

Empirical Theology: A Handbook

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CHAPTER TEN

Ecstatic Naturalism and the Transfiguration of the Good

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INTRODUCTION

Naturalism and empiricism have had a long history of cohabitation in the same conceptual space. The inner dynamics of naturalism have been such as to compel continual methodological changes that come to honor the fitful and vast structures of an indifferent nature. While American naturalism has moved in several distinctive directions, empirical method has been stretched and regrounded, often in dialogue with phenomenology, to correspond to the depth logic of naturalism.¹ Value theory has also been transformed so that the emergence of value in time is intimately tied to an evolutionary and creative nature that provides a finite place for concrete value within the vast network of causal events. Empirical method, however envisioned, works in consort with naturalism to find and secure specific values within human communities. Empirical theology, as but one moment within the history of an emergent naturalism, struggles to express the relation between the divine natures and nature as a whole while showing how value is a creative good within the world.

In what follows I will trace out a history of naturalism that moves through four distinct stages. This will prepare the way for an analysis of empirical methods as they themselves correspond to each stage of naturalism. The

1. On the correlation of empiricism and phenomenology and the relation of both to naturalism, see, *Pragmatism Considers Phenomenology*, ed. Robert S. Corrington, Carl R. Hausman, and Thomas Seeböhm (Lanham, Md.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and The University Press of America, 1987).

status and nature of the good will be redefined in the light of the consummatory phase of naturalism, that of ecstatic naturalism, which has its own unique and combined forms of empirical method and its own conception of the relation between the divine natures and human good. Put in other terms, ecstatic naturalism locates the ethical spheres within a vast metaphysical structure that honors both the sheer indifference of nature and nature's self-transcending potencies.

It is impossible to line up the four stages of naturalism as if they have a clear-cut trajectory and as if there are pure species that have precise outlines and definitions. Like Peirce when he describes the structures of signs, the historian of naturalism must engage in a process of "prescinding" in which certain regnant features are isolated out for analysis while the conflicting or deeply ambiguous features are temporarily muted. No form of naturalism comes "pure" and no one form has historical priority over the others. Rather, each form represents a tendency within naturalism as a whole that needs to be clarified in the light of the other key possibilities.

It should be noted at the outset that each form of naturalism insists that there can be no special realm of the supernatural that somehow remains disconnected from nature itself. Insofar as the supernatural is still affirmed it is done so as one dimension within nature that has its own inner logic and its own forms of interaction with the rest of nature.² The connecting link among the various forms of naturalism is not materialism (a common misconception) but the denial that there is any realm totally incommensurate with the world. Materialism is but one conceptual option within naturalism and should never be confused with naturalism itself, which has a much deeper and richer conceptual structure than any materialism that would appear within it. As we will see, some forms of naturalism affirm final and formal cause in such a way as to put pressure on most forms of materialism.

"DESCRIPTIVE" NATURALISM

The first form of naturalism that can be identified is what I shall call the "descriptive" form. This form stresses the primacy of material and efficient cause within a vast cosmic structure that is indifferent to human aspiration, even if it allows for the growth of the good within fragmented human communities. While the history of descriptive naturalism can be traced back to the categorial descriptions of Aristotle and the transformed atomism of Lucretius, its contemporary manifestation can be seen in the writings of Santayana, Dewey, and Buchler, each of whom, it should be noted, were friendly to some aspects of Greco-Roman forms of naturalism. The empha-

2. For a thorough study of the religious dimension of naturalism and its rejection of a special realm of the supernatural see, William M. Shea, *The Naturalists and the Supernatural* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984).

sis of descriptive naturalism is on the finite and instrumental character of the human process as it struggles to stabilize some goods against an indifferent nature.

For Santayana, the human creature is tethered to a particular place and has no sense of a center or circumference for nature as a whole. The ultimate upshot and value of the human process is unknown and there can be no extranatural salvation for the self that is caught in the whirling eddies of an indifferent cosmos. Santayana takes Dewey to task for failing to push his own naturalism past the foreground and the industrial structures of American capitalism. He sees Dewey as working out of an incomplete naturalism that refuses to look nature squarely in the face and thus fails to grasp just how unconcerned nature is with one of its most complex products, the human self.

Dewey, of course, insists that nature is itself instrumental and that human forms of inquiry are themselves products of evolution that have made it possible for the self to find some momentary forms of stability among the precarious features of a changing nature. Dewey hints in the direction of a process naturalism when he argues that so-called structures are actually events with an especially long-term unfolding that serves to mask their event character.³ Unlike Santayana, Dewey is willing to find a place for final cause within nature provided that such causes are understood to be located within the needs and dynamics of the human process. Material and efficient cause remain central to Dewey's form of descriptive naturalism with his emphasis on the brute and unintelligent qualities of interaction.

Of more recent vintage is the austere and minimalist naturalism of Justus Buchler who was in many respects an heir to Dewey.⁴ What Buchler calls "ordinal naturalism" is actually a species of descriptive naturalism because of its focus on a vast and often indifferent nature that yet remains amenable to some forms of instrumental control. The human animal is unique in using several forms of judgment (making, doing, and saying) to transform natural orders into complexes amenable to human need. Yet the sense remains that nature is far too vast and complex to be circumscribed by finite forms of human query. For Buchler, the self is born into a state of "natural debt" that cannot be canceled by instrumental control any more than it can be overcome by divine agency. Nature has no contour and cannot be mapped from a point outside of itself.⁵

3. Dewey works out the foundations of his event ontology in *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958). The most important chapter is the second, "Existence as Precarious and as Stable."

4. On the development of naturalism from Dewey to Buchler see Robert S. Corrington, "Naturalism, Measure, and the Ontological Difference," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23:1 (1985), pp. 19-32.

5. Buchler's unique naturalist metaphysics is best seen in his *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, 2nd expanded ed., ed. Kathleen Wallace, Armen Marsoobian, and Robert S. Corrington (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

Descriptive naturalism thus emphasizes material and efficient cause while locating the finite human process within an indifferent nature that allows for the growth of value but doesn't have its own mechanisms for the creation and preservation of the good. All goods are human goods and they remain precariously perched on top of a world that has made no special provisions for their survival. At the same time, descriptive naturalism remains reticent to assign an honored place to the spirit or to the divine natures. For Dewey, the divine can be best seen in terms of the ultimate unifying good that sustains a community of inquiry in search of lasting human values. There can be no extranatural realm of the spirit any more than there can be an extranatural or supernatural divine agent.

"HONORIFIC" NATURALISM

Contrasted to descriptive naturalism is what I shall call "honorific" naturalism that places special priority on the role of the spirit in either creating nature or in quickening natural possibilities toward an ideal consummation. Honorific naturalism remains naturalism insofar as the spirit is in and of nature even if it may have been responsible for the creation of nature in the past. The central figure in the history of honorific naturalism is Emerson who struggled to find a clear locus for the spirit within a complex and interweaved nature.

Honorific naturalism has a place for material and efficient cause but privileges formal and final cause. Nature's spirit is purposive and is concentered in forms that have their own spiritual power and momentum. Emerson was deeply sensitive to the locations of spirit and clothed each appearance in a metaphor that gathered together the unique features of the particular order seized by his vision. Nature itself was "saltatory" and exploded with the power of the spirit, moving in fits and starts toward a reintegration. As Emerson's vision darkened in the 1840s this sense of the presence of the spirit faded somewhat from view as his own vision moved toward a more descriptive naturalism. Yet even in his later writings, his honorific naturalism breaks through as he still finds a place for the emergent spirit within a cruel and vast cosmos that seems to mock the poet's hunger for transfiguration.

Of more recent vintage are the later essays of Heidegger where the Emersonian sense of the power of language to evoke and transform the world comes to the fore. For Heidegger, whose naturalism (as manifest in his concern with "worldhood") is clearly of the honorific or even eulogistic variety, language is the "house of Being" that makes it possible for nature to shine forth in all of its plenitude. It is not customary to place Heidegger within the history of naturalism, but I believe this comes from a confusion about the conceptual and experiential possibilities actually prevalent *within* naturalism. Insofar as Heidegger speaks of our alienation from the earth and

our need to sustain a world horizon in which the holy can once again return to guide the self toward a primal transformation, he belongs to those for whom philosophy is indeed a return from epistemology to the realms of a healing nature. And, like Emerson before him, Heidegger insists that only a return of a centering power, as emergent from the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) can rescue us from our sheer drift and fallenness within a darkening world.

Honorific forms of naturalism tend to be monolithic in the sense that they envision spirit (or Being) as a single source for the unity of power and meaning within the world. Such naturalists often write as if nature or history has one purpose or one trajectory and that the spirit is an agency with a fairly clear-cut momentum that can be mapped. It might seem strange to call a perspective focusing on spirit a form of naturalism until it is remembered that the spirit, whatever its quasi-imperial intent, is always part and parcel of nature and can only be effective within natural orders of interaction.

PROCESS NATURALISM

A cousin of the honorific view is "process naturalism" where the focus is less on a ubiquitous and omnivorous spirit and more on plural centers of power and awareness that interact to sustain an evolutionary cosmos. Process naturalisms are thus evolutionary and pluralistic and often imply a form of panpsychism, or, in Peirce's terms, the notion that "matter is effete mind." For a theologian like Cobb, the better descriptive term for the process perspective is "panexperientialism" where the emphasis is on the centrality of some form of experience, however primitive, within all orders of relevance. Empirical theology, particularly as manifest in the writings of Wieman, struggles to honor the process account of creative advance while retaining aspects of Dewey's more descriptive naturalism.

Wieman's case is especially instructive because he works out of the tensions between the descriptive and process versions of naturalism. The descriptive dimension is evident when he backs away from some of the more robust conceptual innovations of Whitehead where the plenitude of a primordial god is described. For Wieman, the correlation of the divine and the creative advance of the good is still an event firmly within a causally structured nature. In the following passage, Wieman uses language that points toward the two forms of naturalism just mentioned:

We shall try to demonstrate that there is a creative process working in our midst which transforms the human mind and the world relative to the human mind. We shall then show how transformation by this process is always in the direction of greater good. The human good thus created includes goods, satisfaction of human wants, richness of quality, and power of man to control the course of events. . . . Throughout the writing

that follows we shall take as our guide the creative event, which produces qualitative meaning.⁶

The process dimension lies in his affirmation that the creative process is somehow larger than the human and that the self participates in something that is not a mere cultural product. The descriptive element lies in the focus on concrete human wants and the control of nature that can bring about a transformation of wants into satisfactions. Where Whitehead and Hartshorne part company from this form of empirical theology is in a stronger focus on the modal and ontological properties of the divine natures themselves. Where Wieman parts company from Dewey, whom he otherwise honors, is in the stress on the metaphysical reality of creative process within nature. That is, creative advance is something "done" by the universe itself and not solely by human beings in search of periodic stabilities within an indifferent nature.

As noted, no form of naturalism comes pure and Wieman's blend of the descriptive and process versions is a perfect example of the native flexibility of naturalism as it struggles beyond its antecedent possibilities toward new innovations. Thus far we have seen that descriptive naturalism stresses material and efficient cause and insists on the indifference of nature to the needs of the human process. It does not follow from this that the self cannot transform nature in small ways to satisfy its needs. Honorific naturalism is monistic in the sense that it envisions a single spirit (or history of Being) that overarches nature and provides the measure for natural forms of interaction. This version of naturalism privileges formal and final cause. Process naturalism pluralizes the spirit and prefers instead to speak of centers of awareness that become aware of each other through a kind of final cause, namely, the feeling of feeling in which an event "chooses" to let another event, now objectified, become relevant to it. At the same time, process naturalism is fully evolutionary and sees the power of creativity throughout the universe. Honorific forms of naturalism need not be evolutionary but process forms must be.

A version of process naturalism can be seen in William Dean's "naturalistic historicism" where the emphasis is on how signs and their objects belong to a historical world in which there are innumerable semiotic chains forming the connecting links of history. Dean, like Cobb before him, insists that the process and historical versions of naturalism are compatible with postmodernist denials of a transcendent realm of signification and are thus sensitive to the explosion of contingency and difference lying at the heart of nature. I call Dean's naturalism a version of process naturalism precisely because it rejects the monolithic structures of honorific naturalism while

6. Henry N. Wieman, *The Source of the Human Good* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1946), p. 17.

insisting on the presence of final cause within an otherwise chaotic nature. It privileges history over nature and thereby distances itself from a descriptive naturalism that would see history as a mere species within the vast realms of nature. At the same time, it places religious experience right at the heart of human communities and sees value as emergent from the fitful and fragmented conditions of social and natural life.⁷

ECSTATIC NATURALISM

The fourth and final form of naturalism is that of "ecstatic naturalism" that combines several of the elements of the previous three forms but that transforms all of them by its radical insistence on a fundamental division within nature itself. The most basic division affirmed by ecstatic naturalism is that between nature naturing (*natura naturans*) and nature natured (*natura naturata*). Nature naturing is here defined as the unlimited realm of the potencies. These potencies are not yet possibilities because possibilities can only arise within and among actualities, that is, within the orders of the world (nature natured). Nature natured is the created orders of the world; that is, the manifest orders within which the human process finds itself. There are no bridging metaphors or ontological links between the innumerable potencies of nature naturing and the innumerable orders of the world as manifest. The difference between nature naturing and nature natured is the fundamental divide *within* nature itself. That is, this divide does not separate off nature from some alleged realm of the non- or super-natural but lives out of the heart of a self-transforming nature.

Ecstatic naturalism affirms with descriptive naturalism that nature is often indifferent to the aspirations of the human process. Along with Santayana it insists that there can be no ultimate center or circumference for nature any more than there can be an ultimate foreground or background. Nature has no outer shape or contour. With honorific naturalism it affirms the presence of spirit within nature even while denying that it is an imperial presence. The great divide between nature naturing and nature natured is akin to the ontological difference as disclosed by Heidegger when he speaks of the difference between Being and a being. With process forms of naturalism it affirms the role of creativity within at least some orders of interaction and provides a place for final cause within particular orders. At the same time, ecstatic naturalism works within the evolutionary perspective.

The potencies of nature are preformal and are not yet orders in their own right. Historically, this notion of the potencies can be traced back to Schelling

7. Dean's two recent books are of special importance, *American Religious Empiricism* (1986), and *History Making History: The New Historicism in American Religious Thought* (1988) (Albany: SUNY Press). See my review of these books in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy: New Series* 3:3 (1989), pp. 223-230.

with his concern for regrounding the sciences of nature within an understanding of the creative and ejective power of an organic nature. Tillich transformed the concept of the potencies in the light of his own understanding of the power of Being as particularly manifest in the New Being of Jesus as the Christ. In what follows, echoes of Tillich's transformation of the potencies will be heard.

Ecstatic naturalism thus honors the finite locations of the spirit within an evolving universe but lives out of the stark recognition that nature itself is reft into two halves only one of which is directly manifest to the human process. The innumerable potencies of nature naturing are only indirectly available to the self through their manifestations within the spirit that hovers between and among orders of relevance. As we will see, the concept of the good itself hovers precariously between these two dimensions of a self-transfiguring nature.

EMPIRICISM AND NATURALISM

Empirical method works hand in hand with naturalism to insure that thought remains fully embedded in nonhuman orders of relevance. Empiricism is not so much a doctrine about the "what" of experience, a mistake made by Hume, but an insistence that experience remains attuned to the envioning conditions of its life. As noted by Dewey, experience is in and of nature and does not exist in a detached realm outside of its evolutionary enabling conditions. It follows that empirical theology is not so much a theory about the "what" of religious experience, although it will draw some conclusions about the referent of experience, as it is an attempt to honor the ways in which nature enters into the human process and deposits its shapes in the self. Put differently, empiricism lets the self become permeable to the not-self so that the orders of nature natured can become deeply relevant to the self in process.

Each form of naturalism has its own distinctive type of empirical method. We can trace these through more quickly because their ontological conditions have already been laid out. Descriptive naturalism uses an empiricism that remains attuned to antecedent causal conditions and that makes tentative inductive leaps beyond the immediacies of the given to class or genus specific conclusions. This form of empiricism remains reticent to impose final cause onto efficient cause even though it will certainly acknowledge the fitful and fragmented presence of purpose within the human order.

Honorific naturalism relies on the primacy of the given in an immediate intuition that does not admit of comparison or inductive analysis. For Emerson, empiricism, insofar as he could use such a term, entailed the intrusion of a self-transcending nature into the poetic consciousness. The self has an immediate and complete awareness of the depth dimension of nature but is not in a position to compare this experience with that of other selves

nor can the Emersonian self participate in the cumulative method of a scientific community. By the same token, Heidegger's concept of experience does not allow for symmetrical communication among equal selves but can only function within private and highly privileged forms of primal immediacy. Honorific naturalism thus has an empiricism (or concept of experience) without a method.

Process naturalisms, whether fully historicist or not, also fall short on method while denying anything like a primal form of immediacy. Put differently, process naturalism has the hermeneutic sophistication to recognize that prehension (feeling of feeling) is always context dependent and fully perspectival. No prehension is unmediated or pure even if the ingression of relevant material is done "at once" and whole. Insofar as a method *can* be assigned to process forms of naturalism, it would be the method of abstractive generalization where the demands of a generically inclusive vision would remain in tension with the series of actual prehensions available to the naturalist at any given time. Postmodernist versions of process naturalism would place less stress on generalization even while using such strategies to make the claims of radical pluralism viable. This irony should not go without notice. Naturalism in any guise is struggling to become as encompassing as nature itself. While this is a vain attempt, it is not out of keeping with the basic piety of naturalism that wishes to honor a nature that is infinitely vaster than any categorical scheme.

Ecstatic naturalism combines the methodological and premethodological dimensions of the other versions of naturalism but attunes them all to the fundamental abyss within nature, namely that between the innumerable potencies of nature naturing and the innumerable orders manifest as nature natured. Like descriptive naturalism, the ecstatic variety uses induction to locate and grasp the contours emergent from efficient and material cause. Such inductive generalizations are tentative and subject to self-control in the long run. Like Peirce, the ecstatic naturalist locates method within the community of inquiry as it struggles against the opacity and recalcitrance of alien orders of interaction. On a larger scale, the community of interpreters works with this inductive material to shape a conception of an evolving and fragmentary world.⁸

The sense of empirical immediacy found in honorific naturalism is transformed in terms of the potencies of nature naturing that are manifest "on the edges" of the world's orders. For ecstatic naturalism there can be an immediate intrusion of the potencies, but the actual shape of any given potency remains shrouded in mystery. The immediacy is thus located in the impact rather than in any "message" conveyed. Postmodernists prefer to use the concept of "traces" to deal with the realms of the presemiotic. Such

8. I have worked out the basic structures of the hermeneutic community in my *The Community of Interpreters* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987).

language is not inappropriate provided that it is recognized that a given potency will have a "presence" that compels the self to participate in the depth dimension of an ecstatically self-transforming nature.

Like the process naturalist, the ecstatic naturalist will honor the plural ways in which the orders of the world become manifest. If the potencies are felt in terms of their immediate impact, the manifest orders of the world are encountered through the innumerable shocks and separations that continue to alter the direction of the self in process. These shocks are "felt" and have their own vector force moving the self in specifiable trajectories that can be mapped in retrospect if not during their actual manifestation. Abstractive generalization enhances the scope of understanding so that it can grasp, in however tentative a fashion, the upshot of these innumerable causes, both efficient and final, as they shape the self in time.

MUSEMENT

On a higher level of sophistication, ecstatic naturalism uses the methods of abduction and interpretive musement as originally delineated by Peirce. Abduction moves in the opposite direction from induction. If induction moves from case to case in order to generate a claim about a class of objects or events, abduction moves from a general hypothesis (rule) and applies it "backward," as it were, to a given case. The creation of novel and rich hypotheses makes it possible to leap beyond the immediate inductive possibilities so that a more pervasive statistical law can be isolated and articulated. Musement is a species of abduction that works in an even less direct fashion to enhance our grasp of pervasive features. The attitude of interpretive musement is fairly common in the human process but is rarely spelled out in detail. For Peirce, musement occurs after induction, deduction, and abduction (rule to case) have exhausted their possibilities. The semiotic world of empirical knowledge becomes open to novel possibilities when musement works in its seemingly random fashion to let complex and different signs interact in ways that could not have been possible for the other more restricted forms of method. Interpretive musement opens up a free semiotic zone in which the self is actually brought into interaction with the depth structures of nature. Musement thus takes place after instrumental and goal-directed methods have exhausted their potential to render a situation intelligible.

Musement thus becomes one of the key methods of ecstatic naturalism. There is a striking sense in which interpretive musement participates in both sides of the *naturing/natured* divide. Insofar as musement feels the direct impact of the presemiotic potencies, and has its own momentum altered and transfigured, it lives out of the rhythms of nature *naturing*. Yet insofar as musement gathers up the traits and features of the orders of the world and hovers over them in creative play it participates in the richness of nature *natured*.

Thus the method of interpretive musement has the unique distinction of living on both sides of the ontological difference and in providing a means for bringing them together. This fact will have profound implications for our discussion of the good as it emerges from the heart of nature and works its way fitfully into the interpretive communities that surround and support the human process.

Ecstatic naturalism thus uses a variety of methods precisely because it shares certain ontological commitments with the three other forms of naturalism. In spite of some crucial differences among the varieties of naturalism they all share the sense that nature is vast and infinitely complex and that all methods must honor antecedent orders of relevance that determine and alter future possibilities. Possibilities are in and of nature and do not hover outside of the world in some "realm" of the possible. By the same token, actualities are in and of orders of relevance and come and go as these orders change and admit or exclude new possibilities.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GOOD

The emergence of the good, or of finite goods, is and must be an event within nature. All forms of naturalism concur in the recognition that goods are no more free floating than are possibilities. Goods are in and of nature or not at all. For descriptive naturalisms, goods are secured by human communities that struggle to render the precarious more stable. Santayana would downplay the communal dimension and envision goods in terms of the detached satisfactions of the realm of spirit which has no causal relation to the realm of matter. Be that as it may, all goods are momentary achievements within an indifferent and often hostile nature.

For the honorific naturalist all goods are part of a final consummation that awaits the self in the emergent epiphanies of the spirit. Goods are not exactly eternal, but they are secure against the ravages of chance and an indifferent causal sequence of events. For Heidegger, of course, the good emerges from out of the primal mittances of Being as it gives and withholds itself in the current epoch. Because of their "empiricism" of immediacy, honorific naturalists must see goods as primal givens that stand before the self and promise a transformation of the human process that is more than instrumental.

For process naturalism, the good emerges whenever the universe allows for the creation of more value. Values are themselves products of experience as it becomes more complex and increases the tension between harmony and contrast *within* experience. Intensity is a good in its own right, and many process thinkers argue as if the creation of intensity is the telos of nature itself. Yet as a species of naturalism, the process variety still envisions all goods as being part of nature rather than as being located outside of orders of interaction. The plot thickens when it is remembered that the pri-

mordial mind of God contains all possible generals (eternal objects) in immediacy even if this is not a realm of the compossible, that is, even if God can allow incompatible traits to coexist within the divine mind at the same "time." Yet the value and relevance of these eternal objects is only determined by their full participation in the world of actual occasions that live by allowing eternal entities to become deeply relevant to their own evolving experience.

Ecstatic naturalism, as can be expected, radically redefines the locus of the good and moves away from antecedent conceptions of how finite goods operate within the world. The good is not so much a human product, as it would be in descriptive naturalisms, as it is a precarious product of a self-transfiguring nature. Consequently, ecstatic naturalism rejects Dewey's instrumental view of the good because it is based on an inadequate metaphysics that in turn ignores the fundamental divide between nature naturing and nature natured. Dewey's metaphysics is inadequate because it remains, as noted by Santayana, far too anthropocentric. That is, the human process becomes nature's center and nature itself is rendered into instrumental terms. By writing the human so large on the face of nature Dewey underestimates the transformative possibilities within nature. At the same time, his reconstructed account of experience, while profound and revolutionary in its own right, fails to understand the depth dimension of both the aesthetic and the religious dimensions of experience. When he speaks of "quality" as an intensified ontological integrity that consummates and fulfills human experience, he comes close to an ecstatic understanding of the human process but remains cut off from the depth dimension of the spiritual presence that underlies so-called qualities. By comparison, Tillich's evocative concept of the "gestalt of grace" moves decisively beyond Dewey's understanding of "quality" and prepares the way for ecstatic naturalism and its conception of the correlation of goods, both finite and otherwise, and the human process.

An initial road block standing in the way of an ecstatic naturalist conception of the good is the traditional notion, at least since Hume, that it is impossible to derive an "ought" from an "is." Naturalism is held to be a framework or perspective deeply attuned to what is the case within nature. The "ought" is held to be an imperative that may be counter-factual or may occupy a realm of obligation that cuts across or against nature. One version of this second view is found in the essays of Kant where he affirms that private maxims are too strongly tied to inclinations, and they must be directed toward the strictures of the categorical imperative which asks the individual to universalize and reverse given maxims. By attempting to universalize a maxim (to ask if it applies to all rational beings) and to reverse the same maxim (to ask if it applies to the individual) the moral agent brings himself or herself into the position where it is possible to see if the maxim ought to become binding. If the maxim passes both tests then it can be imposed on the inclinations that might favor a less general maxim. Kantian dualism is thus

antinaturalist in the sense that it posits an unbridgeable gulf within the self (phenomenal and noumenal orders) that can only be dealt with by an appeal to the non-natural.

Naturalism, of whatever stripe, cannot accept the concept that the "ought" is falsely derived from the "is" any more than it can appeal to a special realm of the "ought" as the locus of finite goods. Ecstatic naturalism, in particular, affirms that the good is not so much derived from the world of actuality as it is one of the more complex and unstable products of a self-transfiguring nature. The debate hinges on the problem of "derivability." If by "derive" one means a clear deduction in which the consequent is prefigured in the antecedent assertions, then it is clear that an "ought" cannot be derived from the "is." If, however, the concept of "derivation" can take on a larger sense to include the concept of "emergence" then it is indeed possible to "derive" an "ought" from an "is." The concept of emergence is thus crucial to any naturalism that wishes to find a proper locus for finite goods within nature.

THE GOOD

Any good is what it is precisely because it has value for the human process and has this value within the context of a community of interpreters for whom all good must emerge in a public way so that they can enhance the share of power and meaning within the community. This is not to say that there are no private goods but to affirm that the so-called private realm derives its own sense of validation from the emancipatory structures of the emergent public good. Goods are never "pure" any more than they are free from the ambiguity of emergence and interaction. The current perspective equates goods with the realm of the "ought" in that such oughts are themselves what they are because of the inner wisdom of the community of interpreters. Put differently, all goods are emergent products of nature that must be assessed by the community. The individual self is a community in its own right (a reflexive community) and uses the same cumulative methodologies as the larger community of interpreters. In assessing these goods the community feels the lure of given goods and is thus bound to enhance their furtherance within the community. Goods in this sense obligate by their very being.

To be a good within nature is, among other things, to be available to human and pre-human organisms as they struggle for security and transcendence within the world. Goods render an organism secure insofar as they insure momentary stabilities against internal and external threats. Goods make transcendence possible insofar as they goad the organism into an enhanced assimilation of signs and values and open the organism to the depth rhythms of nature. A good is thus an ought in that it stands as a call or an obligation moving the organism toward an augmented form of interaction.

Goods stand before the organism and demand a response. Goods are thus not mere products of the self or the organism but are ejective products of a nature that spawns goods without "counting" them or rendering them all coherent or self-consistent. Thus, of course, there can be competing goods and competing obligations.

When the concept of "the good" or of "goods" is invoked it is assumed that one is dealing with orders that can be morally appraised. This issue is deeply problematic and must be addressed from the standpoint of the ontological difference. Can the potencies of nature, which remain hidden to the human process, be morally appraised? The answer must be that they cannot be. Ecstatic naturalism assumes that only manifest orders of relevance can be the subject of moral appraisal. The potencies of nature naturing enter into the human process in unpredictable ways and have no direct relevance to the moral transformation of life. Put in different terms, nature's potencies are "beyond good and evil." They make all orders of relevance possible and they support the human process but they exert no cumulative directionality nor do they have a clear and accessible manifestation. The locus of the good cannot be "within" the realm of nature naturing.

It follows that the "closer" side of the ontological difference, namely, the orders of the manifest world, must be the locus of the good. Yet, this obvious conclusion is not as obvious as it looks. It is clear that the world contains orders that can be morally appraised. While no community will have a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for locating and defining the good, some form of consensus will guide cumulative forms of appraisal. Given orders can be ranked in terms of their overall value for the self in process while others can be critiqued in terms of their anti-emancipatory power within a community. The question remains: Are these goods part of the world as manifest or do they come from a deeper source? To answer this question properly it is necessary to make a distinction that will separate off one type of good from another.

Finite goods, such as physical well-being, are indeed within and among the orders of relevance that constitute the world. Nature is replete with such goods even if no one of them is available in an unambiguous way. All finite goods are thus part and parcel of nature naturing and remain in flux within nature. Human communities work to enhance the strength and scope of these natural goods so that the human process can increase its semiotic and physical fecundity. These goods thus stand before the community as imperatives for transformation. Ecstatic naturalism thus affirms with the other forms of naturalism that finite goods are in and of nature.

THE NOT YET

Yet do finite goods exhaust the class of all goods? Can we even speak of a nonfinite good or of an infinite good? Is such language in any way com-

patible with the naturalism which stresses finite conditions of interaction? For ecstatic naturalism the contrast to finite goods is not an infinite good or an eternal Platonic form but a "dynamic good" that lives out of the not yet.⁹ The concept of the "not yet" (*noch nicht sein*) comes from Ernst Bloch who radically redefined natural law so that it could be understood as an emergent force coming to the community from an emancipatory future. The "not yet Being" of the dynamic good is a higher "ought" in the sense that it calls the human process forward to a new and transfigured reality that cannot be prefigured in antecedent conditions. Finite goods are available as they are within the present and are located in specific orders of interaction. Dynamic goods, on the other hand, are not spatially or temporally located in the same sense. They hover before the self and its communities in the unique space of the not yet that is not an order within the world. This unique space is actually that of the spirit that is neither a potency of nature nor a specific order of relevance. The spirit lives out of the draft held open by the not yet and is the locus for dynamic goods that stand before the self as it struggles for transfiguration.

Process naturalism well understands the idea of emergent goods and can grasp the idea that all goods are imperatives that call forth a choice on the part of the experiencing actual occasion. That is, a good (value) stands before the occasion and "recommends" itself to the evolving experience so that it can become internally related to the occasion as it moves toward concrecence. In an analogous way, ecstatic naturalism affirms that dynamic goods are located outside of selves and in turn "recommend" themselves to the self in process as it moves toward transfiguration. Finite goods do not radically transform the self. They merely augment those properties that link the self to the orders of the world. The individual can have more health, more comfort, more creativity, or more pleasure, but these finite goods, no matter how accumulated, do not alter the depth dimension of the self. Only dynamic goods, which speak out of the not yet of the spirit, can enter into the depth dimension of the self and bring about a transfiguration.

DYNAMIC GOODS

The new Adam and the new Eve cannot emerge from finite goods within nature natured. Finite goods remain strictly anthropological, no matter how essential they are and no matter how treasured by the human process. Dynamic goods, on the other hand, are eschatological because they emerge from the not yet Being of the spirit. They speak from out of a different time and space than do finite goods. Until naturalism opened out the ontological

9. The concept of "dynamic good" points in the direction of Peirce's concept of the "dynamic object." Unlike Kant's "thing-in-itself," the dynamic object moves closer to the interpreter through time as the more available "immediate object" responds to the pressure of the dynamic object that lives within it.

difference it was unable to find the true location for dynamic goods and to contrast them to finite goods. Dewey fully understood the status and location of finite goods within nature but had only the briefest glimpse into the depth dimension of dynamic goods. When he speaks of "quality" he moves toward an understanding of the ontological difference but his conceptual commitments held him back from the ultimate abyss animating thought. It is clear that Dewey saw qualities as being in some sense more real or more vital than the things having them but he could not grasp the originating power of dynamic quality within the not yet Being of the spirit. Put differently, Dewey's "qualities" are immediate finite goods that have a dynamic quality pointing toward the depth dimensions of the good.

Dynamic goods are emergent from the eternal strife between nature *natur-ing* and nature *natured*. For Heidegger, this primal strife is that between "earth" and "world" as they wrestle each other into the clearing of human awareness. Heidegger's rather romantic and even eulogistic language clouds the depth logic of the ontological difference but points in the direction of ecstatic naturalism. Dynamic goods emerge out of this primal strife and live in the between that makes it possible for the ontological difference to obtain at all. Finite goods are clearly emergent on one side of the ontological difference, the side that Heidegger calls "world" and that ecstatic naturalism calls "nature *natured*." Instrumental methods are appropriate when dealing with such finite goods. The inner logic of dynamic goods makes them elusive and recalcitrant to instrumental control or appraisal.

The unique nature of betweenness can only be understood in an ecstatically transfigured naturalism that derives its own categorial momentum from its response to the eternal rift opened out by the ontological difference. Betweenness is an enabling condition that provides the energized and mobile space within which dynamic goods can emerge for the human process. Dynamic goods only appear elliptically to the self in time and announce their presence through the unsettling rhythms of the spirit. It is easy to give examples of finite goods: health, comfort, intensity of experience, pleasure, self-control, etc., but it is extremely difficult to give examples of dynamic goods. By definition, all examples fall within a genus and represent a variable or value within the genus. Dynamic goods do not belong to a genus but live outside of the genera as traditionally understood. In their depth dimension dynamic goods participate in the divine natures that are themselves only available in an elliptical fashion.

As noted, finite goods augment the self yet fail to propel it outside of its anthropocentric structure. Dynamic goods, by contrast, live on the "other side" of anthropological structures and live out of the spirit of nature. Nature's spirit is neither an imperial self-consciousness (in the sense meant by Hegel) nor a body of attained meanings. Rather, the spirit is a transforming rhythm that combines power and meaning in such a way as radically to transform the self so that it can break free from its own anthropology. Dynamic goods are

the manifest dimension of the spirit as it cleaves to the human process. Yet their particular form of manifestation is indirect and elusive.

Wieman comes close to an understanding of dynamic goods when he speaks of the power of "creative events" to go beyond a mere augmentation of the human process. Creative events, like dynamic goods, are deeply transforming and recast the very terms in which the self, the world, and the divine natures are correlated:

The creative event is one that brings forth in the human animal, in society and history, and in the appreciable world a new structure of interrelatedness, whereby events are discriminated and related in a manner not before possible. It is a structure whereby some events derive from other events, through meaningful connection with them, an abundance of quality that events could not have had without this new creation.¹⁰

This new abundance comes from a source outside of the human process and, so I would argue, outside of the orders of the world. Creative events emerge from the realm between nature's potencies and the innumerable orders of relevance that constitute manifest nature. Wieman combines, as noted, several features of descriptive and process forms of naturalism. His evocative portrayal of human goods and creative events brings him close to the categorial commitments of ecstatic naturalism. Had he probed more fully into the depth dimension of the ontological difference he might have moved more decisively in the direction of a transfigured naturalism.

Dynamic goods live in the not yet of the spirit and hover around the human process compelling it to acknowledge an elusive presence that can give it a new sense of measure. The new Adam and Eve are themselves products of the spirit and thus of the realm between the potencies and the created orders. On the other side of an augmented or enhanced anthropology is a transfigured eschatology that gives the self over to nature and lifts it out of its own illusory plenitude. Dynamic goods are not human products but are gifts of nature's spirit as it fills the self with the deeper restlessness of the not yet. Eschatology is the measure for anthropology. As argued by Ernst Bloch, nature is itself eschatological through and through as it moves toward a transfiguration of its own possibilities.

INTERPRETATIVE MUSEMENT AND ECSTATIC NATURALISM

The method adopted by ecstatic naturalism for probing into the dynamic goods of nature is that of interpretive musement. This method, which is actually postmethodic in its operation, derives its own momentum from the realm between nature naturing and nature natured. The free play of signs

10. Wieman, *Source of Human Good*, p. 65.

and semiotic possibilities responds to the deeper play within nature itself. The movement of the potencies toward manifestation is felt by the sign systems of the musing self. On the other side of abduction, which moves carefully from general rules to specific cases within the world, is the musement that opens out the tensions within the ontological difference. Abduction and induction are appropriate methods when dealing with finite and intraworldly goods. They serve to stabilize and enhance goods so that they can be assimilated and manipulated by the community of interpreters. Musement, on the other hand, is responsive to dynamic goods that live in the between which is the home of the spirit.

Put differently, musement lives out of natural grace and is the manifest side of that grace as it interacts with the semiotic material of the human process. Peirce speculated that nature itself may be the muser and that the human process (our "glassy essence") is the "place" where this musement occurs. Ecstatic naturalism affirms and strengthens this speculation and redefines the depth dimension of the human process in terms of nature's own forms of interpretive musement. Dynamic goods are manifest in an elliptical fashion on the nether side of all of our finite goods and can only appear to us through the clearing provided by musement. Yet their appearance is through a "gestalt of grace" that is more than a mere qualitative or creative enhancement of the self in process.

Finite goods can be grasped and shaped by the individual and by the larger community of interpreters. Dynamic goods, on the other hand, grasp the self and transform the structures of interaction in such a way as to create a new person on the other side of our attained and static anthropology. To be gathered up into nature's musement is to be gathered up into the eschatological transfiguration of the self and to leave behind the old self of mere autonomy. In this fundamental transformation finite goods are not left behind but become revalued in the light of dynamic goods. The goods of the world and the goods of the spirit work in consort both to enrich and to transform the human process so that it can lie fully out of the between opened up by the not yet.

Ecstatic naturalism reaches back historically to the fundamental insight of St. Paul:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:20-23, NRSV).

We are adopted by the spirit that lives out of the heart of the ontological difference. Naturalism has evolved beyond its earlier stages to a point where

it can more adequately locate the spirit in the realm between nature natured and nature naturing. Nature's "groaning" is its movement toward the between that animates all created orders. The spirit gives birth to transfigured and dynamic goods that overcome the "futility" of a subjected nature. To be adopted by the spirit is to go beyond ethics with its own categorical structures to a realm of empowerment that actually brings dynamic goods into intersection with the human process. Ecstatic naturalism is not so much a perspective *within* philosophy and theology as a way of honoring the presence of the spirit on the edges of a self-transforming nature. The basic piety of naturalism is itself a gift of the spirit as it adopts the human process and brings it closer to the depth rhythms of nature's elusive potencies.