

EUGENICS, THE GIRARDIAN THEORY OF SACRIFICE, AND THE NEW DARWINIAN ETHICS

THOMAS RYBA*

Abstract: In this paper I argue that, though many ethical systems recognize sacrifice as moral action, the utilitarian appropriation of Neo-Darwinian theory especially as it justifies eugenics as a “winnowing of the human stock” is in Girardian terms analogous to the sacrificial scapegoating of innocents. This argument is accomplished in four steps. (1) I show that within some ethical systems sacrifice is recognized as moral behavior driven by a specific axiology (or theory of value) (2) I discuss some of the meta-ethical problems connected with Neo-Darwinian naturalism and naturalism, in general. (3) I show how modern varieties of naturalism and Darwinian naturalism, in particular are especially inclined to lead to a moral justification of eugenic scapegoating and how Girardian theory is helpful in identifying the moral disorder connected with eugenics. (4) Finally, I conclude by arguing that Darwin’s thought is susceptible to another kind of interpretation, one that need not lead to the valorization of eugenics.

Keywords: Girardian theory of scapegoating, Neo-Darwinianism, Neo-Darwinian ethics, Naturalism in ethics, eugenics, G.E. Moore, John Searle, Rene Girard, P.T. Geach, Michel Foucault.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 21st century, some philosophers and biologists have begun to reassess the relevance of Neo-Darwinian thought for ethics in a way that mimics their 19th century ancestors. What they have proposed is a new naturalist ethics based upon competition and natural selection. The pedigree for the philosophical assumptions that are foundational for this kind of ethical thinking stretches back at least as far as John Hobbes and forms a line of descent including David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus and Charles Darwin. Earlier theoreticians and ideologues of both left and right and as diverse as Karl Marx, Fredrick

*Thomas Ryba is Ph.D. Professor, Notre Dame Theologian in Residence, “St. Thomas Aquinas” Center at Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA. E-mail: ryba@purdue.edu

Engels, H. G. Wells and Adolf Hitler all advocated programs of eugenics and justified them according to a utilitarian interpretation of Darwinian theory. In similar fashion, left and right wing thinkers in the 20th and early 21st century thinkers such as Robert Nozick, Peter Singer, Lee Silver, *et al.* and have begun to re-appropriate Darwinian theory as a justification for eugenics (Singer 2000a, 2000b, Singer & Wells 1985; Nozick 2001, 1974).

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ESSAY

It is my purpose in this paper to argue that though many ethical systems recognize sacrifice as moral action, the *utilitarian* appropriation of Darwinian theory especially as it justifies eugenics as a “winnowing of the human stock” is analogous to the sacrificial scapegoating of innocents. I hope to accomplish this argument in the following steps. After showing that within some ethical systems sacrifice is recognized as moral behavior driven by a specific axiology (or theory of value), I will discuss some of the meta-ethical problems connected with Neo-Darwinian naturalism and naturalism, in general. Next, I will show how modern varieties of naturalism and Darwinian naturalism, in particular are especially inclined to lead to a moral justification of eugenic scapegoating and how Girardian theory is helpful in identifying the moral disorder connected with eugenics. Finally, I will conclude by arguing that Darwin’s thought is susceptible to another kind of interpretation, one that need not lead to the valorization of eugenics. In other words, I will conclude by arguing that Darwinian evolutionary theory may be read in ways that do not lead to sacrificial scapegoating.

SACRIFICE AS MORAL ACTION

According to its common meaning, and according to the broadest meaning of the word, sacrifice is the giving up or offering up of something or someone for some purpose or end. In most ethical systems, sacrifice has been valorized, especially inasmuch as it has been connected with the growth of virtue. In Stoic ethics, for example, the sacrifice of goods or pleasure is productive of the highest virtue of *apatheia* or detachment from pleasure; in Christian ethics is connected with selflessness and directly counteracts the effects of jealousy, envy, and covetousness. For Christians, sacrifice is preeminently a mark of an understanding of charity whose dual referents are God and neighbor. Sacrifice, thus construed as a variety of moral action, is

ethically unproblematic, especially when the “sacrificial victim” offers him/herself with free volition, intending a positive aretological effect and/or external effect and as long as the nature of the sacrifice is not pathologically destructive of his/her physical being.

When, however, the victim is unwilling to be sacrificed and/or coerced by another and the expectation is that s/he will be forced to endure a sacrifice that is destructive of his/her physical existence, or when the victim is pathologically bent upon his/her physical immolation, then sacrifice is generally viewed as morally problematic.

In either case, sacrifice is a kind of action to which value may be connected. It constitutes a kind of action whose morality or immorality may be judged. As a kind of moral action, it can be evaluated according to the general criteria that characterize ethical systems under which it nests.

THE FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF ETHICAL SYSTEMS AS APPLYING TO SACRIFICE

Ethical systems can be analyzed on the basis of five questions: (1) What is Goodness for the system? (2) What is the purpose of moral action in the system? (3) Is the goodness or evil of an action intrinsic or extrinsic (or both) according to the system? (4) Is the intentionality of action relevant to its determination as good or evil in the system? (5) Are the consequences of action relevant to its determination as good or evil? All five features are relevant to the question “How is moral action good?”

With a little reframing of these features, it is possible to analyze sacrifice, accordingly. Since sacrifice is a kind of moral action, whatever applies to the whole class of moral actions should apply to sacrifice. Thus reframed, four of these features become queries about the moral nature of sacrifice. These are: (1’) What is the moral purpose of sacrifice? (2’) Is the goodness of sacrifice intrinsic or extrinsic? (3’) Is the intention of the sacrificial act relevant to its determination as good or evil? (4’) Are the consequences of sacrifice relevant to its determination as good or evil? The first feature of ethical systems the way they characterize the nature of the good has great relevance to the evaluation of sacrifice. Especially as it is fundamental to the kind of ethical system in which sacrifice finds itself, it establishes the definitive meaning of the nouns “the Good” or “goodness” and the adjective “good” as these are related to sacrificial action.

Thus, for each ethical system in which it is possible to characterize sacrifice according to these five features, there are various ways in which sacrifice is evaluated according to the purpose of moral action and there are a variety of theoretical strategies by which it is possible to characterize sacrifice as good or as evil. Typically, four broad approaches can be counted answering to the purpose of moral action: hedonistic, utilitarian, deontological and aretological approaches. With some plausibility, it is possible to argue I think that according to purpose, two of the three ethical systems (the hedonistic and the aretological) are (for the most part) reducible to the utilitarian approach so long as the specifics of their axiologies or theories of value are kept distinct. In other words, there is a utilitarian aspect to three of the possible forms of ethics, the only exception being deontology. In the case of hedonism, the good is that which is useful for obtaining pleasure, pleasure being the ultimate good; for aretology, the good is that which is useful for obtaining virtue *and* perfecting human nature, virtue being the precondition to union with God, union with God being the ultimate good; and for utilitarianism proper, good instrumentalities are whatever enables one to achieve any final or proximate good variously defined as profitability, the greatest good for the greatest number, etc.

In contrast, deontology makes moral action *sui generis*. Categorically unique, it is to be done because it is rationally, intuitively and/or religiously compelling. Since the time of Kant, deontological ethics have been classified according to whether they are compelled based on heteronomous qualities and/or authorities, whether they are based on autonomous qualities and/or authorities, or whether they are based on a combination of both autonomous and heteronomous qualities and/or authorities. Relevant to the purpose of moral action there are two broad divisions of ethics, that of deontology and that of utility (both divisions being construed in the broadest possible sense).

On the other hand, the purpose that characterizes each of these ethical varieties can take a series of possible theories of value. These strategies are sometimes referred to as theories of Goodness, or theories of the Good, or axiologies (or theories of value). For the purpose of this presentation I will use the less familiar neologism 'agathology' (from 'agathon' Greek for the good) to describe. Here, the broadest categories of axiology or agathology are two: naturalist and non-naturalist. The naturalist approach to value or the Good is one that says that *what is* provides the best guide to *what ought to be done*,

while the non-naturalist approach proceeds from the assumption that *what is* cannot be a guide to *what ought to be*. It is possible to relate the taxonomy of ethical purposes together with the taxonomy of axiologies to make the following generalization: Historically, non-naturalist ethics tend to be *a priori*, deontological and intuitionist while naturalist ethics tend to be *a posteriori*, utilitarian, and cognitivist.

When eugenics has been proposed as a means by which to improve or perfect the human stock, it has most often been proposed as such within an ethical frame that was naturalist. However, naturalist ethics come in many flavors and, because of this, is a highly contested concept. Although it would be true to say that almost all programs of eugenics have been proposed within some variety of ethical naturalism it would be mistaken to reverse the implication and suggest that naturalism generally entails such programs.

META-ETHICAL CRITICISMS OF ETHICAL NATURALISM AND CONTRARY ARGUMENTS

The earliest critic of naturalist ethics was David Hume, who in his *Treatise on Human Nature*, suggested that to argue from facts to values was an invalid form of reasoning, although it did not retrain his followers from employing this very form of reasoning when they discovered facts that they believed made this admissible.¹ In John

¹ Two hypotheses about the relation between nature and the ought have been proposed in classical ethical theory. The deontological principle suggests that the relationship between a command and nature is that between the ought and the can. In logical terms “One ought to do something implies that one can do that thing and that thing is valued” or $(x,y) [O(x,y) \supset [\diamond D(x,y) \bullet V(y, +)]]$. This suggests that all commands are dependent upon possibility as a natural feature of one’s situation, or as a feature of human nature, or as an expansion of human nature supplemented by grace. Conversely, if something cannot be done, then it cannot be commanded $[[\sim \diamond D(x,y) \bullet V(y, +)] \supset \sim O(x,y)]$ or if it is not positively valued it cannot be commanded $[[\diamond D(x,y) \bullet \sim V(y, +)] \supset \sim O(x,y)]$.

A second principle is sometimes called the naturalistic principle attempts to derive the command from what is. It says, in effect, that what *ought to be done* is best modeled on what *is* done or on the nature of things. Here, the attempt is to derive the ought from what is. Here the order between the two terms is reversed, thus $\diamond D(x,y)$ and y has some positive value then $O(x,y)$, y ought to be done, in other words $\diamond D(x,y) \bullet V(y, +) \supset O(x,y)$. Coupling the logical descriptions of the first principle and second principles together, it is possible to reformulate the naturalist assertion as $[O(x,y) \equiv [\diamond D(x,y) \bullet V(y, +)]]$. Here, the notion of a positive value is determinative of the logic of the command but it leaves unclear whether valuation is based on objective properties of the thing or whether it is rooted in human subjectivity. Also,

Searle's more incisive formulation, Hume's proscription means four things: (1) "there is a class of statements of fact which is logically distinct from statements of value"; (2) no set of statements of fact by themselves entails any statement of value"; (3) *therefore*, "no set of descriptive statements can entail an evaluative statement without the addition of at least one evaluative premise"; and (4) "to believe otherwise is to commit what has been called the naturalist fallacy." (Searle 1964/1967, 101)

Against Hume's argument, John Searle has been able to show that the derivation of an evaluative statement from statements of fact is indeed possible via a second set of descriptive statements different from descriptions of brute fact, a set of statements that applies to institutions that constitute them. (Searle 1964/1967, 111) Institutional facts are governed by constitutional rules without which they would be impossible; constitutional rules establish the very institution that they regulate because "constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) forms of activity whose existence is logically dependent on the rules." (Searle 1964/1967, 112) As an example of such rules an example which also functions as a tautological description Searle produces the following example: "All promises are (create, are understandings of, are acceptances of) obligations *and* one ought to keep (fulfill) one's obligations." (Searle 1964/1967, 108) Constitutive rules are those that make the social reality possible and define it as the kind of thing it is. Here, Searle seems to understand constitutional rules as applying only within invented social structures, but there would not seem to be a good reason to thus confine them. It should be possible to define a class of such rules which are also metaphysically constitutive, a set of

excluded is the question of whether what ought to be done is defined in conformity with one's own nature, also excluding what that nature might possibly become. This latter oversight introduces a question as to what one's nature *is* which tantamount to a metaphysical question. The question becomes irrelevant if one believes—as some maintain—that human nature is pure potentiality. Pure potentiality undermines the naturalist approach because there is no conceivable way to use the past to evaluate the future. Pure plasticity provides no better reason to do something than to avoid it. Finally, it is clear that whatever naturalism is, it cannot be based on an evaluation that suggests everything that human nature currently is provides the basis for action. Obviously, human nature must possess some imperfections and these cannot command a course of action consistent with them, which would also be moral.

If, however, one assumes that human nature is relatively stable though not perfect, then one can reformulate the naturalistic principle as $[(HN_x \supset \diamond D(x,y)) \bullet V(y,+)] \equiv O(x,y) \vee [(HN_x \supset \diamond D(x,y)) \bullet V(y,-)] \equiv \sim O(x,y)$.

such rules based in description of what it means to be human but obliging performance as constitutive of that very humanity. I would argue that this is precisely how moral theology or religious ethics functions in many faith traditions. Within the Roman Catholic tradition moral precepts, obeyed, form the reality (humanity) that they describe and to which they are related; in the Jewish tradition commandments and covenant function in much the same way.

In his *Principia Ethica* (1903), G. E. Moore mounted a two-front attack upon empiricist and metaphysical naturalistic ethics by strengthening the Humean thesis. Moore's attack on empiricist naturalism was specifically directed against social Darwinism (though it also undermined the morality of the implicit Eugenics) that had exercised significant influence in the latter quarter of the 19th century. It was also directed against what he terms "metaphysical ethics" which is also subject to the naturalist fallacy without empiricist pretensions. For Moore, the empiricist version of the naturalist fallacy (in its simplest form) implies that when we think 'This is good,' what we are thinking is that the thing in question bears a definite relation to some one other thing [the Good]. But this one thing, by which the good is defined, may be either what I may call a natural object something of which the existence is admittedly an object of experience or else it may be an object which is only inferred to exist in a supersensible world. (Moore 1903/1988, 25.38-39)

Although the logical form of Moore's argument has been much disputed, it is clear that he argues two things against all varieties of naturalism: (1) that the possibility of deriving a value statement from a factual statement is impossible (as per the strong interpretation of the Humean thesis mentioned above) and (2) that the good is simple, single, irreducible and indefinable.²

² Louis Pojman (EDRW, 141-142) attempts to provide the logical form for Moore's general argument, but casts it as an example of an erotetic argument without sufficient explanation. However, Pojman's argument can be cast in standard logical form as follows:

<u>Logical argument:</u>	<u>Interpretation:</u>
<p>(1) A complete definition of goodness is one that can be made <i>wholly</i> in terms of another property.</p> <p>(2) A synthetic definition (empirically) adds information to the notion to be defined.</p> <p>(3) $x \text{ is Good} = \text{df } x \text{ is } A \bullet \text{NP}(A)$</p> <p>(4) #3 is an example of #2.</p> <p>(5) $x \text{ is Good} \supset [x \text{ is } A \bullet \text{NP}(A)]$</p> <p>(6) $\sim[x \text{ is } A \bullet \text{NP}(A)] \supset \sim[x \text{ is Good}]$</p> <p>(7) $x \text{ is Good} \equiv x \text{ is Good}$</p> <p>(8) $x \text{ is Good} \equiv [x \text{ is } A \bullet \text{NP}(A)]$</p> <p>(9) #5 \neq #8</p> <p>(10) $\therefore [\#2 \bullet \#5] \supset \sim[\#1 \bullet \#7] \vee [\#1 \bullet \#7] \supset \sim[\#2 \bullet \#5]$</p> <p>(11) $\neg \#1 \bullet \#7$</p> <p>(12) $\therefore \sim[\#2 \bullet \#5]$</p>	<p>(1) A complete definition of goodness is one that can be made <i>wholly</i> in terms of another property. (Common assumption of Moore and the naturalists.)</p> <p>(2) A synthetic definition (empirically) adds information to the notion to be defined.</p> <p>(3) The definition of the Good is a synthetic definition asserting that x is the Good when x is A (adapted) and the property A (adaptability) is NP (a natural property).</p> <p>(4) Formula #3 is a synthetic definition.</p> <p>(5) If x is Good then x is A (adapted) and to be A (adaptability) means to be a natural predicate. [From the notion of synthetic definition.]</p> <p>(6) X is A (adapted) and to be A (adapted) is a natural predicate is a necessary condition for x's being Good [but not a sufficient condition].</p> <p>(7) X is Good if and only if x is Good. [#1 by instantiation, identity; tautology]</p> <p>(8) X is Good if and only if x is A (adapted) and A is a natural property.</p> <p>(9) Lines #5 and # 8 contradict one another.</p> <p>(10) Therefore, either #2 is true and # 1 & #7 are not or #1 & #7 is true and #2 is not.</p> <p>(11) But #1 and #7</p> <p>(12) Therefore, not #2 and #5.</p>

The above argument is decisive only for the Spenserian social Darwinist interpretation of naturalist ethics because this ethics is inconsistent in its reduction of the Good to adaptability. Because Moore has not provided a general argument against all possible forms of naturalism, some varieties are left untouched.

The problem with empirical or metaphysical theories of the good, according to Moore, is that they define the good, multiply its genera or parts, reduce it to something that it manifestly is not and/or derive assertions about it from factual statements. Against naturalism Moore sets himself as anti-naturalist and intuitionist.

Foundational to Moore's critique of social Darwinism is his specification of the ethical variety under which it is best classified: "Those theories of Ethics ... are [empirically] 'naturalistic' which declare the sole good to consist in some one property of things, which exists [has existed or will exist] in time; and which do so because they suppose that 'good' itself can be defined by reference to such a property." (Moore 1903/1988, 27.41)

Moore proceeds on the basis of this argument to refute social Darwinism of the Spenserian variety by showing at least six things: (1) that Spenser (and social Darwinians) transfer an inadmissible value to the strictly scientific category of the adapted (or more evolved) a transvaluation not allowed by Darwin's scientific theory; (2) that this transvaluation introduces an implicit reference to a good end and the organism's fulfillment of a purpose adapted to that end, an end which social Darwinists like Spenser merely allude to, without saying explicitly what it is; (3) that Spenser equivocates between adaptability and pleasure as rival conceptions of ultimate value; (4) that pleasure is no more demonstrably connected with adaptability than is pain; (5) that Spenser is at a loss in demonstrating his thesis that there has been an empirically verifiable increase in net pleasure; (6) and that the evolutionary increase in pleasure is proof of adaptation and not devolution.

Given the refutation of the Spenserian evolutionary ethics, Moore thinks a more general critique of evolutionary ethics is possible. Evolutionary ethics are to be generally rejected when they commands us "to move in the direction of evolution simply *because* it is the direction of evolution." (Moore 1903/1988, 35.56) Unless we are prepared to say that the total set of all natural processes are good, we cannot valorize evolution because it is a part of the natural whole and if we take evolution as one process among others, then the only avenue to valorizing it against other processes means to already possess a criterion of the good. Finally, it is not at all clear that all the outcomes produced by evolution are in themselves good. Short of a Gumpian definition of evolution that says "goodness is as evolution does"

which, if accepted, brings us full circle a criterion independent of the evolutionary process is required to evaluate its outcomes.³

Moore's critique of metaphysical ethics a set of systems he connects with the Stoics, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel is different from his critique of what he called "naturalist ethics" and what I term "empirical naturalist ethics," anticipating a distinction I intend to make shortly. (Moore 1903/1988, 66.110) Metaphysical ethics *do not* suppose the Good to be reducible to some one property of the spatio-temporal world, but hold that it is possible to "use some *metaphysical* proposition as a ground for inferring some fundamental proposition of Ethics" so that "ethical truths follow logically from metaphysical truths" and "Ethics should be based on *Metaphysics*." (Ibid.) "[T]he result is that they all describe the Supreme Good in *metaphysical* terms." (Ibid.) One should be clear that, here, Moore uses the word 'metaphysical' in opposition to the word 'natural' and thus bifurcates the order of things in a way that naively follows materialist (and dualist) assumptions about what these each designate. (Moore 1903/1988, 66.112) It would be equally acceptable, however, to formulate a naturalist ethics, not according to a preconceived dualism of the physical and the metaphysical that is between nature and supernature but according to a view which makes all existing beings natural, because they possess natures or sets of characteristic features and powers. Thus, it would be possible to speak of a metaphysical, naturalist ethics. But this Moore, does not assume; his critique of metaphysical ethics turns in another direction.

Moore's critique of metaphysical ethics begins with an appreciation that metaphysical ethics, at least, recognizes that more than what is sensorially available in the spatio-temporal world is required for acquaintance with perfect goodness. (Moore 1903/1988, 68.115) Moreover, he admits that a supersensible reality may have a direct bearing upon practical ethics, if that supersensible reality could

³ A "Gumpian" definition is one typified by the recursive, trite, though sometimes allusive, speech patterns of Winston Groom's fictional creation, Forrest Gump. Forrest Gump is an especially useful example for illustrating the relationship between virtue and intelligence. In my moral theology classes, I enjoy arguing that Forrest Gump is a type of the Aristotelian virtuous actor, an actor in which goodness is not necessarily proportionate to genius. This—to my mind—is one of Aristotle's most important realizations, one that has had important consequences for Christian ethics and spirituality. It is also one that is often forgotten by the "fallen angels" of the academic establishment.

explain the consequences our present life and moral behavior might have for the next. (Ibid.) On the other hand, he observes that most philosophical approaches to metaphysical ethics are not interested in this bearing. (They may even mock it.) And insofar as they maintain that the metaphysical Good is *real* and *to be real* means to have a nature of some sort, they are guilty of the naturalist fallacy. (Moore 1903/1988, 67.113-114) By making the Good entirely metaphysical the one true reality they dissolve the ability to realize good, here and now and deny the intrinsic goodness of all things including human action in the physical world. (Moore 1903/1988, 68.116) To allow that there are intrinsically good things or actions in this world is to relinquish the unique metaphysical character of the Good and to multiply its kinds. (Moore 1903/1988, 68.116-117) This is something entailed by experience and human moral action but avoided by the purists among the advocates of metaphysical ethics. And, again, to resort to an explanation of the Good which makes it reducible to a metaphysical property is to make this procedure vulnerable to a refutation of the kind that Moore mounted against naturalist ethics because it is either to create a synthetic definition in which case it cannot be the necessary ground for an ethics or simply to assert a tautology of the form that the good is the good, virtue is virtue, etc. (Moore 1903/1988, 72.122-123).

When metaphysical ethicists examine the proposition “This is good” they sometimes interpret this as equivalent to “This is willed in a certain way.” In claiming this, they subject themselves to a variation of the preceding argument. Either they recursively reintroduce the predicate good into a definition of the kind of willing it is or they create a synthetic definition which is insufficient and subject to his anti-naturalist refutation. Moreover, the object of an act of willing and the act of willing, itself, are two different things (Moore 1903/1988, 85.141). And many things are called good without their being willed one way or another (Moore 1903/1988, 83.137). Even if it could be maintained that all good things were such by being-willed-in-a-certain-way, there would arise the question whether their goodness was the cause of their being willed and if so then their being willed would not address what their goodness was but would demand a further explication which would differentiate them. Finally, if the metaphysical ethicist were to reduce the Good with what-is-willed-in-a-certain-way, s/he would be, in effect, asserting that the question “What is the Good?” and the question “Why do we will x in a certain

way?” are the same question, which they are clearly not (Moore 1903/1988, 84.138).

Thus expressed, Moore’s critique stood as the strongest support for a non-naturalist ethics until P. T. Geach, in 1956, provided a refutation of one of its central tenets. In his article, “Good and Evil,” Geach distinguished between the attributive and predicative meanings of adjectives in order to challenge Moore’s thesis that the Good must be simple and singular (Geach 1956/1967). Attributive adjectives are adjectives that signify qualities that are not separable from objects by splitting their predication, but are more directly relative to what the object is; whereas predicative adjectives are adjectives signifying qualities that are splittable. The adjectives ‘big,’ ‘forged,’ and ‘bad’ as in “That is a *big* flea,” “That is a *forged* check,” and “That is a *bad* man” are attributive adjectives because we cannot split the predication and logically say: that *x* is a flea and that *x* is big, that *y* is a check and that *y* is forged and that *z* is a man and that *z* is bad.

Predicative adjectives such as ‘red,’ ‘shiny’ and ‘stinky’ as in “That is a *red* apple,” “That *shiny* penny,” “Those are *stinky* feet” are predicative adjectives because they allow us to split the predication and logically say: that *x* is a book and that *x* is red, that *y* is a penny and that *y* is shiny and those *zs* are feet and those *zs* are stinky. Though they may not be existentially separable from substances, they are logically cognizable as such and can be conceptualized as such.

According to Geach, the important features of attributive qualities are: (1) that they require something substantive to be attached to in order to exist, (2) that they are (usually) bound to that something as a modification of its function (3) that this close relationship between function and substance means that there is no single, simple unequivocal meaning of goodness or evil but (4) this does not mean that attributive adjectives are only subjective. For Geach, goodness and badness are not free floating or existentially prescindable qualities. Goodness and badness signify the state of some substance say, human such that it is inadmissible to say that whatever is true about being a human is also true about being a bad human or about being a good human, or that the word ‘good’ in the sentence “Ann is a good human,” the word ‘good’ in the sentence “Cooper is a good dog” or the word ‘good’ in the sentence “That horse has passed good urine,” do not share a univocal meaning, nor do they refer to a prescindable, simple, singular quality which can exist separately from these substances. ‘Good’ designates a different set of functional attributes in

each case though the difference in the constellation of attributes in each case does not preclude the *objective* judgment that they are good in their own ways and that it is possible to know them as such.

In persuasively arguing these points Geach contributed both to the rehabilitation of naturalist ethics by linking goodness and evil so directly to substance or nature and to rehabilitation of naturalist ethics, which in the last twenty years have again achieved respectability.

POSITIVE META-ETHICAL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT NATURALISM AND ANTI-NATURALISM

Before proceeding to discuss some of the pitfalls of contemporary Darwinian naturalism in ethics, now would be a good time to summarize some of the conclusions it is possible to draw on the basis of the preceding discussions.

First, there is no decisive general argument that is conclusive in demonstrating the impossibility of deriving an ought from an is. Some naturalists of the empiricist or metaphysical variety have proposed unconvincing ways of doing this, but more often than not, the difficulty lies not in the project, itself, but in faulty approaches to the idea of nature, the good, moral action, moral intention, and so on.

Second, and especially germane to the first point, is the question of what constitutes the nature from which the ought is to be derived. One of the difficulties with naturalist ethics has to do with how one choose to define the idea of nature upon which one is to base one's naturalism. Although naturalism is generally associated with a specific idea of natural possibility within the world's physical horizon, it need not be. The word nature is charged with an ambiguity that suggests naturalism might be construed in a variety of other ways, as G.E. Moore has suggested. Aside from referring to the merely physical world, there is a more venerable meaning of 'nature' that makes its referents not the merely physical or material as if these were not ideas in process but whatever constitutes the power of anything that is. Here, naturalism takes the wider metaphysical scope of the powers, regular features and structures that make all beings what they are. It possesses a wider horizon that is broad enough to include what has been traditionally termed the supernatural. In this sense, the natural is closer to Geach's (and St. Thomas') understanding of substance. It is clear that any non-naturalist ethics will vary in scope according to the theory of naturalism that it sets itself against. A non-naturalist ethics, which takes nature to have a narrow scope, will find itself definable in a

broader fashion than a non-naturalist ethics that takes a broad meaning of naturalism as its antithesis. The former will find the refutation of naturalism easier than the latter.

Third, if we link Searle's method for deriving the ought from the is with Geach's understanding of attributive adjectives/qualities we have a way for explaining what natural good is. If we grant the existence of Searlean institutional facts as facts that are governed by constitutional rules without which they would be impossible, and, if we further grant that constitutional rules establish the very institution that they regulate because "constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) forms of activity whose existence is logically dependent on the rules," there is nothing to prevent us from expanding the scope of these rules to the natural world. (Searle 1964/1967, 112) If the natural order is viewed as possessing constitutive laws which determine whatever may be, and if we link these constitutive laws to the "edicts" of God as constituting a good order (and not necessarily a right order, then the religious morality founded in commandment and covenant are the constitutional rules governing the natural (that is institutional) order. Whatever is in harmony with the intended order as expressed in the constitutive rules whatever is commandment and covenant is ordered and good and whoever flouts or whatever deviates from these constitutive rules is disordered.

Fourth, the resulting ethics/moral theology will be naturalist and theonomous and will accept complex characterizations of goodness and evil equivalent to the intended functional characteristics of substances. It will reject that mystification of the good construed in Moore's ethics as anti-naturalist simple, single, irreducible and indefinable in favor of one that is naturalist, complex, multiple, functionalist and progressively expandable.

Fifth, the resulting ethics/moral theology will view with appreciation those parts of Moore's critique of social Darwinism and the various programs of Eugenics that depend upon it so long as this critique does not rely on the mystification of the Moorean conception of the good. Accepted are the following criticisms: (a) that social Darwinians are wrong to attach moral value to the strictly scientific category of the adaptation; (b) that this transvaluation introduces an inadmissible teleology understood as the organism's adaptive perfection and a valorized direction to the evolutionary process, as a whole; and (c) insofar as social Darwinians attempt to reduce the

notion of goodness to single properties, univocally defined adaptedness, pleasure, etc. these attempts are to be rejected.

Sixth, it is not necessary to be an anti-naturalist to find social Darwinian approaches to ethics objectionable. It is possible to be a naturalist in the moral theological sense described above and to reject social Darwinism and/or to find that it is an illicit kind of naturalist ethics.

THE GIRARDIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL DARWINIAN EUGENICS

The Girardian theory of sacrifice appropriately ramified provides a needed supplement to naturalist ethics of the metaphysical aretological kind (Girard 2001, 1989, 1987). Inasmuch as the practice of Eugenics has had a public and private application, each application is susceptible to a different analysis springing from Girardian theory. The first feature of ethical systems—the way they characterize the nature of the good—has great relevance to the evaluation of sacrifice. Especially as it is fundamental to the kind of ethical system in which sacrifice finds itself, it establishes the definitive meaning of the nouns “the Good” or “goodness” and the adjective “good” as these are related to sacrificial action.

The public practice of Eugenics has been generally linked to totalitarian regimes. Michel Foucault has described the totalitarian control of the gene pool as the hyper-development of what he terms *biopower* and what Robert Jay Lifton clearly paralleling Foucault’s analysis and terminology calls *biocracy*. (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 243, 243-245, 253-263) “Biopolitics deals with the population ... as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 245) Foucault believes that, in the 19th century, a sea change took place in the conceptualization of state power from the right of life and death the right to kill and let live to the right to make live and let die.⁴ Prior to the 19th century the active power of the state

⁴ Foucault, in the following passage, provides an illuminating explanation of why this sea change took place:

One might say this: It is as though power, which used to have sovereignty as its modality or organizing schema, found itself unable to govern the economic and political body that was undergoing both a demographic explosion and industrialization. So much so that far too many things were escaping the old

could only be exercised negatively, the state did not possess the technical means to improve and sustain life. Beginning in the later part of the 18th century epidemics are virtually mastered and the state begins to develop natalist policies, controlling fertility and infant morbidity. Because of superior organization, technology and control, the 19th century state focused more and more attention on the endemics of populations “the form, nature, extension, duration and intensity of the illnesses prevalent in a population.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 243) The State began to claim expansive “control of the biological.” The final domain of control which the 19th century state attempt to achieve is “control over the relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are a species, insofar as they are a species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, [or] the milieu in which they live.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 245) And the attempt to do so works at the level of greatest generality, to maintain a statistical average, a kind of regularity, homogeneity or homeostasis across the whole of society. (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 246)

Once the state assumes total control of biopower, racism and its accompanying program of eugenics enter the picture because they allow for near absolute control of the population. (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 256) The first see this linkage were the 19th century theoreticians of the planned state, the socialist thinkers. Even so, it emerged not among those socialist states in which the transition from a capitalist to socialist society was viewed as a technical problem in economics but where that transition was viewed as a life and death

mechanism of the power of sovereignty, both at the top and the bottom, both at the level of detail and at the mass level. A first adjustment was made to take care of the details. Discipline has meant adjusting power [250] mechanisms to the individual body by using surveillance and training. That, of course, was the easier and more convenient thing to adjust. That is why it was the first thing to be introduced ... in the restricted framework of institutions such as schools, hospitals, barracks, workshops and so on. And then at the end of the eighteenth century, you have a second adjustment; the mechanisms are adjusted to phenomena of population, to the biological or biosocial processes characteristic of human masses. This adjustment was much more difficult to make because it implied complex systems of coordination and centralization.

See Michel Foucault. (2003 [1975-1976]). *Society Must be Defended*. 249-250. New York: Picador.

struggle between classes or nations. There, it becomes a necessity to justify the murder of the other. Racism fragments personal relations within and between states in order to distinguish the pure, strong, functional or superior from the corrupt, the weak, defective or inferior according to the naturalist logic of “To live, you ought to kill the other,” or “If you let others die, you will live more.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 255) To kill the inferior means that life, in general, will become “healthier and purer.” (Ibid.)

Not scientifically Darwinian, racist ideologies employ the logic that the extirpation of inferior species or race, of the defective other, means the vigor and proliferation of one’s own species. (Ibid.) Racism coupled with biopower forces the option that all biological competition be eliminated; it ultimately justifies state supported murder. To date, Nazi (National *Socialist*) Germany was the regime where biopower reached its most expansive control. “Controlling the random element inherent in biological processes was one of the regime’s immediate objectives” so that control over procreation, heredity, illness, accident were so tightly regulated that the power to kill was valorized and distributed through the whole society. (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 259) Not only the upper echelons of the state possessed this power, but it was granted to different ranks the SS and the SA, for example and even among the general masses as the power to inform against one’s neighbors, to have “them done away with.” (Ibid.) The destruction of other races was only one prong of the Nazi objective, the other prong being the universal exposure of the general population to the threat of death. (Ibid.) “Exposing the entire population to [biological control and the possibility of] universal death was the only way it could truly constitute itself as a superior race and bring about its definitive regeneration once the other races had been either exterminated or enslaved forever.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 260)

At the end of this historical development is the 20th and 21st century statist appropriation and extension of biopower beyond all limits, so that it now becomes possible not only “to manage life, but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive” so that biopower will be “put ... beyond all sovereignty.” (Foucault 1975-1976/2003, 254)

THE GIRARDIAN SUPPLEMENT TO THE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL DARWINIAN EUGENICS

The connection that the Girardian anthropology establishes between mimesis and sacrifice provides a central insight into the nature of aretology and hamartiology, one that is of great benefit for the clarification of the role that these disorderings play in the practice of Eugenics. It can help us to see an analogy between sacrificial scapegoating as it has appeared in religious practice and sacrificial scapegoating as it appears (and has appeared) in the various programs of eugenics that are part and parcel of a social Darwinian ethical naturalism of both the statist and individualist variety.

Totalitarian regimes are regimes of terror in which the control of composite populations and of external threats is accomplished by means of violence. Totalitarian regimes use the promised homogeneity of a genetically or racially uniform population as a means for accomplishing two things: (a) the minimization of mimetic rivalry among members of the in-group and (b) the maximization of difference between the in-group and the external threat. Within such a system, controlled terror has the purpose of making all members equal under the possibility of being scapegoated, especially as this scapegoating is the constant background threat which hovers ready to fall on anyone whose heterogeneity marks them as inferior, impure, unfit, degenerate, and so on, a heterogeneity generally under the control of the in-group member. The biopower exercised in control of subsequent generations is simply a species of this wider violence used to threaten the general population and control the mimetic rivalry that might undermine that control. Members buy into the program of eugenics (a) because it offers an alternative to their own scapegoating, (b) because resistance to it would, itself, constitute a heterogeneity which would make them culpable for scapegoating, (c) because they recognize that it whether explicitly or implicitly, that is, whether from commitment to the racist ideology of the state or out of fear of instigating a mimetic session is an instrument that reduces mimetic rivalry, because their children will be pure, fit, superior, etc., and, finally, (d) because doing so constitutes a species of positive mimesis according to the values of the totalitarian society. Here, the Girardian understanding of mimesis also opens up the hamartiological components of totalitarian biocracy. Although we don't have time in this piece to explore this in detail, it would be possible to give a reading of a series of moral faults (or sins) which derive from the

mimetic and anti-mimetic moments in totalitarian biocracy. The obvious ones are: cowardice, fear and imprudent conformity.

If we further subject totalitarian eugenics to the five-part analysis suggested at the beginning of this paper, we see that the notion of the Good driving it is one which equates the supreme good with the state's will that it survive in the struggle with the other. In the case of the Nazi's, the supreme good was touted as alternatively as the Führer's will, or the state religion of the will equivalent to "an all-encompassing metaphysical principle" amounting to total control over life and death. (Lifton 1986, 16) Thus construed, the state religion of the will is viewed as an equivalent of the naturalist principle of adaptability. To preserve its genotype is the goal of the racist state. Its will do so is equivalent with the highest good and all actions are ordered to serve it. The eugenic exclusion of specific genetic traits, here, has a utilitarian moral purpose of selecting for what diminishes difference and, hence, intra-group rivalry. The particular act of selection whether active killing or active genetic pre-selection or biogenetic engineering is good both intrinsically and extrinsically; the act of selection is equivalent within the totalitarian system to the creation of perfection, a creation that will also have extrinsic benefits, consequences which are indeed figured into its value. The intention of the sacrificial act is productive of the development of virtues that typify the member of the totalitarian society, virtues such as obedience, doing the hard thing, while the value of the victim or germ line sacrificed is negated or weighed against the ultimate good, the fitness of the race. Clearly the totalitarian statist approach to the elimination of undesirable genetic stock whether by program of genocide, controlled breeding or bioengineering is driven by logic similar to that of the Girardian model of scapegoating (Girard 2001, 1989, 1987).

In the last ten years, the potential to control the eugenic features of humans has increased dramatically with techniques such as somatic gene and germ-line therapy.⁵ Although these developments

⁵ *Germ line therapy* is to be distinguished from *somatic gene therapy* in that the former is the genetic alteration of the cells that are found in the ovaries and testes, while the latter is the genetic alteration of the cells of other diseased bodily organs. Germ line therapy affects the genetic inheritance of subsequent generations (not yet born) whereas somatic gene therapy has the more immediate purpose of curing a specific, living individual, a cure (or alteration) that will not be transmitted to subsequent generations. Among the diseases that can possibly be cured by somatic gene therapy are those not linked to polygenic traits such as cystic fibrosis, severe

will certainly influence the eugenic purposes of totalitarian biocracies to come, where they have received most play is in the context of the postmodern free-market societies, where the availability of such genetic technologies is likely to become widespread by the end of this century. In the midst of the play of free-market forces, a new more insidious naturalist fallacy has emerged to challenge ethicists it is, "Whatever is technologically possible is obligated." Barely a day passes that some pundit suggests the improvement of the human race. Some months ago, I myself witnessed a most chilling interview with Lee Silver in which he spoke in glowing terms of parents, who by the end of this century will have the ability to bioengineer their children to be tall, blond, to have high I.Q.s, but also to meld human genetic material with the xeno-genetic material of other species, like cats and dogs, so that they will see without difficulty in the dark and be able to smell the fear on their business associates. All this he described, with supreme confidence, as a *fait accompli*. The advantage, he admitted would go to the rich with the inevitable result being a global civilization consisting of two classes separated by a wide gulf. At the empyrean heights will be the managers the superhumans and subject to their direction will be the rest of humankind, the managed, those too poor to have been adequately engineered.

The moral dilemmas occasioned by eugenic bioengineering are not usually connected to the healing of diseases caused by mono-genic traits as is the case with somatic gene alteration. The elimination of most mono-genic defects is genuinely considered by most ethicists and moral theologians to be *therapy*. Rather, the real dilemmas of bioengineering are connected with three issues: (a) whether we ought to attempt to "improve" creation, (b) who or what authorizes such an improvement and (c) whether we ought to take the risk of improving creation over and against the possible unforeseen disasters possibly resulting from the alteration of polygenic traits.

combined immune deficiency and Down's and Turner's syndromes. In contrast, germ line therapy is the alteration of subsequent genetic inheritance down a lineage in order to eliminate diseases among the heirs or in order to bio-engineer a superior generations. Neither form of bioengineering is a panacea. Only about 2% of human diseases are thus treatable by either method; 98% are a combination of environmental and polygenic factors impossible to disentangle. See: Michael J. Reiss and Roger Straughan (2001). *Improving Nature? The Science and Ethics of Genetic Engineering*, 202-223. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The private practice of eugenics has been made a contemporary reality under the thralldom of freemarket capitalism. This means that the mimetic features of such practices are not state imposed but are controlled with relative autonomy by individuals. Although the instrumentality of totalitarian eugenic practices is preserved in free-market eugenics the values governing selections are variable, though social Darwinian naturalism is the value system guiding some of its theoreticians and practitioners. Likewise, the mimetic relations involved in this form of eugenics follow a different logic which is much more variable. Here, since individual choice is freer the very forms of mimesis that drive consumption (and production) are likelier to be in play. The desire to have what the other desire's means that the killing, active selection and bioengineering of heirs is likely to follow a competitive pattern. Here, the eugenic winnowing, because it is not coercive but accomplished by a relatively free actor, carries with it the illusion that it is not sacrificial scapegoating. There is no clear parallel between the violence directed against the other which is so ubiquitous in the totalitarian biocracy and the free-market selection of heirs. But the lack of a clear parallel is deceptive. The free-market practitioner of eugenics engages in a scapegoating practice which is tantamount to the cutting off of potential lives which apart from the question of the morality of abortion or infanticide is equivalent to actively deselecting germ-lines or more audaciously expressed potential alternative lives.

Apart from the inability to calculate the consequences of such intentional intervention, the de-selection and selection of traits is hardly likely to be benign and disinterested. Most likely, it will follow a mimetic pattern governing the acquisition of commodities. Two forms of mimesis will be particularly in play, the desire *to have* what the other *has* and the desire *to be* what the other *is* will influence the selection of traits. The desire to have (or best) what the other has will be equivalent to the selection and engineering of traits in competition. The desire to be the other will mean that the parents will narcissistically select the traits of their child, making the child what the parents wish to have been, and this so that the parents can live vicariously through their progeny. In this sense, eugenic selection will serve the desires of the individual as inflamed by the competition to have what the other is or to be what the other is. In its very practice, it may increase the mimetic rivalry in society, while at the same time producing homogeneity. Even the radically narcissistic desire to produce an exact duplicate of one's self and, thus, to say "no" to all

otherness—brings genetic novelty to a standstill. It is this height of the commodification of human personhood that calls attention to a question posed by Jürgen Habermas in his recent work, *The Future of Human Nature*. There, he asks whether a person who determined the essence of another person would not be guilty of destroying that equality of the genetic process which exists among persons of equal birth and provides for their difference. (Habermas 2003, 115) Might not a person feel limited and equivalent to a thing, if s/he came to understand that his/her constitution was designed for the purpose of fulfilling another's desire?

In contrast to the approach of totalitarian state, these disorderings are conducted by means of two distinctive intentionalities. Corresponding to the desire to have what the other has, individualistic eugenics results in the commodification of the human person while the desire to be what the other is results in narcissistic attempt to live vicariously through another person engineered (at least in part) for that purpose.

If, finally, we attempt an analysis of free-market eugenics according to the five-part analysis of ethical features, we find that in free-market practice there is no specific axiology that universally governs the process of selection. Without taking account of mimesis, selection is relativized to the values of the individual. Practically, however, the mimesis which is part and parcel of capitalism would be a driving force in determining how selection is made, and that mimesis is tantamount to the scapegoating of the least powerful; it is the scapegoating of the generations yet unborn.

References:

- Farber, P. L. (1998). *The Temptations of Evolutionary Ethics*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Foucault, M. (2003 [1975-1976]). *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, David Macey, translator, Picador, New York.
- Geach, P. T. (1967 [1956]). "Good and Evil." *Theories of Ethics*, P. Foot, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Girard, R. (1987). *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Girard, R. (1989). *Violence and the Sacred*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Girard, R. (2001). *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Orbis, Maryknoll.
- Habermas, J. (2002). *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*, MIT Press, Cambridge.
- Habermas, J. (2003). *The Future of Human Nature*, Polity, Cambridge.

- Hare, R. M. (1964). *The Language of Morals*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- John Paul II, P. (1993, August 6). *The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)*, Pauline Publications, Boston.
- Lifton, R. J. (1986). *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, Basic Books, New York.
- McInerny, R. (1997). *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C.
- Midgley, M. (2002). *Evolution as a Religion*, Routledge, London.
- Moore, G. E. (1963 [1912]). *Ethics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Moore, G. E. (1988 [1903]). *Principia Ethica*, Prometheus, Buffalo.
- Murdock, I. (1985). *The Sovereignty of Good*, Ark Paperbacks, London.
- Nozick, R. (1974). *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Basic Books, New York.
- Nozick, R. (2001). *Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World*, Harvard, Cambridge.
- Pojman, L. P. (1990). *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, Wadsworth, Belmont.
- Reiss, M. J., Roger Straughan. (2001). *Improving Nature? The Science and Ethics of Genetic Engineering*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ridley, M. (1998). *The Origins of Virtue*, Penguin, New York.
- Ridley, M. (1999). *Genome*, Harper Collins, New York.
- Rifkin, J. (1999). *The Biotech Century*, Penguin Putnam, New York.
- Ruse, M. (2001). *Can a Darwinian Be A Christian?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Searle, J. R. (1967 [1964]). "How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'." *Theories of Ethics*, P. Foot, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Singer, P., and Deane Wells. (1985). *Making Babies: The New Science and Ethics of Conception*, Charles Scribner, New York.
- Singer, P. (1995). *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*, St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Singer, P. (2000a). "About Ethics." *Writings on an Ethical Life*, Harper Collins, New York, 5-17.
- Singer, P. (2000b). *Writings on the Ethical Life*, Ecco Press, New York.
- Sternhell, Z., Mario Sznajder, Maia Asheri. (1995). *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, David Maisel, translator, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Wright, R. (1994). *The Moral Animal: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*, Random House, New York.