones that are equally natural but normatively more suspect or worrisome. This complicates the work of the moral psychologist in providing a complete inventory of first nature. It also complicates the work of the moral community and the moral self-cultivator to grow what is good and weed or suppress what is not good, as well as to explain why and how some gifts of Mother Nature, which presumably arose as biological adaptations, and which are thus fitness-enhancing, are not conducive to flourishing or goodness, not conducive at all or not conducive in certain forms. On every place on earth, and every time, there have been debates and disagreements about what Allan Gibbard (1990) calls “wise choices and apt feelings,” about the norms governing behavior, what to choose and do, how to be, and about the norms governing emotional feelings, emotional expression, and the regulation of the economy of human desire and action. It is not
only between moral communities that there are disagreements about apt feelings, but often, at least in modern times inside them: I say you are rude; you say you are honest and direct. I say you are immodest; you say you appreciate beauty, and that you are simply not uptight or a prude.

**Concluding Thoughts**

It is time to draw this essay and the Aquinas lecture itself to a close. Where are we? I mean this question addressed to “we,” not simply out of politeness, but really, as an invitation. I invite you to reflect on the relevance of what I have said to your own thinking and for your own concerns. For myself, I’ll say this much.

*Anscombe’s Charge.* Thanks to work at the intersection of ethics and the human sciences, there has been progress in developing more psychologically and anthropologically robust and realistic moral psychological models. We should, in fact, call some of the models on offer “bio-psycho-social” models. We have a more robust and adequate philosophical anthropology than we did when Anscombe expressed her lament over a half century ago, one that includes abundant evidence that the possibility space for human psychology and development is vast and that much of it, most of it perhaps, is still untapped. We do not begin life as socio-moral tabula rasa. Our species nature and common problems across space and time constrain what is good, right, and what conduces to flourishing without determining what is good, right,
and what conduces to flourishing. Excellent work on human first nature from across the disciplines is filling out the picture of both the good sprouts and the bad sprouts, the angels and devils in our natures, as well as the sometimes-surprising zones of fragility and strength. In some cases, as in the case of revisiting great thinkers like Confucius and Mencius, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, it is a matter of revisiting and reminding ourselves of what is already known, embedded, and worked-out in our own traditions. Modern universities speak of themselves as places where new knowledge is produced. But we ought not forget that there is also wisdom that deserves reproducing.

**Merit and Promise of Sprout Views.** What about the status of sprout or modular theories? There are some strengths and some weaknesses. On the positive side, there is some merit in establishing an analytic vocabulary for the basic psychological disposition-situation pairs that are activated across worlds in very similar ways, and which are then cultivated, enhanced, modified, and weeded, in somewhat different, often surprising ways across moralities. But there is a variety of dubious claims about there being only good seeds, as opposed to seeds and weeds, and also about interpenetration, autonomy, and completeness of the modular architecture.

Regarding, Mencian modularity: if there are sprouts in our natures, they are definitely not all good. I am agnostic about whether, say, the Buddhist poisons or Christian original sin gets the poisons right or describes the relevant tendency or tendencies
better. There may be distinctive kinds of poisons –
distinctive settings for food lust and sex lust – that
disrupt social relations or it may just be the general
tendency to selfishness that does so. But there are
some such tendencies.

Regarding interpenetration, autonomy, and com-
pleteness here is a generous scorecard: If there are
modules, then they really are like taste buds, a favored
analogy among moral foundation theorists recently.
A taste, even for a baby, is a unified experience: the
taste of mother’s milk. even absent the vocabulary
for tastes, is both sweet and salty. Because drinking
mother’s milk involves tactility as well as taste it,
the liquid, has an experienced texture, the texture of
milk. Even in a newborn, the experience of the flavor
and the taste is what-it-is, molar, holistic, unified,
with a certain phenomenological structure or texture,
which is detectable but blended. The elements, sweet,
salty, milky-texture, interpenetrate. The experience is
the joint production of a modular taste bud system,
a (probably) modular tactile-kinesthetic system that
unifies and “binds” the output of the modules. Moral
experience seems like this. Indeed, as experience it
is like this. Modular outputs, if there are any, inter-
penetrate and yield their autonomy and isolation
in experience from the get-go. This much militates
against any extreme modules all-the-way-up and all-
the-way-down view.

Reason’s Role. The strongest reason to oppose a
view that insists that the system is modules all-the-
way-up and all-the-way-down is that we consistently
reveal, across many domains of life, that we are ratio-
nal beings, a special kind of animal who has long ago embraced new kinds of reasons beyond reasons of fitness — reasons of flourishing, reasons of goodness, and reasons of rightness. No one who has familiarized himself with the wisdom of thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi was in need of 20th or 21st c. cognitive science discovering that we have in us these two capacities, System One, fast, intuitive, and powerful, and System Two, slow, deliberate, and often hard to get into the driver’s seat, where the latter house zhi, phronesis, or reason.

A modules “all-the-way-up and all-the-way-down” view lacks resources to explain the possibility of what we know is actual, namely that we do sometimes show strength of will and reason our way to justify and enact moral or political policies that go against System One, our quick, intuitive reaction system (Bloom 2013; Greene 2013). Classical philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and Confucius and Mencius were right to emphasize the actual and normative role of reason, phronesis, or zhi, call it what you will. Of course, one might hear smart aleck cognitive neuroscientists saying that speaking of reason is a philosopher’s antiquarian affectation, and commits what Antonia Damasio (1994) calls “Descartes’ error,” advocating the “abyssal separation” of mind and body. The straightforward response is that speaking of reason doesn’t imply, entail, or in any other way, align oneself with a dualism of mind and body, or any other form of non-naturalism. It is simply a useful way of marking off in common parlance a capacity or set of capacities that we humans have. Classical Chi-
inese philosophy especially, cannot be a target for the “abyssal separation” charge since reason, zhi, is emotional, originating in a system that feels powerfully about what it approves and disapproves of, what it likes and dislikes. It is passionate reason.

We are creatures who live in spaces of reasons, as well as spaces of causes. Ethicists, as well as scientists, are in the business of giving justifying reasons for their views all the time. For the ethicist: Why is it good to be honest? Why ought I care about the well being of others? For the scientist: How does this evidence support this hypothesis? Why should I trust this statistical measure rather than that one? Why care about understanding nature? When we ask these types of questions, we are not asking the ethicist or the scientist to tell us merely what causes the relevant belief or explains the overall commitment, but to explain what makes it rational to hold the belief or to have the commitment.

So, I read the evidence for sprout or modular views of morality as mixed. What seems fairly clear is that there are in first nature a variety of dispositions that are implicated in what we call morality. How exactly to describe and individuate these dispositions is tricky. One way is to attempt to isolate Strawsonian-modules, which are individuated/defined/characterized in terms of a well-defined, concrete, and limited set of prototypical triggers (seeing the child falling into the well) of basic affect-cognition-conation triplets (alarm, compassion, and impulse to save) at the lowest morally relevant level. This is what moral foundations theory (MFT) does, and perhaps what
Mencius does as well. What I mean by the ‘lowest morally relevant level’ is the level at which some tendency worth cultivating, where cultivation is initially ambiguous among grow, moderate, modify, suppress, etc., is judged to occur in something like a moral or proto-moral guise, for example, disgust at incest which is moralized, but not disgust at sour milk, which is not moralized.

**Alternative Models.** One result of this inquiry is to open up the possibility of other ways to conceptualize first nature than in terms of modules. Two additional, but not incompatible models, are visible now. The “Domains of Life” approach” and the “Basic Equipment” approach. A *domains of life* approach involves thinking of the development of first nature into second nature as involving bringing a distinctive cultural form of life to a set of domains that are universally moralized or moralized “around here,” by us. The focus is on domains in the world rather than on equipment inside persons (Nussbaum, 1988).

A *basic equipment* approach starts with the observation that it is persons-in-community (ies) who are transformed in a variety of holistic and interpenetrative ways as they develop into skilled, smart, gifted, and decent folks, and the equipment that yields such souls is whatever it is – modules, blank spaces, exotic thinking abilities – that the communities that work to develop whole human beings work with.

Briefly, one sees the *domains of life* approach across philosophical traditions, as well as in sociology and anthropology. Pretty much every moral philosopher recognizes family and citizenship as zones of moral-
ity; and also that such events as birth, sexual coming of age, reproduction, and rituals for burying and remembering the dead are marked as significant and embedded in webs of socio-moral normativity. If one starts with domains of life then one will focus on how to develop the beliefs, norms and dispositions that will yield the virtues, apt feelings, wise choices, good rules and principles, and correct behavior for each domain. There will be dispositions, such as respectful attention, for example, that will be required of each domain and thus across domains, and some that will be domain specific – joy at birth, grief at death, and so on.

A basic equipment model says that what you start with is whatever there is in first nature, and that whatever you end up with in second nature is the emergent product of whatever all the dispositional resources of first nature can yield when mixed with the forces of the environment, history and culture. What is the basic equipment? It consists in all the basic biological dispositions plus some, possibly large, number of reactive attitudes that one sees in the taxonomies of classical Chinese, Stoic, modern Korean neo-Confucian, and Buddhist philosophies, as well as Darwin’s and Ekman’s basic emotions, and Strawson’s reactive attitudes.47 The basic equipment

47 An ongoing discussion that roils neo-Confucianism in East Asia, especially Korea, is the relation between the four sprouts depicted by Mencius and the seven emotions discussed in other classical texts. The four sprouts are good, but the seven emotions of happiness, anger, grief, fear, joy, liking,
strategy makes things more unwieldy that either a modular approach or a domains approach, but it will claim for itself greater ecological validity. We, the socializers of the youth, the keepers and purveyors of communal moral standards, really do in self-cultivation, in the moral education of the young, and in setting and modeling the norms of our shared form(s) of life, deal with creatures who just are, at the bottom most level, critters with an enormous number of massively interactive dispositions and equipment. And there is no aspect of human life or mind, not sensation, not perception, not doing philosophy or painting, accounting or taxi-driving that falls entirely outside the zones of normativity, entirely outside the bandwidth of judgment in terms of the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Of course, one could, without inconsistency, recommend the merits of each approach and of operating with all three models for now, going forward, seeing which one, or which hybrid view is most explanatory and predictive. I hereby do so.

Natural Teleology. Finally, none of these three models tells us directly what most philosophers want to know about. What is the best way for second nature to be? What is the right way for human moral personality, for character to develop or to create excellent human beings? Each descriptive-genealogical model will yield a causal explanation – or more likely, a causal-explanation sketch – of how second disliking, and desire also seem to come with the equipment and seem to be a mixed bag normatively.
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nature develops from whatever first nature there is. But, if it is any good, it will do this equally well for King Herod, Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot and for Mary, mother of Jesus, St. Teresa of Avila, Joan of Arc, Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela. This is not due to a weakness in these theories as descriptive-genealogical theories; it is a feature of descriptive-genealogical theories. The lack of normative determinacy, meanwhile, is a feature of the human condition. To speak in a Sellarsian idiom, first nature is insufficient to yield second nature both causally and rationally or normatively.

One thing seems clear: there is no longer any warrant in the first part of the 21st c. to believe (if there ever was) that simply bringing people into the world and providing sun and water yields morally good people. Even in decent physical and socio-moral ecologies, first nature radically underdetermines second nature, by which I simply mean that there are – or in cases where the life form is extinct, were – communities of good Stoics, Epicureans, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Confucians, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, pantheists, pagans, secular liberal humanists, communists, atheists, and so on. And if you doubt this because, for example, you disapprove as a Jain of Abrahamic folk eating animal flesh, make them vegetarians; or if as an egalitarian you disapprove of many of these as actual historical examples of decent people because they are or were sexist, patriarchal, or warmongering make them not so. Or, if you think that communists always trample individual rights, imagine them as not like this, think of them as having learned from past
mistakes and now as master moral educators of a form of compassionate egalitarianism, not as repressors, oppressors or totalitarian utopians. I claim that even if you imagine each life form as improved along the dimensions you think it needs improvement on, it can remain distinctive as the moral form of life it is. For example, the ideal Buddhists, as you imagine them, will still rate the virtue of compassion higher than liberal secular humanists do; and the Buddhists and Confucians, on one side, and the Christians on the other, will have different ways of answering the question, “why be moral?,” while agreeing across a wide class of cases about what it takes to be a moral person.

That said, this radical underdetermination of second nature by first nature is not, according to the views I have been examining, complete underdetermination. There are reasons that can be offered for why some ways of developing youngsters into certain kinds of people are good. Some reasons are impersonal – everyone needs to learn to share, to be honest. The way to see the cup as half full rather than half empty is not to focus only on the zones of life, the spaces of meaning, where people differ and disagree, but on the parts that contains the vast agreements about what virtue and vice are, how good people feel, think, and act, and so on. Natural teleology is not a live view if it is taken to mean that first nature knows where it should head, and that in addition that all it needs to achieve itself is free and open space. We are gregarious mammals, and persons develop only in communal spaces with dynamic life forms already
in place. The development of first nature takes place inside a socio-moral community that carries a history, often a tradition, adding in all the multifarious contingencies that the natural environment offers up. In this sense, natural teleologies are all there are, but there are a large range of decent, possibly good outcomes, not just one (Wong 2006). But just as there are good and bad ways to grow plants and crops, including some that just don’t work at all, there are some techniques and outcomes to avoid, and some sensible, generally reliable standards for developing excellences in our charges.

OK, now, for real, I stop. Thank you for your attention and for thinking through with me some of these matters, not of life and death, but of something more important: of good human lives, of having good effects, and leaving good traces.
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